

# Art and Rhetoric IN ROMAN CULTURE



EDITED BY  
JAŚ ELSNER AND MICHEL MEYER



## Art and Rhetoric in Roman Culture

Rhetoric was fundamental to education and to cultural aspiration in the Greek and Roman worlds. It was one of the key aspects of antiquity that slipped under the line between the ancient world and Christianity erected by the early Church in late antiquity. Ancient rhetorical theory is obsessed with examples and discussions drawn from visual material. This book mines this rich seam of theoretical analysis from within Roman culture to present an internalist model for some aspects of how the Romans understood, made and appreciated their art. The understanding of public monuments like the Arch of Titus or Trajan's Column or of imperial statuary, domestic wall painting, funerary altars and sarcophagi, as well as of intimate items like children's dolls, is greatly enriched by being placed in relevant rhetorical contexts created by the Roman world.

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JAS' ELSNER AND MICHEL MEYER



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## Preface

MICHEL MEYER

Why a volume on Roman art that focuses on rhetoric? At first sight, the idea may seem awkward, because Roman art has rarely been seen as specifically or exceptionally rhetorical by contrast with other kinds of art, such as Greek. Yet the visual culture of Rome was a form of rhetoric designed to convey *romanitas*, grandeur, *imperium*, Roman virtues, and the legitimacy of the social differences that had been as prevalent as they were contested from the advent of the Republic. An *imperator* or a general had to display his victories, and he did this in various monuments erected for that purpose; a patrician had to show the nobility of his ancestry through *imagines* in sculpture or painting; a virtuous patron needed to exemplify the common virtues found in mythology, usually borrowed and adapted from Greek myth, through the frescoes on the walls of his house, for instance, or in the reliefs of his sarcophagus.

Roman art is a form of rhetoric because there can be no empire without the discourses that approve its legitimacy and justify the differences upon which it rests; without the visual affirmation of grandeur and majesty, victory and success with the statues of rulers represented as gods or saviours. In the Roman world, there is no city without magnificent buildings or imperial statues, designed to remind their inhabitants of the values they share with the rest of the empire; no villa without paintings or mosaics of mythological heroes reminding viewers of the virtues the owner is supposed to share with those heroes. One difficulty in seeing such products of visual culture as forms of rhetoric stems from taking as normative a Greek view of rhetoric, in which people debate controversial questions with arguments. On the basis of such a restrictive definition, Roman art can hardly be considered rhetorical. But can rhetoric be appropriately confined to such an outlook? The contrast with Greece should lead us instead to define rhetoric more sharply and more generally, in order to comprehend its specific Roman uses and its relation to the visual arts in particular.

What is the difference between Greek rhetoric and Roman rhetoric? Greek rhetoric, born in Athens, a city proud of its autonomy and unusual in its radical democracy, was focused on the problems that argumentative rationality could handle – such as questions that a free citizen could tackle



in confrontation with other citizens as free as himself. Roman rhetoric, on the other hand, is centred on giving answers that express but also give comfort to the social role of the speaker, what the Greeks called the speaker's *ēthos*. Rhetoric displayed in an indirect way (that is, through speech but also through painting, sculpture or architecture) the values and virtues that defined the identity of individuals in a strongly differentiated society. Art is a way of displaying without debating, an affirmation of the patron's identity to which viewers are free to respond. Both Greek rhetoric and Roman rhetoric deal with questions and the impact of their answers upon a given audience, but not in the same way. The Athenians based their rhetoric on conflictive discourse, while the Romans rather focused on the acceptability of answers, from pleading to showing. Politically, Roman rhetoric transformed the problematic into a set of answers in order to render it more socially forceful and obvious, as a way of warding off social threats and reinforcing the common *romanitas* of the societies under Roman dominion. This does not mean *we* should restrict our understanding of rhetoric to either of these conceptions, but rather that we should analyse why and how what we may consider rhetoric to be today offers an excellent approach for understanding Roman art in its multifariousness and originality.

Rhetoric is the way individuals negotiate their distance when questions arise – questions that can divide people, or unite them because they agree on what to think and say in response. An individual who addresses himself to others is termed the speaker (*ēthos*) and those addressed are called the audience or interlocutors (*pathos*). Since the speaker's address is also a form of response to the audience, *logos* is the way the individual or social difference between these parties is translated into a difference between question and answer. Rhetoric can be conflictive (it is then called dialectic or argumentation), and in that case questions must be dealt with directly, as in law courts where one debates the pros and cons of a case. But rhetorical questions can also be tackled by giving an answer, with the aim of swallowing the question through high style and eloquence, if not elegance, to show for instance that the question posed is not a real one or has already been solved. Answers make questions disappear. This model of rhetoric, conforming to the popular understanding of rhetoric as a set of tricks or a merely formal conundrum consisting of elegance, style and form, is the basic requirement for transforming the problematic into a non-problematic way of seeing things. That is why rhetoric, in this sense, plays a hugely significant role in politics, and is constantly used by those in power or at the top of social hierarchies. Rhetoric enables people in such positions to

please and flatter, and to give the impression (if only rhetorically) of a united and shared world, where the problems have been resolved or do not arise.

Should we then reject rhetoric, as Plato did, on the grounds that it is merely manipulative? This is a short-sighted view. For rhetoric is essential to any community, especially as an alternative to violence; and even when there is socially sanctioned violence (as in the amphitheatre), it may have its own rhetorical justifications. Asserting and reasserting the unity of a potentially divided community lies at the core of exclusion. The violence of the games exerted on foreigners, slaves and exotic animals in the arenas functioned to reinforce feelings of belonging within the Roman world. The Greek city-state, much smaller and more cohesive, had no need to resort to the violence of amphitheatres in order to create a sense of unity. Democracy, for instance, functioned as cement for Athenian society (in the periods when tyrants or oligarchs did not take control), while the Roman world, structured on a much larger scale through strong local hierarchies, needed quite different means to assert unity, not least because of the multiculturalism of its vast empire. In Athens, Greek mythology was transformed into varieties of literary fiction, the first form of Greek rhetoric; and the Athenian invention of a new *logos* to understand and explain the world, in place of myth, gave rise to logic and metaphysics, physics and rhetoric. Greek culture came to substitute *logos* for *mythos*, or at least to supplement mythic and ritual-centred modes of discourse with those governed by *logos*.

The Roman world inherited and adopted both that *logos* and Greek *mythos* as a rhetorical figure for the virtues any hero should have. But the deeper problem for Rome and the peoples beneath its sway was identity within society and within the empire. The Romans did not need to reinvent the sciences, as the Greeks had done. The Roman political framework was not democratic so much as oligarchic, and social differences, while being normal, were nonetheless subject to continual renegotiation throughout history. Greek civilization, most supremely in its Athenian democratic form, which would supply so much of the canonical literary and intellectual models for the Hellenistic kingdoms, was a culture of the *logos*; the Roman world was a civilization of the *ēthos*, in which social roles were questioned and disputed, and could only be legitimized through the resort to virtue (*ēthos*), which is to say through a culture of continually rhetorical claims and self-assertions. When differences are to be negotiated (peacefully) rhetoric is the key. Athenian culture developed dialectic as a democratic way of settling controversial questions between equals.

The Romans preferred rhetoric as a way of reinforcing the images of community and shared values, such as power and strength, but also virtue, valour and success. In Rome, the *ēthos* of the speaker was both a means and an end: Romans sculpted their ancestors at least as much as they did the gods, they displayed *ēthos* in public monuments from triumphal arches and columns to tombs and funerary reliefs, they figured *ēthos* in the mythological paintings of the domestic arena, where divine and heroic virtues are epitomized, as if the owner himself had a share in them or they had been bestowed upon him by virtue of his social role, as patron and paterfamilias. The repeated underlining of virtues (*ēthos*), often in the form of mythical and historical exempla, stressed as obvious and natural the differences that made up the social and political order. Text or image, art or speech, served equally in that undertaking.

No study of Roman art can avoid the question of its Greek legacy, and the issue of the differences between Greek and Roman art. This is more than a question of rhetoric. For the rhetorical nature of Roman art, as shall be presented in this book, may express that difference, but is not its source or cause. The roots of the difference between the arts in Greece and Rome lie elsewhere – not in the forms of visual art (such as stylistic eclecticism versus purity of style) or the manifestations of material culture, but in the structure of the respective societies and their value-systems, which images and material culture were created to serve. One key difference between the two societies lay in the nature and conception of political power. The Roman world always held to an aristocratic and hierarchical functioning of society, a form of oligarchy (although one which allowed significant social mobility among those who might come to comprise its elite). By contrast, the Greek world employed and experimented with a series of systems, among which monarchy may have won out in the Hellenistic period but where the spectacular achievements of Athenian democracy could never be wholly gainsaid.

These differences did not lead only to different conceptions of rhetoric, but also to different uses of rhetoric, most particularly in art. Greek rhetoric – especially in Athens, in the context of autonomous city states which preceded the monarchic hegemonies of the Hellenistic world – was more egalitarian, in the sense that every free citizen could question the others; in agonistic contests from the theatre to athletics, select representatives of every stake-holding community could make a response and win the game to be best. Dialectic is key – especially in what were to become the canonical works of Athenian literature in the fifth and fourth centuries BC, from the speeches in Thucydides and the dialogues of Plato to the debates

staged within tragedy and comedy, themselves genres of writing that were orchestrated within official civic contests. Democracy has difficulties with differences: they are easily seen as infringements upon the identity of the group. One function of theatre is to provide the spectacle of violated differences, those that all societies claim to respect, such as the differences of life and death, of parents and children, for instance – the existential differences giving rise to tragedy, the more down-to-earth and basic ones to the laughter of comedy. Drama highlights the negative consequences spawned by confusion of values. Oedipus kills his father and marries his mother, profaning the most sacred prohibitions, those against parricide and incest. The heroic characters of tragedy, and the burlesque figures of comedy, are far apart from the individuals we meet in everyday life (who has ever met an Oedipus, or an old man who thinks that his fiancée is a young virgin whereas she is a prostitute?); the Greek predilection for theatres on mountain slopes, between men and gods, far from the heart of the cities, gives topographical instantiation to the differences represented in plays, which threaten civic identity and the community's fundamental values.

We find nothing comparable in the Roman world. The Romans accepted social and political differences and relied on them to ensure the good functioning of society. Their theatres and their temples are built within cities, in the middle of forums for instance, without restriction; and they may even take the form, in miniature, of the whole forum, as a rectangle surrounded by arrays of columns. Sculpture in the city under Roman rule plays a different role from that in the era of Greek civic autonomy: statues or busts represent ancestors and benefactors rather than gods or votive dedications, even if they may be sculpted in a Greek style and manner. The difference between Rome and Athens is more deeply a matter of content than of technique or stylistic appearances. Roman art is not simply the decline of Greek art into a series of degenerate replicas as the long history of its art history repeatedly maintained until a generation ago. It is a true art in itself, undoubtedly using Greek techniques, but designed to convey an authentically Roman series of rhetorical statements, in sculpture, in painting, in architecture. Romans invented vaults, created arrays of columns whose aesthetic was exalted anew in the Renaissance; at the same time they borrowed models of painting and statuary from the Hellenistic world and refashioned them to suit the specific needs of an extensive, multicultural, socially segregated and hierarchical cultural system.

# Introduction

JAS' ELSNER

Over the last couple of centuries, classical archaeology has applied a number of theoretical and methodological models to the great empirical morass of ancient materials which it studies. Most of these methods and theories are modern constructs and come from outside the ancient world, to which they are then applied. This includes some of our most familiar scholarly reflexes – such as the use of style to date an artefact, to attribute it to an artist or circle of artists, to give it a provenance. In other words, our approaches and conceptual frames for dealing with Greek and Roman art and archaeology are, to use a perhaps old-fashioned anthropological term, ‘etic’, and would not have been familiar to the actors within antiquity who made, handled, viewed and possessed the objects which we use these models to explain. In general classical archaeology and art history have not been very successful at finding ‘emic’ theoretical models or formulations – that is, conceptualizations of the material-cultural world which come from within antiquity itself and might have been recognizable by the ancients.<sup>1</sup> It is here that the subject of this book has a genuine, and surprisingly under-exploited, value for the historian of Roman art.<sup>2</sup> For rhetoric was a pervasive and dominant aspect of Graeco-Roman culture, central to the school curriculum, carefully adumbrated in a series of surviving textbooks and profoundly theorized in more than one significant philosophically inflected treatise.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Exceptions include Donohue 1988 which examines the terminology of ancient religious images in relation to the origins of sculpture; Neer 2010 which explores the ancient Greek language of dazzle and brightness in relation to marble and bronze sculpture; Perry 2005: 28–77 who discusses the concept of *decor* in relation to Roman art; Anguissola 2012 for some aspects of ‘emulation’. None of these, however, offers an emic model of how the social world of art, from producer via object to viewers, might have been conceived.

<sup>2</sup> The importance of classical rhetoric to art history in later periods has been significant: See e.g. Gombrich 1966; Baxandall 1971; Van Eck 2007; Carruthers 2010; Sánchez Amiejeira 2011. Within antiquity, it is clear that the potential for a rhetorically-inflected understanding is not limited to Roman art; for a rhetorically sensitive interpretation of Hellenistic art (following T. J. Clark’s model of works of art as ‘utterances’) see Stewart 1993b.

<sup>3</sup> The literature on ancient rhetoric is large. Some starting points include Kennedy 1994; Corbeill 1996; Porter 1997; Gunderson 2000, 2003 and 2009; Heath 2004: esp. ch. 9; Habinek 2004; Pernot 2005; Dominik and Hall 2007; Connolly 2007; Booth 2007; Worthington 2010; Smith

As a cultural phenomenon spanning all aspects of education (which included slaves and freedmen as well as the elite) from the Republic well into the Christian empire in late antiquity, rhetoric is fundamental to the thought structures and *mentalités* of the Roman world. While in modernity it is too easy to think only of oratory, legal addresses, panegyric or political philippics as being ‘rhetorical’, in antiquity all forms of writing and speaking – from history and philosophy to poetry and prose fiction – were rhetorically inflected and composed using the specific tropes and techniques set out in the many surviving rhetorical handbooks (known as the *progymnasmata*).<sup>4</sup> One of the richest textual areas for the study of ancient art – the poetic epigram – reflects systematic and creative use of such technical rhetorical tropes as *ekphrasis* (description), *enargeia* (vividness) and *phantasia* (imagination) to bring aspects of art objects, buildings or monuments (some real and some fantastic) to the reader’s or listener’s mind’s eye.<sup>5</sup>

It is important to note at the outset that visual and architectural forms of rhetoric function differently from words, in that the kinds of propositions made by images, and the means by which they are structured in formal terms, are inevitably different from those of language or writing – both in the ways that connections are made and in the ways that the audience’s mind grasps them. In particular, questions of the viewer’s body come strongly to the fore in the rhetoric of material culture – whether it is contained (by buildings, monuments, tombs which may be above or below ground, and painted or decorated with reliefs, and so forth), whether it can itself hold an object (a statuette, small relief, cameo, and so on), or whether it is addressed in some form that is parallel to it or even mimetic of it (as with life-size statues in the round).<sup>6</sup> The differences between material-cultural and textual rhetoric are somewhat liable to be underplayed both in the frequent ancient attempts to compare the visual with the verbal

and Corrino 2011. Among the key modern texts on rhetoric, one might begin with Richards 1936; Toulmin 1958; Burke 1969; Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca 1969; Meyer 2008. An attempt to sketch a rhetorically inflected picture of Roman art is Meyer 2007; also, on propaganda and rhetoric in Roman art, Stewart 2008: 108–27 and Mayer 2010.

<sup>4</sup> These are now helpfully translated as Kennedy 2003. For discussion see Webb 2001 and Webb 2009: 39–60.

<sup>5</sup> There has been a recent explosion of work on the art-related ecphrastic epigram, sparked in part by the recent discovery of so many hitherto unknown examples in the papyrus book attributed to the Hellenistic poet Posidippus. See, for instance, Gutzwiller 2002 and 2004; Platt 2002a and 2011: 170–211; Stewart 2005; Sens 2005; Coleman 2006; Goldhill 2007: 15–19; Männlein-Robert 2007b: 37–81; Prioux 2007; Bing 2009: 194–216; Squire 2010a and 2010b.

<sup>6</sup> This theme in Greek art is now the subject of Osborne 2011.

(notably, Horace's famous 'ut pictura poesis' – 'poetry is as painting')<sup>7</sup> and in those modern models of understanding Roman art which see it as a kind of language or system of communication.<sup>8</sup>

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In what has become perhaps its classic definition, Aristotle (384–322 BC) described rhetoric as having a tripartite structure in which the flow of persuasive argument was directed tendentiously to creating certain effects upon the third element of that structure, the audience:<sup>9</sup>

Rhetoric falls into three divisions, determined by the three classes of listeners to speeches. For of the three elements in speech-making – speaker, subject, and person addressed – it is the last one, the hearer, that determines the speech's end and object. The hearer must be either a judge, with a decision to make about things past or future, or an observer. (*Ars Rhetorica* 1.3.1. 1358<sup>ab</sup> (trans. Rhys Roberts))<sup>10</sup>

Following Aristotle, we may distinguish these three fundamental elements as *ēthos*, *logos* and *pathos*:<sup>11</sup>

Of the modes of persuasion furnished by the spoken word there are three kinds. The first kind depends on the personal character (*ēthos*) of the speaker; the second on putting the audience into a certain frame of mind; the third on the proof, or apparent proof, provided by the words of the speech itself (*logos*). Persuasion is achieved by the speaker's personal character (*ēthos*) when the speech (*logos*) is so spoken as to make us think him credible. We believe good men more fully and more readily than others: this is true generally whatever the question is, and absolutely true where exact certainty is impossible and opinions are divided. This kind of persuasion, like the others, should be achieved by what the speaker says, not by what people think of his character before he begins to speak. It is not true, as

<sup>7</sup> Horace, *Ars Poetica* 361. This is one of the most quoted tags in Latin, yet it has been subject to strikingly little analysis, for instance in relation to the careful disjunction between poetic and artistic licence at the opening of the poem (vv. 1–13 and esp. 12–13). For some discussion see Brink 1971: 368–72 and Hardie 1993.

<sup>8</sup> Esp. e.g. Zanker 1988: 3–4, 335–9 and Hölscher 2004 (first published in German in 1987): 1–3, 7, 86–100, 113–16, 126, followed for instance by Clarke 2003: 2 and 9.

<sup>9</sup> For a repetition of this tripartite model, see Dionysius of Halicarnassus (writing in Rome at the end of the first century BC), *Lysias* 19; for eloquence depending on the state of mind to be moved, to conceive images and so forth (i.e. the third element), see Quintilian (writing in the second half of the first century AD), *Institutio oratoria* 1.2.30; on the centrality of persuasion, see Quintilian, *Inst. or.* 2.15.3–22 (usefully summarizing a large and now mainly lost Graeco-Roman literature). For a brief account of the history of Aristotle's text and the earliest rhetorical handbooks, see Kennedy 2007: app. 2, pp. 293–311. For the 'near universal approval' of Aristotle's definition, see Quintilian, *Inst. or.* 5.1.1.

<sup>10</sup> Rhys Roberts 2004.

<sup>11</sup> For discussion of these three in Aristotle as 'the psychology of rhetorical persuasion', see Rorty 1996: 8–23. For a general account of their place in rhetorical theory, see Meyer 2008: 151–88.

some writers assume in their treatises on rhetoric, that the personal goodness revealed by the speaker contributes nothing to his power of persuasion; on the contrary, his character (*ēthos*) may almost be called the most effective means of persuasion he possesses. Secondly, persuasion may come through the hearers, when the speech stirs their emotions (*pathos*). Our judgements when we are pleased and friendly are not the same as when we are pained and hostile. It is towards producing these effects, as we maintain, that present-day writers on rhetoric direct the whole of their efforts. This subject shall be treated in detail when we come to speak of the emotions (*pathos*). Thirdly, persuasion is effected through the speech itself (*logos*) when we have proved a truth or an apparent truth by means of the persuasive arguments suitable to the case in question. (*Ars Rhetorica* 1.2.3–6. 1356<sup>a</sup>1)

Rhetoric is an inter-subjective relationship that is inevitably tendentious in that it involves the act of, or attempt at, persuasion. In this act, someone – whom Aristotle characterized with the term *ēthos* – addresses himself to an audience – whose frame of mind he called *pathos* – through a medium, a language, called *logos*.<sup>12</sup> If we allow *logos* to be not only words but any medium by which an audience is addressed (that is, by which *ēthos* applies itself to *pathos*), then *logos* in this context consists not only of speech, but of any performative aspect of address, and specifically in the context of this book, it includes images and buildings.<sup>13</sup> In an intriguing epigraph of the first century BC, Antiochus I of Commagene specifically uses the term *logos* to describe visual style, ordering statues and reliefs to be made ‘according to the ancient *logos* of Greeks and Persians – blessed roots of my clan’.<sup>14</sup>

That is, to understand the work of art as rhetoric is to grasp its discursive function as a mediating tool between a series of addressers – commissioners, patrons, artists, who in their different ways constitute an *ēthos* – and an audience of viewers, a *pathos*. The triangulation explicit in Aristotle’s *ēthos*–*logos*–*pathos* formulation of rhetoric is extremely useful for analysing the work of art, since it offers the opportunity to emphasize any of the three parties within the tripartite totality – maker/patron, object or viewers – depending on one’s argument, and it implies a variety of signifying, identity-making or communicative strategies embodied in objects that depend on the specific relations of the patron/artist and the audience. It is striking that Aristotle insists that *ēthos* – as the speaker’s moral character, which renders what is said as worthy of confidence – is

<sup>12</sup> On the development of this model from Aristotle to Roman rhetoric, see Wisse 1989.

<sup>13</sup> Note that Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Lysias* 19, names them *ēthos*, *pathos* and *pragma*. This last – the ‘act’, ‘matter’, ‘thing’ that communicates between *ēthos* and *pathos* – is directly applicable to art and material culture.

<sup>14</sup> See Dittenberger 1903: vol. 1, p. 597, no. 383, line 30.



due to the act of rhetoric (the *logos*) itself and not to any preconceived notion of the speaker's character. Thus both *ēthos* and *pathos* (as the effect intended in the audience) are inscribed in the act of rhetoric – in the case under discussion here, in the work of art.

This originally Aristotelian model is of great interest because it provides, from within antiquity, a form of the kinds of sociological or anthropological modelling that modern scholarship has been searching for in order to grasp the complex nexus of relations embedded in the work of art in terms of a means of affective connection between its producers and its viewers.<sup>15</sup> It has purchase, notably, in offering the potential to develop – according to normative Graeco-Roman concepts and paradigms of thinking – the insights offered by some of the most distinguished recent attempts in classical archaeology to combine accounts of visual communication within a given social context with the material specificity of style, artistic handling and archaeological context.<sup>16</sup> Crucially, the *ēthos–logos–pathos* formulation may direct us away from any too specifically linguistic or political model of communication, as formulated by modern theoretical concerns, towards a rhetorical model – which of course inevitably includes discursive, political and ethical overtones, but in a mix and with an emphasis that is directly located in the culture we are studying.<sup>17</sup>

In any rhetorical situation, *logos* is the way to discuss or handle questions that are more or less problematic and conflictive, but strives to present the conflict as solved, since the questions have disappeared in the

<sup>15</sup> One might see aspects of the analytic work done by seeing art as rhetoric in Alfred Gell's anthropological analysis of art in the work of art as a movement between artist and recipient. See Gell 1998: 12–65 on the 'art nexus' with helpful discussion by Osborne and Tanner 2007b: 10–22 and Davis 2007. Likewise, Talcott Parsons's model of 'expressive symbolism' (as advanced for instance in Parsons 1951: 384–427) has been skilfully applied to Greek and Roman imagery by Tanner 1992 and 2000. Tanner 2006: 292–5 recognizes that the model of rhetoric fulfils some aspects of the artistic agency of Hellenistic and Roman art.

<sup>16</sup> The major and now classic Roman contributions are Zanker 1988 and Hölscher 2004. See also the general theoretical discussion by Smith 2002.

<sup>17</sup> So, to take the classic works just cited, Zanker's book may be criticized as anachronistic precisely because the model of propaganda with which it works is explicitly related to the Third Reich (see Wallace-Hadrill 1989), while Hölscher's book adopts too linguistic a model of the 'semantics' and 'grammar' of Roman art (the quotations are from p. 2), indebted to the linguistic semiotics of Umberto Eco's poststructuralism (p. xxv), and an insufficiently discursive or rhetorical one. Both, it might be added, in their emphasis on the 'expressive' aspects of communication, remain heavily indebted to the theoretical programme of a collective cultural world-view first presented by Alois Riegl at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries through the concept of *Kunstswollen*: see Elsner 2010: 54–7. For some attempts to push Hölscher's model in a more rhetorical and less semantic direction, see Wyler 2006: 215 and Varner 2006: 280; and our comments below.

discourse offered as their answer.<sup>18</sup> In the inscription of Antiochus I of Commagene, cited above, this is beautifully demonstrated by the claim that the artistic style (explicitly named *logos*) of the works produced in his kingdom – a precarious monarchy, which faced east and west, towards both the Persian empire and the Hellenistic Greek world, the latter increasingly dominated by Rome – reflected this political and cultural reality in a visual hybridity (entirely observable in the surviving material culture) that signalled the ‘roots of his clan’. That is, Commagenean culture and identity are problematically placed politically between Persia and the West, and the potential conflicts for Antiochus’ subjects (the *pathos* addressed in his art) arising from this question are resolved artistically through a rhetoric of visual syncretism of Persian and Greek styles, which are themselves tied to the monarch’s own identity through his origins (that is to his *ēthos*).<sup>19</sup> When those questions are highly controversial, *ēthos* and *pathos* argue, give motivations and reasons, may accept or reject each other’s positions, and can even go to court to settle the issues at stake. But if the questions dealt with are quite unproblematic, then *ēthos* and *pathos* give rise to conventional and polite discourse, such as the communication implicit in the question ‘How are you?’, or in Erwin Panofsky’s famous example (which introduced his discussion of ‘iconology’) of the implications of when a man greets an acquaintance by raising his hat.<sup>20</sup> Rhetoric is the negotiation of the distance between individuals on a given question, which reveals their difference or their proximity.<sup>21</sup> Rhetoric is the performance of the social and psychological differences between the speaker (or the author, the builder, the painter, the writer) and his audience.

Despite their distance from normal usage, there is value in keeping the Greek words – *ēthos*, *logos* and *pathos* – to define the main components of the rhetorical relationship. *Ēthos* is much broader than simply a speaker, artist or patron. It represents at the same time the character of the speaker, his social virtues as well as his human values. It is the social role that allows the speaker to display those virtues, namely his persona. In the case of a work of art, it includes all those responsible for its creation from patrons and commissioners to designers and artisans. From the point of view adopted here, *ēthos* is a claim to the capacity or expertise or virtues

<sup>18</sup> See Meyer 1995: 219–23. <sup>19</sup> On Commagenean art, see esp. Versluys, forthcoming.

<sup>20</sup> See Panofsky 1939: 3. As Panofsky rightly saw, while the act of greeting is conventional, there are a multitude of potential expressive meanings that nuance the specific negotiation of relations in how the hat is lifted, the expression on the face and so forth, or in how the words ‘How are you?’ are articulated.

<sup>21</sup> See Meyer 2008: 317.

necessary to respond, to give an appropriate or just answer to a question raised in the debate or simply in social interaction. *Ēthos* is supremely the marker of authority to speak, write or produce images and buildings – it is a claim made in doing any of these things. *Pathos* likewise is much more than the audience *per se*. *Pathos* is the addressee's frame of mind, by extension assimilated to the questions the addressee can raise, linked certainly with passions and emotions; but more essentially, it is the locus of problematization, which may be based on anguish, curiosity, anger or joy, whether emotional or intellectual. All lawyers know that in order to convince a jury, they must rely in part at least on its emotions and feelings. The same feelings guide the problems and the questions at the core of rhetoric. *Ēthos* provides the answers, *pathos* raises the questions, and *logos* is the locus of the play of their difference and similarity, difference and commonality between individuals, between opinions, between the questions and the answers that reflect them, on both the subjective and objective levels.

As a consequence, in applying this rhetorical model to the history of art, we examine works of art not as existing in themselves, independently of their viewers and their makers (including both patrons or commissioners and artists). Rather, a range of messages is conveyed from one to the other, with the purpose of bringing out specific effects and emotions in the audience – of which the work of art is both the means and (from our point of view as investigators from a much later period) the empirical evidence.

We may ask in what sense is the rhetoric of art a form of rhetoric *sui generis*, different from, say, a plea or from political discourse. This question was famously raised in antiquity in the comment, attributed to the sixth-century BC poet Simonides and much repeated afterwards, especially in the Roman period, that 'a poem should be a painting that speaks, a painting a silent poem'.<sup>22</sup> The implication is that there is a fundamental parallelism of visual and verbal effects, but that they operate differently – as Quintilian puts it 'a picture, which is silent and motionless, can penetrate our innermost feelings with such power that it may seem more eloquent than language itself' (*Institutio oratoria* 11.3.67). The work of art stands for itself. There is no speaker addressing himself directly to someone physically present, capable of responding to the interlocutor and assuming his role in turn. As a consequence, the work of art must build into itself the impact it wants to have on the audience (*pathos*), through the form and

<sup>22</sup> The quotation is from the *Auctor ad Herennium* 4.28.9. See also Plato, *Phaedrus* 275d; Plutarch *Moralia* 17f, 58b, 346f, 748a, with Sprigath 2004 and Männlein-Robert 2007b: 20–2.



Figure 0.1 Arch of Titus, east side, with original inscription. After AD 81.

style of art selected (*logos*) and on behalf of someone who purports to express himself in an exemplary way through that work of art (*ēthos*).

Take the triumphal arch. This is a distinctive form in Roman art, whose origins lie in a combination of entry portal and sophisticated statue base,<sup>23</sup> but which became a self-standing monument designed to impress the populace of a city through the achievements of its rulers. The significance of the inscriptions carved on such an arch is to stress the question – the visually and architecturally posed proposition, problem, challenge or desire (the victory celebrated, for instance) – that the building is designed to resolve and whose answer is meant to impress. Hence, the Arch of Titus (Figures 0.1 and 0.2), probably erected under his brother Domitian after AD 81, narrates the triumph that succeeded the victory over the Jews and the signal episode of the sack of the Temple in Jerusalem in AD 70.<sup>24</sup> But the funerary implications of its attic inscription (‘The Senate and Roman People to the deified Titus Vespasian Augustus, son of the deified Vespasian’, Figure 0.3),<sup>25</sup> coupled with the apotheosis of Titus depicted in

<sup>23</sup> See Kleiner 1985: 11–13; da Maria 1988: 31–8.

<sup>24</sup> The fundamental archaeological account is Pfanner 1983; also da Maria 1988: 287–9.

<sup>25</sup> *CIL* 6.945. See e.g. Ross Holloway 1987: 184. Note that Karl Lehmann’s assumption that Titus was buried in the upper storey of the arch is unwarranted, see Lehmann-Hartleben 1934.



Figure 0.2 Arch of Titus, west side. After AD 81.



Figure 0.3 Arch of Titus, east side, inscription and small frieze.

the vault of the passageway (Figures 0.4 and 0.5),<sup>26</sup> refine these triumphal intimations towards the specific purposes of posthumous memory.

The Arch of Titus displays the triumphal glory in life and the divine apotheosis in death of the emperor. The combination of the inscription, the great sculpted relief panels depicting the emperor in his chariot and the triumphal procession with implements from the Temple in the central

<sup>26</sup> See Beard and Henderson 1998: 209–11; Beard 2007: 237–8; generally on the topic see Zanker 2000a and Arce 2010.

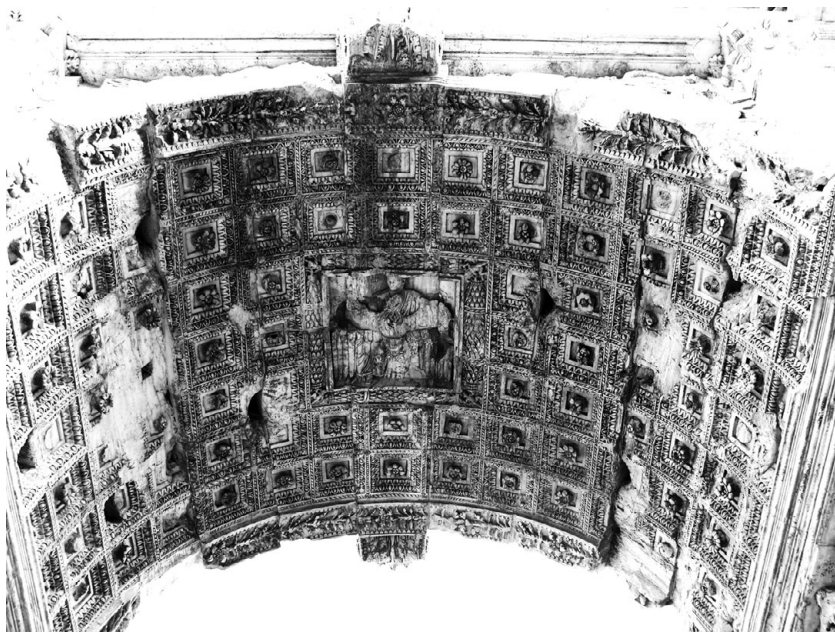


Figure 0.4 Arch of Titus, the vault of the passageway.



Figure 0.5 The Apotheosis of Titus, showing the emperor astride an eagle, from the vault of the arch's passageway.





**Figure 0.6** The triumphal emperor in his chariot, north side, passageway wall of the Arch of Titus.



**Figure 0.7** The procession of spoils from Jerusalem, south side, passageway wall of the Arch of Titus.

passageway at roughly eye level (Figures 0.6 and 0.7), as well as the sacrificial procession in the small friezes of the attic storey (Figure 0.3), together not only comprise but also reinforce the answer to the question of imperial power (both general to the Roman system and specific to Titus himself), that is represented by the monument. Indeed, one interesting aspect of the arch's combination of triumphal and funerary significance is that it becomes ambiguous as to whether the small attic frieze represents

(or re-enacts?) the sacrificial procession of the triumph of Vespasian and Titus in AD 71,<sup>27</sup> or Titus' imperial funeral of AD 81, or both. Indeed, the small frieze, the inscription and the victories on the spandrels of the east side of the arch (Figure 0.1) – which was surely its 'front' since both the processional panels within the passageway 'move' from that side to the west (Figures 0.5 and 0.6), echoing the movement of viewers as they walked through the monument – may be seen as prefatory or introductory statements (signalling both apotheosis through the inscription and triumph through the victories). By contrast, the main relief panels evoking triumph in the passageway – relatively closer to the viewer's eye-level and moving in emulation of the viewer's own pace – as well as the apotheosis relief in the vault may be seen as the monument's development of its initial rhetorical proposition (Figures 0.5, 0.6 and 0.7). The arch is not just an impressive façade but offers a complex visual extrapolation of the victory and apotheosis motifs of the front in larger and more directly visible images, which directly enclose viewers through the architectural structure and immerse them in its argument. It is not clear whether the west side (Figure 0.2) did originally repeat the inscription (or offer a different one; the current inscription is papal) and whether it too had a small frieze as survives on the east. This archaeological uncertainty means we cannot know how the rhetorical process of the arch was originally intended to conclude: its peroration, as it were, no longer survives.

We may say that the same considerations nuance the significance of the now lost bronze statue group that was placed above the arch. But, if the west front of the arch was its rhetorical conclusion as a base, then the entire monument may also be seen as the exordium introducing the statue at its peak. In this sense the viewing of the arch offers two kinds of progressive experience – a movement in linear time (from the east front and through the passageway) akin to the delivery or reading of a speech in linear time, and a movement of the eye with the body static from the base to the statue above (which is more of a structured synoptic view, as in a two-dimensional painting or relief sculpture). Both forms of visual experience are equally but differently rhetorically structured, employing the body and the gaze in different ways. In so far as a funerary memorial is erected not by the honorand but by his heirs, which means by Domitian in the case of Titus, the rhetoric of arch and statue has connotations of brotherly piety that may deliberately counteract the reality, if we are to believe those texts that claim

<sup>27</sup> This is the ubiquitous assumption of the literature: see e.g. Pfanner 1983: 86 and Östenberg 2009: 17–18, 215–16.



Titus' death was due to his brother.<sup>28</sup> But at the same time, in affirming the agency of Senate and People in erecting the monument, the rhetorical thrust of its inscription implies that the impetus for setting up the arch lay in the hands of those who are to be its primary audience, just as the nuances of its precise meanings lie in the interpretative choices of its viewers.

The question of which procession (triumphal or funerary) the small frieze evokes is one played out against the visual intimations of both the front and the passageway. In a sense it depends on the contiguity in relation to the other images or inscriptions which the viewer accords to it. Since in the rhetorical art of memory it is up to the speaker to determine his movement within the imagined space of a building, cityscape or picture, so here it is up to the viewer to read the procession alongside either the inscription and apotheosis relief or the passageway panels and the victories, or both together. The *pathos* of the viewer becomes an active agent in extrapolating what aspects of the *ēthos* of Titus he or she wants the *logos* of the arch to communicate. That is, where the force of *ēthos* in creating a work of art is the result of a certain *phantasia* (or imaginative drive),<sup>29</sup> its interpretation in the hands of the audience is always subject to the *phantasia* of *pathos*; the gap between the *phantasias* of these two postures is that between imaginative formation and mental reception, and the latter cannot be fully controlled. The playfulness of a deliberate ambiguity about what kind of procession is intended is by no means untypical of the kinds of ambiguity we find in some rhetorical *prolaliae*, which keep the listener guessing about what the topic actually is.<sup>30</sup>

The complexity of the arch as a communication between an *ēthos* and a *pathos* is further extended by its generic relationship (as a monumental commemoration) to earlier arches, such as those of Augustus, Claudius and Nero,<sup>31</sup> which no longer survive, and the way it becomes a model for later imperial monuments of similar type and theme. In particular, the combination of triumphal and funerary associations in the arch may be original in terms of imperial commemorations; this is to say that in the established genres of triumphal arches specifically and imperial

<sup>28</sup> For instance Philostratus, *The Life of Apollonius* 6.32.

<sup>29</sup> On *phantasia* see e.g. Watson 1988; Benediktson 2000: 162–88; Goldhill 2001: 168–70, 176–9; Platt 2009a; Webb 2009: 107–30.

<sup>30</sup> An excellent (visual) example is Lucian's *Hercules*, where the speaker describes a very unusual 'Gallic' Hercules, plays with his own uncertainties about it, invents an old and learned man to explain the image to him and ends up with it being a self-portrait of Lucian's own eloquence in old age. Elsner 2007d: 58–62.

<sup>31</sup> Discussed at length by Kleiner 1985: 9–96 and da Maria 1988: 55–117.

monuments more generally, the Arch of Titus was making a claim to particular distinction. One inheritor of this model would be the Column of Trajan, which combined some aspects of the arch's explicit funerary and triumphal associations, but eschewed the arch-form for a still more innovative sculpturally decorated columnar form and explicitly incorporated the emperor's ashes in a chamber at its base.<sup>32</sup> *Ēthos* is embedded in the arch of Titus as the expression of the will to impress the audience by handling the question, which ramifies as the undisputed victory of Rome over Palestine, the depiction of the emperor as a true general (in defeating the rebellious Jews), and the presentation of Titus as a god. *Pathos* denotes not the audience as such, but the impact exerted by the monument itself on its intended audience: that is, the monument expects and circumscribes a certain kind of viewing – above all that its viewers be impressed by the laudatory achievements of imperial conquest represented. But *pathos*, as I have argued, itself incorporates creative responses, and the *intended pathos* cannot of course include the totality of potential viewers. Roman citizens who happened to be Jews will clearly have potentially had a very different and counter-cultural set of responses.<sup>33</sup> This example demonstrates the embeddedness of *ēthos*, *pathos* and *logos* in the work of art. *Pathos* – like *ēthos* and *logos* – is inherent to the work of art as a kind of directed injunction as to how to view it (in accordance with the wishes of *ēthos*), which of course viewers are at liberty to reject in the same way that a jury may not be persuaded by a given speech. This model is capable of much complication, among other reasons because the weight given to *ēthos*, *pathos* or *logos* determines specific forms of art.

When Constantine erected (or had erected for him by the Senate) an arch in 312–15, it broadly partook of the same *logos* as the arch of Titus, in celebrating victory. But the question it posed was much more complex than the combination of apotheosis with triumph. Constantine's conquest was of the city of Rome itself in a civil war waged by one legitimate emperor upon another, Maxentius, his colleague within a college of co-emperors and his brother-in-law.<sup>34</sup> Some of the specific innovations of the

<sup>32</sup> On Trajan's Column the literature is very large indeed, but see e.g. Claridge 1993; Maffei 1995; Coarelli 2000. Note that the Column focuses on the wars for which Trajan was awarded his Dacian triumph of 106 and not the triumph itself; likewise although it contains his tomb, it never refers explicitly to the imagery of apotheosis.

<sup>33</sup> On Jews in Rome making pilgrimage to the artefacts taken from the Temple (and depicted in the Arch of Titus), see Noy 2005.

<sup>34</sup> The literature on the arch is vast and not without polemic. Recent accounts include Pensabene and Panella 1999; Neri 2004; Ross Holloway 2004: 19–53; Zanker 2012.

Arch of Constantine, such as its use of earlier reliefs from monuments of previous ‘good’ emperors of the second century (Trajan, Hadrian and Marcus Aurelius) into whose images of the emperor the head of Constantine was carefully and very skilfully recut, may be understood as nuanced attempts to circumvent the difficulties posed by the monument’s ‘question’ (and the new emperor’s legitimacy) by bolstering him in the bodies of his hallowed predecessors.<sup>35</sup> It is striking that the highly traditional act of recutting heads is here for the first time directed at ‘good’ emperors rather than ‘bad’ ones whose memory had been condemned.<sup>36</sup>

If we attempt to reformulate some aspects of this discussion of the Arch of Titus in terms of ancient rhetorical theory as offered by the handbooks, we may say that its focus on the emperor is clearly a form of panegyric or *enkōmium*, divided specifically into both the genres of *basilikos logos* (or imperial praise), *paramuthētikos* (or consolatory oration) and *epitaphios* (or funerary eulogy).<sup>37</sup> That is to say, the arch ‘reveals the greatness of good virtuous actions and other good qualities belonging to a particular person’ (to quote the definition of *enkōmium* in what is probably the earliest of the *Progymnasmata*);<sup>38</sup> but it is specifically targeted to be simultaneously ‘a generally agreed amplification of the good things attaching to the emperor, but shows no ambivalent or disputed features because of the extreme splendour of the person concerned . . . it relates to things universally acknowledged to be good’ (Menander Rhetor 2.1.368),<sup>39</sup> and a funerary eulogy with consolatory implications: ‘let us therefore sing his praises as a hero, or rather bless him as a god, make paintings of him, placate him as a superhuman being’ (Menander Rhetor 2.9.414). One might remark that

<sup>35</sup> See the discussion of Elsner 2000a: 158–61, 163–5, 173–5. <sup>36</sup> See e.g. Varner 2004: 223.

<sup>37</sup> The divisions of *enkōmium* are most extensively given in the two treatises attributed to Menander Rhetor with *basilikos logos* at 2.1–2, 368–77, *paramuthētikos* at 2.9, 413–15 and *epitaphios* at 2.11, 418–22. For *basilikos logos* in action, see Dio Chrysostom, *Orationes* 1–4 (with Whitmarsh 2001: 181–246), the younger Pliny’s *panegyricus* (of Trajan) and the corpus of Latin panegyrics, translated by Nixon and Rogers 1994. For discussion of sarcophagi in relation to consolatory eulogy, see Müller 1994: 139–70.

<sup>38</sup> See Theon, *Progymnasmata* 9 (109). Note that dating rhetorical texts is notoriously difficult, itself a sign of the persistence of a relatively standard and stable tradition through the Roman empire: most date Theon to the first century AD (for instance Kennedy 2003: 1–3) but some as late as the fifth century AD (e.g. Heath, 2004: 3, 295–6). Also for *enkōmium*, see Aristotle, *Ars Rhetorica* 2.9, 1367<sup>b</sup>–1368<sup>a</sup>; [Aristotle], *Rhetoric for Alexander* 3, 1425<sup>b</sup>–1426<sup>b</sup>; Hermogenes, *Progymnasmata* 7 (14–15); Aphthonius, *Progymnasmata* 8 (21–2 Rabe); Nicolaus, *Progymnasmata* 8 (47–53). For *enkōmium* in antiquity in general, the key study remains Pernot 1993.

<sup>39</sup> Menander adds emphasis on ‘accomplishments’ and ‘actions’ in times of war and peace at 2.1.372.

these descriptions, taken directly from a rhetorical treatise, while hardly normal in the current art-historical language used by classical archaeologists, constitute rather a good account of what is going on in the Arch of Titus.

Yet the arch's self-placement within a history and litany of other public monuments of similar form is itself an act of *synkrisis*, the rhetorical trope where for reasons of praise one compares like with like, but is careful to make the object of one's praise come out as superior.<sup>40</sup> As Aphthonius puts it, '*synkrisis* is a comparison, made by setting things side-by-side, bringing the greater together with what is compared to it'.<sup>41</sup> Notably, the trope of *synkrisis* is a typical feature of *basilikos logos* in which one compares a reign 'with preceding reigns, not disparaging them (that is bad craftsmanship) but admiring them while granting perfection to the present' (Menander Rhetor 2.2.377). It is, further, a feature of Roman state reliefs that the quality of *synkrisis* is evoked through representation as well as by virtue of the monument's existence within a history of similar monuments. In the relief of the spoils from the Jerusalem Temple, the arch includes a carefully depicted illusionistic arch through which the procession moves, perhaps the *porta triumphalis* through which triumphal processions entered Rome (Figures 0.7 and 0.8).<sup>42</sup> This not only plays self-reflexively with the viewer as he or she proceeds through the Arch of Titus, but sets up an image of an arch existing at the time of the triumph in AD 71 that is inevitably set in *synkrisis* with, or in comparison to the Arch of Titus itself. On the Arch of Constantine, the famous fourth-century relief on the north side which shows the emperor addressing the populace includes images of buildings in the Roman Forum, and notably the three-bayed Arch of Septimius Severus to the right of the panel – on the model of which the three-bayed Arch of Constantine was designed and against which it is compared here.<sup>43</sup> This genre of imagery referring to monuments, cities and landscapes itself plays into the rhetoricians' encomiastic *topos* of country- and city-praise,<sup>44</sup> not inappropriate perhaps for assuaging attitudes in Rome in the context of a monument celebrating the conquest of the city by a new

<sup>40</sup> On *synkrisis*, see Theon, *Progymnasmata* 10 (112–15); Hermogenes, *Progymnasmata* 8 (19–20); Aphthonius, *Progymnasmata* 10 (31–2 Rabe); Nicolaus, *Progymnasmata* 9 (58–63).

<sup>41</sup> Aphthonius, *Progymnasmata* 10 (31 Rabe).

<sup>42</sup> See Pfanner 1983: 71–2. On the *porta triumphalis*, which was rebuilt under Domitian (before or after the Arch of Titus?), see Coarelli 1988 363–414 with the scepticism of Beard 2007: 96–101.

<sup>43</sup> See e.g. L'Orange and von Gerkan 1939: 81–9. Indeed, the frequency with which public buildings are depicted on Roman state reliefs and villas or cityscapes in Roman wall painting is a symptom of the strongly *synkrisistic* tendency of Roman art in general.

<sup>44</sup> Menander Rhetor 1.2.344–67.



**Figure 0.8** Detail of the procession carrying the spoils of Jerusalem, passing through an arch.

emperor. The point of offering a brief account of these arches in rhetorical terms explicitly borrowed from Graeco-Roman rhetorical handbooks is not that such a model of description is necessary or imperative for modern art history, but that it is possible, not forced and quite natural within the Roman system. Not only are Roman monuments rhetorical in the ways they function, but they are entirely amenable to rhetorical analysis.

It may be objected that this choice of example – triumphal arches in the public sphere with their ‘propagandist’ tendencies – skews the evidence towards the usefulness of a rhetorical model. But one might contend equally that wall painting, mosaic floor decoration or funerary relief sculpture (especially sarcophagi) – which comprise our largest corpora of Roman imagery and occupy domestic or funerary spheres of experience as opposed to public art – are no less rhetorical, if differently so. In particular, the methods of framing mythological exempla and other images within a rich complex of decorative structures in all these media,<sup>45</sup> offers both a

<sup>45</sup> Analysis of framing has been most intense in the study of the so-called ‘four styles’ of Pompeian wall painting, all of which are ways of dividing the wallspace and framing specific inst images within that space: see e.g. Squire 2009: 374–89. On mosaic frames, see Muth 1998: 48–71 and Swift 2009: 44–104; and on sarcophagi and framing Elsner 2008: 26–31, also generally Elsner 2000b: 266–74.

hierarchical visual structuring of the two-dimensional plane from frame to centre-piece (as well as much playfulness with these structures) which allows the viewer to see the image in terms of a developing rhetorical argument, and places within the frame a range of subject matter (mythological, natural, marvellous) which problematizes larger cultural issues of alterity and identity for the Roman viewer.<sup>46</sup> Likewise, honorific statues – always stereotypical in the choice of bodies (nude, dressed, on a specific repertoire of civic, military or religious models, and so forth)<sup>47</sup> and even in the choices of styling (hair, beards)<sup>48</sup> and yet individualized through portraiture, always framed by base and inscription so that the viewer's response demands a movement between base and statue, and between inscription and image, as well as around the statue's three-dimensional presence – make claims to *ēthos* that are both collective and self-differentiating in a world of statues and elite statue dedicators.<sup>49</sup>

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Among the advantages of a rhetorical understanding of Roman art in terms of Aristotle's *ēthos*–*logos*–*pathos* model is the flexibility with which this model may be applied. It has been suggested that certain forms of art emphasize more strongly one or another of the elements in the Aristotelian trio.<sup>50</sup> Free-standing statuary and portraits may be said to affirm *ēthos*, or the 'speaking' self, not only in the sense of the person honoured but also in the commissioners (who may include relatives or the local civic or religious authorities, and who are often named in the inscription, and sometimes also the artist, who may be named).<sup>51</sup> Painting and relief sculpture, such as the large corpus of mythological sarcophagi, in emphasizing the other – nature, mythology, landscape and so forth – may be argued to focus on *pathos*,<sup>52</sup>

<sup>46</sup> See e.g. Platt 2009b). <sup>47</sup> See e.g. Hallett 2005 and Trimble 2011.

<sup>48</sup> On the 'styled self' see esp. Smith 1998: 63–70, 78–87.

<sup>49</sup> The fundamental general work on honorific statues, and their relation to bases and inscriptions, especially in the Hellenistic period, is Ma 2013, see also Dillon and Baltes 2013.

<sup>50</sup> See Meyer 2007: 74–88.

<sup>51</sup> The most sophisticated explicitly rhetorical account of portraiture is Giuliani 1986: 49–55, 76–90, 101–5 and 126–62 (on issues of *pathos*) and 163–244 (largely on projections of virtues, i.e. *ēthos*). For 'cultural choice' as guiding the projections (*ēthos*) of portraiture in a synoptic study of second-century AD statuary in the Greek-speaking East, see Smith 1998; also Stewart 2008: 77–107.

<sup>52</sup> Vitruvius, *De architectura* 7. 5.2 gives a list of subjects of wall painting which moves from landscapes and their contents to myth. On rhetoric and wall painting, see esp. Leach 1988. For the rhetorical sophistication of mythological sarcophagi, see Müller 1994: 139–70, Koortbojian 1995 and for early Christian sarcophagi, see Elsner 2011. For some comments on *pathos* in terms of rhetoric, see Hölscher 2004: 31–4, especially in relation to the theatricality of Roman art, where discussion has focused on the study of wall painting, e.g. Leach 2004: 93–122.

especially in the ways they dramatize reactions to the main depicted event through the technique of filling the margins with onlookers who suggest (though they cannot determine) the range of potential responses both to the theme represented and implicitly to the picture of the theme on which the beholder gazes.<sup>53</sup> Architecture, as a three-dimensional discourse that formed the environment where people lived their lives, may be said to stress *logos*, as the social reality that mediated the doings of people within the Roman world.<sup>54</sup>

But equally we may see all forms of art as belonging within the nexus of the three elements of the *ēthos*–*logos*–*pathos* triangle. Here, in examining different emphases within the nexus in different contexts, aspects of historical change or geographical variation may be critically identified. Such differences were not easy to extrapolate so long as Roman art was regarded as no more than an imitation of Greek art, a cluster of copies of great Greek masterpieces to which the Roman examples add very little except numerous empirical instances.<sup>55</sup> On this model, Roman art was but a series of replicas, a continuation, or worse, a baroquization of Greek art; nothing new or creative could emerge from its culture of copying, which represented a slow but steady decline to the Dark Ages. However, once one grants creativity and innovation to the Roman play with Greek models (and indeed one might add other stylistic paradigms such as Egyptian, Asiatic and Etruscan),<sup>56</sup> one aspect that becomes interesting is the different weight put on *ēthos*, *logos* and *pathos* in different contexts.

The kinds of historical shift in visual rhetoric suggested here are most obviously apparent in late antiquity, when traditional Roman forms (such as the basilica, used for audience halls and law courts) came to be given

<sup>53</sup> On Campanian onlooker figures see e.g. Michel 1982; Clarke 1997; Elsner 2007d: 89–109, 170–6. On sarcophagi, see e.g. Lorenz 2011.

<sup>54</sup> The most masterly treatment of architectural monumentality as *logos* in the Roman empire is Thomas 2007. Probably the best-focused studies concern the Roman house: see Wallace-Hadrill 1994: 17–61 on the articulation of the house and Hales 2003: 135–63 on ‘the art of impression’. For the beginnings of an account of the rhetorical discourse of Roman floor mosaics, see Muth 1998: 48–71 on the structuring of space and 324–36 on mythological exempla. For a sketch of the effects of civic space in Pompeii, see Zanker 1998: 1–133.

<sup>55</sup> This is the great tradition of Johann Joachim Winckelmann and his successors, especially those who practised *Kopienkritik* in the model created by Adolph Furtwängler and Georg Lippold, which was certainly dominant until the second half of the twentieth century. For discussion of this tradition, see Fullerton 2003; Marvin 2008. For what may be characterized as the current consensus of originality within varieties of replication, variation and emulation in response to Greek art, see Gazda 2002, Perry 2005 and Anguissola 2012; for a direct link of ‘emulation’ to rhetoric, see Varner 2006.

<sup>56</sup> See Elsner 2006a: 270–6.



new significances in transformed contexts (so that the basilica form replaced the temple as the central sacred and liturgical space of the new state religion, Christianity). Clearly different qualities of *ēthos* are highlighted when the emperor builds or occupies an audience hall and when he constructs or worships in a church, with different expectations of *pathos*, even if many aspects of the architectural orchestrations, the *logos*, in terms of design, use of pillars, capitals, roofing, decorative embellishment and so forth remain the same.

The ideological thrust of Athenian classical art, in the age that created naturalism in Greece and provided so many of the visual paradigms that became canonical in Rome, was democratic; hence it was opposed to the display of difference within the identity of the citizen group but used a discourse of alterity to label outsiders and enemies, such as the Persians.<sup>57</sup> Precisely the opposite is the case in Roman society, which was a cosmopolitan *imperium* that encompassed patricians and plebeians, the differences of a multiplicity of subject peoples, including conquerors, elites, slaves, freedmen, citizens. That is, very similar forms – Roman replication playing on ancient Athenian models – may create quite different rhetorical effects within different cultural contexts, Greek and Roman. In particular, within its social system and the *richesse* of the materials, models and techniques available through empire, the Roman world emphasized the importance of *ēthos*. Rhetoric in Rome was less a matter of *logos*, as Aristotle defended it through his theory of rhetorical syllogism (enthymeme),<sup>58</sup> than a matter of expressing and displaying one's virtues (*ēthos*) through language, including the language of images.

The pay-off of this, effectively an uncontroversial sociological proposition about the Roman uses of art to promulgate identity (on all its levels) within a rhetorical system of visual identity claims, is that a series of stylistic and iconographic choices (within what has come to be accepted as the pluralism of Roman art)<sup>59</sup> can be interpreted as directly and deliberately rhetorical. For instance, the styles and decisions for self-representation that have come to be associated with art of freedmen, soldiers or other non-elites may be regarded as rhetorical choices to affirm certain aspects of identity through visual coding.<sup>60</sup> Such choices proclaim *ēthos* in all its

<sup>57</sup> See Cohen 2000. <sup>58</sup> Aristotle, *Ars rhetorica* 1.1.8, 1356a/b, with Burnyeat 1994.

<sup>59</sup> On pluralism in Roman art see esp. von Blanckenhagen 1942; Brendel 1979: 122–37; Settis 1989; Hölscher 2004b: 3, 10–21; Elsner 2006a: 270–6.

<sup>60</sup> On 'freedman art', see e.g. Bianchi Bandinelli 1967; Zanker 1975; Petersen 2006; on non-elites generally, see e.g. Clarke 2003; D'Ambra and Métraux 2006.



ramifications – making claims in relation to both similar and different visual choices within the system. They may make very different kinds of claims at the level of both subject matter and social status from the elite aspiration to Greek culture evident in Roman mythological statue groups,<sup>61</sup> for example, or sarcophagi, to the remarkably sophisticated mix of text and miniature images on the so-called *Tabulae Iliacae*.<sup>62</sup> The same may be said – on a religious rather than social level – of the rich variety of iconographies, often with eastern or non-normative associations, that characterize the extremely rich visual world of the polytheistic cults of the Roman empire.<sup>63</sup> Again the kinds of local self-assertion typical of the arts of the peripheries of the empire, with their strongly non-metropolitan styles but often savvy self-differentiation from and yet knowledge of the visual products of the imperial centre,<sup>64</sup> may be read as rhetorical affirmations of provincial *ēthos* within and against the totality of the imperial system.<sup>65</sup>

In many ways my claim here is closely related to Tonio Hölscher's model of Roman art as a 'semantic system',<sup>66</sup> but replaces the notion of 'semantic' with 'rhetorical' and the notion of 'language' and its associated terms (like 'grammar') with a perhaps more flexible model of 'discourse'. Three major modifications need to be made to Hölscher's picture. First, the visual models with which the rhetorical system of Roman art plays are not just Greek but encompass the full extent of styles and locally prestigious forms across the Roman empire. Second, the system is rhetorical and not linguistic or semantic – which is to say its model of 'communication' is about general assertions and identity claims, not precise meanings or messages. Third, the visual system is not self-contained (as implied, though not explicitly claimed, in Hölscher's discussion), but rather it is one genre or mode of argument within the much wider world of Roman rhetorical culture that includes education, literature, the legal system as well as what we more narrowly mean by 'rhetoric' today. Of course the specific means

<sup>61</sup> For excellent, rhetorically inflected, accounts of statue groups, see von den Hoff 2004 and Squire 2009: 201–38 on Sperlonga).

<sup>62</sup> See Squire 2011a.

<sup>63</sup> On the pluralism of religions in Rome see e.g. North 1992; Beard, North and Price 1998: 245–363; Bendlin 2000. There is no comprehensive study of the pluralism of religious art, but see Elsner 1998: 199–235.

<sup>64</sup> A good example is mummy portraits, which are clearly assertively Egyptian (that is to say, provincial) in their context of use yet are datable by reference to metropolitan hairstyles and jewellery. See Borg 1996: 19–84 and Walker 2000: 34–6.

<sup>65</sup> On provincial art and identities, see Scott and Webster 2003); Kampen 2006; Elsner 2007d: 35–87; Hales and Hodos 2010.

<sup>66</sup> Hölscher 2004 (first published in German in 1987).

by which visual rhetoric operates in material-cultural terms is different from those forms of rhetoric that use speech.

Our suggestion, then, in this book is that Roman art is no different from any other area of Roman culture in its ubiquitous rhetorical inflections and functions, themselves not only theorized within the culture but also regularly compared to and applied to visual examples in our rhetorical texts and handbooks. ‘Rhetoric’ is not just more flexible than ‘language’, it is – as I have argued – always deliberately targeted *ad hoc* with the aim of making particular claims to a specific intended or envisaged audience.

Although clearly *ēthos* is at stake in the personal, regional, religious or civic assertions of a given monument, there is also a sense within the broader *ēthos*–*logos*–*pathos* nexus that *ēthos* is itself on view, or under the gaze, even in the act of self-proclamation. In oratorical writing this is well attested by Quintilian’s obsession with the appearance of the orator’s body within the scopic field of his performance, in his necessary self-reflexive imagining of himself being seen.<sup>67</sup> In material culture it has been best studied in terms of the ‘panopticon’ of the Roman house with its culture of the gaze and its construction around the view.<sup>68</sup> But it can equally be seen in the world of Roman statuary where every statue erected in civic or religious space anywhere in the empire is a gesture within a vast population of such statues (locally but also globally) making claims both for its own individual specificity and for its place within the collective: it stood beneath the cultural gaze not only of citizens living and to come but also of all the statues of the past and the future.<sup>69</sup> The ocular nature of Roman culture in general, whose rhetorical and material obsession with spectatorship has been much explored in recent years,<sup>70</sup> creates a context where the observer is always potentially on display as the object of the gaze, where *ēthos* is always potentially turned to *pathos* and vice versa.

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I have attempted to argue for the rhetorical nature of Roman art as a distinctive aspect of the larger rhetorical culture of the Roman world – indeed, of the Graeco-Roman environment from at least the late classical

<sup>67</sup> See Quintilian *Inst. or.* 11.3 with the outstanding account of Gunderson 1998. For the visual realization of the orator’s sense of being on display in Roman statuary, see Davies 2010.

<sup>68</sup> On the gaze in the house see e.g. Fredrick 1995 and 2002; Platt 2002b; Lorenz 2007.

<sup>69</sup> See Stewart 2003: 118–56 for a general account. The best civic case study – since outstanding archaeology has enabled us to match so many statues with their bases and findspots – is Aphrodisias: see Smith 2006.

<sup>70</sup> See e.g. Coleman 1990; Bartsch 1994; Segal 1994: 257–8; Bergmann and Kondoleon 1999; Fredrick 2002b; Hardie 2002; Ancona and Greene 2005; Alden Smith 2005; Reed 2007: 173–80.

period. I have been careful not to assert that ‘rhetoric’ is merely a metaphor for thinking about art, nor that (following the model of its most literary forms) it should be seen as a system or language through which the visual may be seen as operating. Rather, rhetoric is a space for the play of inter-subjective relationships where *ēthos* and *pathos* interact through a variety of media, which in the case of art are visual, material and architectural. It is a space where the problems and questions inherent in identity and alterity, individuality and collectivity, as well as specific provincial and cosmopolitan, rural and urban, military and civilian self-assertions and self-fashionings may be negotiated within a large multicultural and imperial system.

But at the same time, and strikingly, Roman culture repeatedly turned to the visual arts for a set of paradigms for, and parallels with, oratorical practice and paedagogy.<sup>71</sup> At the heart of this is the assumption that rhetorical theory in ancient education is above all about teaching students the art of imitating and emulating canonical models of rhetorical excellence from the past.<sup>72</sup> The key terms are *mimēsis* (imitation) and *zēlos* (emulation),<sup>73</sup> and clearly both concepts – but above all *mimēsis* – were inextricably linked with the theoretics and criticism of ancient art from Plato onwards.<sup>74</sup> In the preface of Dionysius of Halicarnassus’ treatise on imitation, sadly surviving only as an epitome and a few verbatim fragments,<sup>75</sup> the model of rhetorical *mimēsis* is twice illustrated through complex comparison with the visual arts – first in the parallel of producing good-looking children and beautiful pictures (*Epitome* 1.2–3) and then in the story of the artist Zeuxis selecting the most appropriate parts from a

<sup>71</sup> For the place of images in and as rhetorical education in the Roman empire, see Rousselle 2001. For an excellent introduction to rhetoric in Rome, founded on Quintilian, see Reinhardt and Winterbottom 2006: xxiii–I.

<sup>72</sup> For some aspects of this, see Russell 1979.

<sup>73</sup> *Zēlos* is an interesting literary-critical term since it derives from ‘jealousy’ and conveys a sense of the urge or spirit for emulation. For the two terms paired together, see the proem to Hermogenes, *Peri ideōn* (*On Types of Style*) 1 (213 Rabe), second century AD, or the opening (so far as we can determine) of Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *De imitatione* (*On Mimesis*), first century BC, which survives only in an epitome and a few fragments, esp. Fragment 2 which offers definitions of both *mimēsis* and *zēlos* as energies or forces (*energeiai*) and epitome I.1–3 which employs both terms; also Ps.-Longinus, *De Sublimitate* 13.2 (variously dated between the first century BC and the third century AD) where the terms are paired as the path to the Sublime. For some discussion of mimesis in the rhetorical theorists, see Halliwell 2002: 290–6; and on the two terms *mimēsis* and *zēlos*, see Russell 1979: 9–10.

<sup>74</sup> E.g. Russell 1981: 99–113; Halliwell 2002: 42–8, 58–9, 61–2, 118–47 all on Plato), 152–9 and 178–93 (on Aristotle), 308–12, 316–20 (on imperial Roman developments).

<sup>75</sup> The text is in Aujac 1992: 26–40.

series of female models for a picture of Helen at Croton (*Epitome* 1.4–5).<sup>76</sup> The emphasis on literary emulation and imitation of canonical models is of course fundamentally parallel to (indeed the same cultural phenomenon as) the emulative nature of Roman art in relation to a series of canonical paradigms from the Classical past and its insistence on varieties of replication.<sup>77</sup>

As is repeatedly demonstrated by ancient writers' uses of examples from the visual arts to illustrate aspects of rhetoric, or to demonstrate its workings, there was a clear awareness (at least among Graeco-Roman intellectuals) of strong associations between rhetoric (narrowly conceived) and art, even if we possess no extended ancient rhetorical analysis of the visual arts.<sup>78</sup> Most famously, the art of memory as taught by rhetorical theorists was founded on mentally visualizing an environment like 'a house . . . public buildings, a long journey, the ramparts of a city, or even pictures' and walking through or scanning them in the imagination.<sup>79</sup> The precision-training of remembering the visual specifics of a house, building, cityscape or picture in their interrelations, and then placing particular symbols at given spots so as to jog the speaker's memory as he delivers his discourse and to align the flow of his speech in terms of the movement through imagined and memorized space, inevitably had effects on the kinds of visual environments created for people whose education was dominated by this kind of training.<sup>80</sup> The way in which a house and its decorations, or a picture, were always potentially a material image of the speech, the secret of whose delivery lay in their mental visualization, builds a shared dynamic between visual environment and rhetoric in the Roman world, which meet most specifically in the imaginative space of *phantasia* where the orator or artist visualizes what it is he will create (whether in the medium of words or pigment or carved stone).<sup>81</sup> When he wanted to make

<sup>76</sup> For discussion of what are in fact much more complex passages than there is space to explore here, see Hunter 2009a: 109–20.

<sup>77</sup> See for instance Gazda 2002; Perry 2005; C. Hallett, *Journal of Roman Archaeology* (2005); the essays in *Art History* 29 (2006).

<sup>78</sup> See Pollitt 1974: 58–63; Benediktson 2000: 87–161 and Tanner 2006: 250–4.

<sup>79</sup> The prescriptive texts are *Auctor ad Herennium* 3.15.27–24.40; Cicero, *De or.* 2.86.351–88.360; Quintilian *Inst. or.* 11.2.11–21. The quotation is from the last at 11.2.21. Substantive discussions include Yates 1966: 1–26; Blum 1969; Carruthers 1990: 71–5; Small 1997: 81–116.

<sup>80</sup> See the discussions by Rouveret 1989: 303–9; Bergmann 1994; Elsner 1995: 76–87; Baroin 1998.

<sup>81</sup> The key ancient discussions for our purposes are Quintilian, *Inst. or.* 6.2.29 and Philostratus, *Vita Apollonii* 6.19. On *phantasia* and art, see e.g. Perry 2005: 151–71; Tanner 2006: 283–95; Platt 2006: 245–9.

the case for the orator grasping his topic ‘not with the eye or ear or any of the senses but with the mind and the imagination’, Cicero used the example of Phidias who ‘while making the image of Jupiter or Minerva, did not look at any person whom he was using as a model, but in his own mind there dwelt a surpassing vision of beauty; at this he gazed and all intent on this he guided the artist’s hand to produce the likeness of the god’ (Or. 2.8–9).<sup>82</sup> Writing about a century and a half after Cicero’s *Orator*, and in a speech actually delivered at Olympia, the sophist Dio Chrysostom expanded on this model by staging an interrogation of Phidias, asking whether his statue of Zeus was appropriate to the deity and composing a speech given by Phidias in response to this which compares the sculptor’s *phantasia* of the god with that of the poet Homer.<sup>83</sup>

But beyond the high flights of *phantasia*, the exempla of artists and visual practice are a major paradigm by which the writers of rhetorical treatises illustrated and clarified what they were saying. When Cicero wanted to show how models of surpassing excellence in rhetoric (like Demosthenes) encourage emulation by later and perhaps lesser orators, he used the example of how artists are inspired by the works of Protogenes and Apelles, Phidias and Polyclitus (Or. 1.5). To exemplify the eclecticism of the authors he draws on in writing a textbook on rhetoric, Cicero invokes the anecdote of the many beautiful women who together served as models for Zeuxis’ painting in the temple at Croton (*De inuentione* 2.1–5).<sup>84</sup> This is a complex example of self-reflexive *synkrisis* in that Zeuxis is approached by the Crotoniates (2.1), whereas ‘the inclination to write a textbook’ arises in Cicero’s own mind (2.4), and while Zeuxis was limited to five living girls from a single city (2.3 and 2.5), Cicero can choose any example from any time up to the present (2.5). The result is a careful

<sup>82</sup> Cf For similar versions of this trope: the elder Seneca, *Controversiae* 10.5.8; Plotinus *Enneads* 5.8.1; Philostratus, *Vita Apollonii* 6.19.

<sup>83</sup> Dio Chrysostom *Oratio* 12. 44–6, 49–85. Cicero’s *Orator* is usually dated to 46 BC and Dio’s *Olympic Oration* (*Oratio* 12) was delivered in AD 97. For the trope, see Pernot 2011.

<sup>84</sup> In Cicero, many beautiful women provide the elements for an ideal painted image; in Lucian *Imagines* 1–10 many beautiful images (both statues and paintings) provide the elements for an ideal mental portrait from which to identify a supremely beautiful (real) woman): see Maffei 1986; Vout 2007: 213–39 and Cistaro 2009: 69–112. On the Zeuxis legend, see especially De Angelis 2005 with full earlier bibliography; also Barkan 2000; Mansfield 2007: 7, 12–21; Hunter 2009a: 111–20. Cicero’s version of the story is significantly less prurient than the later telling of Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *De Imitatione, Epitome* 1.4–5, who insists that both the image Helen and the models are naked and that the models are chosen not for their beauty but because ‘it was not likely that they were entirely ugly’ (i.e. some beautiful portion might be saved and imitated from their general ugliness!). Mansfield’s account is vitiated by ignorance of the passage in Dionysius.

claim for pre-eminence couched as faux-modesty through the use of a conditional: 'If my knowledge of the art of rhetoric had equalled his knowledge of painting, perhaps this work of mine might be more famous in its genre than the painting of Zeuxis' (2.5). To make the argument that rhetoric (and indeed all the arts) showed a progressive development from crude beginnings to perfection, the art-historical narrative of the rise of representation from crude schematism to the heights of naturalism (most familiar to us from Pliny's *Natural History*) became a trope to be invoked by rhetoricians (notably Cicero, *Brutus* 18.70 and Quintilian, *Inst. or.* 12.10.3–9).<sup>85</sup> Arguably in these passages ancient 'art history', perceived as the movement from winter to spring,<sup>86</sup> becomes a foundational, even a programmatic, model for rhetoric itself.

In relation to *ēthos*, not only were orators compared with artists,<sup>87</sup> but in so far as they were educators, the model of the artist as educator was adduced as a parallel.<sup>88</sup> Just as 'painters and engravers . . . exhaust the refinements of their artistry on fine veins, young plumage and similar minute details', so the political orator 'should not ignore even the smallest details' (Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *De compositione uerborum* 25).<sup>89</sup> In terms of *logos*, the existence of multiple styles of rhetoric (such as Attic and Asianic) was compared with the different styles of sculpture: 'The earlier style [of writing] has a certain polish and neatness, like old statues whose art seems to have a plain sparseness, whereas the later style resembles the statues of Phidias with their combination of splendour and precision' (Demetrius, *De elocutione* 14).<sup>90</sup> Likewise, the particular rhetorical styles

<sup>85</sup> The passage from Quintilian is an extended piece of potted art history particularly interesting for being sandwiched between a discussion of style (sculptural and rhetorical, at 12.10.1–2) and a parallel progressive account of the rise of Roman rhetoric (12.10.10–15). See Pollitt 1974: 81–4; also Aelius Aristides, *Oratio* 2.118.

<sup>86</sup> In the elegant characterization of Bryson 1984 7.

<sup>87</sup> See Cicero, *De optimo genere oratorum* 2.6, cf. 4.11; Cicero, *Brutus* 296 for the parallelism of relations of orators with their teachers and artists with their teachers; Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *De Demosthene* 50 for the parallel of long immersion by artists in the work of their canonical predecessors with that by orators in the work of earlier canonical orators; Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *De Dinarcho* 7 for how orators can distinguish between original works and their imitations as painters can tell the work of Apelles from his imitators, modellers the work of Polyclitus and sculptors that of Phidias.

<sup>88</sup> E.g. Auctor ad Herennium 4.6.9.

<sup>89</sup> One might think also here of the complex *synkrisis* between sculptor and orator, sculpture and education personified, with which Lucian opens his apparently autobiographical account in *Somnium* 1–15, with the excellent discussion of Lucian's use of the sculptural metaphor to explore his own compositional techniques in Romm 1990.

<sup>90</sup> See also Quintilian, *Inst. or.* 12.10.1–2. Demetrius is datable anywhere between the second century BC and the third AD.

of given orators were compared to the visual styles of specific artists.<sup>91</sup> In relation to *pathos*, the ‘beauty of oratory’ in terms of its enchantment of the audience’ was compared to physical beauty in sculpture and painting – explicitly the way the statues of Phidias and the paintings of Apelles ‘overcome’ the viewer and ‘offer unsurpassable pleasure to the spectator’ – as well as to the effects of the ‘largest, most dignified . . . and most harmonious’ temples on their visitors (Aelius Aristides, *Oratio* 34. 26–30).<sup>92</sup>

Just as the genre of the rhetorical treatise or handbook finds itself repeatedly drawing on parallels with the visual arts, so some of our most impressive surviving rhetorical performances and published speeches – especially from the Greek literature of the Roman empire (the so-called period of the Second Sophistic)<sup>93</sup> – resonate with elaborate plays on the visual. It is striking that a number of the *prolaliae*, or set-piece prologues to speeches written by the great second-century AD orator Lucian (a Syrian who performed with exceptional panache in Greek)<sup>94</sup> centre on the description of a work of art, or a building, to make a point by extension.<sup>95</sup> Related to the genre of a frontispiece in the form of a description of a work of art at the opening of novels and other works,<sup>96</sup> such introductions, as well as longer speeches, often proceed by means of a staged rhetorical *paragone*, or competition,<sup>97</sup> between a work of visual art (which may stand for the material arts in general) and a given rhetorical performance or

<sup>91</sup> See Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *De Isocrate* 3 where Isocrates is compared with Polyclitus and Phidias while Lysias is compared with Calamis and Callimachus; also Dionysius, *De Isaeo* 4 where a simile on the difference between older paintings ‘clear in their outline and thereby possessing great charm’ and later paintings ‘less well drawn but . . . with greater detail and a subtle interplay of light and shade’ is used ‘to clarify’ the difference between the rhetorical styles of Lysias and Isaeus.

<sup>92</sup> Cf. Aelius Aristides, *Oratio* 48.41 for the overpowering effect on the writer of a vision of Athena ‘in the beauty and magnitude and the whole form of the Athena of Phidias in Athens’.

<sup>93</sup> The study of the Second Sophistic is a very rich and lively area at present. See for instance Anderson 1993; Swain 1996; Goldhill 2001a; Whitmarsh 2001 and 2005.

<sup>94</sup> On Lucian, see Swain, 1996, 290–329.

<sup>95</sup> These include *Hippias or the Bath*, *On the Hall*, *Heracles*, *Zeuxis or Antiochus*, *Herodotus or Aëtion*. For some discussion of this material see Maffei 1994: xv–lv and Cistaro 2009: 20–55. An outstanding discussion of the architectural issues in relation to rhetoric is Thomas 2007: 221–41. On these texts see Dobrov 2002 and Newby 2002; and specifically on the *prolaliae*, see Branham 1985 and Nesselrath 1990.

<sup>96</sup> Key examples include the openings of the novels by Longus (*Daphnis and Chloe*) and Achilles Tatius (*Leucippe and Clitophon*), the *Tabula* of Cebes, Lucian, *Slander*, Prudentius, *Peristephanon* 9. The classic discussion is Schissel von Fleschenberg 1913; also Bartsch 1989: 23–79 and Morgan 2004: 145–8.

<sup>97</sup> On the idea of the *paragone*, an intermedial debate between art and literature, see Becker 2003 and Giuliani 2006.

the art of speaking itself.<sup>98</sup> By the time of the *Imagines* of Philostratus, probably composed in the early third century AD, which plays repeatedly on the comparison of painting and writing (both designated ironically by the same Greek work *graphē*) through turning the rhetorical trope of *ekphrasis* (description)<sup>99</sup> into a self-standing prose genre of small-scale virtuoso literary accounts of (probably fictional) pictures,<sup>100</sup> it is impossible to disentangle the rhetorical from the art-historical – at least in some of our most scintillating and rhetorically commanding ancient authors, notably Lucian and Philostratus.<sup>101</sup> While the trope of *ekphrasis* itself, as taught in the rhetorical handbooks of the Roman empire (the *progymnasmata*), included all forms and subjects of description,<sup>102</sup> there is no doubt that the descriptions of works of art were not only among the most purple of rhetorical passages in ancient literary texts (and placed at significant moments such as beginnings), but by late antiquity they came to represent the model examples given in the textbooks.<sup>103</sup> The use of *ekphrastic* forms of writing to heighten vividness, or to perform metaliterary work in offering a kind of self-reflection or *mise-en-abîme* within a text,<sup>104</sup> across the range of ancient rhetorical practice from fiction in prose and verse to panegyric and polemic,<sup>105</sup> further emphasizes the extent to which thinking with the visual and material was rhetorically enmeshed in Graeco-Roman culture.

<sup>98</sup> For instance, Dio Chrysostom's *Olympic Oration* (Or. 12), Lucian's *On the Hall, Imagines, Herodotus or Aëtion and Hippias or the Bath*.

<sup>99</sup> The outstanding modern discussion of *ekphrasis* is Webb 2009; for a rich art-historically modulated discussion, see Squire 2009: 139–46, 202–38.

<sup>100</sup> See Elsner 2002 for an overview and bibliography.

<sup>101</sup> The literature is becoming very large on this. Note for instance Elsner 2002: 13–15; Costantini et al. 2006; Primavesi and Giuliani 2012; Abbondanza 2008: 3–93; Newby 2009. On the younger Philostratus, see Ghedini et al. 2004.

<sup>102</sup> See Webb 2009: 61–86.

<sup>103</sup> Notably in Aphthonius, *Progymnasmata* 12.47–9 and Libanius' *Ekphraseis*, of which 2–4 and perhaps 21 are of paintings, 12–20, 22–3, 26–8 are of statues, while 25 is of a precinct of Tyche with its statues.

<sup>104</sup> See Webb 2009: 167–92 (what she calls the 'poetics of *ekphrasis*'). Excellent examples are the uses of houses as a category to think with about topics much broader than a given piece of architecture. See for instance Hales 2003: 11–60 (mainly on Cicero) and Whitmarsh 2010 on the rhetorical use of the house in Tatius' novel.

<sup>105</sup> For verse, see Putnam 1998 and Elsner 2007d: 78–87 on Virgil; Hardie 2002: 173–93 on the 'ekphrastic procedures' of the *Metamorphoses*; Miguelez-Cavero 2008: 283–309 (and more broadly 264–370 on the immense influence of rhetorical techniques as taught in the *progymnasmata*, on this poetic tradition). For prose, see Whitmarsh 2002 on 'ekphrastic contagion' in our longest ancient novel; Elsner 2007d: 289–302 on Apuleius' *Golden Ass*. For panegyric, see Elsner 2007c: 33–57. For polemic in relation to Polemo's *Physiognomics*, see Swain 2007.



Strikingly, in Libanius, ekphrases that are not specifically about works of art nonetheless bring the image of painting and painters to mind in the course of the discussion, using the model of art as a *synkrisis* to be surpassed by the object of description.<sup>106</sup> The peacock (*Ekphrasis* 24) – a classic example of paradoxographical ‘Persian’ fauna, a natural wonder (*paradoxa thaumata*, 24.7) – is described as the product of nature imitating art ‘to show that colourful variety is untaught’ (24.1). The bird, adorned with a myriad of colours, just as if it were the work of painters (24.2), is a ‘shining statue’ before whom viewers fall down and worship (24.7) which defeats the art of Apelles and Parrhasius (24.8). In the description of Beauty (30), a remarkable play on an immaterial form (the Greek is *ahylos*, repeated at 30.1 and 7) cast in the very sensual form of a ‘girl peeping out of a window’, so wonderful that she cannot be painted or committed to colours (rhetorical as well as pigments, 30.3), part of the discussion turns on Apelles and his failure to produce anything like this girl (30.4). In contrast with Apelles, the soul of the lover-speaker is the most beautiful artist, because it is the painter of the most beautiful girl (30.5) – and we must suppose the very speech within which all this is said, to be that picture.

The embeddedness of artistic paradigms in rhetorical thinking is perhaps most acutely caught in a number of remarkable *controversiae*, or imaginary legal cases, used for the teaching of law and rhetoric in Rome. This genre of exemplary exercises nominates a law, gives an example of a specific (usually imaginary) case that contravenes the law and then offers a series of ideal arguments on both sides of the question followed by a discussion of the *colores* (literally ‘colours’, but technically the interpretative approaches evident in turning the facts of the case to the advantage of the speaker).<sup>107</sup> Two of the *controversiae* that have come down to us from the mid first century AD collection of the elder Seneca turn on ethical issues implicit in art-historical topics.<sup>108</sup> *Controversia* 8.2 (which survives only in fragments) explores the imaginary case that Phidias, accused of pilfering some of the gold set aside for the statue of Zeus at Olympia, an act of sacrilege, had his hands cut off by the Eleans. Here issues of sacrilege – whether that of Phidias in allegedly stealing the sacred gold or the Eleans in cutting off the sacred hands which alone were able to make the god (and hence

<sup>106</sup> For some discussion of the ekphrases of Libanius, see Schouler 1984 vol. 1, pp. 124–32 and Hebert 1983.

<sup>107</sup> On the colours of rhetoric, see Lévy 2006 and Bradley 2009: 110–27.

<sup>108</sup> One might add also the case of the painter who exhibited a picture of a shipwreck in a harbour, as a result of which no ship put into port and he was charged with harming the public interest – in Hermogenes, *On Issues* 65–8 (with Heath 1995: 46–8, 116–18).

offering Phidias' blood as the very first sacrifice tasted by the statue) – are interrogated through the exemplum of a supreme artist and work of art. In *controversia* 10.5, a fictional account of how the artist Parrhasius tortured an Olynthian slave as the model for his brilliantly realistic painting of Prometheus, the legal argument becomes an exploration of a fundamental issue in the visual itself, namely the ethical limits of realism.<sup>109</sup>

One benefit of seeing the rhetorical system of Roman art as being, as it were, a genre within the bigger rhetorical culture of the empire is that we can find clear parallels between different forms of visual representation and the subdivisions offered by rhetorical theory.<sup>110</sup> In Philostratus' *Gymnasticus* of the early third century AD, the branches of wisdom (*sophia*) – which include philosophy, speaking artfully, poetry, music, geometry, astronomy, organizing armies and medicine – are compared with painting, modelling, all types of sculpting, gem-cutting and metal-engraving, before both groups are suggested as parallel to his topic of athletic training.<sup>111</sup> Each of the subdivisions of art has its own special qualities – and in the *Imagines* (which is devoted to panel paintings) Philostratus contrives to argue that while all forms of plastic art (his list there is modeling, bronze-casting, carving in all forms of stone, ivory carving and gem-cutting) are means of imitation, painting – which is 'imitation by the use of colours' – cleverly accomplishes more with this one means than the others by their many means.<sup>112</sup>

Within the bigger frame of a rhetorical culture, some of the puzzles of iconographic and thematic choices in Roman art become at least grounded in parallels outside the world of images. It has frequently been noted that our two largest Roman corpora of mythological imagery – the wall paintings from domestic contexts in Pompeii and Herculaneum and the funerary sarcophagi of which so many are from Rome itself and its environs – comprise very few Roman myths by contrast with the wide range, frequency and treatment of Greek myths, adapted to be sure to Roman needs.<sup>113</sup> Precisely the same pattern of emphasizing topics, set

<sup>109</sup> See the outstanding discussion of Morales 1996.

<sup>110</sup> For such subdivisions, see e.g. Cicero, *Orator* 11.37–12.38; Quintilian, *Inst. or.* 3.4.12–16.

<sup>111</sup> See Philostratus, *Gymnasticus* 1 with discussion by König 2009: 260–1. Note also a parallel account in Philostratus' *Dialexis* 2 with translation and discussion by Swain 2009: 33–46.

<sup>112</sup> See Philostratus, *Imagines* 1. Proem, 2 with Maffei 1991. On colour, see Dubel 2009.

<sup>113</sup> For Pompeii, see Hodske 2007 for an overview of mythological subjects and Lorenz 2008 for some of the ways mythological imagery constructs space; on sarcophagi see e.g. Koortbojian 1995: 15–18 with some bibliography.

in the ancient Greek world (before Roman dominion) and often in a mythological sphere, is observable in the themes chosen for rhetorical education and performance in both Latin and Greek oratory and text books,<sup>114</sup> not to speak of fiction from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* to the Graeco-Roman novel.

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It remains briefly to introduce the essays that comprise this volume. The collective aim of the essays, which have all been specially commissioned by the editors, is to establish the significance of the frame of rhetorical practice and theory within antiquity for ways in which Roman art was conceived and made in its time. Beyond this, it is to suggest that Roman art, born of a rhetorical world, was itself a significant contributor on its own material and visual terms to the working out of a rhetorically modulated world-view. This can be observed not only in the ways rhetorical terminology can be seen to be appropriate to many of the formal features and functions of Roman art but also in the persistent turn to the example of material culture and its creation by ancient writers on rhetoric. Nor is this a simple synchronic or transhistorical phenomenon: one of the particularly significant aspects of the theme of art and rhetoric is that one can trace historical changes in both visual and rhetorical patterns into the third century (as discussed by Barbara Borg) and into the fourth with the rise of Christianity (as discussed by Jaś Elsner). The hope is that the volume will open up models of future collaboration between historians of ancient rhetoric and classical archaeologists and offer inspiration to others who wish to examine many more aspects of the comparison of rhetoric and art than has been possible here. For rhetoric – both as a system of formulating thought and writing and as a model of education for the elite – is one of the few deeply held masteries of knowledge that slipped unscathed under the cultural and ideological barrier that was erected between pagan antiquity and Christianity, and hence it was of deep influence not only on Christendom but also on early Islam, and functioned as a factor of significant continuity between the ancient and medieval worlds.

No volume can cover everything. This volume is divided into four sections – the first on public space including architecture, the second on the domestic arena and images within the house, the third on funerary art

<sup>114</sup> For instance, the elder Seneca, *Controversiae* 3.8, 6.5, 8.2, 9.1, 10.5 as well as *Suasoriae* 1–5; [Quintilian], *Lesser Declamations* 292, 339, 386; Aelius Aristides, *Orationes* 1–16, 32; Dio Chrysostom, *Orationes* 5, 6, 9, 11, 52–61.

and the fourth more generally on questions of rhetoric between material and visual culture, on the one hand, and rhetorical theory on the other. In [part I](#), the two opening papers – both with the *sublime* in their titles, with a nod to the great text that goes under the name of Longinus, which reflects a powerful ancient aesthetics and was to have so significant a life in the Enlightenment and Romantic eras – examine public monuments and architecture. Edmund Thomas offers a deep account of the significance of architecture for the rhetorical theorists of antiquity and of the parallel force of literary and material discourses of monumentality. Francesco de Angelis discusses Trajan's Column, perhaps the best preserved of all major public monuments from ancient Rome, as a specific case of Roman monumentality, in terms of the theoretical concepts of 'grandeur' (μέγεθος) and precision (ἀκριβεία), thereby reformulating according to Graeco-Roman theoretical models some of the most important discussions in Classical archaeology of the last generation (in particular that between Paul Veyne and Salvatore Settis). Moving to the monumental body, Jennifer Trimble looks at imperial portraiture in the light of the early second-century physiognomic sketches by Suetonius in his *Twelve Caesars*. The discrepancy between broadly panegyric discourses (as in statuary dedicated on behalf of emperors) and polemic (as in largely negative accounts of long-dead rulers that reveal their various vices through their appearances) allows her to develop a rhetorical model of persuasion and communication between statues and their audiences. Turning to statuary on a smaller scale (including miniatures), Eve D'Ambra explores beauty, female portraiture and dolls found in ancient tombs to investigate what Quintilian calls a 'language of the body' (*sermo corporis*) reflected in the self-fashioning of the female appearance.

In [Part II](#), the essays by Katharina Lorenz and Verity Platt explore wall painting in Campania before the eruption of Vesuvius in AD 79. Lorenz, taking her cue from the topographical aspects of the rhetorical art of memory, investigates the extremely sophisticated way that paintings within rooms and across suites of rooms could create a range of visual arguments, juxtapositions and thematic polyphonies within a specific Roman house, the *Casa del Menandro* in Pompeii. Platt takes on a key and special case in the evocation of emotion within the traditions of Greek and Roman painting. Both in rhetorical and art-historical writing from antiquity, the visual and literary reflections on the limits of what is possible to represent turned on the extreme grief of Agamemnon when, according to myth, he was forced by circumstances to sacrifice his daughter Iphigenia and to the specific painterly solution to this problem found

by the fourth-century BC Greek painter Timanthes who represented Agamemnon veiled. Whether as a device in visual or in literary rhetoric, Timanthes' veil allowed extremities of emotion that it would be unfitting or bathetic to express through imitation, to be intimated and imagined in the viewer's or hearer's mind.

Part III turns to the immensely rich world of funerary art, with its deep associations to eulogistic and consolatory tropes in oratory and fiction. In her essay on the art of the third century AD, Barbara Borg contrasts literary ekphrasis in the tradition of Philostratus and Lucian with the demythologization which has been observed in Roman sarcophagi of this period. She argues that the descriptive responses to painting for display in the domestic arena and the actual production of relief sculpture in a funerary context were effectively subject to different rhetorical needs and demands in a period of significant change within the culture. Zahra Newby, also focusing on the rich corpus of sarcophagi, examines their specific relations with and resonances against the major Roman literary tradition of consolatory rhetoric and poetry, especially as evidenced by the *Silvae* of Statius published at the end of the first century AD just before the major rise in the production of sarcophagi across the Roman empire. Specifically, she uses these texts to highlight the encomiastic and consolatory effects of Roman funerary imagery. Caroline Vout's chapter juxtaposes funerary epitaphs and the works of art they adorn to assess how the relatively unpretentious commemorative object could speak to its viewers – some of them mourners and some passers-by – in the imperial period. In doing so, Vout expressly touches on the rhetorical aspects of the combined uses of art and text in monuments to offer different, complementary and sometimes contrasting modes of address. Moving to the overlap of pagan and Christian funerary art in the corpus of sarcophagi, Jaś Elsner turns to the ways in which rhetoric is designed to evoke emotion and to exploit psychological effects in its audience. He argues that sarcophagi in the pre-Christian period are largely panegyric of the patrons buried within them, while the empire's shift to Christianity in the course of the fourth century brings a change of visual rhetoric that insists on religious affirmation as a marker of identity: this self-identification through faith allows the rise of polemical as well as encomiastic forms of rhetoric in imagery that mark the acceptable limits within which social identity could be claimed.

In Part IV, Michael Squire's chapter examines the rhetorical category of 'order' (*ordo* in Latin or *taxis* in Greek) – concentrating on the Iliac tablets, a group of small-scale, luxury objects engraved with miniature visual

narratives and sometimes extensive carved texts – to emphasize the contrast and comparison of visual and textual narrativity in Roman art. He sets this against theoretical accounts and rhetorical commentaries on issues of narratology within the culture, so as to explore the rhetorical ways art and text exploit the possibilities inherent in narrative. Finally, Michel Meyer's *Coda* on the rhetorical function of Roman painting from a global point of view puts at least one aspect of Roman art within a big-picture frame in relation to the later arts of the European tradition which are so dependent upon Roman models.

PART I



Architecture and Public Space





# 1 | On the Sublime in architecture

EDMUND THOMAS

Architecture and rhetoric have a special relationship. In his general theory of aesthetics the eighteenth-century philosopher Charles Batteux differentiated between the mechanical arts, serving utility, and the fine arts, including poetry and painting, which served pleasure; the distinction between utility and pleasure goes back to Horace's *Ars poetica*.<sup>1</sup> But he also added a third category, of arts that served *both* utility *and* pleasure, in which he placed just two: rhetoric and architecture. Whereas the mechanical arts were invented for need alone and fine arts were invented to cause delight, architecture and rhetoric owed their origins to necessity and, once they had learned to invest themselves with allurements, were set beside the fine arts. After architecture changed the caves which it had first hollowed out as functional houses into pleasant and comfortable homes, it earned a position among the arts which it had not held before. Likewise, rhetoric, or 'eloquence', developed from a basic need to communicate into an art on the level of poetry, perfected by good taste. Both arts achieved functional goals by pleasing their audience. But while poetry and sculpture were judged on beauty not truth, so architecture and rhetoric were censured if they appeared to be designed to please, because ornament was considered a fault. Service, not spectacle, was required. Only when they were asked to celebrate grandeur were they permitted to be 'raised a few steps'.<sup>2</sup>

This conception of the arts was no uniquely 'modern' system, as Paul Oskar Kristeller maintained some sixty years ago in an article which continues to be controversial.<sup>3</sup> In antiquity too architecture and rhetoric were parallel activities, and their combination of utility and pleasure was not just incidental, but integrally related. Aristotle, on the one hand, presented the art of rhetoric as aiming at utility;<sup>4</sup> and, on the other hand, considered that in building city walls consideration should be given to what was appropriate to the city in beauty (*kosmos*) as well as military

<sup>1</sup> Batteux 1746; cf. Hor. *AP* 343.      <sup>2</sup> Batteux 1746: 44–8.

<sup>3</sup> For the 'modern system of the arts', see Kristeller 1951. Kristeller's argument has lately been taken up by Shiner 2009, but vigorously challenged by Porter 2009a and 2010.

<sup>4</sup> *Ar. Rhet.* 1.6, 1362<sup>a</sup>; Martin 1974: 171–4.

needs (*chreiai*).<sup>5</sup> The contemporary planning of Priene in Ionia by the architect Pytheos can be seen to reflect both principles with its regular street-grid, ordered and secure fortifications, and mathematically proportioned Temple of Athena Polias.<sup>6</sup> The parallel extended into the Roman world. Vitruvius knew the written works of Pytheos and his temple at Priene, and, even if scholars have argued over the degree of influence he exerted on him, it is likely that his famous prescription that architects should take account of utility and beauty (as well as practical considerations of stability) rested on the principles of either Pytheos himself or later architects under his influence such as Hermogenes.<sup>7</sup> In rhetoric too, Cicero argued, ‘those things which contain the greatest utility have either the most dignity or often also the most attractiveness’.<sup>8</sup> Vitruvius’ placement of *venustas* directly after *utilitas* may reflect his view that the former sprang from the latter: beautiful buildings were functional ones. But he might equally have borrowed this order from Cicero’s most famous rhetorical treatise, the *De Oratore*, in which it was clearly stated that ‘a certain *suavitas* and *lepos* should follow *utilitas* and close by *necessitas*’.<sup>9</sup> In this work which he not only knew, but even claimed to rely on,<sup>10</sup> he must have approved of the directly preceding passage on the Capitoline temple, the dignity of whose pediment followed on from its practical utility, a connection so close that, Cicero added, even were it built in a rainless climate where the protective function of the colonnade was redundant, it would seem to have no dignity without this feature. The good orator should, therefore, blend utility and beauty together.<sup>11</sup> Architecture and rhetoric, it was believed, formed a bond, working in harmony to produce civilization. ‘Never’, Quintilian argued, ‘would founders of cities have brought it about that the restless multitude would form communities unless they had been moved by a learned voice.’<sup>12</sup>

In view of the very similar ideals of the two disciplines it should not be surprising that a widespread homology is found between the language of architecture and the language of rhetoric. Basic architectural metaphors have helped to articulate human thought from ancient Egypt to the present day because ‘the processes of design and construction and the experience of using buildings relate to basic mental operations and basic psychological needs’.<sup>13</sup> These metaphors are built into rhetorical criticism that centred

<sup>5</sup> Ar. Pol. 1331<sup>a</sup>10–14 (ὁπῶς καὶ πρὸς κόσμον ἔχη τῇ πόλει πρεπόντως καὶ πρὸς τὰς πολεμικὰς χρεῖας).

<sup>6</sup> von Gerkan 1924; Fehr 1980. <sup>7</sup> Vit. *De arch.* 1.3.2. <sup>8</sup> Cic. *De or.* 3.178.

<sup>9</sup> Cic. *De or.* 3.181; cf. Gros 1982: 680–1. <sup>10</sup> Vit. *De arch.* 9 pr. 17.

<sup>11</sup> Cic. *De or.* 3.178–80. <sup>12</sup> Quint. *Inst. or.* 2.16.9. <sup>13</sup> Onians 1992.

on the nature of rhetoric as an expression of ideas: it was almost as natural to speak of 'building up a work' in rhetoric as in architecture.<sup>14</sup> Cicero talks of 'piling up' words to form a 'structure', and, for Quintilian, words are like the structural elements of a building.<sup>15</sup> Among grammarians of late antiquity this metaphorical usage was taken for granted.<sup>16</sup> But still the metaphor continued to be used in more developed form to give religious projects authority. Thus Gregory the Great wrote: 'First we lay the foundation in history; then by following a symbolical sense we erect an intellectual edifice to be a stronghold of faith; and lastly by the grace of moral instruction we as it were paint the fabric in fair colours'.<sup>17</sup> Such language reappeared on a wide scale in the eighteenth century.<sup>18</sup> For Immanuel Kant, 'the *Critique of Pure Reason* must sketch the whole plan architectonically, that is, from principles, with a full guarantee for the validity and stability of all the parts which enter into the building'.<sup>19</sup>

We can only imagine how the architect Vitruvius would have read those passages in the *De oratore* that were loaded with such imagery. The metaphor was particularly explicit where Cicero compares the opening (*exordium*) of a speech to the entrance to a house:

'Every beginning should contain either the significance (*significatio*) of the matter being brought, or an approach to the case and groundwork (*communitio*), or some ornament and dignity; but, like the vestibules and approaches to houses and temples, it should set out the beginnings of the cases in proportion to the subject; so in small, infrequent cases it is often more convenient to begin with the matter itself; but when a beginning is needed, which will usually be the case, ideas can be drawn either from the defendant or from the plaintiff or from the subject or from those in front of whom the case is being held'.<sup>20</sup>

Here, as throughout his treatise, Cicero, like Vitruvius, is guided by the notion of *decorum*.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Cic. *De or.* 1.164; 2.63.2 (*exaedificatio*).

<sup>15</sup> Cic. *De or.* 3.43 (*componere et struere verba*); Cic. *Brutus* 8, 33 (*structura verborum*); Quint. *Inst. Or.* 1.5.67, 1.10.23, 8.5.27, 8.6.63, 8.6.67, 9.4.27; cf. Sen. *Ep.* 114.7.

<sup>16</sup> E.g. in the standard use of *construere*, 'to construct', for grammatical construction.

<sup>17</sup> Gregory the Great, *Epistles* 5.53a, translated by Dudden 1905: 1.193.

<sup>18</sup> Fussell 1965: 171–210. <sup>19</sup> Kant 1781: Introduction, section vii (trans. Meiklejohn).

<sup>20</sup> Cic. *De or.* 2.320–1: *Omne autem principium aut rei totius, quae agetur, significationem habere debet aut aditum ad causam et communitioem aut quoddam ornamentum et dignitatem; sed oportet, ut aedibus ac templis uestibula et aditus, sic causis principia pro portione rerum praeponere; itaque in parvis atque infrequentibus causis ab ipsa re est exordiri saepe commodius; sed cum erit utendum principio, quod plerumque erit, aut ex reo aut ex aduersario aut ex re aut ex eis, apud quos agetur, sententias duci licebit.*

<sup>21</sup> See, above all, Horn-Oncken 1967: 92–117, and Schlikker 1940: 96–112.

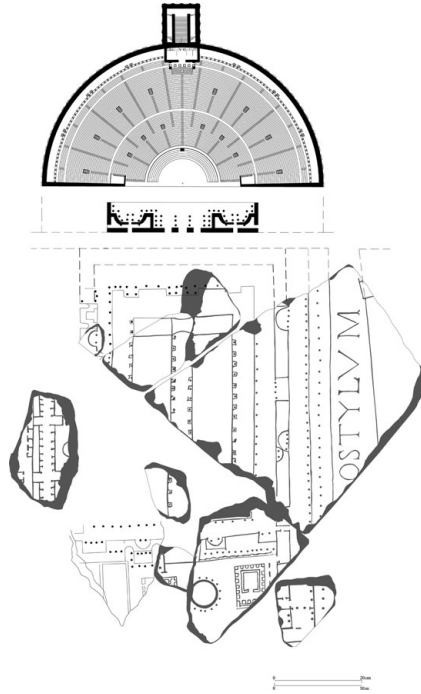
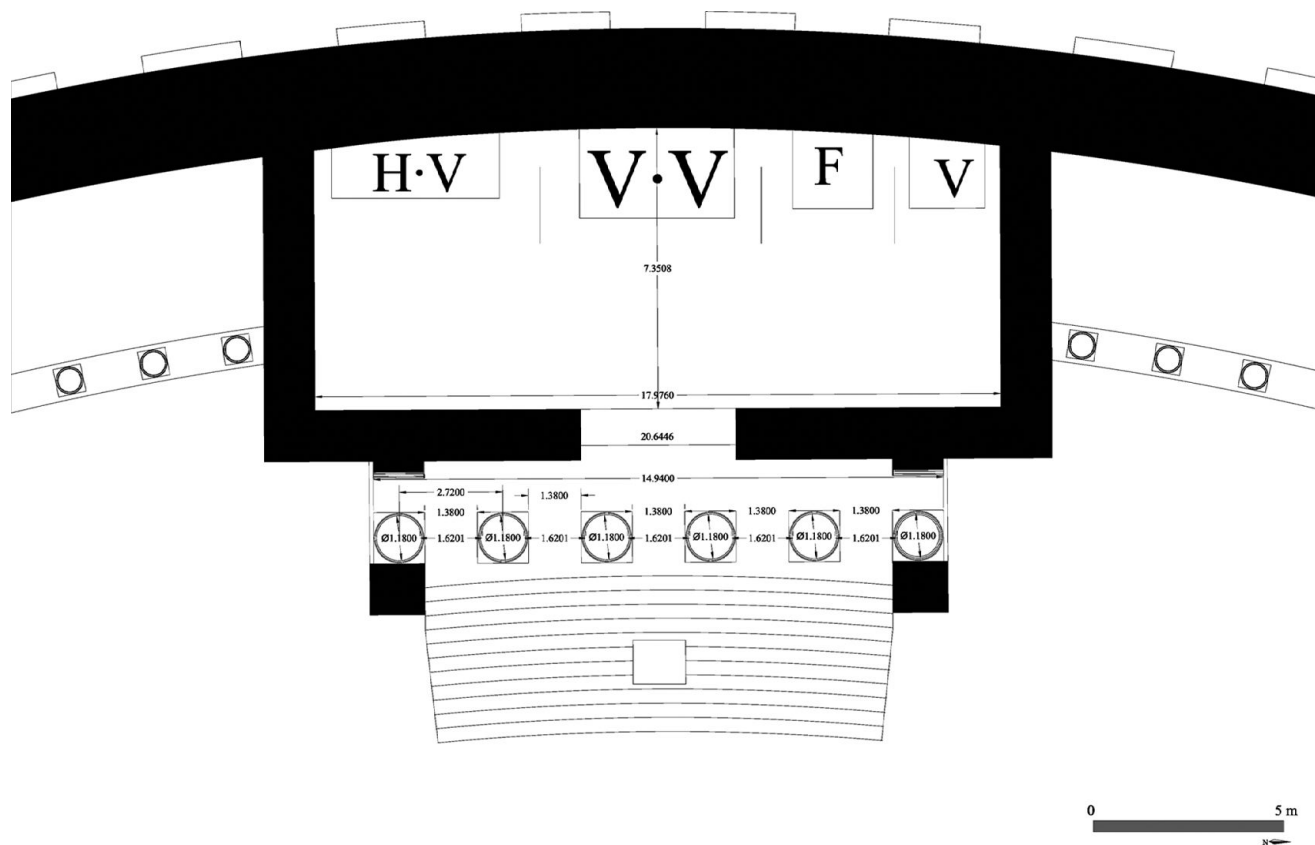


Figure 1.1 Rome, Theatre of Pompey: (a); (b) detail with Temple of Venus Victrix.

But one wonders how far the architectural metaphor was mere window dressing, the random invention of the orator, or, rather, influenced by contemporary architectural tastes. In 55 BCE, when Cicero's treatise was published, the dedication of the sensational Theatre of Pompey could hardly have been ignored: the Temple of Venus Victrix at the top of its cavea took the form, we now know, of a temple with transverse cella whose projecting pronaos stood out above the theatre audience with particular prominence (Figure 1.1).<sup>22</sup> But the metaphor held a more important truth about temples in general and houses. Architecture, like speeches, should be internally consistent and should avoid pretension and not give false expectations. Sir John Soane, who underlined this passage in his copy of William Guthrie's translation of Cicero's *De Oratore*,<sup>23</sup> later elaborated on it with a further comparison:

<sup>22</sup> For this reconstruction of the temple, see Monterroso Checa 2006: 48–50 and 2010, 270–89. For the rhetorical aesthetics of the pronaos in Roman temples generally, see Gros 1979: 336–8.

<sup>23</sup> Copy of Guthrie 1808, 277 in Sir John Soane Museum, London, General Library 23A.



**Figure 1.1** (*cont.*) Abbreviations: HV: Honos et Virtus  
 VV: Venus Victrix  
 F: Felicitas  
 V: Victoria

‘The front of a building is like the prologue of a play, it prepares us for what we are to expect. If the outside promises more than we find in the inside, we are disappointed. The plot opens itself in the first act and is carried on through the remainder, through all the mazes of character, convenience of arrangement, elegance and propriety of ornament, and lastly produces a complete whole in distribution, decoration and construction.’<sup>24</sup>

Some support for the idea that ancient rhetorical theorists were aware of their architectural surroundings and the ideas of contemporary architects is found in Dionysius of Halicarnassus, where the basic metaphor of rhetorical structure is elaborated as an indication of literary style. Here the science of literary composition is described as serving three particular functions (ἔργα): first, ‘to see what joined with what will obtain a beautiful and pleasant combination’; second, ‘to assess how each of the parts to be joined with one another should be shaped to make the joining (ἁρμονία) appear better’; and, third, ‘to judge if any adjustment (μετασκευή) is needed in the materials received, I mean subtraction, addition or alteration and to effect such changes in a manner proper to their future purpose’.<sup>25</sup> Dionysius’ language (ἁρμοζόμενον, ἁρμόττεσθαι, σχηματισθέν, and ἁρμονία) already suggests not only a comparison with architecture, but even an awareness of its basic mathematical concepts; and he develops the analogy by explaining his meaning ‘by using resemblances with the demiurgic arts which everyone knows, house-construction, shipbuilding and the like’:

‘When a builder (οἰκοδόμος) has supplied himself with the materials (τὴν ὕλην) from which he intends to construct the house – stones, timber, tiles, and everything else – he proceeds to put together the building from these, paying close attention to the following three questions: what stone, timber and brick is to be fitted together (ἁρμόσαι) with what other stone, timber and brick; next, how each of the materials that are being so joined should be fitted . . .; thirdly, if anything fits badly (δύσεδρόν ἐστιν), how that piece can be pared down and trimmed and made to fit well . . . Now I say that those who are going to put the parts of speech together effectively should proceed in a similar way.’<sup>26</sup>

Later in the same book, this metaphor for general practice is carried forward into more precise considerations of literary style. Dionysius defines the rhetorical concept of ‘austere harmony’ by means of an image

<sup>24</sup> Sir John Soane Museum, London, Archives 1/2/52, ‘Query 5th Lecture’ (watermark 1808), in Watkin 1996: 188.

<sup>25</sup> Dion. Hal. *De comp. uerb.* 6 (trans. Usher).

<sup>26</sup> A comparable description of language as consisting of elements combined like wooden parts joined by glue or a bolt is found in *P.Herc.* 994 col.34.5–11 = Sbordone Treatise A.

so clearly architectural that it does not need to be explicitly identified: 'words must be set in place (ἐρείδεσθαι), both solidly and distanced from one another; they should be separated by perceptible intervals (ἀισθητοῖς χρόνοις)'.<sup>27</sup> This unstated image of a temple colonnade shows an awareness of the importance of measured intercolumniations in late Hellenistic architectural theory and thus establishes a link between the aesthetics of oratory and the aesthetics of architecture.<sup>28</sup>

The reason that the simple metaphor of process became a basis for stylistic equivalence was that architecture, like rhetoric, was an art of communication.<sup>29</sup> It was natural to seek to match the two. The principle of *decor* demanded that the rhetorical style of speeches should suit the architectural context where they were delivered, temples demanding the grandest style of all.

'Demosthenes could sometimes speak with restraint (*summisce*), but Lysias perhaps could not achieve grandeur (*elate*). Yet, if people think that, with an army stationed in the Forum and in all the temples around it, it was appropriate to speak in defence of Milo as if we had been speaking in a private case before a single judge, they measure the power of eloquence by their own estimate of their own ability, and not by the nature of the case.'<sup>30</sup>

This was not simply a matter of the orator's personal security. The very terms he uses to denote styles of speaking applied equally to architecture. Festus, following the Augustan grammarian Verrius Flaccus, wrote that Marius' Temple of Honour and Virtue was 'lower (*summissiorem*) than other temples'; by contrast, a building that was *elatus* was raised to a considerable height.<sup>31</sup>

Cicero regarded memory, the fifth part of oratory, as its 'foundation, like that of buildings'.<sup>32</sup> Elsewhere he wrote that adherence to the truth and avoidance of partiality and malice are 'foundations known to all, but the construction (*exaedificatio*) is built on the material (*res*) and words (*verba*)'.<sup>33</sup> Rhetoricians distinguished between what you say (*res*) and how you say it (*verba*). The *res* was the material for devising arguments (Greek *heuresis* or Latin *inventio*), the *verba* for stylistic verbal expression (*lexis* or *elocutio*).<sup>34</sup> It was a distinction of which Vitruvius was himself aware, adopting rhetorical formulas and topoi in such measure in his treatise that he must have been one of those predecessors to whom

<sup>27</sup> Dion. Hal. *De comp. verb.* 22 (trans. Rhys Roberts). <sup>28</sup> Gros 1990: 116 and 1991: 76.

<sup>29</sup> This has become well accepted through the work of, especially, Tonio Hölscher.

<sup>30</sup> Cic. *De opt. gen.* 10; cf. *Mil.* 70. <sup>31</sup> Fest. 344 M; Caes. *bc* 2.8.3. <sup>32</sup> Cic. *De opt. gen.* 5.

<sup>33</sup> Cic. *De or.* 2.62–3. <sup>34</sup> Martin 1974: 216.

Palladius referred as ‘emulating orators in arts and eloquence’.<sup>35</sup> But Cicero’s architectural metaphor suggests that architecture and rhetoric were similar representational processes, which obscures the lack of equivalence between the two arts. In architecture meaning is expressed through structure and ornament, which are analogous to oratorical *uerba*, but there is no exact equivalent of *res*, the message or argument of a speech. Nonetheless, Vitruvius highlighted that architecture consisted of the signifier and the signified.<sup>36</sup> The latter was still the *res*, the buildings themselves, but in the case of architecture the signifier was ‘the proof unfolded by the methodologies of scientific studies’ (*demonstratio rationibus doctrinarum explicata*). In other respects Vitruvius’ definition corresponds almost exactly to Quintilian’s definition of rhetoric a century later: ‘all speech consists either of the things signified or of those that signify, the matter and the words (*rebus et uerbis*)’.<sup>37</sup> In other words, in both rhetoric and architecture there is a system of expression, the signifier, and a material result, the signified. In each case, the theoretical system – Vitruvian *rationcinatio* or rhetorical theory – is established *a posteriori* on the basis of the result, speech or building, which shows that language in action.<sup>38</sup> However, while it follows for rhetoric that its aim was to deliver a message, which was achieved through words, this is not Vitruvius’ meaning for architecture, but rather that a building is itself the message, which is explained through scientific theory. In short, buildings demonstrate, but they do not argue. Because of their lack of semantic precision buildings cannot be representational structures like other communicative arts, but nonetheless have a semiotic potential to communicate ideas and values. Architecture, like language, is potentially infinitely expressive.<sup>39</sup>

The analogy between architecture and rhetoric was not only because of the communicative and semiotic nature of buildings, but also in terms of structure and composition. The classical architecture drawn by Vitruvius from earlier masters such as Pytheos, Hermogenes of Priene and their successors and inherited by Roman architects from late classical and Hellenistic practice gave architects a set of rules for the combination and arrangement of parts like linguistic syntax. The widespread reference to a ‘language of architecture’, defined by a ‘grammar of ornament’, was

<sup>35</sup> Pallad. *Op. agr.* 1.1. For Vitruvius’ rhetorical style, see Callebat 1982: 704–5; and, for the prefaces in particular, André 1987.

<sup>36</sup> Cic. *Brut.* 16.65; *De part. or.* 1.3. Vitruv. *De arch.* 1.1.3.

<sup>37</sup> Quint. *Inst. or.* 3.5.1. <sup>38</sup> Callebat 1994: 35–6.

<sup>39</sup> Crossley and Clarke 2000b: esp. 4–5 and 14; cf. van Eck 2000: esp. 81.



adopted by the Renaissance humanists and followed in later classicism. In a more developed form of what has been called the 'linguistic analogy' in architecture, the early eighteenth-century architect Germain Boffrand in his *Livre d'Architecture* (1745) highlighted the expressive purpose of buildings, compared the orders of architecture to poetical genres, and claimed that 'the profiles of mouldings, and the other members that compose a building, are in architecture what words are in a discourse'.<sup>40</sup> Such contentions would be challenged by those who see architecture and language as generically different. Twenty years later, G. E. Lessing signalled to apologists for the ancient doctrine of *ut pictura poesis*, that architecture, like painting, is a spatial art, consisting of forms displayed and experienced in space, whereas rhetoric, like poetry, is a temporal one, concerned with events represented or narrated in time or with bodily forms enumerated in sequence and experienced in time through listening or reading.<sup>41</sup> Yet such a distinction is not a generic one, but a question of degree. By Lessing's own account it is possible, albeit with greater effort, to experience literary arts in a spatial manner and visual arts temporally; thus both works of art and architecture and works of literature can be called 'structures in space-time'.<sup>42</sup> It follows from this that Lessing's space–time distinction is no barrier to interpreting rhetoric and architecture analogously. However, although Umberto Eco asserts that 'architectural language is an authentic linguistic system obeying the same rules that govern the articulation of natural languages',<sup>43</sup> the relation between linguistic rules and architectural systems of ordering is questionable. The stages of development of a critical vocabulary to describe and evaluate buildings and its relationship to the terminology of literary criticism are uncertain. As Pierre Gros has rightly warned, there is a danger in carrying further the significance of verbal incidences which appear to be purely metaphorical.<sup>44</sup>

In so far as it represents the way in which architects conceptualized, organized and structured their design, the application of the rhetorical metaphor in architecture may be regarded as significant. There were not many who believed, as Soane did later, that architecture shared all five components of rhetoric – invention, disposition, elocution, memory, and action<sup>45</sup> – but the

<sup>40</sup> Van Eck 2002: 9; cf. xxii. For the 'linguistic analogy', see Collins 1965: 173–82.

<sup>41</sup> Lessing [1766] 1984; see Mitchell 1986: 95–115. <sup>42</sup> Mitchell 1986: 102–3.

<sup>43</sup> Eco 1969. <sup>44</sup> Gros 1991.

<sup>45</sup> 'Rhetoric like architecture has five parts . . . invention, disposition, elocution, memory, delivery, or action.' Sir John Soane Museum, Architectural Library, Soane Case 161/3, Portfolio 2, and Soane's marginal notes on his copy of Quintilian, Guthrie 1805: 1. 149. See further Watkin 1996: 186–7; van Eck 2007: 123.

rhetorical model for at least the first two categories helped to organize thoughts on architectural design. That does not mean that all rhetorical language applied to architecture was always important in the conception of buildings, especially when used by writers outside the design process. As Lise Bek has shown, the rhetorical concept of antithesis shaped descriptions of architecture in Vitruvius, Seneca the Younger and Pliny the Younger; but that does not necessarily imply anything further about the impact of rhetoric on design.<sup>46</sup> Applying rhetorical vocabulary to the description of art is not without parallel. In a well-known study Michael Baxandall has drawn attention to the ‘classical habit of metaphorical interchange between the critical terminology of literary and art criticism’.<sup>47</sup> Writing of the Humanist evaluation of painting and sculpture, he notes that the Latin rhetorical language of critics such as Leon Battista Alberti or Leonardo Bruni predisposed them to think about visual art in terms of rhetorical concepts that were essentially unrelated to visual experience, applying de-familiarizing labels like *decor*, *copia* and *uarietas* to perceptual realities. Descriptions of architecture thus become not so much accounts of the buildings themselves as descriptions of thinking about buildings.

In Vitruvius’ architectural treatise the use of rhetorical language strengthens the relationship between architecture and rhetoric. This can in part be attributed to Vitruvius’ well-recognized effort to elevate the literary profile of architecture by using rhetorical and philosophical language.<sup>48</sup> Rhetorical training is not explicitly included by Vitruvius among the skills needed by the architect, although ‘letters’ (*litterae*) are mentioned first among such skills so that the architect ‘can make memory more secure with the help of *commentarii*’. His frequent recourse to the *commentarius* in his work seems to recall the practice of orators in preparing notes for a speech, sometimes intended themselves for publication.<sup>49</sup> Yet rhetoric

<sup>46</sup> Bek 1976. <sup>47</sup> Baxandall 1971: 26. <sup>48</sup> Callebat 1982: esp. 704–7; 1994: 32.

<sup>49</sup> Vitr. *De Arch.* 1.1.4 (*uti commentariis memoriam firmiorem efficere possit*). This clause is usually translated with the sense that the architect ‘should strengthen his own memory by reading what has been written in the field’ (Rowland, 1999: 22), following Claude Perrault and Auguste Choisy and, more recently, P. Ruffel and P. H. Schrijvers). However, Fensterbusch (1991: 25) and Fleury (1990: 5) interpret it as meaning that the architect should make his own work more memorable by writing commentaries. This interpretation takes *litterae* as referring to literature, rather than literacy; *memoria* in the sense of a memorial for posterity, rather than the architect’s powers of memory, equivalent to the sense of *memoria* in rhetorical theory; and *commentarii* as works for publication, rather than notes for personal use, like the notes made by orators in preparation of their speeches. These alternative translations fit Vitruvius’ usage elsewhere in his work, but conceal his dependence on rhetorical theory; Quintilian’s use of the term which Fleury cites (*Inst. Or.* 10.7.30) is more ambiguous.

offered the author not just a literary system of presentation, but also, and more significantly, a conceptual and theoretical framework. Vitruvius singled out Cicero's *De oratore* not only as a model for the endurance of a literary work and a basis for future debates on rhetoric with its author, then deceased, but also as one of several works to which he owed dependence in writing his own, 'applying their notions and recommendations'.<sup>50</sup>

Of the six concepts of which Vitruvius claims architecture consists, three terms in particular indicate the rhetorical basis of his treatise: *ordinatio*, *dispositio*, and *distributio*.<sup>51</sup> All three terms are also considered in rhetorical theory to be part of the orator's repertoire (*officium oratoris*). In later rhetorical theory *ordinatio* was thought to consist of 'two parts, quality of structure and quantity of words'.<sup>52</sup> This formulation corresponds so closely to the wording of Vitruvius that one might even suspect that the later rhetoricians had been influenced by his architectural treatise. Although Vitruvius fuses the notion with aesthetic ideas, above all symmetry, the combination with *dispositio* might have seemed tautological to Quintilian, who later reproached writers 'looking for some novelty' for differentiating between *dispositio* and *ordo*.<sup>53</sup> Yet, as has been observed, the two terms reflected the subtle distinction between arranging arguments and distributing them according to their importance.<sup>54</sup> Cicero does not mention *ordinatio*, but in his account of arrangement (*collocatio*) he presents a similar concept, clothed in elaborate architectural language that resembles the later understanding of *ordinatio* as the arrangement of pieces in a mosaic:<sup>55</sup>

It belongs to arrangement to assemble (*componere*) and build (*struere*) words so as not to have either a harsh (*asper*) juxtaposition of words or a gap between them, but it is somehow joined together (*coagmentatus*) and smooth; on which a charming joke was made, in the person of my father-in-law [Q. Mucius Scaevola, father-in-law of the speaker L. Crassus], by the man who was capable of making it in the most elegant way possible, Lucilius: 'How charmingly assembled are those *tournures de phrase*! Like all those little *tesserae* in pavement art and inlaid mosaic like little worms (*uermiculato*).'<sup>56</sup>

<sup>50</sup> Vit. *De arch.* 9 pr. 17–18.      <sup>51</sup> Vit. *De arch.* 1.2.1–2.

<sup>52</sup> [Aug.] *De rhetorica* 1, in Halm 1863: 1.137. The attribution of this work to St Augustine of Hippo is dubious.

<sup>53</sup> Quint. *Inst. or.* 3.3.8.

<sup>54</sup> Cic. *De or.* 1.142; cf. *Rhet. ad Her.* 3.3.8. Calibat 1994: 37–8.      <sup>55</sup> *Ord.* 1.1.2.

<sup>56</sup> Cic. *De or.* 3.171: *Conlocationis est componere et struere uerba sic, ut neue asper eorum concursus neue hiulus sit, sed quodam modo coagmentatus et leuis; in quo lepide soceri mei persona lusit is, qui elegantissime id facere potuit, Lucilius: quam lepide λέξεις compostae! ut tesserae omnes arte pauimento atque emblemate uermiculato.*

While the orator Cicero chooses an architectural image to define the arrangement of words in periodic style, as pieces in a mosaic laid out with artistic virtuosity and with smooth joins and no jarring gaps, the architect Vitruvius selects a rhetorical term to meet the need for organic unity in planning a building through the commensurability of the parts with each other and with the whole.<sup>57</sup> Vitruvius, however, associates *collocatio* with the second of his terms *dispositio*, already established as one of the five main divisions of rhetorical theory, which he defines as ‘the fitting placement of material and the elegant effect of the work’; the formulation expresses the ability of a completed building to achieve both utility, defined by *decor* (Cicero’s *decorum*) and beauty.<sup>58</sup> *Dispositio* indicated the arrangement of parts into an overall organic unity. Vitruvius’ use of the third term, *distributio*, seems almost gratuitous, applying what was a specific designation of rhetorical procedure in the sense of a ‘thrifty mixing’ of resources and site.<sup>59</sup> Using the two terms together, however, reinforced how the architect, like the orator, was guided by the essential principles of utility and *decor*.<sup>60</sup> In practice, *distributio* was closely linked with *dispositio* and occurred ‘when buildings were disposed according to the use of the *patres familiae*, the financial means, or *the dignity of eloquence*’.<sup>61</sup> The last phrase is usually glossed as referring to the prestige or power of the patrons, but this mistranslation does not take account of the tricolon of which the phrase is the culmination, referring to the three factors in the architect’s mind when allocating architectural space: purpose, budget, and rhetoric. In other words, buildings did not just serve a social function or use up resource. They also ‘spoke’.

All together, Vitruvius’ three terms, *ordinatio*, *dispositio* and *distributio*, contributed finely differentiated aspects of his essential argument that a building should be unified through the harmony of its parts, an argument that was not just structural, but aesthetic.<sup>62</sup> The rhetorical metaphor carried a deeper significance, explaining how architecture worked as a

<sup>57</sup> Gros 1990: xxix.      <sup>58</sup> Vit. *De arch.* 1.2.2.

<sup>59</sup> Vit. *De arch.* 1.2.8. Cf. *Rhetorica ad Herennium* 4.35.47 (*distributio est cum in pluris res aut personas negotia quaedam certa dispartuntur*).

<sup>60</sup> P. Rutilius Lupus, *Schemata lexeos* 1.18, in Halm 1863: 10.31–11.1: *Hoc schema [merismos] singulas res separatim disponendo et suum cuique proprium tribuendo magnam efficere utilitatem et inlustrem consuevit*.

<sup>61</sup> Vit. *De Arch.* 1.2.9 (*Alter gradus erit distributionis, cum ad usum patrum familiarum et ad pecuniae copiam aut ad eloquentiae dignitatem aedificia aliter disponentur*).

<sup>62</sup> Callebat 1994: 37–8 adds a fourth term, *compositio*, used several times later in Vitruvius’ treatise and equivalent to the Platonic *sustasis*, which also implied harmonious relations between the parts and the whole and between the parts themselves.

language.<sup>63</sup> Although the words themselves are drawn from extraneous rhetorical theory, they help to shape thinking about architecture and develop new modes of design. The other three terms presented by Vitruvius as the elements of architecture, *eurythmia*, *symmetria* and *decor*, which had particular aesthetic significance, referring to the resulting design of a building rather than the design process of the builder, are also widely used in rhetorical theory.<sup>64</sup> It is well known that *decor* and *utilitas* had aesthetic implications throughout the books, as well as being general guiding principles to frame the work.<sup>65</sup> As Pierre Gros has shown, the rhetorical conceptualization of aesthetics in Vitruvius' treatise is both deep-rooted, being a continuation of design concepts promoted by Hermogenes in the late third century BCE in particular but also already visible in architecture of the fourth century BCE, and continued to influence the form and composition of surviving buildings of the Roman imperial period.<sup>66</sup> Also influential on Vitruvius' own ideas are the terms *eurythmia* and *symmetria*, which had both been, and continued to be, used in rhetoric, applied above all to periodic sentence structure in oratory for the balancing of words and phrases. *Eurythmia* is a complex and shadowy term, whose associations with, and probably origins in, the arts of music and dance informed both rhetorical usage and architectural taste.<sup>67</sup> *Symmetria* may have originated in connection with the work of artists at the end of the fifth century BCE; from that context it will have been borrowed by Plato to denote a system of proportional harmony arising from mathematical procedures based on quantities reducible to a common measure.<sup>68</sup>

The deployment of such rhetorical terms to frame aesthetic ideas is nowhere clearer than in the one building of Vitruvius which he describes in detail, his basilica at Fanum, used as a particular instance of the basilica *genus* to illustrate how it could achieve both *dignitas* and *uenustas*. Vitruvius demonstrates its 'proportions and symmetries (*proportiones et symmetriae*)' by detailing its dimensions: the central hall 60 by 120 feet; the 20-foot module for the width of the surrounding module and the wall pilasters;

<sup>63</sup> Ricoeur 1978.

<sup>64</sup> For this manner of dividing the six basic terms, see Scranton 1974. As, however, *distributio* is placed last, after *decor*, *eurythmia* and *symmetria*, in so far as Vitruvius intended a division into two groups, it seems to belong to the second group, associated with the building.

<sup>65</sup> E.g. Horn-Oncken 1967: 114; Schlikker 1940: 96–101. <sup>66</sup> Gros 1979 and 1991.

<sup>67</sup> I have discussed *eurythmia* in more detail in Thomas forthcoming.

<sup>68</sup> Associated with the painter Parrhasius and the sculptor Euphranor by Pliny, *HN* 35.67 and 128, who is associated with Socrates by Quint. *Inst. Or.* 12.10.4 and Xen. *Mem.* 3.10.1–5; developed in Pl. *Phlb.* 64e ff. and *Rep.* 530a.

the columns in 1:10 ratio of diameter to height. Considerations of *decor* are evident both in the placing of the *pronaos* of the *aedes Augusti* opposite the Temple of Jupiter and in the curve of its hemicycle adjusted ‘so that those before the magistrates would not obstruct those doing business in the basilica’. The arrangement (*conlocatio*) of the roof beams corresponds to the two main functional and aesthetic elements of the basilica so that the beams support one ridge extending over the basilica and a second one extending from the middle to above the shrine. This *dispositio* with two gabled forms on the exterior and a high ceiling offers the *uenusta species* which Vitruvius cherishes. The *distributio* of the *plutei* (parapets) and the upper columns not only reduces the costs and relieves the design of labour-intensive trouble (*operosam molestiam*), but also through the giant order adds ‘magnificence to the expenditure and authority to the building’.<sup>69</sup>

In addition to these notions identified by Vitruvius as the elements of architecture, other rhetorical concepts informed architectural ideas. The older austere style of rhetoric defined architecturally by Dionysius, which formed the basis of later rhetorical concepts of ‘harshness’ (Greek *trachytēs* or Latin *asperitas*), helped to structure Vitruvius’ own observations on *asperitas intercolumniorum*.<sup>70</sup> Yet for Vitruvius such ‘harshness’ was a positive quality associated with the extra depth of the Ionic style of the late Hellenistic age, above all the creations of Hermogenes. At the Temple of Artemis Leukophryene in Magnesia the zones in shadow – like pauses in a speech – separate the white marble supports of the colonnade, maintaining around them the impression of depth from which arises that of relief. A link is thus established between the aesthetics of oratory and those of architecture.<sup>71</sup> The concept involves three complementary ideas: the rhythmic animation of the columns; the alternation of solids and voids; and the resulting visual contrasts of light and shadow. Vitruvius used the term as a Latin equivalent of the Greek *τόνος*, which in a rhetorical context consists of rhythm, vigour and tension and had already been used of a colonnade in the fourth century BCE.<sup>72</sup> By contrast he dismisses the affected grandeur of

<sup>69</sup> Vit. *De arch.* 5.1.10.

<sup>70</sup> Vit. *De arch.* 3.3.9; cf. Dion. Hal. (above, n. 24). For later *trachytēs*, see Martin 1974: 341.

<sup>71</sup> Gros 1990: 116; 1991, 76.

<sup>72</sup> *τόνος* means literally tightening, strain, tension, or contraction, and refers to a cord, band, or sinew. Its meanings include the raising of the voice, pitch, volume, metre, key, mental or physical exertion, intensity, tension, force, tenor, or city quarter (*IG* 12.5.872.36, et al.). Rhetorical uses: Plutarch, *Brutus*, 32; Dion. Hal. *Isocrates* 13; Hdt. 1.47, 62. Of a row of columns in the design of the Piraeus arsenal by Philo of Byzantium: *IG* 2<sup>2</sup>.1668.48 with Martin 1967; Linfert 1981.

*tumor*, which referred to both high-flown language and protuberant architecture. The pycnostyle manner of temple colonnades widely adopted in the new Augustan temple programme is said to produce a 'swollen and unattractive appearance' (*tumidam et inuenustam speciem*).<sup>73</sup>

One influential concept which is absent from Vitruvius is *concinntas*, 'prettiness'. The words *cinnus*, *concinus* and *concinare* are metaphors from the sphere of cookery with the sense of 'composing from different ingredients'. They penetrated into the language of rhetoric without altogether losing their original meaning: *concinntas* is associated with oratorical rhythm, verbal symmetry, and the phonetic effects of *compositio* as a part of *elocutio*; the word designates a harmony, a balance between the constituent parts of an oratorical period or a clausula.<sup>74</sup> The concept of *concinntas* is therefore common in writings on rhetoric, where it refers to that neat and closely crafted style produced by the skilful and elegant combination of words and phrases. It is striking, therefore, that Cicero also applies this leading term of rhetorical theory to the stucco decoration of the colonnade at his brother Quintus' villa at Laterium.<sup>75</sup> Yet, if it might therefore be considered simply a borrowing from the orator's rhetorical language, it also makes clear sense in an architectural context as the neat and finely crafted elaboration of materials in fine art. As in rhetoric, so in an architectural context it fits naturally with *uenustas* as a quality that gives a building an attractive allure. The 'pretty' or 'elegant' stucco decoration, on which the 'dignity' of the portico is felt to rest, makes a rhetorical and aesthetic contrast with the severe architecture of the vault, which it no doubt also adorned, as in contemporary architecture from Pompeii, to offer a more attractive surface appearance.<sup>76</sup>

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By the time, therefore, that the treatise *Peri Hypsous* ('On the Sublime') appeared in the later first century CE there was already a well-established tradition of interpreting rhetoric and architecture in similar ways and, as part of that, a common vocabulary.<sup>77</sup> But the work is of particular interest here because it provides the most extensive and consistent instance in antiquity of the homology of language between architecture and rhetoric.

<sup>73</sup> Vit. *De Arch.* 3.3.11. For the Augustan preference for the pycnostyle mode, already (cf. 3.3.2) adopted in the temples of Divus Iulius in the Roman Forum and of Venus Genetrix in the Forum Iulium, see Gros 1976: 102-8. Other Augustan pycnostyle temples would include the Temples of Apollo Sosianus, Palatine Apollo and Mars Ultor.

<sup>74</sup> López Moreda 2000. <sup>75</sup> Cic. *Ad Q. fr.* 3.1.5. <sup>76</sup> Ling 1972.

<sup>77</sup> For this now generally accepted date and its ramifications, see further below. The attribution to the tutor of Queen Zenobia of Palmyra, Cassius Longinus, is, of course, pure fancy.

Although it is ostensibly concerned with rhetorical style, not art or architecture, the abundance of architectural imagery in the text reinforces the idea of the Sublime as something ‘built up’ to a height. The treatise is thus situated at the boundary between architecture and rhetoric. While the work explicitly concerns oratory and poetry, the intensely visual imagery and extended range of architectural metaphors suggest a concern as much with buildings as with words. The various constituent features that its author presents as characteristic of the Sublime can be applied to architecture as well as to rhetoric. Although he claims to refer to the impact of spoken language on the ‘hearer’ (*akroatēs*), it is the ‘viewer’ that he is really addressing. He is concerned with the direction of this ‘viewer’s’ gaze towards the ‘architectural’ structure of rhetoric and, above all, with the emotional response that this gaze generates. This is clear at once from his initial reference to an earlier treatise on the Sublime by ‘Caecilius’:

Τὸ μὲν τοῦ Καικιλίου συγγραμμάτων, ὃ περὶ ὕψους συνετάξατο, ἀνασκοπούμενοις ἡμῖν ὡς οἶσθα κοινῇ, Ποστούμιε Τερεντιανέ φίλτατε, ταπεινότερον ἐφάνη τῆς ὅλης ὑποθέσεως . . .

‘When we *examined* together Caecilius’ treatise on the Sublime, it appeared, as you know, my dear Postumius Terentianus, *lower* than the whole subject matter . . .’ (1.1)

A visual contrast is right away established. The verb for ‘examined’ here, *anaskopoumenois*, implies ‘looking upwards’ towards the Sublime, only to find that Caecilius’ work is situated down below (*tapeinoteron*), almost a lowly ruin. This sets the pattern for a series of elements of the Sublime with architectural meaning. They can conveniently be listed here.

1. **Height (ἀκρότης) and ‘eminence’ (ἐξοχή).** The first feature of the Sublime, so obvious that ‘Longinus’ feels it needs no further explanation to his Roman addressee who is ‘expert in *paideia*’, is ‘a certain distinction and excellence in expression’, which provides writers with renown and immortality.<sup>78</sup>
2. **Ecstasy.** Almost immediately, a second feature is mentioned, which is related not to the form of the Sublime, but to its effect. It transports the reader in *ekstasis* and does so by its skill in invention, its ordered arrangement, and its power.<sup>79</sup>

<sup>78</sup> [Long.] *De subl.* 1.3: ‘In addressing you who are so expert in culture (*paideia*) I feel almost absolved from the necessity of premising at greater length that sublimity is a height (ἀκρότης) and excellence (ἐξοχή) of language, and from no other source than this the greatest poets and prose writers have derived their eminence and embellished time with their own renown’ (1.3).

<sup>79</sup> [Long.] *De subl.* 1.4: ‘The effect of elevated language upon an audience is not persuasion but ecstasy (ἐκστασις). In every way the amazing (τὸ θαυμάσιον) with its sudden shock (σύν



This image is visual, an intense flash of lightning. By contrast, the next characteristics of the Sublime mentioned seem very literary. Yet they still have application to buildings.

**3. Avoidance of swelling.** In the search for ‘elevation’, it is very hard to avoid ‘tumidity’ (τὸ οἰδεῖν), but ‘bad are those swellings, in bodies and in words, which are inflated and unreal, and threaten us with the reverse of our aim’.<sup>80</sup> This is close to Vitruvius’ criticism of the ‘swollen appearance’ of ‘pycnostyle’ temples.<sup>81</sup> It is characterized by a desire to go beyond the Sublime, like its opposite, puerility, which, in trying to impress, results only in triviality. A third fault, *parenthyrsos*, is criticized as the adoption of empty or immoderate passion where moderation is needed.<sup>82</sup> All three are called ‘undignified things’ (*asemna*), which ‘arise for one reason, a pursuit of novelty, about which people today go wild’.<sup>83</sup>

Beauties of expression are the ‘elements and foundation’ of success or failure in achieving sublimity. In architecture, such ‘elements and foundations’ – the components of classical form: pediments, capitals, columns and bases – are equally abused by ‘improper fashions’ for novelty (*nunc iniquis moribus improbantur*), in the illusionistic, painted *aediculae* of the Third Pompeian Style which pretend to be temples but lack volumetric form. Vitruvius complains that ‘fluted reeds are built instead of columns, ... volutes instead of pediments, candelabra supporting flowers’.<sup>84</sup>

**4. Reached by an arduous ascent.** The way to the Sublime in rhetoric is declared to be arduous, its steps littered with defects, and good judgement of style is considered ‘the last and crowning fruit of long experience’.<sup>85</sup> A similar conceit is expressed in Vitruvius’ opening chapter about ‘the great discipline of architecture’, ‘embellished and overflowing with many, various spheres of learning’: ‘I do not consider that men can properly be called architects just like that, unless they have

ἐκπλήξει) prevails over that which aims at persuasion and gratification. While persuasion is generally under our control, these things become established in front of every listener, bringing power and irresistible might. We see skill in invention, and the arrangement (τάξιν) and management of material (οἰκονομίαν), painstakingly emerging not from one or two features, but out of the overall sublimity of the language (ἐκ δὲ τοῦ ὅλου τῶν λόγων ὕφους); and sublimity brought out at the right moment scatters all facts before it like a thunderbolt and at once displays the full power (δύναμιν) of the orator.’

<sup>80</sup> [Long.] *De subl.* 3.3. <sup>81</sup> Vitr. *De arch.* 3.3.11 (above, n. 73). <sup>82</sup> [Long.] *De subl.* 3.5.

<sup>83</sup> [Long.] *De subl.* 5. <sup>84</sup> Vitr. *De arch.* 7.5.3. <sup>85</sup> [Long.] *De subl.* 5–6.

first climbed these steps of disciplines from their early childhood, fed on the knowledge of several varieties of arts and letters, and then finally reached, at the summit, the supreme temple of architecture.<sup>86</sup>

5. **Attainability of the Sublime.** The Sublime is said to arise from five sources, deriving from both art and nature. Beneath these *ideai*, 'like a common foundation (*edaphous*)', is the power of speaking. The natural sources are, first, the power of forming great conceptions, or literally 'aiming for bulk' (ἄδρεπήβολον), and, second, violent and inspired passion. The sources derived from art are the 'moulding of figures', the choice of words, and 'dignified and elevated composition'.<sup>87</sup> 'We must raise up our souls towards great things and make them, as it were, pregnant with noble inspiration. . . . 'Sublimity is the echo of a great soul (ὑψος μεγαλοφροσύνης ἀπήχημα) . . . The true orator must not have a low (*tapeinon*) or ignoble thought. For it is not possible that men with small ideas fitting for slaves prevailing throughout their lives should produce anything that is admirable and worthy of immortality.'<sup>88</sup> By the same token Vitruvius' rescue from poverty (*inopia*) is the premise for his architectural writings and accomplishments.<sup>89</sup>
6. **Cosmic dimensions.** The Sublime is measured by a cosmic distance.<sup>90</sup> True grandeur comes only from the appearance of cosmic dimensions. In literature the image is Homer's, of horses stepping beyond the edges of the earth in two bounds; in architecture, Vitruvius characterizes the act of looking at a tall building in similar, 'cosmic' terms, in a passage on the Ionic entablature: 'The higher the eye's view climbs, the less easily it cuts through the thickness of the air; so it passes through the space of the height, is stripped of its power, and reports back to the senses an uncertain size of the basic measure.'<sup>91</sup> The taller the building, then, the less sure one is of its true size.
7. **Unity.** True grandeur has a consistency and no gaps. The supposed inferiority of the *Odyssey* to the *Iliad* is expressed architecturally: it lacks 'levelled heights and the absence of subsidence' (οὐδ' ἐξωμαλισμένα τὰ ὕψη καὶ ἰζήματα μηδαμοῦ λαμβάνοντα).<sup>92</sup> Archilochus and Demosthenes 'massed together their outstanding points, inserting in the midst nothing frivolous, mean, or trivial. For these faults undermine the whole, as if creating chinks or gaps in great works built up together and fortified by the relation to each other'.<sup>93</sup>

<sup>86</sup> Vitr. *De arch.* 1.1.11.

<sup>87</sup> [Long.] *Subl.* 8.1.

<sup>88</sup> [Long.] *Subl.* 9.2-3.

<sup>89</sup> Vitr. *De arch.* 1 pr. 3.

<sup>90</sup> [Long.] *Subl.* 9.5.

<sup>91</sup> Vitr. *De arch.* 3.5.9.

<sup>92</sup> [Long.] *Subl.* 9.13.

<sup>93</sup> [Long.] *Subl.* 10.7.

- 8. Amplification.** Amplification (*auxēsis*) occurs when ‘elevated expressions follow, one after the other, in an unbroken succession and in an ascending order’, and its vigour ‘loses its intensity and substance when not buttressed by the Sublime’.<sup>94</sup> It is defined as an ‘abundance of details’ (*plēthos*) which invests the subject with grandeur.<sup>95</sup>

Height, ecstatic effect, avoidance of tumidity and crazy novelties, the result of a hard ascent and natural and artistic qualities, the suggestion of cosmic distance, uninterrupted grandeur and amplification: all these features apply equally, or more easily, to buildings as to words. But the next characteristics of the sublime style in rhetoric come even closer to built monuments.

- 9. Monumentality.** To achieve the Sublime, one must emulate great prototypes. Longinus’ model writers are like monuments. Demosthenes and Cicero are two great towers, the former consisting ‘in mostly sheer height’ (ἐν ὕψει τὸ πλεόν ἀποτόμῳ), the latter ‘in accumulation’ (ἐν χύσει).<sup>96</sup> But the great monument is Plato, ‘set down in bulk and magnificent stateliness’ (καθεστὼς ἐν ὄγκῳ καὶ μεγαλοπρεπεῖ σεμνότητι).<sup>97</sup> One purple passage of Plato’s that second-century writers favoured as a model of such *semmotēs*, or literary dignity, was the famous image from the *Phaedrus* referring to the physical transmission of beauty into a lover’s soul when he sees his beloved.<sup>98</sup> They used it to emphasize the profound eroticism of the experience of ‘unspeakable and immortal’ aesthetic beauty, through which one might come closer to the sublime beauty of the cosmos.<sup>99</sup> It is this passage that Lucian echoes in his rhetorical exercise *On the Hall*, where the interaction of an educated person with the building is analysed in similar terms, its beauty transmitted through perception: ‘for something beautiful virtually flows through the eyes into the soul, then adorning the soul in its own manner it releases the words’.<sup>100</sup> Emulation of a model is ‘like taking an impression from beautiful forms or figures or other works of art’.<sup>101</sup>

- 10. Response.** Related to this is the next feature of the Sublime: its would-be creators should consider how the great writers of the past, like Homer or Demosthenes, would have responded ‘if they had been

<sup>94</sup> [Long.] *Subl.* 11.1–2.

<sup>95</sup> [Long.] *Subl.* 12.1.

<sup>96</sup> [Long.] *Subl.* 12.4.

<sup>97</sup> [Long.] *Subl.* 12.3.

<sup>98</sup> Hermog. *Id.* 1.6; Trapp 1988: 152–3.

<sup>99</sup> E.g. Maximus, *Dialexis* 21.7–8, quoted by Trapp 1988: 162–3.

<sup>100</sup> Lucian, *De domo* 4.

<sup>101</sup> [Long.] *De subl.* 13.4.

there, or how would they have been affected. The competition is truly great, to imagine such a law-court or theatre for our own words.<sup>102</sup>

Considering the built environment of a speech invites a harmony between architecture and rhetoric. As Lucian writes of his 'hall', a great building needs a Homer to do it justice with praise.<sup>103</sup> But, more importantly, the creator of the Sublime needs to anticipate future responses:

'there is an even greater encouragement if you also ask, 'How would every age after me react to what I have written?' If a man is afraid to voice anything that goes beyond one's own life and time, the conceptions of his mind must necessarily be incomplete, blind, and, as it were, born prematurely, since they are not at all brought to perfection for the era of future fame.'<sup>104</sup>

**11. The exhilaration of materials.** Images 'possess' the hearer. Both orators and poets 'seek to stir the passions and the emotions'.<sup>105</sup> If this seems at first distanced from architecture, 'Longinus' metaphors again bring buildings back to the foreground: 'Sometimes Aeschylus introduces ideas that are rough-hewn, unpolished, and harsh ... the palace of Lycurgus at the coming of Dionysus is strangely represented as possessed – "A frenzy thrills the hall; the roofs are bacchant with ecstasy".'<sup>106</sup>

Oratorical imagery can 'instil vehemence and passion into spoken words; when it is combined with argumentative passages it not only persuades the hearer but actually makes him its slave'.<sup>107</sup> In monumental architecture, this is dangerous: in Lucian's *Hall* the viewer is 'persuaded' into 'servitude': 'I came into this building to make a speech, as if I had been attracted by a *iungx* or the beauty of a siren.'<sup>108</sup> But 'it overawes (*ekplēttei*) and terrifies' the speaker, 'confuses his thoughts and makes him more pathetic because he reckons that it is the most shameful thing of all that his words are shown up in a place of such excellent form to be less fine'; 'his eyes take control, demand attention and do not let him get on with his speech'.<sup>109</sup>

**12. The brightness of figures.** 'By some kind of natural law figures bring assistance to the Sublime, and on their part are in turn assisted by it in a wonderful manner. They produce an excess of light and splendour.' The visual metaphor is again developed. 'By what means has the orator

<sup>102</sup> [Long.] *De subl.* 14.2.

<sup>105</sup> [Long.] *De subl.* 15.2.

<sup>108</sup> Lucian, *De domo* 13.

<sup>103</sup> Lucian, *De domo* 9.

<sup>106</sup> [Long.] *De subl.* 15.5–6.

<sup>109</sup> Lucian, *De domo* 17.

<sup>104</sup> [Long.] *De subl.* 14.3.

<sup>107</sup> [Long.] *De subl.* 15.9.

here concealed the figure? Clearly: by that very light. For just as all dim lustres disappear when surrounded by the blaze of the sun, so the tricks of rhetoric are utterly obscured by the grandeur permeating everywhere around them.<sup>110</sup> Again Lucian's *Hall* provides the best comparison:

'the ceiling of the hall, or rather its head, fair of face by itself, has been adorned with gold, to the same effect as the sky at night when thoroughly lit up by the stars at intervals, and blooming here and there with the flowers of their fire. If it were all fire, it would not be beautiful, but terrifying. . . . When the setting sun hits it and mixes with the gold, they make a common lightning and shine in redoubled, reddish splendour.'<sup>111</sup>

**13. Rustication.** Sometimes the Sublime is reached by lack of connection.

In literature this is achieved by asyndeta or connecting particles. Such a feature may seem to stretch the limits of a comparison with architecture. But again the architectural metaphor is prominent: 'if you level the roughness of passion with connecting joins to become smooth, it falls down stingless and its fire is immediately put out'.<sup>112</sup> There is something sublime then in using blocks unworked and unbonded, a kind of literary 'rustication', just as Quintilian likens literary composition to a 'structure of unfinished stones' or 'rough stone blocks' and Apuleius would later compare his own rhetorical style to a rapid and haphazard piling up of unworked stones in a wall without any attempt at achieving evenness, regularity or alignment.<sup>113</sup>

**14. Art and nature.** Here the literary technique of reversals in thought

matters less to our author than its implications: 'among the best writers it is by means of *hyberbaton* that imitation approaches the effects of nature. Art is perfect when it seems to be nature, and nature hits the mark when she contains art hidden within her.'<sup>114</sup> The complementary and mutually substitutive roles of art and nature, *technē* and *physis*, are commonplace in great building projects from Polycrates to Trajan, through Hellenistic monarchs, down to Ruskin, who argued that the design of the Scott monument should be a harmony between art and nature: 'the utmost finish of art is not inappropriate in scenes of nature'.<sup>115</sup>

<sup>110</sup> [Long.] *De subl.* 17.1–2.      <sup>111</sup> Lucian, *De domo* 8.      <sup>112</sup> [Long.] *De subl.* 21.1.

<sup>113</sup> Quint. *Inst. or.* 8.6.63, 9.4.27; Apul. *De deo Socr.*, pr. 3; cf. *Flor.* 18.

<sup>114</sup> [Long.] *De subl.* 22.1.

<sup>115</sup> Cook and Wedderburn 1903–12: 1.256–7. For art and nature in ancient architecture, see, for example, Fehr 1980 and Purcell 1987.

So far, then, we have seen that the accumulated features attributed to the sublime style in rhetoric are inherently visual and in some cases make almost better sense applied to architecture than to words. The remaining characteristics of the Sublime, if not so obviously architectural, also have application to buildings.

15. **Variety.** In linguistic terms, polyptota, changes of case, tense, person, number, or gender, can diversify and enliven an exposition.<sup>116</sup> A similar *poikilia* can be found in buildings, in the range of forms and materials on Roman façades: orders of different sizes; column shafts with straight or twisted flutes; pediments triangular and segmental; and, above all, marbles of different colours and origins.<sup>117</sup> The statues of eastern prisoners in coloured Phrygian or Numidian marble mirror the *poikilia* which Greeks observed in Persian dress.<sup>118</sup> As with clothing, so in architecture slabs and columns of these materials were selected to add *poikilia* to a building.<sup>119</sup>
16. **Mass.** The literary effect of using plural for singular is that the subject seems ‘more like one body’.<sup>120</sup> The architectural meaning of this is plain from a later observation by John Ruskin: ‘a building, in order to show its magnitude, must be seen all at once . . . it must have one visible bounding line from top to bottom, and from end to end’.<sup>121</sup>
17. **Visualization: ‘to make the hearer see’.** ‘Do you observe, my friend, how [Herodotus] leads you in imagination through the region [up to the great city of Meroe (*Histories* 2.29)] and makes you see what you hear? All such cases *supported* (ὑπερείδόμενα) on the persons themselves place the hearer on the very scene of action.’<sup>122</sup> The implication of this principle for architectural description is self-evident; but the use of an architectural metaphor in making the point reiterates how buildings do this too, engaging viewers directly.
18. **Rhythm.** Periphrasis adds musical rhythm.<sup>123</sup> Again, as Plato, starting with unadorned diction, made it musical and shed over it the melodious rhythm which comes from periphrasis, so architects start with

<sup>116</sup> [Long.] *De Subl.* 23.1–2.

<sup>117</sup> E.g. Joseph. *BJ* 5.1.4 (176–80) on Herod’s palace in Jerusalem, noting the variety of the marbles, the size of the roof beams, the dazzling ornaments, numbers of rooms, and thousands of different shapes.

<sup>118</sup> Hdt. 7.61.1; Xen. *Anab.* 1.5.8; cf. Schneider 1986: 152–5 with sculptural examples.

<sup>119</sup> Strabo 12.8.14 (C 537) on pavonazzetto from Docimium; cf. Thomas 2007: 209.

<sup>120</sup> [Long.] *De subl.* 24.1 (σωματοειδέστερον).

<sup>121</sup> Ruskin, *Seven Lamps*, 3.6, in Cook and Wedderburn 1903–12: viii, 106.

<sup>122</sup> [Long.] *De subl.* 26.2. <sup>123</sup> [Long.] *De subl.* 28.1–2.

unadorned materials and make them musical, to produce rhythm: in this they are followers of Amphion, whose musical rhythms on the lyre inspired the assembling of masonry to build Thebes.<sup>124</sup> From the Pythagorean tradition up to Goethe and beyond, architecture and music have been considered analogous; the subject is too vast to be dealt with here.<sup>125</sup>

- 19. Perfection.** In literature the qualities of grandeur and beauty, elegance and dignity, power and force, and even polished refinement arise above all from diction, ‘the choice of authoritative and magnificent words (ἡ τῶν κυρίων καὶ μεγαλοπρεπῶν ὀνομάτων ἐκλογή)’ which ‘leads and casts a spell on the audience’ and allows these qualities to ‘blossom’ and ‘breathes into dead things a kind of living voice’:<sup>126</sup> ‘Longinus’ points to the analogy of beautiful statues, whose refinement is literally polished; but his language applies equally to architecture, none more so than the monumental buildings of the Athenian Acropolis, ‘always in bloom . . . as if they had an evergreen breath and ageless life suffused within them’.<sup>127</sup>
- 20. Hyperbole.** Exaggeration helps to create an impression of *hupsos*.<sup>128</sup> But it also helps us to judge what is monumental in architecture. A well-known instance is Pausanias on the ‘Cyclopaean’ masonry of the walls at Tiryns:

‘The wall, which is the only part of the ruins still standing, is a work of the Cyclopes made of unwrought stones, each stone being so big that a pair of mules could not move the smallest from its place to the slightest degree. Long ago small stones were so inserted that each of them binds the large blocks firmly together.’<sup>129</sup>

Great architecture needs ‘a Homer to do it justice with praise’,<sup>130</sup> so indeed this image can be traced, through Virgil, to Homer himself. At the dramatic culmination of the *Aeneid*, as Aeneas closes in on Turnus, Turnus raises a huge stone that could not be lifted by twelve men today – as he holds it, he wavers and is hit by Aeneas’ spear, harder than stones from a siege engine or a thunderbolt. The continuity between Homer’s and Virgil’s

<sup>124</sup> Aristid. *Or.* 27.30–1; for the analogy between poetry and architecture, cf. Hor. *AP* 394–6.

<sup>125</sup> J.-W. von Goethe, 23 March 1829: ‘Ich habe unter meinen Papieren ein Blatt gefunden wo ich die Baukunst eine erstarrte Musik nenne. Und wirklich, es hat etwas; die Stimmung, die von der Baukunst ausgeht, kommt dem Effekt der Musik nahe’ (Eckermann 1986: 340). I shall deal with this theme in more detail in Thomas forthcoming a.

<sup>126</sup> [Long.] *De subl.* 30.1. <sup>127</sup> Plut. *Per.* 13.3. <sup>128</sup> [Long.] *De subl.* 38.

<sup>129</sup> Paus. 2.25.8; cf. 2.16.5, 7.25.6. <sup>130</sup> Lucian, *De domo* 9.

language suggests that Aeneas is the victim, as much as Turnus. The stone has been called ‘a figure of history that never had a discrete present and is as much a continuous past as a continuous present’; it is thus an image of the ‘Sublime’.<sup>131</sup> Or, in other words, it possesses all the properties of the ‘monumental’.

‘Longinus’, however, stresses that ‘one should know where to set the limit; since an occasional overshooting of the mark ruins the hyperbole, and such expressions, if strained too much, lose their tension and sometimes swing round and produce the opposite effect’.<sup>132</sup> As Ruskin noted of the statue of San Carlo Borromeo above Lago Maggiore, such hyperbolic conception of monumental scale in architecture causes alienation.<sup>133</sup>

**21. Arrangement.** Finally, sublime harmony is achieved through the arrangement of words. The conception follows the notions of *dispositio* and *ordinatio* that we have seen in Cicero and Vitruvius. Again the architectural imagery is particularly prominent: a writer ‘assembles manifold shapes of words, thoughts, deeds, beauty, melody, . . . and by the building of phrase upon phrase raises a sublime and harmonious structure’.<sup>134</sup> The whole matters more than the details, presenting a perfect composite of parts. Writers who are ‘not naturally elevated or are even lacking in greatness nonetheless, simply by joining and fitting together ordinary words that have nothing outstanding in themselves, achieve bulk and distance and the appearance of not being low’. So lines from Euripides show how ‘a popular expression is made high in proportion to the structure’ or how ‘a noble idea becomes more bulky by the harmony not being hurried or carried on a roller, but the words act as buttresses for each other and in the intervals have support for well-grounded greatness’.<sup>135</sup>

When the text of ‘Longinus’, *On the Sublime* reappeared in translation in the seventeenth century, it made an impression not just in the literary world. It also affected architecture. The intensely visual and architectural language of the treatise and the emphasis of the impact of rhetoric on the viewer, the idea of composition as a union of conflicting opposites, and the overall sublime aesthetic all became ingredients in the design and appreciation of architecture. This shift in visual culture was the result not of Boileau’s 1674 translation, which was to have such a major impact in the

<sup>131</sup> Virg. *Aen.* 12.896–902; cf. *Il.* 5.302–14, 20.283–92. Budick 2000: 62–70 (quotation at 69).

<sup>132</sup> [Long.] *De subl.* 38.1.

<sup>133</sup> Cook and Wedderburn 1903–12: 1.263–4; cf. Thomas 2007: 237.

<sup>134</sup> [Long.] *De subl.* 39.3.

<sup>135</sup> [Long.] *De subl.* 40.1–4.





Figure 1.2 Greenwich, St Alphege's Church.

following century on literary and philosophical ideas, but of lesser-known English versions starting with John Hall's translation of 1652. Instead of the classical values of harmony, simplicity and clarity emanating from Vitruvius, 'Longinus', and in his wake Vanbrugh, Hawksmoor and Wren appreciated the intricate, the difficult, the dark and the awful'.<sup>136</sup> Instead of focusing on the architectural object itself, the treatise encouraged its architectural readers to consider the impact of buildings on their viewers.

Some of the specific strategies of rhetorical invention suggested in the ancient rhetorical treatise as means to produce 'the Sublime' clearly resonated with architects. As Sophie Ploeg has shown, aspects of 'Longinus' rhetorical sublime can be seen in Hawksmoor's London churches: the distinctive use of rustication in the upper storeys of the façade of St Mary Woolnoth and the outsized keystones of St George-in-the-East and St George Bloomsbury echo the demand for the unity of discordant elements and the deliberate use of the abrupt; the cultivation of projections and recesses create dramatic contrasts between light and shadow; the avoidance of 'gaps and crevices' in structural masses are reflected in the abrupt transitions in the façade of St Alphege in Greenwich (Figure 1.2); and Hawksmoor's use of orthogonal projections showing buildings as touched by the rays of the sun and resultant patterns of light and shadow show his

<sup>136</sup> Van Eck 2007: 121.

obsessive concern with the visual impact of his works.<sup>137</sup> It seems no exaggeration to claim that ‘Longinus’ offered architects and patrons of the early eighteenth century a new way of thinking about architectural design and its perception. A few decades later the earlier principles of Horace’s *Ars poetica* provided a similar stimulus to Boffrand, whose *Livre d’architecture* included a systematic architectural commentary in French and Latin on Horace’s text. In one part he provides an architectural illustration of failed poetic efforts to reach sublimity:

We are deceived by an appearance of correctness. I labour to be brief, and I become obscure. One who tries to polish a work finds all its strength gone; in the effort to make it sublime, he succeeds only in making it turgid. He who fears to rise too high is left crawling on the ground; or, craving variety, he depicts dolphins in trees and wild boar in the sea.

Aim at a work with a grave character; it turns massive and ponderous. Aim at lightness; the result is arid and mean. Set out to build a church that will inspire respect, and you find that it is so dark inside that no one can read; seek to avoid that defect, and it turns into a light-filled salon, a lantern or a banqueting hall.<sup>138</sup>

If this rhetorical notion could have so great an impact at such linguistic and historical remove, what might its effect have been on its contemporaries? The precise date of the treatise on the Sublime is unknown and has been the subject of great debate and widely divergent opinions ranging from the early first century to the mid third.<sup>139</sup> The concept is already familiar in a Jewish context in Philo’s reference to the prophet Moses’ inspired ‘power of sublime speech’ (*hypsēgoros dynamis*) and the ‘sublime speech’ (*hypsēgoria*) of Jehovah.<sup>140</sup> The polemic with the Jewish critic and historian Caecilius of Calacte, who was probably the Caecilius addressed as *philtate* by Dionysius of Halicarnassus in the latter years of Augustus’ reign, suggests that the work attributed to Longinus was composed not long after that. Yet the author’s reference to the ‘hackneyed’ (*thryloumenon*) discussion of the absence of great literature in the modern age, which is treated at length in Tacitus’ *Dialogus*, has led some to believe that the work was written in the same literary climate of the late first century C.E.<sup>141</sup> The *Dialogus* was probably not published until 100, but it must have undergone several revisions before that, and its principal theme could have

<sup>137</sup> Ploeg 2005 and 2006.

<sup>138</sup> Translation by David Britt, in van Eck 2002: 9, after Hor. *AP* 25–30. The underlined passage refers to Boffrand’s translation of Horace.

<sup>139</sup> For a summary, see Häussler 1995.

<sup>140</sup> Philo, *Quis rerum divinarum heres* 4; *Quod deterius* 79. <sup>141</sup> [Long.] *De subl.* 44.2.

been current in the 80s. Nothing is known of the addressee of *On the Sublime*, Postumius Terentianus. But if this is the same man as the Roman commander of a military detachment in Syene in Upper Egypt in 85/6, the author's choice of a passage from Herodotus' account of a journey from nearby Elephantine to Meroe would have special point, to attract the attention either of one who had just returned from that area or of a young man about to be posted to the region.<sup>142</sup> Circumstantial evidence therefore points to a date for the treatise in the late Flavian period.

At this time 'Longinus' visual metaphors had particular relevance, when many of the orators who confronted this or similar texts not only excelled in verbal performance, but were also builders aiming at architectural display. To Philostratus their literary and architectural projects appeared analogous. Thus, in the case of the famous orator Nicetes of Smyrna, his construction of an approach road from the Ephesian gates to Smyrna was said to be surpassed only by the 'more splendid' (*lamproteros*) metaphorical 'pathways' that he built for Knowledge.<sup>143</sup> The quality of *lamprotēs*, 'brightness' or 'splendour', marks both the verbal and the architectural displays of these sophists, and in neither case could it be called a remote metaphor. When mixed, according to Plato, with the colour 'red' (*erythros*), it produced the range of colours across the spectrum.<sup>144</sup> Architecturally, it enabled that illumination which was perceived as the most striking quality of buildings, varying in intensity at different times of day. Produced by luminous materials such as gold or crystalline white marble or purple dyes, this 'brilliance' found its most intense manifestation in direct sunlight and had a spiritual quality, as the movement of light was considered to manifest the presence of divine powers.<sup>145</sup> Rhetoricians would come to consider it among the most important components of grandeur.<sup>146</sup>

None of this was lost on Nicetes' pupil, Pliny the Younger. Writing to Tacitus in the late 90s CE (*Letter* 1.20), he distinguishes a full rhetorical style (*amplificatio*) in very similar terms to the definition of *auxēsis* in *Peri tou Hupsous*, as marked by 'abundance' (*copia*) and 'force' (*uis*). He prefers expansiveness (*magnitudo*), manifested by boldness (*audacia*) and

<sup>142</sup> Martial 1.86.7; [Long.] *De subl.* 26.2. Herrmann 1964: 80. Manutius' correction of the manuscript reading 'Florentianus' is defended by Russell 1964: 59 and accepted by all modern commentators, although one should not rule out that Manutius was familiar with the Martial passage when he made his correction. The same name also appears on a later water pipe from a suburban property on the Janiculum in Rome: *CIL* 15.2.7373.

<sup>143</sup> Philostr. *VS* 511. <sup>144</sup> Pl. *Tim.* 67d.

<sup>145</sup> For further discussion of *lamprotēs*, see Thomas 2007: 219–20, and forthcoming.

<sup>146</sup> Hermogenes, *De eloc.* 264–9, in Wooten 1987: 32–6.

sublimity (*sublimitas*), to economy (*brevitas*). As in the Greek text, support for this attitude is found in the visual arts:

‘You see how with sculpture, statuary, painting, human form and the form of many animals, even trees, so long as they are noble, nothing makes them more commendable than grandeur (*amplitudo*). The same goes for speeches; scale (*magnitudo*) adds a certain beauty and authority even to the very scrolls.’<sup>147</sup>

The letter starts out as a response to the view of ‘a certain learned and experienced man, who derives pleasure from nothing in forensic oratory so much as brevity’. This man’s admiration of Lysias and Pliny’s rejoinder with Demosthenes and Cicero reminds the reader of the polemic between ‘Longinus’ and Caecilius. Indeed, elsewhere in the letter Pliny comes very close to both the rhetorical theory and the visual language of ‘Longinus’. His quotation from a Greek comic poet of how Pericles ‘flashed lightning, thundered and confounded Greece’ provides the perfect demonstration of ‘Longinus’ view that ‘sublimity brought out at the right moment scatters all facts before it like a thunderbolt and at once displays the full power of the orator’.<sup>148</sup> Pliny continues in an embellishment of the Greek treatise: ‘It is not the speech that is pruned back or chopped up, but that which is expansive, grandiose, and sublime which thunders, flashes lightning, and throws everything into tumult and confusion’.<sup>149</sup>

Pliny comes even closer to the views expressed by ‘Longinus’ in his *Letter* 9.26 to Luperus, which can be seen as forming a thematic pair with 1.20.<sup>150</sup> Orators, he writes, should ‘be excited and worked up, even to boiling point and often to the precipice; for a sheer drop usually lies next to high and elevated places’. Good speakers should take risks. He admits that he is responding to his correspondent’s disapproval as *tumida* of what he calls *sublimia*, a criticism which recalls the Greek treatise, but to which architects were equally prone.<sup>151</sup> ‘Anyone can see what stands out above the crowd’, he replies; ‘but it takes a sharp mind to discriminate between the immoderate and the grand or between the elevated and the disproportionate.’ It is not hard to see how such fine distinctions bedevilled the architecture of the age: what made Domitian’s Palace over the top

<sup>147</sup> Pliny, *Ep.* 1.20.5; cf. [Long.] *De subl.* 30.1. <sup>148</sup> [Long.] *De subl.* 1.4.

<sup>149</sup> Pliny, *Ep.* 1.20.19. <sup>150</sup> Whitton 2012: 364.

<sup>151</sup> Pliny, *Ep.* 9.26.5; [Long.] *In Subl.* 3.4. For Pliny’s admiration of *sublimitas* in literature, compare *Ep.* 1.10.5 (*Platonicam illam sublimitatem et latitudinem*) and 4.20.2–3 (to Novius Maximus: *opus pulchrum ualidum acre sublime uarium elegans purum figuratum spatiosum etiam et cum magna tua laude diffusum . . . Nam dolori sublimitatem et magnificentiam ingenium . . . addidit*).

(*enorme*) and extravagant (*immodicum*), but the projects of Trajan grand and elevated.<sup>152</sup> Both letters seem intended to provoke recipients who were inclined to disagree. Just as *Letter* 9.26 starts by referring elliptically to ‘a certain orator of our generation’, but soon addresses its comments directly to the addressee Lupercus, so in 1.20 Pliny makes it clear that Tacitus dissents from his own view and, through the witty ending and contrasting verbosity of his own letter, implies that Tacitus himself adhered to the value of *brevitas*.<sup>153</sup> The differences between the aesthetics of the two men have in the past encouraged readers to doubt their closeness, but it is now more common to imagine them ‘sitting together in Pliny’s villa, cheerfully sipping their Falernian wine, swapping clichés about life and morals’, and, one might add, debating the aesthetics of literature and buildings.<sup>154</sup>

The impact of ‘Longinus’ on Pliny’s establishment of architectural description as almost a self-standing genre is evident from his two extensive letters on his villas, where he takes ‘Longinus’ principle of ‘visualization’ (no. 17, above) to a self-conscious art, making the reader see what he hears as he tries ‘to put the whole villa before your eyes’.<sup>155</sup> A little over a decade later, the impact of the aesthetic of the Sublime on Pliny’s views on public architecture can be seen in his correspondence as imperial legate in Bithynia–Pontus:<sup>156</sup> a bath built over a ruined house at Prusa demanded by ‘the dignity of the city and the splendour of your age’ was not just a physical enlargement, but a rhetorical ‘amplification’ of the city (*amplietur*); the gymnasium at Nicaea looked ‘more free-flowing’ and had ‘more poetic rhythm’ than its predecessor on the site, though there was a danger that the expenditure on the project would lack utility because what had been built so far was scattered (*incompositum*) and irregular (*sparsum*).<sup>157</sup> In his criticism of architecture Pliny makes the very same appeal as ‘Longinus’ to amplification and a unified body, free from gaps and crevices. Yet the relationship between vehicle and tenor is reversed. While the *Peri Hupsous* uses architectural imagery to define a rhetorical point, Pliny characterizes architecture by rhetorical language. His remarks on the new Trajanic

<sup>152</sup> Pliny, *Ep.* 9.26.6; elsewhere (*Paneg.* 47.4–6) Pliny plays on the more familiar contrast of modesty and excess, rather than, as here, two types of grandeur.

<sup>153</sup> Riggsby 1995. <sup>154</sup> Griffin 1999: 156; cf. Whitton 2012: 346–7.

<sup>155</sup> Pliny, *Ep.* 2.17 and 5.6. Compare esp. 5.6.44 with [Long.] *In Subl.* 26.2.

<sup>156</sup> Pliny’s mission in Bithynia is generally dated to the years between 109 and 111: Sherwin-White 1966: 81.

<sup>157</sup> Prusa: Pliny, *Ep.* 10.23.2 (*et dignitas ciuitatis et saeculi tui nitor postulat*, where *nitor* corresponds to Greek *lamprotes*); 10.70.1. Nicaea: *ibid.* 10.39.4.

project at Nicomedia appeal to the same aesthetics of the Sublime. The old Temple of Magna Mater in the former agora of the city was overshadowed by the buildings of the new forum rising beside it.<sup>158</sup>

A similar rhetoric had been voiced at Prusa only a few years earlier by Dio ('Chrysostom') Cocceianus.<sup>159</sup> His stoa was attacked for 'digging up the city' and 'creating a desert', and a second project was opposed because of the demolition of 'monuments and sacred buildings'.<sup>160</sup> His defence recalls the opening contrasts of *On the Sublime*: the buildings to be demolished were 'ugly and laughable ruins' (αἰσχροὶ καὶ καταγέλαστα ἐρείπια), 'much lower (ταπεινότερα) than sheep pens', not classical 'monuments of ancient prosperity' (ὑπομνήματα τῆς παλαιᾶς εὐδαιμονίας).<sup>161</sup> He proposed that tall buildings were 'worthy of a great city instead of mean, low ones'.<sup>162</sup> If the theory that Dio himself was the author of the treatise on the Sublime remains speculation, there is no doubt that he was part of the same literary circle and was aware of similar texts and ideas.<sup>163</sup> Comparable aesthetic considerations led Plutarch, with perhaps some thought of Domitian's Palace in his own day, to see the position of Valerius Publicola's house on the Velia in Rome, 'overhanging the Forum', as 'rather tragic in manner': 'it looked down on everything from a height and was hard to access, so that when he came down from up there the spectacle (σχήμα) was a lofty one (μετέωρον), and the pomp (ὄγκον) of his procession regal'.<sup>164</sup> Even in the western empire the tendency to view architecture rhetorically is discernible. In Tacitus'

<sup>158</sup> Pliny, *Ep.* 10.49.1 (*est multo depressior opera eo quod cum maxime surgit*); cf. [Long.] *In Subl.* 1.1.

<sup>159</sup> Dio's stoa seems to have been near completion by 105–6: Salmeri 2000: 67.

<sup>160</sup> Dio Chrys. *Or.* 40.8 (λόγοι δὲ ἐγίνοντο πολλοὶ μὲν, οὐ παρὰ πολλῶν δέ, καὶ σφόδρα ἀηδεῖς, ὡς κατασκάπτω τὴν πόλιν, ὡς ἀνάστατον πεποίηκα); a common criticism to judge from Pliny, who denounced the people of Claudopolis for 'digging not building' (*defodiunt plus quam aedificant*, *Ep.* 10.39.5), or, as 'razing to the ground', cf. Hdt. 7.156; Soph. *Phil.* 998; Thuc. 4.109; SIG 344.7 (Teos); Plut. *Publ.* 10; ἀνάστατον πεποίηκα: cf. Plin. *Ep.* 6.16.13; Tac. *Agr.* 30.6.

<sup>161</sup> αἰσχροὶ καὶ καταγέλαστα ἐρείπια: cf. *ILS* 6043, l. 9; Plin. *Ep.* 10.70.1; ταπεινότερα (Dio Chrys. *Or.* 40.9); cf. Plin. *Ep.* 10.49.1 (the old temple at Prusa, overshadowed by the new architecture).

<sup>162</sup> Dio Chrys. *Or.* 47.14–15. The deletion, after Emperius, of the manuscript reading οὐδὲν after ὄφελος, misses the irony of these lines.

<sup>163</sup> The evidence is assembled by Herrmann 1964: esp. 80–1, making the speculative inference regarding authorship and arguing that Dio's Oration 18 was dedicated to the same Terentianus.

<sup>164</sup> Plut. *Publ.* 10.3 (καὶ γὰρ ὄντως ὁ Οὐαλέριος ὥκει τραγικώτερον ὑπὲρ τὴν καλουμένην Οὐελίαν οἰκίαν ἐπικρεμαμένην τῇ ἀγορᾷ καὶ καθορώσαν ἐξ ὕψους ἅπαντα, δυσπρόσοδον δὲ πελάσαι καὶ χαλεπὴν ἐξωθεν, ὥστε καταβαίνοντος αὐτοῦ τὸ σχῆμα μετέωρον εἶναι καὶ βασιλικὸν τῆς προπομπῆς τὸν ὄγκον).

account of public building in Roman Britain the easy shift in thought from a yearning for eloquence to the construction of public buildings suggests a union of architecture and rhetoric, albeit with the historian's disapproval:

'[S]o that people dispersed and uncivilised and thus ready for war might grow used to peace and leisure through pleasures, [Agricola] encouraged them privately and assisted them publicly to build temples, fora, and houses, by praising those quick to respond and chiding the lethargic: . . . he would train leaders' sons in liberal arts and prefer British talents to Gallic passions, so that those who recently used to reject the Roman tongue began to yearn for eloquence. After that even our dress was an honour and the toga was common, and gradually there was a regression to the attractions of vices: porticoes; baths; and elegant dinner parties. And among the ignorant this was called civilisation (*humanitas*), though it was a part of subjection.'<sup>165</sup>

The motivations of architectural patrons reflect the attitudes towards literary production advocated by 'Longinus'. The combination of grand conceptions and fervent passions encouraged the ambitious architectural projects of builders, exceeding even the *megalophrosune* advocated by Aristotle and hinting rather at Vitruvius' appeal to Augustus's *diuina . . . mens et numen*. It was that 'grandeur of enterprise and majesty' which Plutarch saw in imperial buildings.<sup>166</sup> In his own project, the Great Gateway or Pylaea at Thermopylae, he realized the emulation of great models of the past urged by 'Longinus':

'like other plants taking root beside healthy ones, so the Grand Gateway too shares the vigour with the buildings at Delphi and feeds with them off the abundance coming from this place in taking shape and form and receiving the adornment of temples and assemblies and waters such as it had never received in the last thousand years'.<sup>167</sup>

The critic's appeal to the future age, rather than the present, is echoed in Pliny's description to Trajan of a canal scheme at Nicomedia as 'a work worthy of your eternity no less than your renown which will have beauty and utility in equal measure' and in later pronouncements on civic architecture.<sup>168</sup>

<sup>165</sup> Tac. *Agr.* 21.      <sup>166</sup> Plut. *Comp. Per. et Fab. Max.* 3.7.      <sup>167</sup> Plut. *De Pyth. orac.* 409a.

<sup>168</sup> Pliny, *Ep.* 10.41.1; compare Antoninus Pius' declaration to the Ephesians on the buildings of Vedius Antoninus as 'something by which he hopes to make the city more dignified (*semnoteran*) for the future': *I Eph* 1491 = *Syll.* 850 = Oliver 1989: no. 138 = Abbott and Johnson 1926: 423, no. 101, ll. 7–18. Translation in Lewis 1974, 89 no. 26i.

One building project which dominated these years and overshadowed all considerations of the rhetoric of architecture was Trajan's Forum and Markets in Rome. Initiated around 106 and dedicated in 112, it was probably the first major public building project to be undertaken in Rome after the publication of the *Peri Hupsous*.<sup>169</sup> So, just as in eighteenth-century London, it is here and in the works of architecture of the ensuing years that the impact of the visual and architectural imagery of 'Longinus' should be sought. But first it needs to be placed in the context of recent architectural developments.

Perhaps a generation before 'Longinus', Rome had already seen a revolution in design facilitated by the greater theoretical understanding of Roman concrete vaulting and the use of more resilient materials with the selection of lightweight stones for the *caementa*, including Vesuvian scoria and pumice, and an improved quality of mortars made from pozzolana and lime.<sup>170</sup> The Roman architects Severus and Celer had started to think more creatively in terms of mass and volume, now confident in the manipulation of the structural properties of concrete architecture. Internal space was no longer determined only by the axial lines of colonnades and rectilinear walls. The form of solids mattered less than the spaces created between them. Instead of flat and inert rooms, the architects produced a sequence of spaces embraced by vaulted forms overhead and moulded into creatively unified spatial compositions.<sup>171</sup> The Esquiline wing of Nero's Golden House was 'intended to appeal to the viewer emotionally, viscerally. Proportion does not strike the viewer as an issue that requires intellectual reflection, but lighting, dramatic views and overwhelming decoration all cry out for attention in the delicious ways that those design features always do'. Above all, the Octagon Suite was a spectacular series of interwoven spaces that were brilliantly and ingeniously illuminated and formed a sophisticated unity. Roman concrete architecture showed its potential to appeal not to the intellect but to the emotions. After that, it 'would always retain a component of emotional awe'.<sup>172</sup>

Contributing to this enlivened and emotional presentation was the emergence of what have been understandably called 'baroque modes' of design.<sup>173</sup> Characteristic features are orders of mixed heights or uneven

<sup>169</sup> Packer 1997: 1.4–5. This would still be the case if the tradition is believed that the project had been conceived by Domitian.

<sup>170</sup> Lancaster 2005: 51–67. <sup>171</sup> MacDonald 1982: 41–6.

<sup>172</sup> Ball 2003: 26. <sup>173</sup> MacDonald 1986: 221–47.



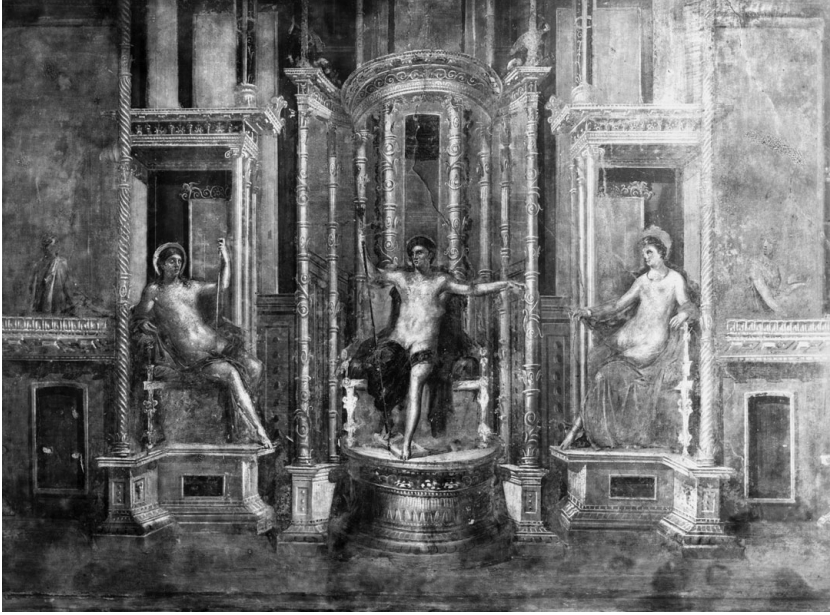


Figure 1.3 Pompeii, House of Apollo: name fresco.

spacing, recessed or broken pediments, ressauts, S-scrolls, an alternation of triangular and segmental pediments, and straight elements linked by curvilinear features. In the House of Apollo in Pompeii a fresco of the 60s CE (Figure 1.3) shows the three divine and astrological figures bathed in brilliant light and presented in a sophisticated columnar staging within rectilinear pavilions on either side of a tholos with dynamic interweaving of projections and recesses. Similarly powerful compositions are achieved in the Nabataean Khasneh and Deir structures at Petra (Figures 1.4–1.5), which play with light and shade by manipulating columnar orders of unequal height and shaded recesses between the broken pediment elements and the central *tholos*. The irregular columnar rhythm of the Deir, enhanced by ressauts and a central concave bay of the entablature, suggests a flowering of baroque architecture, which may date to around the mid-first century CE.<sup>174</sup> A hallmark of such ‘baroque’ design is complex compositional unity often established by means of symmetrical framing schemes. The curving niche used to frame a central *aedicula* in a second-century design has been described as ‘almost rhetorical, functioning as a kind of architectural gesture presenting the aedicula to the viewer’.<sup>175</sup>

<sup>174</sup> McKenzie 1990: 46, 49–50, and 159–61.

<sup>175</sup> MacDonald 1986: 240.

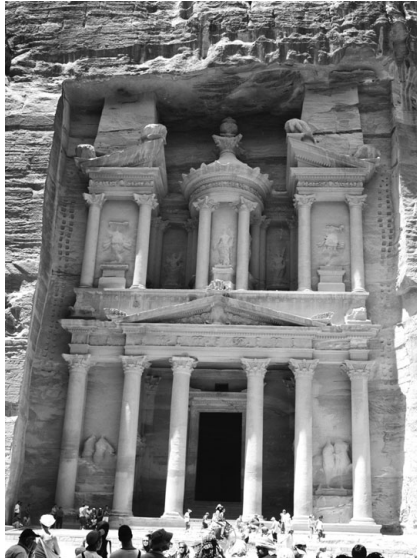


Figure 1.4 Petra, 'the Khasneh'.

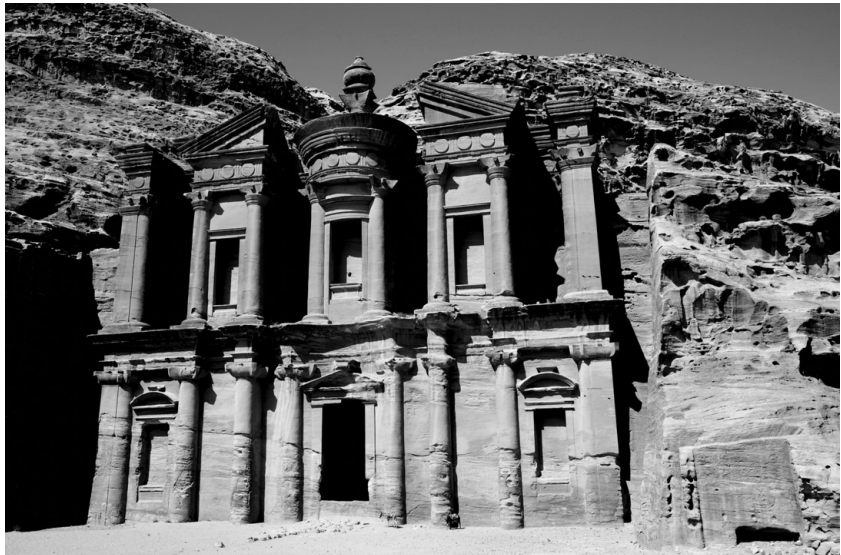


Figure 1.5 Petra, 'the Deir'.

MacDonald is right to contest the characterization of proto-baroque designs as fantasy architecture and to reject the implicit marginalization of 'an architecture of substantial purpose and meaning' which in fact contributed significantly to the distinctive texture of Roman urbanism. But he

seeks the explanation for such forms in mathematical developments and the supposed shift from geometric to arithmetic solutions.<sup>176</sup> It may be more profitable to explain this manner of presentation in terms of the vision of the patrons, not the calculation of the architects. Like the seventeenth-century style from which it derives its name, the baroque architecture of Roman antiquity aimed 'at arousing astonishment, at giving the impression of grandeur, at imposing their effects immediately, even abruptly, on the spectator'.<sup>177</sup> Should one not then rather account for features such as 'the compelling stress placed on a single view or axis', the hierarchical organization of elements of classical architectural vocabulary, and the packing of many parts 'tightly into a schematic crowdedness' by the impact of the same intensely visual rhetorical conceptions which would later have similar impact on the designs of Hawksmoor in early eighteenth century England?

We know that the idea of the Sublime had been current in the half century before 'Longinus', and 'Longinus's' own vision of the concept is presented in answer to alternatives offered by preceding writers, not least Caecilius.<sup>178</sup> Some buildings appear already to reflect the new rhetorical thinking; Nero's Parthian Arch, for example, subsequently demolished, appears, like Hawksmoor's works, to have presented an oversized keystone, and its design of all four sides proudly displayed in the new three-quarter view on coinage corresponded to his demand, inspired by a reading of Hall's translation of 'Longinus', that the South and North of Castle Howard 'should not be taken in completely at one glance'.<sup>179</sup> But it was in Domitian's palace that the architect Rabirius used the confidence and methods of the architectural revolution to achieve a grandeur that could claim to be sublime. In each of the two largest halls, the *Aula Regia* and *Cenatio Iouis* on opposite sides of the vast central peristyle garden, the emperor was presented in an apse, surrounded by brilliant surfaces draped in coloured marble panels, within a baroque, sculptured architecture characterized by a profusion of decoration with ornamental column bases and highly patterned entablatures.<sup>180</sup> Martial's description presents a sublime aesthetic:

Clarius in toto nil videt orbe dies.  
Septenos pariter credas adsurgere montes,

<sup>176</sup> MacDonald 1986: 245–6.      <sup>177</sup> Blunt 1973: 8.      <sup>178</sup> Russell 1964: xxxi and 58.

<sup>179</sup> I discuss the philosophical thinking behind Nero's Arch in *Keystones: Dialogues between Architecture, Philosophy, and Politics* (in preparation), ch. 2.

<sup>180</sup> Zanker 2002: 112 for the apses, 118 for the 'aura of the sacred' in the *Cenatio Iouis*, and, for the exceptionally fine ornament, e.g. 127, fig. 15, reproducing Bianchini 1738: tab. 3.

Thessalicum breuior Pelion Ossa tulit;  
 Aethera sic intrat, nitidis ut conditus astris  
 Inferiore tonet nube serenus apex  
 Et prius arcano satietur numine Phoebi,  
 Nascentis Circe quam uidet ora patris.  
 Haec, Auguste, tamen, quae uertice sidera pulsant,  
 Par domus est caelo, sed minor est domino.

In the entire world nothing so brilliant sees the light of day. You would think the seven hills rise up together; Thessalian Pelion on top of Ossa was not so high. It enters heaven in such a way that, settled in the glittering stars, its summit thunders sunlit to the cloud below and takes its fill of Phoebus' inscrutable power before Circe sees her rising father's face. And yet, Augustus, this house which strikes the stars with its pinnacle, is level with heaven, but lower than its master.<sup>181</sup>

The final chapter of 'Longinus' treatise seems to reflect on this political reality and its potential threat to the aesthetics of rhetorical creativity. It opens with the commonplace

'that in our time there are men who have the gift of persuasion to the utmost extent, and are well fitted for public life, and are keen and ready, and particularly rich in all the charms of language, yet there no longer arise really lofty and transcendent natures unless quite exceptionally. So great and world-wide a dearth of high utterance attends our age.' (44.1)

'Can it be', he continues,

'... that we are to accept the trite explanation that democracy is the kind nursing-mother of genius, and that literary power may be said to share its rise and fall with democracy and democracy alone? For *freedom*, it is said, has power to feed the imaginations of the lofty-minded and inspire hope, and where it prevails there spreads abroad the eagerness of mutual rivalry and the emulous pursuit of the foremost place. 3. Moreover, owing to the prizes which are open to all under popular government, the mental excellences of the orator are continually exercised and sharpened, and as it were rubbed bright, and shine forth (as it is natural they should) with all the freedom which inspires the doings of the state.' (44.2-3)

The failure of contemporary literature to rival that of the past is thus attributed to the loss of this freedom:

Today we seem in our boyhood to learn the lessons of a righteous servitude, being all but enswathed in its customs and observances, when our thoughts are yet young and tender, and never tasting the fairest and most productive source of eloquence

<sup>181</sup> Mart. *Epigr.* 8.36.4-12.

(by which, he added, I mean freedom), *so that we emerge in no other guise than that of sublime flatterers*. This is the reason, he maintained, why *no slave ever becomes an orator*, although all other faculties may belong to menials. In the slave there immediately burst out signs of fettered liberty of speech, of the dungeon as it were, of a man habituated to buffetings. ‘For the day of slavery’, as Homer has it, ‘takes away half our manhood [*Odyssey* 17.322]’. (44.4–5)

Yet under the empire such a conclusion would compromise ‘Longinus’ idea of the achievability of the Sublime. He does not agree that this is a quality only of monuments of the distant past. ‘It is easy”, he says, ‘and peculiar to mankind, to find fault with the present.’ His explanation for the decline is not political but moral, that people are corrupted by love of money and love of pleasure:

[I]f we value boundless wealth so highly, . . . men will no longer lift up their eyes or have any further regard for fame, but the ruin of such lives will gradually reach its complete consummation and sublimities of soul fade and wither away and become contemptible, when men are lost in admiration of their own mortal parts and omit to exalt that which is immortal. In an age which is ravaged by plagues so sore, is it possible for us to imagine that there is still left an unbiased and incorruptible judge of works that are great and likely to reach posterity, or is it not rather the case that all are influenced in their decisions by the passion for gain? No, it is perhaps better for men like ourselves to be ruled than to be free, since our appetites, if let loose without restraint upon our neighbours like beasts from a cage, would set the world on fire with deeds of evil. In general, I said that the characteristic of modern natures was laziness (*rhathymia*), in which all except a few of us live, since our work or activity is only for praise and pleasure, never for utility that is truly worthy of honour and pride. ‘But enough of such speculation’ [Euripides, *Electra* 379], . . . (44.11–12)

Despite the prevailingly negative tone of this chapter, the final part of this passage offers a glimmer of hope that the Sublime can be achieved. It is not the desire for pleasure or praise, but the search for utility (*opheleia*) which is truly worthy of envy and honour, the same value in which Caecilius’ treatise was lacking.<sup>182</sup> The words ‘except a few’ (πλὴν ὀλίγων) suggest that there are still some people living today who can reach that height. An earlier passage throws further light on ‘Longinus’ remarks:

In life nothing can be considered great which it is held great to despise. For instance, riches, honours, distinctions, sovereignties, and all other *things which possess in abundance the external trappings of the stage* (τὸ ἔξωθεν προστραγῶδούμενον),

<sup>182</sup> [Long.] *De subl.* 1.1.

will not seem, to a man of sense, to be supreme blessings, since the very contempt of them is reckoned good in no small degree, and in any case those who could have them, but are high-spirited enough to disdain them, are more admired than those who have them. So also in the case of sublimity in poems and prose writings, we must consider whether some supposed examples have an *illusion (fantasia) of greatness, to which much is added, moulded on top to no purpose* (τὸ εἰκῇ προσαναπλαττόμενον), but when opened up they are found to be merely frivolous things, to despise which is nobler than to admire. 2. *For, by nature somehow, our soul is uplifted by the true sublime and, receiving a splendid high position, is filled with joy and vaunting, as though it had itself produced what it has heard.* (7.1–2)

Although the apparent subject here is rhetoric, the intrusion again of a metaphor from architectural sculpture (προσαναπλαττόμενον) suggests that, without the promise of utility, features which offer an illusion of greatness<sup>183</sup> – costly marbles and gilding, columns, pediments, the ‘ornaments of the tragic stage’ according to Vitruvius<sup>184</sup> – do not represent the genuine sublime.

The Forum and Markets of Trajan promised to achieve that sublime grandeur not, like Domitian’s Palace, through profusion of ornament ‘added on top to no purpose’, but by creating a beauty that also met the goal of utility. In its formal rhetoric it mirrors the principles advocated by ‘Longinus’ and promoted at Rome through men like Pliny and Nicetes. The Forum square emulated earlier imperial fora in its formal planning with exedras, colonnades and open spaces and through its decoration and modular dimensions, but it also visibly enhanced those features through amplification (*auxēsis*), providing an extended and more spacious form in both plan and volume. The east end of the Forum, centred on an octastyle front with ressauts and freestanding columns to either side, showed the intricate articulation which MacDonald has called ‘complex compositional unity’.<sup>185</sup> The position of the colonnade was established by planimetric harmony with the restored Forum Iulium, opened the following year, in particular the front of the Venus Genetrix temple. The magnificent lattice ceiling of the Basilica Ulpia was creatively lit through the broad windows overlooking the Forum. The ‘rhetoric’ of materials, artistic styles

<sup>183</sup> Προσαναπλάττομαι is similarly used by Philo of false images of the divine (*De sacrif. Abel. Et Cain.* 96; *De decalog.* 54) and later by Clement of Alexandria of diaphanous clothing, ‘moulded onto the body, growing into its shape’ (*Paedag.* 2.10bis.107: προσαναπλάττεται σαρκικῶς ἐμφῶσα τῷ σχήματι). Ἀναπλάττειν of sculpture: Diod. Sic. 16.33.1; Plut. *De Is. et Osir.* 366f.

<sup>184</sup> Vitruvius *De arch.* 7.5.2; for the ‘tragic’ aspect of architecture, compare Plut. *Publ.* 10.3 (n. 164 above).

<sup>185</sup> Packer 1997: 1.85–91; Meneghini 2009: 39, pl. 1; cf. MacDonald 1986: 237.

and architectural orders throughout the Forum complex presented rich diversity (*poikilia*). The themes enunciated through its materials and representations are precisely those elaborated in the Rome oration of Aelius Aristides of 144: the vastness of the empire; the spread of peace and prosperity; and the position of Rome herself as amalgam of global diversity.<sup>186</sup> This affinity is no accident, because the whole architectural project, not just the Column, was rhetorically conceived. But there was no free rein given to architectural elaboration. There was a reaction against the lavish architectural ornament of Domitian's Palace.

Instead, the project paid heed to 'Longinus' message about the inclusion of utility. The most 'brilliant and audacious' design belonged not to the ostentation of the Forum, but to the utilitarian Markets, with their bold shapes created out of concrete and brick.<sup>187</sup> The integration of disparate elements into a unified design centring on the hemicycle betrays a rhetorical conception informed by the aspiration to the literary sublime.<sup>188</sup> The best illustration of this for us today is in the so-called Aula Traiana (Figure 1.6). The spacious volume, unbroken by horizontal or vertical divisions, offered a coherent whole and overwhelming sense of place; its transverse barrel vault, higher than any other vaults in the Markets, crowned an 'unencumbered, noble space', in which structure, lighting and proportions contributed to a harmonious whole. In just the same way 'Longinus' saw the Sublime as originating 'in the systematic selection of the most important elements, and the power to make these, by their mutual combination, as it were, into a single body' (τὸ τῶν ἐμφερομένων ἐκλέγειν αἰεὶ τὰ καιριώτατα καὶ ταῦτα τῇ πρὸς ἄλληλα ἐπισυνθέσει καθάπερ ἐν τι σῶμα ποιεῖν δύνασθαι).<sup>189</sup> At the same time, the alternation of triangular and segmental pediments in the attic storey of the hemicycle showed that baroque daring in juxtaposing 'elements not normally compounded'.<sup>190</sup>

The new rhetorical ideas also had an influence in the Roman East. In the early Flavian period a new form of fountain structure had emerged which exhibited markedly baroque characteristics. The first was probably the Nymphaeum at Ephesus built under the supervision of C. Laecanius Bassus, proconsul of Asia in 78/9 CE, at the south-west corner of the State

<sup>186</sup> Galinier 2007: 192–207, esp. 194–5.

<sup>187</sup> MacDonald 1982: 79. An inscription from less than a century later, found in 1992, implies that Forum and Markets were seen as one project, even if their architecture is contrasting and they were separated by a blind barrier wall: Wilson Jones 2000: 22.

<sup>188</sup> For the design, see still MacDonald 1982, 75–93 (quotation at p. 79).

<sup>189</sup> [Long.] *De subl.* 10.1. <sup>190</sup> [Long.] *De subl.* 10.6.





**Figure 1.6** Rome, Trajan's Markets: 'Aula Traiana'.

Agora.<sup>191</sup> A large square basin facing the projected temple of the imperial cult was surrounded on three sides by a spectacular marble façade 10 m high on two sides and 16 m high on the higher, central side (Figure 1.7). The façade comprised projecting and receding sections of a stage-like front marked not just by freestanding columnar orders of different scales with spirally fluted shafts in the central bay, but by three different sizes of pediment, and below that two orders of aedicules crowned by both triangular and segmental varieties.<sup>192</sup> The niches within the aedicules were filled by statues depicting a sea thiasos with river-gods, matched by a relief of Nereids on the podium.<sup>193</sup> In the following year, in 79/80, an even more ostentatious and theatrical structure was erected at Miletus and dedicated by M. Ulpius Traianus, father of the future emperor, as proconsul (Figure 1.8).<sup>194</sup> Three rows of aedicules were constructed to produce a syncopated effect with each succeeding aedicule standing above the gap in the row below. It is not hard to understand these structures as in competition with each other and based on an aesthetic ideal which aimed at achieving an elevated style through the multiplication of pedimental dignity.

A generation later, around the same time as Trajan's Forum was being undertaken in Rome, there was a reaction against the proliferation of

<sup>191</sup> Dorl-Klingenschmid 2001: no. 24.      <sup>192</sup> Lamare 2011.      <sup>193</sup> Rathmayr 2011.

<sup>194</sup> *ILS* 8970 = *AE* 1999.1576; Alföldy 1998; Dorl-Klingenschmid 2001: no. 64.



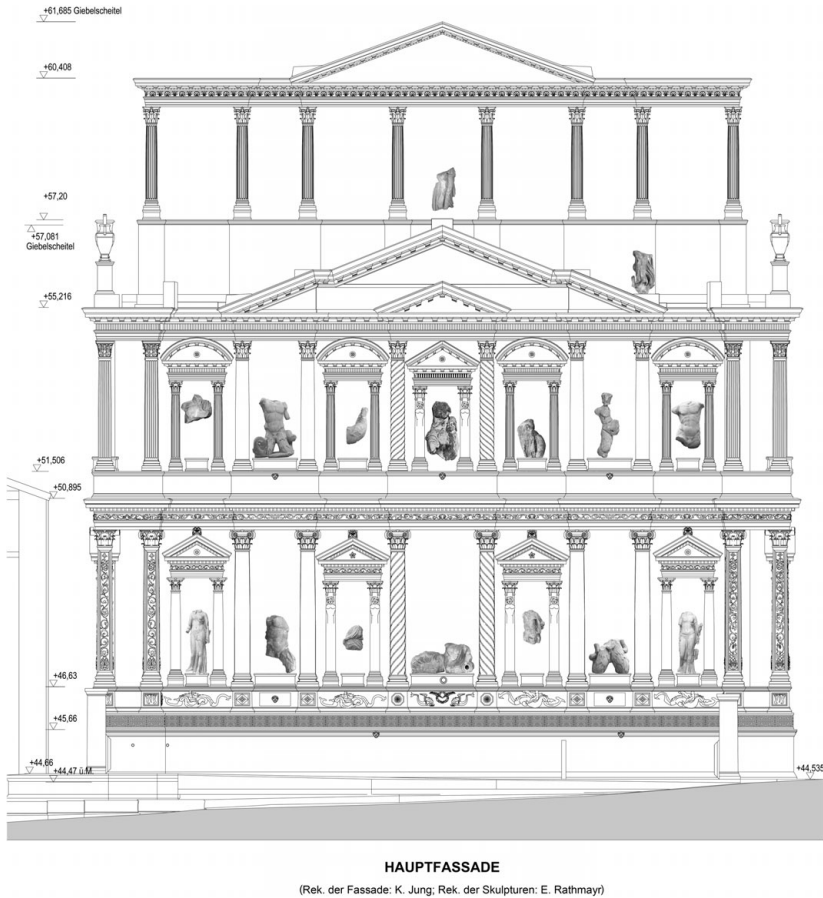


Figure 1.7 Ephesus, Nymphaeum of Laecanius Bassus.

pediments of these Flavian monuments. Two new fountain buildings were dedicated to the city goddess and the emperor Trajan by Ti. Claudius Aristion, whom Pliny describes as a munificent man and *princeps Ephesiorum*.<sup>195</sup> Both fountains followed the type established by the Flavian governors, but the better-preserved and slightly later fountain on the 'Curetes Street' can be seen to have differed from the Flavian structures in its cultivated simplicity, a manner which has been described as 'Trajanic austerity' (*trajanische Nüchternheit*).<sup>196</sup> Instead of the profusion of pediments and sculpture on the latter, the principal façade was a much more

<sup>195</sup> Pliny, *Ep.* 6.31.3. Acquitted in Trajan's court at Centumcellae, he was also sole or joint donor of the Harbour Baths.

<sup>196</sup> Stročka 1988: 295.



Figure 1.8 Miletus, Nymphaeum.

compact design consisting of just five broad bays with a composite form of capital in the lower of the two storeys and two S-shaped scrolls crowning the upper cornice (Figure 1.9). Complexity and heaviness of ornamentation made way for unity of conception and refinement. At the centre of the façade an over-lifesize nude statue of the emperor Trajan was framed by two exceptional spiral, or ‘barley sugar’, columns decorated in relief with vines and figures including a Pan.<sup>197</sup> As Pliny attests, Aristion was a well-educated and urbane man, the sort who could have been acquainted with the new rhetorical fashions of the Sublime. Those doctrines and their arresting visual imagery might have brought a more restrained answer to Bassus’ nymphaeum of some thirty years earlier.

The Nymphaeum of Trajan was a local project, adorned, as far as we can tell from the surviving architectural ornament, by local craftsmen.<sup>198</sup> But a further development occurred a few years later when this theatre-like façade was grafted onto a public building. The year after Trajan’s Forum was formally opened, its influence was already felt on the design of the library building bequeathed by the will of the consul Celsus Polemaeanus and completed under the direction of Aristion. The new rhetorical

<sup>197</sup> Quatember 2011: 15–16 (columns), 66–7 (statue) and 76 (location of statue). For other nude statues of Trajan, see Hallett 2005b: nos. 143–6.

<sup>198</sup> Quatember 2011.

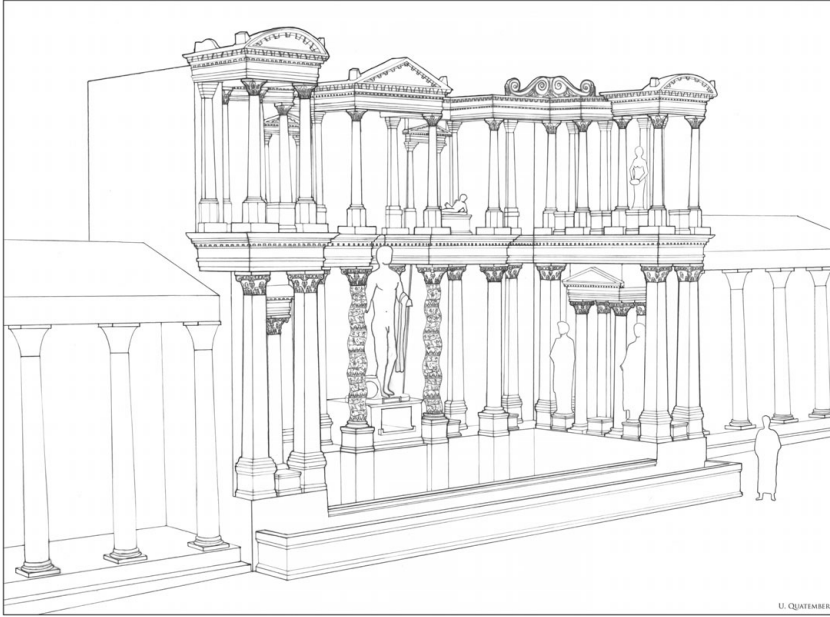


Figure 1.9 Ephesus, Nymphaeum of Trajan.

conception was complemented by formal architectural correspondences to Roman design.<sup>199</sup> The resulting building combined utility and visuality, literature and architecture. Baroque features of the Flavian nymphaeum at Miletus like the syncopated effect of the rhythms of upper and lower storeys in their alternation of niches and *aediculae* were included, but they were fitted into a more measured overall conception (Figure 1.10). The alternation of triangular and segmental pediments crowning the three aedicules of the upper storey and the lone ressauts at each end recall the play with classical vocabulary in the Flavian façades, but are part of a more proportionate ensemble with orders of equal size.

The building was an architectural version of the rhetoric of the Sublime. What has felicitously been termed its ‘visual and spatial rhetoric’<sup>200</sup> consists of a series of specific effects than can be tied to the language of ancient

<sup>199</sup> Strocka 1988 and 2003, 39, has argued for the stylistic influence of the metropolis on the building, but whether this influence took the form of the actual arrival of workmen from Rome is unclear. The prevalingly local technique of the architectural ornament makes it more likely that Roman influences were rather transmitted through the use of pattern books: see Rohmann 1998: 109; Plattner 2004: 23; Quatember 2007: 109.

<sup>200</sup> Eidson 2013, whose analysis of the building follows the attempts of Lamp 2011 and 2013 to see visual and material artefacts in Augustan Rome as a more inclusive rhetoric designed to communicate between state and people.



Figure 1.10 Ephesus, Library of Celsus.

rhetorical theory: the spectacular façade represents a rhetorical *exordium* to the structure within, alluding to its inner content with statues of the virtues of Celsus Polemaeanus and of the benefactor himself; its notable height, deliberately raised above the upper cornice of the adjacent Arch of Mazaeus and Mithridates, provided that *akrotēs* and *exochē* coveted in the opening sections of ‘Longinus’ work; the optical device of the curvature of the upper entablature suggests a deliberate concern with the building’s visual impact, to present to best effect the hierarchical arrangement of the architectural orders, composite below Corinthian; the wide spacing between the aedicules of paired white marble columns and the dark ‘gaps’ of the doors and windows behind the intercolumniations created a ‘harshness’ (*asperitas*) of alternating fields of light and shadow offering dramatic intensity. The subtle configuration of the curvature of the upper cornice suggests a particular attention to the visual impact of the building from afar, above all when viewed down ‘Curetes Street’ from the earlier nymphaeum.<sup>201</sup> Instead

<sup>201</sup> Hüber 1999.

of the serried ranks of statuary crowded into the aedicules of the earlier fountain buildings, statues were set at intervals, apart from the shadowy voids, to produce a balanced effect: female allegories of the virtues of Celsus within the aedicules below; portraits of Celsus on pedestals between the aedicules above. In the deep relief of the wall pilasters on either side of the women were set mythological *exempla* framed by the column-like Roman *fascēs* denoting Celsus' consular rank. The same *exempla* directly indicated that the interpretation of the structure as a work of rhetoric was not merely metaphorical. The eagle on the acanthus frieze of the lower storey representing pictorially the *cognomen* of the building's founder, Aquila, and its association with Roman military power invites a ready identification between words and ornament, the verbal and the visual. The insertion of paradigms like Cupid and Psyche or Pegasus and Bellerophon matches the orator's search for mythic *exempla* to add rhetorical colour and *phantasia* to his discourse: the former brings the intensity of erotic passion to the architectural design and experience; the latter is a typically allusive rebus for the building's cultural enterprise, pointing not just to the medusa heads in the tympana above, but also to the spring on the Muses' sanctuary on Mt Helicon.

Other buildings demonstrate the same rhetoric of the Sublime. Further down the street, the small street-side annexe to the Baths of Varius on the 'Curetes Street' dating from the same time and known as the 'Temple of Hadrian' sported a 'Syrian arch'. As on Hawksmoor's Christ Church, Spitalfields, the abrupt juxtaposition of arch and entablature provided an architectural illustration of 'Longinus' rhetorical device of 'forcing into an abnormal union prepositions not normally compounded'.<sup>202</sup> At Miletus, erected at most only a few years later, the Market Gate (Figure 1.11) displayed the same contrast with earlier architecture as the Celsus library and the nymphaea of Aristion, the orders arranged in the same pattern of composite below and Corinthian above. The design is more markedly baroque with the main aedicule interrupted by a notable recession of its central part over the main gateway; the similarity to the Tomb of the Broken Pediment at Petra is striking.<sup>203</sup> But again there is an abstinence from ornamental richness and a desire for proportion; the syncopated rhythm of the aedicules is passed over for a more conventional alignment; and the unbounded richness of earlier theatrical forms makes way for a focus on the single view. Together these buildings in Asia Minor in the first

<sup>202</sup> Ploeg 2005; cf. [Long.] *De subl.* 10.6.

<sup>203</sup> Strocka 1981; cf. McKenzie 1990: pl. 132.





Figure 1.11 Miletus, Market Gate: reconstruction in the Pergamon Museum Berlin.

two decades of the second century present a clear contrast with earlier architecture. While the architect remains sensitive to the effects of striking visual novelties, particularly the combination of dissonant elements, there is a move away from excess of ornamentation and a focus on the aesthetic unity of the work.

At Rome, hardly was the mortar dry in Trajan's Forum than work began on another project which, perhaps more than any building at Rome, deserves the label 'sublime'. This is not the first time the Pantheon has been read as a rhetorical statement. The building's spatial sequence has been seen as representing a judicial *causa*, a *quaestio finita*, in four parts: the forecourt as *exordium* to prepare the audience; the portico as *narratio*, or statement of facts; the rotunda as *probatio*, the argument and proof; and the Basilica of Neptune as *peroratio*.<sup>204</sup> But, while one may quibble over the applicability of these individual labels,<sup>205</sup> it is not even necessary to suggest such a literal correlation of rhetorical parts. When the building is considered in relation to 'Longinus' Sublime, its rhetorical aspect is more

<sup>204</sup> McEwen 1993: 60.

<sup>205</sup> In particular, the label *exordium* is much more appropriate to the portico of the building, because of the absence of any structural requirement for such an element: see Cic. *De or.* 2.320–1 (n. 20, above) and Gros 1979: 338.

understandable. Here, if anywhere, the opinion that the literary sublime is measured by a cosmic distance finds an obvious architectural manifestation. Whether or not the attic storey of twenty-eight aedicules should be seen as corresponding to the phases of the moon and the five rows of coffering as echoing the five planets, or the division in plan of the rotunda into sixteen segments as reflecting the demands of Etruscan *disciplina*,<sup>206</sup> there is no doubt that the conception of the building, with the temple-like front and the great oculus at the top, was based upon a desire to create grandeur. Moreover, the increasing realization that the sumptuous and awe-inspiring rotunda that replaced Agrippa's Pantheon may have been conceived by the architects of the Forum project, above all Apollodorus of Damascus, and executed in the years immediately following the latter's dedication helps to situate it too within the same rhetorical framework.<sup>207</sup> Many of the features which the Trajano-Hadrianic Pantheon shares with the Forum and Markets confirm this interpretation: the 'baroque' mode of alternating pediments in the Markets hemicycle is repeated, yet with the *variatio* that the attic arcade with pilasters and alternating pediments around the hemicycle is replaced by a continuous row of pilasters and rectilinear openings with the alternating pediments transferred to the ground-floor aedicules of the rotunda (Figure 1.12); the highly charged design of squares and circles in the pavement matches the floor pattern of the Basilica Ulpia; and the centred arrangement of the main apse of the Pantheon repeats the apsidal focus of the basilica. As at Ephesus, the arched lintel over the doorway shows further thinking on the means to achieve dignity through discordance. Finally, a higher portico with 50-foot granite shafts, perhaps the preferred plan of Apollodorus, would have given the façade greater elevation and sublimity.<sup>208</sup>

A major change occurred after the appearance of the treatise, and it affected not only rhetoric but architecture too. If earlier buildings had provided some of the visual inspiration for the rich architectural imagery of 'Longinus', the publication of the treatise and the spread of similar rhetorical ideas through men like Nicetes, Pliny, Aristion, Apollodorus and Hadrian helped to transform the potential of the 'Roman architectural revolution'. The generation after the treatise *On the Sublime* saw attention

<sup>206</sup> For these readings of the building, see Loerke 1990 and Wilson Jones 2000: 183.

<sup>207</sup> The thesis of Heilmeyer 1975 is revived by Wilson Jones 2000, 192–3 and gains more credence in the light of the re-evaluation of the brick-stamps and the building's subsequent dating to the final years of Trajan's reign (Hetland 2007). See now Wilson Jones 2009, esp. 82–6, and forthcoming.

<sup>208</sup> Wilson Jones 2000: 212.

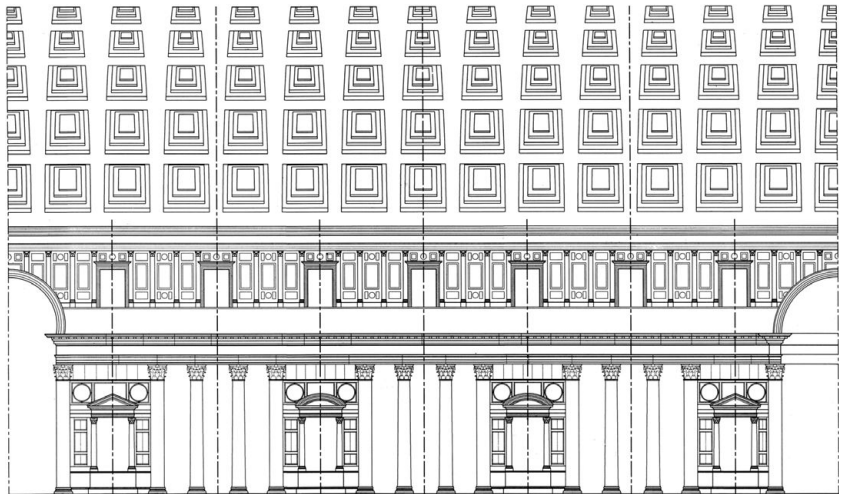


Figure 1.12 Rome, Pantheon, interior detail: (a) interior view, (b) reconstruction.



given to the very issues that it had advocated in rhetoric. The rhetorical invention of Hadrian's Villa at Tivoli and its creation of a field of rhetorical memory, perhaps with the aid of Dionysius of Miletus, expert in 'the Chaldaean arts', is too well known and too complex to require detailed comment here.<sup>209</sup> I have shown elsewhere how the Mausoleum of Hadrian, which Ruskin lauded for the sublime effect produced by its broad expanse of wall surface, uninterrupted situation, unbroken bonding lines, and almost square shape, also echoed the literary sublime in its achievement of a hyperbolic scale, its combination of the 'sheer face' of Demosthenes with the 'accumulation' of Cicero and in the image of brilliance suggested by its decoration with two peacocks.<sup>210</sup> The debate between Hadrian and Apollodorus on the statuary of the Temple of Venus and Rome makes sense in the context of 'Longinus' response to an unnamed writer's criticism of the 'faulty colossus'.<sup>211</sup> The contrast with the Doryphorus of Polyclitus suggests that the colossus meant here was Phidias' statue of the Olympian Zeus, a wonder of the world and a touchstone of aesthetic criticism; Strabo's judgement that the statue would hit the roof of the temple if it stood up suggests that the 'fault' was one of proportion.<sup>212</sup> But the repetition of Strabo's point with reference to the new Roman temple highlights how central this rhetorically informed discussion may have been to architectural planning in the wake of 'Longinus' treatise.<sup>213</sup>

'Longinus' left a mark not just on architecture, but also on architectural description. What was admired was architecture which seemed to reflect the blazing light of the Sublime.<sup>214</sup> Buildings were now praised for embodying those very visual principles which had themselves been modelled on architectural images. Aelius Aristides, speaking at Pergamum, describes the city's acropolis 'flashing lightning from every approach', or, a few years later, Smyrna with its 'lightning flashes of beauty, numbers and measurements of grand scale, and unities as if of a single structure'.<sup>215</sup> Similar is Cleitophon's experience of Alexandria in Achilles Tatius' novel:

<sup>209</sup> McEwen 1994: 56.

<sup>210</sup> Cook and Wedderburn 1903–12, 8.103; cf. Thomas 2007: 237. For the scale, see Dio Cass., *Exc. Salm.* fr. 114 Müller, between books 69 and 70 (Loeb edn, ed. Cary, viii, 466–7), and, for the peacock's proverbial beauty, due particularly to its shifting of colour in the light, and its relevance to architecture, see Lucian, *De domo* 11.

<sup>211</sup> [Long.] *In Subl.* 36.3.

<sup>212</sup> Strab. 8.3.30 (C353–4). For this possible identification, see Wilamowitz 1971 and Merkelbach 1997, citing Callim. Fr. 196 Pf. for the statue's place in literary aesthetics.

<sup>213</sup> Dio Cass. 69.4.2–5; translation in Lepper and Frere 1988: 188.

<sup>214</sup> [Long.] *De subl.* 1.4, 17.1–2; cf. Pliny, *Ep.* 1.20.19 and Lucian, *De domo* 8 (n. 111 above).

<sup>215</sup> *Or.* 23.14; 18.3; cf. 18.6.

‘Like a flash of lightning, the city’s beauty struck me at once and filled my eyes with pleasure. . . .’<sup>216</sup> Aristides’ assessment of the temple at Cyzicus was based on rhetorical qualities: the harmonies (*harmoniai*) in this perfectly ordered structure (41); its grandeur (*megethos*); and its dignity (*semnotēs*).<sup>217</sup>

These were the visual ideals on which the rhetorical texts of the second and third centuries laid ever greater emphasis. From the second century onwards the visual qualities increasingly emphasized by rhetorical theory as components of ‘grandeur’ (*megethos*) gave buildings a louder voice. In the treatise on rhetorical style ascribed to Hermogenes of Tarsus grandeur (*megethos*) and dignity (*axiōma*) in speaking are said to arise from six qualities defined by both subject and manner of speaking: first, solemnity (*semnotēs*), divine subjects voiced by broad sounds or cadences that force the speaker to open his mouth wide; second, abundance (*mestotēs*), not defined further; third, asperity (*trachytēs*), the use of harsh language to reproach superiors to achieve an unrhythmical, inharmonious and jarring effect; fourth, vehemence (*sphodrotēs*), typically using single words separated by pauses to reproach inferiors; fifth, brilliance (*lamprotēs*), produced not by adornment or a decorative arrangement to beautiful effect, but through dignified speech declaring acts ‘in which one can shine’ directly, with confidence and without interruption, typically by means of long clauses and solemn rhythms; and finally florescence (*akmē*), the highest power of exposition, which is closely linked with the preceding qualities; in addition, the quality of amplification (*peribolē*) is emphasized.<sup>218</sup>

Alongside this articulation of rhetorical method the architectural metaphors developed earlier by Cicero and Dionysius were now used in a more expressive way with speakers encouraged to think of prose style as akin to architectural form. Thus in the *De elocutione* attributed to Demetrius the disconnected style of Hecataeus’ preface is contrasted with the periodic style, conceived in terms of the new vaulted architecture:

‘[In Hecataeus] the members (τὰ κῶλα) seem thrown upon one another in a heap without binding together (σύνδεσιν) or buttressing (ἀντῆρεσιν), and without the

<sup>216</sup> Ach. Tat. 5.1.6.

<sup>217</sup> Cf. Paus. 8.41.8 on the Temple of Apollo at Bassae; cf. Aristid. *Or.* 34.30, on Smyrna. On *semnotēs* (‘solemnity’) in rhetoric for talking about divine subjects, cf. Hermog. *Id.* 1.6 (220.2–4), with Rutherford 1998: 8.

<sup>218</sup> Hermogenes, *On Types of Style* 242–71, tr. Wooten 1987: 18–38; cf. Hagedorn 1964: 30–44; Martin 1974: 339–42.

mutual support which we find in periods. The members in a periodic style may, at least, be compared to the stones which support and hold together vaulted roofs (τὰς περιφερεῖς στέγας); while the members of the disconnected style resemble stones which are simply flung carelessly apart and not built together into a structure. Consequently, there is something rough-hewn (περιεξεσμένον) and compact (εὐστοαλές) in the older method of writing, like ancient statues, the art of which was held to consist in their contraction (συστολή) and sparseness (ισχνότης), while the later style is like the works of Phidias, since it already exhibits in some degree both grandeur (μεγαλεῖον) and precision (ἀκριβές).<sup>219</sup>

Corresponding to the visuality of the text was the orality of the building. With his rhetorical training the emperor Hadrian described the construction work of fortifications on the African frontier not only in self-consciously archaic poetic diction, but also with words which made plain the rhetorical aspect of the architecture.<sup>220</sup> The description of the building blocks as *grandibus grauibus inaequalibus* in contrast to the smooth (*planus*) and pliable (*mollis*) aspect of the earth rampart used terms that were now well recognized in rhetorical theory to describe styles of eloquence, a flowing style with the absence of harsh syllables. They were not just ‘huge, heavy, unequal blocks of stone’, but, like speeches of the old school, had an authority that came from their rugged grandeur and the disconnected arrangement of words and phrases of different length. Likewise, terms like *semnotēs* and *lamprotēs* or *auxēsis/ampli(fic)atio* had become so embedded in rhetorical language that buildings praised for these qualities seemed similarly eloquent.<sup>221</sup> In Lucian’s *Hall* a warning is issued against those who make speeches of praise in beautiful buildings: ‘the content of the speech gets lost in the grandeur of the beautiful sights [and] is overshadowed ... like ... an ant placed on an elephant or a camel.’ Architectural form has its own dangers. The ‘periodic’ barrel-vault threatened to yield a sonorous echo. Flat gilded ceilings threatened blazing brilliance of light.

‘The speaker has to watch out that he does not get worried by his own voice when talking in such a harmonious and resonant building; the building, in fact, makes counter-shout, counter-cry, counter-assertion and, worse, hides your shout, like a trumpet drowning a flute when they play together or the sea with people shouting orders to their rowers ... megalophony dominates and obliterates any lesser noise.’<sup>222</sup>

<sup>219</sup> [Demetrius], *On Style (De elocutione)*, 13–14. <sup>220</sup> ILS 2487; cf. Thomas 2007: 27–8.

<sup>221</sup> Maupai 2003 on connections of the term with beauty. <sup>222</sup> Lucian, *De domo* 15–16.

Such depth of affinity between buildings and speeches would strike any rhetorically educated visitor to Rome or any city in the Roman East. The curvature of their forms and the resonance of their materials gave them a lasting voice. They were inscribed with texts that could be said, in a very meaningful sense, to ‘speak’ and to arouse emotions in those who listened to them.<sup>223</sup> In antiquity the assimilation between architecture and rhetoric by Batteux and Boffrand went further than they could ever have suspected; the language of architecture was more seriously considered than Eco might ever have dreamed.

<sup>223</sup> Chaniotis 2012.

## 2 | Sublime histories, exceptional viewers

### *Trajan's Column and its visibility*

FRANCESCO DE ANGELIS

The Column of Trajan (Figure 2.1), dedicated by the Senate and People of Rome in 113 CE, was placed towards one end of the huge forum built by the emperor, in a courtyard enclosed by at least the basilica and two libraries. It was decorated with a spiral frieze commemorating Trajan's two successful campaigns against the Dacians. As a monument, the Column is exceptional both for the innovation of its conception and, at the same time, because it embodies paradigmatically a number of characteristics that are typical of Roman imperial monuments more generally.<sup>1</sup> Prominent among these is the reduced degree of visibility of the Column's frieze. As is well known, the reliefs become harder and harder to make out as the frieze winds up the shaft. This feature has traditionally been interpreted as a problem; in fact, as this chapter will argue, it was an integral component of the viewing process as envisaged by the planners of the monument. In order fully to appreciate this circumstance, however, it is imperative to retrieve the conceptual framework within which artists, designers, patrons and viewers operated – a framework that has found expression several times in the written sources but whose consequences for our understanding of the viewership of ancient monuments have not been properly acknowledged.

Wealth of detail combined with the absence of the possibility of close inspection: this paradoxical situation presented the viewers of the Column with a substantial challenge, one that apparently required contradictory things from them. A proper consideration of the way in which the ancients conceptualized this contradiction will not only provide the tools for a better understanding of the Column itself, but may ultimately invite us to adopt a more complex model of viewership. Needless to say, the viewer that in the following will be the object of analysis is first and foremost an ideal viewer, i.e. the viewer whom the planners of the Column had in mind. However, this inquiry aims

<sup>1</sup> The bibliography on the Column is assembled by Koeppel 1992: 116–22, Settis 1994 and Maffei 1995. Major editions are: Cichorius 1896–1900, Lehmann-Hartleben 1926, Florescu 1969, Settis 1988 and Coarelli 2000.



**Figure 2.1** View of the Column of Trajan (Piranesi, *Vedute di Roma*, 1778, pl. 31).

to reflect on other kinds of viewers as well; nor will it disregard the history of the actual reception of the Column. Indeed, since historical viewers provide the best access to the issue under discussion it is in order to start with them.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> On the modern reception of the Column, see Cavallaro 1984 and 1985, Agosti and Farinella 1985, 1988a and 1988b, Pomponi 1991–2.

Admittedly, looking accurately at the reliefs of the Column has never been an easy task, but in modern times the difficulties have often been amplified even further by imagination. Shortly after 1500, the Bolognese painter Jacopo Ripanda used scaffolding to reach a convenient vantage point from which to copy – for the first time – the *whole* succession of the reliefs. He did so despite all risks, and thereby aroused the admiration of the many onlookers, as a contemporary Latin account by the humanist Raffaele Maffei reports.<sup>3</sup> A century later, due to a mistranslation of this account, Ripanda was believed to have made his drawings while heroically hanging in a hamper suspended from the top of the Column. This myth resurfaces every now and then even in twentieth-century scholarly literature.<sup>4</sup> However, already around the mid-eighteenth century it had inspired a similar project by Piranesi, who asked the French painter Laurent Pecheux to draw the frieze for him from a basket. Pecheux refused, and Piranesi had to resort to plaster casts.<sup>5</sup> Others were bolder. In the early seventeenth century Giovanni Grosso, a Swiss guard and a popular tourist guide in Rome, accomplished a superhuman achievement, as a contemporary print boasts, by climbing down the Column without losing his life – possibly pointing out details of the frieze to the amazed spectators in the process.<sup>6</sup> In the end it took royal resources – namely those of the French rulers François I, Louis XIV and Napoleon III – to have plaster casts of the reliefs made and dispersed throughout Europe for close, and safe, inspection (see Figure 2.2).<sup>7</sup>

Despite the problems that the location of the frieze on the Column evidently raised, its low degree of visibility became a scholarly issue only during the last century, starting in the late 1920s<sup>8</sup> – a phenomenon that was at least in part favored by the modernistic problematization of architectural ornament. It was from the late 1970s on, however, that

<sup>3</sup> Maffei 1506: p. cccc: “Floret nunc item Romae Iacobus Bononiensis qui Traiani columnae picturas omnis ordine delineavit: magna omnium admiratione magnoque periculo circummachinis scandendo.” On Jacopo Ripanda, see especially Farinella 1992, and p. 206 for the quotation from Maffei; see also Agosti and Farinella 1984: 400–3.

<sup>4</sup> On the mistranslation, see Farinella 1992: 58 n. 101. Ripanda suspended in a hamper: see, e.g. Longhi 1968: 146, Zanker 2000: vii.

<sup>5</sup> On Piranesi and Trajan’s Column, see *La Colonna Traiana* 94–102.

<sup>6</sup> The print with the portrait of Giovanni Grosso is reproduced in *La Colonna Traiana* 54–5.

The text that accompanies the image reads: ‘Cet Oultremontain que tu vois | quau naturel Je represente | des hommes surpasse le loys | faisant une estrange descente | de la Colonne de Trajan | sans le detrimet de sa vie | et dun gran serpent quil tua | à qui la force fut ravie’.

<sup>7</sup> Plaster casts of the Column: Délivré, 1988; Pinatel 1988, Galinier 1999 and D’Amato 2001.

<sup>8</sup> See Lehmann-Hartleben 1926: 1–2; Bianchi Bandinelli 1978.





**Figure 2.2** Plaster cast from the Column of Trajan, with Victory inscribing a shield (G. B. Piranesi, *Trofeo o sia Magnifica Colonna Coclide*, 1774/5).

the debate became more intensive. It gained particular momentum thanks to the cleaning and restoration campaign of the 1980s, during which many Roman monuments, including the Column, became visible as rarely before; but it continues still today.

Most efforts have aimed at investigating the visual strategies that foster the efficacy of the frieze despite its unfavorable location. On the one hand, it has been emphasized that ancient viewing conditions differed from modern ones: the reliefs were not uniformly white, as today, but colored; moreover, the narrow courtyard where the Column stood likely had balconies from which the scenes were more easily visible. On the other hand, scholars have detected features that help us to reconstruct and understand possible mechanisms of reception. A prime example of this is represented by the vertical correspondences between scenes placed at different levels on the same side of the Column that establish meaningful relationships across the narrative sequence – the most famous example being the alignment of the favorable omen at the beginning of the war with the personification of Victory separating the two campaigns midway up the Column and the suicide of the Dacian king Decebalus at the very top. Scholars have also emphasized the redundancies and repetitions in scenes of similar subjects: battles, fort-constructions, sacrifices, speeches



to the troops, represent veritable visual *topoi*, easily recognizable and understandable with the visual competencies of an ancient beholder.<sup>9</sup>

The main – and almost only – dissenting voice has been that of Paul Veyne, who has repeatedly discussed Trajan's Column in the context of his anti-iconological argument that the imagery of imperial monuments does not send 'messages', and does not require viewers in order to be effective.<sup>10</sup> In Veyne's opinion, the aim of the Column was not to inform human beings but to proclaim Trajan's greatness in the sight of the gods and posterity. 'No one itemized Trajan's Column [...]. Just the same, simply seeing it, everyone felt that space was occupied by a strong power using a language that was not heard but passed, like the wind, over one's head, offering a discourse that was only generally understood.'<sup>11</sup>

Although both positions have evident merits, neither is fully satisfying, especially if we absolutize them. The existence of visual strategies aimed at real viewers – the expected viewers – is undeniable; but their analysis alone is not able to explain the very choice of such an unfavorable (and unprecedented) format. Why was the frieze placed in such a way as to make those visual strategies necessary? Veyne, on the other hand, rightly raises the issue of the degree of attention and accuracy that works like the frieze allow, but the answer he gives (viz. nobody was expected to pay real attention to the reliefs) is too radical, and moreover phrased in unhistorical terms: in his account ancient viewers do not differ in any significant way from modern ones. Common to both positions, finally, is the assumption that the location of the frieze around the Column is basically an obstacle for a full appreciation of its imagery: hence the need for alternative viewing strategies, or the denial of viewing possibilities *tout court*.

In principle it would be possible to argue that the whole issue is a false problem. In this spirit Filippo Coarelli has recently recalled other examples of low legibility or visibility, such as the epigraphic records of the Ludi Saeculares, which were inscribed with small letters on slabs more than 3 m high, or the Forma Urbis, placed on the upper part of a 17 m high wall. As these were monumental copies of documents that could be more easily consulted in archives, Coarelli suggests that the Column should be understood in a similar way: its frieze was the figural version of the

<sup>9</sup> Gauer 1977, Farinella 1981, Brilliant 1984: 90–123; Settis 1985, 1988: 45–255, 1991, Galinier 1996 and 2007: 121–63.

<sup>10</sup> Veyne 1976: 676–9, 1988, 1990, 2005:379–418. <sup>11</sup> Veyne 1988: 11.

accounts of the Dacian wars, the *Commentarii de bello Dacico*, written by Trajan and likely kept in one of the adjoining libraries.<sup>12</sup> As attractive as it may appear, this explanation is misleading. In the first place, it implies a distinction between document and monument that is mainly modern: for the Romans archival documents were quintessentially *monumenta*.<sup>13</sup> Moreover, in the case of the Column the translation from the accounts kept in the libraries to the frieze implies a passage between different realms, from the textual to the visual, which is absent in the other instances. In other words, we need to account for the specificity of the medium; interpreting the Column as just a huge sign of otherwise invisible realities, that is, of Trajan's historical works, is unnecessarily reductive. Of course Coarelli is right in stressing that it is not particularly productive to phrase the issue purely in terms of the observer; his remarks about the emperor as the recipient and prime addressee of the Column and of its frieze are certainly right and represent a valuable insight, as we will see. Nevertheless, totally removing the issue of viewership from the discussion merely negates the problems, but does not really solve them. The challenge that we face is to assess the viewer's role *in the face of* reduced visibility. What we need is a nuanced balance between the beholder on the one hand and the lack of visibility on the other – a balance in which the two components *interact* with each other rather than being mutually exclusive.

In recent years classical archaeologists have started to focus on gazes that differ from the omniscient one usually assumed in traditional models of interpretation. Casual glimpses, quick glances, uninterested regards, absent-minded viewing, uninformed beholding, and unfocused gazes, are some of the many examples one could mention. In this context Tonio Hölscher, drawing from Hans Belting's anthropological understanding of art, has stressed that the ontological status of the image as 'presence' is fundamental for understanding its functioning.<sup>14</sup> This approach does not deny semiotic models that presuppose a high 'intensity' of communication (i.e. those models that are, more or less consciously, employed in traditional archaeological hermeneutics), but it relativizes them. As Hölscher rightly

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Coarelli 2000: 19–21 (esp. 20: 'we find ourselves before a monumental and purely representative replica of an archive document, which could be consulted directly, and which was – given its author – rather more important and prestigious than its marble copy'); see also Fehr 1985–6. On the visibility of the Forma Urbis, see now Trimble 2007.

<sup>13</sup> Le Goff 1978. See *ThLL* VIII (1936–66): 1460–6 s.v. 'Monumentum'.

<sup>14</sup> Hölscher 2004a: 21–3; Belting 2001. On the issue of viewing and response in ancient art, see e.g. (with different approaches and agendas) Zanker 1994: 281–93; Elsner 1995; Zanker 2000c; Clarke 2003; Stewart 2003.

acknowledges, such an approach calls for a theory of ornament (of the ‘decorative’): a theory, one could paraphrase, that explains how a low semantic charge works, and can even produce sense and meaning; a theory that focuses on the relationship between the parts and the whole, on the subordination of single elements to a broader context, on the levels of translatability of visual components into words, on the oscillations between pregnant meaning and frivolousness. Although this is not the place to sketch such a theory, the study of Trajan’s Column can certainly offer a relevant contribution towards its conception. Due to the reduced visibility of its frieze, it thematizes in an explicit way, so to speak, some of the issues just mentioned – issues for which the nature of the available evidence often makes it difficult to go beyond a certain level of abstraction.

As mentioned at the beginning, the starting point is provided by a group of literary sources that allow us to reconstruct the constellation of concepts and notions that likely conditioned the creation and reception of the reliefs of the Column. In a second move it will be necessary to assess how the Column fits into this conceptual framework. The key words for this purpose are μέγεθος (‘size’, but also, and more exactly, ‘greatness’ or ‘grandeur’) and ἀκρίβεια (‘accuracy’, ‘precision’, ‘meticulousness’).<sup>15</sup> μέγεθος and ἀκρίβεια often occur jointly in ancient texts. Their relationship can vary, but one constant feature of it is the neat distinction between the two terms. μέγεθος and ἀκρίβεια belong to two separate, potentially contrasting fields. They can thus be presented in opposition to each other, but they can also be seen as complementary; in this latter case, the binary acquires additional tension, as it were.

Although the roots of this couple of concepts go as far back as Homer, it is in the first two centuries of the empire that they become the object of more intense consideration. One of the clearest instances is also one of the earliest. In the prooemium of his monumental *Geography*, Strabo describes the aims and the character of the work.<sup>16</sup> In particular, he explains how he intends it to be read:

Καθάπερ τε καὶ ἐν τοῖς κολοσσικοῖς ἔργοις οὐ τό καθ’ ἕκαστον ἀκριβὲς ζητοῦμεν, ἀλλὰ τοῖς καθόλου προσέχομεν μᾶλλον, εἰ καλῶς τὸ ὅλον· οὕτως κἀν τούτοις δεῖ ποιεῖσθαι

<sup>15</sup> On these two terms, see Pollitt 1974: 198–201, 401–2 (μέγεθος) and 117–125 (ἀκρίβεια). On μέγεθος see moreover *ibid.* 196–8, 400–1; Rouveret 1989: 271–2, 411–13; Benediktson 2003: 87–91; Tanner 2006: 51–3. More in general on the issue of colossality: Stemmer 1971; Cancik 1990; Dickie 1996; DeLaine 2002; Ruck 2007: 17–20. On ἀκρίβεια, see also Schweitzer 1963: vol. 1, pp. 117–18; Kurz 1970; Hirsch 1996.

<sup>16</sup> See, on this passage, Potheary 2005.

τὴν κρίσιν. κολοσσουργία γάρ τις καὶ αὐτή, τὰ μεγάλα φράζουσα πῶς ἔχει καὶ τὰ ὅλα, πλὴν εἴ τι κινεῖν δύναται καὶ τῶν μικρῶν τὸν φιλειδήμονα καὶ τὸν πραγματικόν. (Strab. 1.1.23, 13–14)

Just as in judging the merits of colossal works we do not examine each individual part with minute care, but rather consider the general effect and endeavor to see if the work as a whole is well done, so should this book of mine be judged. For it, too, is a colossal work, in that it deals only with the facts about large things and wholes, except as some petty thing may stir the interest of the studious or the practical man.

The stress is clearly on the colossal and on μέγεθος, which in Strabo are tightly connected with the idea of totality, of globality. Thus, the very dimensions of colossal works require them to be considered on a general level (καθόλου), in their entirety. The alternative is represented by a piecemeal approach, in which each part of a work is examined separately – clearly an inappropriate approach for large-scale works. It is in this context that we find the other term, ἀκρίβεια, meticulous accuracy, associated with the idea of the small (cf. τῶν μικρῶν) and combined with the notion of the particular (καθ' ἑκάστον). The whole passage is thus developed around a double opposition: that between big and small, and between totality and detail.

The same oppositions occur in Ps.-Longinus' treatise *On the Sublime*.<sup>17</sup> Understandably, the issue of greatness is of paramount importance in this work. Terms etymologically or semantically related to the sphere of μέγεθος occur again and again in its chapters, and, as in Strabo, they are set in contrast to meticulousness and precision. The starting point is provided by the claim of the literary critic Caecilius of Calacte, who maintained the superiority of Lysias over Plato because of the many flaws in the latter's style. Ps.-Longinus disagrees vehemently. In his opinion, greatness, even if it is not devoid of errors, is definitely to be preferred to flawless mediocrity. In fact, according to him greatness *cannot* be devoid of errors.

Ἐγὼ δ'οἶδα μὲν ὡς αἱ ὑπερμεγέθεις φύσεις ἦκιστα καθαραὶ· τὸ γὰρ ἐν παντὶ ἀκριβὲς κίνδυνος σμικρότητος. ἐν δὲ τοῖς μεγέθεσιν, ὥσπερ ἐν τοῖς ἄγαν πλούτοις, εἶναι τι χρὴ καὶ παρολιγορούμενον. (*De subl.* 33.2)

For my part, I am well aware that great spirits are far from lacking flaws; for invariable accuracy incurs the risk of pettiness, and in the sublime, as in exceeding fortunes, there must be something which is overlooked.

<sup>17</sup> The most recent edition, with updated bibliography, is Mazzucchi 2010. On the issues discussed here see, in particular, Matelli 1988 and 2003.

It is on this basis that, in a famous series of comparisons, Ps.-Longinus assesses the superiority of writers like Homer, Pindar, Sophocles, and so on, over a whole set of other ones. Following the natural love of humans for eternal greatness, these ‘godlike’ (ισόθιοι, 35.2) authors did not care for details (they ‘despised an all-pervading accuracy’, τῆς ἐν ᾗ πᾶσιν ἀκριβείας ὑπερφρονήσαντες, *ibid.*) and thereby achieved sublimity. This whole section is concluded by a passage, in which Ps.-Longinus argues against an unnamed critic (possibly Caecilius again). The passage is interesting because it adds some further associations to the sets of concepts under discussion.

Πρὸς μέντοι γε τὸν γράφοντα ὡς ὁ κολοσσὸς ὁ ἡμαρτημένος οὐ κρείττων ἢ ὁ Πολυκλείτου δορυφόρος παράκειται πρὸς πολλοῖς εἰπεῖν, ὅτι ἐπὶ μὲν τέχνης θαυμάζεται τὸ ἀκριβέστατον, ἐπὶ δὲ τῶν φυσικῶν ἔργων τὸ μέγεθος, φύσει δὲ λογικὸν ὁ ἄνθρωπος· κατὰ μὲν ἀνδριάντων ζητεῖται τὸ ὅμοιον ἀνθρώπῳ, ἐπὶ δὲ τοῦ λόγου τὸ ὑπερᾶρον, ὡς ἔφην, τὰ ἀνθρώπινα. (Ps.-Long., *De subl.* 36.3)

In reply, however, to the writer who maintains that the faulty Colossus is not superior to the Doryphoros of Polykleitos, it is obvious to remark among many other things that in art we admire the utmost exactitude, whilst in the works of nature we admire grandeur; and that it is by nature that man is being gifted with speech. In the statues likeness to man is the quality required; in discourse we demand, as I said, that which transcends the human.

At first glance, Ps.-Longinus’ position differs radically from Strabo’s assumptions (as well as from the mainstream of ancient literary criticism). The writer criticized in this passage had used a comparison drawn from the visual arts to elucidate his views – just as Strabo had done. He maintained that, even though only human-sized, a statue like Polykleitos’ Doryphoros was superior to a colossal statue with its flaws (the identity of the latter is uncertain, due to the obscurity of phrasing, but it might be the Zeus by Pheidias).<sup>18</sup> Ps.-Longinus replies that the parallel itself lacks a firm basis: literary works, related as they are to λόγος, are simply not comparable to statues (ἀνδριάντες), to the products of τέχνη. The reason is that τέχνη, being a human invention, cannot transcend its limits, whereas λόγος is the product of nature (φύσις), and therefore is able to exceed human measure – and consequently τέχνη as well. Interestingly, however, the starting point for this argument is represented by the pairing of μέγεθος and ἀκριβεία – the first being associated with nature, the second with art. In order not to get trapped in logical inconsistencies, it is necessary to

<sup>18</sup> On the identity of the Colossus mentioned by Ps.-Longinus, see Russell 1970: 169.

understand these associations as expressions of tendencies, not as rigorous definitions. Otherwise one could conclude that for Ps.-Longinus (who is not specifically interested anyway in exploring the consequences of his system for the visual arts) a colossus, with its μέγεθος, is not a human product. The implication of his words is rather that, thanks to its size, a colossus partakes of the domain of nature *despite* its technical character; it is not a work of nature but it should be viewed and judged *as if* it were one.

The most relevant point here, however, is the involvement of art and nature in the binary under discussion. The association of μέγεθος and φύσις does not sound particularly original, but even that of ἀκριβεία with τέχνη is not Ps.-Longinus' invention. Actually, it is attested already in the fourth century BCE in Plato and Aristotle, who likely reflect earlier notions that originated not in the realm of philosophy but in the technical language of artisans.<sup>19</sup>

Thus in the end Ps.-Longinus' frame of reference also turns out to be quite conventional. This is borne out by another passage from Strabo's *Geography* (8.6.10, 372), in which the geographer praises the chryselephantine (and colossal) cult statues of Polykleitos, remarking on the beauty of their τέχνη, but adding that they are inferior to those of Pheidias as regards sumptuousness (πολυτέλεια) and greatness (μέγεθος). A statement like this – which reflects widespread views on the respective merits of the two main classical sculptors – is perfectly compatible with Ps.-Longinus' words, and shows that we are dealing not with individual preferences but with a shared set of assumptions.<sup>20</sup>

By now it will have become apparent that the concepts under examination are ultimately rather generic. Indeed, in some cases it is difficult to gauge precisely what a writer is referring to when talking about e.g. technical accuracy. At the same time, this allows a broad range of specific applications in the use of the terms, some of which bear directly upon the issue at hand: the visibility of Trajan's Column. In a group of sources, the ἀκριβεία side of the binary is specifically linked to the figural decoration of colossal statues. A good example is represented by a simile

<sup>19</sup> Arist. *Eth. Nic.* 1141<sup>a</sup>9–11; see Settis 1973: 305–7. The Latin equivalent of ἀκριβεία, also used in art criticism, is *diligentia*: see Pollitt 1974: 351–7 (and 306–7, on *argutiae*); and most recently Perry 2000: 445–58 (who however overemphasizes the differences between ἀκριβεία and *diligentia*).

<sup>20</sup> It is worth noticing that Strabo's πολυτέλεια (on which see Pollitt 1974: 215–17) also has a correspondence in Ps.-Longinus' allusion to great riches in the passage quoted above (33.2: ὥσπερ ἐν τοῖς ἄγαν πλούτοις).

in Lucian's treatise on *How to Write History*, in which he lists some of the main mistakes made by the writers of historical works.<sup>21</sup>

Εἰσὶ γάρ τινες, οἱ τὰ μεγάλα μὲν τῶν πεπραγμένων καὶ ἀξιομνημόνευτα παραλείπουσιν ἢ παραθέουσιν, ὑπὸ δὲ ἰδιωτείας καὶ ἀπειροκαλίας καὶ ἀγνοίας τῶν λεκτέων ἢ σιωπητέων τὰ μικρότατα πάνυ λιπαρῶς καὶ φιλοπόνως ἐρμηνεύουσιν ἐμβραδύνοντες, ὥσπερ ἂν εἴ τις τοῦ Διὸς τοῦ ἐν Ὀλυμπίᾳ τὸ μὲν ὅλον κάλλος τοσοῦτο καὶ τοιοῦτο ὄν μὴ βλέποι μηδὲ ἐπαινοῖ μηδὲ τοῖς οὐκ εἰδόσιν ἐξηγοῖτο, τοῦ ὑποποδίου δὲ τό τε εὐθυεργές καὶ τὸ εὐξεστον θαυμάζοι καὶ τῆς κρηπίδος τὸ εὐρυθμον, καὶ ταῦτα πάνυ μετὰ πολλῆς φροντίδος διεξίω. (Luc. *Hist. conscr.* 27)

There are some who leave out or skate over the important and interesting events, and from lack of education, taste, and knowledge of what to mention and what to ignore dwell very fully and laboriously on the most insignificant happenings; this is like failing to observe and praise and describe for those who do not know it the entire beauty of the Zeus of Olympia, its grandeur and its quality, and instead admiring the good workmanship and good finish of the footstool, and the good proportions of the base, and developing all this with great concern.

The word ἀκρίβεια does not occur here, but its idea is undoubtedly present, as are related concepts, so much so that in many regards it is possible to take the whole passage as a concrete version of Strabo's comparison between Polykleitos and Pheidias, in which the κολοσσικὸν ἔργον is specified as being the Zeus by Pheidias. There is the opposition between large and small, as well as the parallel opposition between global and partial, and the context is again that of critical appraisal (of both visual and literary works). The century and a half that separates the two writers is not particularly apparent from this point of view.

The parts that Lucian singles out as being unworthy of consideration in the face of the beauty of the whole statue are the footstool of Zeus and the base of the statue. We know that the first was decorated with an Amazon battle framed by golden lions, while the second displayed a representation of the birth of Aphrodite in the presence of the main Olympian gods.<sup>22</sup> Lucian is evidently referring to these images when he talks about the aesthetic qualities praised by his inadequate viewer. The choice of these particular examples is itself significant. From Pausanias' painstaking description we learn that Zeus' throne was also lavishly decorated (with images of athletes, the slaughter of the Niobids, a second Amazon

<sup>21</sup> On this treatise, see Avenarius 1956: 105–13 for the passage quoted in the text; Georgiadou and Larmour 1994.

<sup>22</sup> Paus. 5.11.7–8.

battle, Sphinxes, Graces, and Seasons), as was his mantle (with animals and lilies), not to mention the many mythological scenes painted on the barriers around the statue.<sup>23</sup> By focusing on the footstool and base, Lucian highlights the supporting elements of the work, the ones placed on the lowest level. Through their location they certainly allow an accurate inspection, a gaze καθ' ἑκαστον, but at the same time they bear connotations of particular humility. The majesty of the statue does not – cannot – depend on them.

It is worth stressing that, unlike e.g. Ps.-Longinus, Lucian is not implying that the details of Pheidias' colossal statue are imperfect. The terms he uses to characterize the footstool and base (εὐθυεργές, εὐξεστον, εὐρυθμον) rather point to the contrary.<sup>24</sup> This does not impinge on the kind of gaze deemed adequate for an over-lifesize statue like the Olympic Zeus – which is a global gaze in Lucian just as it is in Ps.-Longinus and Strabo – but it suggests that the conceptual system under discussion does not necessarily require utter disregard of details. It is rather a matter of hierarchies. Details like the images on the base or on an attribute of a colossal statue fall into the category of ornament and thus are of a subordinate character in relation to the statue as a whole.

With this in mind one can easily interpret several other passages about colossal works, in which ἀκρίβεια (with *technē*) is seen as complementary, but also as supplemental, and ultimately as subordinate, to μέγεθος.<sup>25</sup> One could mention, for example, the passage in Lucian (*Iupp. trag.* 11) in which the Colossus of Rhodes itself boasts about its exceedingly large dimensions (defining himself τηλικουτῷ τὸ μέγεθος, 'so great in size', ὑπερφυᾶ, 'monstrous', and ὑπέρμετρον, 'enormous') and concludes: 'and in addition I have art and precision of workmanship, for all my great size' (καὶ πρόσσεστιν ἡ τέχνη καὶ τῆς ἐργασίας τὸ ἀκριβές ἐν μεγέθει τοσούτῳ). Sometimes the hierarchical relationship is apparently subverted, and details are highlighted precisely in order to extol a colossal statue. This is the case of Pliny the Elder's praise of the Athena Parthenos by Pheidias (*NH* 36.18–19), which explicitly disregards the statue as a whole and instead focuses on the figural decoration (again!) of the shield, the pedestal, and the helmet. However, as Pliny's concluding remark on the 'grandeur in small matters' (*magnificentia in*

<sup>23</sup> Paus. 5.11.1–7; see, most recently, Davison 2009: vol. 1, pp. 331–43.

<sup>24</sup> See, on εὐρυθμία, Pollitt 1974: 169–81.

<sup>25</sup> See also Ps.-Long., *De subl.* 36.4: προσήκει δ' ὁμῶς [...] βοήθημα τῇ φύσει πάντη πορίζεσθαι τὴν τέχνην· ἡ γὰρ ἀλληλουχία τούτων ἴσως γένοιτ' ἂν τὸ τέλειον.



*paruis*) shows, passages like this one have an unmistakable paradoxical flavor.<sup>26</sup> Much more common are cases in which ἀκρίβεια and technical quality are simply added to the mention of size to suggest ultimate perfection. In one of Lucian's *Dialogues of the Dead*, for example, King Mausolus explains why he is so proud and expects special honors among the dead:

“Ὅτι ἐν Ἁλικαρνασσῶ μνημα παμμέγεθες ἔχω ἐπικείμενον, ἡλικόν οὐκ ἄλλο νεκρός, ἀλλ’ οὐδὲ οὕτως ἐς κάλλος ἐξησκημένον, ἵππων καὶ ἀνδρῶν ἐς τὸ ἀκριβέστατον εἰκασμένων λίθου τοῦ καλλίστου, οἷον οὐδὲ νεῶν εὗροι τις ἂν ῥαδίως. (Luc. *Dial. mort.* 29.1)

I have lying over me in Halicarnassus a huge memorial, outdoing that of any other of the dead not only in size but also in its finished beauty, with horses and men reproduced most accurately in the fairest marble, so that it would be difficult to find even a temple like it.

The tension between μέγεθος and ἀκρίβεια is rather low here; nevertheless the passage is particularly relevant for our purposes because it shows that the same notions were also used to talk about architecture, and that here too ἀκρίβεια is a quality intrinsic to figural decoration.

To sum up: on the one hand we have μέγεθος, greatness, grandeur. In so far as it exceeds the human norm it partakes of the divine and natural sphere, and thus carries connotations of sublimity. To appreciate it in the right way, one needs to consider it in its globality, without wasting time on details. These details should instead be judged on the basis of their ἀκρίβεια, of their accuracy, of their precision. Since ἀκρίβεια is the quality *par excellence* of art and workmanship, it has a special relevance in ‘technical’ appraisals by specialists. Consequently, it invites close inspection of every single part by a trained eye, but it is also closely tied to the human sphere. Given the contrast between these two qualities, their combination generates a tense but fruitful relationship in which ἀκρίβεια is tendentially subordinated to μέγεθος but can nonetheless interact with it in different ways according to the context.

How do these concepts help us to understand the assumptions that conditioned the viewing of Trajan's Column? Let us start with μέγεθος. The imposing dimensions of the monument are undeniable. This quality was indirectly but explicitly addressed in the dedicatory inscription

<sup>26</sup> The witty juxtaposition of large and small is to be found elsewhere in Pliny (e.g. *NH* 34.45–47, on the sculptor Zenodorus' ability in working both on the colossal and the miniature scale), and is shared by him with other authors of the Flavian period: see, e.g. Statius, *Silv.* 4.6, esp. ll. 35–49, with the commentaries of Coleman 1988: 183–6, and Bonadeo 2010: 205–19.

placed atop the base's entrance, which stated that the purpose of the Column was 'to indicate how high the mountainous place was that was leveled to build works of such a magnitude.'<sup>27</sup> A rhetoric of amplifying indeterminacy is at work here: the precise measure of the celebrated *altitudo* is not given; moreover, this *altitudo* is attributed to the natural features that have been replaced with Trajan's large works, i.e., the forum, the basilica, and the Column itself. The size of the latter is therefore subsumed and amplified by that of the whole complex, and at the same time it is put in relation to nature (cf. *mons et locus*).

However, the Column was not only tall and imposing in a generic way; its height was remarkable also in relation to its very genre. The moldings of the base and of the capital (Figures 2.3 and 2.4), the entasis, and the flutings emerging from under the frieze at the top of the shaft, are all clear signs that, for all its innovations, the Column was conceived *as a column*, as an architectural element.<sup>28</sup> In this regard, it was not simply large *per se*, but more specifically, it was larger than any other column seen thus far: it was an oversized column, which was able to raise Trajan above everybody else.<sup>29</sup> Emerging from and towering high above the narrow courtyard, by its very location the Column must have highlighted this aspect. The measure of Trajan's Column might have played a role in this context, as well. The height of the shaft was planned to be 100 feet (although it eventually came to be slightly bigger). It is not unlikely that this measurement was well known, and that the Column was thus called a *columna centenaria*, as is later attested for the Column of Marcus Aurelius.<sup>30</sup> The number 100 carried obvious symbolic connotations of greatness. In this way, even an objective account of the Column's size would have increased the perception of its colossality.

Turning to ἀκριβεία, there is little doubt, in the light of the testimonies discussed earlier, that the frieze, with its precise carving and its many

<sup>27</sup> CIL 6.960: 'ad declarandum quantae altitudinis mons et locus tan[tis ope]ribus sit egestus'. On the inscription, see especially Raoss 1968; also Settis 1988: 49–56; Galinier 2007: 128–9.

<sup>28</sup> On the architectural quality of the Column of Trajan, see Wilson Jones 2000: 161, 167–9. Of course the Column was meant to be an autonomous element, and not a subordinated component of a larger architectural structure: Becatti 1960: 39–45; Martines 1990–2: and 2000: 50–5.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. also Cass. Dio 68.16.3: καὶ ἔστησεν ἐν τῇ ἀγορᾷ καὶ κίονα μέγιστον. The key passage on the function of honorary columns is Pliny, NH 34.27: 'columnarum ratio erat attolli super ceteros mortales'; see Jordan-Ruwe 1995; Ruck 2007: 113–16.

<sup>30</sup> Height of the Column of Trajan: Bauer 1983: 136 n. 33; Wilson Jones 1993 and 2000: 161–74. For the Column of Marcus Aurelius as *columna centenaria*: CIL 6.1, 1585b, 31 and 40–1; see also Martines 2000: 39–46.

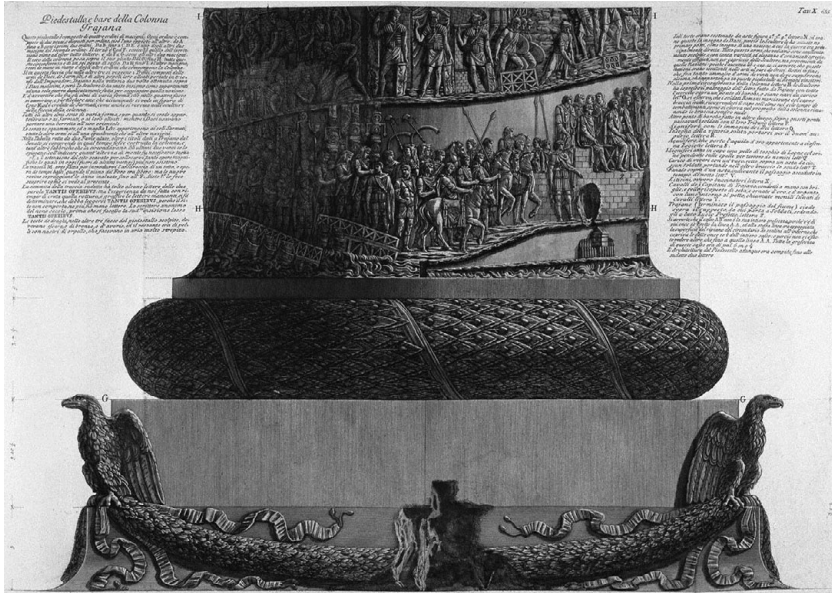


Figure 2.3 Base of the Column of Trajan (G. B. Piranesi, *Trofeo o sia Magnifica Colonna Coclide*, 1774/5, pl. X).



Figure 2.4 Capital of the Column of Trajan (G. B. Piranesi, *Trofeo o sia Magnifica Colonna Coclide*, c. 1780, pl. 17).



Figure 2.5 Column of Trajan, crossing of the Danube.

details, is an exemplary locus for a quality like meticulous precision. The representation of the various phases of the Dacian Wars appears to require a gaze κατ' ἑκάστον in order to appreciate all its moments and episodes.<sup>31</sup> Is it possible to be more specific, to read the ἀκριβεία of the Column's frieze using the connotations and associations that the term obtains in ancient texts?

As we have seen, ἀκριβεία is related to the appreciation of 'technical', i.e., artistic qualities. In the case of Trajan's Column, we can safely assume that the reliefs were the focus of such 'technical' interest, at least by the artists who were responsible for the Column of Marcus Aurelius (see Figures 2.5 and 2.6), although it is difficult to say to what extent they observed the scenes depicting the Dacian Wars directly (with scaffoldings?), or if they instead consulted drawings and preliminary plans kept in some archive.

<sup>31</sup> A piecemeal view is made necessary also by the very structure of the winding frieze, which can never be grasped in its entirety all at once.



Figure 2.6 Column of Marcus Aurelius, crossing of the Danube.

However, there is another perspective from which ἀκρίβεια appears to be relevant in the case of the Column's frieze. Many of our passages – Strabo and Lucian, for example – involve a comparison with history writing. This is not by chance, since ἀκρίβεια is also one of the qualities of historical research. From Thucydides on, scrupulous accuracy in the investigation and in the reporting of facts and events is a commonly mentioned requisite of good historians. The frieze of Trajan's Column conflates, so to speak, this historiographic connotation of ἀκρίβεια with the artistic one; its precision is visual and historic-narrative at the same time.<sup>32</sup>

As seen before, μέγεθος and ἀκρίβεια can interact (and interfere) in several ways with each other. What we have to assess at this point is which of several options, if any, operated on the Column, and how this affected its viewing. Let us consider first what we know about *real* viewers. From the ancient testimonies regarding the Column, one could quickly conclude that what really mattered to viewers in antiquity were its dimensions, particularly its height, whereas the frieze played almost no role. The first and main indication in this sense is given by the

<sup>32</sup> On ἀκρίβεια in history writing see especially the excellent entry by Fantasia 2004; also Trédé 1983.





**Figure 2.7** Pedestal of the Column of Trajan with dedicatory inscription (G. B. Piranesi, *Trofeo o sia Magnifica Colonna Coclide*, 1774/5, pl. IX).

dedicatory inscription itself (Figure 2.7), which does not mention the frieze at all. The absence *per se* is understandable, given that the Column itself is alluded to only indirectly, through reference to its height. However, neither is there any reference to the subject of the reliefs, the Dacian Wars – save, perhaps, for the title of Trajan as *Dacicus*, which is, however, combined with *Germanicus* and thus lacks any specificity in relation to the frieze.

Furthermore, Cassius Dio, when describing Trajan's building projects, mentions the height of the Column and its relation to the hill that stood on the site before the erection of the Column, but he does not mention the frieze.<sup>33</sup> Admittedly, Dio is basically paraphrasing the inscription. However, since he also mentions the function of the Column as the tomb of Trajan – something about which the dedication is silent – his account clearly does not depend on the inscription alone. Dio spent several years in Rome and thus certainly had first-hand knowledge of the Column, but evidently he did not deem the frieze worthy of mention. Similarly,

<sup>33</sup> Cass. Dio 68.16.3: καὶ ἔστησεν ἐν τῇ ἀγορᾷ καὶ κίονα μέγιστον, ἅμα μὲν ἐς ταφὴν ἑαυτοῦ, ἅμα δὲ ἐς ἐπίδειξιν τοῦ κατὰ τὴν ἀγορὰν ἔργου· παντὸς γὰρ τοῦ χωρίου ἐκείνου ὀρεινίου ὄντος κατέσκαψε τοσοῦτον ὅσον ὁ κίων ἀνίσχει, καὶ τὴν ἀγορὰν ἐκ τούτου πεδινὴν κατεσκεύασε.

when Ammianus Marcellinus lists the most remarkable sights in Rome admired by the emperor Constantius II in the fourth century, he also mentions the Columns of Trajan and Marcus Aurelius, albeit not as monuments worthy of being *looked at* for their figural decoration, but as supports for platforms *from which* one could conveniently contemplate the cityscape of the Urbs.<sup>34</sup> That this was a common way of using the Columns is testified to indirectly by Pausanias, two centuries earlier, according to whom the most impressive feature of Trajan's Forum was the gleaming bronze roof of the Basilica, which he had evidently admired from atop the Column.<sup>35</sup> In the late antique Regionary Catalogues of Rome the Columns were still remembered mainly for their internal staircases.<sup>36</sup>

How should one explain this disregard for the frieze in the ancient sources in light of the texts examined earlier? A possible, and easy, answer would be to consider the Column of Trajan a failed experiment, the product of a mistake in judgment. Indeed, in modern times several scholars have commented upon the lack of balance between the architectural structure of the Column and its figural decoration.<sup>37</sup> In ancient terms, one could say that the planners of the Column had forgotten to follow the principles upheld by authors like Ps.-Longinus and Lucian, and devoted excessive and unnecessary care to details. In support of this hypothesis, one could stress the experimental character of the monument, which was the first of its genre. It was not by chance – one could add – that the planners of the Column of Marcus Aurelius did not follow their model exactly, but corrected it to increase its visibility. Thus, the coils of the frieze of the second column are larger (and consequently fewer in number, 21 instead of 23), the relief is higher, and the whole sculptural style is more expressive, with figures isolated against a neutral background, fewer details, and so on.

It is legitimate, as well as very useful, to consider the artists of the Column of Marcus Aurelius as viewers and critics of Trajan's Column.

<sup>34</sup> Amm. Marc. 16.10.14: *deinde intra septem montium culmina, per acclivitates planitiemque posita urbis membra collustrans et suburbana, quicquid viderat primum, id eminere inter alia cuncta sperabat: [...] elatosque vertices qui scansili suggestu consurgunt, priorum principum imitamenta portantes*. On the Column of Trajan as belvedere, see Davies 2000: 129–135.

<sup>35</sup> Paus. 5.12.6 and 10.5.11. See de Angelis 2012.

<sup>36</sup> *Curiosum* p. 115 in Valentini and Zucchetti 1940–53: 'templum Traiani et columnam coclidem altam pedes CXXVII semis; gradus intus habet CLXXX, fenestras XLV'; *Notitia* p. 174 in Valentini and Zucchetti 1940–53: 'templum divi Traiani et columnam coclydem altam pedes CXXVIII semis; gradus intus habet CLXXXV, fenestras XLV'.

<sup>37</sup> See, most recently, Claridge 1993.

However, some caution is needed. In the first place, it is difficult to assess to what extent the features of Marcus Aurelius' Column were influenced by the concrete viewing conditions of the monument. Unfortunately even less is known about the surroundings of the Column of Marcus Aurelius than about the surroundings of Trajan's Column.<sup>38</sup> Nor should one overlook the fact that the base of Marcus Aurelius' Column is much higher than its predecessor's, thereby detracting from the visibility of the frieze.<sup>39</sup>

However, such a solution is unsatisfactory on a more general level, regardless of the concrete viewing conditions of the Columns. It is well known that the differences between the two are symptoms of a wider change that takes place in the late second century, one that concerns a wide range of artistic genres and monumental typologies – the *Stilwandel*, the 'change of style', of the late Antonine age.<sup>40</sup> Despite the name, it is a change that affects not only style (i.e. the *production* of visual artefacts), but also the viewing regime (i.e. the *reception* of visual artefacts). A comparison between the descriptions of works of art by Lucian in the second century and those of Philostratus in the early third century makes this very clear: descriptions striving for objectivity are replaced by ones that place the subjective perception of the viewer in the forefront.<sup>41</sup> Thus, looking at Trajan's Column from the late Antonine perspective is not a useless operation from an historical point of view, but it carries the risk of anachronism if one wants to understand the circumstances and conditions that led to the creation of Trajan's Column in the first place.

The interpretation of the Column's frieze as a mistake is also made unlikely by the fact that the frieze was planned very carefully, by artisans whose skill in matters of visual communication is evident in the attention devoted to the creation of meaningful visual patterns and correspondences. Nor should we forget that notions about the correct relationship between μέγεθος and ἀκριβεία were widespread in the first and second centuries; Apollodorus of Damascus, the planner of the Forum who must have been responsible for the Column as well, was almost certainly acquainted with them.<sup>42</sup> Finally, had the issue been simply that of maximization of

<sup>38</sup> The most recent assessment is Coarelli 2008: 9–32. <sup>39</sup> Martines 2000: 48; Coarelli 2008: 40.

<sup>40</sup> On the late Antonine *Stilwandel*, see Rodenwaldt 1935; specifically on the Column of Marcus Aurelius, see Becatti 1960: 53–82; Maffei 1994a: 235–6; Pirson 1996.

<sup>41</sup> On the changes that affected the viewing of images between the early principate and late antiquity, see Elsner 1995.

<sup>42</sup> Apollodorus' knowledge and use of the conceptual system to which μέγεθος and ἀκριβεία belong can be argued on the base of the correspondence between the views attributed to him by Cass. Dio 69.4.3–5 and a similar opinion in Strabo 8.3.30, C 353.



visibility, the planners would have had plenty of examples to follow. Roman art, both official and private, is full of friezes placed at a high level, from the representations of triumphal processions on honorary arches to the bakery scenes on the tomb of Eurysaces, whose rendering is influenced by considerations for their visibility.<sup>43</sup>

The silence of our sources, therefore, should not be interpreted too rigidly. As much as we find their (apparent) disregard of the frieze striking in light of the emphasis laid on the size of the Column and on the possibility of climbing to its top, we should be aware that this impression is conditioned by our own viewing habits and expectations. We are long accustomed to bell-towers and skyscrapers as viewing platforms, whereas historical scenes decorating, let alone winding up, a monument are arguably much rarer in modern cities. Our priorities may be different from those of the ancients. Indeed, mention of the figural decoration of monuments is often omitted by ancient writers, even when the issues of visibility are less extreme than in the case of the Column. In other words, when dealing with testimonies about viewers, it is necessary to keep in mind the rather obvious fact that these do not straightforwardly reproduce acts of viewing, but follow their own conventions, conventions dictated by genre and context. By omitting the frieze of the Column in their accounts, the ancient writers do not so much express their predicament or their negative feelings about this barely visible celebration of historical deeds, as observe the hierarchy between greatness and details on which the ancient sources place so much value.<sup>44</sup>

This conclusion contributes to framing the issue of the visibility of the frieze in the correct way, but still does not provide a complete answer. How was the frieze viewed *in relation* to the size of the Column? The most probable answer is that ἀκριβεία was meant to integrate and qualify the qualities embodied by μέγεθος. At the same time, the Column was not intended simply to be a perfect colossal work, as in the case of the Mausoleum according to Lucian. Thanks to the specific format of the monument, it was possible to exploit the tension, as well as the hierarchical relationship, between the two terms in order to produce a complex viewing experience. In theory the representation of the Dacian

<sup>43</sup> In modern scholarship formal principles aiming to increase visibility are often associated with the so-called ‘plebeian art’ or ‘freedmen art’; in fact, they are used on state monuments as well: see Hölscher 2012. For a critique of the notion of ‘freedmen art’, see also Petersen 2006.

<sup>44</sup> On the frequent silence of literary sources about architectural sculpture, see Galinier 2001: 107–9.

campaigns could have been placed, at least partially, on the pedestal of the Column, where it would have been easily visible. However, if one thinks of Lucian's passage about how *not* to look at the Zeus of Olympia, with his insistence on the decoration of precisely the lowest (and humblest) parts of the work, the positive connotations of a frieze winding around the shaft up to the top of the Column become readily evident. For all their ἀκριβεία, the reliefs partake of the grandeur of the Column, of its elevation, in a literal way. This tension is emphasized even further by the shifting degrees of visibility of the frieze, which correspond to its different levels.

The wealth of detail can be easily appreciated and examined on the lower spirals. Thus at the very beginning the viewer is informed of the ἀκριβεία of the visual narrative, i.e., of the meticulousness and accuracy with which the images reproduce historical reality. Moreover, even the more highly placed spirals allow the viewer, if not to make out details as such, at least to be assured of the consistency with which ἀκριβεία is maintained throughout the reliefs. Thereby the frieze proclaims itself as a work that completely fulfils the rules of the genre to which it belongs (i.e., figural decoration with historical content). At the same time, it is prevented from becoming 'mere ornament' in the commonsensical modern usage of the term. Ἀκριβεία warrants the existence of a high semantic charge throughout the frieze, inviting the viewer to go on looking until the end.

Despite the ostentatious staging of accuracy, however, close inspection of the frieze is made progressively more difficult, and in many regards utterly impossible. Attention to detail is invoked at the initial stage only to be consciously and almost systematically denied in the course of the viewing process. The message is clear: the frieze is technically and historically precise, but its excellence is not based on this quality – not primarily, at least; it is its striving for sublimity that makes it remarkable, imposing. Accordingly, beholders should not get lost in minutiae, but focus on the main features, on the substance of the historical narrative. This kind of viewing corresponds well to the historiographic precepts expounded by Lucian and observed by several historians of the imperial age, from Cassius Dio, who deems certain topics unworthy of history's dignity (ὄγκος τῆς ἱστορίας), to Ammianus Marcellinus (26.1.1), who warns that he will treat only the loftiest historical events (*celsitudines negotiorum*). It also resonates with the ideas about the Sublime expressed by Ps.-Longinus. Needless to say, careful analysis of these various passages shows that the topic is

articulated differently from author to author. What they – and the Column – all share is the conviction that elevated subjects require a corresponding attitude, be it by the producer of the work or by its recipient.

The solution that is being suggested here may appear a neat and balanced one. However, one should not overlook the equally relevant circumstance that this balance is a very *precarious* one. This element of instability is crucial for a correct appreciation of the Column. On the one hand, it is an undeniable fact that observing the frieze was not easy. The possibility that the voice of the Column passed high above the heads of its audience, and that the frieze was reduced to a generic embellishment in the awareness of the beholders, was more than just a remote risk. The border between disregard of minor details and superficial awe must have been crossed more than once, and many viewers will have stayed content with a sense of generic admiration, even in antiquity. On the other hand, one should not underestimate the addressing function of the frieze's ἀκριβεία, the strength of its appeal. After all, the frieze *was* carved with a keen eye for documentary and artistic precision. The location of the Column between two libraries reminds us that erudition was not a negative value in this context.<sup>45</sup>

So, viewers wishing to look accurately at the frieze from the beginning to the end might have been an exception, but this is precisely the point: the Column calls for exceptional viewers. In combination with the spiral format, ἀκριβεία lends the monument a dynamic tension that can be solved in principle only by the gaze of a viewer hovering higher and higher around it. In other words, it requires a viewer who is able to rise above normal human limitations, as the print about the Swiss guard declared. Now, even though the planners certainly did not intend the Column to become a place for acrobatic endeavors, this does not mean that the modern history of reception of the Column is useless for our aims. On the contrary, even in its most extreme forms, like the free-climbing experience of Giovanni Grosso, it helps us focus on a crucial aspect. By inviting close scrutiny through its ἀκριβεία and at the same time denying it through its μέγεθος, the Column represents a permanent admonishment not to be content with an ordinary viewing experience but to respond in an active way. This challenge to the viewer cannot be stressed enough. It is something that the Column shares with many other

<sup>45</sup> See Fehr 1985–6. On the libraries of the Basilica Ulpia, see most recently Meneghini 2002a and 2002b, 2010: 38–40; Dix and Houseton 2006: 695–9.

monuments in antiquity; one could even go so far as to say that challenge belongs to the very conception of ancient monuments, if not of monuments altogether. It would be possible to quote several authors, from Herodotus on, to prove the point. One example will suffice.

As already alluded to before, in 357 CE the emperor Constantius II visited the old capital, Rome. In the account of the historian Marcellinus, he was overwhelmed by the many marvelous sights of the city.

uerum cum ad Traiani forum uenisset, singularem sub omni caelo structuram, ut opinamur, etiam numinum assensione mirabilem, haerebat attonitus, per gigantes contextus circumferens mentem, nec relatu effabiles, nec rursus mortalibus appetendos. Omni itaque spe huiusmodi quicquam conandi depulsa, Traiani equum solum, locatum in atrii medio, qui ipsum principem uehit, imitari se uelle dicebat et posse. Cui prope adstans regalis Ormisda [...] respondit astu gentili: 'Ante' inquit 'imperator, stabulum tale condi iubeto, si uales; equus quem fabricare disponis, ita late succedat, ut iste quem uidemus.' (Amm. Marc. 16.10.15–16)

But when he came to the Forum of Trajan, a construction unique under the heavens, as we believe, and admirable even in the unanimous opinion of the gods, he stood fast in amazement, turning his attention to the gigantic complex about him, begging description and never again to be imitated by mortal men. Therefore abandoning all hope of attempting anything like it, he said that he would and could copy Trajan's steed alone, which stands in the centre of the vestibule, carrying the emperor himself. To this prince Ormisda, who was standing near him [...] replied with native wit: 'First, Sire', said he, 'command a like stable to be built, if you can; let the steed which you propose to create range as widely as this which we see.'

So eventually Constantius limited himself to the erection of an obelisk in the Circus Maximus.

As Marcellinus makes clear, viewing plays an essential role in the whole process. It is the sight of a ruler's monument that triggers the desire by a subsequent ruler to create a new monument. In this case, the predecessor's example proves to be too big to be adequately rivalled. This is not necessarily the norm, but it makes the rationale of such responses all the more evident. Since monuments are both memorials of deeds accomplished and achievements in and of themselves, they are indicators of the greatness of their patrons. Thus they become part of the cycle of competition and emulation by which rulers vie with each other to assess their place in history. Indeed, Trajan's Column may not have impressed Constantius II as strongly as Trajan's bronze horse did (or else he deemed himself unworthy of even attempting

to match *that* paradigm). Nevertheless, as we know, the Column's challenge was taken up by other emperors, in Rome as well as in Constantinople, and also beyond antiquity, with the Napoleonic Vendôme Column in Paris.<sup>46</sup>

In view of this, maybe it is worthwhile to rephrase the issue of the viewer in more adequate terms. Monuments like the Column do not call so much for *ideal* viewers as for *worthy* viewers. With its combination of μέγεθος and ἀκρίβεια, the Column invites the beholder to live up to the challenge that it presents, in every sense. In this regard, it is not a problem that rarely, if ever, was the Column subject to close scrutiny. On the contrary, this condition allowed for viewers to be ranked, as it were, according to their responses. This hierarchy had of course strong socio-political connotations. Not by chance does Marcellinus, as so many other historians before him, inform us about a *ruler's* response.<sup>47</sup> By virtue of their role monarchs partake of the sublimity required by the Column, and therefore become its ultimate viewers. It is possible to be even more specific on this point. Rulers are viewers of monuments, and respondents to them, in the same way that they are said to be their builders. That is, they are the metonymic agents of operations which in reality are the outcome of the collaboration of a multiplicity of actors, from planners and counselors to the last workman. In this perspective, it is of little relevance that – when, for example, the construction of the Column of Marcus Aurelius was decided – we do not know how attentively the emperor looked at the frieze of Trajan's Column (if at all). What matters is that somebody did so in his name (as said before, one can safely assume careful scrutiny of Trajan's Column by the artists involved in the creation of Marcus Aurelius' Column). As a matter of fact, only through this actual repartition of agency, coupled with its metonymical subsumption under the name of one person, is it possible to address and solve the contradiction implied by the combination of μέγεθος and ἀκρίβεια and by their competing demands on the viewer.

Needless to say, such an answer raises many further questions. Some of them are specifically related to the Column. For example, how should we

<sup>46</sup> On the imitations of the Column of Trajan, see Gauer 1981. On the Columns of Theodosius and Arcadius, see Becatti 1960: 83–288; Florescu 1969: 148–60; Jordan-Ruwe 1995: 140–5; Mayer 2002: 130–58; for further bibliography, see Maffei 1994b. Vendôme Column: Murat 1970, Traeger 1977, Huet 1999.

<sup>47</sup> See, for an early parallel, Hdt. 2.110.1–3 (Darius and the colossal statues of Sesostris in Memphis).

understand the role of the Senate and People of Rome as the avowed commissioners of the monument within this frame? Other questions go beyond Trajan's Column as such. To what extent, for example, can we apply this explanation model to other monuments? How should we change and adapt it to incorporate cases such as the Bisutun rock carvings, or the Parthenon frieze?<sup>48</sup> These questions, however, would go beyond the scope of this chapter, and will have to be addressed elsewhere.

<sup>48</sup> On the visibility of the Parthenon frieze, see now Marconi 2009.

### 3 | *Corpore enormi*

#### *The Rhetoric of Physical Appearance in Suetonius and Imperial Portrait Statuary*

JENNIFER TRIMBLE

#### **Lenin's corpse, Caligula's body**

Vladimir Ilyich Lenin died in 1924, but his embalmed body has been displayed in a mausoleum in Moscow's Red Square for almost ninety years (Figure 3.1). This extraordinary act of preservation makes strong claims about Lenin's appearance. In his memoir about caring for the body, Ilya Zbarsky explains that the embalmers did not try to make Lenin look younger (he was 53 when he died), more handsome, stronger or in some other way better than life. The point was to make him better than death.<sup>1</sup> They tried to prevent signs of decomposition and produce a lifelike appearance of sleep. This mattered most for the visible parts of the body, the head and hands. Early work focused on reversing the corpse's greenish-gray color and plumping up the shriveled ears; false eyeballs kept the eyes from appearing too sunken; the eyelids and mouth were sewn shut.<sup>2</sup> Anything below the visible surface was fair game for transformation; not least, the entire body was regularly immersed in a mix of glycerine and potassium acetate. Keeping Lenin's body looking unchanged and lifelike required continued efforts over decades.<sup>3</sup> The result, an authentic Lenin available for public viewing in the mausoleum, was a rhetorical production. It was also an elaborate hybrid of the man's actual remains, mechanical interventions, and chemical replacements – a material, embodied rhetoric.

Lenin's corpse made truth claims, many decades and chemicals later, about the actual appearance of the leader, claims that were politically and culturally situated. Zbarsky's memoir is shot through with the

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<sup>1</sup> Zbarsky and Hutchinson 1998. <sup>2</sup> Zbarsky and Hutchinson 1998: 21, 24, 30, 85.

<sup>3</sup> For example, the removal of the corpse from Moscow during World War II allowed the embalmers more time to work on it: 'so far as realism went, the face and hands of the corpse, which had been very pale before our work during the war, had taken a pinker, and thus more lifelike, tone' (Zbarsky and Hutchinson 1998: 139; see also 121–2). On the regular glycerine and potassium acetate baths: p. 78.



Figure 3.1 Lenin's embalmed body on display in his mausoleum in Moscow.

political secrecy, repression and fear of the Soviet era, but it also makes clear the Soviet state's pride in the team's scientific achievement.<sup>4</sup> Equally important was the ritualized public viewing and reception of Lenin's corpse. His body, in its carefully lit presentation in the mausoleum on Red Square, provided an important way to focus political veneration. Over the years, millions of ordinary people waited in long lines to view the body and had to follow rules for respectful behavior once inside the building.<sup>5</sup> Visiting dignitaries paid their respects there; Soviet leaders stood on top of the mausoleum to review parades. Lenin's body was a potent symbol. Not coincidentally, since the Soviet Union's

<sup>4</sup> Political machinations, arrests, and fear appear throughout the memoir, notably with the unexplained arrest and imprisonment of Zbarsky's father in 1952 (pp. 157–71). But, thanks to their success with Lenin's body, his embalmers were asked to work on other Communist rulers, including not only Stalin but also dead leaders from Bulgaria, Mongolia, Czechoslovakia, North Vietnam, Angola, Guyana and North Korea (Zbarsky and Hutchinson, 1998: 172–90). Since the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the embalmers' best clients have been murdered Russian gangsters (191–207).

<sup>5</sup> Tumarkin 1997: esp. xi–xii, 194–5, 261, 267. She puts the total number of visitors in the 'tens of millions' (267). On the role of the cult of personality, and on predecessors to this veneration of a dead leader: 4–23.



dissolution in 1991, there has been ongoing debate about whether to remove Lenin's body from view and bury it.<sup>6</sup>

Lenin's body offers a revealing way into the subject of this essay: rhetorical constructions of what the Roman emperor looked like. Similar issues of mimetic representation, public reception and symbolic force inform a rich element of Roman culture in the early and middle imperial period: visual and textual representations of the emperor's physical appearance. Describing how the emperor looked was apparently a meaningful thing to do. The statues of Augustus, Vespasian, Trajan or any other first- or second-century CE emperor depict recognizable and lifelike individuals, each with his own facial traits and hairstyle. In the fullest surviving textual counterpart, Suetonius' *Twelve Caesars*, the author describes the individual appearance of each of his subjects in unusual detail. These images and texts made strong claims about how the Roman emperor actually looked, claims that, as for Lenin's lifelike corpse, operated within a specific political and technological context.

These claims are all the more striking because the visual and textual representations do not match. Both Suetonius' *Twelve Caesars* and portrait statues of the same rulers claim to represent what the individual emperors looked like. However, they do not say the same thing. Take, for example, Caligula. Suetonius describes him like this (*Gaius*, 50):<sup>7</sup>

statura fuit eminenti, colore expallido, corpore enormi, gracilitate maxima ceruicis et crurum, oculis et temporibus concauis, fronte lata et torua, capillo raro at circa uerticem nullo, hirsutus cetera. quare transeunte eo prospicere ex superiore parte aut omnino quacumque de causa capram nominare, criminosum et exitiale habebatur. vultum uero natura horridum ac taetrum etiam ex industria efferabat componens ad speculum in omnem terrorem ac formidinem.

He was very tall and extremely pale, with an unshapely body, but very thin neck and legs. His eyes and temples were hollow, his forehead broad and grim, his hair thin and entirely gone on the top of his head, though his body was hairy. Because of this to look upon him from a higher place as he passed by, or for any reason whatever to mention a goat, was treated as a capital offence. While his face was naturally forbidding and ugly, he purposely made it even more savage, practising all kinds of terrible and fearsome expressions before a mirror.

Suetonius emphasizes this body's disproportion. Caligula's forms and shapes were ugly; even his hair grew in all the wrong places, with not enough on his

<sup>6</sup> Weir 2011. He notes that a website ([www.goodbyelenin.ru](http://www.goodbyelenin.ru)) set up by the United Russia party invites Russians to vote on whether Lenin should be buried. On April 17, 2012, 66.71% of the 347,032 votes were in favor.

<sup>7</sup> All citations and translations of Suetonius are from the Loeb edition (Rolfe 1997-8).



Figure 3.2 Detail of a portrait statue of Caligula from the Agora of Gortyn (see fig. 3.3).

head and too much everywhere else. In this account, the princeps even intensified his unpleasant appearance by making faces in the mirror. By contrast, visual representations of Caligula show very little of this ugliness. On coins, he is depicted with large eyes, but that is a recurrent feature of Julio-Claudian dynastic portraiture and not specific to this ruler.<sup>8</sup> Neither his eyes nor his temples appear particularly hollow; his neck does not look particularly thin, and he has a normal amount and distribution of hair. The portrait sculptures are even more distant from Suetonius' account (Figures 3.2, 3.3, 3.4). They show Caligula with plenty of hair, unremarkable temples and a reasonably sized neck. His eyes are large but not especially hollow; there is no sign of unusual height, spindly legs, or copious body hair. Rather, his full-length statues depict a standard, well-proportioned body (Figures 3.3, 3.4).<sup>9</sup>

<sup>8</sup> von Kaenel 1989, with plates A–E.

<sup>9</sup> Only two full-length figures of Caligula survive, reproduced here in figs. 3.3 and 3.4. Fig. 3.3 is a togate statue, *capite uelato*, found in the agora of Gortyn in 1885, marble, 2.05m high, now in the Gortyn Aquarium, inv. GO 16 (Boschung 1989: cat. 8, p. 109 and plates 8.1–3 and 41.1–2; Romeo and Portale 1998: 331–6, cat. 8, pl. 43, with extensive bibliography and discussion of other Julio-Claudian portraits found in the same zone). Fig. 3.4 is a togate statue with the head uncovered, marble, 2.03m high, said to have been found at the Theater of Marcellus in Rome. Previously in the Palazzo Colonna in Rome, since 1971 it has been in the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts in Richmond, Virginia, acc. no. 71.20 (Boschung 1989: cat. 11, pp. 109–10 and pls 42–3, with detail views of the head on pl. 11).



**Figure 3.3** Portrait statue of Caligula from the Agora of Gortyn. Marble, 2.05m. Gortyn Antiquarium.

How to reconcile these contradictory versions of how the emperor looked? Previous studies have tried to resolve these differences in three main ways. A first approach is to treat the relationship of these textual and visual descriptions as a problem of evidence for how the ruler actually looked. Studies of written biography or visual portraiture sometimes refer to elements from the other medium to analyze and verify the ruler's

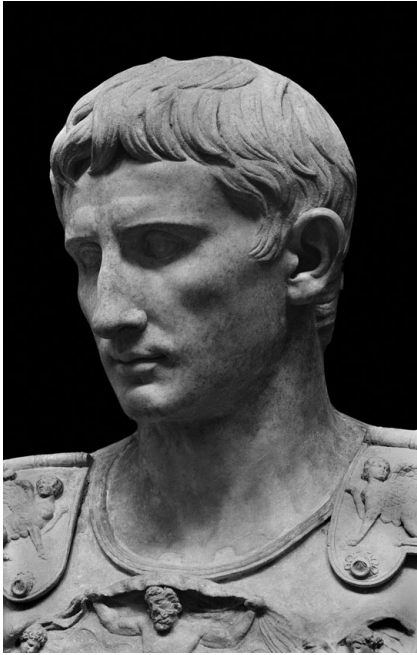


**Figure 3.4** Portrait statue of Caligula from Rome. Marble, 2.03 m. Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond.

appearance.<sup>10</sup> Suetonius writes, for example, that Augustus' nose 'projected a little at the top and then bent slightly inward' (*nasum et a summo eminentiorem et ab imo deductiorem*; *Aug.* 79), and this may match the carved noses of the Alcudia, Louvre MA 1280 and Prima Porta portrait types, with their slight bump on the upper bridge (Figure 3.5).<sup>11</sup> The difficulty is that only a few features can be matched directly in this way. Suetonius' account of Augustus' 'calm and mild' expression (*uultu ... tranquillo serenoque*; *Aug.* 79) is much harder to relate to the visual portraits, and other traits do not cross genres at all. Suetonius writes that Augustus had skin blemishes, a weak left leg and an itchy body (*Aug.* 80).

<sup>10</sup> Gross 1982 discusses this approach as an improvement on the untenable method of trying to read known aspects of character directly from a portrait face. On the dangers of simplistic interpretations of appearance and character in visual portraits, see Winkes 1973.

<sup>11</sup> In his magisterial study of the sculpted portraits of Augustus, Dietrich Boschung examines the literary evidence for the princeps's appearance to measure the extent to which the visual portraits were stylized (Boschung 1993: 93–6). This still implies that the written descriptions can be used as a source of good information on this point.



**Figure 3.5** Detail of the portrait statue of Augustus from Prima Porta. Marble, 2.06m. Vatican Museums: Museo Chiaramonti, Braccio Nuovo.

By contrast, the portrait statues of Augustus portray a man of physical strength and health, with smooth, unblemished skin (Figures 3.5, 3.6).

A second approach has been to stress the functional differences between historical writing and visual portraiture; portrait statues were strongly honorific, while the written sources were often not. So, for Caligula, we might interpret the statues as flattering versions of his actual appearance, which Suetonius depicts more accurately. However, this does not solve the larger problem, since the mismatch extends well beyond the case of Caligula and includes good emperors as well as bad. No Roman statue shows a ruler with the physical problems described for Augustus, with a protruding belly and blotchy body (*Nero*, 51), or bad feet and bow legs (*Otho* 12). These written physicalities, so unflattering and specific, seem to have little to do with the idealizing ways in which the emperors were visually portrayed.

In light of these difficulties, a third, more recent approach shows increasing scepticism about drawing on the visual evidence at all to illuminate the written descriptions, or vice versa. These scholars emphasize the distances between Suetonius' descriptions and portrait statuary, and the impossibility of bridging them.<sup>12</sup> For example, Suetonius does not seem to have drawn on

<sup>12</sup> Bradley 1978: 281; Hurley 1993: 178–80.



**Figure 3.6** Portrait statue of Augustus from the Via Labicana, Rome. Marble, 2.05 m. Museo Nazionale Romano di Palazzo Massimo alle Terme, Inv. no. 56230.

visual sources for his descriptions of appearance; his references were primarily textual.<sup>13</sup> Yet the second-century CE audience for Suetonius' biographies lived among ubiquitous visual depictions of past and present

<sup>13</sup> Wardman 1967; Wardle 1994: 325–6. Wardman points out that Suetonius mentions statues, but not in relation to appearance; statues are present as omens, honors, and evidence for political attitudes or imperial arrogance vs. restraint.

emperors, in coinage, public statuary and other media. Apparently, in their own context, these discrepancies were not considered a problem.<sup>14</sup> This encourages a reframing of the question. How did these apparently irreconcilable visual and textual representations – each claiming authority and truth about the appearance of the emperor – make sense to their audiences? And how did they relate to one another?

In this essay, I suggest that exploring the rhetorical aspects of appearance in both Suetonius' biographies and imperial portrait statuary helps explain how these apparently divergent claims worked within the same cultural and historical milieu. Suetonius' relationship to rhetorical training and forms of expression has received scholarly attention, but the relationship between visual portraiture and rhetoric less so.<sup>15</sup> Accordingly, I begin with a discussion of Suetonius' descriptions of appearance in the *Twelve Caesars* in relation to the rhetoric of praise and blame, drawing on the work of Tamsyn Barton and others. Then, I consider first-century CE imperial portrait statues in light of the rhetorical model proposed by Jaś Elsner in this volume's [Introduction](#), exploring *ēthos*, *pathos* and *logos* as concepts that help illuminate the persuasive nature and mechanisms of this visual imagery.<sup>16</sup> Ultimately, this will allow a return to the relationship between Suetonius' descriptions and portrait statues of the same individuals, and to the question of how they interacted within the same broader cultural context.

A central theme is that these representations of appearance, and their reception, were fundamentally shaped by their different media and genres. At the same time, these texts and images shared underlying concerns about defining, characterizing and assessing the power of the ruler. In this sense, they demonstrate the rich malleability of descriptions of appearance, and

<sup>14</sup> Jaś Elsner offers an intriguing way forward in his comparison of the physiognomist and orator Polemo's highly specific and detailed description of Favorinus with Favorinus' portrait statue in Corinth, which does not survive but was almost certainly a standard honorific statue employing a stock body (Elsner 2007b). Here there is a disjunction between textual and visual description that cannot be directly bridged. Even Polemo's very positive description of Hadrian, with its emphasis on the extraordinary color and power of the emperor's eyes, cannot be matched up well with sculpted portraits. Interestingly, Elsner is more optimistic about the potential impact of art on physiognomics, citing Polemo's emphasis on certain physical features and disregard of others, and his use of color. I will come back to related possibilities at the end of this essay.

<sup>15</sup> On Suetonius' debt to rhetorical training and thinking, see Wallace-Hadrill 1983: 142–74, Barton 1994a. On rhetorical dimensions of visual portraiture, see Giuliani 1986, Stewart 1993a.

<sup>16</sup> The portraiture of the Julio-Claudian dynasty is more fully studied than that of the Flavians, and that emphasis is reproduced here. I am especially indebted to Boschung 1989, 1993 and 2002, and Rose 1997.



suggest the range of work that descriptions of physical appearance could perform. This discussion makes clear that there was no concept in Roman culture of a single or objectively ‘true’ appearance for any given person, in the modern sense of what someone actually looks like. Descriptions of appearance are culturally constructed and vary greatly across place and time. In both image and text, representations of the Roman ruler took shape as an embodied rhetoric – as much for the Roman emperor in the first century CE as in the preservation of Lenin’s body in the twentieth.

### Suetonius’ descriptions of the ruler’s appearance

Every one of Suetonius’ biographies in *The Twelve Caesars* describes the ruler’s physical appearance: *Julius* 45, *Augustus* 79–80, *Tiberius* 68, *Gaius* 50, *Claudius* 30, *Nero* 51, *Galba* 21, *Otho* 12, *Vitellius* 17, *Vespasian* 20, *Titus* 3, and *Domitian* 18. Such descriptions had precedents in ancient biography, but their systematic inclusion and level of detail seem to have been unique to Suetonius.<sup>17</sup> For the reader or listener encountering these biographies in order, physical description became a predictable element, like the attention paid to ancestors and the father’s career at the start of each life. In the first of the twelve, for example, Julius Caesar is physically described about halfway through, after the accounts of his public life and deeds and at the start of a discussion of his domestic life and personal qualities. At this transitional point, the author promises to review ‘his personal appearance, his dress, his mode of life, and his character, as well as his conduct in civil and military life’ (*ea quae ad formam et habitum et cultum et mores, nec minus quae ad ciuilia et bellica eius studia pertineant*; *Julius* 44). Here, the syntactical series *et ... et ... et* makes physical appearance one of several equally revealing aspects of Julius’ character and education. The passage emphasizes their functional equivalence; personal appearance is one part of constructing a biography and understanding its subject. This sets the tone for physical descriptions throughout the work.

These were not ‘photographic’ or neutral descriptions of how a person looked; their primary goal was not recognizability. The latter kind of description did exist, but in specific contexts; A. E. Wardman notes that

<sup>17</sup> Couissin 1953: 234; Stok 1995: 112–13. See also Bradley 1978: 281 and Wardle 1994: 323–9. Barton comments on the contrast between Suetonius and both Plutarch and in particular Polemo, who claimed to understand character through the interpretation of appearance (on Polemo’s physiognomy, see Gleason 1995).



their goal was to identify people like runaway slaves and errant taxpayers, and those descriptions accordingly emphasized features that would allow immediate recognition.<sup>18</sup> Biography had other goals. In Suetonius, the description of physical appearance contributed to the larger narrative about a ruler's character and the assessment of his deeds. Several scholars have pointed out how much Suetonius' biographies owe to rhetorical training and ways of thinking, in particular epideictic, the praise or blame of persons.<sup>19</sup> In particular, Tamsyn Barton offers a detailed analysis of Suetonius as rhetorician, showing how the structures and tropes of encomium were reversed to create a very negative assessment of Nero.<sup>20</sup>

Especially useful here is Barton's discussion of the embroidery or even outright invention of what happened in the service of *enargeia*, or vivid description. So, for example, colorful details flesh out accusations of vice or depraved behavior, and those details are themselves often *topoi* of invective. Some examples: Nero's early tutors are said (not surprisingly) to have been of very low status, a dancer and a barber (*Nero* 6); Nero robbed temples (*Nero* 32); Nero's sexual behavior inverted – to put it mildly – standard expectations of elite masculinity (esp. *Nero* 28–9). Barton also points out that Suetonius seems deliberately to frame these details in relation to one another, building from mild sexual debauchery to an appalling peak, with a similar trajectory for Nero's cruelty. This has immediate implications for scholarship: 'Clearly the acceptability of this sort of elaboration on standard lines poses problems for historians hoping to extract kernels of truth from Suetonius. The tradition should not be taken on trust.'<sup>21</sup> These gruesome details are presented as part of an evaluation built up through rhetorical techniques and expectations, not as objective fact.

Barton's analysis is extremely helpful in analyzing Suetonius' descriptions of personal appearance, and indeed they seem to work in a very similar way. The physical descriptions are primarily concerned with praise and blame, and with the assessment of a ruler's character and deeds; they are not neutral depictions of what a ruler actually looked like. We can see tropes of

<sup>18</sup> Wardman 1967: 414, with further discussion in Evans 1969: 51–2. Misener 1924 is an extended exploration of this 'iconistic' kind of description. Couissin notes that this is not a question of the quality of evidence available to Suetonius; if it were, we would expect the most detailed descriptions to be of the most recent emperors, seen in living memory, but this is not the case (Couissin 1953: 235).

<sup>19</sup> For example, Andrew Wallace-Hadrill has analyzed Suetonius' treatment of his rulers' stock panoply of virtues or vices in this light (Wallace-Hadrill 1983: 144). However, Wallace-Hadrill also points out that Suetonius does not follow the rhetorical handbooks' focus on courage, justice, temperance and wisdom in particular, but pursues his own emphases.

<sup>20</sup> Barton 1994a. <sup>21</sup> Barton 1994a: 58.

encomium or invective, while the most vivid details are probably best understood as serving the purposes of *enargeia* rather than factual reality. Their structure and context are crucial, with different rhetorical effects depending on what aspects of appearance are described and how, where a description is placed within the narrative, and how it relates to the rest of a ruler's life.

Most obviously, Suetonius' good rulers are generally pleasing in appearance and the bad rulers are not; the worst can be downright hideous. Caligula, the most insane of these twelve, has an awful appearance, as already seen. Augustus and Titus, the best of the bunch, are also the best looking, with relatively minor flaws (Augustus' bad teeth, Titus' protruding belly) placed within a harmonious whole. This difference extends to the kind and amount of detail included. Typical elements of Suetonius' descriptions include height and to what extent the body is in proportion or not. If a ruler was well proportioned, this is mentioned in positive but vague terms. Augustus has an 'unusually handsome' figure (*forma fuit eximia*) with 'fine proportion and symmetry' (*commoditate et aequitate membrorum*; *Aug.* 79). Similarly, Titus' 'bodily and mental gifts were conspicuous' (*corporis animique dotes exsplenduerunt*; *Titus* 3) and he had a 'handsome person' (*forma egregia*; *Titus* 3). When the body is not well-proportioned (usually the sign of a bad ruler), specific problems are described in much more detail, as in the example of Caligula cited above, or Nero, who had a thick neck, protruding belly, and skinny legs (*cervicē obesa, uentre proiecto, gracillimis cruribus*; *Nero* 51).<sup>22</sup> *Enargeia* here plays a role in communicating the overall praise- or blameworthiness of a ruler. Caligula's practice of making faces in the mirror to intensify his own fearsomeness can be understood in this light; the point is not whether or not he actually did this, but that the vivid detail heightens the interweaving of his physical and ethical ugliness.

These correlations between appearance and character have raised the question of Suetonius' relationship to the ancient physiognomic handbooks. Physiognomic ideas are visible in the attention sometimes given to the color and brilliance of the eyes (e.g. *Julius* 45, *Aug.* 79, *Tib.* 68). Caligula's goat-like appearance (*Gaius* 50) links him to the lascivious and other negative connotations of the goat in physiognomic writings; Augustus, by contrast, can be associated with the positive connotations of

<sup>22</sup> Couissin notes that the most detailed descriptions are reserved for psychologically unusual emperors (Couissin 1953: 235); cf. Bradley 1978: 281. More generally on the importance of good proportions in ancient physiognomics, see Evans 1969: 53.

the eagle or the lion (*Aug.* 79–80).<sup>23</sup> However, other descriptions in Suetonius cannot be linked as strongly to physiognomic ideas; a physiognomic framework is not dominant in Suetonius, or even consistently employed.<sup>24</sup> It may make more sense to read the physiognomic references in Suetonius primarily as tropes of invective or encomium, additional fuel for the construction of praise or blame through physical description.

For example, Suetonius sometimes establishes correlations between appearance and character only to explode them later on. Claudius was considered incompetent and lacking in potential as a child and young man, largely on the basis of his physical defects (*Claudius* 2, 4); the point here is that physiognomic expectations were confounded by Claudius' good performance as emperor. Similarly, the short-lived emperor Otho stands out for his heroism in death, contradicting his dissipated life and his unprepossessing appearance: 'neither Otho's person nor his bearing suggested such great courage' (*tanto Othonis animo nequaquam corpus aut habitus competit*; *Otho* 12). As Fabio Stok points out, the oppositions in Otho's biography are quite broad, balancing a corrupt life with a courageous death as much as they invert physiognomic expectations.<sup>25</sup>

The placement and context of the descriptions within individual biographies strengthen these effects. Some of these placements seem to be about stylistic *variatio* more than character: Augustus' physical description, like Julius', is grouped with other aspects of his personal life (marriages, children, sexual rumors, bodily habits), but at the end of these rather than at the start, with no substantial change in impact. Others are more clearly about evaluating the ruler: Caligula's starkly negative appearance counterbalances the very positive description of the beloved Germanicus near the start of that biography (*Gaius* 3).<sup>26</sup> The placement of Vitellius' description heightens the public shame of his downfall and death; it is only once Vitellius is being

<sup>23</sup> On Caligula the goat: Couissin 1953: 247–8, 251; Evans 1969: 54 (noting that Caligula's description can also be linked to the panther: pp. 54–5). Augustus as eagle: Couissin 1953: 244–5; as lion: Evans 1969: 53–4.

<sup>24</sup> Reservations about a purely physiognomic interpretation: Bradley 1978: 281–2; Wardle 1994: 325; Hurley 2001: 200–2. Hurley 1993: 178–80 discusses the complexity of these issues in Suetonius' description of Caligula. Stok 1995 offers a rich exploration of competing ideas about just how physiognomic Suetonius was. Rohrbacher 2010 goes further, stressing the role of Suetonius' readers in decoding his layered use of physiognomics.

<sup>25</sup> Stok 1995, *pace* Couissin 1953: 236. Stok further notes that appearance is not fixed or unchangeable. Germanicus, endowed with a perfect character and almost perfect appearance at the start of Caligula's biography (*Gaius* 3), is able to build up his too-skinny legs by an effort of will and exercise (Stok 1995: 124).

<sup>26</sup> Stok 1995.

dragged along the Sacred Way, mocked from all sides, that the reader is told that 'he was in fact abnormally tall, with a face usually flushed from hard drinking, a huge belly, and one thigh crippled' (*erat enim in eo enormis proceritas, facies rubida plerumque ex uinulentia, uenter obesus, alterum femur subdebile*; Vitellius 17). In the very next sentence, Vitellius is killed and dumped in the Tiber. The disproportion and vivid detail of his description make clear that this is no positive image or neutral description; its placement makes the reader or listener a participant in Vitellius' humiliation.

Tiberius' appearance, placed near the end of his biography, encapsulates in physical terms the contradictory character seen in his life and deeds.<sup>27</sup> Like his reign, the description begins well; he is 'large and strong of frame, and of a stature above the average; broad of shoulders and chest; well proportioned and symmetrical from head to foot' (*corpore fuit amplo atque robusto, statura quae iustam excederet; latus ab umeris et pectore, ceteris quoque membris usque ad imos pedes aequalis et congruens*; Tib. 68). However, this pleasing proportion deteriorates very fast, in the very next sentence. 'His left hand was the more nimble and stronger, and its joints were so powerful that he could bore through a fresh, sound apple with his finger, and break the head of a boy, or even a young man, with a fillip' (*sinistra manu agiliore ac ualidiore, articulis ita firmis, ut recens et integrum malum digito terebraret, caput pueri uel etiam adolescentis talitro uulneraret*; Tib. 68). In this sinister crescendo, the left hand takes on freakish strength; its potential violence escalates to the killing of a boy and then a grown man. This escalation parallels Tiberius' deeds in life: 'little by little he unmasked the ruler' (*paulatim principem exseruit*; Tib. 33), while his praiseworthy violence against Rome's enemies (Tib. 9, 16) is now increasingly turned against Romans (37), from children (43, 44) through youths (his own grandsons, 54) to grown men (55, 56, 58, especially 61).

To sum up this brief discussion: Suetonius' physical descriptions did not offer what in modern terms might be called a photographic sense of a person's appearance; they cannot be taken as reliable indicators of what a ruler actually looked like. Instead, their emphases, arrangements, and even particular details primarily communicated an ethical assessment of the ruler in question, framed in rhetorical terms of praise or blame. The descriptions' placement within a given biography, the details of what was described in relation to the rest of the life, and the similarities and contrasts from one ruler to another shaped their impact. Suetonius' descriptions

<sup>27</sup> Evans (1969: 55–6) notes this, though she does not discuss his left hand.

made truth claims not about how an emperor really looked, but ultimately explained how his actions and motivations in the past might properly be understood and assessed in the present.

## The rhetoric of appearance in imperial portrait statuary

Keeping Suetonius in mind as a rhetorician of appearance, I turn now to imperial portrait statues and to some preliminary observations about their shaping conventions. These will then help ground their analysis in terms of Elsner's rhetorical model. As in Suetonius, these visual descriptions of appearance were not intended to provide a photorealistic representation of the ruler, despite the crucial structural role played by recognizable individuality. Rather, these portraits were fundamentally about persuasion in relation to social power.<sup>28</sup> Imperial portrait statuary was rhetorical in that its purpose was to honor the ruler portrayed; in this sense, it made an argument and attempted to persuade. Here again, the force of this portraiture was most closely related to epideictic, or the praise and blame of an individual. But, by contrast to Suetonius' biographies, honorific portraiture was about encomium and did not include invective. This does not exclude a strong relationship to how the emperor 'really' looked in a modern sense, but it does change the analytical goals. Caligula's portraits cannot be analyzed for clues to his failings; we will not find Suetonius' fearsome features and expressions here.<sup>29</sup> This portraiture was created to thank, glorify or otherwise praise the person depicted, and, by definition, did not include negative characterizations. Other visual genres, e.g. graffiti, could of course exercise more freedom, and invective might be expressed later on in the life of a portrait, most dramatically in attacks on visual representations of specific individuals, but the surviving portraits in marble and bronze were produced to praise rather than blame the portrayed ruler.

At the same time, the rules of medium and genre fundamentally shaped these images. Imperial portrait statues followed the structural conventions of honorific portraiture, with certain exceptions (e.g. colossal portraits). A male honorific statue was normally slightly over lifesize, between 2 m

<sup>28</sup> Previous studies investigating Graeco-Roman portraiture in relation to rhetorical concepts and persuasion include Giuliani 1986 and Stewart 1993a. These, however, focus on formal aspects, and especially the heads; my emphasis below is somewhat different.

<sup>29</sup> Noted by Gross 1982: 205.

and 2.20 m high, meaning that the height of a statue was unrelated to the height of the person portrayed. The two best-preserved portrait statues of Caligula, for example, stand 2.05 m and 2.03 m high (Figures 3.3 and 3.4).<sup>30</sup> A second fundamental convention was the combination of an individualized head with a stock body. This kind of juxtaposition can seem jarring to modern eyes, as in the famous example of the first-century BCE Tivoli General, on which middle-aged, careworn facial features are combined with a nearly nude, heroic body.<sup>31</sup> In a Roman context, however, this was standard and expected. These two statues of Caligula, for example, combine portrait heads with generic bodies, well-proportioned and dressed in the toga, standing in a balanced pose with the weight on one foot and the other drawn slightly back – such bodies could be used for any senatorial Roman male. Much more restricted in its use and monarchic in its connotations, but sharing the same structural principles, was the body of Zeus/Jupiter as combined, for example, with the portrait head of Claudius in the Metroon at Olympia (Figure 3.7).<sup>32</sup> These statue bodies never represented the actual body of the person portrayed – a convention that was clearly understood by ancient audiences – meaning that an individual's bodily characteristics like skin trouble or old injuries did not appear in the visual portraiture.

The stock body of an honorific statue usefully connected the individual to larger social or symbolic categories. These categories could include gender and age (shown by body shape, clothing and sometimes size), high social status (postures of physical ease, high-quality cloth elegantly draped, the achievement of having an honorific portrait statue at all), and specific social roles such as citizen (through a Roman toga or Greek himation). In the case of the princeps, this meant the facial features and hairstyle were specific to one man, but from the neck down, the statue consisted of a generic body in one of several stock guises: dressed in a citizen's or magistrate's toga, wearing the armor and a military cloak of a military commander, represented in heroic nudity, and so on.<sup>33</sup> So, for

<sup>30</sup> Findspot, current location, and bibliography for these two statues are at n. 9, above.

<sup>31</sup> On the relationships of head and body in statuary, see Stewart 2003: 53 and ch. 2; see also Trimble 2011: ch. 4. On the visual and cultural meanings of the nude male body in Roman art, see Hallett 2005.

<sup>32</sup> Olympia Archaeological Museum, I 125. Hitzl 1991: cat. 2, pp. 38–43 and pls 8–13, 14a–b, 38b and 40a. The colossal statue of (presumably) Augustus as Zeus is no longer thought to have stood in the Metroon, *contra* Hitzl 1991 and earlier commentators: see Bol 2008. I am grateful to H. R. Goette for bringing this reference to my attention. On the connotations of this body type at Olympia, Bol 2008.

<sup>33</sup> Niemeyer 1968.



**Figure 3.7** Portrait statue of Claudius from the Metroon at Olympia. Marble, 2.00 m. Archaeological Museum of Olympia, L 125.

example, the bodies used in Caligula's two statues represent adult males wearing the full citizen toga and senatorial shoes. The portrait from Gortyn in addition depicts him *capite uelato*, with a fold of the toga pulled over his head to mark religious action; his missing right hand held a patera (Figure 3.3). Caligula is here portrayed as a high-ranking Roman citizen performing a religious ritual; the elements of this body could be employed for other men as well, and in this way the generic elements of the Gortyn statue tied Caligula into a broader ideology of civic leadership and *pietas*.

Given these strong conventions, it is no surprise that Suetonius' bodily asymmetries and weaknesses are not seen in the portrait statuary. But the head of a portrait statue, the most individualized and apparently mimetic part, was also strongly constrained by medium and genre; a photorealistic representation was not the primary goal here either. The portraits of

Augustus famously repeated a consistent set of features and hairstyle that did not change with the increasing age of the princeps over the four decades and more of his rule (Figures 3.5 and 3.6). Sculpted portraits continued to depict him in an idealized young adulthood; individualizing traits like slightly projecting ears and an aquiline nose were combined with a classicizing bone structure and smooth skin.<sup>34</sup> The most reliable identifier of a portrait of Augustus is the consistent arrangement of the ‘crab claw’ locks of hair on his forehead, but this feature seems to be unique to the visual portraiture and his hair is treated very differently in the written sources.<sup>35</sup> This tells us less about Augustus’ actual appearance than about the way in which this visually portrayed hairstyle took on importance and meaning within its own medium and genre. For example, Dietrich Boschung has argued that in group portraits this hairstyle became a visual symbol shared by, and indicating, Augustus’ designated successors.<sup>36</sup> In a related phenomenon, numerous members of the Julio-Claudian dynasty were portrayed with large eyes and very similar bone structure; these make them difficult for modern commentators to identify, but in their own time usefully created visual and ideological connections between the members of the ruling house. In turn, a change of dynasty could be signalled in strong visual ways, including by a strong change in the style or other aspects of *how* the ruler’s features were portrayed.<sup>37</sup>

This brief review raises a further question: how can we understand the rhetorical workings of this statuary more deeply and richly? The rhetorical model of art, set out in this volume’s [Introduction](#), offers a very helpful way forward. The editors explore three different means of persuasion, working with concepts of *ēthos*, *pathos* and *logos* as these might be applied to the study of a work of art. Very briefly, in ancient rhetoric, *ēthos* is a means of persuasion related to the good character of the speaker and the ways that character could be established in a speech with persuasive results; *pathos* concerned the receptivity of the audience and the speaker’s ways of shaping the emotional impact of a speech; *logos* involved the content of the speech

<sup>34</sup> Boschung 1993.

<sup>35</sup> Suetonius describes a very different situation, stressing Augustus’ lack of care about his hair and the haste he imposed on his barbers (*Aug.* 79). Other ancient writings on Augustus’ appearance don’t mention his hair at all. The sources are discussed in Boschung 1993: 93–6.

<sup>36</sup> Boschung 2002: 185–7.

<sup>37</sup> The portrait heads of Vespasian famously employ a much more veristic style than the Julio-Claudians’ did; among other things, their detailed facial wrinkles and fleshy sags express a useful ideological distance from the reign of Nero.



itself.<sup>38</sup> Below, I draw on the Introduction's discussion of these to consider selected aspects of imperial portrait statuary. These three concepts usefully situate the power of the images in relation to persuasion while also providing a way of thinking about *how* an imperial portrait statue did its persuasive work.

For the sake of argument and brevity, I will focus here on the dedicators of statuary in relation to *ēthos*, on spatial and ritual contexts in relation to *pathos*, and on the formal and symbolic construction of the figure in my discussion of *logos*. However, all of these overlap and interact, and many additional aspects of imperial portrait statuary could also be considered in these terms. My discussion will assume that an imperial portrait statue can consist not only of an individualized head and stock body, but also any accompanying inscription, associated portraits, the physical setting, and the ritual and spatial shaping of the audience's viewing. One further note: in talking about these works as rhetorical, it is difficult to avoid talking about the images themselves as agents, e.g. a statue makes claims about the credibility of its dedicator, works on the viewers' state of mind, aims to persuade viewers about the identity of the ruler, and so on. A theoretical discussion of this problem is beyond my scope in this essay, but briefly stated, I am following recent scholarship that treats images as powerful but the relevant agency as human, expressed through the shaping, installation and reception of images by social actors.<sup>39</sup>

### *Ēthos*

The maker of an image was not normally present when the work was viewed; rather, the artwork itself had to make any persuasive claims, including about the identity and credibility of the maker. The [Introduction](#) to this volume notes that the maker could include designers, artists and patrons, i.e. whoever was responsible for an artwork's existence, appearance, and persuasive aspects. The concept of *ēthos* is framed accordingly:

From the point of view adopted here, *ēthos* is a claim to the capacity or expertise or virtues necessary to respond, to give an appropriate or just answer to a question raised in the debate or simply in social interaction. *Ēthos* is supremely the marker

<sup>38</sup> The ultimate source of this triad is Aristotle, *On Rhetoric*, 1.2.3–6 and 2.1, with further elaboration at 2.2–11 (character), 2.12–17 (emotions), 2.18–26 (techniques of persuasion). I am indebted here to Kennedy 2007.

<sup>39</sup> The fullest theoretical exploration is Gell 1998, with a critical discussion and applied case studies for classical art (and others) in Osborne and Tanner 2007.

of authority to speak, write or produce images and buildings – it is a claim made in doing any of these things.<sup>40</sup>

This formulation encourages us to look both for the source of authority in image-making and also for the ways in which that authority is communicated through the artwork itself.<sup>41</sup> It suggests that imperial portrait statues not only demonstrated the good character and credible authority of the persons responsible for presenting them, but that this character and authority also helped make the statue persuasive. And, somehow, this claim did not rely solely on the presence or prior reputation of the person responsible but was part of the artwork.

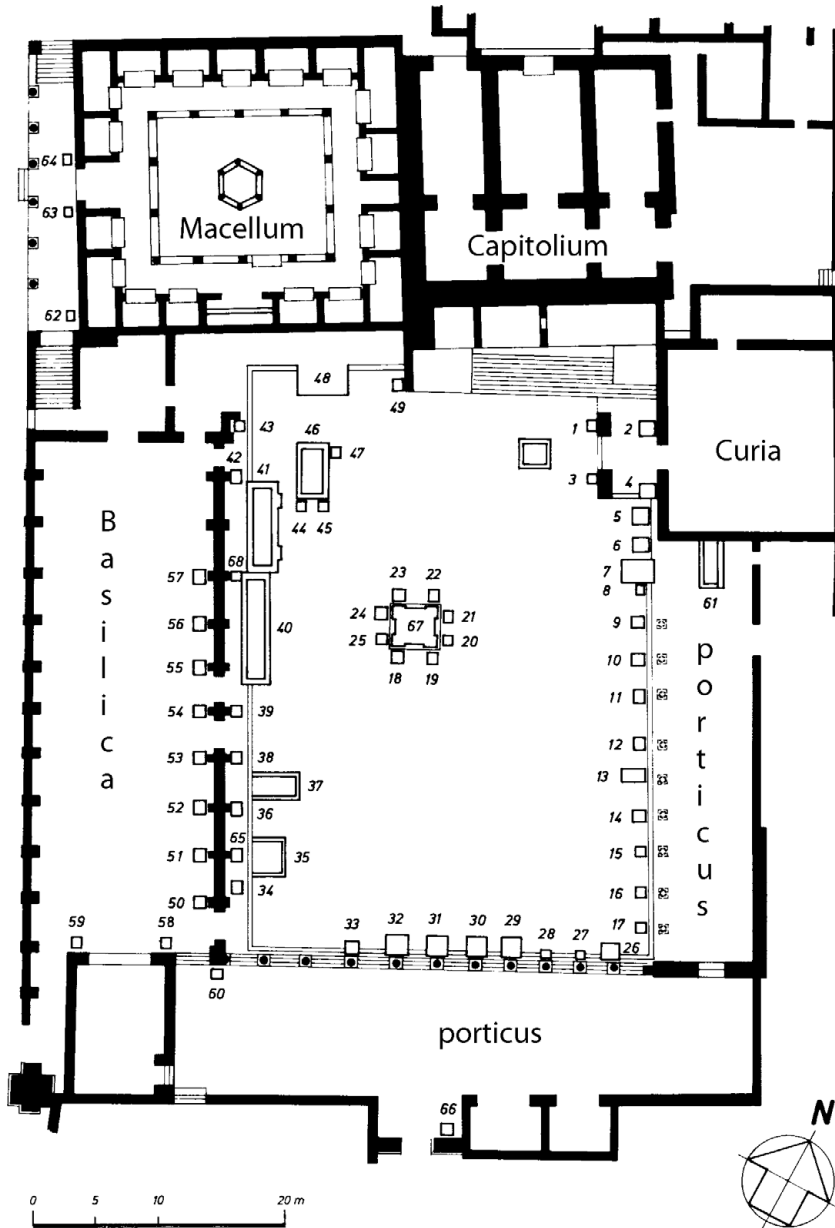
In the most immediate sense, an imperial portrait statue expressed to viewers the authority of the ruler portrayed, his authority to occupy public space in that supreme role. This was accomplished by the recognizability of the portrait head, its juxtaposition with an appropriate body type and any inscription or accompanying dynastic portraits, the prestige of the space it was installed in, and the viewers' prior familiarity with the conventions of public imperial portraiture. Indeed, for most viewers, portrait statues and other images of the emperor were probably as close as they ever got to the ruler. An image of the emperor was vested with certain kinds of representative authority, physically able to stand in for the emperor's person and perform certain kinds of work: to act as a site of oath-taking, a place of asylum, a locus for demonstrating loyalty or betraying treason.<sup>42</sup> In a very real sense, the *ēthos* of the portrait and the *ēthos* of the ruler were the same.

But this *ēthos* also extended to the dedicator of a statue. For an imperial portrait statue, the person responsible for making and installing it was not normally the ruler portrayed. As for any statue or other public honor, the honorific economy required that someone else formally make the honoring gesture. This relational aspect of honorific portraiture meant that the portrait authorized not only its model (the princeps) but also its dedicator. Multiple people were responsible for making and installing an imperial portrait statue, including the sculptor of the portrait head type which was then replicated in portraits around the empire, the carvers of any given portrait statue, and the dedicator(s) of that statue, responsible for its final installation and viewing. Sculptors were generally not named in the evidence, but the dedicators often claimed responsibility in an accompanying

<sup>40</sup> This volume, pp. 6–7.

<sup>41</sup> I am grateful to Jaś Elsner for discussion of the relationship between the *ēthos* of the ruler portrayed and the *ēthos* of the dedicator.

<sup>42</sup> Instances are collected in Boschung 2002: 168–71.



**Figure 3.8** Plan of Cuicul Forum showing the locations of inscribed statuary bases, almost all dating to the second and early third century CE. Statues of emperors and members of the imperial family were concentrated on the west side of the Forum, in front of the Basilica (numbers 18, 19, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 34, 35, 37, 38, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46). By contrast, only four of the statue bases on the east side of the square are for imperial figures (1, 3, 14, 16).

inscription. The dedicators made an explicit and rhetorical gesture: I/we install this statue here, in my/our name, to honor the ruler. In this way, the patron can be considered a maker of the statue, and the *ēthos* of imperial portrait statues expanded accordingly.

Dietrich Boschung explains who dedicated statues of Augustus and why. In Rome and elsewhere, they were put up by the Senate, by his family and close associates, and by individual members of the Roman elite. Throughout the provinces, statues were erected by a city's decurions or by private citizens, sometimes in groups; the imperial statues in the Cuicul Forum (Figure 3.8), for example, were mostly dedicated by the city's decurions.<sup>43</sup> The accompanying inscriptions, when they provided a reason, expressed gratitude for Augustus' patronage, military successes, and the conditions that allowed commerce to prosper, among other things. These patterns continued for Augustus' successors. C. Brian Rose's study of 130 Julio-Claudian portrait groups shows that the largest number of recorded dedicators, more than fifty, were cities or their official representative bodies (decurions, Senate and People, or council in the Latin West; the *dēmos*, *boulē* and/or *polis* in the Greek East).<sup>44</sup> Eight more were dedicated by individual magistrates, from local duoviri up to a consul; another twelve were commissioned by civic priests and priestly groups, including *Augustales*, *neopoioi*, and *magistri*. Three were dedicated by members of the ruling regime and two dedications were made by regional organizations, the Amphictyonic League and the *koinon* of Asia. A less official group is an association of doctors at Velia in Campania (Rose's cat. 49), while ten dedications were by persons not acting in an official capacity, including imperial freedmen, a soldier, and family groups.

The portrait statues communicated the *ēthos* of these dedicators in several ways. Above all, they described and demonstrated the dedicators' social authority. In the accompanying inscriptions, dedicators are sometimes listed with their formal titles, making the installation of portraits of the ruling family an occasion for the display of their own careers. At Cuicul, which flourished in the later second and early third centuries CE, a typical formula for the dedication of an imperial portrait statue in the Forum was *d(ecreto) d(ecurionum) p(ecunia) p(ublica)* (bases 1, 16, 37, 43 and 44 on Figure 3.8).<sup>45</sup> Dedicating a statue could do more than

<sup>43</sup> Boschung 1993: 101–2; Boschung 2002: 171–2. On the Cuicul Forum: Zimmer 1989: 20.

<sup>44</sup> Rose 1997. This sample must lean heavily toward the wealthier and more powerful end of the patronage scale, since these are group dedications rather than individual statues; they required more money, authorization and other resources than single statue dedications did.

<sup>45</sup> Zimmer 1989: p. 20 and inscriptions C1, C16, C37, C43 and C44.

describe a career; it also legitimized the office and the officeholder. Dedications by Augustales not only honored the founder of their priesthood and his family, but also showed the priests properly fulfilling the role enabled by the ruler in the first place. As aedile at Segobriga in Hispania Tarraconensis, Lucius Turellius Geminus installed statues of Drusus the Younger and Germanicus, demonstrating his own energy in that civic role and ensuring that it was remembered beyond his actual term of office.<sup>46</sup>

Turellius' installation was done at his own expense, 'd(e) s(ua) p(ecunia).' This kind of public generosity was a further way to establish the dedicator's good character and credible authority. At Herculaneum, the will of a soldier named Seneca, who had belonged to the thirteenth urban cohort, provided a cash handout of four sesterces per person in conjunction with statue dedications of Augustus and Claudius.<sup>47</sup> Similarly, at Trebula Suffenas in Latium, three freedmen distributed cakes and wine to the people (*crustulum et mulsum dederunt*) in connection with a dedication of imperial portrait statues.<sup>48</sup> Gifts like this, added to the costs of the portrait statues, showed the dedicator to be generous and civic-minded, as well as properly honorific toward the ruling family.

The dedicator's *ēthos* was expressed in spatial terms as well; certain locations were especially prestigious. As a rule, imperial statue groups were installed in the most visible and prestigious of public spaces, including *fora* and *agorai*, *basilicae*, and sanctuaries; each statue was a demonstration of the dedicator's privileged access and power to shape that space. At Cuicul, the western half of the Forum in front of the basilica was the most prestigious space, judging by the preponderance of imperial portrait statues; fifteen inscribed bases attest to imperial statuary there, by contrast to only four imperial figures among the statue bases on the east side of the square (Figure 3.8).<sup>49</sup> At Eresus on the island of Lesbos, in thanks for a victory of Augustus probably in 8 CE, an unnamed donor built a sanctuary and temple for the sons of Augustus 'in the most prominent part of the agora' ([ἐν τῷ ἐπιφανέστατῳ τόπῳ τᾶς ἀγορᾶς]); he also gave a feast and handouts of bread and wine to all the inhabitants of the city.<sup>50</sup>

Finally, the dedicator demonstrated knowledge of exactly whom to honor, and how. Some inscriptions accompanying dynastic Julio-Claudian

<sup>46</sup> Rose 1997: cat. 62, p. 124. Cf. cat. 14 and 16.

<sup>47</sup> Rose 1997: cat. 15, pp. 91–2. <sup>48</sup> Rose 1997: cat. 47, pp. 119–20.

<sup>49</sup> Two of the imperial bases on the east side had special positions flanking the entrance into the Curia (Zimmer 1989: pp. 20–1, 32; bases 1 and 3 on Figure 3.8 in the present essay).

<sup>50</sup> Rose 1997: cat. 84, pp. 151–2.

statue groups show a great deal of attention paid by local dedicators to the correct, current titles and up-to-date dynastic developments of the imperial house – even far from Rome. For example, at Thasos, a great deal of care was taken to express current and politically correct relationships among three statues of Livia, Augustus' daughter Julia, and her own newborn daughter with Agrippa.<sup>51</sup> The terminology shows equal care. Imperial figures are called savior (*sōtēr*), benefactor (*euergetēs*), god (*theos*, *thea*) and more, enacting the proper relationship with the ruling house and again demonstrating the dedicators' know-how.<sup>52</sup>

Occasionally, letters between the emperor and a city were reproduced, attesting to the delicate diplomacy involved and its success in the form of the emperor's approval of the proposed honors. Sometimes the emperor refused some of the proposals while commending the rest, suggesting that a city had to be extremely thoughtful about the right number and kind of honors to propose. At Gytheum, an inscription records a range of honors for Augustus, Livia and Tiberius, as well as Tiberius' response: he commends the city and accepts all the honors proposed for Augustus, as befitting his benefactions and appropriately godlike, but adds, in a rhetoric modulation of his own, 'but I myself am satisfied with honors more modest and more human' (αὐτὸς δὲ ἄρκοῦμαι ταῖς μετριωτέραις τε καὶ ἀνθρωπείοις).<sup>53</sup> In this symbolic exchange, the stakes could be very high. The city of Cyzicus seems to have lost its freedom in part for dragging its feet with regard to honors to Augustus, and a new dedication of portrait statues of Augustus, Tiberius and Claudius seems to have been an attempt to get back into favor.<sup>54</sup> In other words, there were real consequences for doing it wrong; *ēthos* lay in doing it right.

In all these ways, imperial portrait statues depicted the dedicator as a local benefactor and pious imperial subject. Elsner stresses that *ēthos* as applied to artworks is in crucial ways about *social* roles and actions. It took social authority to put up imperial statues, but doing so also demonstrated and strengthened the dedicator's social persona and credible authority. *Ēthos* was thus profoundly relational; these claims and actions were worked out

<sup>51</sup> Rose 1997: cat. 95, pp. 158–9. Depictions of Julio-Claudian portrait groups on coins produced by local vs. imperial mints offer an interesting parallel (Boschung 2002: 158–67).

<sup>52</sup> Rose 1997: 74, with examples in cat. 71, 83, 100 and others.

<sup>53</sup> Rose 1997: cat. 74(b), pp. 142–4 lines 20–1. Similarly, in a letter written in 41 CE to the city of Alexandria, the emperor Claudius accepted almost all the proposed honors but turned down the establishment of temples and a high priesthood for himself (Rose 1997: cat. 128). Suetonius mentions other cases of Tiberius' modesty about honors (*Tib.* 26); cf. Boschung 2002: 172, nn. 1200 and 1201.

<sup>54</sup> Rose 1997: cat. 110; Boschung 2002: 173 and n. 1223.

between the dedicator and other persons and groups in the home city, between the dedicator and the rulers at Rome, between the city and the rulers. Every imperial portrait statue embodied a claim that the dedicator had performed a social good: the ruler was honored, and the local community was bound into the right honorific relationship with the ruler. This claim was action- and situation-specific, relating to the commission and installation of particular statues in particular places, and activated by people's encounters with those statues in those places. In other words, *ēthos* as expressed through these statues was established by the statues themselves, through their installation and viewing, not through the dedicator's prior reputation or by a deed separate from the artwork. This in turn added to the credibility and persuasive force of the portraits. If a credible character had dedicated a statue and the proper honorific things were visibly done, then the statue itself would become more credible as an honorific image and its subject correspondingly more praiseworthy. This form of good character lay not in a person's inner nature but in what he did; character had material and expressive qualities.

### *Pathos*

In the rhetorical model of art developed in this volume's [Introduction](#), *pathos* concerns the receptivity of an artwork's audience and the ways in which that receptivity was shaped.

*Pathos* is the addressee's frame of mind, by extension assimilated to the questions the addressee can raise, linked certainly with passions and emotions; but more essentially, it is the locus of problematization, which may be based on anguish, curiosity, anger or joy, whether emotional or intellectual.<sup>55</sup>

*Pathos*, then, relates not only to who saw an artwork but also to how it was seen. This is a valuable concept because of the importance given to the audience and an artwork's reception from the start of the analysis, usefully countering a focus on only the creators, patrons, or formal aspects of an artwork. Considered in these terms, the audience is understood to shape and even predetermine the making of an artwork, including its form and physical setting – that is, the artwork was made with the audience and with these desired effects in mind. For imperial portrait statues, *pathos* could relate to the visual expectations and formal knowledge brought by viewers, their experience of an artwork's spatial and visual context, and any ritual and other ways that reception was shaped. But the editors push this

<sup>55</sup> This volume, p. 7.

further; as ‘the locus of problematization’, *pathos* connects maker, patron and audience through the artwork. The work takes shape in terms of these connections but also defines them anew in its making and reception. In this sense as well, imperial portrait statuary was profoundly relational. How these statues shaped the audience’s receptivity can be considered under two rough headings: the prior knowledge and expectations of the viewers, and the viewers’ lived experience of the portrait statues. I will explore aspects of the audience’s prior knowledge later, in conjunction with *logos*; here, I will focus on aspects of the viewer’s experience.

Physical setting played a persuasive role in viewing and reception; *pathos* was partly a function of where imperial portrait statues were installed, and how they were seen there. As already seen, imperial portrait statues were installed in the most prestigious civic and religious locations. Rose shows that Julio-Claudian portrait groups were overwhelmingly installed in public places. Of his list of 130 groups, thirty come from temple precincts and sanctuaries, mostly within cities. Examples include three groups from the vicinity of the Temple of Athena on the acropolis of Lindos on Rhodes, another from the Temple of Artemis at Ephesus, an installation in front of the west façade of the Parthenon on the Athenian acropolis, and a group installed in the sanctuary of Bel at Palmyra. Temples could be dedicated to imperial figures, presumably with portrait figures as cult statues, as in the Temple of Divus Augustus at Rome, the Temple of Gaius and Lucius at Nemausus, and others. Not all these religious settings were in cities. Julio-Claudian imperial portrait groups were installed in the most prestigious extra-urban sanctuaries as well, for example at Delphi in front of the Temple of Apollo, or, at Olympia, one group probably in front of the Temple of Zeus and another inside the Metroon. Portrait installations in temples and sanctuaries removed the images from the everyday and from casual circulation by appropriating the ritual, dedicatory and festival prestige of sacred places.

Public, urban contexts dominate, however. The portrait of Caligula from Gortyn (Figure 3.3) was found in the city’s agora, in the same zone as several other Julio-Claudian portraits.<sup>56</sup> Rose has shown that Julio-Claudian statue groups stood in fora or agorai, theaters, basilicae, Augustea or the

<sup>56</sup> These included Gaius Caesar, Livia (?), Tiberius, Antonia the Younger (?), and a second portrait of Caligula (Romeo and Portale, cat. nos. 3–7; the togate Caligula illustrated here in Figure 3.3 is their cat. no. 8). Additional, unidentified figures, some quite a bit later in date, were also found in the area (cat. nos. 2, 22, 29, 30, 35, 54, as well as a colossal female figure described on pp. 139–42). Inscriptions from the same zone suggest this was the imperial center of Roman Gortyn: attested are Augustus, Tiberius, Hadrian, (twice), Septimius Severus, Diocletian, Maximian, Constantius Chlorus, and Galerius (Romeo and Portale 1998: 44, n. 115).



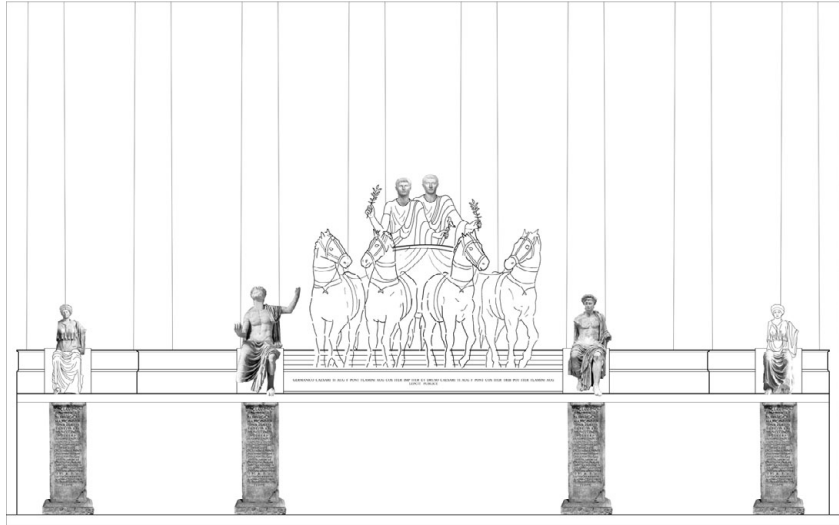
headquarters of Augustales, and other public buildings. Boschung's *Gens Augusta* of 2002 is a contextual exploration of a number of these spaces. Some were built for this purpose, with statues carefully positioned within, as in the probable Augusteum of Rusellae, an apsidal building south of the Forum, or a very similar space at Lucus Feroniae.<sup>57</sup> Some installations drew on the importance and centrality of pre-existing places. A city's forum or agora was already a central place for political, legal and commercial business, and people went to these places with a strong set of associations, motivations and expectations that in turn shaped the reception of statuary placed there. Just how important placement was is shown by its explicit mention as a local decision and a key part of the honorific gesture, as at Acraephia, where the city responded to Nero's decree of freedom for the Greeks by installing portraits of Nero and Messalina in the Ptoan Temple of Apollo and posting the city's decree in the agora next to the altar of Zeus Soter.<sup>58</sup> In this sense, the placement of imperial portraiture had a dual effect, not only responding to pre-existing concepts of prestige and public space, but in turn also reshaping spatial experiences and expectations.

An imperial portrait statue shaped its audience's reception also through its juxtaposition with other figures, the physical setting, and the shaping of movement and access to the statue. In groups of portrait statues, interconnections of size, pose and detail could create visual relationships among figures. For example, on the rostra in front of the Temple of Augustus at Leptis Magna, the seated statues of Augustus and Claudius mirrored one another in the reversed positions of their legs; they framed the sculpture visible between and behind them, a *quadriga* carrying portrait statues of Germanicus and Drusus the Younger (Figure 3.9).<sup>59</sup> These statues took advantage of their visibility from across the open space of the Forum; they also stood above and away from the ordinary people who moved through the city's spaces. In the Metroon at Olympia, imperial portrait statues were installed in at least two phases after the Augustan period, ultimately with three male-female pairs

<sup>57</sup> Rusellae: Boschung 2002: 69–76. Lucus Feroniae: Sgubini Moretti 1982–4. Boschung 2002: 25–78 is about forum and basilica installations of Julio-Claudian imperial statue groups; for theaters, pp. 79–94.

<sup>58</sup> Rose 1997: no. 67. Experience could be reframed outside religious and urban centers as well, as in the heightened visual emphasis created by portraits placed on top of an arch over a bridge spanning the Charente river at Mediolanum Santonum, or the case of a statuary group installed on a hill overlooking the harbor at Andriaca, visible to anyone entering the harbor: Rose 1997: nos. 56 and 100.

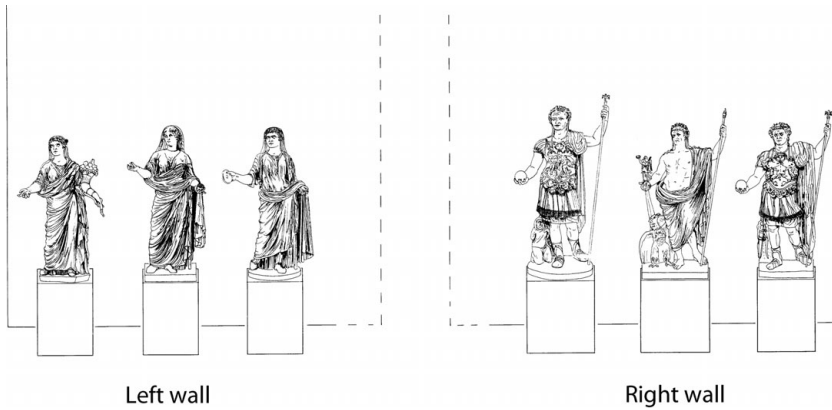
<sup>59</sup> Boschung 2002: 8–21 and Beilage 1 reconstructs these statues' spatial setting and impact. Hallett adds persuasive comments on how the figures related visually (Hallett 2004: 444). More broadly on visual similarity and difference, Boschung 2002: 192–95.



**Figure 3.9** Reconstruction drawing showing the seated portraits of Augustus, Claudius, Livia and an unidentified woman on the Rostra at Leptis Magna, as seen from the open space of the Forum at Leptis Magna. Portraits of Germanicus and Drusus the Younger are visible in the *quadriga* behind.

facing each other across the central space (Figure 3.10).<sup>60</sup> Shared body types and other formal details linked the figures in dynastic relationships, even as they characterized the emperor's role *vis-à-vis* the larger world. Claudius, like the colossal portrait just outside (most probably of Augustus), was depicted in the guise of Zeus/Jupiter (Figure 3.7), while Vespasian and his son Titus wore the garb of military commanders. The retention of Claudius and Agrippina Minor in this group visually claimed continuity between Julio-Claudians and Flavians; overall, the similarities in heights, stances, gestures, turns of the heads, and the women's clothing unified the group as a whole, even as details of objects held and drapery configurations varied. In addition, carving details show awareness of the viewer: the left side of Claudius' statue is more carefully

<sup>60</sup> In the Claudian period, statues of Claudius and Agrippina Minor were installed in the Metroon, probably with portrait statues of Tiberius, Livia, Germanicus and Agrippina the Elder. Under Vespasian, the latter four seem to have been replaced with cuirassed statues of Vespasian and Titus, paired with draped female statues probably of Vespasian's wife and daughter, Domitilla the Elder and Domitilla the Younger. See the summary of these developments at Hitzl 1991: 115–16, with full justifications throughout the monograph. Renate Bol has revised this in one important respect: she shows that the colossal statue of (probably) Augustus most probably did not stand inside the temple but in the open area directly to the south, presiding over this all-important central area of the sanctuary in a way similar to the Augustus statue installed in Athena's precinct at Pergamon (Bol 2008).



**Figure 3.10** Reconstruction of the imperial portrait statues standing along the left and right walls inside the Metroon at Olympia (not to scale). Three male-female pairs faced each other across the central space. Nearest the entrance (farthest right and farthest left in this drawing) stood Titus opposite his sister, Flavia Domitilla the Younger. Next in were Claudius as Zeus facing his wife, Agrippina Minor. Innermost were Vespasian and his wife, Flavia Domitilla the Elder. All statues marble, slightly over life size (tallest reconstructed height is 2.25 m). Staatliche Museen zu Berlin: Pergamonmuseum (Flavia Domitilla the Younger) and Archaeological Museum of Olympia (the other five statues).

carved than the right, suggesting that this side was intended to be seen from the entrance.<sup>61</sup> These visual details and placements posed questions for viewers to ask as they looked. Who and what was the Roman emperor? How did he relate to the ruling family, to the sanctuary of Olympia, to human affairs in general, to the gods? At Leptis Magna and Olympia, space and form provided both the questions and their answers.

Constraints on how viewers approached, as well as the shaping of ritual behavior in relation to the statues, were also part of *pathos*. As noted above, the image of the emperor and the emperor's actual presence were equivalent under certain circumstances; taking an oath or claiming asylum in the authorizing presence of a statue of the emperor meant that the image shaped human behavior in particular ways.<sup>62</sup> Ritual behaviors requiring images of the emperor strengthened these material and symbolic associations. Two letters written by Ovid from exile on the Black Sea mention images of Augustus and other Julio-Claudian figures installed in his

<sup>61</sup> Hitzl 1991: 86–9. On the uses of body types to create dynastic connections: Rose 1997; Boschung 2002; Hallett 2004: 443, *contra* Boschung's emphasis on the uniformity of body types within the same dynastic portrait group (Boschung 2002: 192–5).

<sup>62</sup> Ando 2000: ch. 7, esp. 206–39; Boschung 2002: 168–71.

household shrine in Tomis.<sup>63</sup> In this experiential sense, Ovid's ritual observances at his household shrine are related to the distributions of food at the dedication of a public portrait statue, which tangibly connected the images of the ruling house to pleasurable beneficence. At Gytheum, an annual eight-day festival of the Caesars tied imperial portraits into space, movement and ritual. A procession on each of those eight days, its citizen participants dressed in white, moved from the sanctuary of Asclepius and Hygieia to the theater, with a stop at the Caesareum to sacrifice a bull. Theater performances then took place in sight of images (in this case apparently paintings) of Augustus, Tiberius and Livia, which had been placed on stage for the occasion.<sup>64</sup> Annual observances enacted these ritual connections through time. In another example, from Forum Clodii in Latium, honey-cakes and wine were handed out every year on the anniversary of the dedication of statues to Augustus, Tiberius and Livia.<sup>65</sup> Ritual and repetition acted on collective memory, framing the portraits as touchstones for social relationships and connections across time and space.

None of this means that viewers were in fact persuaded exactly as the image-makers intended, or that all viewers saw, understood or responded to imperial portraits in the same way. The very act of dedicating a statue created a differentiated viewing, split in the first place between the dedicator (one kind of viewer with a particularly vested interest) and everyone else. The [Introduction](#) to this volume makes a useful clarification here:

*Pathos* – like *ēthos* and *logos* – is inherent to the work of art as a kind of directed injunction as to how to view it (in accordance with the wishes of *ēthos*), which of course viewers are at liberty to reject in the same way that a jury may not be persuaded by a given speech.<sup>66</sup>

Viewers brought prior expectations and knowledge to their viewing, and were able to comment on and judge what they saw. This viewing audience was highly trained in the fundamentals of its own visual culture. Repeated exposure to honorific portraiture, to images of the emperor, to rituals and behaviors concerning the emperor and imperial house, will have made

<sup>63</sup> This is the only group dedication catalogued by Rose in a private context (cat. 124, p. 181): Ovid, *Ex Ponto* 2.8.1–8, 55–76; 2.9.105–12.

<sup>64</sup> Rose 1997: cat. 74, pp. 142–4.

<sup>65</sup> Rose 1997: cat. 11, pp. 88–9. More broadly, on the ways in which imperial cult rituals framed the wider world within local urban communities in Asia Minor, see Price 1994.

<sup>66</sup> This volume, p. 14.

many people – especially in the empire’s cities and sanctuaries – highly aware of how these visual representations worked. Accordingly, imperial portrait statuary did not take chances with viewing and reception. Perhaps for this reason, as a corpus it is characterized by immense conservatism: the fixity of portrait types, the use of standard conventions over and over, the widespread repetition of certain images, names, titles, figural juxtapositions. The key point is that, in this way, the possibilities of response were constrained, even if they could not be fully predetermined. The imperial portrait in its most complete sense, including its contexts and circumstances of viewing, constructed certain avenues of acceptance or rejection, and not others. Viewers’ responses were not singular, homogenous or even predictable, but they were carefully channeled along certain lines.

### *Logos*

The third means of persuasion, *logos*, concerns the message itself, the construction of the argument. As the Introduction puts it, *logos* is ‘any medium by which an audience is addressed’ as well as ‘any performative aspect of address.’<sup>67</sup> Aspects of an artwork can of course work in terms of two or more of these forms of persuasion, and in the discussion below, *logos* will prove to be interwoven with *pathos*. Still, it is helpful to think about *logos* in imperial portrait statues, to assume the statements made were persuasive rather than indicative in nature. To put all this another way, we might say the artwork itself raises a question or poses a problem for viewers. Without one, why should anyone pay attention? At the same time, it also answers the question and solves the problem. In this light, fundamental questions raised by imperial portrait statues – especially in regard to a diverse and empire-wide viewing audience – might include: who is the emperor? What is an emperor? How does the emperor relate to concepts and practices of power? How does the audience, in its diverse social groupings, relate to the emperor? Groupings of statuary had, among other advantages over a solitary portrait, the ability to raise and answer more complex versions of these questions.<sup>68</sup> Considered in terms of *logos*, then, imperial portrait statues had to persuade a very wide range of viewers not only that these were the important questions but also that the answers

<sup>67</sup> This volume, p. 4.

<sup>68</sup> Some of the most fruitful work on Julio-Claudian imperial portraiture in recent decades has been on dynastic groups, esp. Rose 1997 and Boschung 2002 (though with very different emphases).

provided were believable and true. Many aspects of imperial portrait statuary could be considered in relation to *logos* and the analysis of how these arguments were made. Here I will focus on just two: the role of visual conventions and the role of repetition.

Imperial portrait statuary constructed its visual arguments primarily by following strong visual conventions. The configuration of imperial portrait statuary worked in terms of viewers' prior knowledge and expectations, meaning that the content of the visual argument went hand in hand with its shaping of the audience's perceptions. As already noted, imperial statuary participated in a visual tradition of honorific portraiture even as it became a major shaping force within that tradition; although the corpus of imperial portrait statuary had unique features (e.g. some colossal portraits, the use of red porphyry later on), for the most part these portraits often shared with non-imperial honorific male portraits the most standard sizes, materials, and body types. For our purposes this means that most viewers of imperial portrait statues, through long and frequent exposure, could probably grasp the basic nature of any such statue at first glance, whether or not they saw or understood every iconographic detail. Any new statue immediately signaled, by virtue of its size, material,<sup>69</sup> combination of individualized head and stock body, accompanying inscription, and often its setting as well, that this was an honorific portrait statue. Who and what was the emperor? First and foremost, apparently, he was a figure deserving of honor. Every portrait statue claimed this by its very existence, tangible evidence that someone had in fact honored the ruler in this form. For the viewer, the specific details of a statue then progressively elaborated on that initial visual impact.

For example, the togate statue of Caligula from the *agora* of Gortyn (Figure 3.3) is immediately recognizable as an honorific portrait. It was carved in a standard material, marble, to a typical height, 2.05 m. The figure stands in a typical pose for honorific statuary, with his weight on the left leg and the right slightly bent. He wears the toga, which in the West would describe him simply as a Roman citizen, but here in the Greek East probably denoted a Roman magistrate.<sup>70</sup> The statue depicts him performing a religious function, originally (before the loss of the right hand) probably

<sup>69</sup> Usually marble or bronze. Colossal size, precious metals, or a gilded surface created a visual and sensual distinction between viewers and the emperor portrayed, which also worked in terms of *pathos*.

<sup>70</sup> Havé-Nikolaus 1998: 20–1. Recently, traces of purple were discovered on the chest of this statue, just inside the right shoulder, meaning the statue could be reconstructed as wearing the *toga praetexta*, the *toga purpurea*, or the *toga purpurea* with gilt embroidered edges ([digitalarthistory.weebly.com/uploads/6/9/4/3/6943163/frischer\\_getty\\_final\\_digital\\_](https://digitalarthistory.weebly.com/uploads/6/9/4/3/6943163/frischer_getty_final_digital_)

pouring a libation. This is a standard body and pose for the portrait of a Roman citizen performing a religious ritual, but the individualized and recognizable head (together with the associated inscription, if there was one) activates a more specific meaning. It marks this statue as a portrait of the emperor Caligula, in his religious office as *pontifex maximus*.<sup>71</sup> More broadly, it connects this individual ruler to a crucial symbolic role of the Roman emperor: *pietas*, the emperor's religious observance and care for the Roman state's right relationship with the gods.

Scholars have identified repeated allegorical themes in visual depictions of the Roman emperor. Depictions in armor, for example, relate the current ruler, a time-specific individual, to the broader, timeless concept of imperial *uirtus*, or military ability and courage successfully deployed on behalf of Rome. Reliefs and other narrative scenes, with their increased scope for figural interactions in space, can more fully express additional important imperial virtues such as *clementia*, the restraint and mercy properly shown to conquered peoples, or *concordia*, harmony within the imperial house and hence the all-important stability of the succession, and so on. In this way, individual imperial portrait statues were part of a much larger web of signification. Each one identified a need (e.g. for *pietas Augusti*) and at the same time demonstrated it being fulfilled. Who and what was the emperor? The statue of Caligula from Gortyn portrays the emperor both in terms of the need for a figure who can and will enact piety on behalf of the state and as the figure who does in fact enact piety on behalf of the state.

Repetition was a second central characteristic of the persuasive force of imperial portraiture. The same viewers often saw the same statues repeatedly, but much more important in this sense was the sheer ubiquity of imperial representations. This was perhaps the most striking difference between imperial and non-imperial portrait statues. Only the emperors, and to a lesser extent their family members, were represented over and over again around the empire, on coins, in paintings, cameos and other media, and in statuary. Starting with Augustus, portrait types were established for the heads, i.e. centrally created and authorized versions of the ruler's facial features and hairstyle, which were in turn copied all over the empire.<sup>72</sup> Not every new portrait statue faithfully reproduced the most

[sculpture\\_project.pdf](#), accessed July 16, 2012). Its visual impact and meaning will have been significantly different depending on the overall color.

<sup>71</sup> Niemeyer 1968: 43–7.

<sup>72</sup> New portrait types could be created during an emperor's reign; see Boschung 1987, 1993 and 2002: 180–98. On the distribution of these portrait types, see Pfanner 1989.

current head type, but the overall result was to impose a striking overall degree of uniformity and recognizability on representations of the emperor's face and hair. For many viewers, looking at a statue could mean immediate recognition of the features and hairstyle of Augustus, or Caligula, or whoever the case might be. Who was the emperor? He was the most repeated person in the empire, the man whose head was portrayed over and over again on coins, in portrait statues and other media. Imperial portrait statuary was not only about authoritative *representation* but also authoritative *repetition*.

This feature allowed even the overwhelmingly honorific medium of portraiture effectively to produce some measure of blame as well as praise over time. The ubiquity of imperial portraiture in different media created a very widespread visual literacy; most people never saw the emperor in person, but almost everyone saw images of him. Any one portrait both drew meaning from this broader landscape of visual repetition and contributed to it in turn. This ubiquity and recognition take on heightened significance over time. The sculpted images of Augustus are estimated to have numbered in the tens of thousands, and many will have remained on view long after his death (Figures 3.5, 3.6 and 3.9). As already seen in the Metroon at Olympia and in the Forum at Leptis Magna, they sometimes became essential elements of later rulers' public representation. By contrast, a short-lived or undistinguished princeps, or one who suffered what modern scholars have termed *damnatio memoriae*, ended up with a far smaller number of surviving portrait statues in the longer term.<sup>73</sup> In this way, the tangible, lived aspects of imperial portraits could construct praise and blame for the emperor's memory through relative frequency or absence in public space.

Similarly, the stock body of a portrait statue worked rhetorically through repetition – but along a different set of visual and symbolic axes.<sup>74</sup> These body types had other sources, distribution mechanisms, and uses; they were not centrally designed or distributed, but could often be used for many different individuals, private and even mythological as well as imperial. For example, portrait heads of Augustus were combined with a wide range of stock bodies: wearing military garb, in the toga, nude or semi-nude with a mantle, in the 'Diomedes' type, or seated in the pose of a ruler or Jupiter,

<sup>73</sup> Gregory 1994 on the political receptions of mainly late republican portraits and other images; Stewart 2003: ch. 8 on the various things that could happen to Roman statues; Varner 2004 on *damnatio memoriae* and portraiture.

<sup>74</sup> Trimble 2011: ch. 4. It should be noted that the rule of individualized head combined with stock body was most consistently true for male portraiture. For women, stock bodies were also the norm, but the head's relationship to individualization was different. See also Dillon 2010.



and so on (e.g. [Figures 3.5, 3.6, 3.9](#)).<sup>75</sup> For Augustus and his successors, these stock bodies delivered straightforward meanings whose simplicity and repetitive force helped make them intelligible across a vast and diverse empire. What was the emperor? Depending on the circumstances, a citizen, a magistrate, a priest, a military commander, a hero, a god. Head and body worked together accordingly. Imperial portraits made claims not about how an emperor actually looked but about how this particular emperor (recognizable by the head) fulfilled the role of emperor (recognizable through the formulaic clothing, gesture, any attributes carried).<sup>76</sup>

It is through this repetition that head types and stock bodies formed the building blocks for more complex meanings expressed very locally, within specific situations of place, event or identity. As noted above for Olympia and Leptis Magna, the juxtaposition of portrait statues of different rulers, with similar or different formulaic bodies, could build up visual arguments about legitimacy, hierarchy and dynastic relationships ([Figures 3.7 and 3.9](#)). But even as the princeps' extraordinary status was created through these specific sculptural, epigraphic and spatial relationships, the local features of who dedicated a statue, where it was placed, and what kinds of ritual encounters were staged around it built up arguments about local social relations and desired behavior, and linked those local relationships to a wider world. Every new imperial statue dedication was an intervention into local power dynamics and constructions of meaning; installing any imperial portrait statue claimed a certain set of relationships among local social groups as well as with the emperor. The physical nature of an imperial portrait statue in actual space made possible an embodied rhetoric. At the same time, formula, sameness and repetition made this reproducible on an empire-wide scale. In sum, at stake in imperial portrait statuary was a rhetorical repetition and amplification, acting on a far-flung and extremely diverse audience throughout the empire.

## Suetonius and portrait statuary

Thinking rhetorically about imperial portrait statues offers several benefits, including help with the problem posed at the start of this essay: how to understand Suetonius' descriptions and imperial portrait statuary in

<sup>75</sup> Boschung 1993: 6–7 and nn. 56–61. More broadly on the Roman emperor's statue bodies: Niemeyer 1968.

<sup>76</sup> On this concept, and how it changed in late antique imperial portraits, see Smith 1985.

relation to one another. This in turn allows a different set of relationships between the two to emerge, one that avoids both the impossibility of direct comparison and the pessimism of abandoning the attempt altogether.

One benefit of drawing on a rhetorical framework is that it allows makers, patrons, artworks and viewers to be fundamentally interrelated throughout the analysis. In the words of the [Introduction](#) to this book: ‘to understand the work of art as rhetoric is to grasp its discursive function as a mediating tool between a series of addressers – commissioners, patrons, artists, who in their different ways constitute an *ēthos* – and an audience of viewers, a *pathos*.’<sup>77</sup> Viewing and reception are incorporated from the beginning, rather than treated as separate and unknowable phenomena that happened well after the carving and installation. This rhetorical model allows a more integrated consideration of a statue’s audience and reception, and of the ways in which form, context, and persuasion were shaped and perceived. In this way, thinking rhetorically about these images offers a unifying framework. It brings into relationship aspects of imperial portrait statuary that are often individually well understood, e.g. sculptural technique, portrait types, patronage, and spatial context, but that have been less fully considered in terms of their interconnections.

Second, thinking about these portraits in terms of *ēthos*, *pathos* and *logos* makes persuasion central to these images. In this view, imperial portrait statues were not simply one-dimensional gestures of political loyalty, nor did they work as one-directional political propaganda, serving only the interests of the imperial house. Discussing artworks in terms of *ēthos*, *pathos*, and *logos* makes it possible to think also about the interactions of spatial context, visual form, and socio-political relations; it establishes these statues as fundamentally relational, connecting people and images in lived space. Communication is one way to describe this functioning of the statues, but persuasion may be a more productive concept, focusing our attention more sharply on what was at stake and on the interests and constraints of the different parties involved.

For the purposes of this essay, a third benefit of this rhetorical approach is that it helps explain the strange disjunction with which I began. My discussion has emphasized that there is no direct way to match up the physical descriptions of rulers in Suetonius’ *Twelve Caesars* and the way portrait statues represent the same men. Yet the question remains: how did these apparently irreconcilable claims about the emperor’s appearance

<sup>77</sup> This volume, p. 4.

make sense within the same society and even with overlapping audiences?<sup>78</sup> On the one hand, emphasizing the rhetorical aspects of Suetonius' descriptions and the portrait statuary has underlined how very different these two media were: the forms, emphases and even particular details of these texts and images took shape in terms of their respective media and genres, with very different conventions, goals and audience expectations in play. On the other hand, taking these differences seriously under the rubric of rhetorical persuasion allows other kinds of interconnections to appear.

A strong connecting theme is that a single conception of how the ruler actually looked was simply not in play. Juxtaposing Suetonius and portrait statuary is a powerful reminder of how culturally specific concepts of likeness actually are. How people frame physical descriptions, and what people see in physical descriptions, is not a universal but culturally and situationally embedded.<sup>79</sup> Likeness is a set of traits declared to represent a person in some important way, but what that means can vary with the context, the describer's goals, audience expectations, and the larger context of what it means to describe someone in a particular society. The Roman visual and textual descriptions cannot be compared to determine what Augustus, Caligula or Vespasian actually looked like; neither body of work was intended to depict a ruler's singular, actual appearance, or worked in terms of that concept. Instead, both Suetonius' descriptions and portrait statuary – in very different ways – were persuasive in intent and construction. Appearance was not a fixed or essential concept; these texts and images instead allow us to see the malleability and expressive capacities of physical description.

With these strong differences and capacities in mind, we may be able to see ways in which text and image worked in awareness of one another. For example, as already noted, Augustus' 'crab claw' locks over the forehead were a consistent element of many of his visual portraits (Figures 3.5 and

<sup>78</sup> The audiences for Suetonius and imperial portrait statuary were not identical; Suetonius wrote in the early second century, while the portrait statues of the first century rulers were made primarily during those reigns (though many still stood during the second century). Suetonius' work may have been best known at Rome, while portrait statuary was installed around the empire. At the same time, there will have been overlap in these audiences; anyone familiar with Suetonius' work had surely also seen visual portraits of those rulers.

<sup>79</sup> Bowersock 1991 emphasizes that approaches to the self and personhood are not the same cross-culturally; Rohrbacher 2010 makes a similar point. Sheila Dillon, in her study of 'anonymous' portraits of Greek philosophers, highlights the cultural contingency of individual appearance from a different angle, criticizing the modern fetishization of likeness and the dismissal of works that are clearly portraits but that are not linked to a specific name (Dillon 2006: 1).

3.6). Apparently they were recognized as such, or at least carved with the expectation that they would be recognized. This feature is directly contradicted by Suetonius: ‘he was so far from being particular about the dressing of his hair, that he would have several barbers working in a hurry at the same time’ (*in capite comendo tam incuriosus, ut raptim compluribus simul tonsoribus operam daret*; Aug. 79). Suetonius’ text does not simply represent a different hairstyle but claims that Augustus had no hairstyle at all, and in fact resisted careful grooming. It is possible that this counterpoint was deliberate, a difference that marked a biographical separation from the longstanding, most widely known, formulaic depictions of the first princeps in statuary.

In another Suetonian example, Caligula’s clothing dramatically flouts appropriate categories and occasions. He is said to have worn women’s clothing, bodyguards’ clothing, gods’ clothing, and even triumphator’s clothing before the relevant military campaign had even begun (*Gaius* 52).<sup>80</sup> All these ways of dressing wrong make peculiar sense in relation to the visual representations. In his carved portraits, Caligula’s clothing is not only appropriate and unexceptionable (Figures 3.3 and 3.4), but was presumably repeated over and over again as appropriate and unexceptionable through the canonical use of stock body types, as was standard for any emperor. Here, the written emphasis on Caligula’s lack of (sartorial) restraint and propriety may have gained all the more force from its pointed contrast to the visual sobriety and fixity of what emperors normally wore in the images most people saw. To put it another way, in a visual culture of formulaic and carefully constrained imperial representations, an emperor’s general excesses could be specifically evoked in terms of their distance from those very formulae.

This possible awareness across text and image lends significance to Suetonius’ treatment of movement and mannerisms. No matter how lifelike a painted or carved portrait, it obviously cannot evoke a man’s bad smell (*Nero* 51) or temporary afflictions like the sudden eruption of pimples (*Tib.* 68). By contrast, movement and mannerisms seem to have played an especially important role in Suetonius’ physical descriptions. Tiberius’ posture while walking and the unpleasant ‘supple movement of his fingers’ while speaking (*molli quadam digitorum gesticulatione*) are presented as indicative of his character (*Tib.* 68). Augustus tried to explain them away as ‘natural failings and not intentional’ (*naturae uitia esse, non animi*),

<sup>80</sup> Boschung (1989: 73–9) discusses Caligula’s clothing, though with different emphases.

but apparently this was not persuasive; Tiberius' mannerisms were instead seen as 'disagreeable and signs of arrogance' (*ingrata atque arrogantiae plena*).<sup>81</sup> These mannerisms, and the malleability of their interpretation, take on added resonance against the visual backdrop of statues of Tiberius that, by definition, would have characterized him in terms of perfectly agreeable posture and monumental stillness.

Most striking in this sense is Suetonius' description of Claudius. He 'possessed majesty and dignity of appearance, but only when he was standing still or sitting, and especially when he was lying down' (*auctoritas dignitasque formae non defuit ei, uerum stanti uel sedenti ac praecipue quiescenti*) – in other words, when he most resembled a portrait statue. In motion, he was the very opposite of an honorific representation. Besides a stammer and a constantly shaking head, 'his laughter was unseemly and his anger still more disgusting, for he would foam at the mouth and trickle at the nose' (*risus indecens, ira turpior spumante rictu, umentibus naribus*; Claudius 30). As an illustrative contrast, the statue of Claudius from the Metroon at Olympia, like his famous portrait from Lanuvium, combined an individualized head with a body in the guise of Zeus/Jupiter (Figure 3.7). The statue powerfully materialized Claudius as ruler by distancing the image from physical traits of exactly the kind emphasized in Suetonius. Written and visual representations become counterpoints: a timeless image vs. intermittent events, a represented body vs. the lived body, a fixed appearance in the statuary vs. tics and illness in the text. In Suetonius, this very opposition is what encapsulates Claudius' contradictory aspects; his foolish appearance and confidence-eroding mannerisms belied a surprisingly effective reign. Visual imagery here is a valuable resource. Claudius was a good and successful ruler inasmuch as he resembled imperial portrait statues, but that genre's monumentality and fixity were not undercut or contradicted through this parallel. They were instead employed as one pole of meaning to which an important aspect of Claudius' life and deeds, the successful aspects of his rule, could be vividly and comprehensibly linked.

In short, Suetonius' descriptions seem to play with the possibilities of portrait statuary as a backdrop, a competing claim about the ruler, a starting point for meaningful contradiction and texture. His descriptions evoke a world of statues but also a self-conscious competition across genres. Conversely, imperial portrait statuary may have developed partly in awareness of spoken and written forms of description. The tremendous

<sup>81</sup> Stok points out that Augustus' argument complicates a simple physiognomic reading of Suetonius' physical descriptions (Stok 1995).

conservatism and fixity of honorific imperial statuary, with its endlessly repeated portrait head types and stock bodies, surely conferred – or attempted to confer – a valuable stability of meaning. In a world of malleable and rhetorical verbal descriptions of appearance, any deviation or room for alternative interpretation could be exploited in unpredictable and potentially dangerous ways.<sup>82</sup> In this sense, imperial portrait statuary performed its own policing. There was no guarantee of how viewers would receive a given portrait, or that an established portrait type would be properly replicated across the empire. However, the establishment of portrait types, the extraordinary emphasis on repetition across time and space, and the conventions of honorific portraiture strengthened this statuary's persuasive claims, helped constrain reception along strongly shaped channels, and bolstered the possibility of an honorific outcome. It is exactly this fixity that Suetonius' descriptions occasionally seem to play with and even unravel.

Suetonius' descriptions and imperial portrait statues both use physical description to connect how the ruler looked to what he did in the world. Appearance, and the audience's expectations about appearance, could be worked with and shaped to create different effects and responses. In this sense, both the statuary and Suetonius' descriptions recall Lenin's embalmed body, with its elaborate construction of a 'lifelike' appearance. As with Lenin's corpse, how the Roman ruler was portrayed to his subjects was ultimately a question of politics, context and an embodied rhetoric.

<sup>82</sup> Gleason 1995.

## 4 | Beauty and the Roman female portrait

EVE D'AMBRA

Rhetoric emanated from a speaker whose physical presence, along with his words, impressed the audience with authority, integrity and moral conviction. Gesture and stance remained integral to the art of persuasion. Appearance mattered, too, but orators were only described in broad moralizing terms as, for example, leonine, that is, stately and virile.<sup>1</sup> The sounds and sights of oratorical performances have faded, although the silent population of statues in ancient cities displays the poses and postures of men of honor, many of which emerged from the arena of public speaking.<sup>2</sup> This chapter turns to the portrait sculpture of women. Their statues also demonstrated their worth and virtue in a limited number of statue types that evoked the modesty and restraint of matrons and maidens. Female portrait statues usually consisted of conventional draped bodies and individualized heads, the latter adorned with highly styled hair in the late first and second centuries CE. The hairstyles that dominate the portraits suggest an urbane sophistication that was at odds with moralists' vitriolic attacks on feminine vanity and the vices accompanying it. Material culture, however, tells a different story with the piles of perfume vials scattered across archaeological sites and marble busts depicting hardened dowagers under clouds of curls and jeweled headdresses. Clearly beauty and refinement were sought after by respectable, upstanding women. We haven't yet recognized female beauty in ancient Rome as a system with its own logic and order articulated with rhetorical force. It is worth considering the beauty of the portraits along with other highly adorned artifacts, ivory dolls with jointed limbs and grooming kits, in order to glimpse beauty in action. One doll, in particular, bears an uncanny resemblance to sculptural portraits, and the doll's capacity for animation, its ability to 'come to life' in play, allows us to probe the Roman preoccupation with its marble doubles, the statues' reception in public life and hold on private imagination. The story of the doll's discovery follows.

<sup>1</sup> Gleason 1995: 62; Gunderson 1998: 169–89, on the orator as the *vir bonus*, a good man, i.e. 'a man of substance.'

<sup>2</sup> Davies 2010: 51–72, on the numerous togate statues representing 'men of good manners and breeding', but not necessarily orators.

Many archaeological objects and works of ancient art came to light during Rome's building boom in the late nineteenth century. Of all the recent discoveries that soon filled the museums of Rome and other capitals, none received the fanfare of a toy found in the grave of a Roman girl. As the grave happened to be unearthed in 1889 on May 10, the day of an ancient Roman festival for the dead, the Lemuria, a learned Latin poem was written for the occasion.<sup>3</sup> Rodolfo Lanciani describes this curious find that was brought to light during excavations for the construction of the Palace of Justice. A pair of sarcophagi was uncovered, one of them plain on the exterior, and the other bearing a strigillated design on its front and a scene of mourning carved in relief on its short end: a young woman reclining on a *klinē* attended by a veiled female and a standing male figure. The lid, now lost, was inscribed with the deceased girl's name, Crepereia Tryphaena. The sarcophagus was filled with water from the Tiber when it was opened to reveal the girl's skeleton. Lanciani goes on:

'The news of this miraculous discovery quickly gathered a crowd of curious onlookers from the neighboring Prati district, so that Crepereia's exhumation was carried out with honors of surpassing solemnity, and was long remembered in the neighborhood's local legends . . . The skull itself was slightly turned in the direction of the left shoulder, where a charming little doll had been carefully placed.'<sup>4</sup>

The doll of Crepereia Tryphaena, however, is more than a charming trifle (Figure 4.1). That the girl was laid to rest with her head turned towards her doll is particularly moving. Its burial with the girl suggests a relationship, the bond between playmates. We could expect the doll to have become a counterpart or double of the girl. Both girl and doll were well matched: the skeleton of Crepereia Tryphaena indicates that she died at about age seventeen in the middle of the second century CE.<sup>5</sup> Yet the juxtaposition of the lifeless girl and the pert doll seems uncanny – we are accustomed to seeing dolls as inanimate in contrast to their owners. Modern literature on dolls often recounts tales in which the doll is given up by the girl when she realizes that it is merely an inert, lifeless thing.<sup>6</sup> Here the doll was never put aside or abandoned.

The doll, now in the Capitoline Museums in Rome, is not only the best-preserved but also the most finely carved and crafted doll of the imperial period. It is made of ivory now darkened from age and exposure to water

<sup>3</sup> Pascoli 1951.      <sup>4</sup> Lanciani 1889; also cited in Bettini 1999: 213–14.

<sup>5</sup> Sommella Mura 1983: 10–16.      <sup>6</sup> S. Stewart 1984: 57, on the dream of the animated toy.





**Figure 4.1** Doll of Crepereia Tryphaena (Capitoline Museums), from Rome, mid-second century CE.

and stands 23 cm tall.<sup>7</sup> The limbs are jointed at the shoulders, elbows, hips, and knees. The doll was mobile, unlike statuary. In order to be activated, it required the manipulation of the girls' hands to make the doll sit, walk or get dressed. The figure appears nude but it had its own wardrobe – we can surmise this from the doll's own box of grooming accessories and jewelry also buried in the sarcophagus.<sup>8</sup>

The fine carving of the head rivals that of portrait sculpture. Its delicacy and detail lend the doll the quality of a statuette. For example, the doll's hair is expertly groomed in a style popular in private portraits of the Antonine period and adapted from coiffures of the elder Faustina, wife of the emperor Antoninus Pius.<sup>9</sup> The coiffure features wavy locks arranged around the face from a central part, while the rest was braided and coiled above in a wide bun. In the back view, three wide plaits are brought straight up the top tier of the bun like a trellis. Fine incised lines indicate individual locks of hair and their styling, whether the crimped strands in the front or the braids piled on top.

<sup>7</sup> Sommella Mura 1983: 12–14.

<sup>8</sup> Sommella Mura 1983: 17–24.

<sup>9</sup> Fejfer 2008: 331–69.



**Figure 4.2** Comparative profile views of doll and portrait of Faustina the Elder (Mt. Hoyoke College Museum of Art), from Rome, mid-second century CE.

The doll bears comparison to a portrait of the elder Faustina. Its profile view shares the slightly receding chin and the strong nose of portraits of the imperial woman (Figure 4.2).<sup>10</sup> In frontal views, the faces differ in their proportions (the doll's emphasizing the width, Faustina's length), as well as in their features, but both present broad features arranged in absolute symmetry with no imperfections. In particular, the broad planes of Faustina's softly rounded cheeks provide an expanse on which the small, crimped lips and large, heavy-lidded eyes (pupils hollowed out in heart shape) seem to float. The head was intended to loom over pedestrians when placed on a monumental draped figure atop a pedestal. Not only did lofty statues condition patterns of viewing that accommodated certain

<sup>10</sup> Bergmann and Watson 1999: 5–15; for a colossal head of the elder Faustina, excavated in Sagalassos, Turkey, see Waelkens 2008.

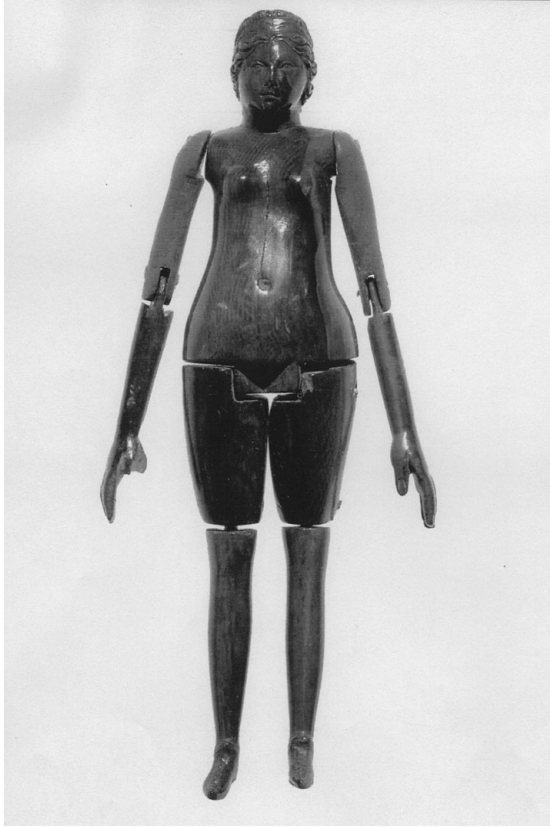


**Figure 4.2** (*cont.*)

highly stylized or iconic features, they also projected commanding presences through the manipulation of scale and arresting iconography available in multiple images.<sup>11</sup> They are literally larger than life.

In profile views, the similarity of the two coiffures is striking with the locks swept back and the braids piled up on top. The doll, however, is not a replica of the imperial portrait, nor is it even a portrait in the sense of an individual likeness. The face is wide with large eyes set far apart, a small clipped nose and pursed mouth with the chin tapering to a point. The eyes are also emphasized by ridges on the lids, perhaps to suggest cosmetics in the form of liner or merely to give emphasis to their shape and size. Pristine and simplified, the features placed close together on a heart-shaped face appear to represent a standardized and generic type of youthful beauty. This may recall the faces of fashion dolls in later historical periods that seem to distill

<sup>11</sup> Fejfer 2008: 331–69.



**Figure 4.3** Doll from tomb at Grottarossa, via Cassia (Palazzo Massimo), mid second century CE.

conventional characteristics of beauty and sophistication with a broad palette.<sup>12</sup> Another ivory doll, dated to about the later second century and from the tombs of the Roman countryside, lacks this fine work and detail in its smaller features and fuller face; it is also wears an imperial coiffure, that of the younger Faustina, the wife of Marcus Aurelius (Figure 4.3).<sup>13</sup> Both dolls, of course, were intended to be seen up close as small, hand-held objects. If the monumental portrait of Faustina projects a rarefied air of distance and privilege, then the doll of Crepereia Tryphaena requires familiarity – if not intimacy – from those who handle its limbs, and dress, and groom it.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Lord 2004; Peers 2004; it should be noted that the fashion doll appealed to adults and was produced for them from early on.

<sup>13</sup> Bedini 1995: 77.

<sup>14</sup> Bettini 1999: 218–20 on the doll's capacity for movement and its 'interactive' qualities.

Both the doll's imperial coiffure and generic features bring to mind another category of portraiture, the private portrait. The private portrait is defined in opposition to what it is not: a portrait of an emperor, or members of his family.<sup>15</sup> Mostly anonymous to us, the subjects of private portraits were assumed to have copied the looks of the reigning emperor, according to the scholarship. Private portraits were derived from their imperial models and dated in relationship to them: they are also seen to reflect the values enshrined in the imperial images which, in turn, defined the period-face, the *Zeitgesicht*.<sup>16</sup> Other portraits that diverged from the imperial models have been thought to be transcriptions of their subjects' physical appearance faithfully and directly into the marble, that is, the sitters were represented 'as they were.' These portraits, more difficult to date, are seen to be genuine expressions of the self unmediated by sophisticated artistic processes, according to the connoisseurs who developed the field.

The traditional scholarship focused on identifying subjects because of its insistence on the portrait as a historical document that illustrates a prominent biography. Many of the extant heads portray citizens of the lower social orders, whose names would mean little to us, while others honored more prominent members of their communities whose statues were erected in the most desirable and public locations in their cities. These are also considered as private portraits. The category of the private portrait, so broadly defined and under-conceptualized, entails difficulties –it gravitates towards subjects without names, heads without bodies, sculpture without sculptors, and works without dates. Private portraits, however, dominate by their sheer quantity: in Asia Minor there are 150 imperial portraits compared to 501 private portraits in the high empire, in the province of Cyrenaica, 21: 275.<sup>17</sup> They also show a wide geographic distribution across the empire that allows for patterns of emulation and variation to be observed. Standards of quality should not be assumed for the imperial portraits: there are provincial examples of a lesser quality than those of private portraits.<sup>18</sup> Thus quality cannot always be correlated to the patron's status.

The private portrait allows us to reconsider functions and significance of the Roman portrait in general and more particularly, the influence of the imperial models and the importance of likeness. The doll of Crepereia Tryphaena enters in this discussion because of its meticulously rendered

<sup>15</sup> Fejfer 2008: 16–17.      <sup>16</sup> Zanker 1982: 307–12.      <sup>17</sup> Fejfer 1999: 137–48.

<sup>18</sup> Stewart 2008: 87–8; Fronto, *Ad M. Caesarem* 4.12.4.

details gracing a conventionalized portrayal of a youthful beauty or an ingénue, if you will. A mere toy may seem a blunt instrument to probe the limits of portraiture but it is both the doll's similarities and differences from a portrait statue that are telling. Dolls serve to mimic certain human aspects and functions: movements, dress and habits of grooming or daily maintenance. Statues, on the other hand, were moved, adorned, and anointed only during high ceremonial occasions.<sup>19</sup> The doll's limbs can be moved in her owner's hands. Statues usually stayed put on their podia, although some were carried or carted in processions, we imagine, in rather more stately cadences than the doll's stilted gait. The doll appears undressed rather than nude: the high-breasted and long-waisted figure conforms to the shape of a tunic belted below the chest, a popular type of garment.<sup>20</sup> The body appears to be a mannequin for the absent clothes rather than a nude figurine – thus, it has two surfaces, in that it is a body that can be revealed and hidden.<sup>21</sup> Cult statues were draped on feast days and given offerings, but consist of their exterior surfaces. The doll, however, possessed accessories, grooming instruments, which were kept in a small ivory box also placed in the sarcophagus (Figure 4.4).<sup>22</sup> These miniature objects were not votives but served in the games between girl and doll.

Viewers enter into different relationships with portrait sculpture, to be sure, but both the doll and portraits of women from the late first through second centuries CE suggest ideals of beauty and urbane sophistication. Such beauty was not only exhibited through facial characteristics or physiognomic types but more often through opulent hairstyles constructed of high-flying wigs (the doll has both). Private portraits of women in the first half of the second century CE tend not to represent the coiffures of the imperial women but, rather, possess more highly stylized and architectonic hairstyles.<sup>23</sup> Without imitation of the top-tier women as motivation, the variety of hairstyles can be seen as acts of creative self-fashioning or the result of the competitive drive for matrons to distinguish themselves from their peers.<sup>24</sup> Rather than fashion, however, the Roman

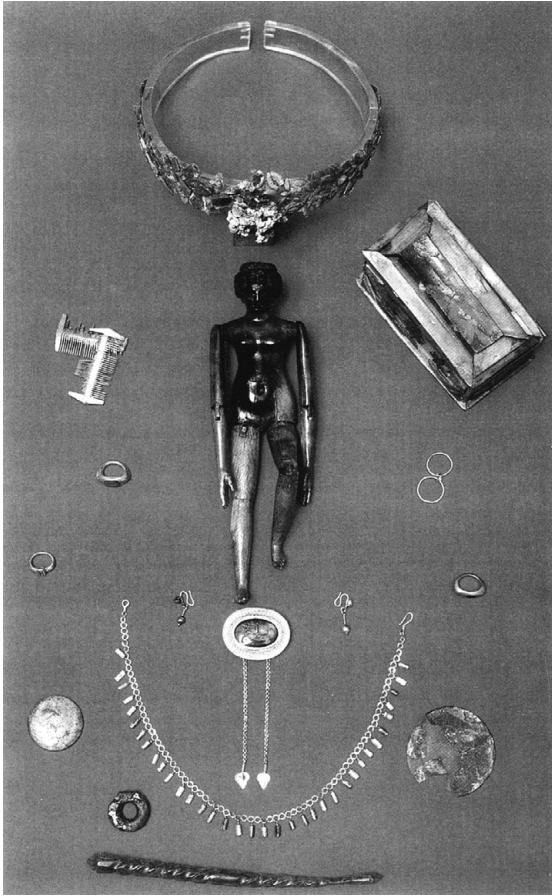
<sup>19</sup> Fejfer 2008: 63, 392.

<sup>20</sup> The physically mature bodies of the dolls were covered with doll clothes (Elderkin 1930: 455–79; Janssen 1996); some dolls had shoes delineated in engraved lines on their feet, while the doll of Crepereia Tryphaena and others had pierced ears (Elderkin 1930: 460; Sommella Mura 1983: 50); also Bordenache Battaglia 1983 116.

<sup>21</sup> Bettini 1999: 219. <sup>22</sup> Sommella Mura 1983: 10, 15–16, 20–2.

<sup>23</sup> Fejfer 2008: 353 and 358–9, for a survey of coiffures and portraits that seem to merge the likenesses of imperial women and other women.

<sup>24</sup> Bartman 2001: 1–25.



**Figure 4.4** Doll of Crepereia Tryphaena and array of adornments and utensils (Capitoline Museums), from Rome, mid second century CE.

concept of *cultus* is more appropriate.<sup>25</sup> *Cultus* achieves refinement and sophistication with a range of meaning. The ‘cultivated self’ suggests the social demands made upon appearances, and the regimens of care, labor, and control that result in a well turned-out countenance. The coiffure may have been worn on occasions by the portrait’s subjects but it also forms part of a symbolic system that goes well beyond modish attire.<sup>26</sup> As an eighteenth-century antiquarian quipped, ‘Wigs, as well as books, are furniture for the head, and both equally voluminous.’<sup>27</sup>

<sup>25</sup> Olson 2008: 7–9.      <sup>26</sup> Myerowitz Levine 1995: 76–130.

<sup>27</sup> Stevens’ satirical *Lecture on Heads*, 1764; cited in Pointon 1993: 110–11.



Dolls had beauty accessories, and there were also wigs for portraits. Such a carved marble wig is in the storerooms of the Ostia Museum, and is dated to the end of the first century CE through its association with the coiffure of the Flavian women.<sup>28</sup> We assume that this coiffure with the wreath of ringlets over the forehead must have been difficult to construct on women's heads. The crest of curls over the forehead was probably mounted on leather backings of the hairpieces.<sup>29</sup> Ovid and Martial allude to the practice of women wearing false locks and the purchase of wigs.<sup>30</sup> Why would a portrait need a wig? To keep the statue up to date has been the explanation, yet far too few wigs have turned up to envision seasonal rotations of hairpieces on statues' heads.<sup>31</sup> Rather, the marble wig attests to the artifice of the coiffure. It reminds us that the wigs were adornments like jewelry and clothing that could be donned or cast aside. I would suggest, furthermore, that the marble wig evoked a notion of artistry, not only in the crafting of an elegant appearance, the process of *cultus*, without which the subject seemed naked to her peers, but also in the craftsmanship of the hairpiece.<sup>32</sup>

The second century witnessed the peak production of portrait sculpture with the advanced technology of the day, the running drill, and its luminous effects, but we know very little about sculptors and their workshops. Not only did the sculptors closely observe appearances, but their work makes references to other art forms and craft traditions. For example, a meticulously woven (sprang) hairnet is depicted atop the turban coiffure of a Trajanic bronze portrait head in the Princeton Art Museum, and a pair of scroll-like curls, standing sentry over the pile-up of hair, recall plumage or other ornaments of more official headgear in the marble bust of Claudia Olympias in the British Museum and dating to the mid-second century (other coiffures have insertions for jewelry or metalwork; Figure 4.5).<sup>33</sup> This imitation of other materials and techniques on marble and bronze heads may be attributed to the demands of realism, that the subjects represented wore the hairnets or the upholstered hairpieces at one point in their lives. This reproduction of other forms of adornment attests to the sculptors' skillful manipulation of effects and their ability to evoke a range of materials and media in their

<sup>28</sup> Calza 1964: figs. 191–2, pl. 106.

<sup>29</sup> Stephens (2008: 111–32) has recreated the toupet coiffure by combing the hair into sections that are then teased (back-combed), secured in place by stitching them together, and curled; the curls could be kept in place with an application of oil or beeswax or gum Arabic.

<sup>30</sup> Ovid *Ars Amatoria* 3.167–8; Martial *Epigrams* 5.37.8; 5.49.12–13; 14.26.

<sup>31</sup> See Hirst and Salapata 2004: 143–58, on the reworking of coiffures to repair the heads or to compensate for flaws in the marble, rather than to update the hairstyles.

<sup>32</sup> D'Ambra 2000: 101–14. <sup>33</sup> Jenkins and Williams 1987: 9–15; Hinks 1976: 64, fig. 52.





**Figure 4.5** Princeton bronze head of a matron (Princeton University Museum of Art) and the bust of Claudia Olympias (British Museum), both from Rome or vicinity, both mid-second century CE.

carvings of cross-hatched braids or crimped strands of hair on heads. The hair on the marble or bronze heads provided sculptors with a rich canvas to transform wayward locks into an array of more fanciful and formidable head coverings: wreaths, turbans, crowns. They may improve looks but they also acknowledge the industry of other craftsmen who toiled to produce such artistry, the protocols of status that inflected hair with motifs from ceremonial regalia, and the unhurried life required to balance such top-heavy constructions on the head – the latter demonstrating beauty in action.<sup>34</sup> If we return to the eighteenth-century formulation about wigs and books, then such coiffed heads are frontispieces which signal that lofty standards are maintained.

The doll's relationship to the monumental female portrait of the mid-second century requires a look at other portraits that depict youthful subjects with conventionalized features connoting beauty and sumptuous hairstyles. This widely illustrated work known as the Fonseca bust, named

<sup>34</sup> D'Ambra 2000: 104–5, 109–10.



**Figure 4.5** (*cont.*)

after its collector but long a part of the Capitoline Museums, has stood alternately for courtly elegance or bourgeois extravagance (Figure 4.6).<sup>35</sup> Yet for all its familiarity, little is certain about it – including the identity of its subject, the date of the head (the bust is not ancient), and the stylishness of the coiffure. The portrait, representing a young woman with smooth skin, a heart-shaped face, large almond-shaped eyes, prominent

<sup>35</sup> Fittschen and Zanker 1983: 53–4, no. 69, pls 86–7.



**Figure 4.6** Fonseca bust: two views (Capitoline Museums), late first or early second century CE, from Rome.

cheekbones, a nose with a slight hook at the bridge, and full curving lips, is thought to capture an individual likeness, although there are resemblances found in a group of portraits of similarly well-appointed and elegant young women. The Fonseca bust has become an icon of feminine beauty with little scrutiny of the standards of such beauty in Roman society and the characteristics of the portrait type to which it belongs.<sup>36</sup>

The exquisite carving and finesse with detail has suggested an imperial commission to some scholars who would have identified the bust as depicting female relatives of Trajan and Hadrian.<sup>37</sup> Although it is impossible to tell if the subject was affiliated with the court in Rome or of lower rank, the portrait

<sup>36</sup> Mannsperger 1998, 55–61; Sheila Dillon in Smith 2006: 208: a portrait statue of a woman with a comparable hairstyle is called a ‘fashion beauty’, although fashion operated differently in antiquity and beauty may have been evaluated in terms of moral character and social worth, that is, *cultus*.

<sup>37</sup> Kleiner 1992: 179–80, fig. 149, for the reiteration of the identity of the subject of the Fonseca bust as possibly Trajan’s niece Vibia Matidia. It is curious that a portrait that plays such a significant role remains unidentified; it is more likely to be a private portrait.



Figure 4.6 (*cont.*)

identifies her with women of means and, possibly, prominence, which is not to say that the subject is one of these women (but, perhaps, wished to project this image; there are women of the lower social orders, including freedwomen, who have themselves depicted with this style).<sup>38</sup> The portrait is dominated by the towering coiffure of curls, associated with the Flavian dynasty from Domitia and Julia Titi in the late first century CE, but worn through the Trajanic period in the early second century and, perhaps, even later with variations.<sup>39</sup> The curls form corkscrews in long coils spilling

<sup>38</sup> Kleiner 1987: cat. no. 27, 138–9, pl. 18, 1–2; cat. no. 49, 170–2, pls 30–1, for the funerary altars of Cornelia Glyce (Rome, Vatican Museums), a freedwoman, and Q. Gavius Musicus and Volumnia Ianuaria (Rome, Vatican Museums) whose legal status is not stated in their epitaph.

<sup>39</sup> The funerary altar of Q. Gavius Musicus and Volumnia Ianuaria (Kleiner 1987: 138–9, 170–2) depicts the former with the Trajanic bands across the forehead, while Volumnia Ianuaria wears the toupet coiffure in a tall, pointed form. This combination of coiffures seems to indicate that the Flavian toupet remained current in the early second century.

in a somewhat wayward fashion yet aligned in columns over the forehead. In the back view the height of the wig is apparent and its lack of obvious support is striking: the snaking lines of the curls give little sense of their mass as seen in the front.<sup>40</sup> The rest of the hair is braided and wound into a wide chignon set at the back of the head like a knob. Originally thought to be from the late first century, the portrait has been redated by Paul Zanker to the late Trajanic or early Hadrianic periods (c. 115–25 CE) because of the contrast between the deeply undercut and drilled corkscrew curls and the high polish of the skin, the tactile quality of the modeling, and the clearly defined and well-contoured details.<sup>41</sup>

Often described as a high fashion or vogueish style, the so-called Flavian coiffure had a long life from the 80s to the 120s CE. If it was originally copied from the Flavian imperial women, then it outlasted them and undermines the notion of women following the styles of their social superiors in lockstep.<sup>42</sup> That it appears in a wide geographic distribution throughout the empire may suggest its utility as a cosmopolitan style. In the 70s through 90s CE the coiffure was worn low on the head with the curls forming a spongy mass of irregularly formed ringlets as seen in the painted mummy portrait from the Hawara in the Fayum dated to the last quarter of the first century: the curls lie low on the forehead, the chignon constructed of fine braids is held in place with a long bone hairpin (Figure 4.7). A Greek inscription on the mummy reads, 'Demo, age 24, remembered forever.'<sup>43</sup> A mummy of a young girl buried with that of Demo suggests that we have portraits of a mother and child. The subjects of the paintings were the local elite of the Fayum, Hellenized landowners.<sup>44</sup> Like many mummy paintings of women, Demo's portrait shows her adorned with expensive jewelry: bar earrings set with pearls and a necklace of emerald beads and a gold chain. The brilliant color of the mummy portraits gives a sense of what is lost on the marble statues that no longer have the paint applied to clothing and hair, eyes and lips.<sup>45</sup>

The western extent of the hairstyle is evidenced in a bronze head from the port of Ampurias, near Barcelona.<sup>46</sup> Here is the typical profile with the cloud of curls in front and the chignon in the back formed by fine braids.

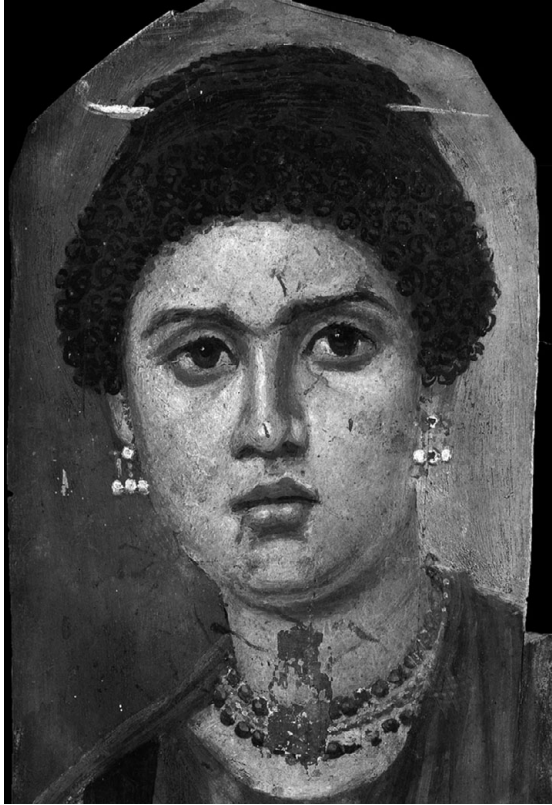
<sup>40</sup> See n. 29. <sup>41</sup> Zanker 1982: 53–4, no. 69.

<sup>42</sup> Although the conventional model of stylistic transmission is top-down, the Flavian imperial women most likely assumed the mode of adornment worn by elite women of their day. See D'Ambra 2013: 511–25 and Fejfer 2008: 356–7.

<sup>43</sup> Doxiadis 1995, 56–7, pls 39, 40; 197–8. <sup>44</sup> Bagnall 1997: 17–20.

<sup>45</sup> For a general discussion, see Bradley 2009: 87–110.

<sup>46</sup> Trillmich et al. 1993 : taf. 161; D'Ambra 1998 : 102–4, fig. 64.



**Figure 4.7** Mummy portrait of Demo (Egyptian Museum, Cairo), late first century CE, from Hawara.

Both this head and the mummy portrait represent different types with wider faces and cruder features than those of the soignée Fonseca bust. We may surmise that the hairpieces served as respectable headdresses for women at various stages of life and expectations, perhaps, rather like matrons in the mid-twentieth century who would not think to leave their houses without hats on their heads. The funerary context of the mummy portrait requires that the deceased was depicted as a woman sufficiently mourned by her loved ones, who would keep her image in memory. It was important that the image for posterity represent her at her best with her jewelry on and her hair done-up.

Other portraits were erected in the most visible and prestigious quarters of their cities, the highest honor that citizens could receive. A Trajanic pair of draped female statues in the Istanbul Museum were found in a portico in the agora of Aphrodisias: as one represents a middle-aged woman in a statuary type of Hera, and the other a younger woman in the guise of



**Figure 4.8** Draped statue, one of a pair (Istanbul Museum), early second century CE, from Aphrodisias, agora.

Demeter, they probably formed a family group, perhaps mother and daughter (the inscriptions on the bases are not extant; [Figure 4.8](#)).<sup>47</sup> Prominent women were publicly commemorated because they served as priestesses of cults and held some liturgies in Asia Minor, among other reasons.<sup>48</sup> One statue of the pair has an elongated oval-shaped face with smaller eyes, fuller cheeks and chin than those of the Fonseca bust, with which it bears comparison through the height of the highly wrought hair and the refined looks. The figure wears an impressive toupet, less like a honeycomb and more like a diadem in its shape with sloping contours on top and six rows of curls, some of them snaking ‘s’-shaped locks rather than the round ringlets of the earlier version of the coiffure and the long

<sup>47</sup> Smith 2006: cat. nos. 89–90, 207–11, pls 69–71.

<sup>48</sup> van Bremen 1996.



coils of the Fonseca bust. A veil covers the back of the head, obscuring the rest of the coiffure. The practice of veiling women's heads was more prevalent in the eastern Roman empire, yet here the head is twice covered, with the wig and the mantle drawn up over it.<sup>49</sup> The viewer cannot glimpse the hair modestly stowed out of sight beneath the wig and veil. This mode of adornment, the superstructure of false hair as well as the voluminous draping of the body, magnifies the presence of the subject by literally increasing the height and girth of the figure.

There are many more portraits coiffed in this style in the late first through the early second centuries throughout the empire, but it becomes clear how the hairstyle served as part of a dress uniform. The depiction of the coiffure in portraits over a thirty-year span suggests that the wig of ringlets marked a group identity and functioned as an index of worth and social recognition.<sup>50</sup> By dressing in this manner or being depicted as such, women adopted a standard look that made them resemble each other, at least in part.<sup>51</sup> The style changed over the years: the mass of curls over the forehead rises to a peak and becomes more regular in their arrangement in the 90s and first decade of the second century: the early versions of the coiffure have a chignon of tightly wound braids in the back, while the chignon becomes more prominent as a coil of braids at the top of the head in the second-century version. The Trajanic adaption altered the contours of the coiffure so that it looks more like a headdress than a hairstyle. The increasing height may indicate ways in which women distinguished themselves from their peers although I think there is more to this than fashion. How do we account for 'fashion' in an ancient society in which the garments worn by the full-length figures barely register changes over generations or longer periods?<sup>52</sup>

That the production of marble coiffures mimicked other art forms or craft traditions enhanced the allusive character of the coiffures. The displays that recall the highly wrought workmanship of plumage or jewelry call attention to the sculptors' skills, their ability to make marble look not only like striated locks of hair but also as hair processed

<sup>49</sup> Olson 2008: 33–36 on the *palla* or veil as a 'symbol of position', and 45–6 on lower-class women not wearing the veil that would hamper physical labor; on the other hand, it has been said that upper-class women also avoided the veil: MacMullen 1980: 208–18. The literature on veiling is more prolific on the Greek side: Llewellyn-Jones 2003; Cairns 2002: 73–93.

<sup>50</sup> D'Ambra 2013.

<sup>51</sup> Contra Bartman 2001: 22: 'although there are some exceptions, women seem to have avoided looking just like their neighbors.'

<sup>52</sup> Olson 2008: 40–1, on the prescriptive nature of the literary evidence on women's clothing and its unchanging, idealized nature.



into other forms.<sup>53</sup> With applied color and additions of other materials, it would not be as difficult to tell which part is hair, hairpiece, or other finery. In many of the complex coiffures, the hair appears to be masquerading as various types of adornment or gear – in their various parts, if not their concocted whole.<sup>54</sup> There are precedents for coils of braids hugging the head in the Vestal Virgins' wrapped headdress as well as in the headgear of other venerable priestesses (e.g. the cone-shaped *tutulus* of the Flaminica Dialis);<sup>55</sup> imperial women were bedecked with floral wreaths, beaded fillets, and crowns of various types, which may very well have provided inspiration for the hairstyles that dismantled prestigious attributes from their symbolic structures and reassembled them for elegant and savvy effects. It is interesting that the architectonic hairstyles evoked stateliness or grandeur in periods in which the imagery of the imperial women appeared less stable and well established.

The elaborate coiffures and hairpieces entailed not only expense and labor in their purchase and maintenance but also an erect carriage, leisurely gait, and regal poise to be worn successfully, that is, the qualities contributing to a noble or aristocratic demeanor.<sup>56</sup> The coiffures appear to be artifacts of a life lived in public with painstaking care for appearances with rounds of social calls or visits to temples or sanctuaries – that is, they are worn for ceremonial occasions or what we might consider as performances required by the heightened moments of everyday life.<sup>57</sup> We tend to think of these hairstyles only in terms of the expense and care necessary to purchase and maintain them – the scholarship dutifully nods to the wealth and status of the anonymous subjects – rather than for the burdens and benefits they imposed on those who wore them.<sup>58</sup> The number of portraits with adornment suggests social standards of grooming and, above that, of cultivation and an urbane sophistication. The portrait has long been considered a vehicle by which individuals prove themselves to their peers, that is, represent their status or rank in society. Given the ubiquity of the Flavian coiffure over a long period throughout

<sup>53</sup> Stewart 2008: 92, on the choice of coiffure as endowing the subject with 'cultural capital'; Pointon 1999: 39–58 on hair transformed into jewelry in nineteenth-century England.

<sup>54</sup> For example, a hairnet may have been used in the casting process of the bronze head in the Art Museum, Princeton University (Jenkins and Williams 1987: 9–15). Other portraits were enhanced with ornament inserted into the marble or contrast different types of processed hair. See, for example, the portrait known as the Torlonia Maiden (Rome, Villa Albani) with, possibly, a jeweled plaque once adorning the central part and the bust in Copenhagen (Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, no. 1539) with a spray of ringlets adorning a turban coiffure.

<sup>55</sup> Wood 1999: 159, 164, 224; Lindner, unpublished. <sup>56</sup> Gleason 1995: 60–2.

<sup>57</sup> Hemelrijk 1999: 9–16. <sup>58</sup> D'Ambra 2007: 111–28.

the empire, we can think about them differently: women preferred being depicted under the wreath of curls because it offered them a corporate identity governed by a uniform and homogeneous look. The fact that freedwomen, ex-slaves, wear these wigs in their relief portraits on their funerary altars should give us pause: instead of marking social differentiation, the adorned hair erased status distinctions and made the female subjects seem more alike than different.<sup>59</sup> Even if the subjects of the portraits rarely appeared like this in life, the wigs graced them with the dignity of women of honor and bestowed upon them a set of characteristic qualities of upstanding and respectable matrons and maidens. The wig indicated that the matron depicted under it belonged to this honorable community.

For Roman reactions to feminine adornment, we can turn to the literary sources, although the finery and hairstyles are only mentioned as fleeting glimpses in highly polarized contexts of praise and blame. Juvenal in *Satire* 6 claims: 'So fierce the quest for beauty, so many tiers and storeys, the weight built up on her head! From the front you see Andromache; from behind, she's much shorter (a different person, you'd think); the effect is absurd if she's really tiny', (501–5). With this critique Juvenal acknowledges that the hairstyles endow women with beauty, lest we have any doubts. The passage in *Satire* 6, dated to 115 CE, calls to mind the high-peaked hairpieces of the Trajanic period, that is, the text and portraits are contemporary. The reference to the quest for beauty is also tempered by the heroic stature of Andromache, who is beautiful and remains dignified under duress; that is, the hairstyle makes the woman seem formidable and ennobled as if the wig conferred on her the prestige of a diadem or helmet. The effect, however, may be out of proportion to the woman's stature, and we have the comic or mock-heroic image of a petite woman teetering under an oversized coiffure. Furthermore, she is a two-sided creature with an impressive façade but appears diminished from behind: is she the same woman seen from different points of view? The confusion of identity calls to mind masks and masquerades: donning the mask is often said to make the wearer seem more 'like herself', paradoxically, by hiding what is most unique, her facial features, and accentuating an aspect of herself that lies beneath the surface.<sup>60</sup> In this case, the facial features are overshadowed or diminished by the hair, which identifies the subject as a member of a group, respectable and cultivated matrons, through the insignia of the

<sup>59</sup> D'Ambra, 2013: 511–25.

<sup>60</sup> Gombrich 1972: 9–16.

coiffure. A woman may be more visible and recognizable to her peers under such a wig.<sup>61</sup> That it hides her own hair beneath is attributed to her modesty, although satirists like Juvenal were not taken in by this. In the satirist's world, a small woman with big hair arouses ridicule due to the uneasiness about the trickery and deceit of a woman's toilette, and there is a long tradition from Ovid on attesting to this attitude.<sup>62</sup> The observations about the hairstyles in *Satire* 6 are situated in a tirade against wives who waste money and time to make themselves attractive for their lovers; the downward moral trajectory of adultery, vanity, and extravagance flashes by in this vignette.<sup>63</sup>

Another glimpse of the hairstyle is found in a very different context in Statius, *Silvae*, 1.2.113–14, dated to the early or mid-90s. The poem celebrates the marriage of Statius' friend Stella in a genre that elevates the match with mythological allusions, praises the couple, and flatters the bride and wedding party. Venus herself describes the bride: 'Behold even from here the lofty beauty of her brow and high-piled hair. Reckon how far she towers above the matrons of Rome.' The height of the 'high-piled' coiffure receives reverential approval here; its 'lofty beauty' confers esteem and distinguishes the bride from Roman matrons, some of whom must have worn high-piled coiffures, too. That the well-coiffed bride seems larger than life recalls the epiphanies of goddesses who loom over their mortal witnesses. The poem also compares her to lesser mythological beings, so a hierarchy is implied and beauty is a competitive sport, as always.<sup>64</sup> The context is highly idealized here with a rarefied atmosphere and luxurious trappings, as opposed to the darkly sardonic tone of the satirist. The bride's beauty and well-dressed hair give her stature and prominence among her peers.

Although the literary evidence demonstrates some ambivalence, the portraits honor their subjects and characterize them as women who cared for appearances without indulging in antisocial or suspect habits of vanity or extravagance, as the moralists would have it. At archaeological sites the number of ointment jars and perfume vials also attests to the daily beauty regimens of Roman women.<sup>65</sup> In graves we find inventories of items from the toilette, especially jewels that adorned girls in life as in death. The grave

<sup>61</sup> Olson 2008: 107–9 on visibility and power.

<sup>62</sup> Olson 2008: 70, 107–8, and 115; see also Martial, *Epigrams* 5.49 for the viewing of a semi-bald man who looked different when seen from different sides.

<sup>63</sup> Olson 2008: 80–8. <sup>64</sup> The primal beauty contest is the Judgment of Paris.

<sup>65</sup> Fittschen 1996: 164, cat. nos. 118, 119.

goods of Crepereia Tryphaena testify to the value of adornment: the girl was buried with an array of jewelry and utensils (Figure 4.4). Her burial in the vicinity of the imperial gardens near Hadrian's Mausoleum indicates a level of prosperity (and the family of freed stock, freedmen of L. Crepereius).<sup>66</sup> The jewelry consists of gold and pearl earrings, a gold and amethyst pin, an emerald necklace, four gold rings – one of which is inscribed with a man's name, *Filetus*.<sup>67</sup> Such valuables were not ordinarily interred with the dead, except in the cases of girls dying unwed.<sup>68</sup> In this scenario, Filetus would have been the bereaved bridegroom who put aside the wedding plans for his beloved's funeral rites. We assume that the girl was buried wearing her gold, and she also wore a wreath of blossoms on her head that are identified as box leaves, sacred to the underworld.<sup>69</sup> That they are box leaves sacred to the underworld is also appropriate for the would-be bride.<sup>70</sup> Neither the cloth garments of the girl nor the doll survived the dank conditions of the grave (beyond a few fragments).<sup>71</sup>

The presence of the doll in the grave also points to the unattained wedding. Prospective brides were supposed to dedicate their dolls to Venus in the goddess' sanctuaries. The dolls were left behind with Venus as a rite of passage, the giving up of childish things before the wedding (Scholia to Persius, *Saturae* 2.69f.).<sup>72</sup> For those dying before their time, the dolls accompanied their owners to the tomb, companions in death as in life. The other objects found in the sarcophagus are the tiny possessions of the doll made to her scale. She had a locked box measuring 6 cm wide and 12.5 cm long made of ivory with inlays.<sup>73</sup> In it were kept the two little silver

<sup>66</sup> The sarcophagus of Crepereia Tryphaena was placed beside that of L. Crepereius Euhodus, most likely her brother; their *cognomina* suggest that they were freed (Martin-Kilcher 2000: 69; Sommella Mura 1983: 31); the meaning of the *cognomen*, Tryphaena, from *tryphē*, wealth or fortune, cannot be construed as significant – it may simply have been a name.

<sup>67</sup> Sommella Mura 1983: 20–3.

<sup>68</sup> It may be that Crepereia Tryphaena was buried in her wedding dress: she wore a wreath of blossoms, had a large brooch that may have secured the bridal veil or girdle; the mirror, spindle, and distaff also played roles in the adornment of the bride and her procession; on the jewelry consigned to the graves of girls and young women as their dowry, which could not be transferred to their husbands since death intervened before marriage, see Martin-Kilcher 2000: 69–70; Oliver 2000: 115–24.

<sup>69</sup> Martin-Kilcher 2000: 69–70, *contra* myrtle as stated in Bedini 1995: 71.

<sup>70</sup> For the *topos* of the maiden dying before her time as the bride of Hades and the Greek concept of marriage and death as related rites of passage, see Humphreys 1993; Wohl, 2002; Cole 2004.

<sup>71</sup> Bettini 1999: 219.

<sup>72</sup> Bettini 1999: 225–6; Elderkin 1930: 455; Scholia to Horace, *Sermones* 1.5.69: the boys, 'having completed their childhood and having already put on the toga of a man consecrated their bullae to the Penates, just as the girls did their dolls.'

<sup>73</sup> Sommella Mura 1983: 24.



**Figure 4.9** Key on the hand of Crepereia Tryphaena's doll (Capitoline Museums), from Rome, mid-second century CE.

mirrors and two ivory combs, luxurious items of the grooming kit. As proof of her ownership, the doll wore a ring bearing a key to the box. Although the image of the doll and its possessions looks like a still-life of diminutive feminine finery, we need to see the mirrors being held up to scrutinize the doll's face or the combs dredging the ivory coiffure. These objects of feminine adornment, along with the clothes with which Crepereia Tryphaena dressed her, formed the exclusive world shared by the girl and her doll, literally her *kosmos*.<sup>74</sup> In play, the doll comes to life and takes possession of her things. Maurizio Bettini, in his chapter on the doll in *The Portrait of the Lover* (1999), observes that the doll is 'interactive'.<sup>75</sup>

The key on the ring fitted to the doll's finger suggests that there is more to the doll than meets the eye (Figure 4.9). The key to the locked box

<sup>74</sup> Bettini 1999: 226.

<sup>75</sup> Bettini 1999: 220.

reminds us that the doll is the possession of the girl, Crepereia Tryphaena. Girls also put their little chests in the household's storeroom and kept their own sets of keys in imitation of their mothers' duties, according to a late antique source.<sup>76</sup> Here the act of exclusion connotes authority rather than the imaginative grasp of an interior world, the realm of play. Bettini has pointed out the shared identity between the girl and her doll, and that 'the doll is like a tiny mirror that reflects the world at large.'<sup>77</sup> The doll, however, was more than a shining image – the doll came to life during play. The movement made by the jointed limbs, the figure hidden beneath its wardrobe, the pierced ears, the beauty accessories – all of these give the doll the contours of a real life. From the contents of the ivory box, we imagine that much of the game consisted of grooming and dressing the doll, getting her ready for play. In her experiments with the combs, mirrors, and clothes, the doll provides the girl with the appropriate tools for trying on the adornment that projects womanliness. In other words, girls participate in the construction of femininity during play.<sup>78</sup> At the time of her death at about the age of seventeen, the girl may no longer have had reason to play with the doll, who remained her companion all the same. The jointed limbs and ring adorned with a key attest to the sense of arrested life in the sarcophagus of Crepereia Tryphaena. Play depended upon the girl's ability to bring the doll to life.

Ancients were haunted by the idea of other effigies coming to life. These were the most immobile and stone-cold of figures, marble statues imagined to be stepping down from their bases and joining the man in the street. We may find this curious because the sculpted human figure no longer resonates as either audience or participant in urban life. Yet the animation fantasy, or what has been called the dream of the moving statue, had a powerful hold on the imagination.<sup>79</sup> Plato has Socrates speak of statues made by Daedalus who would walk off 'like runaway slaves' if untethered. That statues could slip away in a crowd is startling (*Meno* in *Works*, 3:3–55, [52]). Marble likenesses would pass as human because the distinctions between the inanimate and the living were deemed imperceptible to the ancient imagination at some level. Daedalus allegedly had made marble dolls with moveable limbs, but a doll, of course, demands to be touched. The statue, on the other hand, exists on a higher plane – literally on its tall podium and symbolically in its depiction of figures of authority who deserved to be remembered. The monumental marble statue served as

<sup>76</sup> John Chrysostom (*De uirg.* 73.1 = *Migne*, PG 48.586), late fourth century, Antioch.

<sup>77</sup> Bettini 1999: 217. <sup>78</sup> Riviere 1929: 303–13. <sup>79</sup> Gross 1992: 21–5.

both consolation for the loss of great men and defense against the effects of mortality, that is, the body's decay and death.<sup>80</sup> For the ancients, statues possessed an undeniable presence in their alleged imitation of life, their noble surveillance of their settings before gliding down to the ground or their stately procession through cities.

Ovid's account of Pygmalion in *Metamorphoses* (10.320–74) gives a sense of the blurring of outer and inner worlds in the tale of the artist who fell in love with his own creation, a 'snowy ivory statue' of a maiden.<sup>81</sup> The statue, 'lovelier than any woman born', was luxuriously adorned with clothes and jewelry in a manner similar to the dolls. When Venus grants Pygmalion his wish of a wife, the statue's ivory limbs appear to melt and become warm with the blood coursing through her veins. Her blush at being kissed is her first reaction to experience. The contrast between the unyielding ivory and the soft flesh, the external adornment and her innate modesty, highlights the transformation of statue into wife.

The ivory doll was given an imaginary life by Crepereia Tryphaena, although now the lifeless remains of the girl give no clue to their spirited play. The modern narrative of childhood emphasizes the point at which disillusionment replaces enchantment with dolls or mechanical toys. Baudelaire observed children shaking dolls in search of their souls,<sup>82</sup> and Rilke imagined them angry at the dolls' utter stupidity, their incapacity to respond, to live on their own. For Rilke, the doll assumes its own life when it is abandoned after being outgrown by its owner.<sup>83</sup> Monumental statues, however, were usually expected to remain mute, dispassionate, and aloof witnesses.

The sarcophagus of Crepereia Tryphaena elicits pathos through its exterior relief of a common funerary scene: a reclining young woman joined by a man and a veiled woman who either are taking their leave of her or otherwise appear mournful (although the young woman appears alive, which is typical of these scenes). Within the sarcophagus, the tableau of the doll and the array of undersized implements also tug at the emotions. Rather than only interrupted games and loss of companionship summoned by the grave goods, the doll and her possessions also imply a regimen of maintenance and self-improvement carried out in miniature. The doll's grooming kit indicates efforts to appear well turned-out, to keep up appearances. As Quintilian articulated a *sermo corporis*, a language of the body, for the orator defined by posture and hand gestures, so, too,

<sup>80</sup> Gross 1992: 17–25.

<sup>81</sup> Stoichita 2008: 7–20.

<sup>82</sup> Baudelaire 1964: 202–3.

<sup>83</sup> Rilke 1954: 19.

reputable women acquired presence, that is, social visibility, by their refined looks and carefully coiffed hair.<sup>84</sup> The *ēthos* of the woman of substance, like the orator, is reflected in her appearance. The feminine *ēthos*, however, was constructed in private and in the constricted spheres of the home and tomb, here ensconced in a locked container within the box of the casket. Even when women were commemorated in a grand manner, such as Claudia Semne, the wife of an imperial freedman in Rome of the early second century CE, their identities were masked and fragmented through the mythological masquerade of a statue gallery of divinities in the tomb.<sup>85</sup> Cicero's daughter, Tullia, who died at about the age of thirty-two in 45 BCE, appears in his correspondence as his loyal and loving companion whose virtues impressed and whose conversation enticed.<sup>86</sup> He wrote of commemorating her with a shrine and deifying her, but his plans came to nothing; instead, as consolation, she was said to have taken pride in the accomplishments of his public life.<sup>87</sup> Married three times and the mother of two sons who lived but very briefly, Tullia can only be glimpsed through her father's fine words, his *ēthos*, and in the wake of his turbulent career.<sup>88</sup>

In the sarcophagus of Crepereia Tryphaena the doll shines brightly as an early guide to the girl's life and an intimate companion enduring the darkness of the grave. The Roman doll was placed in the grave at the end of the game, no doubt, because of the desire that the inanimate could come to life or, at least, bring comfort. Her silver mirrors, ivory comb, rings, and locked box testify to the infinite pleasures of her world, and it is the promise of these pleasures that make the dreams of moving statues or the living dead so vivid.

<sup>84</sup> Gunderson 1998: 174.      <sup>85</sup> Wrede 1971: 125–66.      <sup>86</sup> Treggiari 2007: 161–2.

<sup>87</sup> S. Sulpicius Rufus to Cicero, *F.* 4.5/248.5, 6.      <sup>88</sup> Treggiari 2007: 135–7.



PART II



The Domestic Realm



## 5 | The Casa del Menandro in Pompeii

### *Rhetoric and the Topology of Roman Wall Painting*

KATHARINA LORENZ

#### Introduction

A guide for *reading* the decoration of Roman houses: this, in many ways, is the modern view of the role of rhetoric with regard to Roman wall painting. Wall painting is not the only artistic genre thus connected to rhetoric as an explanatory framework.<sup>1</sup> But it represents, perhaps more prominently than others, the conflicting relationship that can ensue from using ancient rhetoric as a manual for ancient visual art.

The interpretative framework of rhetoric with its topographical powers has proven a blessing in the field of Roman domestic interior decoration. Accounts such as those by Quintilian and others, which show the reader how to store the different parts of a speech as imaginary objects lining an equally imaginary walk through a house, have provided a means to consider how this decoration, and specifically how this decoration with regard to its location, helps to create specific atmospheres in specific parts of the house and thereby contributes to what is perhaps best called social zoning.<sup>2</sup>

And yet the application of rhetorical theory to the decoration of Roman houses has also triggered new problems: the rhetorical manuals of the first centuries BCE and CE applied to the study of interior decoration are primarily concerned with the construction of speeches. The mechanisms championed in order to sustain and exploit the linearity of a speech, as the course of an argument unfolding over time, have a tendency to localize and linearize content, not least when applied as interpretative tools to other evidence than the flow of words, such as the visual arts.

The Roman house, however, does not offer a linear experience; or, to state the obvious, while it is true that certain rooms can only be reached by cutting across others, once inside the house more than one route is

<sup>1</sup> For Roman sculpture, see e.g. Hölscher 1987: 54–61; also cf. Preisshofen and Zanker 1970–1; Varner 2006. For Roman sarcophagi, see e.g. Giuliani 1989.

<sup>2</sup> The rhetoric passages most often cited in this context are: *Ad C. Herenn.* 3.16–24; *Cic. de orat.* 2.86.351–54; Quint. *Inst. or.* 11.2.17–22. Examples of their application in the scholarship of the Roman domestic context: Brilliant 1984; Leach 1988: 23; Rouveret 1989; Bergmann 1994; Elsner 1995: 77–87.

possible, including ultimately a return to the entrance that is also the exit. In many ways, therefore, the Roman house functions like B. S. Johnson's novel *The Unfortunates*, in which the twenty-seven chapters, bar first and last, can be rearranged at leisure to create ever-new narratives.<sup>3</sup>

In such a setup, the actual location of individual elements is of lesser importance than the way in which these elements gain meaning in relationship with whatever other elements surround them.<sup>4</sup> In short, it is their topology, and not their topography, that is crucial to an understanding of the decorative elements of a Roman house. And herein lies a problem: interpretative frameworks solely derived from a mnemonic technique bound to the topographical such as those canvassed by the rhetoric manuals will struggle to account for this topology – something that, as we will see, Quintilian for instance is happy to acknowledge.

In the following, after a brief survey of the use of two aspects of rhetorical writing – mnemonic systems and descriptors of modes of transmission – in the study of Roman wall painting, the Casa del Menandro in Pompeii (Regio I 10.4) will serve as a case study to examine the usefulness of interpretative frameworks derived from these elements of rhetoric and to explore how Roman rhetoric can be harnessed to account for the visuality of early imperial Roman interior decoration.

## Rhetoric and Roman wall painting

Ancient rhetorical writing of the kind applied to Roman wall painting is mostly devoted to rhetoric as a practical skill. In essence, the works that survive are mainly teaching manuals concerned with the art of managing the voice, and – more broadly – organizing thought in order to deliver content most successfully to audiences. This type of rhetoric can thus offer valuable insights in particular with regard to the formal appearance and arrangement of content. In addition, it forms an important source for our understanding of ancient expectations with regard to perception, and cognitive processes more generally.

The consequent use of rhetoric as an interpretative framework is a comparatively recent phenomenon in scholarship on Roman wall painting.

<sup>3</sup> Johnson 1969/2008.

<sup>4</sup> This sits in parallel to the social structure of Roman houses, which has been aptly described as the layers of an onion: their status (as public or private) is not absolute, but emerges from the relationship of layer to layer. See Wallace-Hadrill 1994: 17.

The work of Bettina Bergmann in particular has established ancient rhetorical writing as a means for understanding the decorations that adorn the walls of Roman houses.<sup>5</sup> Bergmann starts from the proposition that memory is an important factor bearing upon the pictorial decoration of the Roman domestic context of the first centuries BCE and CE.<sup>6</sup> She applies the mnemonic systems described by the author of the *Ad Herennium*, Cicero and Quintilian (written roughly within the same window of time between the first centuries BCE and CE, in which the layout of the house provides the mental topography for the placing of individual parts of a speech)<sup>7</sup> to argue that the pictorial decorations of Roman houses should be approached as an interrelated network of content. Decoration elicits flexible content that is prone to semantic changes: it is dependent on the movements and mentality of its audiences, and the combinations and sequences in which they experience specific decorative features.

The application of these mnemonic systems as an interpretative framework for Roman wall painting offers a clear advantage to the text-hermeneutical argument of old scholarship because it enforces a focus on what individual decorations display, and refuses simply to reduce their meaning to what can be derived from the labels given to them, such as 'decorative pattern', 'Dionysian scene', or 'Zeus and Hera'.<sup>8</sup> But the approach implicit in Bergmann's emphasis on the 'semantic flexibility' of decorations spread across the house, and their 'thematic polyphony',<sup>9</sup> reaches further. It does so, however, by following not so much the mnemonic template but the criticism Quintilian brings against the system he himself champions.<sup>10</sup>

Quintilian argues that his mnemonic system is workable for remembering a large set of data in a specific sequence such as people recalling sales; but he doubts its usefulness for learning a continuous speech, and indeed 'verbal structure'.<sup>11</sup> In order to remember such a network of ideas within the

<sup>5</sup> Bergmann 1994. See also Brilliant 1984; Leach 1988: 23; Rouveret 1989 for previous essays in this field. For an alternative application of rhetorical theory to Roman wall painting, as a means to assess form and style, see Tybout 1989.

<sup>6</sup> Bergmann 1994: 225.

<sup>7</sup> *Ad C. Herenn.* 3.16–24; *Cic. De orat.* 2.86.351–54; *Quint. Inst. or.* 11.2.17–22. – On ancient mnemonic techniques, see also Rossi 1960; Blum 1969; Yates 1966: 1–49; Rouveret 1989: 303–79; Elsner 1995: 77–81; also Small 1997: 81–140, esp. 95–116.

<sup>8</sup> For a discussion, see Lorenz 2008: 8–11.

<sup>9</sup> For the terms, see Bergmann 1994: 245–51.

<sup>10</sup> Bergmann mentions the existence of the critique in a footnote, but does not discuss it; see Bergmann 1994: 225 no. 2.

<sup>11</sup> *Quint. Inst. or.* 11.2.23–6, esp. 11.2.24–5: 'This may well have been an aid to those who, at the end of the sale, repeated what they had sold to each buyer, precisely as the cashiers' records testified. [...] But the technique will be less useful for learning by heart what is to be a

confines of the mnemonic system that Quintilian elaborates one would have to turn the ideas into symbols by inventing an object as place-holder for each idea, in order to position these imaginary objects within the house that serves as mnemonic container. Effectively, therefore, these imaginary – but, within the confines of the mnemonic framework, visible and tangible – objects are ideas turned into symbols for the sake of data storage. But Quintilian is quick to point out the problems of retrieval linked to this type of storage: because the ideas feature no longer as themselves but as symbolically loaded signs, as ideas-turned-objects, the rhetor not only has to memorize the route through the house but, separately, also the relevant relationships between ideas and denoting objects. This makes additional demands on one's mnemonic facility, but also, as Quintilian notes, adds extraneous data. That is, it engages other (symbolic) meanings already linked to the chosen objects, which can potentially interfere with the mnemonic network, alter its trajectory and send the rhetor – along with his argument – onto a differing pathway.

Whilst Quintilian's mnemonic system is concerned with the topography of objects and content, his excursus on the system's limitations is devoted to a topology of meaning. He acknowledges that ideas turned into visible objects (his signs, essentially) might in turn trigger ideas different from those that originally marshalled the symbols. For Quintilian, the main problem here is the cognitive overload this can cause on the part of the rhetor, who might find himself lost between different strata of meaning.

This potential for interference between things and ideas, described by Quintilian, is at the conceptual core of what allows Bergmann's approach not simply to focus on the decoration (with regard to what is visible where), but to reach beyond the linearity enforced by the mnemonic template and unlock a dynamic way of looking at Roman wall painting. That is, it shows how decorations can be perceived on the grounds of what is visible around them. With his critique, Quintilian points to a distinction that in modern art-historical scholarship would be described as the difference between the visible and the visual: that is, the visible of a picture as what we see, and the visual as what makes for its overall efficacy, a fluid agglomeration of associations, and a multi-stability created in 'the intertwinings of

continuous speech. For on the one hand, ideas do not have the same images as objects, since we always have to invent a separate sign for them, but a Site may none the less somehow remind us of them, as it may of a conversation held there; on the other hand, how can a verbal structure be grasped by this art? [...] For suppose that, like shorthand writers, we have definite Images for all of these things and (of course) infinite Sites for them [...] – and suppose we remember them all, as if they were safe in the bank: will not the run of our speech actually be held up by this double effort of memorizing?' (trans. Russell).

transmitted and dismantled knowledges'.<sup>12</sup> And it is this that helps to lead beyond a mere topography of domestic decoration – a list of what appears where – to its topology, an assessment of the meanings of objects produced through and for their location.

In this sense, then, and following Quintilian's critique, it is by offering a means to leave the linearity of rhetoric behind that rhetoric helps to appropriate a new framework for the study of Roman wall painting. But this also opens up a new set of questions with regard as to how we are to tackle this topology, and whether the apparent 'thematic polyphony' could be disentangled again for analysis. This is an area in which scholarship has once more relied on rhetorical writing: on the basis of stylistic figures and rhetorical tropes, Bettina Bergmann and others have specified modal principles according to which especially mythological pictures are combined in the Roman house: parallelism, intensification and contrast (*similitudo*, *uicinitas* and *contrarium*).<sup>13</sup>

These categories can help to distinguish different modes of transmission at play in different parts of the house – transmission here used both in the narrow sense of conveying content by means of visual depiction and in the wider sense of partaking in the communication of cultural knowledge and protocols.<sup>14</sup> And yet they also create a crucial problem: for Quintilian, the tropes bolster an overarching system of transmission for verbal content, facilitating the specific requirements of speech. Adopting this framework without adaptation for the analysis of pictorial decoration risks boxing up the visual in the same way – without testing out whether the verbal and the visual answer to the same requirements, and indeed whether shared stylistic characteristics produce comparable effects in the two media. In short, it takes the individual rhetorical building blocks for full-blown aesthetic concepts without examining whether they can actually fulfil this role.<sup>15</sup>

The Pompeian evidence points to the scaffolding of visual argument as an overriding category to which tropes such as contrast and intensification contribute. Within this setup, however, the combinations of mythological

<sup>12</sup> Didi-Huberman 2005: 16.

<sup>13</sup> Bergmann 1999: 101. See also Brilliant 1984: 71 (himself pointing back to Barwick 1957); Descoeudres 1994: 163 (parallelism, intensification, contrast); Stročka 1997: 130 (complementing and antithetical combinations).

<sup>14</sup> Transmission here is used following Régis Debray's concept of *transmettre*: Debray 2000: 9–44; Debray 2004.

<sup>15</sup> The argument has been made that rhetorical theory shapes Roman perception, which indeed would give rhetorical tropes a comprehensive stake in contemporary aesthetics: Brilliant 1984: 53–89; Leach 1988; Rouveret 1989: passim; Bergmann 1994: 226; Elsner 1995: 77–84. Cf. also Elsner 1995: 78 on the role of the house in Roman thought.

pictures within the rooms of Pompeian houses are characterized not by whether they are based on parallelism, intensification or contrast. Instead, they are defined by the ways in which these modal relationships are combined in individual rooms, and within the domestic space as a whole, in order to generate an overall experience.<sup>16</sup> Once again, rhetoric provides the tools – in this case, formal descriptors – to reach beyond its linear limitations, but these are in need of being appropriated and conceptualized for an interpretative framework that can account for the visual nature of the evidence.

### The Casa del Menandro (Regio I 10.4)

The Casa del Menandro is one of Pompeii's most prominent houses (Figure 5.1).<sup>17</sup> Its size and features confirm it as the dwelling of a financially potent owner: covering an impressive 1,800 m<sup>2</sup> and including both living quarters and an extensive work tract, it was among the first Pompeian houses to be equipped with a private bath, added around 30 BCE and a clear marker of the house's exclusivity. It also contains the largest banqueting room in Pompeii, Room (18), part of the remarkable two three-room groups located around the peristyle which vouch for the owner's ample need for entertaining guests.<sup>18</sup>

The architectural layout is matched by the luxuriousness of the interior decoration. The pavements in all central areas are lavishly adorned with mosaics from the period of the Second Style, including three figural *emblemata*.<sup>19</sup> The wall paintings are of high quality throughout, and they feature a whole series of topics that are either exceptional or seem to mark the beginning of specific decorative trends in Pompeii: the mythological scenes of the Second Style in the *atriolum* (46) of the bath suite are among the

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Lorenz 2008: 41–4.

<sup>17</sup> PPM II 1991: 241–397; Ling 1997: 47–144; Dickmann 1999: 317–18, 355–6; Ling and Ling 2005: 3–106.

<sup>18</sup> This setup is facilitated by the double assignment of *tablinum* (8), both in its traditional function as passageway between *atrium* and peristyle and as the central part of the three-room group that comprises Room (11) to the west and Room (12) to the east. Pompeian houses have generally only one three-room group, as suite for reception and entertainment; see: Tamm 1963: 128–33; Förtsch 1993: 110–15; Leach 1997: 59–62; Ling 1997: 223–7; Dickmann 1999: 313–31, esp. 317–19. However, multiplication of this room configuration can be used to signal wealth and social standing: Wallace-Hadrill 1988: 92–3.

<sup>19</sup> The mosaic flooring covers 80 sqm of the overall 1,800 sqm, see: Ling and Ling 2005: 95; cf. also Pesando 1997: 221–47, esp. 236.



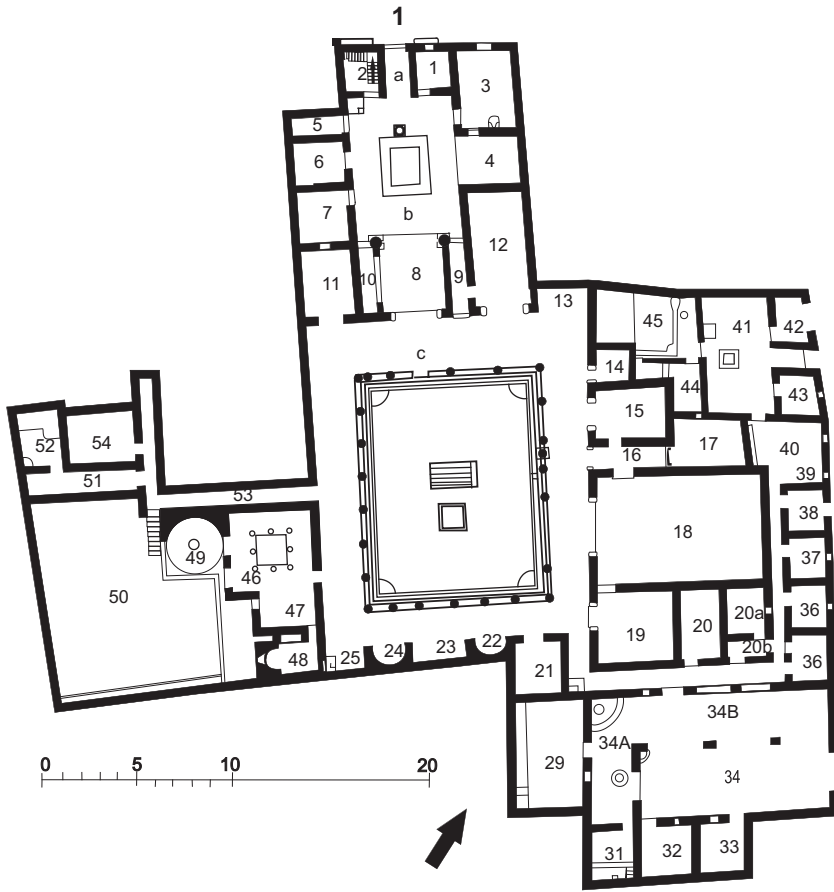


Figure 5.1 Pompeii, Casa del Menandro (I 10.4).

earliest, if not the first appearance of mythological topics on Pompeian walls;<sup>20</sup> the painting of the dramatist Menander in the peristyle, from which the name of the house is derived, constitutes the only representation of a specific poet on Pompeian walls;<sup>21</sup> the scenes of the Iliupersis of the Fourth Style in *ala* (4) are among the few Fourth Style cyclical depictions of myth; and the picture of Perseus and Andromeda of the Fourth Style in Room (11) possibly constitutes the first Roman depiction of this particular episode.

Its apparent role as a trendsetting dwelling renders the Casa del Menandro a good case study, and this is further backed by its exceptionally thorough

<sup>20</sup> Beyen 1938/1960: 147–8; Maiuri 1932: 127–32; Binsfeld 1956: 31–3; Cèbe 1966: 362–3; Tybout 1989: 348 no. 1268; Ling and Ling 2005: 20–3, 64–5, fig. 81; Clarke 2007: 134–40.

<sup>21</sup> Ling and Ling 2005: 85–8, esp. 87.

scholarly exploration, with Roger Ling's comprehensive and exemplary study of the *Insula* of Menander forming the culmination.<sup>22</sup> A particularly important product of this extensive engagement is that the chronology of the individual decorative phases of the house is well established. Hence it can facilitate a discussion of the individual decorative phenomena both within the sequence of their appearance and in relation to the use and overall development of wall painting in Pompeii and its embeddedness in wider socio-cultural activities and historical events.

The decoration of the house falls into two main phases, the first in the late Second Style around the third quarter of the first century BCE, when most pavements (and all of the mosaic pavements) were laid down and the bath suite was decorated.<sup>23</sup> The second phase took place in the Fourth Style between the 40s and the 60s CE, when the house underwent a comprehensive redesign, but with most pavements remaining. Ling argues convincingly that this redecoration was executed in three stages, the first early in the Fourth Style in the 40s; the other two during the mature Fourth Style, with the second before and the third after the earthquake of 62.<sup>24</sup> It seems that the same workshop continued its work over this extended period, from before until after the earthquake; whence Ling establishes a date between 61 and 65 CE for the second and third phase of redecoration.

Despite this robust chronological framework the dominant interpretation of the decoration is less conclusive. The image of Menander in the south of the peristyle, along with its companion piece, possibly a painting of Euripides,<sup>25</sup> has channelled assessment in one direction, to read the whole decoration as evidence for the cultural and specifically literary ambitions of the owner, whom Ling calls an 'aficionado of epic and drama'.<sup>26</sup> The decorations of Rooms (4) and (15) are marshalled in support of the 'literary feel' that

<sup>22</sup> Ling 1997–2007.

<sup>23</sup> Ling and Ling 2005: 3–4.

<sup>24</sup> Ling and Ling 2005: 4. A first burst of work in the 40s sees the redecoration of Rooms (3) and (11); then, in the 50s and early 60s CE Room (15) is redecorated and, after the earthquake, work is executed in the whole *atrium* area and in Rooms (18) and (19), with repairs in Rooms (11) and (15).

<sup>25</sup> PPM II 1991: 367; Maiuri 1932: 107. Clarke (1991: 188) argues that *exedra* (23) with the image of the poet forms the 'visual and iconographical focus' of the house, providing the end-point to the axis that reaches from the *fauces* through the house. Menander reads the comedy 'The Twins' (*Didumai*), as explained by the inscription (cf. Maiuri 1932: 112).

<sup>26</sup> Ling and Ling 2005: 104–5. Clarke (1991: 170) follows the interpretation that the house belonged to the Poppaei, because of a seal found in Room (43), bearing the name of the freedman Quintus Poppaeus; but he also agrees that the owner had a 'taste for highly dramatic pictorial cycles or individual paintings illustrating climatic moments in myths' (Clarke 1991: 176–7).

seemingly characterizes the house, because of their decoration with cyclical scenes,<sup>27</sup> and because Room (15) displays pictures of the Muses. And Ling takes it further, identifying the owner as interested particularly in scenes of a Dionysian nature, or in scenes with a religious flair, devoted to the goddesses Artemis and Aphrodite.<sup>28</sup>

## Layers of paint

The Casa del Menandro is evidence for the sophistication of its owners; but it is evidence more complex, and more powerful, than merely signalling learnedness by means of literary portraits. There is a strong element of continuity that characterizes the design: despite being executed in different phases, the pictorial decorations share in a set of conceptual stratagems. This points to a strong hand behind the execution – in terms of both financial means and intellectual reach – that potentially extends beyond a single generation.

Four rooms around *atrium* and peristyle are decorated with mythological panels in the centre of their walls [Rooms (4), (11), (15), (19)]. Three of these – Rooms (11), (15), (19) – are part of the two three-room groups that surround the peristyle, but in each case the mythological designs are not chosen to decorate the central rooms of these configurations – *tablinum* (8) and Room (18) respectively – but their wing rooms. These decorations, within each room and in their interplay across the *atrium* and peristyle areas of the house, provide a promising basis for testing the applicability of interpretative frameworks derived from mnemonic systems and modes of transmission as championed in the rhetorical manuals of the first century BCE and CE.

## Ala (4)

The decoration was executed together with that of the rest of the *atrium* area, after the earthquake of 62 CE.<sup>29</sup> The rooms in this part of the house, including the *atrium* (b) and the *tablinum* (8), share a similar colour scheme, with black dado below and large fields of yellow or red in the

<sup>27</sup> Ling and Ling 2005: 104; cf. Lippold 1951: 83–4. Clarke goes so far as to interpret these pictures as based on the poem of the Fall of Troy, which Nero sang on the occasion of the fire of Rome of 64 CE (Clarke 1991: 177–80, esp. 179).

<sup>28</sup> Ling and Ling 2005: 102.6, esp. 104–5. <sup>29</sup> Ling and Ling 2005: 41–6.

middle zone.<sup>30</sup> But *ala* (4) stands out from the neighbouring spaces because of its decoration with mythological panels, which do not appear in any of the other rooms around the *atrium*. In the centre of each of the three walls sits an almost square panel, each depicting events and people connected with the Fall of Troy: Priam, Ajax and Cassandra, and Menelaus and Helen in the north; Laocoon in the south; and the Trojan Horse on the central east wall (Figures 5.2, 5.3, 5.4).<sup>31</sup>

The panels are unusual. First, there is their place on the wall: they sit in the white-ground intervals between the large fields of the wall's middle zone, not within these fields, as would be standard. And they are integrated into the architectural vistas which adorn these intervals, each sitting on an architrave as if an actual wooden panel had been put up against the wall. Second, there is their content: the combination of individual panels depicting scenes of the same epic cycle has very few parallels in Fourth Style decorations.<sup>32</sup> Similarly, each subject individually is rare in Pompeii.<sup>33</sup>

Their combination in *ala* (4) offers various pathways for reception: first, the panels can be experienced by following the consecutive narrative – from right to left, and progressing in narrative time towards the actual Fall of Troy; or from left to right, to unpick the reasons for Troy's fate retrospectively.<sup>34</sup> But the arrangement also offers parallel and contrasting statements, beyond this consecutive narrative.

<sup>30</sup> Ling and Ling 2005: 42.

<sup>31</sup> PPM II 1991: 276–86; Ling and Ling 2005: 72–5; Lorenz 2008: 291–3.

<sup>32</sup> Lorenz 2008: 28–41; Lorenz 2013. The best parallel is the stuccoed frieze in the Casa del Sacello Iliaco (Regio I 6.4), which presents five individual episodes of the *Iliad*, rigorously selecting a few central scenes to create a prominent filter for the epic as a whole (Casa del Sacello Iliaco: PPM I 1990: 280–329; Brilliant 1984: 63–4; Croisille 2005: 160). Other examples include the *Iliad* scenes in Room (3) and (4) of the Domus Transitoria in Rome, probably of Claudian date (Domus Transitoria: LTUR II 1995: 199–202 [M. de Vos]; Richardson 1992: 138–9. See also Croisille 2005: 165; Stročka 2007: 317); and scenes in the Temple of Apollo in Pompeii, decorated after the earthquake of 62 CE (Temple of Apollo (Regio VII 7.32): PPM VII 1997: 286–304). In addition, Pliny reports the presentation of wooden panel paintings of the Trojan War by the Greek painter Theorus in the Porticus Philippi in Rome (Plin. *Nat.* 35,144).

<sup>33</sup> Laocoon: MANN inv. no. 111210; from the Casa di Laocoonte (Regio VI 14.30), *atrium*. Third Style. PPM V 1996: 352–4, figs. 15–17. Trojan Horse: MANN inv. no. 9893. Dawson 1944: 86 no. 14; MANN inv. no. 120176; from Regio IX 7.16. Third Style. PPM IX 1999: 792 fig. 18; MANN inv. no. 9010. Fourth Style. PPM VII 214 fig. 7; one further picture described in an excavation report but not extant (*Notizie degli Scavi* (1880): 492). Sack of Troy: Ajax and Cassandra were featured in a painting which is no longer extant (Helbig 1868: 293 no. 1328; PPM II 1990: 277); Menelaus and Helen: Casa dell'Efebo (Regio I 7.11). PPM I 1990: 690 fig. 120.

<sup>34</sup> Ling and Ling 2005: 72.



**Figure 5.2** Pompeii, Casa del Menandro (I 10.4). Ala (4), north wall: Priam, Ajax and Cassandra, and Menelaus and Helen.



**Figure 5.3** Pompeii, Casa del Menandro (I 10.4). Ala (4), south wall: Laocoon.

The juxtaposition of Laocoon in the south and the Sack of Troy in the north opens up a specific angle on the Fall of Troy: the differing fates of two fathers – Laocoon and Priam – each depicted in the centre of the picture, and both watching the demise of their children ([Figures 5.2, 5.3](#)).



Figure 5.4 Pompeii, Casa del Menandro (I 10.4). Ala (4), east wall: the Trojan Horse.

This correspondence is further extended by the intermeshing of Helen's and Cassandra's lot in the north, which is without parallel in Pompeii (Figure 5.2): the two women, each similarly nude in appearance and each facing their respective fates, frame the figure of Priam left and right. This arrangement emphasizes the parallel between these three characters, and Laocoon with his two sons on the other side. At the same time, this parallelism puts Menelaus and Ajax on a par with the snakes attacking Laocoon's family, emphasizing their powers and their divine backing.

The mythological decoration of the space thus unfolds its content on different levels: most prominent is the consecutive narrative that connects the pictures, with all of them contributing to key episodes in the Fall of Troy. Then there is the affirmative parallelism of Laocoon and Priam with their respective families, and this is presented with an added complementary element, focusing on the fate of females as well as males in the wake of the city's destruction.

The central panel is both incorporated and excluded from these mechanisms (Figure 5.4): whilst quite literally a transit stage in the consecutive narrative – the scene of the Trojan Horse marks the point at which the Greeks finally enter Troy – it is not concerned with the parallelism of familial fate; and in contrast to the successful assault of the snakes, and that of Menelaus and Ajax, Cassandra's attempt at attacking the wooden prop is stopped in its tracks by two attendants who hold her back.

Cassandra and the Horse make for the focus of the scene, and this differentiates this version from the other Pompeian depictions of this topic.

The confrontation of seer and other-worldly horse condenses the Fall of Troy to a clash of powers beyond the grasp of mere humans. Yet again, in doing so, the panel reaches out to the neighbouring pictures, each of which is centrally concerned with the worship of a god: Poseidon and Athena respectively; with each depicting how the discounting of the specific religious spheres referenced in the picture marks a step towards the destruction of the city.

In addition, the central panel also joins forces with the picture in the north in a relationship that goes beyond mere chronological sequence to highlight Cassandra's fate. The Trojan woman is depicted in both scenes – in the centre marching against, in the north seeking refuge from the Greek attack. And this contrasting presentation captures the spectrum of Troy's demise, thus adding to a panorama of destruction simultaneously also mapped by the two scenes of fathers and offspring.

Despite the peculiarities with regard to the individual panels, and their consecutive arrangement, the layering of different, even interfering correspondences across the decoration of the room – comprising consecutive, parallel, complementary and contrasting connections, and shutting out the central panel on some levels whilst involving it on others – is characteristic also for other decorations of the Fourth Style.<sup>35</sup> But it is uncommon in this part of the house: normally, these types of highly charged decorative scenes are found in the area of the peristyle, in rooms devised for longer durations of stay on a visitor's part.<sup>36</sup> And yet the subject matter on display here, the Fall of Troy, is in line with the penchant for epic stories to be found around the *atrium* in those cases where this area is decorated with mythological panels at all.<sup>37</sup>

## Room (11)

This room receives its decoration in the first phase of the Fourth Style refurbishments in the 40s CE. Referred to as the *Green Salon*, it is predominantly decorated in a lush green.<sup>38</sup> The Second Style mosaic pavement with an *emblēma* depicting pygmies hunting in a Nilotic landscape identifies the room as a lavish dining space.<sup>39</sup>

A mythological panel sits on each of the three walls. Central in the arrangement, albeit not on the central wall in the north, is the scene of

<sup>35</sup> See Lorenz 2008: 325–8. <sup>36</sup> Lorenz 2008: 361–79. <sup>37</sup> Lorenz 2008: 354–60.

<sup>38</sup> For the decoration, see: Ling and Ling 2005: 67–71. Versluys 2002: 108–9.

<sup>39</sup> This function might have ceased after the narrowing of the doorway (from 3.32 to 1.84m), which took place possibly after the earthquake: Ling and Ling 2005: 30.





**Figure 5.5** Pompeii, Casa del Menandro (I 10.4). Room (11), west wall: Perseus and Andromeda (reconstruction).

Perseus and Andromeda on the west wall (Figure 5.5). It depicts the two in a scene generally referred to as the *Happy End Type*, an episode that does not occur in any of the literary sources: there, Andromeda is first presented as a sacrifice, to appease Poseidon and the sea monster he sent to lay waste to the Aethiopian lands in response to the arrogance of Andromeda's mother, Cassiopeia, who had boasted that she was more beautiful than the Nereids. Then, Perseus catches sight of Andromeda on his return from slaying the Gorgon; he asks Andromeda's father, Cepheus, for the hand of her daughter in return for slaying the sea monster. And, finally, after having successfully disposed of it, he takes Andromeda as his bride to Tiryns.<sup>40</sup>

Here, in the *Happy End Type* in Room (11) the two protagonists are sitting next to each other and Perseus, having killed the sea monster and freed Andromeda, embraces her; and both gaze upon the reflection of the Gorgon's head in a pool in front of them, its deadly powers thus defused. Scenes of this type are characterized by two aspects in particular: that is,

<sup>40</sup> For the myth, see *LIMC* I 1981 s.v. *Andromeda* I [K. Schauenburg]; *LIMC* VII 1994 s.v. *Perseus* [L. Jones Roccas]. The literary treatments: Apollod. 2.43–9; Ov. *Met.* 4,663–7. On the visual representations, see Schauenburg 1960: 68–74; Phillips 1968; Maaskant-Kleibrink 1989: 39–41; Schmaltz 1989; Muth 1998: 200–2; Lorenz 2007; Lorenz 2008: 124–49, esp. 142–6. Schmaltz (1989) differentiates three types in the Campanian corpus: the first, the *Landscape Type* (late Second to Third Style), shows Andromeda chained to a rock, set within an extended landscape and under attack from the Cetus, whilst Perseus approaches. In the second, the *Liberation Type* (Third and Fourth Style), the Cetus is dead and Andromeda is about to step down from the rock, only chained with one arm, while Perseus assists her. The third, the *Happy End Type* (Fourth Style), displays the two protagonists in close embrace and watching the reflection of the Gorgoneion.



the two heroes meet around a pledge of love, in this case the Gorgoneion; and they are shown in a close relationship which emphasizes notions of *coniugium*.<sup>41</sup>

The presence of the Gorgon's head ties Andromeda to her partner differently from the way pledges of love are employed in other Pompeian scenes of mythological relationship, e.g. in those of Theseus and Ariadne with the dead Minotaur; or Meleager and Atalanta with the dead boar.<sup>42</sup> Andromeda has to abide by Perseus' moving of the prop. That means that the narrative baggage embedded in the scene by means of the Gorgoneion defines the relationship on display: Perseus is the active partner, and their relationship asymmetrical. And Perseus' seductive charisma, in this particular picture, is further underlined by the fact that, with the wings on his head, he is depicted in clear analogy to the Gorgoneion itself – a unique iconographic move which seemingly equips him with irresistible gaze-attracting powers.

The scene is put in parallelism with the worn panel on the opposite east wall, where a satyr pours a liquid (wine?) from what appears to be a mask onto a child or cupid:<sup>43</sup> the dangers spreading from the mask on the west and east walls are rather different, but in each case the prop is used to steer the relationship between the two figures. In contrast to that, the panel on the central wall in the back of the room appears not to have featured a mask, but instead probably showed a woman or maenad feeding grapes to a cupid or Baby Dionysus.<sup>44</sup> In this sense, then, the central wall – similar to the arrangement in *ala* (4) – is cut off from elements that connect the other two pictures, whilst at the same time featuring yet another variation of the depiction of asymmetrical relationships, and adding a complementary aspect because here it is a woman, not a man, who controls the relationship.

In the combination, the north wall is set off, and a connection between east and west wall is created through the use of the mask prop. Yet again, the design harbours more heterogeneous elements: the panel of Perseus and Andromeda on the west wall is differentiated from the other two because it displays a specific mythological episode, whereas the others are of generic Dionysian character. If seen alone, Andromeda is Perseus' admiring consort; but if set in parallel to the two child-like figures in the other two pictures, the playfulness of the Gorgoneion scene is emphasized, but so also is Andromeda's vulnerability.

<sup>41</sup> Schmaltz 1989: 266.    <sup>42</sup> Lorenz 2008: 147.    <sup>43</sup> Ling and Ling 2005: 68.

<sup>44</sup> Ling and Ling (2005: 69) link this depiction convincingly with the following: Casa di Meleagro (Regio VI 9.2.13), peristyle (16), west wall: *PPM* IV 716 fig. 122; Casa di Fabius Rufus (Regio VII 16.22), Room (58), north wall: *PPM* VII 1065 fig. 236.



**Figure 5.6** Pompeii, Casa del Menandro (I 10.4). Room (15), north wall: Perseus and veiled figure.

### Room (15)

Located in the east of the peristyle, and part of the three-room group that has Room (18) at its centre, this room was redecorated about one decade after Room (11), with repairs – including new central panels on north and east wall – after the earthquake.<sup>45</sup> The room is larger than Room (11), and it stands out because of its predominantly red colour scheme.

The decoration with three mythological panels displays elements of both the consecutive arrangement in *ala* (4) and the subject choice in Room (11): two walls feature scenes from the story of Perseus and Andromeda. The panel in the north shows the hero equipped with his trademark short sword, the *harpē*, and Gorgoneion and winged boots (but no wings on his head!) within a grand interior setting, as indicated by the curtains framing the upper part of the panel (Figure 5.6). He is reaching out with his right towards a veiled figure depicted in thoughtful pose in the centre of the picture; and further to the right stand three figures watching the scene – among them at least two men, one of them dressed in long garments and also in thoughtful pose.<sup>46</sup>

<sup>45</sup> Ling and Ling 2005: 76–81. The pavement here also dates to the Second Style, but does not feature an *emblemā*.

<sup>46</sup> Cf. Ling and Ling 2005: 79–80.



**Figure 5.7** Pompeii, Casa del Menandro (I 10.4). Room (15), east wall: Perseus and Andromeda (reconstruction).

This scene must be set in the palace of Andromeda's father, Cepheus – a setting which also features in two representations of the *Landscape Type*.<sup>47</sup> The scene here, however, is adjusted considerably: whilst in these other representations Perseus is about to shake hands with Cepheus, who is characterized as king by his long garment and Phrygian cap, the central figure here shows the white flesh tone of a woman, and the king stands aside (assuming he is the character with dark face and long white garments). Roger Ling has argued that the central figure here must be Cassiopeia, Andromeda's mother.<sup>48</sup> If this was the case, it would put considerable emphasis on the queen's *hybris*, boasting about her own beauty, and her responsibility for Andromeda's situation. The formal act of marital agreement between Perseus and Cepheus that seems at the centre of the palace episode in the landscape pictures, however, would then here appear to have been pushed into the background.

On the east wall, the second episode from the myth also breaks with previous templates, in this case modifying the *Liberation Type* (Figure 5.7): the scene is set after Perseus has killed the sea monster, and the hero points with his *harpē* to its dead body in the foreground. In the back, Andromeda

<sup>47</sup> Boscotrecase: Blanckenhagen and Alexander 1962: 43–6; 1990: 33–5; Casa del Sacerdos Amandus (Regio I 7.7), Room (b), west wall. Third Style. *PPM I* 1990: 602–3. This moment is otherwise in Pompeii not chosen for a stand-alone depiction, except perhaps for a now lost panel in the house Regio VII 6.38. See *PPM VII* 1997: 214; Ling and Ling 2005: 79 no. 463. For the myth in general, see n. 40 above.

<sup>48</sup> Ling and Ling 2005: 79.

is still chained to the rock – and, in contrast to most other versions of the liberation, Perseus is not looking or engaging with her. With the key action of this type missing from the scene – the unchaining of the heroine – the emphasis is put entirely on Perseus. And his role is further redefined: pointing to the sea monster with his *harpē*, it appears Perseus killed the monster not with the magic Gorgoneion, but with a close-combat weapon. This puts his fighting *uirtus* centre stage – a remarkable divergence from the usual tone of the liberation pictures, which normally take the struggle as closed and instead highlight the union of the two protagonists with a view to their prospective *coniugium*.<sup>49</sup>

The two panels are connected consecutively like those in *ala* (4), even if there remains some uncertainty around which episode occurs first.<sup>50</sup> In their combination, and with the woman as central figure in the panel on the north, a reaccentuation of the female characters in the myth takes place which in the liberation scene is otherwise reduced in favour of emphasizing Perseus' deed.

This parallelism, then, forms the only element related to the picture on the south wall, which otherwise shows considerable formal and compositional differences: here, Dirce is shown tied to the bull, which is held by Amphion and Zetus (Figure 5.8).<sup>51</sup> An immediate explanation for the differing appearance is that this scene is older than the other two pictures, which were inserted at a later stage. And yet, this version of Dirce's punishment diverges also from other Campanian versions of the myth, primarily because of three additional elements within the scene: Amphion is shown in communication with Hermes, who otherwise does not appear in these scenes; three dead boy soldiers lie in the foreground, again not normally part of the scene; and in the background, a Dionysian thiasus descends from the mountains.

Dirce, a follower of Dionysus and wife of King Lycus, mistreats her niece, Antiope. The latter eventually flees the grip of the former and encounters Amphion and Zethus, her twin sons, whom she had to abandon after their birth. The twins fail to recognize their mother, but when Dirce appears and commands her niece to be killed, they are eventually

<sup>49</sup> Lorenz 2008: 131–40, esp. 139–40.

<sup>50</sup> Ling argues that the scene on the north wall must be second (Ling and Ling 2005: 80). However, as with the multi-episode landscape pictures in Boscotrecase and in the Casa del Sacerdos Amandus, the scene could form both the overture, and the conclusion, to the liberation. See Lorenz 2008: 128–9.

<sup>51</sup> Ling and Ling 2005: 76–7, including a full discussion of the oddities of the picture; cf. also Leach 1986: 166–7.



**Figure 5.8** Pompeii, Casa del Menandro (I 10.4). Room (15), south wall: the Punishment of Dirce.

persuaded to help Antiope and instead tie Dirce to a bull to kill her in recompense for her mistreatment of their mother.<sup>52</sup>

The other Pompeian scenes of the punishment show Dirce either in the process of being tied to the bull, or being dragged by it across the countryside. Especially in the three examples of the last from the Third Style more characters appear in the scene, all pointing to moments in the myth leading to and/or following Dirce's punishment.<sup>53</sup> The Fourth Style pictures, on the other hand, zoom in on the figures of Dirce and the twins; only the scene in the Casa del Granduca (Regio VII 4.56) also features the twins' mother, Antiope, and a shepherd, possibly the foster-father of the twins.<sup>54</sup> The picture on the south wall displays a form of dramatic violence

<sup>52</sup> For the myth, see: *LIMC* III 1990 s.v. *Dirke* [F. Heger]. The literary treatments: Hyg. fab. 7–8 (after Euripides); Apollod. 3.43–4; Petron. 45.8. On the myth in Campanian wall painting, see Lauter-Bufe 1967: 29–33; Leach 1986.

<sup>53</sup> Casa delle Quadrighe (Regio VII 2.25). Third Style. *PPM* VI 1996: 717 fig. 61; Casa del Marinaio (Regio VII 15.2), Room (z'), west wall. Third Style. *PPM* VII: 1997: 762–5, fig. 94–5; Casa di C. Iulius Polybius (Regio IX 13.1–3). Third Style. *PPM* X 2000: 256–61 fig. 114–21.

<sup>54</sup> Casa dei Vettii (Regio VI 15.1), Room (n), south wall. Fourth Style. *PPM* V 1996: 531–3 fig. 111; Casa del Granduca (Regio VII 4.56). Fourth Style. *PPM* VII 1997: 55 fig. 18.

similar to those other pictures of the Fourth Style, with an emphasis on the merciless destruction of the evil aunt. But the additional elements in the scene widen this focus considerably, again touching upon different points in the extended narrative.

This seemingly cumbersome combination yields connections after all, and it does so on two levels: first, there is the aspect of consecutive narrative, expressed both in the Perseus panels and in the synoptic scene of Dirce, albeit in different ways. Second, there is the parallelism of different female roles, for which the figure of Dirce provides a reference point: her character shows iconographic parallels to the figure of Andromeda in the east, not least because the latter here is still chained with both arms. This parallelism, first of all, emphasizes the contrast between the two women: whilst both are bound, Andromeda will be rescued and Dirce killed. Yet again both are also shown at the mercy of men; and this offers a potentially negative twist on the happy ending of the Andromeda narrative, since in this specific version in the room she remains bound.

When seen together with the picture set in Cepheus' palace, the scene of Dirce can stimulate more parallels. Both scenes show women at the centre who – through their arrogance – caused demise to their kin: Dirce to Antiope, and Cassiopeia to Andromeda. Yet again, both actions are contrasted by their outcome: for Cassiopeia a son-in-law, for Dirce death. Still, their combined appearance sustains an element of suspense in the picture in the north, a reminder that the woman there – if it is Cassiopeia – not only receives a suitor for her daughter, but also has to face up to her own guilt.

As with the combination in *ala* (4) the decoration of Room (15) provides a rich offering of consecutive, parallel and contrasting connections, again shutting out one of the pictures on some levels whilst involving it on others – as indeed is common in this part of the house and in rooms for longer sojourns.<sup>55</sup> In view of all this, it is unlikely that the mythological decoration in this room was simply meant to replicate a set of pre-existing Greek masterpieces.<sup>56</sup>

### Room (19)

Also in the east of the peristyle, forming the corresponding wing of the three-room group around Room (18), and decorated after the earthquake, this room's decoration is predominantly yellow.<sup>57</sup> The two preserved central figure panels on the north and south walls take up the theme of the mask

<sup>55</sup> Lorenz 2008: 299–302, 361–79.

<sup>56</sup> So Clarke 1991: 182.

<sup>57</sup> Ling and Ling 2005: 82–4.





**Figure 5.9** Pompeii, Casa del Menandro (I 10.4). Room (19), north wall: Cupid and couple.

prop also played out in Room (11), to generate connections similar to those in that room, albeit with a stronger emphasis on loving couples. A third picture existed in the east but is no longer extant. In the north, a seated woman accompanied by a man behind her uses a theatre mask to scare a cupid, who is turning away in surprise and horror (Figure 5.9). In the south, a seated satyr plays the syrinx, with a maenad standing next to him (Figure 5.10). In addition, small Gorgoneia decorate the side fields of each wall.

Despite their generic Dionysian appearance, it is difficult – as in Room (11) – to pinpoint exact parallels for these two scenes. The figure of the scared cupid finds a parallel in the bystanders in those scenes where Hermaphroditus' identity is revealed, but not the motif of the mask as a scare.<sup>58</sup> For that, the only iconographical parallel is offered by the scenes of Perseus and Andromeda dealing with the petrifying power of the Gorgoneion – in the scenes of the *Happy End Type*, such as in Room (11), and most prominently in an unusual version of the liberation from the house Regio I 3.25, where Andromeda appears to shy away from the Gorgoneion in Perseus' hand.<sup>59</sup> On the basis

<sup>58</sup> For the myth, see: *LIMC* V 1990 s.v. Hermaphroditos [J. Ajootian]. – Good examples, each featuring a surprised Pan, are: Casa di Meleagro (Regio VI 9.2.13), Room (13), east wall. Fourth Style. *PPM* IV 1995: 692 fig. 65; Casa dei Postumii (Regio VIII 4.4.49), Room (31), east wall. Fourth Style. *PPM* VIII 1998: 499–501 fig. 89.

<sup>59</sup> House Regio I 3.25, Room (i); now lost. Fourth Style. *PPM* I 1990: 103 fig. 18. – See Lorenz 2008: 141–4, cat. no. K2aO.



**Figure 5.10** Pompeii, Casa del Menandro (I 10.4). Room (19), south wall: satyr and maenad.

of this, the picture can be interpreted not so much as a statement about tragedy's adverse effects on love, but as a play on the myth of Perseus and Andromeda. It employs a similar asymmetrical relationship – albeit not between man and woman, but couple and cupid; and the pun is played out on the basis that any viewer in this house will know about the petrifying potential of the Gorgoneion by the time they enter this room.

Similarly, in the picture of the satyr and maenad: whilst scenes of Marsyas teaching Olympus the flute are close in terms of iconography (notwithstanding the apparent gender difference),<sup>60</sup> the action as such finds parallels in the way in which Perseus uses the Gorgoneion in order to channel Andromeda's attention – in both cases, man and woman are displayed in an asymmetrical relationship dominated by the male.

### Mythological connections: from topography to topology

A topographical reading derived from the mnemonic systems championed by the rhetorical manuals cited in this short survey of mythological

<sup>60</sup> For the myth, see: *LIMC* VII 1994 s.v. *Olympos* [A. Weis]. – The Pompeian representations: Casa della Regina Margherita (Regio V 2.1), Room (p), west wall. Fourth Style. *PPM* III 1991: 784 fig. 15; Casa di Meleagro (VI 9.2.13), Room (25), east wall. Fourth Style. *PPM* IV 1995: 756–7 fig. 197.



decorations in the Casa del Menandro would throw into relief two different areas in the house: an *atrium* adorned with scenes of epic, and a peristyle around which themes loosely based on Euripidean tragedy are on display. Hence, from the vantage point of such a topographical approach, the decoration of the Casa del Menandro would stand out as displaying the literary aspirations of its owners, neatly differentiating between literary genres.<sup>61</sup>

A crucial factor, however, cannot be captured in this topographical reading, and this is the apparent ‘thematic polyphony’ of the decoration: if the purpose of the decorations was to showcase literary veneration, and cultural prowess at large, then why muddy the waters with those capricious reinterpretations of the Perseus and Andromeda myth to be found around the peristyle? Why include panels such as those of satyr and child in Room (11), and couple and cupid in Room (19)?

In order to approach these questions around the thematic scope of the decoration, one needs to abandon the topographical reading in favour of a perspective that assesses the rhetorical tropes employed in the picture combinations. Yet again, the evidence of the Casa del Menandro suggests that this is not a simple case of pigeonholing the decorations in the individual rooms as ‘parallel’, ‘intensified’, or ‘contrasting’. And this, in turn, leads towards an assessment of the rhetorical tropes, and their specifically visual employment, marking the turn from a topographical to a topological perspective.

The analysis of the picture combinations within each of the four rooms shows that a range of different modal relationships bears simultaneously upon the meaning of the individual pictures, their combination, and their connection across the house as a whole. A viewer might make a conscious choice to concentrate on the consecutive connections or the contrasts between pictures. But the fact that other potential routes coexist can bring about interference, and indeed change the way in which each of the individual trajectories on offer in a room is eventually followed.

In the Casa del Menandro, this phenomenon is most pronounced in *ala* (4): here, the parallelisms and contrasts interfere with the consecutive structure to an extent that, even as one follows the narrative, one continuously encounters elements – the double appearance of Cassandra, the parallelisms between the north and south panels – that loops one backwards and forwards in narrative time. This layering feeds on the flexibility of the pictures. But it channels this flexibility into distinct trajectories within the parameters provided by the

<sup>61</sup> Cf. the overall assessment of Ling: Ling and Ling 2005: 104–5.

different modes of transmission. And these trajectories no longer follow the independent modes of transmission but come together to form new, visual ways of conveying content.

At the same time, a second process provides a corrective for the flexibility of the individual pictures: the distribution of pictures across the house as a whole. In the Casa del Menandro, this process is facilitated by two mechanisms, which serve to highlight the connections between pictures in individual rooms. The first mechanism is the consecutive arrangement of scenes from the myth of Perseus and Andromeda across Rooms (11) and (15). Together, these capture three moments of the myth: the killing of the sea monster, including Andromeda's liberation, the union of the protagonists, and a scene of marital negotiation set either before or after the liberation. The second is the repetition and emulation of the mask motif across Rooms (11), (15) and (19), encompassing the Gorgoneion of the Perseus scenes as well as theatre masks. And this filters even into Room (18), the large reception hall, which – although devoid of central mythological panels – displays Gorgoneia and Zeus Ammon masks in its parapets.<sup>62</sup>

If the chronology of internal decoration is correct, the Casa del Menandro provides a unique picture of how these mechanisms are built up over time. It emerges as an elaborate score of answer and response: first, the decoration of Room (11) introduces both the myth of Perseus and Andromeda, in the novel version of the *Happy End Type*, and a playful theme around the mask motif. Then, at the latest after the earthquake, Room (15) is appropriated to offer an extended consecutive narrative of the Perseus myth, tracing the events before the moment depicted in Room (11).

At the same time, Room (19) is turned into an extended musing around the mask motif, with direct references to the pictures in Room (11), in the shape of the theatre mask employed in the panel in the north; and to the Perseus myth in the decorative Gorgoneia adorning the room.<sup>63</sup> In addition, the decoration continues the theme of asymmetrical relationships which also originated in Room (11). And, finally, the theme of consecutive narration is appropriated for *ala* (4), and here condensed into one room. One of the foci chosen, the figure of Cassandra, yet again sits in parallel with one of the prevalent topics in Room (15): that is, examples of female fate.

<sup>62</sup> Ling and Ling 2005: 38.

<sup>63</sup> This connection is further manifested by the reoccurrence of decorative attributes, a tambourine and rhyton. In Room (11) these are depicted underneath the central panels, in the west and north respectively; in Room (19) they appear within the mythological scenes, in the south and north respectively.

Whilst, from a chronological perspective, the connections between the individual parts of the house branch out from Room (11), the experience for viewers entering the house in the later phase of the Fourth Style redecoration offers a different picture: then, it is the paintings in *ala* (4) which set a framework for perception. They provide a well-known storyline that exudes venerability and can allude to notions of a glorious Greek past and luxurious Hellenistic ambience. And because of its epic veneer, this decoration might also serve as a reference point for the decorations to come.<sup>64</sup>

In this function the decoration in *ala* (4) sets a tone particularly concerned with the sequence and interconnectedness of action, and with female demise, and family fate more broadly. This, reciprocally, can accentuate the experience of the other mythological decorations: for one, it draws attention to the decoration in Room (15), which picks directly up on these themes, notwithstanding its potentially earlier date. And it presents them at a high level of complexity as indicated by the underlying consecutive narrative matrix, and the synchronous picture of Dirce. This, in turn, renders Rooms (11) und (19) subordinate satellites, because they show derivatives of these themes, reappropriated in pleasant and joyous surroundings, and again notwithstanding the chronology in which they are created.

In comparison with *ala* (4), and indeed with most of the house, another aspect of these three rooms around the peristyle is emphasized: that is, their monochrome décor. The comparable design, albeit on different ground colours, enhances their appearance as a joint configuration; and it puts yet again emphasis on Room (15). Rooms (15) and (19) provide each a different solution to the themes triggered in Room (11): the former by hammering out the myth, the latter by diffusing it further into Dionysian genre. But whilst Room (11) serves as a relay with regard to content, Room (15) presents its mythological offerings in specific reference to male *uirtus* and female *dignitas*, whereas in Rooms (11) and (19) the asymmetrical relationships are presented in a more generic, playful tone, and without this emphasis on specific role models. In addition, the scenes in Room (15) are set within grand settings – a palatial interior, or mythologized landscapes – which are in stark contrast to the diffuse sacral backdrops of the scenes in Rooms (11) and (19).

These differences render Room (15) a reference point in the house with regard both to the myth of Perseus and Andromeda and to the presentation

<sup>64</sup> For the functioning of the Iliad decoration in Room (h) of the Casa di Octavius Quartio, which in many ways is comparable, see: Lorenz 2013; Casa di Octavius Quartio: PPM III 1991: 42–108; Spinazzola 1953: 1026–7. On the frieze: Aurigemma 1953; Clarke 1991: 203–7; cf. Squire's discussion in this volume (Chapter 11).

of behavioural role models. This introduces a clear hierarchy between the three rooms, despite all their similarities. And it is a hierarchical design associated with the decoration of three-room groups in the Fourth Style, where content and tone of the mythological pictures is nuanced across the configuration: the central, most important room features myths celebrating male *uirtus*, *dignitas* and *auctoritas* within grand settings, frequently tied into complex narrative relationships; the side rooms offer more open frameworks for status representation, with discourses around emotional conditions, beauty and erotics, and thus an altogether more intimate dialogue with what is on display.<sup>65</sup> In adopting this hierarchy, Rooms (11), (15) and (19) are turned into a *virtual* three-room group, adding yet another entertainment suite and status indicator to the two physical configurations in existence around the peristyle [Rooms (11), (8), (12) and (15), (18), (19) respectively].

The topics chosen for the central room of this virtual suite are, however, unusual for a room of this category. More commonly, these units of the configuration are decorated with themes such as Theseus as slayer of the Minotaur, Dionysus rescuing Ariadne on Naxos, or the Judgement of Paris.<sup>66</sup> In contrast, the decoration in Room (15), the virtual centre unit in the Casa del Menandro, opts for a more muted tone with regard to the presentation of male virtues. The reason for that must be that, after all, physically it is the wing room of the three-room group around Room (18) – and the presence of this, the largest reception hall in all of Pompeii, appears to be a status indicator of a strength to render further messages in this direction by means of mythological panels superfluous.

## Wall painting and rhetoric: a topology

Roman wall painting and rhetorical writing of the early imperial period display parallels which demonstrate their stakes in a shared aesthetic: for

<sup>65</sup> Lorenz 2008: 361–79. A good example is provided by Rooms (58), (62), (64) in the Casa di Fabius Rufus (Regio VII 16.22): the two wing rooms reject the grand topics of the central reception room (62) in favour of themes of bodily beauty and emotional conditions. Interestingly, the combination in Room (58) bears great resemblance to that of Room (11) in the Casa del Menandro: it combines the picture of a mythological couple (Heracles and consort, east) with two depictions showing an adult with a child consort, including Narcissus (south) and a panel (north) depicting the same scene of grape feeding that features in the north of Room (11). Casa di Fabius Rufus: PPM VII 1997: 947–1125; Kockel 1985: 507–51; Dickmann 1999: 235–41. On the decoration of the three-room group: Leach 1989; Lorenz 2008: 361–8.

<sup>66</sup> Cf. Lorenz 2008: 377–9.

one, the stylistic figures and tropes recommended across the manuals also cut across designs such as those observed in the Casa del Menandro. And this house in particular provides an ideal context in which to study this relationship because the information we have about the chronology of decoration allows us to read it in sequence of its appearance, as we would read or listen to a speech.

This similarity, however, also throws the differences most profoundly into relief that exist between a decorative ensemble such as the Casa del Menandro and a speech: the rooms may have been decorated one after the other; but, once in place, there is more than one sequence available in which they can be experienced. Whereas the individual units of a speech, and its stylistic modes, could only be employed one after the other, in a setting such as the Casa del Menandro they operate simultaneously. What is more, the design of the house seems to feed precisely on this fact.

This layering of interfering, even conflicting messages is fuelled, and kept in check, by two correctives, one operating on the level of content, the other with regard to stylistic tropes or modes of transmission. These two correctives are lines of consecutive narrative, constructed by means of episodes and motifs taken from the myth of Perseus and Andromeda; and the blending of consecutive, parallel, complementary and contrasting combinations which can bear on each other and modify their respective powers. This *visual rhetoric* differs from the advice of the rhetoric manuals not so much in its components, but in its effect. And it is this effect that a topological approach helps to capture: it facilitates an understanding of the interrelationship of the individual elements of decoration within its specific context. The case of the Casa del Menandro demonstrates that rhetorical theory can provide powerful tools for an exploration of Roman interior decoration, as long as its tendency to linearize is kept in check. Here, in particular, it provides insights into the strategies behind the overall design, and the understanding of space that informs it.

The way in which the rooms with mythological panels are brought in interplay with each other, within the individual rooms and across the house, is a pervasive manifestation of the sophistication of those who commissioned and lived in these spaces, and confounds the notion that the owners were merely interested in epic and drama, and adverse to Ovidian love stories.<sup>67</sup> There is no denying that the house displays one of the rare Pompeian Iliadic cycles, and that indeed the pictures in Room

<sup>67</sup> Ling and Ling 2005: 104–5.

(15) of Andromeda, Perseus and Dirce are all connected by the fact that the tragedian possibly depicted in the peristyle, Euripides, wrote tragedies about each story: *Andromeda* and *Antiope*.<sup>68</sup> But this alone opens more questions than it answers; and it cannot be the endpoint of the interpretation, for it leaves the obvious emulation and splicing of motifs and themes across the house unexplained.

Then, with regard to matters of space, the Casa del Menandro appears initially as a counter-project to the taste for villas so popular in the period of the Fourth Style – a fashion expressed in the layering of different architectural and decorative features even in the most restricted spaces in an attempt to recreate large Roman country villas in modest dwellings.<sup>69</sup> In contrast, here, the design verges deliberately on the excessive in order to differentiate the house from contemporary mainstream fashion, multiplying status-relevant features and extending their expanse as in the case of the triple three-room group.

And yet on closer inspection, with regard to space and narrative, it seems that the design of the Casa del Menandro quite happily follows strategies not at all unlike those also governing the construction-kit villas of the lower echelons of society. This is the conflation of strands of mythological narrative, and specifically the story of Perseus and Andromeda, with other types of content – either other myths, as with the picture of Dirce, or more generic roles and atmospheres, as in the case of the scenes of Dionysian genre. In both cases, space is approached as a framework to generate not absolute and static but relative and dynamic relationships between objects and ideas. And indeed this topological perspective makes the Casa del Menandro appear much more standardized with regard to decorative strategies of the period than the list of its unique decorative features would allow us to assume.

<sup>68</sup> Leach 1986: 161–2; Ling and Ling 2005: 104.

<sup>69</sup> Zanker 1979 (Engl.trans. of parts: Zanker 1998: 145–56).

*On the Limits of Expression in Roman Rhetoric  
and Painting*

VERITY PLATT

Nec mirum si ista, quae tamen in aliquo posita sunt motu, tantum in animis ualent, cum pictura, tacens opus et habitus semper eiusdem, sic in intimos penetret adfectus ut ipsam uim dicendi nonnumquam superare uideatur.

Nor is it surprising that gesture, which depends on various forms of movement, should have such power, when painting, which is silent and motionless, can penetrate our innermost feelings with such power that it may seem more eloquent than language itself.

Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria* 11.3.67

In Book 11 of the *Institutio Oratoria*, Quintilian addresses the theme of rhetorical delivery, which is concerned with voice and gesture, ‘the two senses by which all emotion reaches the soul’ (11.3.14).<sup>1</sup> Conceding that ‘the nature of the speech that we have composed within our minds is not as important as the manner in which we produce it’, Quintilian shifts from an emphasis on the verbal aspects of oratory – that is, its form and content – to a focus on its sensory effect in performance. It is here that our *magister eloquentiae* is strikingly compelled to acknowledge the limitations of his chosen medium and, in a refinement of Horace’s dictum *ut pictura poesis*, to cede affective power to the visual.<sup>2</sup> It is no marvel that gesture, which propels the visual into motion, can move the soul so intensely, he claims, when painting, despite its status as a still and silent *opus*, can be more forceful than language. The orator’s powers of persuasion, therefore, depend upon his ability to unite all these elements in a multimedia *tour de force* that takes account of his audience’s susceptibility to sound, vision and motion, as well as careful argumentation.<sup>3</sup> Quintilian’s emphasis upon uniting different kinds of aesthetic experience here is not surprising, given that rhetoric was arguably the Roman world’s most self-conscious (not to mention its most

<sup>1</sup> 11.3.14: *cum sit autem omnis actio, ut dixi, in duas diuisa partis, uocem gestumque, quorum alter oculos, altera aures mouet, per quos duos sensus omnis ad animum penetrat adfectus, prius est de uoce dicere, cui etiam gestus accommodatur*. Translation from H. E. Butler’s Loeb Classical Library edition, 1920. On this passage, see also van Eck 2007: 8.

<sup>2</sup> *Ars Poetica* 361: see Hardie 1993.

<sup>3</sup> On gesture in Quintilian, see Gunderson 1998 and Wülfing 2003.

high-profile and socially influential) form of cultural expression, as well as being key to the system of elite education. As a medium in which theory and practice were intimately entwined, from the most elementary stages of training to the most sophisticated of treatises, rhetoric was also, as James Porter has commented, an ‘omnivorous consumer of knowledge’, which ‘traditionally felt entitled to cohabit the same space as any number of arts’, dealing in intense traffic with adjacent fields of cultural creativity, from poetry to architecture, as it reflected upon the ethics and aesthetics of its own practice.<sup>4</sup> The visual arts, in particular, form a frequent point of comparison in rhetorical treatises, particularly in relation to style (as discussed in this volume’s [Introduction](#)).<sup>5</sup> Yet of all the forms of cultural expression that the rhetorician might co-opt to his cause, why should it be the medium of painting (*pictura*) that Quintilian turns to in order to define the limits of speech? Moreover, why does painting play such a prominent role in Roman rhetorical treatises more broadly, not only in the *Institutes* but also in Cicero’s treatises *On Invention*, *Brutus* and *On the Orator*?

This essay explores some of the ways in which rhetoric and painting acted as parallel and even symbiotic discourses in Roman culture, each offering a lens through which to survey the other’s modes of practice. In particular, I focus on the means by which awareness of the communicative and representational strategies employed by one medium might prompt reflection on the potential and limitations of another. In this sense, rhetoric and painting made natural companions. Just as the practice and spectacle of oratory structured the Roman citizen’s education and engagement with public life, so painting articulated his built environment. As he moved from domus to basilica, baths to temple, painted surfaces lured the eye or smoothed the way, ornamenting or commenting upon the spaces and spheres of activity they adorned. And just as rhetoric could both clarify and obfuscate verbal expression, so painting was both a vehicle of communication and a means of transformation and concealment. In its ubiquity, paint was so mundane as to be almost invisible, yet when appropriately framed and applied it could also operate as a dense and highly complex conveyer of meaning. In this sense, paint was more than just a material substance or medium of representation for Roman viewers: it also stood as an exemplum of artistic creativity and communication, inviting reflection on modes of expression and their cultural reception, as well as art’s social

<sup>4</sup> Porter 2009: 102, 95. On the relationship between rhetoric and poetry, see Meijering 1987: 71–2 and Webb 2009, 95–103. On analogies between orator and actor, see Gastaldi 1995.

<sup>5</sup> See the [Introduction](#), 23–31, with Onians 1999: 256–61.



and ethical functions. For writers on oratory, painting offered a means of figuring the *res et uerba* – the ‘what’ and ‘how’ – of rhetorical composition and performance, of giving clear and compelling visual form to the relationship between content and expression.<sup>6</sup> As a representational medium, painting also offered ways of thinking about the ontology of both visual images and spoken words.

My examples are largely taken from that remarkable flowering of rhetorical writing and theory that took place in the last years of the Roman Republic and the first century of the empire, from which we have a clutch of texts in both Latin and Greek which offer different takes on the arts of oratory – instructive, philosophical, practical and performative. It is from this period that so many of the artistic, and especially painterly, exempla in rhetorical writing are drawn. Although they usually discuss classic instances of pictures or styles of painting in the classical period, they do so in the context of Roman classicism – a world rich in replications of ancient Greek art, collections of both original works and multiple more recent variants, antiquarian learning and a semi-mythological lore of artistic activity around the rise of naturalism, which formed the basis for the analogies seized upon by the orators.

## Zeuxis' Helen and the ethics of invention

Crotoniatae quondam, cum florerent omnibus copiis et in Italia cum primis beati numerarentur, templum Iunonis, quod religiosissime colebant, egregiis picturis locupletare uoluerunt. Itaque Heracleoten Zeuxin, qui tum longe ceteris excellere pictoribus existimabatur, magno pretio conductum adhibuerunt. is et ceteras complures tabulas pinxit, quarum nonnulla pars usque ad nostram memoriam propter fani religionem remansit, et, ut excellentem muliebris formae pulchritudinem muta in se imago contineret, Helenae pingere simulacrum uelle dixit; quod Crotoniatae, qui eum muliebri in corpore pingendo plurimum aliis praestare saepe acceperant, libenter audierunt. putauerunt enim, si, quo in genere plurimum posset, in eo magno opere elaborasset, egregium sibi opus illo in fano relicturum.

neque tum eos illa opinio fefellit. nam Zeuxis ilico quaesiuit ab iis, quasnam uirgines formosas haberent. illi autem statim hominem deduxerunt in palastram atque ei pueros ostenderunt multos, magna praeditos dignitate. etenim quodam tempore Crotoniatae multum omnibus corporum uiribus et dignitatibus antisteterunt atque honestissimas ex gymnico certamine uictorias domum cum laude maxima

<sup>6</sup> Quintilian, *Inst. or.* 8.pr.6 sets out how a speech (*opus*) consists of the topic under treatment (*res*) and the linguistic means of expression (*uerba*): *orationem . . . omnem constare rebus et uerbis*: see Lausberg et al. 1998: 113, with van Eck 2007: 9.

rettulerunt. cum puerorum igitur formas et corpora magno hic opere miraretur: 'Horum', inquiunt illi, 'sorores sunt apud nos uirgines. quare, qua sint illae dignitate, potes ex his suspicari.' 'Praebete igitur mihi, quaeso', inquit, 'ex istis uirginibus formosissimas, dum pingo id, quod pollicitus sum uobis, ut mutum in simulacrum ex animali exemplo ueritas transferatur.'

tum Crotoniatae publico de consilio uirgines unum in locum conduxerunt et pictori quam uellet eligendi potestatem dederunt. ille autem quinque delegit; quarum nomina multi poetae memoriae prodiderunt, quod eius essent iudicio probatae, qui pulchritudinis habere uerissimum iudicium debuisset. neque enim putauit omnia, quae quaereret ad uenustatem, uno se in corpore reperire posse ideo, quod nihil simplici in genere omnibus ex partibus perfectum natura expoliuit. itaque, tamquam ceteris non sit habitura quod largiatur, si uni cuncta concesserit, aliud alii commodi aliquo adiuncto incommodo muneratur.

quod quoniam nobis quoque uoluntatis accidit, ut artem dicendi perscriberemus, non unum aliquod proposuimus exemplum, cuius omnes partes, quocumque essent in genere, exprimendae nobis necessarie uiderentur; sed omnibus unum in locum coactis scriptoribus, quod quisque commodissime praecipere uidebatur, excerptissimus et ex uariis ingeniis excellentissima quaeque libauimus.

...

ac si par in nobis huius artis atque in illo picturae scientia fuisset, fortasse magis hoc in suo genere opus nostrum quam illius in sua pictura nobilis eniteret. Ex maiore enim copia nobis quam illi fuit exemplorum eligendi potestas. ille una ex urbe et ex eo numero uirginum, quae tum erant, eligere potuit; nobis omnium, quicumque fuerunt ab ultimo principio huius praeceptionis usque ad hoc tempus, expositis copiis, quodcumque placeret, eligendi potestas fuit.

The citizens of Croton, once upon a time, when they had abundant wealth and were numbered among the most prosperous in Italy, desired to enrich with distinguished paintings the Temple of Juno, which they held in the deepest veneration. They therefore paid a large fee to Zeuxis of Heraclea, who was considered at that time to excel all other artists, and secured his services for their project. He painted many panels, some of which have been preserved to the present by the sanctity of the shrine; he also said that he wished to paint a picture of Helen so that the portrait, though silent and lifeless, might embody the surpassing beauty of womanhood. This delighted the Crotoniates, who had often heard that he surpassed all others in the portrayal of women. For they thought that if he exerted himself in the genre in which he was supreme, he would leave an outstanding work of art in the temple.

Nor were they mistaken in this opinion. For Zeuxis immediately asked them what girls they had of surpassing beauty. They took him directly to the palaestra and showed him many very handsome young men, for at one time the men of Croton excelled all in strength and beauty of body, and brought home the most glorious

victories in athletic contests with the greatest distinction. As he was greatly admiring the handsome bodies, they said, "There are in our city the sisters of these men; you may get an idea of their beauty from these youths." 'Please send me the most beautiful of these girls, while I am painting the picture that I have promised, so that the true beauty might be transferred from the living model to the mute likeness.'

Then the citizens of Croton by a public decree assembled the girls in one place and allowed the painter to choose whom he wished. He selected five, whose names many poets recorded because they were approved by the judgement of him who must have been the most supreme judge of beauty. He chose five because he did not think all the qualities which he sought to combine in a portrayal of beauty could be found in one person, because in no single case has Nature made anything perfect and finished in every part. Therefore, as if she would have no beauty to lavish on the others if she gave everything to one, she bestows some advantage on one and some on another, but always joins with it some defect.

In a similar fashion when the inclination arose in my mind to write a text-book of rhetoric, I did not set before myself some one model which I thought necessary to reproduce in all details, of whatever sort they might be, but after collecting all the works on the subject I excerpted what seemed the most suitable precepts from each, and so culled the flowers of many minds.

...

And if my knowledge of the art of rhetoric had equalled his knowledge of painting, perhaps this work of mine might be more famous in its class than his in his painting. For I had a larger number of models to choose from than he had. He could choose from one city and from the group of girls who were alive at that time, but I was able to set out before me the store of wisdom of all who had written from the very beginning of instruction in rhetoric right down to the present time, and choose whatever was acceptable. (Cicero, *de Inventione* 2.1–5; trans. Hubbel)

Amid the panoply of artistic fields that rhetorical theory (or 'meta-rhetoric') enfolds within itself, well-known examples of classical painting play a strikingly programmatic role. In the introduction to the second book of his early rhetorical handbook *On Invention*, for example, the young Cicero accounts for the theoretical models he has employed by comparing his enterprise to Zeuxis' famed painting of Helen in the Temple of Juno at Croton.<sup>7</sup> Intended to 'embody the surpassing beauty of womanhood', Zeuxis' 'silent image' (*muta imago*) was famously dependent upon multiple female sitters selected from the young maidens of the city. 'He chose five [Cicero tells us] because he

<sup>7</sup> For some discussion on this, see Barkan 2000: 99–110.

did not think all the qualities which he sought to combine in a portrayal of beauty could be found in one person, because in no single case has Nature made anything perfect and finished in every part.' So, Cicero continues, are the diverse sources he has employed in compiling his own treatise on the 'art of speaking', from which he has 'culled the flower of many minds' while rejecting their numerous errors or misconceptions. The *De inventione*, by implication, is equivalent to the *Helen* itself, a 'perfect' work that 'might [even] be more famous in its class than [Zeuxis] is in his painting', for while the artist was dependent upon the prettiest girls of a single city at a single moment, Cicero has had access to 'the store of wisdom of all who had written from the very beginning of instruction in rhetoric down to the present time' (2.1–5). One can see why Cicero was somewhat dismissive of this piece of juvenilia in his more mature treatise *On the Orator*. . . (I.5).

In his youthful brio, Cicero takes as an exemplum for his own theoretical enterprise an image which had become a paradigmatic example of the ontological impasse posed by the Platonic model of mimesis.<sup>8</sup> In doing so, however, he announces he has surpassed the mimetic dilemma faced by Zeuxis in order to make a claim for the accumulative achievement of his own work. We find a similar programmatic use of the exemplum in the opening to Dionysius of Halicarnassus' treatise *On Imitation*, written shortly after Cicero's *On Invention*: Zeuxis, Dionysius claims, 'collected together the features of each which were worth painting into a single bodily image (*es mian . . . sōmatos eikona*), and from the bringing together of many parts fashioned a single perfect form (*hen ti . . . teleion eidos*).'<sup>9</sup> Whereas Cicero uses the *Helen* to reflect upon his own compositional practice, however, Dionysius performs a somewhat more subtle rhetorical manoeuvre, turning the exemplum towards his readers: 'Thus you too, as in a theatre [he writes], can examine forms of beautiful bodies and pick the best from their souls, and by bringing together the contribution of your wide learning you may fashion, not an image which will fade with time, but the immortal beauty of art'.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Mansfield 2007: xiii: 'This is not simply an aesthetic predicament; it is an ontological one.' It produces an uncanny effect which is 'a symptom of the ontological impasse posed by classical mimesis itself' (xvi).

<sup>9</sup> *On Imitation* fr. VI, pp. 203–4 U.R. - pp. 31–2 Aujac, trans. Hunter 2009a: 109–10:

'Zeuxis was a painter who was admired by the people of Croton. When he was painting a picture of the naked Helen, they sent along the young girls of the town so that he could see them naked; not that they were all beautiful, but it was not probable that they were completely ugly. He collected together the features of each which were painted into a single bodily image (ὁ δ' ἦν ἄξιον παρ' ἐκάστηι γραφῆς, ἐς μίαν ἡθροίσθη σώματος εἰκόνα), and from the bringing together of many parts art fashioned a single perfect form (ἐν τι . . . τέλειον εἶδος). Thus you too, as in a theatre, can examine forms of beautiful bodies and pick the best from their souls, and by

If rhetoric, as so many of the treatises claimed, was indeed an art (*ars*), then the *Helen*, as a paradigmatic example of artistic achievement, served as a powerful illustration of the uneasy relationship between model and copy, tradition and creativity.<sup>10</sup> As the Platonic idea of female beauty, she embodied both the challenge of invention and the anxiety of influence. She also alluded to a philosophical-theoretical tradition concerned with the power and ethics of language: in Gorgias' *Helen*, her elusive beauty had stood in its capacity to seduce and charm for the illusions of rhetoric and poetry: 'Whenever painters perfectly fashion a single body and shape from many colours and bodies', he claims, 'they delight the sight' (18).<sup>11</sup> The relationship such a composite image forges between representation, rhetoric and reality is fraught; as Socrates points out in the *Republic*, the search for a 'perfectly just' man is akin to the painter who paints a model of a man who is *kallistos* in every respect, but cannot demonstrate that he could ever exist (5.474b–d).<sup>12</sup> Likewise, the figure of Helen (as Euripides' drama of 412 BC so playfully recognized) is a mirage, a vision of impossible *kallos* whose deceptive unity is dependent upon multiplicity and fragmentation.<sup>13</sup> Whereas for Cicero and Dionysius, Zeuxis' *Helen* offers a model for thinking about art's superiority to nature and gives cause for creative confidence, her classical roots in art, drama and philosophy hint at the ontological dilemmas faced by both painting and rhetoric in their efforts to charm and persuade. Far from being a straightforward *muta imago*, then, Helen demonstrates how the aesthetics of language, representation and imitation are implicitly bound to the *ēthos* of their practitioners. In this sense, she resonates throughout Cicero's increasingly sophisticated rhetorical treatises in more complex ways than the brazen confidence of her initial appearance might imply.

## Painting as practice: medium, ornament and technique

In their use of visual exempla such as Zeuxis' *Helen*, texts like Cicero's *On Invention* inadvertently supply us with some of our richest evidence for

bringing together the contribution of your wide learning you may fashion, not an image which will fade with time, but the immortal beauty of art . . . so that the imitation should contain extracts which are obvious and clear to the audience.'

<sup>10</sup> On Dionysius' theory of eclectic mimesis, see Hidber 1996: 56–75 and Hunter 2009a: 109–10.

<sup>11</sup> Note also the emphasis on statue-making in the following sentence. For the power of *opsis* in Gorgias' *Encomium of Helen*, see Constantinidou 2008: 26–107, esp. 33–4, 38–41, 47–8.

<sup>12</sup> See Hunter 2009a: 110–17.

<sup>13</sup> On the tradition of Helen as mirage – attested in Stesichorus, Herodotus and Euripides – see Allan 2008: 18–28 with bibliography.

the reception of classical 'Old Master' paintings during antiquity. While scholars have mined them (as they have the elder Pliny) for art-historical purposes, such passages have seldom been discussed in relation to their role within rhetorical theory.

However, it is important to distinguish between the use of *specific* visual exempla and references to both the *practice* of painting in general and the *material* qualities of paint itself. Specific exempla, as part of the standard armoury of the orator, refer to well-known works of art that inhabit the cultural imagination and exist almost independently of their material origins; technical issues (whether about the practice of art or its materials) are a metaphorical means for considering the technical qualities of rhetoric itself as a craft. It is this latter analogy between the artistry at play in both image-making and rhetoric that animates the opening of Lucian's *De somno*, which describes the writer torn between careers (in fact the word used is 'trades', *technai*, *De somno* 2) as a sculptor and an orator before being summoned by *Paideia* (9) to a vocation in eloquence.<sup>14</sup> The *De somno*, however, is relatively unusual in using sculpture as the artistic analogy for rhetoric. The image of painting is much more common and it is applied in a large variety of quite subtle ways.

For instance, we find a clear distinction in rhetorical treatises between references to paintings that encapsulate certain mental concepts in visual form (like Zeuxis' *Helen*), and the use of painting as a metaphor, where it tends to be applied with a somewhat broader brush. Most notable, in the latter case, is the appropriation of painting as a metaphor for *ornatus*, or ornamentation. In Cicero's *Brutus*, for example, rhetorical figures are described as ornaments which 'contribute not so much to paint our language (*in uerbis pingendis*), as to give a lustre to our sentiments' (141).<sup>15</sup> While the Zeuxis example employs a specific painting as a visual parallel to the compositional skill of the rhetorician, operating at the level of structure, paint itself is here referred to as a medium that is applied to material surfaces. It thus functions as an analogy, like cosmetics, for that which is supplementary to language (and which implicitly has the potential to mask its true import),<sup>16</sup> but which at the same time can illuminate *sententiae* in a way that not only adorns them but also transmits them with clarity to the audience. We might compare Quintilian's comment that rhetorical ornament must be 'bold, manly and chaste, free from all artificial

<sup>14</sup> On Lucian's *De somno*, see Romm 1990.

<sup>15</sup> *σχήματα enim quae uocant Graeci, ea maxime ornant oratorem eaque non tam in uerbis pingendis habent pondus quam in illuminandis sententiis*. Spoken by Brutus.

<sup>16</sup> Note parallels with cosmetics at Quintilian 8.1.19.

dyes, and must glow with health and vigour' (8.3.6), an attempt to outline a theory of ornament that is organically bound to the structure and meaning of speech, rather than applied as surface embellishment.<sup>17</sup> We see here a distinction between painting as work and as ornament, a parallel to the difficult relationship between speech as rational *logos* and speech as ancillary figure or schema which haunts the theory of rhetoric. Likewise, the role of supplementary adornment is extended to both painterly and rhetorical 'colours'. As Cicero comments of the sophists in his *Orator* (in an explicit use of the analogy), 'They use far-fetched metaphors, and arrange them as painters do colour combinations' (65).<sup>18</sup>

In all these examples, paint and paintings offer the rhetorician a visual trope for exploring the relationship between language and truth (and, implicitly, the ethics of persuasion). Yet whereas the concept of paint as surface embellishment (a reduction of the trope to its material ontology) offers a means of criticizing rhetoric's ability to deceive or its propensity to excess, elsewhere the concept of painting as mimesis (i.e. its status as a representational medium) is used to defend rhetoric's persuasive power. In Book 2 of the *Institutes*, for example, Quintilian addresses the charge that rhetoric should be denied status as an art because it involves assent to false conclusions. Emphasizing the difference between 'holding a certain opinion oneself and persuading someone else to adopt an opinion', Quintilian employs the analogy of pictorial perspective: 'When a painter by his artistic skill makes us believe that certain objects project from the picture, while others are withdrawn into the background, he knows perfectly well that they are really all in the same plane' (2.17.20–1).<sup>19</sup> Within the visual and linguistic logic of the rhetorical treatise, perspective thus operates as a parallel to self-conscious

<sup>17</sup> Quintilian, *Inst. or.* 8.3.6–7 (trans. H. E. Butler): *Recteque Cicero his ipsis ad Brutum uerbis quadam in epistula scribit: 'nam eloquentiam quae admirationem non habet nullam iudico'. Eandem Aristoteles quoque petendam maxime putat. sed hic ornatus (repetam enim) uirilis et fortis et sanctus sit nec effeminatam leuitatem et fuco ementitum colorem amet: sanguine et uiribus niteat. Hoc autem adeo uerum est ut, cum in hac maxime parte sint uicina uirtutibus uitia, etiam qui uitii utuntur uirtutum tamen iis nomen imponant* ('Cicero was right when, in one of his letters to Brutus, he wrote, 'Eloquence which evokes no admiration is, in my opinion, unworthy of the name.' Aristotle likewise thinks that the excitement of admiration should be one of our first aims. But such ornament must, as I have already said, be bold, manly and chaste, free from all artificial dyes, and must glow with health and vigour. So true is this, that although, where ornament is concerned, vice and virtue are never far apart, those who employ a vicious style of embellishment disguise their vices with the name of virtue').

<sup>18</sup> Cicero, *Orator* 65: *uerba altius transferunt eaque ita disponunt ut pictores uarietatem colorum.*

<sup>19</sup> Quintilian, *Inst. or.* 2.17.20–1: *Et pictor, eum ui artis suae efficit, ut quaedam eminere in opere, quaedam recessisse credamus, ipse ea plana esse non nescit.* Cf. van Eck 2002, ch. 3 on perspective in Renaissance painting as a form of visual persuasion.

obfuscation; by comparison, ‘When Cicero boasted that he had thrown dust in the eyes of the jury in the case of Cluentius’, Quintilian points out, ‘he was far from being blinded himself’ (2.17.21). In this sense, the orator creates a knowing *trompe l’œil*, employing the illusionistic strategies of language for specific ends. If ‘the eyes’ of his audience are willingly deceived, then more fool them. To persuade another but retain clarity of vision oneself is not, Quintilian implies, a case of moral turpitude or myopia; rather, it is a demonstration of *ars* as required by the medium at hand.

Why does painting feature so prominently in these passages? It is not unusual for Quintilian to draw upon the visual arts in general; in his introduction to rhetorical style in Book 12, for example, he provides histories of the stylistic development of both painting and sculpture as visual parallels to that of rhetoric (12.10), while in Book 2 he claims that ‘speeches, like statues, require art for their production’ (2.21). However, the close parallels between words and painting in particular reach back a long way in Graeco-Roman tradition (not least in the ambiguous meaning of *graphein*, as both ‘to draw’ and ‘to write’). As Philostratus would later claim in the prologue to his *Imagines*, painting ‘contrives’, *sophizetai*, more than the other visual arts.<sup>20</sup> Perspective, of course, offers an obvious sophistic parallel to rhetoric in its ability to transform three-dimensional planes into two dimensions and its capacity to deceive (or persuade) the viewer; as such, it is one of the cardinal features of illusionistic naturalism.

For Philostratus, however, painting’s *sophisma* lies predominantly in its use of colour, ‘for it both reproduces light and shade and also permits the observer to recognize the look, now of the man who is mad, now of the man who is sorrowing or rejoicing’.<sup>21</sup> In this sense, colour facilitates both the impression of volume on a two-dimensional surface and the depiction (and provocation) of emotion, or pathos. As both a physical property of paint and a vehicle of mimesis, colour draws attention to the material and representational aspects of paint and painting. In doing so, it invites one to recognize the painter’s mastery of his medium and to engage with the

<sup>20</sup> Philostratus, *Imagines*, proem 2 (trans. Fairbanks): ζωγραφία δὲ ξυμβέβληται μὲν ἐκ χρωμάτων, πράττει δὲ οὐ τοῦτο μόνον, ἀλλὰ καὶ πλείω σοφίζεται ἀπὸ τούτου ἑνὸς ὄντος ἢ ἀπὸ τῶν πολλῶν ἢ ἑτέρα τέχνη. σκιάν τε γὰρ ἀποφαίνει καὶ βλέμμα γινώσκει ἄλλο μὲν τοῦ μεμηνότος, ἄλλο δὲ τοῦ ἀλγοῦντος ἢ χαίροντος.

Painting is imitation by the use of colours; and not only does it employ colour, but this second form of art cleverly accomplishes more with this one means than the other form with its many means [i.e. sculpture]. For it both reproduces light and shade and also permits the observer to recognize the look, now of the man who is mad, now of the man who is sorrowing or rejoicing.

<sup>21</sup> On the proem to the *Imagines*, see Maffei 1991. Above, n. 20.



painting's dramatic content, to perceive both painted surface and depicted subject. In allowing the viewer to shuttle between the modes of 'absorption and erudition' (as Zahra Newby has put it, following Michael Fried's model of 'absorption and theatricality'), painting thus parallels rhetoric's aim to charm and persuade, on the one hand, and to draw attention to its own medium and modes of expression, on the other.<sup>22</sup> Cicero, after all, wanted both to win his case and to draw attention to the skill by which he did so. As a visual analogy to rhetoric, painting thus offers a means of distinguishing between the seeming 'naturalness' of speech and argument (its capacity to absorb and convince) and the technical wizardry employed to make it effective (rhetorical erudition).<sup>23</sup>

Indeed, the quality that Philostratus saw as key to the differentiation of painting from all other visual arts (and especially the plastic arts), namely its use of colour,<sup>24</sup> was a precise technical term in rhetoric. As Cicero puts it: 'The tones of the voice are keyed up like the strings of an instrument . . . [and all can be] regulated by art and moderation; they are the colours [*colores*] available to the actor, as for the painter, to secure variety' (*De or.* 3.57.216–17). That variety – performed as glosses or varnishes or tones to manipulate the material presented so as to put it most persuasively from the speaker's point of view – is what is meant by 'colours' (*colores*).<sup>25</sup> At the same time *color* – as the hint of artistic inspiration – can mean the moment of extempore brilliance that allows free creative improvisation (Quintilian 10.6.5); one is reminded of Pliny's story of Protogenes throwing a sponge in frustration at the dog in his picture of Ialysus, whose frothy effect perfectly rendered the foam at the panting animal's mouth (*Natural History* 35.103). The combination of *ars* and *color* as the orator's supreme methods of persuasion, that is as a technical means for achieving mimesis which has the potential to supplant the truth, is the occasion for an interesting and unusual apology from Quintilian at 12.1.33. This passage specifically links *ars* (as artifice) and *color*, so that 'the power and force of speech at times

<sup>22</sup> Fried 1980; Newby 2009.

<sup>23</sup> On the construction of rhetorical speech as 'natural', see Gunderson 2009, with Quintilian 8.1.22–3: 'The usual result of over-attention to the niceties of style is the deterioration of our eloquence. The main reason for this is that those words are best which are least far-fetched and give the impression of simplicity and reality'; 8.1.32: 'While, then, style calls for the utmost attention, we must always bear in mind that nothing should be done for the sake of words only, since words were invented merely to give expression to things.' On this matter, Quintilian approvingly cites Cicero's claim in a letter to Brutus (now lost) that 'Eloquence which evokes no admiration is, in my opinion, unworthy of the name'.

<sup>24</sup> See Philostratus, *Imagines* I. proem. 2.

<sup>25</sup> For instance in Quintilian *Inst. or.* 4.2.88, 90, 94–100; 11.1.85.

triumphs over truth itself.<sup>26</sup> In other words, it is where oratory is most self-conscious of its own artifice as a vehicle for a mimesis which might supplant truth that it comes closest to the painterly analogy of an artifice that can imitate actuality in a two-dimensional illusion without actually being what it represents.

### Timanthes' sacrifice of Iphigenia 1: style and decor

Given these parallels between painted and rhetorical 'colours', it is not surprising that painting features most prominently in theoretical discussions of style (*lexis*, or *elocutio*). In his *Orator*, for example, Cicero explicitly compares tastes in rhetorical style to those in painting, for 'Some like pictures rough, rude and sombre, others on the contrary prefer them bright, cheerful and brilliantly coloured' (11.36).<sup>27</sup> While relevant to principles of ornamentation (one of Theophrastus' four virtues, or *aretai*, of rhetoric),<sup>28</sup> painting also features in discussions of the virtue of decorum or propriety (*to prepon*, *proprietas*). It is here, perhaps, that art and rhetoric find their most natural coupling in Roman culture; rhetoricians are highly self-conscious about the appropriateness of specific styles, word-choice and figures in given contexts, and the importance of decorum in delivery. Quintilian even compares 'what is becoming and what is expedient' in rhetorical delivery to the varied use of 'dress, expression and attitude' in pictures and statues.<sup>29</sup> In this sense, he draws upon the principles of *decorum*, which, as Ellen Perry has shown, dictate the use of precise categories of style and iconography for artworks according to the architectural spaces in which they are displayed.<sup>30</sup> Likewise, the concept of *decor* is employed by Vitruvius in his discussion of appropriate styles of wall painting within the *domus*, not simply in the selection of subject matter, but, more crucially, in the degree of plausible illusionism employed for painted frameworks (in his famous critique of third-style *monstra*). For Vitruvius, *decor* unites modes of representation with

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Quintilian *Inst. or.* 12.8.6.

<sup>27</sup> Cicero, *Orator* 36: *In picturis alios horrida inculta opaca, contra alios nitida laeta collustrata delectant.*

<sup>28</sup> Cicero, *Orator* 79 and *De or.* 3.37–8; Quintilian *Inst. or.* 8.1–11.1. See e.g. Kennedy 1994: 85–6.

<sup>29</sup> 2.13.8; see also 8.2.

<sup>30</sup> Perry 2005. Consider Quintilian 8.3.15: *nihil ornatum ... quod sit improprium* ('without propriety ornament is impossible').

architectural and social principles of stability; it has an explicit moral value.<sup>31</sup>

The ethics and aesthetics of decorum are also implicitly combined in rhetorical treatises. As Cicero states in his *Orator*, 'in an oration, as in life, nothing is harder than to determine what is appropriate (*quid deceat uidere*). The Greeks call it *prepon*; let us call it decorum or 'propriety' (70).<sup>32</sup> His ensuing discussion of the importance of adapting style and gesture to subject matter includes the claim that 'Apelles, [who Quintilian tells us was 'renowned for his genius and grace', 12.10.6], said that those painters also make this error, who do not know when they have done enough' (73). For in general, Cicero reminds us, 'too much is more offensive than too little'.<sup>33</sup> As an artistic process that invites aesthetic judgement, painting here offers the theorist a visual parallel for thinking through specific challenges of expression in order to maximize the effects of language. Read according to Aristotle's tripartite model of rhetorical communication, the visual image provides an analogy to the *logos* of the speech, constructed according to the *ēthos* of the speaker and prompting a reaction of *pathos* from his audience.<sup>34</sup> Crucially, for both Cicero and Quintilian, effective *logos* is not simply a case of rhetorical fulsomeness or vivid *enargeia*; as for Apelles, it is also about restraint and propriety, about doing 'just enough'.

It is here that Cicero moves beyond general comments on painterly style to discuss a specific work attributed to the fourth-century BC painter Timanthes. Arguing that "propriety" is what is fitting and agreeable to an occasion or person', he points out that this applies not just to speech but also to facial expression, gesture and gait. Having shifted his focus from language to bodily decorum, he illustrates his point by commenting that

the painter in portraying the sacrifice of Iphigenia, after representing Calchas as sad, Ulysses as still more so, Menelaus as in grief, felt that Agamemnon's head must be veiled, because the supreme sorrow could not be portrayed by his brush; even the actor seeks propriety; what then, think you, should the orator do? (74)

So far, the rhetorical examples I have cited have referred either to lost paintings (such as Zeuxis' *Helen*) or to the stylistic and material features of painting in general. With Cicero's allusion to Timanthes' painting of *The Sacrifice of Iphigenia*, however, we finally reach an exemplum that finds a

<sup>31</sup> Platt 2009a. Compare Horace, *Ars Poetica*, 1–13.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. Quintilian *Inst. or.* 8.1.25, 8.2.11.

<sup>33</sup> Quintilian passes a more explicit ethical judgment in his claim that, where ornament is concerned, 'vice and virtue are never far apart' (*in hac maxime parte sint uicina uirtutibus uitia*, 8.3.7).

<sup>34</sup> See the [Introduction](#) to this volume.



**Figure 6.1** *The Sacrifice of Iphigenia*. From the House of the Tragic Poet, Pompeii 6.8.3, now in the Museo Nazionale, Naples, no. 9112. After AD 62.

surviving parallel in the archaeological record. Timanthes' original has long disappeared, of course, but in the so-called House of the Tragic Poet in Pompeii (VI.8.3.5), we find a mid-first century AD panel, which – though unlikely to be a direct 'copy' of the painting – includes many of the features mentioned by Cicero (Figure 6.1).<sup>35</sup> To the right of the scene, we see Calchas the seer, his left hand holding the knife and fillets in preparation for Iphigenia's sacrifice, his right hand raised to his lips in a gesture that appears to imply doubt and anxiety. In the centre, gripping the desperate girl, her arms upraised, two heroes (presumably Ulysses and Menelaus) turn their faces away from her naked body. The right-hand figure looks towards Calchas, as if for reassurance; the hero on the left turns his eyes to heaven, as if to ask the gods for guidance. To the far left, his back completely turned to the scene of incipient violence in the centre and his face hidden from intrusive observation by the painting's viewers, a veiled figure identifiable solely by his ornate military boots covers his face with his right hand. As an interrogation of the limits of artistic expression,

<sup>35</sup> On the house, see F. O. Badoni in *PPM* IV: 527–603 and Bergmann 1994. The picture (Alinari 12021), removed from the house to the Museo Nazionale in Naples (MN 9112), is not a direct copy: for instance, Iphigenia is not 'standing by the altar' (as Pliny, *Natural History* 35.73 reports of Timanthes' picture) but is being carried to it: see Ling 1991: 134.

the painting brilliantly stages Agamemnon's impossible grief. This is a transfixed moment of parental despair so great that it cannot be witnessed either by the other figures in the picture or by its viewers, so great that it cannot be depicted directly through the naturalistic arts of painterly imitation, but must be evoked through the *sophisma* of veiling. In performing the denial of its own depictive pictorialism, the painting creates a *mise-en-abyme* of the limits of what is possible to depict, in order to evoke the limits of what is possible for a human being to feel. In Book 8 of his *Memorable Doings and Sayings*, addressed to the emperor Tiberius in the first third of the first century AD, Valerius Maximus specifically comments on this:

Consider too that other no less famous painter who portrayed the grievous sacrifice of Iphigenia, placing a sad Calchas, a mournful Ulysses and a lamenting Menelaus around the altar. Did he not confess by veiling Agamemnon's head that the bitterness of deepest grief cannot be expressed by art (*arte*)? So his painting is wet with the tears of the soothsayer, the friend and the brother, but left the father's weeping to be judged by the emotions of the spectator' (8.11, Ext. 6, trans. Shackleton-Bailey)

Timanthes' painting – even in its Pompeian replication – stands as an equivalent to Zeuxis' *Helen*; just as Helen defied conventional mimesis in her elusive beauty, so Agamemnon's grief surpasses the limitations of painterly *ars*. Both function as *adynata* – impossible images whose form draws attention to the challenges faced in their artistic creation even as their content stimulates the desire or *pathos* of the viewer. In this sense, the *Sacrifice of Iphigenia* offers a paradigmatic example of the shuttling between absorption and erudition that, as I discussed earlier, typifies the dramatic and aesthetic effects of both painting and rhetoric.

Yet why should Cicero allude to Timanthes' *Iphigenia* in his discussion of stylistic decorum? Here the panel from Pompeii gives us a telling glimpse of how specific visual parallels do not simply operate as imagined images that give form to dematerialized concepts (as the *Helen*); for Cicero's use of the *Iphigenia* also depends upon familiarity with the compositional arrangement of and expressive contrasts between the characters depicted. For the purposes of the *Orator*, which seeks to define 'the finest ideal and type of oratory' (2), the original painting's escalating expressions of grief serve as a parallel to stylistic *uariatio* both between speeches and within an individual speech, while the figure of Agamemnon functions as an expression of the limits of propriety.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>36</sup> On *uarietas* in ancient rhetoric, see Drijepondt 1979, with Baxandall 1971: 92–6, 136–8 and van Eck 2007: 22 on its influence on early modern treatises on painting.

Yet by using a well-known (and perhaps widely emulated) painting as a visual analogy, Cicero is able to give form to his point about language (*in dictis*) while at the same time shifting the reader's focus to issues of gesture and appearance (*in factis*). In this sense, the painting's suspension of figures within space, which allows for a direct comparison of gestures and expressions, is allied to language's property of unfolding through time, reminding us that the orator himself is a multimedia work of art who, like an actor, must inhabit both spheres appropriately if he is to achieve success in his role. In this way, Cicero's abbreviated ekphrasis of Timanthes' *Iphigenia* serves to extend the text-bound nature of the rhetorical treatise to encompass visual and spatial factors that are also intrinsic to rhetorical practice.

### Timanthes' sacrifice of Iphigenia 2: the limits of expression

Quam quidem gratiam et delectationem adferunt figurae, quaeque in sensibus quaeque in uerbis sunt. mutant enim aliquid a recto, atque hanc prae se uirtutem ferunt, quod a consuetudine uulgari recesserunt. habet in pictura speciem tota facies: Apelles tamen imaginem Antagoni latere tantum altero ostendit, ut amissi oculi deformitas lateret. quid? non in oratione operienda sunt quaedam, siue ostendi non debent siue exprimi pro dignitate non possunt? ut fecit Timanthes, opinor, Cythnius in ea tabula qua Coloten Teium uicit. Nam cum in Iphigeniae immolatione pinxisset tristem Calchantem, tristiores Ulixem, addidisset Menelao quem summum poterat ars efficere maerorem: consumptis adfectibus non repens quo digne modo patris uultum posset exprimere, uelauit eius caput et suo cuique animo dedit aestimandum.

A similar impression of grace and charm is produced by rhetorical figures, whether they be figures of thought or figures of speech. For they involve a certain departure from the straight line and have the merit of variation from the ordinary usage. In a painting the full face is most attractive. But Apelles painted Antigonus in profile, to conceal the blemish caused by the loss of one eye. So, too, in speaking, there are certain things which have to be concealed, either because they ought not to be disclosed or because they cannot be expressed as they deserve. Timanthes, who was, I think, a native of Cythnus, provides an example of this in the painting with which he won the victory over Colotes of Teos. It represented the sacrifice of Iphigenia, and the artist had depicted an expression of grief on the face of Calchas and of still greater grief on that of Ulysses, while he had given Menelaus an agony of sorrow beyond which his art could not go. Having exhausted his powers of emotional expression he was at a loss to portray the father's face as it deserved, and solved the problem by veiling

his head and leaving his sorrow to the imagination of the spectator. (Quintilian, *Inst. or.* 2.13.11–13; trans. Butler)

Whereas Cicero evokes Timanthes' Agamemnon in order to advise verbal and gestural restraint in rhetorical performance, Quintilian pushes the analogy further in order to dwell on that which should be repressed or concealed. In Book 2 of the *Institutes*, the *Iphigenia* serves not just to illustrate the limits of propriety, but also to express the more complex idea that rhetorical principles should be applied with flexibility, for 'what is becoming and what is expedient' may occasionally require deviation from expected norms.<sup>37</sup> The first example he gives is derived from portraiture: 'In a painting the full face is most attractive. But Apelles painted Antigonos in profile, to conceal the blemish caused by the loss of one eye. So too in speaking', he claims, 'there are certain things which have to be concealed, either because they ought not to be disclosed (*ostendi*), or because they cannot be expressed as they deserve (*exprimi pro dignitate non possunt*).' This is where Timanthes comes in, for in the *Sacrifice of Iphigenia*,

the artist had depicted an expression of grief (*tristem*) on the face of Calchas and of still greater grief (*tristioorem*) on that of Ulysses, while he had given Menelaus an agony of sorrow beyond which his art could not go. Having exhausted his powers of emotional expression he was at a loss to portray the father's face as it deserved, and solved the problem by veiling his head and leaving his sorrow to the imagination of the spectator (*et suo cuique animo dedit aestimandum*). (2.13.12–13)<sup>38</sup>

Quintilian is perhaps more alive to the visual subtleties of his exemplum than was Cicero. Although Timanthes' Agamemnon stands as a sign of the failure of painting's expressive power, an embodiment of agony 'beyond which art could not go', the ingenuity such limitations enforce upon the artist result in representational strategies that paradoxically heighten the painting's emotional and aesthetic power. In this way, a trope familiarly employed to express the limits of both mimesis and human pain is, like Zeuxis' Helen, transformed in the rhetorician's hands into a positive strategy for maximizing the power of speech. In this sense, the veiled Agamemnon is thus akin to the rhetorical figure of *aposiōpēsis*, or 'becoming silent', employed when a sentence is suddenly broken off, and known

<sup>37</sup> See van Eck 2007: 5–6, on Quintilian on Myron's *Discobolus* 2.13.8–11.

<sup>38</sup> On the importance of the head in Quintilian's theory of gesture, see Wülfing 2003; see also van Eck 2007: 6–8 discussing Quintilian on the *uultus orationis* and Cicero on the face as the 'image of the soul' and 'silent language of the mind' as well as the parallels between figures of style and the 'face of speech'.

in Latin as *reticentia*, *obticentia* or *interruptio*. Quintilian tells us in Book 9 that the figure ‘is used to indicate passion or anger’, and cites a passage from Cicero’s *Pro Milone*, a paradigmatic example of the pressures exerted upon rhetorical expression at a time of crisis (9.2.54). In this sense, *apōsiōpēsis* is akin to a number of rhetorical tropes which draw attention to the failures of language or its potential to conceal, disguise or suggest. Despite important differences between the verbal and the visual, the medium of painting thus illuminates the self-reflexive way in which speech can allude to the limits of its own rhetorical practices as part of its very attempt to charm and persuade.<sup>39</sup>

Quintilian comments in Book 11 of the *Institutes* that ‘a picture, a silent and motionless work of art (*tacens opus*), can penetrate our innermost feelings to such an extent that it seems sometimes to be more powerful than speech itself (11.3.67).<sup>40</sup> Despite Quintilian’s seeming deprecation of his own medium here, the use of painting in the treatises I have discussed makes clear that the orator’s task is to recognize its expressive potential in order to appropriate its visual strategies for rhetorical ends, whether verbal or gestural.

To return to the questions raised at the beginning of this essay, then, is it at all possible that the ‘meta-rhetorical’ use of the Iphigenia exemplum by Cicero and Quintilian might shed light on the expressive effects and communicative strategies of painting itself? Can we ‘read’ the Pompeian *Iphigenia* as a visual parallel to speech? As so many paintings depicting scenes related to epic and tragedy, the image in the House of the Tragic Poet is poised at a ‘pregnant moment’:<sup>41</sup> the viewer is alerted to the happy outcome of the scene by the airborne figures in its upper sphere, which depict Iphigenia and the stag she was replaced by together with the salvific appearance of Diana, whose presence within the scene below is suggested by the miniature statue of Artemis–Hecate behind Agamemnon. Yet the action within the main body of the panel remains poised at the moment before sacrifice, from which multiple outcomes might ensue. As a rhetorical proposition, the painting requires its viewers to determine the stasis of the case it

<sup>39</sup> One might think of Hortensius silent in front of the Senate but glancing at portraits of his famous grandfather and Augustus (Tacitus, *Annals* 2.37–8), or Quintilian on the power of eyes being second only to that of hands in silent persuasion (9.3.72–7, with van Eck 2007: 4).

<sup>40</sup> *cum pictura, tacens opus et habitus semper eiusdem, sic in intimos penetret adfectus ut ipsam uim dicendi nonnumquam superare uideatur.*

<sup>41</sup> The phrase is Lessing’s: Lessing 1984 (originally 1766): 21, with discussion of ‘Timanthes’ *Iphigenia* at 16–17. The idea was usefully applied to Roman painting by Bergmann 1996, although that article does not discuss Timanthes’ picture or the House of the Tragic Poet.



presents for judgement or deliberation. What should Agamemnon do? As a scene of conflict between religious piety and paternal devotion, it is fitting (indeed decorous) that the painting's position within the peristyle of the house should point directly (in the figure of Agamemnon) to its *lararium*, the locus of piety and paternal duty within the home. In staging its tragic dilemma, the panel prompts consideration of the *ēthos* of its patron (and by implication the *domus'* paterfamilias) at the same time as it elicits *pathos* through its expressive range and draws attention to the allusive skill of its creator. It thus invites both emotional identification and connoisseurship – in short, a rhetorical engagement with the image. In this sense, it is not at all surprising to hear that the same myth was a popular subject of declamation in Roman schools of rhetoric, employed as an exemplary *suasoria* by Seneca the Elder (3), while the Letter to Herennius suggests as an exercise for memorizing verse the visualization of actors playing roles in a performance of the Iphigenia tragedy (3.21.34).

The Pompeian Iphigenia comes from a house that, since Bettina Bergmann's foundational article in *The Art Bulletin*, has become archetypal for modern scholars in its correspondence to Roman principles of *decorum* and the rhetorical 'mapping' of images within space. The House of the Tragic Poet is full of paintings that seek to charm and persuade, that absorb the viewer within their dramatic narratives (many of which hinge on fateful moments of decision) while asserting the learnedness of their patron with a self-conscious theatricality that also encourages meditation on the skill of their creators. My argument here, in so far as it relates to the house and its pictures, is that their high level of visual self-consciousness and pictorial self-reflexivity is itself reflected in an interpretative model which might potentially align the complex communicative strategies of the visual realm with an extensive meditation on the relationship between style, content and affect in a parallel and contemporary sphere of artistic activity. In the supreme confidence of its status and efficacy within Roman public life, rhetoric assumed the authority to absorb and comment upon the expressive means employed by other media. A closer reading of such passages, however, suggests that while painting might be rhetorical, rhetoric could also be painterly. By (literally) drawing attention to the challenges of representation, the power of gesture, and the complex relationship between style and content, painting gave form to problems and ideas that are perceptible without necessarily being reducible to verbal interpretation. In doing so, it provided a model by which rhetoricians could theorize both the scope and the shortcomings of their own moral and aesthetic enterprises.

In conclusion it may be worth commenting a little further on the question of the artistic analogy to rhetoric in relation to testing the boundaries of what artifice can accomplish. Agamemnon's veil, as we have seen, is about a point of grief so extreme that it cannot be depicted. The limits of mimesis here are not only those of the artist's skill, but also a matter of propriety and decorum, as well as about what the viewer is capable of feeling and indeed should be allowed to feel. But at the same time – and this is Timanthes' genius according to the tradition – not directly depicting what cannot be shown is a way of allowing the viewer to impute imagined intensities of grief into the picture. Timanthes uses the *logos* of painting to build the *pathos* of spectators into the *ēthos* of the painter's own command – transforming what was apparently his inability to represent Agamemnon's grief into a brilliant opening for the *pathos* of the viewer to construct his or her own imagined suffering beneath the veil, as it were. The ramifications of this as an exemplum for the orator are obvious, and are drawn out by both Cicero and Quintilian.

In a second and quite separate allusion to mimetic painting as pushing the limits of realism, the elder Seneca – writing during the early principate – discusses a fictional case concerning the painter Parrhasius in his *Controversia* 10.5:<sup>42</sup>

The Athenian painter Parrhasius purchased an old man from among the captives at Olynthus, put up for sale by Philip, and took him to Athens. He tortured him, and using him as a model painted a Prometheus. The Olynthian died under the torture. Parrhasius put the picture into the temple of Minerva; he is accused of harming the state.

In this example, the painting of an extreme of suffering (Prometheus having his liver devoured by the eagle) – the kind of suffering which Timanthes' veil was invented to disguise – is realized through the pictorial imitation of actual suffering in the model, produced through torture, taken to the limit of murder. In one respect this is a commentary on the ethical limits of visual arts, and it is dressed up as a legal court case with competing positions taken and opinions offered. But, as Helen Morales points out, the repeated pun on *color* meaning both hue and rhetorical shading reverberates through the text.<sup>43</sup> This is in part about the comparative logic of torture and the declamatory rhetoric on torture – but it is also about the parallel between the rhetorical artist and the pictorial artist in terms of the limits to which they will go to attain their object. One of Seneca's speakers asks if it was only

<sup>42</sup> See the scintillating discussion of Morales 1996.

<sup>43</sup> Morales 1996: 207 (on 10.5.17–18, 25).

the Olynthian that Parrhasius tortured: 'Does he not torture our eyes too?' (10.5.3); but interestingly none goes so far as to wonder whether the viewer of the picture, and the audience (even the jury) of the court case might not vicariously participate in the act of torture through witnessing its enactment. However, that Prometheus – the tortured object – is himself a supreme artist who fashioned mankind from clay<sup>44</sup> turns this version of rhetoric's artistic thinking about its own limits into another *mise-en-abyme* where one semi-legendary artist portrays and tortures another mythical artist by means of actually torturing a real person.

If we return to the passage of Quintilian with which we opened – and its ruminations on that which can penetrate 'our innermost feelings' more eloquently than language itself – we find that the image of visual art – as a constant *synkrisis* with rhetoric, a field of agonistic competition in which it is always possible that the 'silent and motionless' picture can say more than all the orator's 'colours' – is more than rhetoric's animating model for thinking about itself. It is also rhetoric's supreme object of envy. In this sense the trope of the visual arts within rhetoric – whether brought to bear as analogies of the act of creation (*ēthos*), as models of affect (*pathos*) or as a means of formal composition and communication (*logos*) – is central to both the *imitation* (*mimēsis*) and the emulation (or envy, *zēlos*) that ancient theory took as key to both the learning and the practice of rhetoric.<sup>45</sup> The play with limits, both in art and in oratory – exemplified by Seneca's Parrhasius and Timanthes' veil of Agamemnon – is the pictorial paradigm for rhetoric's own self-examination.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. 10.5.7, 20–21.

<sup>45</sup> See the discussion in the [Introduction](#) to this volume, pp. 23–31.



PART III



The Funerary



BARBARA E. BORG

The relationship between visual art and artfully rendered words has been explored from the very beginning of writing in the Greek world. Homer's 130-verse-long description of the Shield of Achilles, arguably marking the turning point of the narrative of his poem, not only provides a meta- or subtext to the *Iliad*'s story but also explores the potentials and limits of verbal and visual narratives (*Il.* 18.478–608). His ekphrasis<sup>1</sup> inspired a multitude of later authors' works, from Pseudo-Hesiod's *Shield of Heracles* to Virgil's images of the Trojan War on the Temple of Juno in Carthage in the *Aeneid* (1.441–93), to various paintings in Roman novels.<sup>2</sup> From the Hellenistic period onwards, ekphrastic epigrams chose works of art as their subject, not providing proper descriptions but drawing on visual features of the objects that are played upon in various ways.<sup>3</sup> According to both ancient and modern writers, the main point of ekphrases, including ekphrastic epigrams, is their *enargeia*, their vividness – which includes their authors' ability to involve the audience emotionally, to seduce them, to stimulate the imagination (*phantasia*) of readers or listeners in such a way that they see the object before their inner eye as if it were right in front of them physically.<sup>4</sup> These skills were appreciated to such an extent that ekphrases even became a sub-genre of *progymnasmata*, rhetorical exercises. Moreover, they could serve as *prolaliai*, teasers used by the sophists

I am grateful to Jaś Elsner for the opportunity to present my ideas in this volume, and for his helpful suggestions and improvement of my English style.

<sup>1</sup> The ancient term ekphrasis designated a wide range of descriptions, not just of artworks and 'things' but also of events, locations, people, etc. (cf. e.g. Graf 1995; *DNP* vol. 3, 942–50 s.v. Ekphrasis (U. Egelhaaf); Webb 1999). In this essay, however, I shall use the term throughout in its modern, limited sense of a description of works of art.

<sup>2</sup> On Virgil's ekphrases see esp. Fowler 1991, with extensive bibliography on ekphrasis in general up to 1990; Putnam 1998. On *ekphrasis* in the novel: Bartsch 1989; Morales 2004; Webb 2009, esp. 178–84, with ample bibliography.

<sup>3</sup> The literature is vast, but see for some recent publications with further bibliography: Gutzwiller 1998; Gutzwiller 2005; Männlein-Robert 2007b; Acosta-Hughes et al. 2004; Bing and Bruss 2007; Bruss 2010.

<sup>4</sup> On *enargeia* cf. G. Zanker 1981; G. Zanker 2004: 39–42; Dubel 1997; Webb 2009: esp. 87–106.

and rhetoricians of the second sophistic to attract their audience's interest and establish a friendly atmosphere between themselves.<sup>5</sup>

One way of suggesting the vivid presence and emotional effect of the object was to claim that it was alive itself; or that it was perceived as being alive by a spectator within the text; or at least that the object of art was in some emotional turmoil. Scholars have usually taken this as a reflection of ancient art criticism, of real attitudes to real art, and as support for the view that ancient artists strove, from the beginning, to create mimetically, to enhance verisimilitude and lifelikeness, to deliberately develop their skills in creating artworks that would be as naturalistic, 'realistic', and deceptive as possible.<sup>6</sup> The apparent clash between the fabulously vivid Homeric description of the *Shield of Achilles* and the schematism of real artworks of the time has often been attributed to a modern perception that fails to appreciate the ancients' mode of viewing and the impression that their art conveyed upon them: after all, they did not know any more naturalistic art and thus may have marvelled at images that fail to appeal to a modern viewer in the same way.<sup>7</sup> And surely, it is hard to deny that there was an increase in naturalism and lifelikeness over the centuries through the Hellenistic period and into the early Roman era.<sup>8</sup>

Modern evaluations of third-century AD and later art are the flip side of this teleological concept. When the aim of artistic creation was ever-increasing 'realism', the artistic developments of later Roman art could

<sup>5</sup> *Progymnasmata*: Webb 2001; Kennedy 2003; Webb 2009: 39-60. *Prolaliai*: Nesselrath 1990; on Lucian's ekphrastic *prolaliai* see Borg 2004a: 44-50.

<sup>6</sup> Students of literary ekphrasis assume almost throughout that the language of ekphrases and ekphrastic epigrams is that of art criticism, but see especially: G. Zanker 2004, and B. H. Fowler 1989; all authors discussing Philostratus (see below) would also agree.

<sup>7</sup> Wollheim 1970, 205-29, coined the term 'seeing in' (as opposed to 'seeing as') for this phenomenon; cf. Hallett 1986; Steiner 2001: 20-3; Neer 2002b, 48f.; specifically on the Homeric Shield: Simon 1995.

<sup>8</sup> The terms used in descriptions of these developments, e.g. naturalistic, realistic, lifelike, etc., raise problems in themselves but cannot be discussed here in detail. Arguably, classical bodies are rendered more correctly in physiognomic terms, and with a better understanding of the interaction of muscles, weight and movement than archaic bodies, and therefore may be termed more naturalistic or lifelike. The same is hard to deny for the development of portraiture when we think, for instance, of the portrait of Pericles in comparison with Roman republican portraits. But to what extent are the Hellenistic muscular bodies of Pergamene art naturalistic? Are the old, wrinkled Hellenistic fishermen and market women really realistic? And to what extent is republican portraiture faithful to its patrons' physiognomy when it is so easy to group these images into 'period faces' (Kockel 1993: 62-7)?

For these and other reasons, many art historians no longer subscribe to this teleological view, though the latter is only rarely scrutinized more explicitly and in detail. But see for instance: Himmelmann 1983; Hallett 1986; Stewart 1993b; Himmelmann 1994; Steiner 2001, esp. 28-30; Neer 2002b: 32-86; Neer 2010; Borg 2005; Elsner 2006c.



only be viewed as decline. Simpler forms and abstractions, such as we encounter in portraiture from the third century, for instance, or in the reliefs of public monuments from the Tetrarchic period onwards, were regarded as a result of an inability to 'do better', be it for lack of funds, lack of skills, lack of understanding the classical tradition, or a combination of these.<sup>9</sup>

In the same vein, it has usually been taken for granted that images with two or more interacting figures, especially mythological ones, were intended to tell a story. The introduction of narrative images in the Late Geometric period, and the introduction of mythological narratives in particular, have been regarded as a major achievement, while the lack of narrative qualities in later images, especially in mosaics and sarcophagus reliefs, has been condemned and again explained as an indication of decline.<sup>10</sup> German scholarship has coined the term *Entmythologisierung* (demythologization) to describe and summarize the changes at stake here.<sup>11</sup> The core meaning of this term is a drift or shift away from mythological narrative that takes two different forms. The first refers to the style and iconography of mythical images. The narrative context of the stories, actions, and events becomes increasingly less important, while the focus shifts to individual figures posing in a stage-like setting, sometimes wearing contemporary dress and even assuming portrait heads. The second development concerns the subjects chosen for depiction. While in the early and high imperial period mythical subjects prevailed in the majority of artistic genres, they became much rarer in some genres from the third century onwards, most notably in wall painting, and on sarcophagi. It is on this latter genre that I shall focus for the purpose of this essay, in which I would like to challenge the views just summarized. In a first step, I shall take a fresh look at third-century sarcophagi and argue

<sup>9</sup> For an overview of previous interpretations see e.g. Wood 1986, 11-25; Elsner 1995, 1-14; for a critique of various concepts of decline (some come in disguise) see also Borg and Witschel 2001 with further references. There is a different appreciation of late Roman art among scholars working on the fourth century and later periods, and especially those interested in the impact of Christianity on art. One reason might be that they view the period as *a priori* distinct from the 'high imperial age', or look at it from 'the other end' of the development, i.e. the medieval era, applying a similarly teleological approach to that of the 'classicists'; a notable exception is Elsner 1995.

<sup>10</sup> For a noteworthy exception see Muth 1998, with examples of the traditional views in n. 1141, and now Newby 2011.

<sup>11</sup> Dunbabin 1978: 38-45; Raeck 1992: esp. 71-8; Muth 1998, esp. 282-9, with further bibliography; with reference to sarcophagi: Sichtermann 1966: 82-7; Brandenburg 1967: 210, 240-3 with n. 132; Blome 1978; Wrede 1981, 171; Koch and Sichtermann 1982, 615-17; Koortbojian 1995: 138-41.

that the move away from mythological narrative is part of a general change in visual rhetoric<sup>12</sup> which, in turn, was better suited to expressing the messages the patrons of these sarcophagi wanted to convey. In a second step, I would like to revisit the relationship between the aims and objectives of this visual rhetoric and of ekphrastic authors, and demonstrate that literary ekphrasis is not concerned with art criticism, but has its very own agenda, which is strikingly different from that of the visual arts in many instances.

## Sarcophagi

On Roman sarcophagi, we find the two aspects of *Entmythologisierung* just summarized not entirely simultaneously but as stages in a development. In the first decades of the third century, mythological sarcophagi were still produced, but with a marked decline in narrative quality. From about the 230s or 240s, however, mythological images were increasingly outnumbered either by symbolic decorative images such as garlands, the seasons, or lions savaging their prey, or by images referring to various real-life activities.<sup>13</sup>

This twofold shift has been interpreted in a number of ways. As mentioned above, in earlier scholarship it was regarded as yet another indication of a general decline during the third century, – a cessation of the ability to understand and depict the complexities of myths whose narrative content was seen as their essence.<sup>14</sup> But while it is true, as we shall see, that there is a decline in narrative detail in the sarcophagus images, telling a story for the sake of it was never their primary function. There is no such thing as an ‘autonomous myth’.<sup>15</sup> As is generally acknowledged, myths on sarcophagi were meant to express

<sup>12</sup> For the term ‘visual rhetoric’ see Borg 2001. I use this term in order to highlight that the creators of images use strategies to guide and manipulate viewers’ interpretations and ‘readings’ just as poets or orators do.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Ewald 2003: esp. fig. 1; Zanker and Ewald 2004: 255–66; P. Zanker 2005. As Jaś Elsner reminds me, there is a return to narrative with the advent of Christian sarcophagi, but they became more numerous only around the turn of the fourth century. For the following see also Borg 2010 and Borg 2013.

<sup>14</sup> Thus e.g. Raeck 1992: esp. 161–6; for a critique of his approach cf. Amedick 1997; Muth 1998: esp. 284–7. Koortbojian 1995: 140f., points out that the fewer the narrative details the more sophistication it takes to identify the myth referred to.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. esp. Hölscher 1993; Muth 1998, 287f. and *passim*; Zanker and Ewald 2004: 52–54 and *passim*; for the opposite view Raeck 1992, esp. 78, 159.

specific concerns about death, the deceased, and their families, and narratives served as a poetic way of conveying these messages, elevating the deceased as well as the general atmosphere of the funeral and tomb into a heroic realm.<sup>16</sup>

More recently, Paul Zanker has therefore suggested a different explanation. Drawing on the fact that early mythological narratives on sarcophagi of the second century are particularly varied, sophisticated, and sometimes difficult to interpret, he followed Müller in attributing the introduction of mythological sarcophagus imagery to an educated elite and their specific interest in all things to do with Greek learning (*paideia*), which was so important for self-representation in the high time of the so-called Second Sophistic. Correspondingly, he put the discarding of such imagery down to a decline in this interest, a trend that he suspected was enhanced by an increasing number of (crypto-)Christians.<sup>17</sup> But while this explanation has the advantage of refraining from the gloomy scenario of 'decline', it is not easy to find compelling reasons to sustain it. Not only does Greek *paideia*, if anything, become even more important as a status symbol in late antiquity among both pagans and Christians,<sup>18</sup> but the large number of sarcophagi depicting their patrons surrounded by muses and sages, and engaged in 'intellectual' activities, confirm a continued interest in *paideia* throughout the third century.<sup>19</sup>

A major problem with almost all attempts at explaining the reduced narrative qualities of sarcophagus imagery is the assumption that the intended message remained essentially the same throughout the use of these myths, at least during the Roman period and in this specific genre. This is most obvious when features from third-century sarcophagi are used to interpret the meaning of second-century examples. The fact that mythical protagonists assume the portrait features of the deceased in the third century serves to confirm that also in the second century these same protagonists with their stories, and even myths in general, were used to praise the deceased for various virtues. According to this view, the

<sup>16</sup> Scholars are divided, however, over what these messages and concerns were. For three different views see for instance: Müller 1994; Turcan 1999; Zanker and Ewald 2004.

<sup>17</sup> P. Zanker 2005, and elsewhere; cf. Müller 1994: 139-70, for the idea that a learned elite clientele introduced mythological sarcophagi in the wake of the Second Sophistic 'movement'.

<sup>18</sup> E.g. Cameron 1985; Bowersock 1990; Brown 1992; Cameron 2004; Muth 1998: 282f. with bibl. on the continued interest in mythological subjects in mosaic decorations of houses.

<sup>19</sup> On these sarcophagi see esp. Wegner 1966; Ewald 1999. I have argued elsewhere that the so-called philosophers' sarcophagi only rarely refer to philosophy, but mostly claim *paideia* in its more comprehensive sense for their patrons: Borg 2004b.

third-century sarcophagi would only render more explicitly a message common to sarcophagi of both centuries.<sup>20</sup> However, this argument is highly problematic. It either assumes that it took the Romans two centuries to ‘liberate’ themselves from the overpowering influence of Greek models and come up with a suitable iconography of their own, or conceptualizes the style and composition of the images as external to their meaning and fails entirely to take the ‘language of images’ as what it is: utterly rhetorical.<sup>21</sup> Let us look at a few examples.

### Persephone sarcophagi

Among sarcophagi with mythological images, Persephone sarcophagi constitute the second largest group. On the majority of early caskets, the heroine’s abduction was just one part of a larger scene in the right-hand third of the frieze. Demeter and her chariot drawn by serpents occupy a major part of the visual field on the left, and Athena, Aphrodite, and one or more of Persephone’s companions occupy the centre (Figure 7.1).<sup>22</sup> In the last decade of the second century, a third scene is introduced on some caskets, Hades’ surprise attack on the heroine while she is picking flowers with her friends.<sup>23</sup> In both iconographic groups, Persephone now moves into the centre of the relief. In one group, Hades and his chariot with Persephone’s frantic struggle occupy the middle position:<sup>24</sup> in a second

<sup>20</sup> Peter Blome was among the first to draw attention to the marked changes in sarcophagus iconographies, to recognize the changes in meaning involved, and also to interpret some interesting sarcophagi of the third century. However, he regarded these changes primarily as processes of Romanization of Greek myth, and thus contributed to the misunderstanding that, once Greek myths had been adapted by Romans, their Roman (rather than Greek) interpretation remained largely unchanged, and was only expressed in more comprehensible ways: Blome 1978; Blome 1992. For more recent studies still taking the same approach see among others Koortbojian 1995: 18; Zanker and Ewald 2004, 45. In the same vein, Ruth Bielfeldt (2005) even assumes encomiastic elements in the gruesome events on Orestes sarcophagi.

<sup>21</sup> To be sure, all authors mentioned in the previous footnote (as well as many others) pay due attention to changes in style and their significance on other occasions, and Tonio Hölscher even devoted a programmatic and highly influential short monograph to the ‘language of images’ (Hölscher 2004; it first appeared in German in 1987). But as Jaś Elsner has astutely noticed, in this book – and I would extend this to most other accounts of style – there is still a strong essentialist element in that the agents of these stylistic changes remain largely unclear (Elsner in Hölscher 2004b: xxvi; Elsner 2006b: 764–6). For an approach similar to my own see now Newby 2011, which only came to my attention after this essay was completed.

<sup>22</sup> Robert 1919: nos. 359–77; Koch and Sichtermann 1982: 175f.

<sup>23</sup> Koch and Sichtermann 1982: 177. <sup>24</sup> E.g. Robert 1919: nos. 379, 382–4.

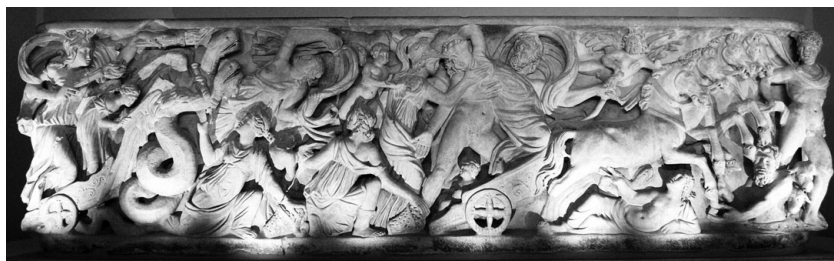


Figure 7.1 Late Antonine Persephone sarcophagus. Aachen, Domschatzkammer.

group the attack in the meadow occupies the centre. However, in both groups the heroine is often depicted on such a small scale that it is difficult to identify her in the crowd.<sup>25</sup> In other cases she is a mirror image of one of her companions,<sup>26</sup> and in still others the heroine is hardly visible at all since Hades on the chariot is depicted in a wonderful aspect from the back.<sup>27</sup> In all these images, there is still a remarkable degree of narrative content. The focus is on the act of abduction rather than the heroine as a specific character, and proves that the myth continues to be used as a paradigm of loss and death as it had been from the time when it first featured on funerary altars.<sup>28</sup>

But from around 200 until the mid-third century, a number of representations focus much more on the protagonists of the event. In some images with Hades' attack on Persephone in the middle, the heroine is framed by her veil, while her companions are moved to the background or sides to push her firmly into the centre of attention.<sup>29</sup> On a casket in Messina (Figure 7.2), Persephone received portrait features, and her body was properly covered up so that she seems to be wearing, not the usual *chiton* but the Roman tunic and *palla*.<sup>30</sup> The chariot scene is unchanged, however, so that the myth appears as a backdrop, an *ornatus* and further comment, while the deceased is shown in her familiar dress, picking flowers as she may well have done as a girl in the prime of her youth awaiting marriage, before she was snatched away by death. This image is, perhaps, closest to the metaphorical references to rape by Pluto that we frequently find in the epitaphs.

<sup>25</sup> E.g. Robert 1919: no. 397. <sup>26</sup> E.g. Robert 1919: nos. 405, 406, 409.

<sup>27</sup> Robert 1919: nos. 411-13, 415; Lindner 1984: 80-2 nos. 195-10.

<sup>28</sup> See below n. 48. <sup>29</sup> E.g. Robert 1919: nos. 389, 391, 393, 412.

<sup>30</sup> To this effect, also the usual blown veil behind her has disappeared. Messina, Mus. Reg. A224: Robert 1919: 482f., no. 399; Wrede 1981: 296f., no. 266; Lindner 1984: 68f., no. 78; Tusa 1995: 40f., no. 40 pls 53-6; Newby 2011: 220-1, fig. 6.10.



Figure 7.2 Mid-Severan Persephone sarcophagus. Messina, Museo Regionale A224.



Figure 7.3 Severan Persephone sarcophagus. Rome, Museo Capitolino, Galleria 249.

On other sarcophagi it is Persephone in the chariot scene who assumed portrait features as she does in a lost fragment,<sup>31</sup> or on a unique sarcophagus in the Museo Capitolino (Figure 7.3).<sup>32</sup> On the latter, the chariot occupies the centre of the relief. Persephone is no longer in a horizontal position with her arms stretched out in anxiety and desperation, but she is riding upright in the chariot, turning to the viewer and holding behind her the wind-blown drapery that frames her nude body. The effect is all too clear: the focus has shifted from the drama of loss and death to the reason for the rape, Persephone's beauty and seductiveness, and thus to praise of the deceased. In order to stage her appropriately, this time Hades' attack is pushed to the side. Here as well, the heroine is almost entirely naked and presented frontally to the viewer, and the scene is not overly dramatic

<sup>31</sup> Robert 1919: 471, no. 380; Koch 1976: 110, no. 24, fig. 24; Wrede 1981: 297, no. 267; Lindner 1984: 72, no. 83.

<sup>32</sup> Rome, Museo Capitolino 249K: Robert 1919: 477f., no. 392; Blome 1978: 450-3, pl. 147.2; Wrede 1981: 297f., no. 269; Lindner 1984: 70f., no. 81; Zanker and Ewald 2004: 52, fig. 77; pp. 94, 370-2, no. 33; Newby 2011: 223.





Figure 7.4 Persephone sarcophagus, AD c. 240. Rome, Palazzo Giustiniani.

either. But Persephone in this scene has an ideal head and the myth has again become more of a backdrop against which we are supposed to understand the image in the centre. The marked change of the primary message is further amplified by new figures added to the scene. On the right, Hercules and Victoria symbolize victory, commenting not only on Hades' success but also on the deceased.<sup>33</sup>

On one example from around 240, Hades' head is lost and Persephone's too poorly preserved to be certain about any portrait features (Figure 7.4).<sup>34</sup> Yet, the iconography of the scene strongly suggests that both did have portrait heads. The heroine's companions have been omitted. Instead, Aphrodite has come in support of the action and two Eros figures are hovering in the background. The image in the centre has been turned into a metaphor for the deceased couple's love while the chariot scene retains its mythical personnel and faint allusion to death. In another late example, the myth is even more radically reinterpreted (Figure 7.5).<sup>35</sup> Only Hades has portrait features. He is carrying a spear rather than a sceptre (?), and is moved to the foreground flanking Persephone on the right so that his athletic body is fully visible. His counterpart on the left is Athena taking the place of Aphrodite. She now is Hades' helper whereas on the early sarcophagi she usually tries to hold back the girl. The position behind the chariot is taken by Artemis alone.

<sup>33</sup> Blome 1978: 450-2, rightly observes that the figures must refer to the deceased as well, and that Heracles has become a symbolic figure.

<sup>34</sup> Rome, Palazzo Giustiniani: Rizzo 1905: 36-8, pl. 3-4,1 (Hades' portrait head is ancient but a modern addition to this casket); Robert 1919: no. 390; Wrede 1981: 296, 298, no. 265 = 270; Lindner 1984: 71f., no. 82; Newby 2011: 221-2 with fig. 6.11 (she seems to think that the head is original).

<sup>35</sup> Berlin, Staatliche Museen Preussischer Kulturbesitz Sk 874: Robert 1919: 474, no. 387; Lindner 1984: 65, no. 69; no photograph seems to be published of this exceptional piece.



**Figure 7.5** Gallienic (?) Persephone sarcophagus. Berlin, Staatliche Museen Preussischer Kulturbesitz Sk 874.

The myth has been transformed considerably and very capriciously into an image of conquest and victory.<sup>36</sup>

## Endymion and Selene

Endymion sarcophagi constitute the largest group among mythological sarcophagi, and they change in a very similar way.<sup>37</sup> On earlier examples, the ever-sleeping hero was usually depicted at one end of the relief, while Selene with her chariot was in the centre, and much of the space was used to amplify the bucolic setting. Around 180, a second scene was introduced which gives the event a less optimistic touch, Selene leaving Endymion (Figure 7.6). This variation continues into the third century, but the monoscenic sarcophagi become the far more popular option. There is a tendency now to move Endymion and the goddess towards the centre of the relief, and from around 220 the couple is often depicted in larger scale than the surrounding figures, and occupies a major part of the high sarcophagus fronts. They are the calm centre of the scene, standing out against the breeziness of the other figures. There is a particularly large number of pieces with portrait heads. With the exception of one or two examples from the beginning of the century, it is always both protagonists who

<sup>36</sup> The portrait features have passed unnoticed in scholarship, but they are clearly visible in the drawing by Eichler reproduced in Robert (here Fig. 7.5). They also explain best the unique composition of figures, which equally has passed unnoticed. The sarcophagus is most likely Gallienic.

<sup>37</sup> Koch and Sichtermann 1982: 144-6; Sichtermann 1992: 32-58, 103-63, nos. 27-137.





Figure 7.6 Antonine Endymion sarcophagus. Rome, Museo Capitolino 723.



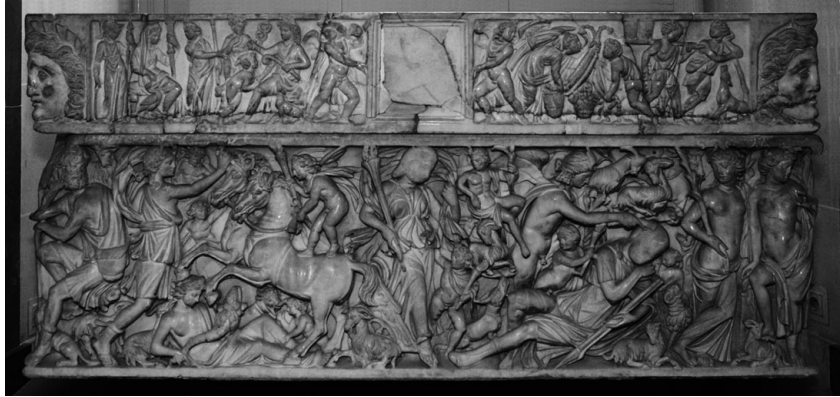
Figure 7.7 Gallienic Endymion sarcophagus. Woburn Abbey.

receive portrait features.<sup>38</sup> Four examples are still of the earlier type with Endymion and Selene in the right half of the scene.<sup>39</sup> But the full potential of such portrait identification is developed in three spectacular examples of the second type, from the second to third quarter of the century, on which Selene and Endymion – or should we say the deceased couple? – are displayed as by far the most prominent figures (Figures 7.7–7.8).<sup>40</sup> With the exception again of the two

<sup>38</sup> Newby 2011; exceptions: Sichtermann 1992: 130f. no. 77, pls 75.1, 84, 112.4-5; 113f., no. 49, pls 49, 50.3-4, 66.8 (Selene is not preserved, so that we do not know whether or not she also had a portrait head).

<sup>39</sup> Sichtermann 1992: 118 no. 56 pls 52.4, 57, 59, 60.3, 66.9-10 (naked with cloak and spear); 127f., no. 73, pls 67.7-8, 75.2, 78, 79.3 (fully dressed with spear and sword); 130, no. 76, pls 75.3, 79.1-2, 80.1, 112.1-2 (mantle covering his lower body and closed with fibula on right shoulder); for portrait features on Endymion see Schauenburg 1980: 153, n. 23 contra Sichtermann and others); possibly also: 140 no. 85 pl. 81.3 (fully dressed without weapons; Selene's head not preserved).

<sup>40</sup> Sichtermann 1992: 125-7, no. 72, pls 86.1, 88, 89, 94, 113.2-3 (fully dressed in tunic, cloak and boots with spear); 142f., no. 93, pls 87.1, 90.1, 95, 98, 113.5-6 (fully dressed, *lagōbolon*); 143-5, no. 94, pls 87.2, 92.3-4, 93.3-4, 99.1-2 (fully dressed with two spears).



**Figure 7.8** Endymion sarcophagus, second quarter of the third century. Paris, Louvre Ma 1335.

early pieces, Endymion now regularly is a hunter with *lagōbolon*, spears and, in one example, even a sword. Moreover, he is older now and, with one additional exception, he is fully dressed, sometimes with short tunic, cloak and boots. He thereby has lost some of the ostensibly erotic features he had in the early reliefs where his body, often naked below his pubes, is revealed by an Eros pulling away his covering *himation*. It is clearly the love of the couple that is in the centre of attention,<sup>41</sup> but with this more immediate allocation of one aspect of the story to the sarcophagus patrons, it must have appeared more appropriate to reduce the ostensive eroticism of the male hero,<sup>42</sup> supplement some *virtus*, and adjust Endymion's age in order to adapt the myth for a more direct identification with the protagonists, and for the self-representation of two Romans.<sup>43</sup>

## Amazonomachy

Amazonomachy sarcophagi started to be produced in the second century with depictions of anonymous, rather generic battle scenes. At the end of

<sup>41</sup> As Sichtermann 1992: 52; Koortbojian 1995: 133f., and others have rightly stressed.

<sup>42</sup> Thus also Zanker and Ewald 2004: 108, 207, but I do not agree that this is a matter of morals.

<sup>43</sup> It is not clear that the relationship between the two is always that of a married couple. The very youthful features of Endymion and rather mature face of Selene on the sarcophagus in the Palazzo Doria (Sichtermann 1992: no. 93; cf. here n. 40) could indicate that it is mother and son who are portrayed. A similar case is that of Theseus and Ariadne where the identity of the two is indicated by the inscription on the lid (Robert 1904: 219, no. 179, with fig.; Koch and Sichtermann 1982: 152f. with n. 38; Zanker and Ewald 2004: 45, 47f., 378-81, fig. 31), and probably of Aphrodite and Adonis on the Adonis sarcophagus from the so-called Tomb of the Pancratii discussed below (at n. 52); cf. Newby 2011: 207-9.



**Figure 7.9** Achilles–Penthesilea sarcophagus, second quarter third century. Vatican City, Museo Vaticano, Cortile del Belvedere 933.

the second century, a soldier killing an Amazon is singled out on some sarcophagi in a prominent position in the centre, suggesting that he is Achilles killing Penthesilea.<sup>44</sup> From the early third century to around 250, all ambiguity is removed, and hero and heroine are depicted in the centre of the scene after the fatal blow (Figure 7.9).<sup>45</sup> They are no longer fighting – unlike the rest of their troops – but Penthesilea is dying and collapsing in the arms of Achilles, who had fallen in love with her the moment he killed her. On six of these sarcophagi, both protagonists have portrait heads, and on these in particular Penthesilea is held in a somewhat unnatural, theatrical position.<sup>46</sup> She is presented to the viewer rather than embraced by Achilles who is equally turned as far towards the viewer as the subject would allow. That the viewer is the addressee of the message is also clear from their views, which are not directed towards one another but outside the imaginary space of the event. The beauty, courage, love and care of the mythical heroes are not just casually intended as mythical paradigms for the beauty, *virtus*, love and care of the deceased couple, but emphatically and proudly presented as such, while the battle and its participants, who

<sup>44</sup> Robert 1890: 77, nos. 86f. (his third Roman group); Koch and Sichtermann 1982: 139.

<sup>45</sup> Robert 1890: 77, 108–44, nos. 88–101 (his fourth Roman group); Koch and Sichtermann 1982: 139f.; Grassinger 1999: 153–4, 179–85, nos. 118–36; Zanker and Ewald 2004: 52–4, 215, 220, 285–8, no. 3, with a slightly different interpretation.

<sup>46</sup> Robert 1890: nos. 88, 92, 94–6, 99 = Grassinger 1999: nos. 119, 125, 127, 130f., 137.

are also depicted in smaller sizes, merely constitute the backdrop and incidental allusion to the mythical story.

### Changing message, changing rhetoric

Similar changes affect sarcophagi with other mythological subjects, all confirming the general trends we have observed so far. True, there is a considerable loss in narrative quality, but this is by no means an accidental result from a failure to understand the story. Rather, we are dealing with an intentional manipulation of the myths and their iconographies in order to make them fit the messages that the sarcophagi's patrons now wanted to convey. The link with the deceased is not only more explicit but also more specific, and now refers to a particular individual or couple – rarely a larger number of individuals – rather than a potentially infinite group of addressees. As I shall argue more fully elsewhere, in the second century the Endymion and Persephone sarcophagi use the myths as rather general paradigms of death and loss that provide some consolation by drawing on the traditional comparison between death and eternal sleep, and by suggesting the protection and vicinity of a divinity. As is the case with all mythical paradigms, they also lend some nobility to the present event with which they are compared, and to the people involved in it. But it is primarily rape and abduction into Hades and eternal sleep that are compared, not the protagonists, as is clear from the patrons for whom these sarcophagi were used. Of the four inscribed Endymion sarcophagi two were for women, one for a couple but dedicated by a husband on the occasion of his wife's death, and only one for a young man.<sup>47</sup> No Persephone sarcophagus bears an inscription, but of seven inscribed altars from the second century depicting the Rape of Persephone, four were dedicated to men, two to a couple, and only one to a single woman. This suggests that Persephone sarcophagi could equally be used for men, extending the metaphor of rape by Hades to the male deceased, as is sometimes done in epitaphs.<sup>48</sup> The primary function of myths on second-century sarcophagi is to serve as *exempla mortalitatis*, not as *exempla uirtutis*,<sup>49</sup> and the general

<sup>47</sup> Sichtermann 1992: nos. 27, 35, 79, 80.

<sup>48</sup> Altars: Lindner 1984: 60–4, nos. 56–66 (her no. 58 is perhaps a second altar for a woman but it is lost and was never illustrated); Boschung 1987, 51 with n. 750. Epitaphs: e.g. CLE 1219 = CIL 6.25871; CLE 1223 = CIL 6.25128.

<sup>49</sup> Cf. Müller 1994: esp. 88–106, and Müller 2003, for the same suggestion in connection with Achilles sarcophagi, and now Newby 2011: esp. 194–200, who shows that this holds true in the second century even for the rare sarcophagi with portrait heads.

comparison with a heroic death is what elevates the present one to a heroic realm, quite independently of age or gender.

With the introduction of portraits in the third century, the message becomes more focused in that it makes a statement explicitly about the individuals portrayed, and thus forces upon the viewer a direct comparison between the mythical protagonists and the deceased, while the details of action and event become secondary. The comparison with the heroes almost naturally results in stronger encomiastic overtones, but these are enhanced further and deliberately by changes in the iconography.<sup>50</sup> Firstly, the protagonists had to move fully into the centre rather than being part of a larger and potentially confusing narrative. Secondly, when they assumed the portrait features of the deceased, the mythical protagonists had to guard their decorum, calm down, pose for the viewer, and dress according to the message.

Thirdly, the gloomy and passionate aspects of the myths no longer appeared appropriate. As Zanker has duly noted, the blows of fate, loss and death, as well as more passionate love affairs – popular themes of mythical narratives during the second century – are generally being marginalized during the third.<sup>51</sup> The violent deaths on Medea/Creusa, Orestes, or Niobid sarcophagi are abandoned around the turn of the century, as they also are on Adonis sarcophagi, with their particularly passionate and physical depictions of affection. There is only one remarkable exception, which is also the only one with portrait heads (Figure 7.10). On this sarcophagus from the so-called Pancratii tomb on the Via Latina,<sup>52</sup> we find the usual farewell scene on the left-hand side, but the following image depicts Adonis already wounded and attended to by a doctor, as well as Aphrodite sitting next to him, while the hunt which resulted in the deadly wound is the last scene on the right. The sequence of events is distorted in order to present the couple in the centre. Adonis is obviously injured but this does not seem to affect him very much. With Aphrodite to his left he is enthroned rather than just sitting; not leaning on her shoulder breathing his last breath, but looking

<sup>50</sup> Muth 1998: esp. 246–8, recognizes the importance of status representation for the iconographies of mythical mosaics, but she is more interested in mythological images as a sublimated form of erotic discourse. She also does not apply the same methodological insights to sarcophagi, which she largely interprets in the line of Zanker and Ewald: *ibid.* 106 n. 375, 165–70, 306f.

<sup>51</sup> Zanker and Ewald 2004: 255–66; Zanker 2005: esp. 248, 250–2.

<sup>52</sup> Blome 1990: esp. 54–5, fig. 22; Koortbojian 1995: 50–3, fig. 7; Grassinger 1999: 74, no. 65, fig. 7, pls 47.2, 49.3, 52.2, 53.2, 55–7, 59, 63.1; Zanker and Ewald 2004: 211–12, 290–2, no. 6, fig. 190; their interpretation differs partly from my own.





**Figure 7.10** Severan Adonis sarcophagus from the ‘Tomba dei Pancratii’. Vatican, Museo Gregoriano Profano 10409.

rather confident next to his lover. Except for his nudity, the two look entirely like a couple (or mother and son)<sup>53</sup> of some distinction, ready to receive guests or clients.<sup>54</sup> Interestingly, only the couple in this image is equipped with portrait heads while the protagonists in the two flanking scenes are generic figures, who are also depicted in smaller size, detaching the deceased from the mythological narrative to a significant extent. Adonis’ and Aphrodite’s more passionate and dramatic moments of love and death remain separated from the deceased couple. As in other stories, the aspects of death and drama were marginalized, and the story became an ornate backdrop to the celebration of the deceased in this one instance where a third-century patron dared to commission an image of this challenging myth.

It is clear from these examples that preference for less emotional images that avoided the display of excessive grief as well as the passion of love reflects not only a change in attitude towards emotions, as Zanker suggested,<sup>55</sup> but is primarily a consequence of the newly increased desire to use sarcophagus images for praise of the deceased, and for status

<sup>53</sup> As suggested by Grassinger 1999: 74, followed by Zanker and Ewald 2004: 291, because of the apparent young age of ‘Adonis’.

<sup>54</sup> Koortbojian 1995: 44-6, rightly stressed the symbolic arrangement of scenes and focus on an enthroned couple, but his suggestion that this is a sign of apotheosis and resurrection is misguided (*ibid.* 49-62). While a similar iconography is indeed used for divinities and deified emperors, it is not in itself a sign of divine status, but of command and rule, which would apply to gods as well as to humans of some ambition.

<sup>55</sup> Zanker and Ewald 2004: 255-66; Zanker 2005: esp. 248, 250-2.

representation.<sup>56</sup> The observed changes in the iconography and use of myth on sarcophagi attest a remarkable creativity and imagination on the part of those who shaped the new iconographies.<sup>57</sup> Rather than lacking understanding of, or appreciation for, the stories and the ‘real’ meaning of the myths, third-century sarcophagi set out to exploit the myths’ full potential of being adaptable to various purposes and occasions. To some extent, they changed the narratives, adding a few things, leaving out others, and sometimes even reinterpreting them to outright distortion. But they also changed the *language*, the *rhetoric* of the narrative: the composition of the scenes, the proportions of figures as well as of scenes, and the movements and postures of the protagonists.

Admittedly, this rhetoric could not save mythical images on sarcophagi in the medium term, and the tensions still contained in these images cannot have passed unnoticed. As long as the Amazonomachy, and even Penthesilea’s death, remained a general *exemplum mortalitatis*, it did not matter much who was responsible for the killing. But when the protagonists were identified with the patrons of the sarcophagus directly by bearing their portrait features, these details must have become difficult to accept. Surely the Achilles and Penthesilea sarcophagi were not all created for wives who fell victim to their husbands or lovers, and even though the actual killing is not depicted, it must have been present in the minds of viewers, whose capacities in selective reading were tried hard. It may thus have been this tension that contributed considerably to the abandonment of mythical sarcophagi in the medium term. But the growing concern about praise of the deceased and status representation must equally have contributed to this abandonment. It is most obvious in the unprecedented number of *vita humana* sarcophagi, but also in the widespread use of portraits on the lids as well as in tondos on the caskets.

## Ekphrasis

The interpretation of the new, less ‘lively’ iconographies, and the loss in narrative quality of the sarcophagus imagery suggested here, obviously

<sup>56</sup> The increased interest in status representation in the third century is noticed by Zanker and Ewald 2004: 253-5, but only in connection with non-mythological sarcophagi. The reasons for this change in attitude cannot be explored in this essay, but as I argue elsewhere (Borg 2013), they are probably to be sought, at least partly, in different display contexts.

<sup>57</sup> Ditto Newby 2011; cf. Muth 1998: esp. 283, 289, for the same assessment of changes in mosaic iconography.

raises questions about the relationship between the praise of artistic qualities in rhetorical and other literary ekphrases, and the qualities of real art as appreciated by its patrons and creators, and thus about the usefulness of evaluative criteria in ekphrases for our understanding of ancient art criticism. One author who devoted an entire work to ekphrases, the elder Philostratus, wrote his *Eikones* roughly around 220, and thus at the same time as the sarcophagi discussed above, and can serve as a suitable example to study this discrepancy.<sup>58</sup> His descriptions of paintings are characterized by their praise of the images' lifelikeness that even deceives the viewer into reacting to the actions depicted as if they were taking place in reality. In *Menoikeus*, for instance, the boy – to whom Philostratus explains the images – is invited to catch the wounded hero's blood in the folds of his garment (1.4.4), and at various points we are told that one could even hear the sounds made by the painted figures, and smell the fragrances exuded by gardens or a fire.<sup>59</sup> Moreover, the alleged vividness of the depictions triggers the Sophist's evocation of the entire narratives on which his interpretations rely, suggesting that this was also their main purpose.

Francesca Ghedini has shown in a detailed comparison between the *Eikones* and surviving ancient art that Philostratus was not only familiar with real-art iconographies, but also drew upon them regularly, albeit in various ways.<sup>60</sup> While some of his paintings are very close in subject and iconography to still extant ancient images, others draw upon styles and iconographies more eclectically. Even obvious inventions by Philostratus, which have no parallel in ancient art, use familiar iconographical elements.

It has been noted that Philostratus is particularly interested in his protagonists' sensuality and state of emotion,<sup>61</sup> and I want to argue that this aspect is key to our understanding of the kind of art he creates. While some of his ekphrases seem to convey comments on specific emotions and character features as exemplified by the protagonists of his images, three other aspects are relevant throughout the corpus: the literary tradition of ekphrasis from Homer onwards, the role of emotions in successful education and persuasion, and the idea that the visual is better suited to create

<sup>58</sup> Most recently Costantini et al. 2006; Bowie and Elsner 2009; both with further bibliography. Much of what I shall say here about the elder Philostratus' *Eikones* is true also for Philostratus the Younger's homonymous word, on which see Noack-Hilgers 1999.

<sup>59</sup> Manieri 1999. <sup>60</sup> Ghedini 2000; Ghedini 2004.

<sup>61</sup> Sensuality: Manieri 1999; Newby 2009; eroticism: Elsner 1996; Mathieu-Castellani 1996; Mathieu-Castellani 1997; Mathieu-Castellani 2006. On Philostratus the Younger's interest in emotions see Noack-Hilgers 1999: 206.



such emotions. These aspects are closely related, but I shall briefly treat them separately for heuristic reasons.

The first point, the tradition of ekphrasis, has already been sketched above. Whatever the differences of context or genre, a main aim of ekphrasis had always been to produce as vivid a description as possible, a description of – or narrative about – an artwork that deceives its audience by making them imagine as real an object which may in fact be non-existent or artificial. The competition between writers and orators contributed to the appreciation of the skills involved in such exercises, and Philostratus puts himself directly into this tradition,<sup>62</sup> aiming to outdo his predecessors by accepting the challenges and main rules of the game.

The second aspect is ekphrasis' suitability to didactic discourses. According to ancient theory, didactic discourse (like forensic speeches) must achieve two main objectives: to persuade the audience of the veracity and value of what is being said, and to render the message memorable – and in both cases visualization was regarded as a powerful tool. It was generally agreed in antiquity that the visual is easier to memorize than the verbal, so that orators are advised to use images in their own mind to memorize the details of their speeches, but also to create images in the minds of their audience in order to render the speech more memorable to them.<sup>63</sup> Who would forget Lucian's *Calumny* or *Heracles Ogmios* after reading them? Both are not really about a painting – after all, it is most unlikely that either of these paintings existed. They are lessons about slander, and about the power of speech in old age; and, of course, they are impressive documents for Lucian's visualizing skills, and teasers for the longer oration that was to follow: so much so that they have inspired modern artists to recreate these images, and modern scholars to make every effort to find evidence, however elusive, for their existence.<sup>64</sup> It is also no coincidence that the elder Philostratus' ekphrases were allegedly delivered to a young boy, who was supposed to learn the messages taught by the paintings and to memorize as much as possible of the general erudition that Philostratus offered. After all, it has long been noticed that the *Eikones* are not only about ekphrastic skills, but full of references to 'classical' authors, especially to Homer, and that they display an enormously wide range of knowledge and wisdom, the full scope of traditional

<sup>62</sup> Philostratos, *Imagines*, *Proem*, 4 (295K 16–21): Webb 2006: 116; this context of Philostratus is generally accepted.

<sup>63</sup> Yates 1966; Blum 1969; Elsner 1995: 77–80; Small 1997; Webb 2009: esp. 110–13.

<sup>64</sup> Borg 2004a. A similar claim is made for Philostratus by Webb 2006, and convincingly so.

*paideia*.<sup>65</sup> At least within the narrative, it is this wide range of knowledge, poetry, philosophy, geography, myth, and science, that the boy is being taught,<sup>66</sup> and the images are intended to help the boy's memory, while the adolescents invited to listen – and, indeed, the readers of the account of these 'lessons' – certainly admired the speaker's/author's rhetorical skills, and his sophisticated play on representation, illusion, and deception through the visual and the verbal.<sup>67</sup>

Finally, the main reason why images were both memorable and a powerful persuasive tool was that they were perceived as emotionally appealing, and ekphrases made the most of this emotional engagement.<sup>68</sup> Philostratus' interest in emotions was not just an idiosyncratic predilection, but closely related both to the aim of oratory in persuading the audience, and to the genre of ekphrasis. Anything but a claim to lifelike vividness and emotional charge for the images described would have been preposterous.<sup>69</sup> Philostratus' (and other ekphrastic authors') impressive engagement with visual art thus cannot be taken as a reflection of art criticism and its criteria in general, nor of a given and generally applicable taste at any particular time. Not even his knowledge of and reference to real iconographies can support this view.<sup>70</sup> His close adherence to familiar iconographies is another strategy to render the existence and nature of his images that much more convincing, and to help the audience's imagination by using familiar elements.<sup>71</sup> At best the *Eikones* is a reflection of a

<sup>65</sup> Newby 2009; for a concise summary and evaluation of Philostratus' skilful merging of a wide range of second-sophistic genres and interests see Elsner 2009: esp. 10-12.

<sup>66</sup> Elsner 1995: 28f. rightly insists on the neglected educational aspect of the *Eikones*, but I do not agree that what is being taught is 'how to look', despite Philostratus' assertion in the introduction.

<sup>67</sup> This point is stressed by Webb 2009: 187-90; Webb 2006, also draws attention to the fact that the ekphrases of paintings are actually ekphrases within an ekphrasis, namely the ekphrasis of a sophist visiting a gallery and performing ekphrases.

<sup>68</sup> E.g. Quint. *Inst.* 6.2.29-30; Webb 2009: 94-101. Goldhill 2007: 3-7, stresses the fact that this persuasion through *phantasia* is not at all innocent, but is able to mask facts and rational thought. The link between the sensual and emotional, and erudition has been well observed and described by Newby 2009, but her interest is in the question of *paragone*.

<sup>69</sup> On the relationship between erotics and naturalism (though from a different angle) see Elsner 1996.

<sup>70</sup> As proposed by Ghedini 2004: 432. Moreover, while she does not claim that the gallery and the paintings described by Philostratus existed, Ghedini concludes that many *like* them were created during Philostratus' lifetime, which is hard to confirm from the material or documentary evidence we have from this period.

<sup>71</sup> Similarly, the ancient orator is advised to draw upon familiar things, upon his and the audience's 'visual resources': Webb 2009: 110-11, 126-7 with references.

particular sub-group of art that was intended to be emotional, and thus particularly emotionally appealing.

## Conclusion

For these reasons, the closest parallels for Philostratus' images are not found in third-century art, but in Pompeian wall painting – and, at least in terms of style and rhetoric, on sarcophagi from the second century with their highly emotional images. It is there that we find strong facial expressions and sweeping gestures, and an accumulation of detail that recalls the larger story. But as we have seen, this does not make such work superior in comparison to the reliefs of the third century – not at any rate in the eyes of Roman viewers. Such emotion and drama are part of the message and the rhetoric employed to convey it. When the message changed in third-century sarcophagi, the rhetoric had to change as well.<sup>72</sup> The requirements of encomiastic expositions, and the decorum that had to be observed in visual self-representation, rendered the drama and excitement of second-century sarcophagi inappropriate. Like oratory, which changed style depending on subject matter and context, pictorial representation adapted its visual rhetoric according to its own various aims and messages.

<sup>72</sup> It should be clear that I do not regard my explanation as covering all changes that take place in the third century, but rather as an example of how one might approach the issue.

## 8 | Poems in Stone

### *Reading Mythological Sarcophagi through Statius' Consolations*

ZAHRA NEWBY

Homo es; resiste et tumulum contempla meum  
You are mortal: stop and consider my tomb.<sup>1</sup>

Roman funerary monuments spoke out to their viewers. Funerary inscriptions cry out to the passers-by, imploring them to stay a while and remember the dead.<sup>2</sup> Sometimes they are accompanied by images, presenting the dead as they wished to be remembered: the funerary monument of Flavius Agricola, found in the necropolis beneath St Peter's in Rome, showed the deceased reclining on a *klinē* while an inscription exhorted his audience to follow his example and 'drink deep, your temples wreathed in flowers' (*potate procul redimiti tempora flore*).<sup>3</sup> This essay proceeds from the premise that all Roman funerary monuments sought to speak out to their viewers, presenting a message about those buried within or some consolation to those left behind.<sup>4</sup> However, the emergence of mythological sarcophagi in the second century poses an interpretative challenge: whereas earlier funerary monuments often presented a portrait of the deceased, accompanied by an identifying inscription, sarcophagi mostly present their message by visual means alone, with inscriptions appearing only rarely.<sup>5</sup> The choice of mythological imagery as the vehicle for their funerary message also invites interpretation – what were those who commissioned or bought these sarcophagi trying to say through the medium of myth?<sup>6</sup> In this volume Jaś Elsner identifies the rhetorical effects of pagan

<sup>1</sup> CLE 83, l. 1, found near Beneventum.

<sup>2</sup> On epitaphs see Lattimore 1942; Häusle 1980; on their combination with images, Koortbojian 1996.

<sup>3</sup> Indianapolis Museum of Art, inv. 72.148; inscription now lost but recorded as CIL 6.17985a, (l. 13 quoted here). See discussion by Davies 2007: 46–9, fig. 2.3.

<sup>4</sup> For an opposite view see Vout, this volume. I would agree that sometimes the message is one about the unreachability of the dead.

<sup>5</sup> On the messages of earlier funerary art see Koortbojian 1996; Davies 2007; Vout, this volume. These too can pose interpretative challenges, especially in interpreting the symbolism of decorative imagery, see e.g. Davies 2003.

<sup>6</sup> The symbolism of mythological sarcophagi has been the subject of great scholarly debate, largely polarized between readings either as positive statements about the afterlife or as reflecting back

sarcophagi as being largely panegyric. My aim here is to explore further the encomiastic and consolatory rhetoric of mythological sarcophagi through a close comparison with the verse consolations of the poet Statius.<sup>7</sup> While Statius was writing a couple of decades before the earliest sarcophagi emerge, he uses myth in complex and sensitive ways to console the bereaved and praise the deceased, offering us insights into the possibilities myth offered in a funerary context which can help to shed light on its later use on sarcophagi.

Statius' consolations form part of his *Silvae*, occasional works of poetry addressed to individual patrons and published in five books (the last posthumously).<sup>8</sup> These books contain six works identified as *consolationes* or *epicedia*, terms which Statius seems to use interchangeably (2.1, 2.6, 3.3, 5.1, 5.3, 5.5), as well as a couple of others with funereal elements (2.7 to Lucan's widow Polla on the occasion of his birthday; 2.4 on the death of Atedius Melior's parrot).<sup>9</sup> They were written to console others (and in 5.3 and 5.5 Statius himself) on the loss of dear friends or relatives, but, as published poems are also literary pieces, designed to show off Statius' poetic prowess. As pieces commissioned (and presumably, since they were later published, approved) by others they can offer valuable insights into the sorts of themes of grief and commemoration which were thought appropriate at this period (the AD 90s), and would reflect favourably on those who commissioned them as well as the deceased themselves.

Within the poems Statius repeatedly compares his works of poetic commemoration to physical memorials in stone or marble. In 5.1 he tells us that he cannot paint or sculpt portraits of the type which the grieving husband Abascantus has already commissioned as solace for the loss of his wife, but instead will construct a memorial in song which will endure

on the deceased and their decorative tastes; positions exemplified by Cumont 1942 and Nock 1946. For reviews of the scholarship see Turcan 1978; Ewald 1999a. More recent scholarship has focused instead on the messages they conveyed to their viewers, especially bereaved relatives: Fittschen 1992; Grassinger 1994; Koortbojian 1995; Zanker 2000c; Zanker and Ewald 2004; for a review see Bielfeldt 2005: 16–25.

<sup>7</sup> See also Gessert 2004 for a comparable attempt to read Medea sarcophagi in the light of the use of negative exempla in prose consolations.

<sup>8</sup> On the *Silvae* see Hardie 1983, and the commentaries by Coleman 1988 (book 1); van Dam 1984 (book 2); Laguna 1992 (book 3); Gibson 2006 (book 5); Liberman 2010.

<sup>9</sup> For discussion of Statius' consolations see Manning 1978; van Dam 1984: 63–8; Laguna 1992: 246–52; Gibson 2006: xxxi–l; on *Silvae* 2.1 see also Asso 2010. For consolatory poetry in general see Kassel 1958; Esteve Forriol 1962. On the meaning of *consolationes* and *epicedia* for Statius see Laguna 1992: 252. The dedicatory epistles to books 2 and 3 refer to such poems as both *epicedia* and *consolationes* or *solacia*. The titles given to the poems in the manuscript are probably not by Statius (Coleman 1988: xxviii–xxxii; Gibson 2006: xxviii–xxx).

forever. He concludes ‘in no other tomb will you be better laid to rest’ (*haud alio melius condere sepulchro*).<sup>10</sup> The stress on the immortality of Statius’ poetic memorials reappears in 3.3 where he states that his gifts will not burn, unlike the costly funeral gifts given by Claudius Etruscus to his father.<sup>11</sup> At the end of this poem Statius imagines Claudius Etruscus addressing his father, reproaching him for dying and promising him immortality in the form of a lavish tomb. Here Claudius will provide custodians and feasts, and set up images of his father in marble, wax, ivory and gold from which to ask advice. Statius ends the poem by saying that Claudius will also dedicate his song (*carmina*) to his father, ‘rejoicing to have entrusted your ashes to this tomb too’ (*hoc etiam gaudens cinerem donasse sepulchro*).<sup>12</sup>

In both 3.3 and 5.1 Statius describes his poem as a *sepulchrum*, placing it on an equal level to the physical tombs described. The assertion that a poem can equal or even exceed a material memorial is of course a poetic *topos*, which can be traced as far back as Pindar’s epinician odes.<sup>13</sup> However, in these two poems the lavish descriptions of the tombs actually constructed by Claudius Etruscus and Abascantus for their loved ones show that grieving relatives could seek to commemorate the dead in both song and stone. If the same patrons were commissioning funerary monuments as well as poetic memorials, we are justified in comparing the two, and asking what messages the visual monuments asserted about the deceased and the grief of those they left behind.

In what follows I will look in greater detail at Statius’ poetic consolations and his use of mythological imagery to celebrate both the deceased and the bereaved. While the qualities commemorated by Statius in the lives of the deceased seem to tally closely with those celebrated in other funerary literature, his concentration on the grief and despair felt by the bereaved sets him in opposition to the philosophical calls to moderation in grief which appear in prose consolations. His use of mythological examples to exalt the deceased and articulate the grief of those left behind are also striking when compared to previous funerary literature and foreshadow the arrival of mythological sarcophagi a few decades later. Through this analysis of Statius’ poems I aim to identify a new attitude towards death and grief which helps to articulate the messages of the mythological sarcophagi. I am not claiming here any direct influence between Statius and mythological sarcophagi, although Statius does show an acute visual

<sup>10</sup> *Silvae* 5.1.1–15.      <sup>11</sup> *Silvae* 3.3.33–39.      <sup>12</sup> *Silvae* 3.3.216.

<sup>13</sup> E.g. Pindar, *Nemean* 5.1–2; see Steiner 2001: 251–94.

sense in some of his descriptions which suggests a close familiarity with the visual arts of his own time.<sup>14</sup> Rather I am using Statius as a guide to the sensibilities around death and grief which were current at the end of the first century AD. His poetry can help us to understand the sorts of messages that griever desired and sought out for consolation and which sarcophagi too were later designed to fulfil.

My suggestion that we should view the messages of sarcophagi in the light of verbal forms of funerary commemoration is not new. In his excellent analysis of the circumstances surrounding the emergence of mythological sarcophagi Frank Müller drew attention to the influence of Greek epideictic rhetoric on Roman society and the extensive use made of myth in Statius' consolations.<sup>15</sup> However, while Müller made the link between funerary poetry and mythological imagery he did not examine in detail the implications of this overlap, or the ways that examination of funerary poetry can help to articulate the imagery of the sarcophagi.

In the foreword to their book Paul Zanker and Björn Ewald also state that their discussion will follow the themes of contemporary funerary orations, looking at the ways myths were used to relate to death and loss, as visions of the joys of life, or to praise the deeds and virtues of the deceased.<sup>16</sup> Yet they do not give any detailed analysis of the literary evidence.<sup>17</sup> It is my intention here to tease out some of the implications of this comparison for what it tells us about the ways in which mythological sarcophagi communicated with their patrons and viewers. My argument is that mythological sarcophagi presented their messages in a poetic mode; if Statius' *carmina* acted as poetic *sepulchra*, the sarcophagi present themselves as poems in stone.

<sup>14</sup> Statius' description of Priscilla's tomb in 5.1 with its portraits of the deceased in the guise of various goddesses has parallels in art from the mid-first century onwards; see Wrede 1981a and Gibson 2006: 75 for a possible identification of the tomb. For discussion of Statius' descriptions elsewhere in the *Silvae* of villas, baths and other monuments see Bergmann 1991; Newlands 2002.

<sup>15</sup> Müller 1994: 139–70, esp. 150. The extent to which Statius was influenced by rhetoric is discussed further below.

<sup>16</sup> Zanker and Ewald 2004: 5. For the impact of this new approach see the reviews by Wood 2004; Hallett 2005a.

<sup>17</sup> Brief discussions at Zanker and Ewald 2004: 36, 43, 110–11, without clear distinction between inscriptions, orations and consolatory poetry. Mythological comparisons are rare in prose epitaphs and *laudationes* but much more common in verse consolations. In the epigraphic material they are more common in those written in Greek: Lattimore 1942: 218, 253–4.

## Grief and commemoration in Statius' *Silvae*

In addition to poetic consolations of the sort written by Statius, there are other forms of verbal commemoration of the dead which can throw light on the values esteemed by Roman society. These include the Roman funerary speech or *laudatio funebris* given either in the Forum or at the graveside, prose consolations written to the bereaved by the likes of Seneca and Plutarch, and inscribed epitaphs in both prose and verse.<sup>18</sup> All of these share certain core qualities for which the dead were praised and help to illuminate the values celebrated on contemporary funerary art.<sup>19</sup> In their attitude to the grief of the bereaved, however, they were very different. While Seneca's philosophical consolations aim to put an end to the grief of the bereaved and correct their views about death, poetic consolations such as the anonymous *Consolatio ad Liuiam* and those written by Statius focus much more strongly on the grief of the bereaved, building up the intensity of the loss suffered, with only brief words of consolation at the end.<sup>20</sup> Statius explicitly says that he will not sternly tell the bereaved not to mourn, but will instead mourn alongside them.<sup>21</sup> The poetic consolations also make much more extensive use of mythological comparisons; where exempla were used in speeches or prose consolations, they seem instead to have been drawn from the figures of Roman history.<sup>22</sup> My decision to focus on Statius' consolations as a guide to the rhetoric of Roman mythological sarcophagi is determined by these two factors: the dominance of grief in Statius' poems, which corresponds closely with the taste for myths of violence and loss in early mythological sarcophagi, and his use of mythological parallels to augment praise of the deceased and to celebrate bonds of love and grief.<sup>23</sup>

Statius' consolations commemorate three types of people: young boys in *Silvae* 2.1, 2.6 and 5.5, a married woman in 5.1, and old men in 3.3 and 5.3. The values praised in these poems show clear overlaps with other forms of

<sup>18</sup> For discussions see Lattimore 1942; Kassel 1958; Häusle 1980; Kierdorf 1980; Carroll 2006.

<sup>19</sup> Men are primarily valued for their public careers and achievements, women for virtues such as loyalty, beauty and family ties, and youths and children for their early promise, often evoked through a focus on education. For comparisons to funerary art see Kampen 1981; Gessert 2004.

<sup>20</sup> Seneca: Manning 1981; *Consolatio ad Liviam*: Schoonhoven 1992; Amat 1997; Statius: Manning 1978; Markus 2004: esp. 127–30.

<sup>21</sup> *Silvae* 2.1.34–5, also 2.6.1–2. Asso 2010 argues that 2.1 is an attempt to defend Melior against attacks of excessive grief, but overall Statius seems to me to suggest that excessive, even womanly grief can be justified, at least within his poetic world.

<sup>22</sup> E.g. Seneca, *Consolatio ad Marciam* 12–16; 20.4–6; discussed by Shelton 1995; Wilcox 2006.

<sup>23</sup> On violent myths see Zanker and Ewald 2004: 63–115.



funerary commemoration, suggesting that Statius is reflecting the norms of his society. The two poems lamenting the deaths of old men, the fathers of Claudius Etruscus (3.3) and Statius himself (5.1), include long accounts of their successful careers.<sup>24</sup> In 3.3 Statius states that the deceased's lack of lineage was made up for by his splendid career as an imperial slave, freedman and, eventually, *eques* who controlled the imperial treasury under Nero. He also praises Claudius' wife, Etrusca, who is acclaimed for her family (allowing Statius to assert his patron's high birth in ll. 119–20) and beauty before moving onto the end of Claudius' life and his death.

Statius' lament for his own father, 5.3, follows a similar pattern in concentrating on the biography of his father, and in particular on his successful career as a poet and teacher. As in 3.3 his wife is also thought worthy of mention. Here Statius concentrates on the happy marriage shared by his parents, and on their fidelity to one another.<sup>25</sup> There is a brief reference to his father's character (246–8) and family, which is declared to have been noble, if impoverished (116–18). These allusions to birth, family, career, honours, marriage and virtues conform to the basic strictures governing praise oratory.<sup>26</sup> Both poems also give space to the grieving sons themselves. 3.3 starts with an invocation to the goddess Pietas to witness Claudius Etruscus' filial grief and 5.3 includes details of Statius' own career as well as his father's.<sup>27</sup> This suggests that consolations were not only about honouring the deceased; they could also shed praise on the patron himself and his wider family. The same is true of funerary monuments, many of which were commissioned by a bereaved relative and often celebrate both deceased and commissioner, presenting a message about the surviving spouse, child or parent no less than the dead relative.<sup>28</sup>

In similar manner Statius' consolation to the imperial freedman Abascantus on the death of his wife Priscilla contains a great deal of praise of both Abascantus and Priscilla, praising her for loyalty, chastity and modesty, and him for his successful career as imperial *ab epistulis* as well as his sincere grief for his wife.<sup>29</sup> The commemoration of the dead youths

<sup>24</sup> On the overlap with the themes of funeral orations see Laguna 1992: 249–50. An example is the oration by Augustus for Marcus Agrippa which focuses primarily on his public career, Koenen 1970; Kierdorf 1980: no. 21.

<sup>25</sup> *Silvae* 5.3.239–45. <sup>26</sup> As outlined e.g. by Quintilian *Inst* 3.7.10–17.

<sup>27</sup> *Silvae* 3.3.1–21; 5.3. 209–38.

<sup>28</sup> See discussion below and Elsner, this volume. Dedicatory inscriptions on tombs often mention dedicators and their close families, see analyses by Eck 1987; Hope 1997.

<sup>29</sup> Similar female virtues are mentioned in the *laudationes* for 'Turia' (though her eventful life takes centre stage) and Marcia, *ILS* 8393.1 ll 30–2; 8394 ll. 28–30; see Kierdorf 1980: nos. 24 and 25.

celebrated in 2.1 and 2.6 focuses instead on their beauty and promise for the future. In 2.1 Melior's foster son Glaucias is praised for his physical beauty as well as his aptitude for athletics and literary pursuits, while the slave boy mourned by Ursus in 2.6 is also praised for his physical beauty and free-born appearance.<sup>30</sup> While Statius concentrates especially on the physical appearance of these two boys, brief references to their morality and modesty also suggest the conventional qualities praised in youths who died young.<sup>31</sup>

### Statius' uses of myth

This brief summary of the consolations shows that in the qualities praised they conform to general norms of society as expressed in other forms of funerary rhetoric. However, they add to this a much greater emphasis on the sense of grief and loss felt by the bereaved, to whom they are primarily addressed. While poetic consolations and *epicedia* appear before Statius in the works of poets like Propertius, Horace and Ovid, he develops the genre in a new way, using mythological analogies to intensify the sense of grief and to exalt both the bereaved (his patrons) and the deceased, foreshadowing the use of myth on sarcophagi a couple of decades later.<sup>32</sup>

The use of mythological exempla in consolations goes back as far back as the *Iliad*, where Achilles urges Priam to join him in eating, saying that even Niobe thought of food when she was grieving for her twelve children.<sup>33</sup> A similar sentiment appears in Horace *Odes* 2.9 where Valgius is told to put an end to his grief for Mystes just as Nestor eventually ceased grieving for Antilochus, and his parents and sisters for Troilus.<sup>34</sup> Elsewhere in the Augustan poets myths are used as proof of the ineluctability of Fate. In his lament for Marcellus Propertius cites a number of mythological exempla to prove that none can escape Death:

Nirea non facies, non uis exemit Achillem,  
Croesum aut, Pactoli quas parit umor, opes.

<sup>30</sup> *Silvae* 2.1.39–51, 106–19; 2.6.21–3, 35–7.

<sup>31</sup> Compare Seneca, *Consolatio ad Marciam* 22–3 with Statius, *Silvae* 2.1.39–40. Both youths are praised for modesty, chastity and maturity as well as for physical beauty, though with different emphases.

<sup>32</sup> The earliest mythological scenes appear on garland sarcophagi in the 120s, with mythological frieze sarcophagi starting in the 130s. See Herdejürgen 1996: 34–6 and further discussion below.

<sup>33</sup> Homer, *Iliad* 24.601–4. <sup>34</sup> Horace, *Odes* 2.9.13–18.

His beauty did not save Nireus, nor his strength Achilles  
nor Croesus all the wealth that Pactolus' stream gave forth.<sup>35</sup>

Similar sentiments appear in inscribed epitaphs.<sup>36</sup> Yet in all of these cases myths are used as exempla to incite a stoical endurance of loss, and with a single point of correspondence: Achilles stands for strength, Nireus for beauty, and Niobe and Nestor for those who despite their grief eventually took thought for the necessities of everyday life. Statius' use of myth in the *Silvae* is more complex and extensive, targeted towards the expression of grief as well as the memorialization of the deceased.<sup>37</sup>

In what follows I will look in detail at the ways Statius utilizes references to myths in these poems. Contemporary literary handbooks such as that of Quintilian advocated the use of comparisons in a variety of circumstances, both for stylistic effect and as part of the proofs adduced to convince an audience of a particular argument.<sup>38</sup> Statius too seems to use myths both as similes which are primarily illustrative, helping to create a picture of the patron or deceased, and as exempla where they act as proof of a particular assertion, often supporting traditional Roman moral values.<sup>39</sup> The similarities between rhetorical strictures on the use of particular modes of speech and Statius' own usage suggests that he was influenced by contemporary rhetoric; this is hardly surprising given the epideictic nature of his poetry, whose aim to delight and praise had much in common with panegyric rhetoric.<sup>40</sup> Yet while the methods used may be rhetorical, the tone is distinctively poetic, exemplified through the choice of mythological, rather than historical, exempla.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>35</sup> Propertius 3.18.27–8.

<sup>36</sup> IG 14.1806; *Epigr. Gr.* 567: both Greek inscriptions from Rome, Lattimore 1942: 253–4.

<sup>37</sup> Ovid's Elegy for Tibullus, *Amores* 3.9, foreshadows this emphasis on grief; there the grief of Eos and Thetis for Memnon and Achilles is mentioned to incite Elegy to mourn for Tibullus. Note too the emphasis on grief in the anonymous *Consolatio ad Liviam*, which some assign to Ovid (Amat 1997: 26, *contra* Schoonhoven 1992: 22–39).

<sup>38</sup> Quintilian, *Inst.* 5.11 discusses exempla (both historical and mythological) as part of the proofs that can be used to support an argument, whereas his discussion of tropes including similes and metaphors in 8.6 forms part of his advice on rhetorical ornament. Greek rhetorical handbooks also advocate the use of *paradeigmata* (which Quintilian *Inst.* 5.11.2 translates into Latin as exempla) e.g. Menander Rhetor, *Treatise* II.371; Ps.-Dionysius, *On Epideictic Speeches* 6 (282, 283).

<sup>39</sup> E.g. Priscilla as the ideal Roman wife, *Silvae* 5.1.55–63, where *unum nouisse cubile* (l. 55) evokes the ideal of the Roman *uniuira*, despite the fact that Priscilla had, in fact, been married before (l. 45). On the moral force of exempla see Quintilian *Inst.* 12.2.29–30.

<sup>40</sup> Newlands 2002: 18–27. For the debate over the influence on Greek epideictic rhetoric on Statius see Hardie 1983 and van Dam 1984: 5–7. C.f. also Schoonhoven 1992: 14 on the *Consolatio ad Liviam*.

<sup>41</sup> Quintilian *Inst.* 5.11, 12.2.29–30 primarily concentrates on examples from Roman history.

## Simile

The simplest use of myth in Statius is as a simile, to support a statement about the qualities of the person honoured. In 2.6 the manly beauty of the dead slave boy is exalted through comparison with the appearance of the warrior Parthenopaeus (whose beauty is also described in *Thebaid* 9.699–706). He is also compared to a Spartan youth, or a young athlete competing at Olympia.<sup>42</sup> Here the words *qualis* and *talem* introduce a straightforward comparison which could be summed up as ‘he was as beautiful as Parthenopaeus or an Olympic victor’, though the simile is also fleshed out by reference to Parthenopaeus’ appearance on the battlefield, and the boy dedicating his youth to Olympian Zeus.<sup>43</sup>

Another comparison to exalt his appearance occurs earlier in lines 25–33. Here Philetus (named later at l. 81) is actually said to outdo his mythological predecessors, who are described in strikingly visual terms. Statius is keen to stress that although the boy was a slave he had the appearance and qualities of a free man, comparing him to the young Theseus, Paris, Achilles and Troilus.<sup>44</sup> Statius justifies this comparison by claiming autopsy: ‘I do not deceive, nor does the accustomed license lead my poetry. I saw him, I see him still’.<sup>45</sup> The mythological comparisons are described in very visual terms:

Non talem Cressa superbum  
callida sollicito reuocauit Thesea filo,  
nec Paris Oebalios talis uisurus amores  
rusticus inuitas deiecit in aequora pinus.

Not such as he was the proud Theseus  
the cunning Cretan lass led back with her anxious thread,  
nor rustic Paris as he cast his unwilling pine on the deep,  
embarking to see his Oebalian love.<sup>46</sup>

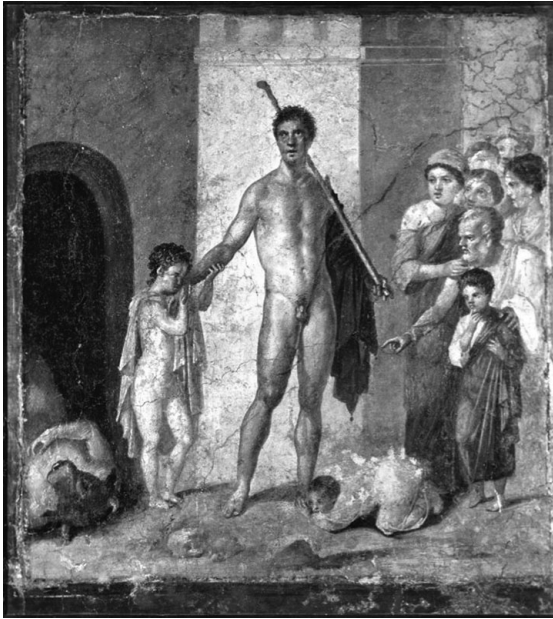
Later Achilles is depicted as Thetis hid him on a virginal shore and Troilus as he was speared while ‘fleeing around cruel Phoebus’ walls’.<sup>47</sup> All four heroes are depicted on very precise occasions, easily visualized by the reader. It is their appearance and attitudes here which are compared to

<sup>42</sup> *Silvae* 2.6.42–47.

<sup>43</sup> The lines on Parthenopaeus have been the subject of much debate, see van Dam 1984: 417–19 and Liberman 2010: 226–7 for suggested corrections.

<sup>44</sup> van Dam 1984: 390–4, 407–10. <sup>45</sup> *Silvae* 2.6.29–30.

<sup>46</sup> *Silvae* 2.6.25–8. <sup>47</sup> *Silvae* 2.6.30–3.



**Figure 8.1** Wall painting showing the victorious Theseus, from the House of Gavius Rufus, Pompeii VII, 2, 16-17. Naples, Museo Nazionale, inv. 9043.

the noble appearance of the slave boy, who is actually said to outdo them all, stressed through the repeated negatives *non talem ... nec talis ... qualem nec ... nec*.

Statius seems keen to create a visual picture of the boy in the mind of the reader, and the vividness of the scenes invites comparison with artworks. We cannot know whether Statius was consciously or deliberately evoking particular works of art, or rather simply ensuring the vividness, *enargeia*, of his imagery, but there are some striking similarities with the visual arts which may also have been evoked in the minds of his audience. The description of the proud Theseus safely returned from the labyrinth evokes paintings of the victorious hero with the body of the dead Minotaur, such as those from the House of Gavius Rufus at Pompeii (Figure 8.1) and the Basilica at Herculaneum, as well as scenes of Ariadne giving him the thread to lead him out of the labyrinth.<sup>48</sup> This

<sup>48</sup> Victorious Theseus: Naples, Museo Nazionale inv. 9043, 9049; Ariadne and Theseus: Naples, Museo Nazionale inv. 9048, from the House of the Ancient Hunt, Pompeii. For illustrations see Archivio Fotografico Pedicini 1989: I: cats. 172-4; *PPM* VI: 563, fig 55; *PPM* VII: 23, fig. 26. For further examples see Daszewski 1986: nos. 4-15.



**Figure 8.2** Garland sarcophagus with scenes of Theseus and Ariadne. New York, Metropolitan Museum (90.12).

combination of scenes also appears on one of the earliest mythological sarcophagi, the Theseus and Ariadne garland sarcophagus in New York (Figure 8.2).<sup>49</sup> This shows three scenes from the life of Theseus across its front: Theseus outside the labyrinth, receiving the ball of thread from Ariadne; his victory over the Minotaur and his abandonment of Ariadne. The left-hand scene shows the moment before Theseus enters the labyrinth, but Ariadne's eagerness to help, manifest in her flowing drapery implying movement and her offering hand, and Theseus' static pose with hand outstretched to receive the thread provide a close parallel to Statius' proud Theseus and anxious Ariadne.

The description of Achilles also suggests the many images of Achilles on Scyros which can be found in Roman wall paintings as well as on later sarcophagi.<sup>50</sup> We are not as well supplied with images of Paris setting sail to abduct Helen (though her departure onto his ship does appear, as in the House of the Tragic Poet in Pompeii) or of Troilos' capture, but other mythological figures setting sail (the departing Theseus, for one) and running around battlements probably evoked mental images to accompany these allusions.<sup>51</sup> It seems likely that Statius was partly influenced by wall

<sup>49</sup> New York, Metropolitan Museum 90.12. Herdejürgen 1996: 29 dates it to AD 120–30 (see n. 117 on other datings, e.g. McCann 1978: 25 to AD 140–50).

<sup>50</sup> Kossatz-Deissmann 1981: nos. 107–119, 128–165.

<sup>51</sup> Paris and Helen: House of the Tragic Poet, Pompeii VI.8, 3.5; Naples, Museo Archeologico inv. 9108; *PPM* IV: 539–41, figs 21, 23, also interpreted as Chryseis. Departing Theseus: Daszewski 1986: nos. 55–92. Battlements: see the eroded painting identified as the Seven against Thebes in the House of the Orchard, Pompeii I.9.5; *PPM* II: 73–9, figs. 97–103.

paintings such as these when composing the lines; even if he did not intend a specific allusion, it would be hard for a man from Campania not to have absorbed this mythological imagery to some degree.<sup>52</sup> His audience too would no doubt have been familiar with such images and able to create a vivid mind's-eye picture when hearing the text.

What the vividness of these lines suggests is the interchange between the representations of myths in different media, poetry and painting, and the reuse in a funerary context of imagery that had a long history of use in the domestic sphere. The earliest appearance of mythological images on sarcophagi appears in the lunettes of garland sarcophagi and these too often represent scenes previously common in the domestic sphere.<sup>53</sup> In addition to the Theseus sarcophagi mentioned above, we could cite the Actaeon sarcophagus in the Louvre, while other garland sarcophagi include scenes such as Polyphemus and Galatea.<sup>54</sup> Many of these themes later drop out of the repertoire, but it seems as though the overlap with domestic imagery was dominant at first.<sup>55</sup> Statius' use of vivid depictions of heroes, similar to those found in wall paintings, also suggests this ability to draw on the mythological repertoire of the domestic zone and reframe it for a funereal message. While the sarcophagi are later than Statius some mythological scenes do begin to appear on funerary altars of the Domitianic period.<sup>56</sup> These remain rare but they suggest a new desire at the end of the first century AD to start to use mythological imagery to comment on death, a desire which is shared by both Statius and the visual arts, where it continues with more impetus in the Hadrianic period.<sup>57</sup>

<sup>52</sup> Pompeii and Herculaneum were of course destroyed in AD 79, but Statius may have visited them in his youth and would have seen similar paintings elsewhere in the towns and villas of Campania.

<sup>53</sup> Herdejürgen 1996: 34–6.

<sup>54</sup> Paris, Louvre MA 459; Rome, Palazzo Mattei. Herdejürgen 1996: cats. 26 and 31. On reading the narratives of the Actaeon and Theseus sarcophagi see Brilliant 1984: 126–34.

<sup>55</sup> Note also Feraudi-Gruénais 2001: 169–200 on the parallels between the internal decoration of tombs and that of the home, although some of the mythological scenes do have specifically funerary resonances too.

<sup>56</sup> Boschung 1987: nos. 765–6 (death of Opheltes), no. 781 (Rape of Persephone), both examples of sudden and tragic loss. Mythological scenes appear slightly later on funerary urns after a few one-off occurrences in the early Augustan period, Sinn 1987: 23, 41, 80–1.

<sup>57</sup> The garland sarcophagus of C. Bellicus Natalis Tebanianus (consul suffectus in AD 87), decorated with a Dionysiac scene of a Maenad and Pan and a military trophy may also date to the late first century AD. See Herdejürgen 1996: 22–3; cat. 6. Mythological scenes appear in a few isolated tombs of the Augustan period, e.g. the Columbarium Doria Pamphili (Feraudi-Gruénais 2001: cat. K10), but then largely die out until the later first century AD.



## Exemplification

In addition to their use as similes, illustrating an individual quality or virtue, Statius uses mythological comparanda to exemplify an entire relationship or situation, sometimes through contrasting positive and negative exempla. In 5.3 he stresses his extreme grief for his father, arguing that he suffers no less than a bereaved mother, or a young widow. As proof that his grief for a parent is as great as that for a child or husband he cites a mythological precedent:

Nec enim Marathonias uirgo  
parcius extinctum saeuorum crimine agrestum  
fleuerat Icarium Phrygia quam turre cadentem  
Astyanacta parens; laqueo quin illa supremo<s>  
inclusit gemitus, at te post funera magni  
Hectoris Haemonio pudor est seruasse marito.

For no more sparingly did the maid of Marathon  
weep for Icarus, murdered by a gang of savage rustics,  
than did his mother for Astyanax as he fell from the Phrygian tower:  
indeed, she stifled her last groans with a noose,  
while you to your shame served a Haemonian husband  
after the funeral of great Hector.<sup>58</sup>

Here Erigone, the daughter of Icarus, is contrasted with Andromache, who married Neoptolemus after the deaths of her husband and son. The examples serve as proof of Statius' claim that the loss of a parent can be just as painful as that of a child, while his bitter hostility towards Andromache (usually viewed more sympathetically in classical literature) both underlines and is explained by his own intense grief at the death of his father.

A similar use of mythological exempla to support a point is in 2.1, here used to praise Melior and justify his grief.<sup>59</sup> Statius describes how Glaucias was chosen by Melior to be his son at the very moment of his birth. He declares that it is possible for adopted sons to become even more beloved than natural ones, and adduces as proof a series of mythological exempla. Chiron and Phoenix are said to have been closer to Achilles than his father Peleus, and Acoetes attended Pallas' battles while his father Evander prayed from afar. Perseus' father Jupiter kept to the heavens while Dictys attended him. After these male examples Statius moves onto female ones,

<sup>58</sup> *Silvae* 5.3.74–7.

<sup>59</sup> On this 'fostering frame' see Asso 2010.



of nurses who surpassed mothers citing Ino, the nurse of the infant Bacchus, and Acca, the foster-mother of Romulus.<sup>60</sup> In formal terms these examples act as a proof of the assertion that ‘a natural child is a necessity, a chosen one a joy’ (1.87–8), but they also provide vivid analogies which help to elevate the relationship between Melior and Glaucias, setting it into exalted company. Here myths are used to describe a whole relationship and female as well as male examples make an appearance. In all the examples the foster parent is said to have outdone the real one, being present and useful while the other kept a distance, hence praising Melior for taking on the role of parent.

A striking feature here is the use of female as well as male exempla, suggesting a certain amount of flexibility and showing that exempla did not have to agree specifically with the gender of the person being praised. This can also be seen in 5.3 where Statius’ own grief is compared to that of female figures. Feminine qualities of grief and nurture were shared, it would seem, by men. The cross-gender application of role models here may help to illuminate our understanding of myths on sarcophagi too. It has often been assumed that myths featuring male heroes ought to have commemorated men and female ones women, but on the infrequent occasions that inscriptions have been added to the sarcophagi this is shown not always to be the case. Two Endymion sarcophagi bear inscriptions dedicating them to women: one now in the Capitoline museum is dedicated to a daughter, Gerontia, while another in New York was dedicated by a woman to her mother, Arria, who died aged 50 and is shown in a portrait bust on the lid. Both have been explained by the reuse of earlier sarcophagi on a later occasion; while this seems likely for the Capitoline piece it is not necessarily true of the New York sarcophagus where a stylistic dating of the chest to c. 210 correlates well with the portrait style of the deceased.<sup>61</sup> In any case, for both pieces, it seems that the myth of Endymion could have resonance for women as well as youths. Its image of endless sleep might have offered a consoling metaphor for the death of the beloved Gerontia, while on the New York piece the appearance on the lid of vignettes showing Eros and Psyche, Selene and Endymion, and (split between two panels) Mars and Venus suggests that the story of Selene and Endymion’s

<sup>60</sup> *Silvae* 2.1.88–100.

<sup>61</sup> Rome, Capitoline Museum inv. 325; Sichtermann 1992: cat. 27. New York Metropolitan Museum Inv. 47.100.4; Sichtermann 1992: cat. 80; see Zanker and Ewald 2004: 322–5, no. 15, esp. 324–5 on the question of reuse.

enduring love offered a parable of romantic love which her daughter may have thought appropriate to convey Arria's own wifely devotion.<sup>62</sup>

In *Silvae* 2.1 Statius uses mythological examples to illustrate the closeness of the relationship between mourner and deceased. A similar use of myth appears in 3.3, in honour of Claudius Etruscus' father. Here the son's grief at his father's death is compared to that of Theseus for Aegeus: *... haud aliter gemuit periuria Theseus | litore, qui falsis deceperat Aegea uelis* ('No less by the shore did Theseus mourn his lie to Aegeus whom he had deceived with false sails').<sup>63</sup> While Theseus' grief for Aegeus compares to that of Claudius Etruscus for his father, the reference to Theseus' culpability in forgetting to exchange his black sails for white at first strikes a discordant note. Yet in the ensuing speech in the mouth of Claudius Etruscus we learn that he had just secured his father's release from exile in Campania. While his grief is just as deep as Theseus', Theseus also provides a contrasting example, his thoughtlessness casting into relief Claudius Etruscus' own pious concern for his father.

In Claudius Etruscus' speech this piety is exemplified through the citation of a number of other examples of dutiful sons. Claudius compares himself to the more favourable position of those who had been able to save their fathers – such as Aeneas, Scipio and Lausus – and with Alcestis who was allowed to exchange her life for that of a loved one, or Orpheus who followed Eurydice down to the underworld.<sup>64</sup> The reference to three pious sons underlines his own piety, suggesting how unfair it is that he cannot recall his father from the underworld. Here Claudius mentions three figures of importance in Roman history – Aeneas, Scipio and Lausus. In 2.1 too the examples used to praise Melior include the Italian figures Acoetes and Acca as well as figures from Greek myth. Roman mythological examples are relatively rare in Statius' poetry and it is probably significant that in both these cases they are used to praise adult male figures for the very Roman qualities of fatherly concern and filial piety.<sup>65</sup>

In the lines discussed here mythological examples are used to prove an assertion made by the poet or to exemplify the unfairness of the speaker's situation, by contrast with those who had been able to save their fathers.

<sup>62</sup> On the appearance of portrait heads on the figure of Selene on some Endymion sarcophagi see Newby 2011, also Borg, this volume. Sorabella 2001 explores further the messages of this sarcophagus.

<sup>63</sup> *Silvae* 3.3.179–80      <sup>64</sup> *Silvae* 3.3.188–94.

<sup>65</sup> The majority of Roman sarcophagi feature Greek myths, but a few show Aeneas (Grassinger 1999: nos. 68 – 70) or Mars approaching the sleeping Rhea Silvia (Robert 1904: nos. 188–91; Sichtermann 1992: cat. 99). On the latter see Newby 2011: 209–13.

This use of exemplification via contrast appears again in 2.1.137–145 where the unfairness of Glaucias' fate is expressed by a series of mythological comparisons. Statius berates the cruelty of Fate, unmoved either by his beauty or his youth, and imagines a series of reversals of mythological history. Fierce Procne could not have torn him, nor Medea, even if he were Creusa's son; Athamas would have turned away his bow and Ulysses would have wept as he prepared to throw him from the battlements, despite his hatred for Troy. In this series of reversals Statius imagines what would have happened if Glaucias took the place of a series of unfortunate mythological youths: Itys, the son of Procne, whom she murdered out of anger for her husband's rape of her sister; Medea's victims (which included her brother and her own children, supplemented here by a hypothetical son of Creusa); Athamas' son Learchus; and Astyanax, son of Hector and Andromache. This imaginative insertion of Glaucias into a series of violent mythological episodes is suggestive of the scenes of violent death which appear on sarcophagi – such as those showing the myths of Orestes, Medea and the Niobids. While Statius says that Medea and others would have stayed their hands for him, the imagery also evokes these episodes as parallels to the tragic death of Glaucias.

### Mourning and tragic death on Roman mythological sarcophagi

Statius' concentration on the grief of the bereaved, and his use of mythological parallels to exemplify the depth of this grief, foreshadows the dominance of mourning and violence on the earliest mythological frieze sarcophagi. In addition to scenes of violent deaths, such as those of the Niobids and Creusa, which echo the mythological parallels chosen by Statius to illustrate the unfairness of Glaucias' death, a number specifically include scenes of grief and distress, both at the time of the initial death, and later at the tomb. These are close to scenes portrayed by Statius, where the bereaved hurl themselves towards the bodies of their loved ones and later cannot be dragged from the tomb.

I will start with a Meleager sarcophagus now in Istanbul, dated to the mid-second century AD, which combines a number of these themes (Figure 8.3).<sup>66</sup> The front of the sarcophagus is dominated by the return of Meleager's corpse to the palace. At the right we see the impact of his

<sup>66</sup> Istanbul Archaeological Museum Inv. 2100; Koch 1975: cat. 81; Zanker and Ewald 2004: 353–5, no. 27.



**Figure 8.3** Meleager sarcophagus. Istanbul Archaeological Museum, inv. 2100.



**Figure 8.4** Meleager sarcophagus, right short side. Istanbul Archaeological Museum, inv. 2100.

death on his family; his father turns back to the corpse in grief, three sisters rush around distraught, while his mother Altheia commits suicide to the far right. In the context of the myth Altheia's suicide is explained by the fact that she herself has caused his death, by throwing into the fire a brand which held his fate. On purely visual terms, however, it can also be seen as a result of her extreme grief at her son's death.

On the right short side of the sarcophagus, just around the corner from Altheia's death, is a roughly carved scene showing two heavily draped figures mourning outside a tomb (Figure 8.4). A similar but more highly executed scene appears on the right short side of a sarcophagus which shows the deaths of the Niobids on the front, dated to AD 130–40



**Figure 8.5** Niobids sarcophagus, right short side. Museo Vaticano, Museo Gregoriano Profano, inv. 10437.

(Figure 8.5).<sup>67</sup> Zanker describes it as acting like a commentary on the imagery on the front, relating the myth to the situation of the viewer.<sup>68</sup> However, a comparison with Statius' uses of myth suggests the reverse. In his consolations he starts with the grief of the bereaved, and then adduces mythological examples to emphasize their great loss. Similarly the image on the side of the sarcophagus could have been designed to act as the springboard for the mythological exemplification of this grief on the front.<sup>69</sup>

The scene shows a grieving woman, sitting outside a tomb and watched by a herdsman. While she can be identified as Niobe, she can also be seen as an illustration of any bereaved woman, perhaps the commissioner of the sarcophagus, with the mythological scene on the front acting as a

<sup>67</sup> Musei Vaticani, Museo Gregoriano Profano inv. 10437; Robert 1919: cat. 315; Zanker and Ewald 2004: 357–9, no. 29. On the dating see Herdejürgen 1996: 37–40.

<sup>68</sup> Zanker and Ewald 2004: 45.

<sup>69</sup> This sarcophagus was actually found *in situ* against the left hand wall of a tomb where the right short side would not have been visible. However, the right end is more fully carved than the left, and there are signs that this and the Orestes sarcophagus opposite were not commissioned specifically for this tomb, since both were elevated on supports (Herdejürgen 1996: 37–8). The higher detail of carving on the right short side could originally have been intended to suit a sarcophagus placed on the right of a tomb's entrance where the viewer would see this first, and then turn to the mythological exemplification on the front. For a recent discussion of this tomb see Bielfeldt 2003; 2005: 306–21.

mythological exemplum, designed to illustrate the depth of her grief. Statius repeatedly imagines the bereaved lingering outside the tomb: in 5.3 he presents himself as leaning against his father's tomb while he composes his poem, and later compares his grief to that of a bereaved mother sitting over her son's warm mound.<sup>70</sup> He then compares his own grief to that of Erigone, who lamented the murder of her father so greatly that she committed suicide.

The scenes of grief on the short sides of these two sarcophagi suggest that they can be understood as poetic statements of extreme grief, using mythological imagery to convey the power of the loss.<sup>71</sup> They present messages which are analogous to Statius' consolations and could be articulated somewhat as follows: 'I lament my dear relative, grieving at his/her tomb no less than Niobe, after the cruel children of Leto had cut down her children' or 'Y grieves for her child, so extreme a grief afflicted the sisters of Meleager, and indeed his mother, who met her death at her own hand'.<sup>72</sup> I have envisaged the bereaved here as women, taking as a hint the grieving women outside the tombs, but the parallel need not have been so close. Statius compares his grief to that of a bereaved mother, a widowed wife or the daughter Erigone.<sup>73</sup> Here too female exempla might have illustrated the grief of a man. Excessive grief was often connoted as a female trait in Roman thought, and so the imagery of female mourners might have been felt to be the most effective way of conveying extreme grief, whatever the gender of the bereaved themselves.<sup>74</sup>

Of the figures who are shown bewailing Meleager in [Figure 8.3](#), his sisters appear in funerary poetry as models for extreme grief, as in the *Consolatio ad Liviam*.<sup>75</sup> Altheia might be thought a less appropriate comparison, responsible as she was for her son's death. Yet this does not seem to cause concern in funerary poetry. Grieving mothers can be compared to

<sup>70</sup> 5.3.36 (*acclinis tumulo*); 65–6 (*quae tepido genetrix super aggere nati | orba sedet*).

<sup>71</sup> For related arguments about the ways myth can be used to reflect on the everyday see Lorenz 2011. She argues that the figure of Atalanta on a later Meleager sarcophagus in Paris acts as a 'gateway' figure into the mythological meditations on death and mourning contained in the rest of the imagery; see also her comments on the mourning figures on the Ostia sarcophagus discussed below. On the way that the arrangement of scenes on Meleager sarcophagi influences the interpretation of the narratives see also Elsner 2012.

<sup>72</sup> On a grave inscription from Smyrna, Peek 1955: no. 1545, a mother likens her grief to that of Niobe.

<sup>73</sup> *Silvae* 5.3.64–79.

<sup>74</sup> On the gendering of grief see Wilcox 2006, focused on Seneca's consolations. Birk 2011 discusses examples of cross-gender associations on sarcophagi.

<sup>75</sup> *Consolatio ad Liviam* 109–10.



Figure 8.6 Meleager sarcophagus. Ostia Museo Nazionale 101.

Procne mourning her son Itys, despite the fact that she had actually caused his death.<sup>76</sup> In fact, the tragic nature of his death might actually have given added pungency to the comparison, intensifying the drama of the comparison and thus further intensifying its message about the bereaved's own loss.<sup>77</sup>

The freedom to adapt myths to relate them more closely to a funerary context can also be seen on a child sarcophagus showing the death of Meleager, dated to c. AD 160 (Figure 8.6).<sup>78</sup> The central scene here shows the laying out of Meleager's body, surrounded by his grieving family. To the right we see Meleager in the aftermath of the Calydonian boar hunt, drawing his sword in preparation to kill his uncle over the awarding of the spoils. Other sarcophagi of this type show his mother Altheia at the left end, plunging the brand into the fire to avenge her brothers' death, and thus securing her child's destruction. Here, however, the focus is changed. The uncle himself does not appear on the sarcophagus front, putting the emphasis on Meleager's ill-fated heroism as he draws his sword and is simultaneously mourned by the bowed figure of Atalanta, rather than on his act of murder.<sup>79</sup> The usual scene of Altheia is replaced with a scene similar to those on the short sides of the two sarcophagi discussed above. Here a female and male figure sit either side of a garlanded tomb, their heads bowed in grief. They evoke the bereaved parents of the child buried within the sarcophagus, whose grief equals that of the family of Meleager, shown in the next scene. An arch separates these scenes of human and

<sup>76</sup> *Consolatio ad Liviam* 105–6; CIL 6.21521, l. 26 (= Courtney 1995: no. 183).

<sup>77</sup> Cf. Statius' use of the examples of those who killed their own children to describe the unfairness of Glaucias' death in *Silvae* 2.1.140–45, where Procne appears again.

<sup>78</sup> Ostia Museo Nazionale 101; Koch 1975: cat. 112, discussed in Zanker and Ewald 2004: 70; Lorenz 2011: 326–7.

<sup>79</sup> The fallen figure at his feet is elsewhere identified as one of the uncles, but here he is beardless and the second uncle who is usually shown drawing his sword in response (as on Koch 1975: cat. 116) is omitted.



mythological grief, acting as a visual equivalent of verbal comparisons often introduced *sic . . . nec secus*. In the death-bed scene one of the sisters clasps Meleager's head in her hands, ready to provide the last rites. This is very close to the depiction of Claudius Etruscus' grief, where Statius pictures the bereaved son holding his father's head in his arms, bedewing it with kisses and catching his final breath, as well as *conclamatio* scenes on non-mythological sarcophagi, such as a child's biographical sarcophagus in Agrigento.<sup>80</sup>

The lid of the Istanbul Meleager sarcophagus (Figure 8.3) shows an earlier scene in the myth, Meleager and Atalanta feasting after the boar hunt. The body of the boar lies to the right, perhaps suggesting the mayhem its division as spoils will cause, but the emphasis here is on festivity rather than disaster. Scenes of feasting have been seen as allusions to the feasts enjoyed at the tomb by relatives during funerary festivals.<sup>81</sup> This association might have been evoked here too, but the clear mythological content of the scene (Meleager, Atalanta and the Dioscuri are all identifiable) also suggests that it could have served as a poetic meditation, lamenting the fact that just as Meleager could not prolong the intense happiness experienced after his success in the hunt, so too the figure buried within was cut off from the joys he had experienced during life.<sup>82</sup>

The three sarcophagi discussed here are among the earlier mythological sarcophagi, dating to the AD 130s to 160s. Although they were produced several decades after Statius' consolations were written, they show the same concern to express the grief of the bereaved and illustrate its intensity through mythological examples. The scenes of grieving figures beside tombs serve to make this link between current grief and its mythological precedents, making the myths serve as exemplification. Here both parts of the equation are shown, the human grief as well as the mythological parallel.

Elsewhere, however, Statius uses myths not simply as proof or embellishment, but also as a way to meditate upon the unfairness of fate. In the case of Glaucias he achieves this by imagining the youth taking the place of a series of ill-fated mythological characters, arguing that surely even Medea, Procne and others would have stayed their hands at the sight of his beauty. Since Glaucias did indeed die, like the youths of these myths,

<sup>80</sup> *Silvae* 3.3.17–19; Amedick 1991: cat. 2. <sup>81</sup> Zanker and Ewald 2004: 33–6; 159–60.

<sup>82</sup> The contrast between the joys enjoyed during life and the finality of death frequently appear in funerary poetry, see e.g. the epitaph of Agricola, discussed above, Davies 2007: 46–9 and more generally Lattimore 1942: 176–8.



this also acts to intensify the tragedy of his death by equating it with the very worst crimes of mythology. There are two aspects of this which bear comparison with sarcophagi: the likening of someone's death with the worst horrors of Greek tragedy and the projection of a historical contemporary figure into a mythological situation. On the sarcophagi these two phenomena generally appear separately.

Statius' equation of Glaucias' fate with that of Itys, Learchus, Astyanax and the children of Medea is parallel to the representation of the myths of the Niobids, Medea, Persephone and the Leucippidae on Roman sarcophagi. The appearance of these myths on sarcophagi used to evoke surprise amongst commentators until Fittschen read the Medea myth as suggesting an equation of the deceased not with Medea, but with Creusa, whose untimely and painful death actually takes centre stage.<sup>83</sup> Other scholars have since extended the analogy, and Zanker and Ewald's work has shown the importance of thinking of these scenes as primarily directed towards the bereaved's feelings of grief, rather than as comments on the deceased's own life.<sup>84</sup>

The way in which Statius and other poets could use these myths as analogies for sudden and tragic death suggests a tendency to think in terms of mythological parallels, which the sarcophagus sculptors also adopted. The myths chosen differ in poetry and stone; while Medea and the Niobids appear both in funerary consolations and on sarcophagi, other examples such as Procne and Itys, or the death of Astyanax, are missing from the visual realm. This variation is partly due to the availability of visual models and the need for clarity; the overall attitude to myth is, however, the same. The way the myths are used shows a high degree of selectivity. While Phaedra might not appear to us to be an appropriate model of love and grief, the popularity of sarcophagi showing the myth of Hippolytus suggests that her extreme love for Hippolytus and his tragic death offered a telling parallel for those afflicted by grief.<sup>85</sup> Poetry confirms the selectivity and flexibility with which mythological exempla could be used. While Statius uses Procne in *Silvae* 2.1 as the archetype of a heartless murderer, elsewhere she can serve as a model for endless parental grief. In the *Consolatio ad Liviam* Livia's grief is compared to that of Procne, despite the fact that Procne had actually brought about her own son's death in

<sup>83</sup> Fittschen 1992, building on Blome 1978. See also Gessert 2004 for a reading of Medea as a negative example of someone who died at the wrong time, unlike the putative deceased. Her comparison with prose consolations is appealing, though the emphatic violence of the myth seems more in tune with the grief and loss articulated by Statius. Both readings may have been available, however, depending on the outlook of the purchaser.

<sup>84</sup> Zanker and Ewald 2004: 63–115. <sup>85</sup> Zanker 1999.

anger at her husband's rape of her sister Philomela. For the poem what matters is the depth of Procne's lament for her son, and also the allusion to her song as a bird, which can be compared to this poetic lament for Drusus.<sup>86</sup>

It is nevertheless striking that mythological sarcophagi often include abundant narrative details from the myth as a whole which seem to divert from its purpose as a specific example of grief or sudden death.<sup>87</sup> Thus while the Medea sarcophagi do indeed seem to concentrate on the sudden and tragic death of Creusa, they can also contain a lot of extra detail about the wider myths of both Medea and Jason. Some of this is necessary to make the myth clear and identifiable, such as Medea's appearance on the chariot of the sun-god at the far right of the sarcophagus. But other elements might be thought to lead the viewer away from the specific point of comparison into a more general account of the full myth. On a sarcophagus in Basle the deaths of Creusa and Medea's children appear on the main chest, while Jason's deeds in Colchis and the help Medea provided him are shown on the lid (Figure 8.7).<sup>88</sup> Fittschen suggests that while the main chest laments sudden death, the lid celebrates the virtues of the deceased through analogy to the life of Jason.<sup>89</sup> This sort of flexibility for one myth to carry a number of different meanings is certainly attested in funerary poetry, but an analysis of Statius' desire for narrative fullness also suggests other possibilities.

Statius often seems keen to provide a full contextualization for the myths he employs. In 2.1 although a simple reference to Odysseus and Astyanax would have been sufficient for his purpose Statius devotes two lines to the myth: 'For him [Glaucias], though detesting Hector's ashes and Troy, Ulysses would have wept as he was about to fling him from the Phrygian battlements'.<sup>90</sup> Odysseus' wider motivation for the murder of Astyanax is given space here, helping to contextualize his act, without condoning it. This might help to explain why scenes of Medea's earlier history with Jason are given space on some sarcophagi, providing the background to her acts of violence. We might question their relevance if the main point is simply to compare an untimely death to the tragedies

<sup>86</sup> *Consolatio ad Liviam* 103–118 compares Livia's laments for Drusus to those of Procne, the sisters of Meleager (also transformed into birds) and the mother of Phaethon.

<sup>87</sup> Bielfeldt 2005: 16–22 discusses this tension between mythological narrative and the Roman message (*interpretatio romana*) of sarcophagi and scholarship's responses to it.

<sup>88</sup> Antikenmuseum Basel und Sammlung Ludwig, inv. BS 203; Schmidt 1969; Gaggadis-Robin 1994: cat. 24.

<sup>89</sup> Fittschen 1992: 1058. <sup>90</sup> *Silvae* 2.1.144–5.



Figure 8.7 Medea sarcophagus. Antikenmuseum Basel und Sammlung Ludwig, inv. BS 203.

of Creusa and Medea's children, but the ways that myths could be used in poetry suggests that sarcophagi too might have spoken to a more sophisticated concern with mythology. Like Statius' consolations, the sarcophagi present elaborate mythological parallels to comfort and elevate the grief of those who commissioned them. Medea may also serve here as a negative exemplum, similar to those who appear in Statius' poetry. Medea's abandonment of the correct path of a dutiful wife could have served to cast into relief the piety and loyalty of the woman buried within.<sup>91</sup>

Statius' references can often be allusive, requiring the reader to identify the figure for himself, or clearly visual, as in the equation of Philetus' appearance with that of Theseus or Achilles. This flatters the reader, allowing him to draw on his mythological knowledge as well as creating vivid visual pictures in his mind's eye. The sarcophagi were probably bought and commissioned by similar patrons among Rome's middle and upper classes and flattered their egos in a similar manner. Their presentation of complex, involved narratives reveals the cultural credentials of those who viewed them, commenting on the level of education shared by the deceased and his family, while simultaneously offering comfort and comment. Statius' poems show that cleverness and erudition were not in

<sup>91</sup> Negative exempla: *Silvae* 3.3.179–80 (Theseus); 5.1.57–59 (Helen, Aërope). On the use of unlike examples in rhetorical arguments see Quintilian, *Inst.* 5.11.10.

opposition to the commemoration of sincere grief, but helped instead to express it. The narratological depth and complexity of the sarcophagi images allows them to be read as metanarratives of the deceased's own life and death. They offer analogies to the loss and grief of the bereaved, but also go further in opening up possibilities for multiple messages about past joys and present sorrows (as in the contrast between happy feasting on the lid and mourning below, shown on [Figure 8.3](#)) and provoking broader thoughts about the nature of human life, its achievements and its limits.

### Projections into the mythological realm

A second aspect of Statius' comparison of Glaucias' violent death to those of ill-fated youths is the way in which he imagines Glaucias himself taking the place of those youths. Statius replays the myths with Glaucias as the main character, musing on what the consequences might have been. This foreshadows the projection of real figures into mythological scenarios which we find on later sarcophagi. As I have shown elsewhere, the use of portrait heads to identify the deceased with a particular mythological character is in fact more restricted than is usually suggested, and is a particular feature of sarcophagi produced from the late second century onwards, where it often seems to have been used as a device to tie down the significance of the mythical analogy.<sup>92</sup> However, there are a few early examples of sarcophagi where mythological figures are given portrait faces which appear similar to Statius' projection of his characters into a mythological situation.<sup>93</sup>

Glaucias is imagined in a series of violent scenarios, expressing the horror of his untimely death, but in *Silvae* 5.1 Statius uses a similar technique to comment instead on the unshakeable fidelity of Priscilla towards her husband Abascantus:

illum nec Phrygius uitiasset raptor amorem  
Dulichiiue proci nec qui fraternus adulter  
casta Mycenaeano conubia polluit auro.

<sup>92</sup> Newby 2011.

<sup>93</sup> In *Silvae* 5.1.231–8 Statius also describes Priscilla's tomb, which contains statues identifying her with various divine figures. These non-narrative identifications seem designed to evoke Priscilla's individual virtues and are rather different from the imagined projections of the dead into mythological narratives and situations discussed here.



Figure 8.8 Alcestis sarcophagus. Vatican, Museo Chiaramonti, inv. 1195.

That love no Phrygian ravisher would have violated  
nor Dulichian suitors, nor the brotherly adulterer  
who polluted chaste wedlock with Mycenaean gold.<sup>94</sup>

Priscilla's fidelity is strong enough to resist Paris, the suitors of Penelope, and Thyestes, who seduced his own brother's wife. Statius here includes both positive and negative parallels, contrasting Priscilla with Helen and Aërope, but also comparing her to the resilient Penelope. In each she is implicitly put into the place of the woman concerned.

Penelope appears elsewhere on funerary inscriptions as the epitome of a loyal wife, though not usually on sarcophagi. Another loyal wife, Alcestis, however, appears in both visual and verbal comparisons as the model of a dutiful wife prepared to sacrifice herself for her husband.<sup>95</sup> The sarcophagi tend to focus on the death-bed scene, expressing the sorrow felt at the loss of such a virtuous wife. On one example from the AD 160s an inscription tells us that it was commissioned by Junius Euhodus for his wife Metilia Acte (Figure 8.8).<sup>96</sup> In the central death-bed scene most of the figures are given portrait faces. While Admetus' heroic nudity suggests that this scene is part of the myth, the portrait faces also equate it with the real death of Metilia herself, suggesting Euhodus' grief and Metilia's merits as a wife.

The dedicatory inscription focuses primarily on Euhodus himself. His name appears first and the first two lines concentrate on his career. We are then told that he made it for himself and Metilia Acte, who was a priestess

<sup>94</sup> *Silvae* 5.1.57–9.

<sup>95</sup> E.g. A bilingual Sardinian inscription honouring one Pomptilla equates her with Penelope, Laodameia, Evadne and Alcestis: *IG* 14.607; *CIL* 10.7563/78; Peek 1955: 636–40, no. 2005, l. 22–31.

<sup>96</sup> Museo Chiaramonti inv. 1195; Grassinger 1999: no. 76; Inscription = *CIL* 14.371. See also Wood 1978; Zanker and Ewald 2004: 202–3, figs. 182–3; 298–30, no. 8.

and a most pious wife.<sup>97</sup> The measured tone and concentration on career agree with the eulogies of mature men found in funerary orations and prose consolations. In the imagery, however, we move into the poetic sphere. Where the inscription's stress is on Euhodus, the imagery focuses rather on Metilia. Indeed, the equation between her and Alcestis could be read as a mythological proof of the inscription's reference to her as 'co[n]iug[i] sanctissim[ae]'. *Sanctus* carries a range of meanings including holy, pious, virtuous and chaste. Metilia's role as priestess exemplifies her holiness, but her piety as a wife is further illustrated in the myth shown below. Just as Statius tells us that Priscilla's great love would have withstood all manner of wealthy adulterers, here the sarcophagus' imagery follows on from the inscription's 'sanctissim[ae]': her piety was such that she would have played the role of Alcestis, sacrificing herself for her husband.<sup>98</sup>

While the mythological imagery stresses Metilia's qualities as a wife as well as the grief of those left behind, the sarcophagus as a whole is also clearly designed to foster the self-image of her husband who commissioned it. This tallies with what we have seen in Statius' poems, where praise of the deceased often acts to enhance the reputation of the bereaved, and the actions of wives have a positive impact on the self-image of their husbands. We can also see a division in the means of self-representation. Euhodus primarily defines himself here through language and a record of his career, while the visual imagery paints a more poetic picture of Metilia, stressing her virtues through equation with the mythological paradigm of a loyal wife.

The scene at the far right of the sarcophagus shows Hercules returning Alcestis from the underworld. This has been read as a positive statement about the afterlife which Metilia might hope to enjoy, but in fact the image stops short of promising her a similar immortality: Alcestis here does not have a portrait face although Admetus does.<sup>99</sup> Instead this could be read as a poetic lament, a rebuke that Euhodus is not allowed to recover his wife from the underworld, even though Admetus was. A similar sentiment appears in *Silvae* 3.3 when Claudius Etruscus bewails his loss and the

<sup>97</sup> CIL 14.371: D. M. C. IVNIVS PAL. EVHODVS MAGISTER QQ. | COLLEGI FABR. TIGN. OSTIS. LUSTRI XXI | FECIT SIBI ET METILIAE ACTE SACERDO | TI M. D. M. COLON. OST. COIVG. SANCTISSIM. 'To the Manes. C. Junius Euhodus of the Palatina tribe, five-year magistrate of the 21st lustrum of the guild of carpenters at Ostia, made [it] for himself and for Metilia Acte, priestess of the Great Mother of the Gods of the colony of Ostia, most pious wife'.

<sup>98</sup> There is a very close parallel to this in the grave inscription of Pomptilla (above, n. 95), who is said to have prayed to save her husband from death, ll. 3–4.

<sup>99</sup> For hopeful readings see Wood 1978.

unfairness of it, arguing that if Alcestis could swap her death for Admetus, and Orpheus follow Eurydice down to the underworld, surely he too ought to be able to reclaim his father from death.<sup>100</sup> The asymmetry of the image, where Admetus has a portrait and Alcestis does not, prompts us to interpret the mythological analogy; however, while some might have seen here a rebuke, others perhaps could have read hope.<sup>101</sup> Comparison with Statius' poetic use of myth opens up a range of possibilities for the interpretation of this imagery, but the flexibility with which he can use myths in different ways also cautions against defining absolute messages for any individual sarcophagus.

A slightly different example of Statius' merging of human and mythological worlds appears in *Silvae* 2.1 where figures from myth intrude into the human world, rather than the other way around.<sup>102</sup> Statius is praising Glaucias for his youthful promise in both physical and intellectual pursuits. When wrestling, he says, you would think him 'born of an Amyclean mother', that is a product of Sparta. We are told that Apollo would have exchanged Hyacinth for him, or Heracles Hylas. If he declaimed Menander, the Muse Thalia would have crowned him with roses, while when he spoke the *Iliad* or *Odyssey* his father and his teacher were amazed.<sup>103</sup> Here Glaucias seems to be mingling freely with gods and heroes. The use of the subjunctive may introduce an element of distance, but the presence of both divine and human observers puts them on the same footing, suggesting the intrusion of these mythological figures into Glaucias' world.<sup>104</sup> Rather than the mythological figures playing a role as exempla, instead they are introduced as real characters engaging with Glaucias, preferring him to their own beloved boys (Hylas and Hyacinth) or offering him a poetic prize.<sup>105</sup>

<sup>100</sup> *Silvae* 3.3.192–4.

<sup>101</sup> Another sarcophagus which could be read as a poetic statement that the Concordia of a deceased couple entitled them to one last reunion like those permitted in myth is the Protesilaus and Laodameia sarcophagus in the Vatican where the mythological couple is fused with the human couple through the unfinished heads on the central *dextrarum iunctio* scene: Newby 2011, fig. 6.2.

<sup>102</sup> Cf. Coleman 1999 on mythological figures intruding into the real world elsewhere in the *Silvae*.

<sup>103</sup> *Silvae* 2.1.110–19; van Dam 1984: 123–4.

<sup>104</sup> Cf. 5.3.191–4 where it is said that the mythological teachers and advisers Mentor, Chiron and Phoenix would not have vied with Statius senior in their ability to mould youthful hearts. While essentially this compares Statius to those figures, the expression *non tibi certassent* ('they would not have vied with you') also imagines Statius mingling freely with them.

<sup>105</sup> Asso 2010 uses this comparison to Hylas and Hyacinth to argue that Statius here alludes to a homoerotic element in Melior's love for Glaucias, which is otherwise expressed in fatherly terms. For my purposes the nature of the relationship is less important than the sincere grief Melior is said to have expressed and the ways Statius attempts to praise and console him.





Figure 8.9 Eroses sarcophagus. Berlin Antikensammlung, inv. Sk 855.

The picture of Thalia delighting in Glaucias' Attic speech and crowning him with roses offers a close parallel to the appearance of Muses on some biographical sarcophagi. These show scenes from the childhood of the deceased, but also elevate the praise by the insertion of mythological characters. On a sarcophagus in the Villa Doria Pamphili a scene of the deceased reading to his teacher is attended by Hermes and two Muses, identified by the masks they hold.<sup>106</sup> Here the mythological figures intrude on the real world, as in Statius' poem.

Elsewhere, an early Eroses sarcophagus also suggests the direct interaction of mythological figures with the deceased, though here the setting is a Dionysiac one. A young girl with portrait features stands in the middle of the sarcophagus, surrounded by Eroses (Figure 8.9).<sup>107</sup> While she looks out at the viewer, an Eros approaches from the left, offering her grapes. The usual iconography of the scene is changed to make a figure who elsewhere is part of the wrestling scene to the right interact instead with the deceased. However, this interaction only goes one way; while the Eros approaches the girl, she does not seem to see him. This differs from those sarcophagi where mythological figures are given portrait faces; here the girl is shown as she must have looked in life. While she has been parachuted into the world of Eroses she does not herself take part in their activities. This image could be read as a consolatory expression of hope that she will find peace in a Dionysiac realm. Similar sentiments appear at the ends of some of Statius' consolations. *Silvae* 2.1 pictures Glaucias in the underworld with Melior's dead friend Blaesus, while 5.1 has Priscilla welcomed by ancient heroines.<sup>108</sup> An even closer parallel is provided by a Latin verse inscription from Rome in which the dead *Nepos* consoles his grieving relatives by

<sup>106</sup> Rome, Villa Doria Pamphili; Amedick 1991: cat. 236

<sup>107</sup> Berlin, Antikensammlung inv Sk 855; Kranz 1999: 31–2, 109–110, cat. 5.

<sup>108</sup> *Silvae* 2.1.189–207; 5.1.247–62.



saying that he has been translated to the heavens and mingles freely with gods and heroes; one line pictures him surrounded by a crowd of Amores.<sup>109</sup> Rather than reading this image as a secure statement of a belief in immortality, a comparison with Statius and verse epitaphs suggests instead that it was a poetic euphemism, designed to ease the pain of loss with the hope of a peaceful hereafter.

## Conclusions

By comparing a few of the earlier mythological sarcophagi with Statius' consolations I hope to have shown how the rhetoric of sarcophagi could work. Through the projection of real figures into mythological situations, or the pairing of real-life scenes of mourning with mythological ones, the sarcophagi work analogously to consolatory poetry. They start with the grief of the bereaved, or the merits of the deceased, and then exemplify these through comparison to mythological events, or direct insertion of the deceased into the mythological world. The visual strategies by which this is achieved vary; on some the key might be a scene of mourning on a side panel or the centrality of a scene bearing portrait features. From here we look outwards to the rest of the imagery, to decipher its messages about grief and virtue. Sometimes the imagery is closely controlled, kept relevant to one central message, whereas at other times the mythological analogies seem to run away with themselves, introducing less (to our minds) relevant aspects of the myths. Yet this too can be paralleled in poetry, and might help to intensify the message, fixing it into the viewer's minds, as well as flattering their intellectual aspirations.

The turn towards grief and myth in Statius' poetry at the end of the first century AD is paralleled by a change in focus of funerary monuments, away from lavish memorials which faced the outside world towards a more internalized display.<sup>110</sup> Tombs which were plain brick on the outside, with space for a short inscription, could contain lavishly decorated interiors, housing both carved sarcophagi and ash chests, as can be seen in the necropolis at Isola Sacra.<sup>111</sup> The audience for these monuments was more restricted, consisting mainly of members of the deceased's family, though a

<sup>109</sup> *CIL* 6. 21521 = *CIL* 6. 34137 = *CLE* 1109, translated as Courtney 1995: no. 183 l. 31, possibly Flavian though Courtney 1995: 381 on line 1 argues for a late date.

<sup>110</sup> von Hesberg 1992.

<sup>111</sup> Calza 1940; Baldassare 1987. On decorated tomb interiors at Rome see Feraudi-Gruénais 2001.

wider audience may have seen the sarcophagus at the time of the burial. The introduction of mythological imagery onto sarcophagi in the second century introduces a more poetic mode of funerary imagery into this intensely private world, and also initially draws on the iconography of the domestic sphere.

Myth seems to be primarily a poetic mode of speech in Latin funerary literature.<sup>112</sup> While public funeral speeches and the consolations of Seneca do sometimes make use of exempla to exalt the achievements of the deceased, or to offer a model to the bereaved, these are primarily chosen from among the figures of Roman history, or the imperial family. It is only in poetry, it seems, that mythological characters are really appropriate. This is in line with the strictures of ancient literary theory which allowed a greater licence to poetry than to prose. The orator Quintilian repeatedly states that some things which are allowed to the poet are not appropriate to the orator. The Greek writer Lucian in his treatise on the writing of history also makes a clear distinction between the rules of history and the licence allowed to poetry, whose freedom is unchecked and for whom one law alone exists – the will of the poet.<sup>113</sup> Among his examples of the fantasies of the poets Lucian includes extravagant mythological comparanda. Poetry's embellishments are specifically identified by Lucian as 'myth and encomium'.<sup>114</sup>

Traditionally poetry was the preserve of emotion, summed up by the sophist Gorgias thus: 'those who hear poetry feel shudders of fear, the tears of pity, the longings of grief'.<sup>115</sup> The evidence of Statius and the mythological sarcophagi suggests that it was increasingly towards this poetic mode of speech that the bereaved turned in order to find expression of their grief. First-century philosophical prose consolations express the view that it was inappropriate to yield unduly to grief, especially for men, though many of these works address themselves to women too. Statius' poems, all addressed to men, seem to suggest the opposite, that excessive grief was now acceptable and even encouraged. Yet other evidence shows

<sup>112</sup> Greek funerary oratory makes much greater use of myth, as is specifically encouraged in the *Progymnasmata* of Ps.-Dionysius (*On Epideictic Speeches* 6. 282, 283; see e.g. Dio Chrys. *Or.* 29.17–20), and it has been suggested that Greek epideictic rhetoric had a pervasive effect on Statius (Hardie 1983, *contra* van Dam 1984: 5–7). There are indeed overlaps between poetry and rhetoric in terms of techniques and the aim of persuasion, but in Latin funerary texts of the first and second century mythological exempla are primarily confined to verse.

<sup>113</sup> E.g. Quintilian, *Inst.* 8.6.17–18; 10.1.27f.; Lucian, *How to write History* 8.

<sup>114</sup> Lucian, *How to write History* 8. τὸν μῦθον καὶ, τὸ ἐγκώμιον

<sup>115</sup> Gorgias, *Defence of Helen* 9, trans. Russell in Russell and Winterbottom 1972: 7. For discussion see Russell 1995: 22–4.

that the Stoic demands for endurance in the face of loss continued into the second century, exemplified by Marcus Aurelius' restraint in reaction to the loss of his son.<sup>116</sup> A letter by Fronto on the death of his grandson explores this tension, arguing that a belief in the immortality of the soul is of little consolation to those missing a beloved face, stance and voice.<sup>117</sup> The explanation seems to lie in the context. While excessive grief was still expected to be curtailed in public life, the private atmosphere of the tomb allowed greater space and privacy to articulate it. For those wishing to express their grief or hopes, mythological sarcophagi could provide an outlet, presenting their messages in the elevated imagery of poetry and translating the feelings of the bereaved into poems in stone.

<sup>116</sup> SHA, *Marcus Aurelius* 21.1. Note that in *Meditations* 11.6 he claims to find comfort in the examples shown in tragedy that terrible things have happened before and been endured.

<sup>117</sup> Fronto, *Ep* 2.5.

## 9 | The funerary altar of Pedana and the rhetoric of unreachability

CAROLINE VOUT

For him, these thoughts are for Roland Barthes, ‘for him’, which means that I am thinking of him and about him, not only about his *oeuvre* or his subject. ‘For him’ – it means that I would like also to dedicate these thoughts to him, to give them to him, to intend them for him. Now they will no longer reach him – that’s the starting point of what I must think; they can no longer reach him, reach right to him (if indeed they could when he was alive). So? Where do they go? To whom and for whom?

Derrida, *The Deaths of Roland Barthes*<sup>1</sup>

### Show and not tell

The linguistic turn makes everything a language,<sup>2</sup> and everything ultimately interpretable. Warburg, Panofsky and their formalist forebears give voice to ‘the silent poetry’ that is painting,<sup>3</sup> enabling it to speak in its own terms in vocabulary learned from other canvases. Yet inevitably the audience lacks fluency, forced instead to translate what the image says into natural language, which can be signed, spoken, written – icono-graphy, icono-logy, – ‘logos’ being about speech not vision, about turning allusiveness into argumentation. If this argumentation is persuasive, it qualifies as

The seed of this piece was first planted at a session, entitled ‘Three Passionate Gazes at the Lady Lever’ at the Classical Association Conference in Liverpool in 2007. I thank my co-panellists, Jessica Hughes and Robin Osborne as well as the audience, for their engagement, and the editors of this book for the opportunity to cultivate these ideas some years later. I also thank Janet Huskinson and audiences at the Norwegian Institute in Rome, the Philological Society in Oxford, the Ancient History Seminar in Cambridge, the Classics Seminar in Nottingham and the World Art Research Seminar at the University of East Anglia for their feedback, and the Leverhulme Trust for the award of a Philip Leverhulme Prize, which has given me the research leave to meet the deadline.

<sup>1</sup> Derrida 1981: 269; translation, Vout. Useful in relating this to rhetoric is Rollins 2005.

<sup>2</sup> For the visual implications of this, see Mitchell 1994: 11.

<sup>3</sup> For poetry as painting with the gift of speech and painting as silent poetry, see Simonides, fr. 190b Bergk (Plut. *De glor. Ath., Mor.* 346F) and the discussion by Stansbury-O’Donnell 1999: 10–13 and Goldhill 2007: 5–6. Panofsky’s *Studies in Iconology* was published in 1939. For an excellent translation and edition of his ‘Über das Verhältnis der Kunstgeschichte zur Kunsttheorie’, *Zeitschrift für Ästhetik und allgemeine Kunstwissenschaft* 18 (1925) 129–61, see Panofsky 2008. Fundamental for understanding iconology today is Mitchell 1986 and 1994: 17 where he asks, ‘Is Panofsky really the Saussure of Art History?’

rhetoric – rhetoric, the art of communication. Yet words cast a different spell from brush or chisel. We do not hear or read a seductive painting. We see and . . . ‘are filled with something more elemental than a process of intellectualisation’.<sup>4</sup> We are struck dumb by being moved in ways we do not understand, physically assaulted by sculpture’s three-dimensionality.<sup>5</sup> The act of contemplation replaces conversation, turning Simonides’ silence into a virtue.

This chapter is about that silence; about the failure of rhetoric; and its subject matter is Roman funerary art. It starts with a cross-section of monuments from the late first to late second century CE and some observations about their visual mechanics, and then moves to a detailed reading of one altar. This second part of the chapter enables us to bring art and text together again, seeing them not as image and word but as elements of a single visual experience. The emphasis is less on what these monuments offer than on what they do not – on making ‘aporia’ an hermeneutic category crucial to their function.

Silences are uncomfortable. Such is the need for the visual arts to secure a status above that of imitation that they have long been endowed ‘with a sense of discursive rationality’.<sup>6</sup> Ancient images are accorded their own agency: statues move, sing, step from their bases, can even be tried for murder.<sup>7</sup> And drinking cups introduce themselves, and their influence, with first-person inscriptions (Figure 9.1): ‘Nestor’s cup I am, good to drink from. Whoever drinks this cup empty, straightaway the desire of beautiful-crowned Aphrodite will seize’.<sup>8</sup> They advertise their ability to inspire passion, loyalty, fear, religious feeling – the didactic impulses implicit in their aestheticism. But they do so as though they were actors, orators almost, adopting human characteristics of emotion and gesture which highlight that they are speaking in a foreign tongue. Sometimes, they are so convincing as to dupe their audience, eliding the gap between real and representational. Stories about

<sup>4</sup> De Bolla 2003: 2.

<sup>5</sup> De Bolla 2003: 2 describes the effect of being struck dumb by an object as ‘mutism’: see Vout (2010). Those working on the relationship of art and text usually give insufficient attention to the ways in which the differences between painting and sculpture have been elided. Despite the spatial dimension of Lessing’s *Laocoon*, for example, it is painting that drives the debate there too. So much so that Lessing explicitly says at the close of his preface (1961 edition: 5), ‘under the name of Painting I include the plastic arts in general’. For the need to reassert these differences, with specific reference to art and Epic, see Vout (2013).

<sup>6</sup> Puttfarcken 1985: x, in relation to the rationale behind the work of early art-theorists such as André Félibien.

<sup>7</sup> See Gleason (1995) 14–15. On the Colossus of Memnon as a speaking statue, Bowersock (1984) and Platt (2009a), and on moving statues, Spivey (1995).

<sup>8</sup> Archaeological Museum, Pithekoussai. See Buchner and Russo 1955, Watkins 1976, Murray 1994, and Ridgway (1997). For the Homeric ekphrasis with which this cup converses, Hom. *Il.* 11.628–37 and Becker 1995: 65–7.



**Figure 9.1** Cup of Nestor, late eighth century BCE, Archaeological Museum, Pithekoussai.

sex with the Cnidian Aphrodite, or the competitive illusionism of Zeuxis' and Parrhasius' painting,<sup>9</sup> explore a tension at the heart of rhetorical display between truthfulness and persuasion.

This is not the same as saying that the visual arts have a decipherable language. Rather the ancients are using analogy with the living world to raise the problematic; to ask whether their systems encode and decode information in the same way as texts. This is not unlike what Renaissance humanists were doing in applying rhetorical terms to art, where what is interesting is 'less that the man has praised a painting for *décor* than that *décor* is a category of visual analysis he has had to learn'.<sup>10</sup> In other words, the thought processes involved force him to notice the visual effects that he is feeling. Similar benefit might be derived by scholars today. Classical archaeologist Eric Varner, for one, has found the concepts of 'aemulatio' and 'imitatio' helpful in interrogating *Kopienkritik* with new vigour. As he acknowledges, it is absurd to let Roman art's newly celebrated autonomy as innovatively appropriating (as opposed to unimaginatively copying) Greek art dispense with the idea of direct quotation.<sup>11</sup> If anything, it makes the question of direct quotation *more* relevant. Rhetoric teaches that the *puritas* of grammar relied on *consuetudo* (custom),<sup>12</sup> and the impact of a performance on exceeding expectation.

We could extend Varner's methodology: juggling such rhetorical tropes as *antanaklasis* (using a single word more than once but in its different senses), *antimetabolē* (repeating words in successive clauses but in reverse

<sup>9</sup> Aphrodite: Plin. *NH* 36.22; Ath. 13.591a; Arnob. *Adv. Nat.* 6.22; Lucian, *Imagines* 4 and pseudo-Lucian, *Amores* 13–18. Zeuxis and Parrhasius: Plin. *NH* 35.65 and, the discussions by Bryson 1990: 30–2 and, with bibliography, Squire 2009: 384–9. Fundamental reading on Parrhasius and the limits of art is Morales 1996.

<sup>10</sup> Baxandall 1971: 48. <sup>11</sup> Varner 2006. <sup>12</sup> Puttfarken 1985: 59.



**Figure 9.2** The Warren Cup, 5-15 CE (?), showing a boy spying on the male lovers from behind the door.

grammatical order), *epanalēpsis* (the same word repeated at the beginning and end of a clause, line or sentence), *epistrophē* (the same word repeated at the end of a sequence of clauses or sentences) and *epizeuxis* (the repetition of words for emphasis) might make us think harder about different kinds of visual echo and how these work in a single composition and a larger frame of reference.<sup>13</sup> But how far is this to impose alien terms of analysis on the visual's peculiar prowess? How celebratory is Roman art of its own 'painterli-ness', naturalism, Greek-ness, and, thus, of its own persuasive strategies? Of what it is, and cannot be? 'I am the cup of Nestor'. 'Ceci n'est pas une pipe'.<sup>14</sup> Here the artists rely on text and its potential to comment on visual meaning and have us look more closely at the image. An image sometimes included a spectator-figure within the frame, whose looking makes us aware of ours: that the tableau is a performance (Figure 9.2).<sup>15</sup> But again this scripts the image, giving narrative to its impact. It also, like all ekphrases, describes not the object but a way of seeing. It is embarrassed by the unfathomable, is shy about offering 'mutism'.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>13</sup> For a full list of such tropes, see Vickers 1988: 491–8.

<sup>14</sup> Magritte, *La trahison des images* (1928–9). Oil on canvas, 63.5 x 93.98 cm, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, California.

<sup>15</sup> See, for example, the Warren Cup, from the British Museum, London, where the story stimulated by the person peeking round the door adds to the titillation.

<sup>16</sup> Although note Goldhill 2007: 3–8 and his emphasis on ekphrasis eliciting emotion, amazement, confusion.

## The power of empty rhetoric

All art encodes allusiveness and absence.<sup>17</sup> But some genres of art do this more insistently than others. In this respect, funerary art is a special category. Its relationship to reality – life – is complicated by decomposition: *si quaeris quae sim, cinis en et tosta fauilla, | ante obitus tristeis Heluia Prima fui* reads one verse inscription from Beneventum, its past tense underlining that the deceased is intact body no more.<sup>18</sup> Were there a portrait of Helvia here, any charisma, any fantasy elicited by the gap between image and referent (as between the Primaporta portrait-type and the aged Augustus, or the Cnidian and all powerful Aphrodite) would be crushed by the presence of the corpse or lack of it, the capacity to conjure her up would be stymied by the fact that she is still there, but in a form which threatens the life histories provided by the stone. What kind of relationship to truthfulness does the funerary monument have? How does it commemorate the deceased and visualize loss, persuade in ways which are consolatory? In a much-cited passage by the Roman jurist Ulpian, the function of funerary monuments is said to be ‘to preserve memory’,<sup>19</sup> but unlike the younger Seneca’s letters and their claims to immortalize himself and Lucilius, with funerary art, there is the proximity of the body.<sup>20</sup>

Questions of cremation versus inhumation, and group versus individual burial, are of obvious relevance here. But they are in danger of distracting from the overarching issue of how funerary altar and cinerary urn deal with the ‘strong psychological urge to see the dead’,<sup>21</sup> to convert epideictic rhetoric or funerary oration into concrete form or visual memorial. While inscriptions on these monuments often refer to the bones of the deceased (‘Who can tell, passer-by, having looked at a fleshless corpse, whether it

<sup>17</sup> Excellent here, but on Greek sculpture, is Steiner 2001: 3–25. Also interested in absence and presence in Greek funerary sculpture is Neer 2002a and 2010.

<sup>18</sup> Now in the Naples Museum: *CIL* 9.1837: ‘If you ask who I am, see I am ashes and burned embers; before my sad death, I was Helvia Prima’. See Garrod 1913. Also relevant here is *CIL* 9.2272: *Apollonia quae uocitabur, lapide hoc inclusa quiesco* (I, who used to be called Apollonia, lie here shut in by the stone).

<sup>19</sup> Ulpian, *Digest* 11.7.2.6: *monumentum est quod memoriae seruandae gratia*.

<sup>20</sup> Playing with this problem is *CIL* 9.6311, which commemorates one woman’s erection of a tombstone to her husband when he is still alive (*Caecilia Iulia marito uiuo posuit*). Although it was common for people to see to the provision of their own tombs, this commemoration is curious: see Lawler 1929: 352. For Seneca’s letter, see *Epist.* 21.5.

<sup>21</sup> Courtney 1995: 381.



was Hylas or Thersites?’<sup>22</sup> or ‘Stranger, stop and behold this heap of earth on your left. Here are contained the bones of a good man’),<sup>23</sup> and sometimes even to the smell,<sup>24</sup> accompanying images are usually more fragrant. Art and text deal with these issues in different ways. Skeletons, for example, are rarely represented on tombs, thereby also avoiding doubling, or distracting from the real remains. They are better suited to the dining room, where the absent presence they embody is the viewer in future time – not a specific past life but the theme of mortality.<sup>25</sup> Before the medieval period, when Christian doctrine taught of eternal life and the resurrection of the flesh, the picture of a skeleton on a grave marker was all too obvious.

Scenes showing the laying out of the corpse are also less frequent in Roman art than in Greek, where *lekythoi* show the corpse lying in death pose, attended by the living.<sup>26</sup> When they do occur, as on the Augustan funerary relief from Amiternum, now in the National Museum of Abruzzo,<sup>27</sup> the deceased is propped up on an elbow, as though posing for a posthumous portrait. He is aware of his body being displayed. Either that, or he is an image already, framed by the hanging behind him, which represents a wax figure or stand-in to highlight his departure. Mourners left and right gesture towards him theatrically, attributing meaning as though to a painting. In the act of exegesis, his life becomes (art) history.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>22</sup> εἰπεῖν τίς δύναται σκήνος λιπόσαρκον ἀθήσας | εἴπερ Ὑλάς ἢ Θερσεΐτης ἦν, ὧ παροδεῖτα. Roman loculus slab with Greek inscription, second century CE, today in the British Museum, London (GR 1805.7–3.211 (Sculpture 2391)).

<sup>23</sup> *CIL* 1.1027 = *CIL* 6.9545/*ILS* 7602: *Hospes, resiste et hoc ad grumum ad laeuam aspice ubi continentur ossa hominis boni* . . .

<sup>24</sup> Second-century CE inscription from the cemetery of Hermopolis in middle Egypt, as cited in Montserrat 1998: 167: ‘Do not pass in silence by me, the son of Epimachus, as you go on your way. Stop: the disagreeable smell of cedar oil will not bother you near me. Stay, and hear a little about a fragrant corpse . . .’

<sup>25</sup> Although note that the loculus slab from the British Museum which refers to Hylas and Thersites above (n. 22) does show a skeleton, supine beneath the text, in a rectangular hollow, akin to a casket. Also interesting here is the funerary altar of a young girl, Antonia Panace (Archaeological Museum, Naples, inv. no. 2803 and *CIL* 6.12059) where the skeleton reclining cup in hand might allude to the adult pleasures that the child’s premature death has denied her. Excellent on these and other exceptions is Dunbabin 1986, and again in Dunbabin 2003: 103–40.

<sup>26</sup> For Greek examples, see Oakley 2004: 76–87.

<sup>27</sup> Funerary relief, Amiternum, mid to late first century BCE, National Museum of Abruzzo, L’Aquila: see Dunbabin 2003: fig. 62.

<sup>28</sup> See also Varner 2006: 290–2 and his ‘explicit references to the deceased memorialized as works of art in numerous funerary monuments’, or the tomb-crane relief of the Tomb of the Haterii, now in the Vatican, where the deceased woman seems to be represented three times: first, propped up on her death-bed, looking out, second, as a bust in the pediment of the monument being constructed and, third, as a Venus figure in a niche. One might compare these examples

Such fictive forwardness is typical of grave monuments. It is no accident that these should play such a starring role in Varner's argument: other examples of individuals being transformed into works of art include an early imperial altar commemorating one, Tiberius Octavius Diadumenus, not with a portrait likeness but with an image of Polyclitus' famous fillet-binder, and Flavian female funerary statues with portrait-heads and Aphrodite-bodies (Figure 9.3).<sup>29</sup> Their gain is Greek art's loss. And their genius, that they are given bodies that are resolutely other – immediately recognizable as different from their own bodies. Some scholars have judged these women unconvincing. But unconvincing is the point. They do not conjure up the dead woman, but dissolve her flesh through metamorphosis. They exploit the suppression of description or truthfulness as a positive.

Other funerary monuments unsettle the relationship between image and referent in different ways. Take the relief of Lucius Vibius Felix and family, today in the Vatican Museum (Figure 9.4), a piece often cited as the classic example of freedman portraiture. Husband and wife show off their recently acquired citizenship by virtue of their Roman dress and veristic facial features, framing a bust of their young son which hovers between them. The nuclear family is a simple story of hard work reaping rich rewards, a perfect image of attainment; except that the inscription also mentions a *liberta* (Lucius' daughter?), Vibia Prima.<sup>30</sup> Where is she in the frame? Her textual footprint complicates the mapping of art onto life (and death), deliberately undermining the image's openness. Whatever the practical reasons for this (she was too young to qualify for representation? the relief

to the sorts of self-consciousness that one finds on classical Attic equivalents, like the Ilissos Stele, 350–330 BCE (National Archaeological Museum of Athens, Greece, inv. 869), where the nude body of the deceased leans against what appears to be a/his tomb.

<sup>29</sup> Altar of Tiberius Octavius Diadumenus, c. 10–40 CE, Vatican Museum, Cortile Ottaviano, inv. 1142, *CIL* 6.10035: see Kleiner 1987: fig. 1 and Varner 2006: 292–3. The jury is still out on whether all of the female portrait-statues with Aphrodite bodies, the most famous, 'Marcia Furnilla', included (Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen: inv. 711), are funerary. See D'Ambra 1996 and 2000.

<sup>30</sup> Grave relief of Lucius Vibius Felix and family, c. 13 BCE–5 CE, Vatican Museum, the inscription of which lists 'Lucius Vibius, son of Lucius, of the Tromentina voting tribe and Vecilia Hil(ar)a, Lucius Vibius Felicio Felix and Vibia Prima, who was manumitted by a woman': see Koortbojian 1996: 218–21, who already makes this discrepancy speak, but collapses it into the question of literacy and the readability of the inscription. Also important here are Sanders 1991: 93 and Davies 2007: 52–9 who again raise the issue of mismatch between image and text, though without pursuing its implications very far. For Sanders, it points to a diminishing of the portrait.



**Figure 9.3** 'Marcia Furnilla', 98-117 CE, Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen.

was the best the workshop had?), incongruity has the power to generate eternal impasse.

This kind of incongruity is not uncommon. A loculus slab from Isola Sacra, dating to the mid second century CE, is confusing with its proliferation of figures (Figure 9.5).<sup>31</sup> A mature male reclines on a couch, drinking cup in hand. Behind him is a sleeping female, and at his feet, another, seated female, her torso exposed like his and her arms extended to offer

<sup>31</sup> Isola Sacra, tomb II, loculus slab, c. 152-60 CE, Museo Ostiense, inv. 1333.



**Figure 9.4** Grave relief of Lucius Vibius Felix and family, Vatican Museums, c. 13 BCE–5 CE.



**Figure 9.5** Loculus slab, Isola Sacra, tomb II, c. 152–60 CE, Museo Ostiense.

him another drink. Convention dictates that the man is the deceased but what about the women? The drinking, semi-nudity, and the company of an Eros who flies in to garland the couple bind this second woman to him, leaving her sleeping counterpart in the shadows. Is she ‘a first wife, dead before her husband? A daughter, sister, or fellow freedwoman?’<sup>32</sup> Is she his current wife, and the ‘seated Venus’ an allegory of the *pothos* elicited by his passing? Or are they one and the same: the former, representative of the dead wife whom he joins, and the latter, of the fun they have left behind them (or vice versa)? To the left of the couch is Ceres, and to the right, closest to the sleeping figure, Mercury, who beckons the deceased to join him. This is an image about transition, but is more intricate than a simple

<sup>32</sup> Dunbabin 2003: 120.



**Figure 9.6** Section of the Portonaccio sarcophagus, c. 190 CE, Palazzo Massimo, Rome.

departure scene. The man belongs to both women. Where does this promiscuity leave the corpse behind the slab and the viewer's intimacy with it?

'Unfinished' heads of the kind one finds on the Portonaccio sarcophagus, now in the collection of Rome's Palazzo Massimo, similarly deny resolution (Figure 9.6).<sup>33</sup> As Janet Huskinson points out, it is not as though these portraits are weathered with age or attacked by a chisel. Rather they are incomplete, and this incompleteness – however accidental – creates 'a distance between the dead person and his or her image', one which withholds memory.<sup>34</sup> It is not just that individuals like this cannot meet our gaze. They are not individuals at all. They are unable to die as they are yet to be born, cannot reach maturity. These faceless faces do more than

<sup>33</sup> For further discussion of the general's unfinished features on the Antonine sarcophagus in Palazzo Massimo, Rome, see Buchanan 2013.

<sup>34</sup> Huskinson 1998: 133. Also relevant here is Newby 2011: 198 and Davies 2007: 40, who discusses 'the small but noticeable proportion of ash chests' on which the panel was never inscribed.

create a distance between deceased and image, deceased and viewer. They create a lacuna and the overwhelming need to fill it.

All of these strategies magnify the absence in an image, turning it from default to something more marked and unsettling. They signal that however honorific the artwork, the individual concerned is still unreachable. 'Can an image be an elegy?' asks art historian Elizabeth Helsinger. 'An elegy does more than picture death: it mourns'.<sup>35</sup> In other words, it has to flag its inability to get there. These do that, by celebrating the gap in a more visceral way than is usual – differently from the funerary processions that paraded through the city.<sup>36</sup> In a world in which the *mos maiorum* weighed heavy, with family busts in the *atrium* and statues crowding public spaces, it was arguably even harder for the monuments on the streets of tombs to affect the viewer, and in ways which were about the personal rather than the collective, not only about writing oneself into history but about escorting one's loved ones out. The preservation of their memory 'required active participation by the viewer in the dialogue with the deceased', explains Maureen Carroll.<sup>37</sup> But emotion comes when one is unable to make sense of the situation, as soon as words cede to tears. These monuments make dialogue as hard as possible – to upset through anxiety.

The success of these kinds of visual languages (if we can call them that) lies in their failure or indeterminacy. This conclusion is Jacques Derrida's view of language writ large, deconstructionalism's denial of determinate meaning in favour of texts that have their own unravelling written into them. Brian Vickers has argued that such a commitment to the infinite postponement of meaning means 'the death of rhetoric'. 'If language could not be reliably understood, . . . then there would be no point in developing powers of eloquence or argument'.<sup>38</sup> And there is a sense in which he is right, albeit with a more positive spin than he realizes. It is as though our monuments are accepting of the dearth of their persuasive powers, exploiting the rhetorical device of *aposiōpēsis* (becoming silent), where a sentence is deliberately broken off through embarrassment, pain, modesty . . . It is not that other rhetorical figures – those that achieve visual presence (*prosōpographia*, *prosōpopoeia*, *enargeia*) – are neutralized. If anything, it is that they are being pressed to offer more than a metaphor for understanding the visual, something more concrete and comforting – a loved

<sup>35</sup> Helsinger 2010: 658.

<sup>36</sup> Unsurpassed here in depth and range is Flower 1996.

<sup>37</sup> Carroll 2006: 55.

<sup>38</sup> Vickers 1995: 298.

one's actual body. In realizing their limited powers to do this, these monuments exploit the potential of empty rhetoric.

Consider the way in which many funerary inscriptions speak to the viewer: 'I was Helvia Prima', 'Stranger, stop and behold this heap of earth on your left', 'Stop and read'.<sup>39</sup> Or, rather differently, the way that they dramatize the viewer's response to the grave: 'May the earth rest lightly upon you',<sup>40</sup> an appeal so frequent as to have been abbreviated to 'S.T.T.L.', rendering even concern for the corpse formulaic. It is a well-known technique of rhetoric to add extra voices to a monologue and make objects speak, and here those of viewer, deceased and disembodied narrator vie with one another to animate the encounter.<sup>41</sup> Except that in obeying the command to stop, the viewer has had his progress halted – taking up a position off track, out of himself, as though preparing for an assault (the title of *uiator* or *hospes* making him alien). This is hardly conversing with the dead: he is 'petrified',<sup>42</sup> like a statue,<sup>43</sup> and force-fed words, as the deceased is force-fed words: 'may the earth rest lightly upon you'. Either that, or he undergoes a full-on physical reaction: 'I am made rigid, and stiffening horror had flooded my limbs' – though, in this case, not by the appearance of the deceased, but by his divine presence (as implied apotheosis enables the dead man to be both an epiphany and safely buried).<sup>44</sup> He is thus rendered mute, 'proto-dead' even.<sup>45</sup> An inscription from Ostia teases, 'Know, passer-by, that your voice is mine'<sup>46</sup> as the profits of *prosōpopoeia* collapse around him.

What follows applies this 'rhetoric of unreachability' to a Roman funerary altar. Next to funerary urns, altars are the most characteristic form of grave monument from the first and second centuries CE and could be set up inside tombs or in the precinct outside, sometimes on high bases. Usually around a metre tall, a few of them had cavities in which to place the ashes, but most were solid, the jug and *patera*, which are standard decoration for the left and right sides respectively, signalling a sacrificial function. While it was common practice to pour a libation at a grave, the

<sup>39</sup> So common is the formula that 'siste, viator, et lege' is the title of Blänsdorf's 2008 monograph on Latin inscriptions, ancient and modern, from Mainz.

<sup>40</sup> *Sit tibi terra levis*. For variants on this, see Carroll 2006: 54–5.

<sup>41</sup> Gleason 1995: 14. And on the competition between voices, Courtney 1995: 181 and Erasmo 2008: 171.

<sup>42</sup> Helsinger 2010: 667. <sup>43</sup> See Steiner 2001: 152–6.

<sup>44</sup> *CIL* 6.21521, found outside the Porta Portuensis, Rome and dated to the Flavian period or after: line 29, *erigor et gelidos horror perfuderat artus*. See Courtney 1995: 171, no. 183 and Reed 2002.

<sup>45</sup> Formative here is de Man 1984 as discussed by Helsinger 2010.

<sup>46</sup> *CIL* 14.356: *scire, uiator, [uox] tua nempe mea est*.



‘frankness’<sup>47</sup> or redundancy of putting sacrificial accoutrements on an altar makes them signifiers without necessarily being descriptive of function. The height alone of some of these monuments would have made them inaccessible. Instead, they ‘set boundaries’.<sup>48</sup> On the front of them, commemorative image and inscription collide to make any inaccessibility personal.

Diana Kleiner and Dietrich Boschung offer excellent catalogues of these altars, with the latter interested mainly in typologies and the former restricted to those with portraits.<sup>49</sup> But beyond this, there is little to rival the sophisticated work now being done on sarcophagi, even if the emphasis there is still largely on the rhetoric of consolation and on the ways in which their mythological friezes encode empathy.<sup>50</sup> The decoration of sarcophagi would benefit from more interrogation of how it alienates the viewer. For all that a few great men will raise their heads above ‘the deep flood of time’, resist ‘the realms of silence’ and ‘for a long time fight against oblivion’,<sup>51</sup> it is the fight that it is crucial. Funerary monuments do not guarantee memory, and not only because ‘wasting rain’, ‘furious north wind’ and ‘the countless chain of years’ destroy them,<sup>52</sup> but because remembering is painful, and pain a crucial part of coming to terms with loss. How, other than by carving faceless heads or too few/many figures, did the Romans commemorate the deceased physically for eternity, and yet let them go? How did they manage the paradoxical convention, often expressed in times of mourning, of the impossibility of expression? As Derrida’s oration for Roland Barthes at the start of this chapter underlines, that these words and images will not touch the deceased ‘must be the starting point’ of reflection.

<sup>47</sup> See Barthes 1985 (first published 1964), whose case study is advertising images which are obviously out to persuade – those which are ‘frank or at least emphatic’.

<sup>48</sup> Kleiner 1987: 23.

<sup>49</sup> For catalogues of these altars, see Boschung 1987, Altmann 1905, Candida 1979, and, with portraits, Kleiner 1987, and for urns, Sinn 1987. Also useful is the Getty’s catalogue of Roman funerary sculpture 1988 and, for examples in the British Museum, Walker 1985. Kleiner’s review articles (Kleiner 1988 and 1989) give further context.

<sup>50</sup> In particular, Koortbojian 1995; Zanker and Ewald 2004, esp. 110–15 on ‘Trauerrhetorik und Bildallegorie’; Newby 2011. Also important here is the recent ‘Flesh Eaters’ conference, held in the Berkeley Art Museum on 18–19 September 2009 and the response by Mary Beard on her blog, ‘A Don’s Life’ (20 September 2009): ‘Was the message actually consolatory in the sense of “look – awful things happen to the gods too?” I began to think that many of these scenes were not trying to draw the viewer sympathetically in, but to keep him or her OUT. Their difficulty, their redundant figures and sometimes sheer nastiness were actually trying to erect a firm barrier between the dead person inside and the living outside. The job of the sarcophagus was, in a sense, turning the recently living into the definitely DEAD’.

<sup>51</sup> Sen. *Epist.* 21.5. <sup>52</sup> Hor. *Carm.* 3.30.3–5.



## Falling on deaf ears

Roman epitaphs became all the rage in around the first century AD and began slowly to die out in the third century. This is not surprising, for Roman epitaphs reflected not some fundamental idea of death but the reign of public rhetoric. Veyne 1992: 171

The funerary altar to Pedana, now in the Lady Lever Art Gallery at Port Sunlight in Liverpool, has an interesting afterlife (Figure 9.7). First recorded early in the fifteenth century when it stood in the Church of Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome, it was soon to become a key component in the garden of the Cesi Palace, one of the pre-eminent collections of ancient sculpture in the city, where it remained well into the eighteenth century.<sup>53</sup> After that, its history is hazier, until Edward Cheney buys it from Liverpool banker Richard Christopher Naylor, of Hooton Hall, Elsmere Port, Cheshire in 1875. A photograph taken in 1888 shows it in the vestibule of Cheney's house, Badger Hall, in Shropshire, next to the stairwell, where it functions as a base for a marble statuette of poet and novelist Sir Walter Scott.<sup>54</sup> When the collection was dispersed in 1905, both pieces were bought by William Hesketh Lever, and the altar installed in the corridor between the dining room and music room of his London residence, 'The Hill', Hampstead. In 1915, when the relevant inventory was made, his wife, Elizabeth, had been dead but two years. The altar, dedicated by a Roman freedman in honour of Pedana, his wife, must have been of particular resonance. It is today in the north rotunda of the Gallery built in Elizabeth's memory.<sup>55</sup>

Not that the altar is quite as Pedana's husband commissioned it. Its base is a modern addition, as is the top which replaces the original gable. These give it a height of 91.5 cm, but of these, only the central 70.5 cm are ancient. The inscription, which is framed on the front, is intact, but the relief sculpture above it is recut. Fortunately for us, drawings made of the

<sup>53</sup> The altar's inv. no. is LLAG 12, and its inscription, *CIL* 6.17050 and Bücheler 1895-7: II: no. 1301. The main publication of the altar is Waywell 1982. See also Altmann 1905: no. 113, Waywell 1986: no. 13, with bibliography, Boschung 1987: no. 775, Davies 1986: 55 and Roller 2006: 135. On Cardinal Cesi's sculpture garden, see van der Meulen 1974 and Bentz 2003. Note that English political philosopher Thomas Hollis (1720-74) is drawn to it, when he visits the Cesi Palace in Rome, querying the third couplet (a reference not mentioned by Waywell 1982: 239): see Blackburne 1780: 82 and, for more on Hollis and ancient sculpture, Vout 2012.

<sup>54</sup> Knox 2007: 8, fig. 4, and 13.

<sup>55</sup> For the display of the altar in Lever's London house and its move to Liverpool, see Yarrington 2005.



Figure 9.7 The funerary altar to Pedana, c. 90 CE, Lady Lever Gallery, Liverpool

piece when it was in the Cesi collection, though slightly different from one another, provide strong clues as to the nature of the airbrushing. These translations work – like applying rhetorical terms to art – to make us look more closely at the sculpture.<sup>56</sup>

The relief shows a banqueting scene similar to the one from Isola Sacra, but with the standard *two* figures, as opposed to three – a reclining male in tunic and cloak on the right, and a seated female, also in tunic and cloak, who perches on the edge of the couch in front of him (Figure 9.8). She is a little smaller than he is, cocooned almost by the fold of his bended knee, and by his right arm, which rests gently on her shoulder. As she gazes up at him, it is as though she is listening attentively to his address. There is little else for her to look at. He has something important to tell her; their

<sup>56</sup> Waywell 1982: 239 and pl. 37.



Figure 9.8 Close-up of the relief panel, altar to Pedana, Lady Lever Gallery, Liverpool.

conversation is serious. Not that the scene was always so free of distractions. The drawings suggest that originally the female figure had a more elaborate hairstyle than she does today, and that there were garlands, and perhaps also details of masonry, in the background, and cakes on the accompanying table. The touch of his recut fingers on its now empty surface signals perishability. First-hand inspection of the altar, meanwhile, reveals that, like his hand, his face and eyes have also been modified, and her right hand remodelled – the bowl, which she once offered him, now marked by its glaring absence. The couple's closeness might have assumed a rather different meaning, when surrounded by drinking paraphernalia.

These acts of erasure inevitably make the scene more poignant. 'The key is to recognise that silences and erasures are themselves signs. To be sure, they are signs that pretend to be the opposite, the negation of representation – just as *damnatio memoriae* purports to be the destruction of memory', writes historian Charles Hedrick,<sup>57</sup> but they draw attention to the mechanisms by which memory is stimulated; they remind us to let go, or at least reconfigure who these individuals were, and to embrace their changed status. They also raise the question of whether all funerary art is not like this, deploying a rhetoric not of unreachability so much as negation: not Helvia Prima, not the family of Lucius Vibius, not *that* Diadumenus, not the deceased speaking. An adapted image works like an unfinished one inasmuch as it signals that it does not quite refer to the

<sup>57</sup> Hedrick 2000: 117. For more on the ways in which the display of absence works in scenarios of so-called *damnatio memoriae*, see Vout 2008.

referent. In advertising its own ephemeral nature, it stresses the fragility of the link between them.

All of this is further nuanced by Geoffrey Waywell, who proposes that the fourteen-line inscription on the altar may have replaced an earlier, shorter ancient one.<sup>58</sup> This hypothesis finds some support in the uneven surface of the stone, but stems largely from the difficulty of reconciling the last line's reference to a sarcophagus with the early Flavian style of relief sculpture. Is the altar an ash-altar, and the use of 'sarcophagus' self-referential? After all, Pliny, who publishes his *Natural History* in 77–9 CE, mentions a stone 'by which all bodies are consumed', 'called a sarcophagus'.<sup>59</sup> Yet the restoration of the top makes this impossible to answer. Or does it point to the presence of a real sarcophagus in the enclosure, in which case we would likely be in the second century CE, when the Romans went over to inhumation?<sup>60</sup> In the first scenario, the altar is Pedana's box, and in the second, a borrowed boundary stone, the old-fashioned figures of which underscore the distance between it and her body. Reuse was not uncommon in Roman burial,<sup>61</sup> and not only about speed or convenience. In giving the dead a memorial that was not (only) theirs, relatives muddled the rhetorical processes of remembering.

Even without its modern recutting, the relief is intimate. Our couple have eyes only for each other. His arm on her neck is suggestive of tender concern – a prelude perhaps to seduction. If we compare something like the Flavian altar of Gaius Licinius Primigenius in the Louvre or the urn of Lucius Roscius Prepon from Puteoli, which is late first to early second century in date and today in the National Archaeological Museum in Naples, we find similar scenes of couples on dining couches (Figure 9.9). In both, the male figures recline, the former seemingly engaging his wife in animated conversation.<sup>62</sup> But there is no physical contact between them. Indeed, on the ash-chest, the figures look not at, but past, one other: the man is in a different world, and she in isolation.

But it is not just their touch that is telling, but also their seclusion. Often in scenes of this kind, the visual field accommodates figures other than the couple. On the Flavian altar of Quintus Socconius Felix from Rome, for

<sup>58</sup> Waywell 1982: 240. <sup>59</sup> Plin. *NH* 2.211.

<sup>60</sup> On the handful of sarcophagi to predate 120 CE, see Davies 2011.

<sup>61</sup> On the reuse of altars in particular, see Altmann 1905: 33.

<sup>62</sup> Altar of C. Licinius Primigenius, Louvre, Paris, MA 2125 (Boschung 1987: no. 784 and Dunbabin 2003: fig. 63) and urn of L. Roscius Prepon, late first to early second century CE, National Archaeological Museum, Naples, inv. 4189. Interesting on the identity of the female figure in the latter is Davies 2007: 51.



Figure 9.9 Urn of L. Roscius Prepon, late first to early second century CE, National Archaeological Museum, Naples.

example, where the couple recline together more cosily than is often the case, their affection is made worthy of comment by the inclusion of an Eros (Figure 9.10). In front of them, three slaves pander to their every need, one with a jug, the second with a towel and the third with a garland, conferring status though luxury.<sup>63</sup> This reconfigures the act of tending the tomb, and closeness to the deceased, as a master–slave relationship. On the central band of another altar, this time to Publius Vitellius Successus and in the Vatican, a male and female figure, in similar arrangement to the couples on the Louvre or Naples examples, are accompanied by a horse and palm-tree so as to signal transition to the afterlife.<sup>64</sup> Below them, two erotes flank a banner, bearing a simple *dis manibus* (to the souls of the departed) inscription, while above, in a segmented headed gable, they are again represented, but this time as portrait busts staring out from the stone as

<sup>63</sup> Altar of Q. Socconius Felix, second half of first century CE, Rome, Via Quattro Fontane, 13–18: see Dunbabin 2003: 114–15.

<sup>64</sup> Altmann 1905: no. 259.



**Figure 9.10** Altar of Quintus Socconius Felix, second half of first century CE, Via Quattro Fontane 13-18, Rome.

they might from a cupboard in an *atrium*. How do these and the *Totenmahl* relief work together? The disembodied heads and the part that these play in the resolutely Roman cult of the ancestors<sup>65</sup> jar with the banqueting scene and with the exoticism implied by palm and stallion. Which *di manes* are being addressed? Rather than conjure the couple up, the decision to represent them in two different forms imprisons them in a ‘no man’s land’ between memory and mimesis.

Of the 130 altars catalogued by Kleiner, only twenty-two are without the *dis manibus* tagline.<sup>66</sup> The altar to Pedana joins these. Its sides also substitute laurel trees and birds for the explicitly sacrificial jug and *patera*. Like most inscriptions to those who have died prematurely (it makes this tragedy explicit in its use of the phrase *praemature funere*), it is longer than average (four elegiac couplets), as though the weight of words counterbalances the dearth of years. Framed as it is, directly below the relief panel, and flanked by burning candelabra, supported on eagles, with bucrania, jugs and altars, the inscription works independently of, and in dialogue with, the sculpture (Figure 9.11).<sup>67</sup>

<sup>65</sup> I return to this point in the conclusion. <sup>66</sup> Kleiner 1987: 74.

<sup>67</sup> Text and translation after Waywell 1982: 241.



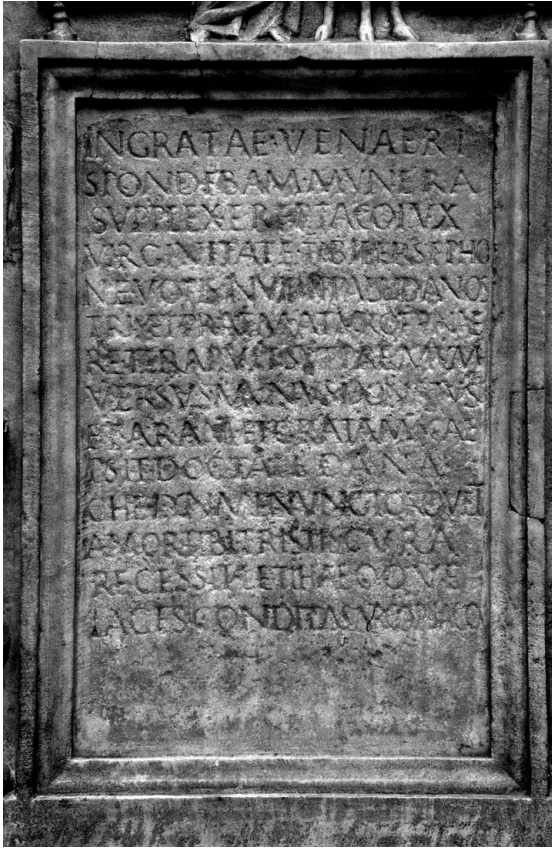


Figure 9.11 Inscription from the altar to Pedana, Lady Lever Gallery,

INGRATAE · VENAERI	
SPONDEBAM · MVNERA	
SVPPLEX · EREPTA COIVX	
VIRGINITATE · TIBI PERSEPHO	
NE · VOTIS INVIDIT PALLIDA NOS	5
TRIS ET PRAEMATVRO FVNAE	
RE · TE RAPVIT · SVPPREMVM	
VERSVS · MVNVS DONATVS	
ET · ARAM · ET GRATAM SCAL	
PSIT · DOCTA PEDANA	10
CHELYN ME NVNC TORQVET	
AMOR TIBI · TRISTIS CVRA	
RECESSIT · LETIHAEQVE	
IACES · CONDITA SARCOPHAGO	

Ingratae Ven[e]ri spondebam munera supplex,  
 erepta, coiux, uirginitate tibi.  
 Persephone uotes inuidit pallida nostris  
 et praematurō fun [e]re te rapuit.  
 Su [p]remum uersus munus Donatus et aram  
 et gratam scalpsit, docta Pedana, chelyn.  
 Me nunc torquet amor, tibi tristis cura recessit,  
 Le[t]haeoque iaces condita sarcophago.

To ungrateful Venus I was making offerings as a suppliant, after you had lost your virginity, wife. Pale Persephone envied our prayers and snatched you away in an untimely death. Donatus carved a last offering of a verse, an altar and a pleasing lyre, learned Pedana. Now love tortures me, but for you sad care has departed, and you lie buried in a sarcophagus of forgetfulness.

Any intimacy or suggestion of seductiveness is immediately heightened by the first line: not ‘to the souls of the departed’, but ‘to ungrateful Venus’. The goddess’s ingratitude is even more surprising given the position of the words – directly beneath the relief, and by the verb that follows them, SPONDEBAM at the beginning of line 2. A *sponda* is a bed or couch, and a possible translation of *spondebam*, ‘I was promising’ or ‘entrusting in marriage’. As yet we know neither the deceased nor the identity of the person speaking. Who is pledging what? Already this poem advertises itself as being about unfulfilled promises – Venus is not as appreciative as she should be, the second line does not point to the *Totenmahl* relief as was hoped, and the imperfect tense of the verb aches with lost opportunity. At the end of the next line is COIVX, a regular epigraphic variant of *coniunx* (‘bride’ or ‘wife’), whom one might think – given the EREPTA – had been taken before her prime. But this scenario is snatched away as soon as the viewer becomes a reader, and sees the words as adding up to an epigram, complete with rhythm, metre and scansion. Tying the first few lines together fails to meet expectation.

*Spondebam* pertains not to marriage, but to gifts or sacrifices, which the dedicant of the altar once offered to Venus, and *ereptā* agrees with *uirginitate* in line 4. Join the dots, and the assumption is that these gifts were given in the hope of children, after the loss of his bride’s virginity. But it was not to be. Childless Persephone is envious and whisks his wife to the underworld. Not that we should be particularly surprised by this. As Glenys Davies has noted, depictions of Persephone, showing Hades abducting her in a speeding chariot, appear with unusual frequency on



altars and ash chests of both sexes, and may have ‘hinted at the promise of return’.<sup>68</sup> Though our reference is textual, intertextuality implicates the visual: in the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*, Hermes finds ‘Hades in his house seated upon a couch, and his shy mate with him, much reluctant’.<sup>69</sup>

The mismatch between Persephone’s unwillingness here and the attentiveness of the female figure in the relief is of a piece with the overriding violence of our text and its departure from the image of Hades’ chariot and its allusion to apotheosis. *Rapuit* is an aggressive action, made all the more so by its prefiguration in line 3 where it reads as especially brutal. There is nothing delicate about this deflowering; nor indeed about the use of the Persephone myth, where it is Persephone who is doing the kidnapping.<sup>70</sup> Often epitaphs of this kind praise the loyalty and chastity of the wife; sometimes they also record that she and her husband lived their whole marriage without arguing.<sup>71</sup> But here, there is no such comfort, as though – in contrast to the seduction of the sculpture – even the wedding night is rushed. Persephone *inuidit*: it is a word that has looking at its core, as envy always does. As she looks (askance), viewers/readers look with her: how convinced are they by the panel’s intimacy, the directness of Pedana’s gaze, that the female on the couch is Pedana, and her partner, her husband? It is perhaps only now that they realize the oddity of having the male recline, when in most examples, the reclining figure is deceased. Their understanding and empathy are called into question.

At this point, Pedana’s husband switches from the intensity of ‘ego’ to the third person. Who is Donatus? The effect is similar to the command *siste, viator*, and forces the audience to consider whose voice it has been ventriloquizing. The third couplet reads, ‘Donatus carved a last offering of a verse, an altar and a pleasing lyre, learned Pedana’: is he referring to himself or is Donatus the sculptor? Either way, it functions as a kind of commentary on the altar and its heart-felt narrative, except that the reference to the lyre is dissonant, prompting Waywell to wonder whether there was not a separate sculpture beside the altar.<sup>72</sup> Given what we know thus far, there would be benefit in it being less literal, worthy of Pedana’s learning. She is the measure of sophistication. *Docta* is an epithet found in other inscriptions (so, in *CIL* 6.9693, Euphrosyne is praised as *docta*,

<sup>68</sup> Davies 1986: 57.      <sup>69</sup> *Hymn to Demeter* 334–9.

<sup>70</sup> Even if this is not unique. Note also *CIL* 6.27060 in which Persephone again has ravished away the deceased: *annus erat uitae primus, mox deinde secundi liminibus rapuit me sibi Persephone*.

<sup>71</sup> Excellent for examples is Lawler 1929 and Lattimore 1942. For more on the kinds of epithets used in epitaphs, and how these differ from their usage in literary texts, see Nielsen 1997.

<sup>72</sup> Waywell 1982: 241.

*opulenta, pia, casta, pudica, proba*) but is less common than *pia, casta, pudica, carissima*. ‘There is no female counterpart of the respectful qualification *vir doctus*, which denotes a man of culture, trained in the liberal arts and civilized in conduct; *docta* is sometimes used for a woman, but it is not always meant as a compliment’.<sup>73</sup> At the other end of the spectrum, a *docta virgo* is one of the Muses.<sup>74</sup>

Where *docta* does have a place is in Latin love elegy.<sup>75</sup> The *docta puella* is the love object of this highly rhetorical poetry, its aim to gain access to the woman’s body with prayers and gifts and to make her eternally famous. As a courtesan, the *docta puella* cannot be a wife: it is her role to be unfaithful. What are the implications of seeing Pedana as such a girl? Is the ‘banqueting scene’ a symposium? Pedana is the recipient of her husband’s ultimate gift – this verse, lyre and *grata ara*. *Grata* means ‘deserving of thanks’ as well as ‘pleasing’ and references the very first line, and his gifts to ungrateful Venus. Now it is his wife he supplicates in an emotional appeal *mortuos ab inferis excitare*. Will she be responsive and speak from the grave like Propertius’ Cynthia?<sup>76</sup>

The combination of *munus* and *gratam chelyn* has the potential to lead to elegy of a different sort – Ovid’s letter from Sappho to Phaon, a boatman of Mitylene in Lesbos. In it, Ovid has the lyric poet lament the loss of her lover and the loss of the power of her poetry.

Scribimus et lacrimis oculi rorantur obortis;  
 adspice quam sit in hoc multa litura loco.  
 si tam certus eras hinc ire, modestius isses,  
 et modo dixisses ‘Lesbi puella, uale!’  
 non tecum lacrimas, non oscula nostra tulisti;  
 denique non timui, quod dolitura fui.  
 nil de te mecum est, nisi tantum iniuria. nec tu,  
 admoneat quod te, pignus amantis habes.  
 non mandata dedi. neque enim mandata dedissem  
 ulla, nisi ut nolles immemor esse mei.

I write, and my eyes let fall the springing tears like drops of dew; look, how many a blot obscure this place. If you were so resolved to leave my side, you could have

<sup>73</sup> Hemelrijk 1999: 8.      <sup>74</sup> Hemelrijk 1999: 221, fn. 1.

<sup>75</sup> See Roller 2006: 135. My thinking here is influenced by James 2003 and supported now by Valladares 2012, 331–4. The poem’s lack of fulfilment, especially the imperfect in the second line and the ambiguities of *spondebam*, might further enforce the elegiac frame by putting the reader in mind of Ov. *Am.* 1.1 and Cupid’s cruelty in preventing Ovid from writing about war. I thank Tim Whitmarsh for this point.

<sup>76</sup> Propertius 4.7. Relevant here is Dufallo 2003, which later formed part of Dufallo 2007.

done it more gently. You might at least have said to me: ‘O Lesbian mistress, fare you well!’ You did not take with you my tears, you did not take my kisses; indeed, I felt no fear of the pangs I was to suffer. You have left me nothing, nothing except my wrong; and you have no token of my love to put you in mind of me. I gave you no orders – nor would I have given any, save not to be unmindful (*inmemor*) of me.<sup>77</sup>

And yet Phaon is immune to her wishes. So desperate is she that, on the advice of a Naiad, she has set out to free herself once and for all, and to head to Actium, where she will dedicate a lyre (*chelys*) to Apollo, as *communia munera*, a ‘mutually beneficial gift’.<sup>78</sup> The accompanying verse, says Ovid, commemorates her *grata* dedicating a *lyra*. After this she will throw herself into the Leucadian Sea, an act which will reputedly absolve her of her passion. Yet the poem ends open-endedly – with Sappho still hoping that Phaon will come back to collect her.

Read with this allusion in mind, the husband’s performance is undercut. As Maud Gleason has so elegantly argued, rhetoric entailed much more than the mastery of words; it was ‘a callisthenics of manhood’. Control was crucial, and the question was: ‘how to achieve vocal flexibility without sounding like a woman or an actor’.<sup>79</sup> This poet gets it wrong; he is rendered not just passive but feminine, a recognized side effect, in Roman literature, of excessive mourning.<sup>80</sup> He has ‘carved’ all of these things for Pedana, *scalpere* also meaning to scratch a physical itch, but to no avail. Still – if not more than ever before – ‘*now* love tortures him’, *torqueo* being as violent a verb as *rapio* and one which implies that he is racked or tormented, without any of the self-regulation of body, voice or emotions demanded of a rhetorician. For her, in contrast, ‘sad care has departed’. He is unable to persuade himself of consolation, never mind his audience.<sup>81</sup>

Far from being conjured up by her husband, Pedana has withdrawn, absolved from anxiety and concern for her family, and from the attentiveness she shows in the relief. The final line of the poem addresses and dismisses her: ‘you lie buried in a sarcophagus of forgetfulness’. In so

<sup>77</sup> Ov. *Her.* 15.97–106.

<sup>78</sup> Ov. *Her.* 15.181–4: *inde chelyn Phoebos, communia munera, ponam, | et sub ea uersus unus et alter erunt: | GRATA LYRAM POSUI TIBI, PHOEBE, POETRIA SAPPHO: | CONVENIT ILLA MIHI, CONVENIT ILLA TIBI.*

<sup>79</sup> Gleason 1995: xxii. See also Habinek 2004: 65 and Gunderson 2000.

<sup>80</sup> See e.g. Sen. *Epist.* 99.1–3 and SHA, *Hadrian* 14.5.

<sup>81</sup> Compare the image of the afterlife in the roughly contemporary consolatory poem written by Statius’ *alma chelys* on the death of Abascantus’ wife, Priscilla (*Silv.* 5.1). Here, despite the husband’s heart being aflame with grief at Priscilla’s death, her tomb enables her to be made new as Persephone joyfully receives her.

doing, it faces the reality of her physical remains. She is concealed or hidden just metres away, perhaps even in the altar itself: when an Italian antiquarian, Pirro Ligorio, refers to the piece in the sixteenth century, he describes it as an *urna*.<sup>82</sup> She is ‘a little substance in a little urn’, ‘instead of her ‘dearest form’, ashes and a useless shadow’.<sup>83</sup> All Donatus has done is scratch (*scalpsit*) at the surface. Other epitaphs speak of the widower’s desire to join his wife on earth or in the grave,<sup>84</sup> his wish that fate had enveloped them both, or even – as is the case with the epitaph to Euphrosyne above – that their bones be mingled in a single sarcophagus (*ossibus hic uxor miscuit ossa meis . . . absumet tecum singula sarcophagus*). The last of these sentiments echoes Cynthia, who suggests that she and the poet will be together and that she will grind bones mixed with bones (*mecum eris, et mixtis ossibus ossa teram*). Ovid too picks it up, when in his *Metamorphoses*, Alcyone laments her dead husband, Ceyx.<sup>85</sup>

In contrast, Pedana is hermetically sealed. At the point at which the poem makes its readers see her body, she is lying not on a funerary couch but in a ‘sarcophagus’. The word eats away at her, lending a logic to its usage, whatever the period. Unlike *urna* or *ara*, it gives her flesh, both affects and denies *enargeia* or *evidentia*. Quintilian writes,

The ornate is something that goes beyond what is merely lucid and acceptable. It consists firstly in forming a clear conception of what we wish to say, secondly in giving this adequate expression, and thirdly in lending brilliance, a process which may correctly be called embellishment. Consequently, we must place among ornaments that ἐνάργεια which I mentioned in the rules which I laid down for the statement of facts, because vivid illustration [*evidentia*], or, as some prefer to call it, representation [*repraesentatio*] is something more than mere clearness [*perspicuitas*], since the latter merely lets itself be seen [*patet*], whereas the former thrusts itself upon our notice [*se quodammodo ostendit*] . . . For oratory fails of its full effect and does not assert itself as it should, if its appeal is merely to the hearing, and if the judge merely feels that the facts on which he has to give his decision are being narrated to him, and not displayed in their living truth to the eyes of the mind.<sup>86</sup>

The epitaph fulfils this brief: Pedana shows herself for what she is, despite concealment. It is an image that exposes the pathetic fallacy of an imagined conversation.

Pedana’s forgetfulness comes from the river from which the shades drink to forget their earthly life. However sweet her oblivion, it is more

<sup>82</sup> Naples, MS 13.B.8 309. <sup>83</sup> Sophocles, *Electra* 1142 and 1158–9.

<sup>84</sup> See e.g. *CIL* 6.7579/*ILS* 819D. Also relevant here is *CIL* 13.2205.

<sup>85</sup> Prop. 4.7.94 and Ov. *Met.* 11.674. Excellent here is Allison 1980. <sup>86</sup> Quint. *Inst.* 8.3.61–2.

shocking than comforting.<sup>87</sup> In contrast, the poet Lucan has the spectre of Pompey's wife, Julia, haunt him thus: 'Not even the forgetful shore of Lethe has banished my husband from my memory'.<sup>88</sup> And funerary epigrams record or ask for similar assurances: so, 'This little stone, good Sabinus, is a memorial of our great friendship. I shall always miss you and if so it may be, when with the dead you drink of Lethe, do not drink forgetfulness of me', or 'Not even now that I am dead shall I, shipwrecked Theris, cast up on land by the waves, forget the sleepless surges . . . Not even Hades gave me rest from trouble, since I alone even in death cannot lie in unbroken repose'.<sup>89</sup> But Pedana is insensible: a message made all the more difficult by the relief above and the sculpted hand on the woman's shoulder. Image and referent never did fit. Like Pedana, the viewer has been silenced. The poet stops. The truthfulness (ἀ-λήθεια) in this representation is its direct opposite (λήθη).

## Memories are made of this

Are we trying to negate death or retain it? Derrida, *The Deaths of Roland Barthes*, 35

Pedana's husband is not alone in his loneliness. 'He will hear nothing of what I say here to him, for him', laments Derrida. And yet, to speak 'of him, here and now, as one speaks of the living or of the dead' is not quite right either. 'In both cases, I disfigure'.<sup>90</sup> It is somehow too passive; somehow also as though Barthes is just around the corner. How to mark his loss, our loss – not what he was or is now, but what he is not, and in a way which enables him still to be our loved one? Not the community's, but ours, to have, hold and attend to. In elite Roman funerals, relatives donned masks of their ancestors, animating the dead so as to mix fathers with brothers and with legendary leaders such as Romulus.<sup>91</sup> It was ennobling, but it was also transitory. The *rite de passage* which made the deceased one of a role-call of heroes was a conveyor belt, not a conversation. Indeed it spoke of him, securing him a future, as the funerary oration captured his past.

<sup>87</sup> Compare, for example, the very fragmentary CIL 9.2780: *tu securo iaces, ego . . .*

<sup>88</sup> Luc. BC 3.28–9: *me non Lethaeae, coniunx, obliuia ripae | inmemorem fecere tui . . .*

<sup>89</sup> *Anth. Pal.* 7.346 and 278. Extremely useful here for its lists of epigraphic language, including references to Lethe, is Harkness 1899.

<sup>90</sup> Derrida 1981: 276–7.

<sup>91</sup> Dio Cassius 56.34 and Tacitus, *Annals* 4.9.2. See Flower 1996: 237 and 243.

Funerary monuments pointed forwards and backwards. They offered a visual biography of the deceased, gave them an afterlife. As one specialist on epitaphs put it, 'what rhetoric can supply at death is the glory of immortality on stone'.<sup>92</sup> But they were also functional in a different way, giving the family a place to go to convene with the dead and to mourn, often sharing food and pouring libations. They had to elicit emotion not just once but every time, enabling the deceased to be loved, and lost repeatedly. And this meant according them insufficient stability of status to have them serve only as ancestors, moral exempla to be emulated. They had to be closer than the venerable distance accorded to Romulus or Appius Claudius Caecus. Yet, like Odysseus' mother in the underworld, they could speak but not be embraced.

My mother, why do you not stay for me when I wish to clasp you, so that even in the house of Hades we two may throw our arms about each other and take our fill of chill lamenting? Is this some phantom that august Persephone has sent me so that I many lament and groan still more?<sup>93</sup>

They had to be sensed and not sensed. Encountering them had also to mean encountering their absence. Anticleia replies: 'Ah me, my child, ill-fated above all men, it is not that Persephone, daughter of Zeus, is deceiving you, but this is the appointed way with mortals, when one dies. For the sinews no longer hold the flesh and bones together'.<sup>94</sup>

Tombs, ash altars and sarcophagi took over here, making an identifiable entity from the corpse's fragments. How to articulate what it is they are doing, remembering? How do they envision enough of the person to prevent him from being forgotten, while allowing the family to loose the ties and eventually cease grieving? Freud gives us an answer.

Each single one of the memories and situations of expectancy which demonstrates the libido's attachment to the lost object is met by the verdict of reality that the object no longer exists; and the ego, confronted as it were with the question whether it shall share this fate, is persuaded by the sum of the narcissistic satisfactions it derives from being alive to sever its attachment to the object that has been abolished. We may perhaps suppose that this work of severance is so slow and gradual that by the time it has been finished, the expenditure of energy necessary for it is also dissipated.<sup>95</sup>

<sup>92</sup> Judge 1997: 827.      <sup>93</sup> Hom, *Od.* 11.210–14.      <sup>94</sup> Hom, *Od.* 11.216–19.

<sup>95</sup> Freud 1991 edition (originally published in 1917 as *Trauer und Melancholie*): 265. Part of this passage is cited by Huskinson 1998: 154.

This chapter has exposed how Rome's funerary monuments did this, as Greek bodies, unfinished portrait-heads, forced conversations, and other such devices, brought the living face to face with the 'lost-ness' of the object. These monuments 'bent over backwards' to avoid the sorts of assimilation of hero and deceased that scholars now see in sarcophagi. Instead of offering an ongoing consolatory narrative, they rendered their audience incomprehending, stopping them dead in their tracks. In the process, they converted insufferable, 'unforgetting mourning' (ἀλαστος πένθος) into something with closure.<sup>96</sup>

Rhetoric is not something ancillary; it is a way of thinking. It is the viewer's recognition of what art can do, and how it does it – its reference to reality and appeal to the imagination – that constitutes the rhetoric of unreachability and makes something like the Portonaccio sarcophagus or the altar to Pedana so affecting. All art is allusive, refusing a direct relationship between image and referent. But funerary art has a special investment in underlining this evasion, emphasizing its incongruity. Why trust in the sweet sleep and eternal youth of Endymion, when the corpse is liquefying within, or at the opposite extreme, laugh at the funerary statues of women with the bodies of Aphrodite? Why believe that the couple on the couch are Donatus and Pedana in eternal togetherness, or in the power of anyone who (or anything which) claims to address or hear the deceased? There is virtue in these memorials' very failure to persuade their audience.

This failure to persuade triggers the memory's capacity to retain and recall. For those who never knew Pedana, recalling her means recalling, comparing and contrasting her monument with other funerary images, other funerary inscriptions. Pedana lies in the gaps. Art and text compete and combine to construct a resting space for Pedana. All their elements (whether the intimacy of the scene on the relief or the use of *chelys* and *munera* together) are most vocal, not in their overlap with other artefacts, but in their departure; in the gap in between, amid reality and expectation; in their lack. Ultimately, ways have to be found to plug these gaps, but in the interim – a moment of silence.

<sup>96</sup> See Loraux 1998: 83–109.

## 10 | Rational, passionate and appetitive

### *The Psychology of Rhetoric and the Transformation of Visual Culture from non-Christian to Christian Sarcophagi in the Roman World*

JAS ÉLSNER

One aspect of the tradition of rhetorical theory produced in antiquity is the provision of extensive commentarial material by later (often anonymous) rhetors on earlier texts, a process that continued well into the Byzantine era. The *progymnasmata* of Aphthonius the Sophist (composed in the second half of the fourth century AD by a student of Libanius of Antioch),<sup>1</sup> for instance, received a number of commentaries in the Byzantine era,<sup>2</sup> and also an anonymous Introduction written no earlier than the fifth century AD since it refers to two late fourth-century Church Fathers.<sup>3</sup> This Introduction offers a striking definition of rhetoric:

Rhetoric is divided into three species, the deliberative (*symbolēutikon*), the judicial (*dikanikon*) and the panegyric (*panēgyrikon*), since the hearers have come together either to judge or deliberate or celebrate.<sup>4</sup> Alternatively, as rhetoric developed jointly with the human mind (*psychē*), it should be subdivided into parts corresponding to the parts of the mind. The parts of the mind are logical (*logikon*), passionate (*thymikon*) and appetitive (*epithymētikon*) [cf. Plato, *Republic* 4, 440e–441a]. Deliberative rhetoric corresponds to the rational part; for just as

I have given versions of this essay in Athens, Georgia, in Chicago and in Oxford. I am grateful for the critiques and comments of those present, and especially to Jane Heath, Janet Huskinson, Margaret Mitchell and Richard Neer.

<sup>1</sup> See Rabe 1907: 262–4; Rabe 1926: xxii–xxv; Patillon 2008: vol. 1, pp. xxx–xxxii, 50–2. Excellent introductions to the *Progymnasmata* include Pernot 1993: 56–66; Webb 2001 and 2009: 39–60 (focusing on ekphrasis in particular). On Aphthonius and Libanius, see e.g. Criboire 2007: 59–60.

<sup>2</sup> For that by John of Sardis, see: Rabe 1928; for those by John Doxopatrios and John Argyropoulos, see Rabe 1931: 80–158.

<sup>3</sup> For the text, see Rabe 1931: 73–80; cf. a second anonymous introduction in Rabe 1931: 158–70.

<sup>4</sup> Cf Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1.3.1–6, Menander Rhetor 1.1, 331 and the preface to the *Progymnasmata* of Nicolaus the Sophist (probably fifth century AD): ‘Rhetoric, at the most general level, is divided into three species: judicial (*dikanikon*), deliberative (*symbolēutikon*) and panegyric (*panēgyrikon*). Each of these is characterized by the persons presumed to be present; for the hearers have been collected to render judgment, or to deliberate or to celebrate a festival. Everything in accusation and defense is specific to judicial rhetoric, and its end is the just; exhortation and dissuasion belong to deliberative, and its end is the advantageous; of panegyric, also called epideictic, the forms are encomiastic and invective and its object is the honourable.’ See Felten 1913: 3–4, trans. Kennedy 2003: 132.



*logos* exists in us to direct us to better things, so deliberation turns us away from things not beneficial and incites us to the beneficial. Judicial rhetoric corresponds to the passionate; for they say that anger is a boiling of the blood around the heart from a desire to distress others in return [cf. Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 2.2.1, 1378<sup>ab</sup>]; and similarly it is judicial 'to ward off a man when one is the first to wrath' [cf. *Iliad* 19.183]. The panegyric corresponds to the appetitive (*epithymia*); for longing (*epithymia*) has the beautiful (*to kalon*) as its objective.<sup>5</sup>

There is much here – not only the range of reference to philosophical and medical theory as well as classic texts from the long history of the theorizing of ancient rhetoric and the quotation of Homer, but also the substantive division of rhetoric into three elements determined by the demands of an audience. This is an applied form of Aristotle's *ēthos*–*logos*–*pathos* theory discussed in the Introduction to this volume (and is indeed a reiteration of a specific proposition made by Aristotle at *Rhetoric* 1.3.1–6, 1358<sup>ab</sup>), since each 'species' of rhetoric is a different kind of *logos* produced by a differentiated speaking persona or *ēthos* responding to the different demands of audiences in different contexts (*pathos*). But the second definition, relating the species of rhetoric to the parts of the mind as established by ancient philosophical theory, presents a more personal as opposed to social model that generalizes the types of rhetoric according to their psychological effects.<sup>6</sup>

I am going to argue that the rhetorical effects of Roman art are largely panegyric (which includes themes of consolation in funerary contexts) and hence belong to the last category of the mind – the appetitive, with its objective of longing for the beautiful. But the rise of Christian art brought a shift of visual rhetoric to a form of argument through images that was simultaneously affirmative of a religious identity and confessional in the sense of propounding a set of beliefs. In this, Christian art marks itself as different from the visual culture of the Graeco-Roman environment, out of which it developed. The rhetoric of this new form of argument, I shall argue, made use of *psogos* (usually translated as invective) as well as encomium in ways that invoked both the deliberative and the judicial as well as the panegyric in the psychological appeal of visual culture, encompassing what the Introduction to Aphthonius calls the rational and the passionate parts of the mind, as well as the appetitive. My aim here is to trace certain changes in the rhetorical discourse of Roman art in the third and fourth centuries, in the specific context of sarcophagi, to explore changes in culture which are certainly visual but go beyond images to encompass questions

<sup>5</sup> Rabe 1931: 74–5, trans. Kennedy 2003: 91–2, adapted.

<sup>6</sup> See also the second anonymous Introduction to Aphthonius at Rabe 1931: 170.

of identity and social transformation. One particular and remarkable value of using the prism of rhetoric as a means to examine the visual is that it can help to clarify the nature of certain kinds of historical change.

### Sarcophagi: panegyrical and appetitive

In this essay I will look at one category of funerary art in relation to its appetitive effects. In thinking of Roman funerary art – whether one brings to mind large-scale monuments, reliefs, funerary altars, cinerary urns, commemorative statues or sarcophagi (each of these a large corpus and all together a vast one) – we look, in terms of rhetorical action, at the range of the panegyrical in relation to the consolatory.<sup>7</sup> The point has been well made in relation to Roman sarcophagi.<sup>8</sup> But here I want to explore the shift within visual rhetorical strategies of encomium for the dead between the pre-Christian polytheistic world of Roman antiquity and the early Christian empire. This limits the kind of funerary art, on which one may conduct this discussion, quite radically, to sarcophagi alone, since they are our one form of surviving funerary commemoration that spans both pre-Christian and explicitly Christian usage. This is itself a revealing datum, since it indicates that even as early as the second decade of the fourth century AD, shortly after Christianity had been legalized, the panegyrical and consolatory possibilities inherent in many of the other traditional commemorative genres were not seen as useful or conducive to the new religious and cultural order, which rose rapidly in the course of the century to a position of dominance and of exclusivist, non-tolerant rejection of traditional religious alternatives.

Among sarcophagi, it is worth noting that – unless we allow the large corpus with Dionysiac themes to have a religious significance (currently not the normative view)<sup>9</sup> – only the sarcophagi with Christian iconography offer a specifically religious and even confessional range of imagery. That is, on this assumption (which may be open to question in relation

<sup>7</sup> For a rich range of kinds of epideictic (meaning panegyrical) rhetoric, see the works of Menander Rhetor in Russell and Wilson 1981 with specific emphasis on consolation (*paramuthētikos*) at 2.413–14, funerary speech (*epitaphios*) at 2.418–22 and lament (*monōdia*) at 2.434–7. For commentary, see Soffel 1974: 155–269.

<sup>8</sup> Müller 1994: 91–7, 142–5 and esp. Newby, this volume, on consolation; also Koortbojian 1995: 5–9 on analogy as a (panegyrical) mode for stressing *virtus* and exemplarity, 114–26 as ‘vehicles for remembrance’. On issues of allegory in sarcophagi in relation to rhetorical theory, see Giuliani 1989: 38–9, Zanker and Ewald 2004: 110–15, and Lorenz 2011: 310–11 and 332.

<sup>9</sup> See Zanker and Ewald 2004: 135–67 contra Turcan 1966.

at least to Dionysiac imagery), although they appear to have been produced in some of the same workshops and by the same artists for broadly the same class of patrons in the same places as 'pagan' sarcophagi, the iconographical choices that govern Christian sarcophagi do appear to be different in kind from those of other sarcophagi. They are not merely about the extension of mythological imagery to include a new set of Christian myths, but represent a significant set of substantive differences from other sarcophagi. These include confessional meaning in the use of Christian imagery as well as a scriptural set of referents for many images (which is to say, a set of referents testable against a canonical text and its commentaries, and therefore in principle against orthodox or heterodox interpretations), as opposed to the much more open combination of oral and written mythological retellings, to which the mythological sarcophagi themselves add a creative visual dimension.

The difference is again emphasized when we compare Christian sarcophagi with those pagan examples that seem most directly to allude to questions of cult. One of the largest corpora of pagan sarcophagi – both from the city of Rome and elsewhere – are those decorated with garlands.<sup>10</sup> Such imagery cannot but allude to the kinds of offerings given by the living to the dead in the Roman world, and indeed constitutes a potential replacement offering, or rather a permanent offering to which the addition of actual flowers or wreaths by living mourners may be seen as a supplement.<sup>11</sup> Some examples include further imagery of cult implements (such as *paterae*) or objects implying sacrificial action (such as *bucrania*). While the addition of other iconography – particularly in the spaces above the falling garlands – for instance, of mythical subjects or masks, adds a series of additional rhetorical and thematic amplifications, such sarcophagi always ground the person buried within them in a specific reference to the cult of the dead. In a mid-second-century child sarcophagus now in the Vatican, for example, cupids hold the garlands while winged putti play on dolphins above the swags and on the lid a pair of winged putti bear aloft

<sup>10</sup> See for the east Korkut 2006; Işık 2007; for Rome: Herdejürgen 1996. Discussions include the first four papers in Koch 1993a. Of course the range of objects that include garland decoration is much larger than only sarcophagi: see Honrath 1971.

<sup>11</sup> For the use of wreaths and flowers in the cult of the dead, see Toynbee 1971: 44, 46, 62, 63 (note: 'counterfeited flowers perpetuated, as it were, all the year round the offerings of actual roses that were associated with the Feast of Roses . . . held in May and June'), 64 (citing Ovid, *Fasti* 2.533–70 where v. 537 refers to garlands as offerings and v. 539 to violets). For the range of meanings implied by garlands in antiquity, see Turcan 1971; and on garlands and other offerings in sarcophagi, see Herdejürgen 1984: 7–26.



**Figure 10.1** Child sarcophagus with erotes and garlands on the base and sleeping Psyche with butterfly wings between winged erotes on the lid, c. AD 130-40. Vatican, Galleria Lapidaria.

the deceased girl, depicted asleep, or what may be meant to be the soul of the dead child, personified as Psyche with butterfly wings (Figure 10.1); garlands also appear on the ends.<sup>12</sup> The contrast with Christian examples is that these pagan coffins emphasize cult or ritual offerings, rather than any kind of belief system or doctrine. The sarcophagus affirms itself as an offering and the bearer of offerings, rather than as an identity claim about religious beliefs. In the Christian sarcophagi, the visual framing of the space of death changes radically to an affirmation of faith and its orthodoxies through scriptural imagery.

However, before we turn in detail to the question of the differences in encomiastic strategies that can be observed in the surviving visual culture, it is worth commenting on the complexity of panegyric gestures contributed by sarcophagi. Like any honorific or commemorative statue in Hellenistic or Roman art, a sarcophagus simultaneously makes claims about the person or persons honoured (in this case buried inside the coffin) and the person or persons who have dedicated the offering (in this case those who have performed the funerary rites and provided the coffin, usually the relatives or heirs of the deceased). In one sense we may say that the directly panegyric aspects of the object (its size and impact; the portrait, if any, it may include; its decoration) are directed to the deceased, whereas its consolatory aspects (which may include all the same features) are directed to the heirs. But in so far as status in the Roman

<sup>12</sup> See Herdejürgen 1996: no. 76, pp. 124–5; Amedick 1991: no. 261, p. 164; Huskinson 1996: no. 4.2, pp. 36 and 53.

world was intimately connected to ancestor cult, and the presence of the portraits or memorials of one's ancestors, one may say also that significant elements of panegyric apparently directed to the recipient of the coffin are implicitly conferred upon the heir.<sup>13</sup> This is a clever form of visual discourse, since all parties were winners in the commemorative celebration, their appetitive parts satisfied by the object's expression of what the Introduction to Aphthonius calls 'the beautiful'.

We may say that one aspect of the sarcophagus' rhetorical force is the fact that as a box it contains the body of the dead person (or persons) celebrated by its iconography, inscriptions and monumental form. All its decorative devices, from whatever elements of the traditional arts and rituals of Graeco-Roman culture they are borrowed, are contrived to place a particular and individual death into a context (mythological, civic, religious, honorific or whatever) that is meaningful both to the dead person and to his or her heirs. In this sense, all the decoration on our copious sarcophagi (surviving examples have been estimated to number between 10,000 and 20,000 including fragments)<sup>14</sup> is rhetorical, and the different ways it is used add up to a visual elaboration of the ways different kinds of speech may be used in literary rhetoric, as classified by such texts as the *Progymnasmata*. But in a certain sense – like literary rhetoric – all is designed to signal and celebrate the importance of a specific and personal instance within and against the grandeur of the tradition and its normative, canonical values, just as the sarcophagus as a type of coffin and the replicative nature of its kinds of decoration are designed to place the particular remains of a specific and deceased individual within a much broader cultural pattern of monumental and iconographical commemoration. The encomiastic rhetoric of the sarcophagus is in part to buy the dead a place in the social world of Roman death, but also to affirm for the living descendants a place in the social world of the Roman elite.

Let us take the issue of portraiture – the use of medallions with actual or ideal 'portraits' as the central feature of the reliefs of the main casket,<sup>15</sup>

<sup>13</sup> On the *imagines* in relation to ancestral cult in Rome, see Flower 1996: 1–59 on definition and significance (especially on the distinction between wax *imagines* and portraits), 128–58 on the rhetorical issues of the *imagines* in relation to eulogies, 223–69 on the developments in the uses of *imagines* in the imperial period.

<sup>14</sup> Koch 1993b: 1 estimates 12,000–15,000 surviving examples between 120 and 310. Add to this post-Constantinian examples (especially but not only of Christian material) and the numbers rise towards 20,000.

<sup>15</sup> Remarkably, I have found no systematic discussion of this feature – but it is clearly of significant interest. For brief accounts, see Matz 1975: 452–66 (on the Dionysiac sarcophagi); Engemann 1973: 35–9, 65–7; Koch 2000: 114–16 on Christian examples. See now Birk 2013: 47–9.



**Figure 10.2** Sarcophagus front with tondo of a young bearded man between victories, with an eagle between personifications of earth and ocean beneath and Achilles holding a lyre accompanied by Chiron to the sides, c. AD 220. Museo Nazionale Romano, Rome.

or more rarely the lid,<sup>16</sup> the use of three-dimensional portraits of reclining figures – effectively statues – on lids (in both Attic and Roman sarcophagi)<sup>17</sup> and the employment of portrait heads (finished, and unfinished in numerous instances)<sup>18</sup> within the narrative imagery of relief sculpture – both in idealizations of ‘real life’, for instance the images of men and women with portraits, sometimes on statue bases, that often appear at the corners of the casket,<sup>19</sup> and in images with mythological subject matter.<sup>20</sup> Each of these portrait types has significant and different encomiastic effects.<sup>21</sup> The least-discussed category of portraits on sarcophagi in the scholarly literature is that of those incorporated in tondi (Figures 10.2 and 10.6), which may be single figures of either sex, or a male and female couple, or occasionally two males. This is both the largest group of portraits on sarcophagi and the one where portraiture crosses the pagan/Christian divide (as it hardly does in the other cases where portraits appear on sarcophagi). One may say that, in general, it matters little whether the tondo-portrait is a realistic likeness or a generic gesture of portraiture: what matters rhetorically is the visual focalization on an image that stands for the dead person or persons, placed in the centre of the visual field and as the focus of the rest of the imagery of the chest’s main front, which generally turns in from the two sides to focus symmetrically around the centre when

<sup>16</sup> See Wischmeyer 1982: 59–69.

<sup>17</sup> See Wrede 1977; Berczelly 1978); Wrede 1981b; Koch and Sichtermann 1982: 5861, 371–3, 456–7; Wrede 1984; Wrede 1990.

<sup>18</sup> See Andreae 1984 and Huskinson 1998. For the very few unfinished heads on the earliest Christian sarcophagi, see Engemann 1973: 76–8.

<sup>19</sup> See the many examples in Ewald 1999b.

<sup>20</sup> Generally, see Fittschen 1984 and Fejfer 2008: 133–6. On myth, see Koch and Sichtermann 1982: 607–14; Zanker and Ewald 2004: 45–50; and especially Newby 2011.

<sup>21</sup> For a chronologically framed general account in relation to questions of private deification, see Wrede 1981a: 139–57.



a medallion portrait is placed there.<sup>22</sup> This is, in both encomiastic and consolatory terms, a clear statement of the value, status and dignity of the deceased, while the narrative or decorative context in which the portrait appears is designed to be a kind of eulogy to elevate the dead. A fine early third-century piece found in Torraca in 1946 shows a young man with his first beard in the central medallion, which is borne aloft by winged victories while personifications of earth and sea recline beneath (Figure 10.2).<sup>23</sup> Immediately below the clipeus with the portrait is an eagle – as if about to take wing and bear the soul of the deceased to its apotheosis, on the model of imperial funerals.<sup>24</sup> On the far sides Chiron instructs Achilles in playing the lyre, an allusion to the process of *paideia* and hence to the youth but also the accomplishments and the lost promise of the deceased man portrayed.<sup>25</sup>

Medallions of this type – often upheld by winged victories, putti, seasons or centaurs, and sometimes emphatically isolated within a field of fluting or strigillation – are very common, especially on sarcophagi with a symmetrical design on the main face with the imagery turning in towards the centre.<sup>26</sup> Clearly the kind of encomiastic significance varies depending on the visual decoration chosen to surround such a tondo. In particular the small scene immediately beneath the medallion (in the place where the eagle rises in Figure 10.2) gives the rhetorical implications a specific flavour – from the Dionysiac imagery of vintaging grapes and pressing wine,<sup>27</sup> which may have intimations

<sup>22</sup> See Elsner 2012. <sup>23</sup> See Grassinger 1999: no. 3, p. 195.

<sup>24</sup> For discussion of imperial iconographic parallels, see Beard and Henderson 1998 and Zanker 2000a. Most compelling for the eagle is the vault of the arch of Titus (see the Introduction to this volume and figure 0.5) for the dead man between two winged victories, see the late fourth- or early fifth-century ivory leaf of an elite apotheosis now in the British Museum – in Zanker 2000: 63.

<sup>25</sup> For Achilles and Chiron as a model for *paideia*, see Leader-Newby 2004: 125–37.

<sup>26</sup> For medallion portraits held up by personifications or mythological figures, see Bovini and Brandenburg 1967: nos. 381, 557; Matz 1975: nos. 268, 269, 270, 271, 272, 273; Kranz 1984: nos. 27, 29, 30, 31, 32, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 68, 70, 71, 72, 74, 95, 96, 97, 100, 102, 104, 105, 107, 108, 110, 111, 113, 114, 123, 406, 572; Dresken-Weiland 1998: no. 150 (lid); Stroszeck 1998: nos. 182, 200, 238, 354, 368, 419; Kranz 1999: nos. 23, 26, 29, 94, 137; Christern-Briesenick 2003: nos. 209, 286, 302, 348. For medallion portraits not held up but within strigillation or fluting, see Bovini and Brandenburg 1967: nos. 83, 85, 87, 112, 238, 239, 240, 244, 650, 689, 744, 756, 760, 778, 947, 962, 985, 1003, 1010, 1014; Kranz 1984: nos. 152, 154, 155, 156, 157, 159, 160, 161, 164, 165, 166, 167, 168, 169, 171, 172, 319; Dresken-Weiland 1998: nos. 102, 103, 104, 105, 108; Stroszeck 1998: 56, 97, 129, 149, 175, 195, 196, 199, 230, 231, 241, 246, 266, 296, 302, 306, 307, 311, 312, 315, 318, 321, 322, 333, 334, 352, 363, 381, 403, 406, 408, 414; 416; Christern-Briesenick 2003: nos. 73, 211, 305.

<sup>27</sup> See for instance the examples collected in Bielefeld 1997: nos. 1, 16, 72, 78, 79, 94, 112, 152, 155, 161, 179, 195, 210, 226, 317 (where the clipeus is held up by a winged figure) and 21, 116, 151, 170, 176, 196 (where the clipeus is within strigillation).

of transformation,<sup>28</sup> via theatrical imagery,<sup>29</sup> to myths like Ganymede and the eagle or Romulus and Remus,<sup>30</sup> to Christian themes,<sup>31</sup> which in one group of rather spectacular examples occupy the entirety of the main front around the medallion (e.g. Figure 10.6).<sup>32</sup> In rhetorical terms one might see this range of imagery around a central tondo as forms of *topos*, imagery that amplifies its subject and makes it vivid,<sup>33</sup> or of *exergasia*, ‘elaboration . . . that adds what is lacking . . . by filling gaps in the language or content’.<sup>34</sup> Effectively, the bald medallion-portrait, although the centre of the visual field, requires iconographic framing to amplify and slant its meanings, and to fill the gaps in how viewers should understand it. The hint at apotheosis in winged figures carrying the tondo is a form of such amplification, while the differentiated flavour of the different kinds of themes depicted below the medallion give a range of – admittedly highly conventional – suggestions about the hoped-for afterlife of the figure portrayed, whose body is inside the casket. Differently inflected, amplification of the deceased as ‘philosopher’ or Muse (meaning well-educated member of the elite with good taste) is offered by corner portraits of individuals frequently in the form of statues.<sup>35</sup>

The three-dimensional use of reclining figures – in death as if in life, sometimes an individual and sometimes a pair of husband and wife (as in the great example often thought to represent the emperor Balbinus and his spouse from around AD 240, if the identification is correct: see Figure 10.3)<sup>36</sup> – is the closest that sarcophagi come to celebrating the deceased in the way an honorific statue does.<sup>37</sup> These kinds of lids echo

<sup>28</sup> As suggested by Elsner 2012: 182–4.

<sup>29</sup> See e.g. Kranz 1984: nos. 29, 32, 42, 43, 59, 62, 64, 95, 104, 159, 162, 172, 519.

<sup>30</sup> See Kranz 1984: nos. 60, 70, 96. On Ganymede, see Engemann 1973: 15–59.

<sup>31</sup> For the Good Shepherd or Jonah see Bovini and Brandenburg 1967: 756, 962, 985; Dresken-Weiland 1998: no. 103; Christern-Briesenick 2003: no. 305. On the Good Shepherd, see Himmelmann 1980: 121–56; on Jonah, see Engemann 1973: 70–4.

<sup>32</sup> See Bovini and Brandenburg 1967: nos. 33, 34, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 188, 625, 772 (2 portrait medallion on the lid), 811, 838; Dresken-Weiland 1998: nos. 12, 20; Christern-Briesenick 2003: nos. 38, 40, 41, 203.

<sup>33</sup> Theon 6 (106–9).

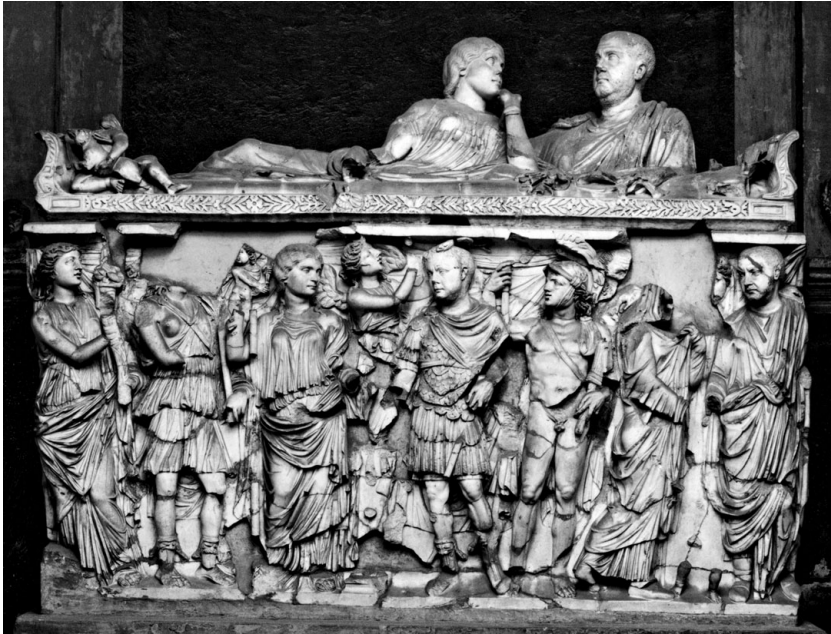
<sup>34</sup> Theon 16; see Patillon and Bolognesi 1997: 110–12. The Greek is lost and this section survives only in an Armenian version of the fifth or sixth century.

<sup>35</sup> See Ewald 1999b: 16–20, 121–34; Huskinson 2012.

<sup>36</sup> On the sarcophagus, see Reinsberg 2006: no. 73, pp. 213–14. On the identification with Balbinus, see Gütschow, 1938: no. 3, esp. 49–81 and Jucker 1966; but more recent literature is more sceptical: see Reinsberg 1985 and Wrede 2001: 64–5.

<sup>37</sup> Generally on honorific statuary, see Stewart 2003: 157–83 and Fejfer 2008: 16–72, 181–227; on the honorific nude portrait, see esp. Hallett 2005b: 102–222; on female honorific statuary, see esp. Trimble 2011.





**Figure 10.3** The ‘Balbinus sarcophagus’ with husband and wife reclining on the lid and ‘biographical’ imagery of marriage and sacrifice on the base, c. AD 240. Praetextatus Catacomb, Rome.

other funerary memorial statuary in reclining form, or may perhaps be said to combine the artistic genres of the sarcophagus and the commemorative statue-dedication, and they are themselves occasionally referred to (even represented) in images of reclining figures on sarcophagus reliefs.<sup>38</sup> In the case of the ‘Balbinus sarcophagus’, the presence of erotes, with attributes that include a hare and a cithara, emphasize the affection of the couple portrayed as the key theme of their commemoration – a love in life that continues into the afterlife.

By contrast, the use of portraiture on the iconography of the reliefs of the main casket casts the deceased into a series of narrative instantiations. In the case of the main face of the ‘Balbinus sarcophagus’, two scenes are depicted. On the far right is an image of *dextrarum iunctio* in which the male stands in tunic and toga while his wife is veiled (neither the head of the wife nor the small figure of Amor or Hymenaeus, that stood between

<sup>38</sup> For some examples, see Wrede 1981: 96–99 and 109–18 and also the striking case from Rome in Herdejürgen 1996: no. 127, pp. 148–9. A reclining figure of this kind appears on the relief in the interior of the Simpleveld Sarcophagus in Leiden, see Holwerda 1933.

them, has survived).<sup>39</sup> In the centre, the man stands in military dress performing a libation (over a now lost altar) surrounded by personifications of Mars (immediately ‘behind’ him to the right), Victory, Virtus and Fortuna, as well as his wife in the pose of – and potentially in the guise of a personification of – Venus Victrix.<sup>40</sup> Here the reliefs participate in the classic typology of senatorial-sarcophagus iconography that characteristically stresses marriage and sacrificial offering as principal elements of the ideal-typical ‘biographical’ narratives eulogizing the traditional Roman aristocracy.<sup>41</sup> In rhetorical terms such ‘biographies’ stress the accomplishments (*epitēdeumata*) and the deeds (*praxeis*) which Menander Rhetor emphasizes as key to the successful funeral speech (*epitaphios*) at 2.420.10–30. In this case reliefs – deep-cut to leave three-dimensional heads – support the thematics of the lid, placing its intimations of marriage in eternity on the firm basis of the imagery of marriage-vows committed in life and of sacrificial rituals correctly observed. It has been argued that this kind of ideal biographical imagery, as well as imagery of hunting and of war (in both of which genres we find the use of portraits),<sup>42</sup> are about suggesting the virtues of the deceased,<sup>43</sup> and certainly the use of personifications – as in the Balbinus chest – would be broadly supportive of such meanings.

Of course, in cases where there was no reclining lid-portrait or where the reliefs were mythological rather than ‘ideal-biographical’, as in the famous Alcestis sarcophagus in the Vatican (see [Figure 8.8 in Chapter 8](#)), where Junius Euhodius is represented (perhaps three times) as Admetus and his wife Metilia Acte is shown (once) as Alcestis,<sup>44</sup> the panegyric and consolatory effects work differently. In that case, portraiture combined with mythology clearly offers a case of exemplarity in stressing virtues,<sup>45</sup> and evokes them by means of correspondence or analogy.<sup>46</sup> The fact that

<sup>39</sup> On the *dextrarum iunctio* see Reekmans 1958; Davies 1985; Reinsberg 2006: 75–85; Huskinson 2012.

<sup>40</sup> On the portrayal of women as Venus on third-century sarcophagi, see Ponessa Salathé 2000, with the Balbinus sarcophagus as a key example.

<sup>41</sup> See Muth 2004 and Reinsberg 2006: 61–129.

<sup>42</sup> On this range of iconographies, see Koch and Sichtermann 1982: 90–126.

<sup>43</sup> For a summary of virtues claimed to be exemplified in the biographical sarcophagi, see Wrede 2001: 25–33 and Hölscher 2004b: 88–91. But there is little precision about what qualities exactly are being communicated and how: see Muth 2004.

<sup>44</sup> See Grassinger 1999: no. 76, pp. 227–8. Discussions include Wood 1970; Zanker and Ewald 2004: 202–3, 298–301; Hallett 2005b: 216–17; Newby, this volume, pp. 281–3 (who accepts only two appearances of Euhodius).

<sup>45</sup> Newby 2011: and this volume. <sup>46</sup> Cf. Koortbojian 1995: 5–9, 133.

the sarcophagus shows Hercules returning Alcestis to Admetus may seem to imply the hope that untimely death may be defeated, but the decision not to include a portrait head on the returned Alcestis (as opposed to on her figure as Metilia Acte in the death scene) tends perhaps to suggest a lament for loss made more poignant by the fantasized possibility of its reversal. One might say that the placement of portraiture within mythological imagery is a way of emphasizing and personalizing the panegyric effects. But the potential narrative implications of the subjects chosen for the insertion of portraits may themselves complicate the meanings that viewers were to see. In the series of Achilles and Penthesilea sarcophagi, where the two protagonists are accorded portraits in the midst of a *mêlée* of fighting figures, the manly virtues of victory, which are surely in play at least for the heroic male, are themselves the cause of the loss of the female (in that Achilles kills Penthesilea even at the moment that he falls in love with her) and hence of the need for consolation as he grips her falling figure amidst the ruin of war (see [Figure 7.9 in Chapter 7](#)).<sup>47</sup> Of course no causation may be intended in the case of the deceased man and woman represented in such figures, but the visual narrative certainly offers the potential for such meanings and the need to police interpretative assumptions within a broadly eulogistic framework.

While consolation, monodic lament and funerary discourse appear specifically under the broad umbrella of encomium in Menander Rhetor, the force of personification (*prosōpopoeia*, *ēthopoeia*)<sup>48</sup> is emphasized by the *Progymnasmata* and is fundamentally tied there to consolatory discourse.<sup>49</sup> The difference between these tropes is defined by Hermogenes as follows: ‘*Ēthopoeia* is an imitation of the character of a person supposed to be speaking ... It is called personification (*prosōpopoeia*) when we personify a thing ... The difference is clear: in *ēthopoeia* we imagine words for a real person, in *prosōpopoeia* we imagine a non-existing person’.<sup>50</sup> Theon argues that ‘under this genus of exercise (*prosōpopoeia*) fall the species of consolations’;<sup>51</sup> while under the heading of *ēthopoeia*, the other

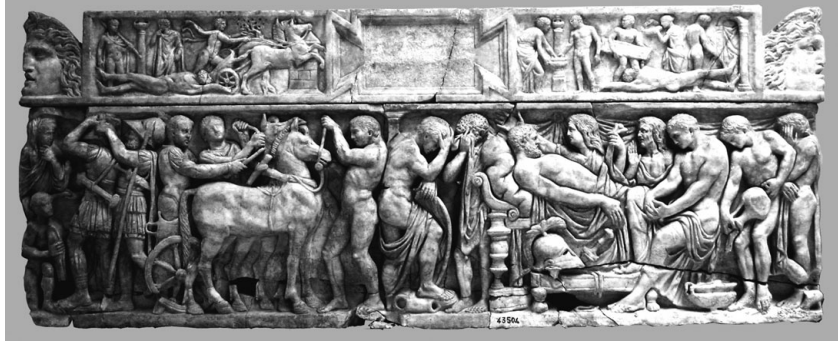
<sup>47</sup> The group of Roman examples is discussed by Grassinger 1999: 179–85, 247–54. There are, interestingly, no Attic examples of this theme among the Attic Achilles sarcophagi, so far as I know.

<sup>48</sup> They appear as specific exercises: *prosōpopoeia* in Theon, *Progymnasmata* 8 (115–118); *ēthopoeia* in Hermogenes 9 (20–21), Aphthonius 11 (34 Rabe) and Nicolaus 10 (63–67).

<sup>49</sup> In Menander, monody – the lament for the deceased – is specifically tied to Homeric exempla (Andromache, Priam, Hecuba) and hence to *ēthopoeia* when such figures appear in post-Homeric usage. See 2.434.10–15.

<sup>50</sup> Hermogenes 9 (20).

<sup>51</sup> Theon 8 (115 cf. also 117). See the discussion of Peirano 2012: 226–8, 236–7.



**Figure 10.4** Frieze sarcophagus found in Pianabella with the lament over the dead Patroclus and Achilles' revenge, c. AD 160. Ostia Museum.

authors of *Progymnasmata* list examples such as 'what Andromache would say over the dead Hector',<sup>52</sup> 'what Achilles would say over the dead Patroclus',<sup>53</sup> 'what Hecuba might say when Troy was destroyed',<sup>54</sup> 'what words Niobe might say when her children lie dead',<sup>55</sup> 'what words Peleus would say when hearing of the death of Achilles'.<sup>56</sup> These examples belong precisely within the range of subject matter depicted on the mythological sarcophagi, which – it has been observed – often emphasize the death-scene and represent the process of mourning and lamentation in ways that echo (on the elevated or rhetorically exemplary level of myth) the particular sorrows of those who are commemorating a loved one in the coffin which displays such imagery.<sup>57</sup>

A particularly powerful example of a casket that draws on the themes of the death of Hector and Achilles' lament for the death of Patroclus is the Pianabella sarcophagus, probably made in Rome around AD 160, reused for a new burial in late antiquity, looted in a clandestine excavation in the 1970s and only returned to Italy from Berlin in the 1990s (Figure 10.4).<sup>58</sup>

<sup>52</sup> Hermogenes 9 (21), Nicolaus 10 (64).

<sup>53</sup> Hermogenes 9 (21), Aphthonius 11 (35 Rabe), Nicolaus 10 (64).

<sup>54</sup> Aphthonius 11 (35 Rabe).

<sup>55</sup> A model example performed by Aphthonius 11 (35–36 Rabe). <sup>56</sup> Nicolaus 10 (64–5).

<sup>57</sup> See for instance Borghini 1980; Lorenz 2011: 309–36.

<sup>58</sup> See Grassinger 1999: no. 27, pp. 204–5 (also pp. 44–8), with discussion by Koch 1983; N. Agnoli in Paroli 1999: B 8, 219–22; Dresken-Weiland 2003: 331, no. A92; Zanker and Ewald 2004: 68–9, 283–5; Huskinson 2011: 58–61, 72–3. This sarcophagus was, early in its critical reception, the subject of a very acute rhetorical analysis by Luca Giuliani in relation to Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria* 8.6 (which is concerned with forms of rhetorical ornament) and especially 8.6.47 and the notion of *allegoria apertis permixta*, or a mixture in the way allegorical exempla are used. My discussion here is intended to extend this insight. See Giuliani 1989: 38–9. On the centrality of Achilles to Libanius' *Progymnasmata* (for instance), see Criboire 2007: 144–5.

Here the main front of the casket shows a scene usually interpreted as the arming of Achilles and an elaborate image of the hero mourning the dead Patroclus, while the lid has – on the sides flanking the *tabula ansata* (on which an inscription may have been painted) – Achilles dragging the corpse of Hector around Patroclus' tomb, on the left, and the ritual washing of Hector's body prior to its return to Priam, on the right. The narrative sequence is not wholly obvious. If the image on the far left represents Thetis bringing the armour to Achilles, then a diachronic reading leads from the bottom right of the main chest to the bottom left to the chariot scene at the centre (the lament for Patroclus, followed by the arming of Achilles and his preparation for battle) and then from the top left to the top right (the humiliation of Hector's corpse and then its honouring). Although the arming scene is usually read as representing Achilles (because of the presence of the female figure on the far left, usually seen as Thetis), the hero's head is covered as he dons his helmet and arguably the image could also imply Patroclus putting on Achilles' armour. The chariot scene that follows could then represent Patroclus as he prepares to ride to battle. On this model, the main face of the casket would read from left to right telling the narrative of Patroclus in relation to Achilles, with the killing of Patroclus a significant pictorial absence and Hector, who kills him, the key missing figure. Likewise on the lid, the narrative has jumped beyond the death of Hector to the narrative of his corpse, seen in parallel with that of Patroclus below and in relation to Patroclus' tomb.<sup>59</sup>

Most of the elements in the visual decoration are borrowed, just like rhetorical tropes and mythical exempla in speeches, from the iconographical canon, especially of Attic sarcophagi,<sup>60</sup> but are innovatively combined on the Pianabella example. The topic of the dragging of Hector's body appears on the long sides of a number of sarcophagi now in Adana, Beirut, Ioannina, Paris and Tyre, but differently configured (for instance, dragged by the feet and not the head).<sup>61</sup> Yet in these Attic examples the chariot group is certainly the type on which the Pianabella horses, charioteer and figure holding the reins in the main face are modelled. The group on the far left of the Pianabella chest – with the arming of the warrior in the presence of a woman – is certainly related to the iconography on the left

<sup>59</sup> I do not suggest that the usual interpretation of the iconography is wrong. Rather, the imagery is sufficiently ambiguous to allow more than one reading depending on the viewer's inclinations.

<sup>60</sup> It may or may not be relevant that the marble for this sarcophagus is from Proconnesus in the Sea of Marmara in the east: see Huskinson 2011) 58.

<sup>61</sup> See Rogge 1995: nos. 1, 7, 12, 21 and 43 (this last on the back).

end of the Ioannina sarcophagus.<sup>62</sup> Likewise the iconography of the mourning over the dead Patroclus appears on the left end of the Beirut sarcophagus and on the right ends of those from Adana and Ioannina, although in the Attic sarcophagi Patroclus is not bearded.<sup>63</sup> The very visual structure, as typological and iconographic argument, is rhetorically put together. Arguably the iconographic themes that were added beyond the existing visual repertoire (notably the washing of Hector's body and the reformulation of the dragging of his corpse so that the hero's head at both scenes of the lid is aligned towards the centre), as well as the themes excluded from the Pianabella sarcophagus (especially that of Priam before Achilles, which appears on all the Attic examples cited here as well as several fragments),<sup>64</sup> are as important to the rhetorical impact of its iconographic claims as those borrowed from elsewhere and placed in a new juxtapositional figuration.

The range of selection and juxtaposition creates the basis for a subtle and fundamentally rhetorical visual discourse about death, mourning and the variety of human responses. The Pianabella sarcophagus offers a virtuoso use of the Iliadic narrative to create a pattern of multiple deaths, lamentations and treatments of the body, which enact the *ēthopoeia* of heroic grief. Arguably the lid's left hand scene of the dragging of Hector's corpse is the visual representation and fulfilment of Achilles' lament over Patroclus, while the right hand scene shows his response when he has finally been persuaded of the excess and inappropriateness of his humiliation of Hector. But beyond a visual performance of *ēthopoeia*, the sarcophagus' pictorial discourse takes the viewer into the encomiastic trope of *synkrisis*, described by Aphthonius as 'a comparison, made by setting things side by side, bringing the greater together with what is compared to it'.<sup>65</sup> Aphthonius' model example is precisely a *synkrisis* of Achilles and Hector, which concludes 'to the extent that their life and death was nearly equal, Hector is nearly equal to Achilles'.<sup>66</sup> Nicolaus comments: 'Our subjects will be great when they seem greater than the great, as in the Homeric line (*Iliad* 20.158, of Hector and Achilles respectively): 'The man who fled in front was good, but by

<sup>62</sup> See Rogge 1995: no. 12, pp. 129–30 with Giuliani 1989: 28–30.

<sup>63</sup> See Rogge 1995: nos. 7, 1 and 12 respectively, with Giuliani 1989: 28–30.

<sup>64</sup> The fragments include pieces in Bursa, Antalya, Tripoli, Trogir and Zadar: see Rogge 1995: nos. 2, 9, 40, 40A and 46 respectively.

<sup>65</sup> Aphthonius 10 (31 Rabe). See also Theon 10 (112–115); Hermogenes 8 (18–20); Nicolaus 9 (59–63). For some exercises in *synkrisis*, see Libanius' *Progymnasmata* in Gibson 2008: 322–53.

<sup>66</sup> Aphthonius 10 (32–3 Rabe).



far a better man pursued'.<sup>67</sup> The argument of the sarcophagus is an extremely complex and deft visual use of the technique of *synkrisis*, defined in the *Progymnasmata* in relation to the narratives depicted on it and using the Iliadic line quoted by Nicolaus as a Homeric foundation of the rhetorical trope itself. In one sense the *synkrisis* operates as a comparison of the living and the dead – the thrice-depicted nude bodies of dead heroes (Hector twice on the lid and Patroclus once on the base) in counterpoint with the nudity of the living hero, Achilles, who avenges and survives. This imagery of beautiful nudity (male bodies laid out in a kind of beauty of death, a trope that is strikingly emphasized for instance in the *Imagines* of Philostratus,<sup>68</sup> and that is – in the case of Hector – divinely orchestrated despite the humiliation of his corpse)<sup>69</sup> is itself in *synkrisis* with the reality of a real corpse, decomposing inside the coffin which this iconography decorates.<sup>70</sup> Indeed the Homeric narrative specifically sanctions this form of *synkrisis* – the viewer of a corpse reminded of his or her own death – in the famous passage where Briseis leads the women in a lament for Patroclus as he lies laid out in death in Achilles' tent (the specific passage depicted on the base of the Pianabella sarcophagus) and each mourns 'ostensibly for Patroclus but at heart for her own unhappy lot' (*Iliad* 19.282–302, esp. 301–2).

We may say that there is in addition a comparison between the dead bodies actually depicted: those of Hector on the lid and Patroclus on the base, one treated in an unseemly manner and one correctly mourned. But we may also surmise, following both the Homeric model quoted by Nicolaus and the rhetors' discussions of *synkrisis*, that ultimately the comparison is between the two killers – Hector and Achilles – one seen here as dead in consequence of his own killing of Patroclus, the other alive and victorious but consumed by his grief for Patroclus' death. Yet – as Hector's dying prophecy in the *Iliad* (22.355–60) confirms – the fate of triumphant Achilles will echo Hector's own, when he too is felled in battle, just as the viewer will one day die, to join the heroes and the corpse interred behind the visual narrative of their stories.

<sup>67</sup> Nicolaus 9 (61).

<sup>68</sup> See e.g. Philostratus, *Imag.* 1.4.3–4; 1.7.2; 1.18.2; 1.24.3; 2.4.3–4; 2.6.5; 2.7.5; 2.25.1. For some discussion, see Elsner 2007a: 314–15, 321–3. The Philostratean examples all draw on the rhetorical tradition of monody ('delivered over young people not over the old') as presented by Menander Rhetor: see 2.436.15–20.

<sup>69</sup> *Iliad* 23.184–91.

<sup>70</sup> For some discussion of ideal nudity in the Graeco-Roman tradition, see Himmelmann 1990 and Hallett 2005b.

From the point of view of the performance of *pathos*, exquisitely enacted in the scene of the mourning of Patroclus on the right of the main face, the three images of dead bodies give a threefold *synkrisis* of responses to death (responses, that is, on a mythologically inflated level, to the deceased person and his or her body inside the sarcophagus). There is Achilles' active humiliation of the corpse of Hector at the left of the lid (itself contrasted with the properly buried body of Patroclus in the tomb around which Achilles drags the body in the same scene). There is the washing of Hector's body at the right of the lid with its narrative implications of exchange, indeed sale, for its weight in gold. There is the larger and intense focus on mourning and grief in the lamentation over Patroclus at the right side of the main face. The rhetorical brilliance of this sarcophagus is that, in selecting the scenes for its abbreviated narrative of a theme central to Graeco-Roman models of heroic death, to educational training and to rhetorical exempla, it constructs and lays bare a range of synkrisistic effects whose power lies above all in their combined resonance on a multiplicity of levels, which together intimate the many ramifications and responses that bereavement evokes in a family or a community.

Moreover, as a self-conscious work of art, the Pianabella sarcophagus constructs itself in *synkrisis* not only with the Attic sarcophagi, whose formal motifs it appropriates with such selective care – though the Attic examples never themselves climax on the lamentation scene – but also with other signal examples of funerary lament in the iconography of Roman sarcophagi. The most notable group of these is that of the sarcophagi which show the death of Meleager.<sup>71</sup> Although Meleager is nowhere represented or alluded to in the Pianabella sarcophagus, we may see the borrowing and reinvention of the lamentation motif from the Meleager group as an act of creative variation: Meleager always lies on his couch with his head to the right, for instance, whereas Patroclus, in both the Pianabella example and its Attic models, has his head to the left. This effectively offers the possibility for a viewer to develop a further set of synkrisistic comparisons between heroes – Patroclus and Meleager, Hector and Meleager, Achilles and Meleager. The potential visual allusion (and its distance from the Meleager model) shows the possibilities for the vibrant rhetorical articulation of Roman art's characteristic use of repeated tropes and formulae (its world of replication and emulation) at their most

<sup>71</sup> See Koch 1975: nos. 112–26, pp. 38–47 and 119–25. For recent discussion of the Meleager lament theme and bibliography, see Lorenz 2011.



imaginative and brilliantly effective.<sup>72</sup> In fact, the visual *synkrisis* with a Meleager never shown on the Pianabella sarcophagus is itself a direct reflection of the *synkrisis* in Phoenix's speech in *Iliad* 9.524–605 between Achilles and Meleager, who is represented as sulking in wrath during the war of the Curetes and Aetolians (just as Achilles does in the *Iliad*), hardened against even the pleas of his parents until he is finally persuaded by his wife to save his city.<sup>73</sup>

### Christian sarcophagi: changes in rhetorical argument

The principal point I have been making about the range of rhetorical devices apparent on the non-Christian sarcophagi – from the simplest to the most sophisticated examples, like the Pianabella chest – is that they partake of a fundamentally eulogistic mode of visual discourse, where the deceased is praised and the surviving mourners consoled. In terms of the psychology of response suggested by the Introduction to Aphthonius, with which I began, this encomiastic mode emphasizes the appetitive part of the mind, whose sense of longing has the beautiful as its object. Certainly Christian sarcophagi continue with age-old patterns of consolation, although this is modulated by a shift to praising God and placing the deceased in a pattern of relationship to the new divine order. This is also, of course, a matter of reassurance for the deceased and his or her relatives in the face of death, and a visual model for affirming trust in God's salvific framework for the believer at a vulnerable moment.

Spectacular senatorial examples, all from the late fourth century, include the choice to carve all four sides of the sarcophagus (something unusual in Roman examples, although popular in the East) so as to include, on the back, images of the deceased (often as a married couple) in very traditional format, while offering mainstream Christian imagery on the front and ends.<sup>74</sup> The so-called sarcophagus of Probus in the Vatican has Christ and numerous saints in the columnar arcades of the front and sides, but the married couple stand in *dextrarum iunctio* at the centre of the five-panelled back, with its three arches broken by areas of strigillation.<sup>75</sup>

<sup>72</sup> Much has been written on replication recently. Note the works by Gazda 2002; Perry 2005; the essays in Trimble and Elsner 2006; Trimble 2011: 104–50. A model for thinking about how such replication may work in Roman art is Hölscher 2004.

<sup>73</sup> On the *synkrisis* of Achilles and Meleager in the *Iliad*, see e.g. Swain 1988.

<sup>74</sup> For some discussion, see Huskinson 2012.

<sup>75</sup> See Bovini and Brandenburg 1967: no. 678, pp. 277–8 and Reinsberg 2006: no. 159, p. 239.



**Figure 10.5** The four-sided sarcophagus of Flavius Catervius and Septimia Severina, now in the cathedral of Tolentino, Italy, late fourth-century, from Rome. (a) Front: the Good Shepherd and saints, with the deceased couple in the acroteria of the lid. (b) Right end: the Magi before Herod. (c) Left end: the Epiphany. (d) Detail of the deceased couple in the central tondo of the back.

In the superb Tolentino sarcophagus of the former Praetorian Prefect, Flavius Catervius and his wife Septimia Severina (with its rich verse inscriptions), the base has the Good Shepherd between panels of strigillation and saints at the corners with the narrative of the Magi before Herod on the right end and the epiphany on the left



Figure 10.5 (cont.)

(Figure 10.5, a, b, c, d).<sup>76</sup> On the back amidst a strigillated plane, the senatorial couple appear in an *imago clipeata* within a square, with a garland above them, Chi—rho signs between alpha and omega at the top corners of the square and doves at the bottom corners. On the acroteria of the lid at the front, the deceased couple appear again, holding scrolls and

<sup>76</sup> See Dresken-Weiland 1998: no. 148, pp. 52–4.

looking in towards the good shepherd. Their act of genuflection on the front, and their inclusion in its imagery (effectively as early forms of donor-portrait as well as offering permanent acts of worship to the symbolic representation of Christ in the centre) is the engine for the spiritual resonances of a place in salvation at the back, with its double portrait framed by symbols of Christ and the Holy Ghost. In the great Ancona sarcophagus of the senator and Praetorian Prefect Flavius Gorgonius, sadly damaged by bombing in 1943–4, Christ stands in the centre of the front between Peter and Paul, flanked on each side by four further apostles.<sup>77</sup> On the right end were the Magi before Herod and on the left a series of Old Testament scenes including Moses and the sacrifice of Isaac. On the back Gorgonius and his wife (who is not named in the inscription) appear in *dextrarum iunctio* in the central arch of a five-panel strigillated scheme with saints at the corners. The couple appear again on the front, this time as small figures kneeling before Jesus (to his right and left) in the bottom centre of the main face. In all three of these major pieces, normal eulogizing consolatory and encomiastic imagery of the Roman upper class, as we saw it in the ‘Balbinus’ sarcophagus, has been adapted and subordinated to a Christian context – given full scope at the back, and in the Tolentino and Ancona sarcophagi also included in a secondary context at the front. The panegyric aspects of these sarcophagi function by virtue of the Christian dispensation they celebrate.

The panegyric frame for such sarcophagi is parallel to the strong tendency in the earlier *progymnasmata* and rhetorical manuals to emphasize encomium (or ‘language revealing the greatness of virtuous actions and other good qualities’, as Theon puts it)<sup>78</sup> and to underplay invective or polemic (*psogos*).<sup>79</sup> Hence, Theon’s account of ‘encomium or invective’, normally dated to the first century AD, has several pages on panegyric and just one sentence on its opposite: ‘these are the sources of praise, and we shall derive blame from the opposites’.<sup>80</sup> Hermogenes (whose date is uncertain but provides the simplest of the *progymnasmata*) has no

<sup>77</sup> See Dresken-Weiland 1998: no. 149, pp. 54–6; Reinsberg 2006: no. 1, p. 191.

<sup>78</sup> Theon 9 (109).

<sup>79</sup> The striking focus on encomium as opposed to polemic is well caught by the balance of the premier modern account, Pernot 1993. The entire book (of course specifically on eulogy) follows the sources in the space it gives to the topics they discuss, and has only a few pages on *psogos* (481–90).

<sup>80</sup> The full account is Theon 9 (109–112). This is the last sentence at 9 (112). Note that *psogos* is so little discussed here that one of our three MSS, M, omits ‘and invective’ from the title of the section. See Patillon and Bolognesi 1997) ap. crit. ad loc., p. 74.

mention at all of invective, although a whole section on encomium.<sup>81</sup> Most strikingly, the opening of Menander Rhetor's first treatise, perhaps late third century AD,<sup>82</sup> places both encomiastic and polemical speeches (*enkōmiastikous* and *psētikous logous*) within the category of epideictic, but while 'blame' (*psogos*) has no subdivisions, praise (*epainos*) has many,<sup>83</sup> which Menander then proceeds to enumerate and discuss. The rest of both treatises transmitted under Menander's name are dedicated to encomium and avoid any account of invective. Given the widespread use of polemic in the Republic and the imperial period (from Cicero's *Philippics* via the pseudo-Senecan *Apocolocyntosis* and much of what passes for history in the character studies of Suetonius and Tacitus to Polemo's physiognomic prescriptions)<sup>84</sup> it is perhaps surprising that educational texts should be so cautious about the topic, and this may be a significant social datum about the depths of self-censorship within paideia in imperial culture. Certainly, however, the panegyric emphasis is directly in accord with the vast visual archive of the pagan sarcophagi.

But from the fourth century, that is, in the rhetorical works composed in the Christian empire, and I shall argue in the sarcophagi with Christian subjects, we find the emphasis moving towards the inclusion of *psogos*. Aphthonius' *Progymnasmata* (of the later fourth century) has independent sections on encomium and polemic, with exemplary speeches in each.<sup>85</sup> Likewise, Nicolaus, writing in the fifth century, has discussions of both panegyric and blame.<sup>86</sup> Perhaps most strikingly, the various exemplary speeches composed by Libanius, in his *Progymnasmata* from the mid fourth century, contain both encomia and *psogoi* – notably, in the case of Achilles, of the same figure.<sup>87</sup> In the sarcophagi, the rise of potentially polemical subject matter (an issue that has been little discussed)<sup>88</sup> is certainly connected to the confessional nature of the iconography chosen and its dual purpose in both defining a Christian identity for the deceased and in selectively denying or excluding the applicability of certain definitively non-Christian aspects of

<sup>81</sup> Hermogenes 7 (14–18 Rabe).

<sup>82</sup> Russell and Wilson 1981: xl and Heath 2004: 94.

<sup>83</sup> Menander Rhetor 1.1.331.4–20.

<sup>84</sup> The literature is of course large. But see for instance Booth 2007 on Cicero; Barton 1994a on Suetonius; Barton 1994b: 111–18 on Polemo.

<sup>85</sup> Aphthonius 8 (21 Rabe)–9 (31 Rabe).

<sup>86</sup> Nicolaus 8 (47–58).

<sup>87</sup> See Foerster 1915: 216–77 (*laudationes*, with Achilles at 235–43) and 282–328 (*vituperationes*, with Achilles at 282–90), conveniently translated alongside a text based on Foerster's by Gibson 2008: 221–8 and 267–76; cf. Pernot 1993: 484 with a few further examples.

<sup>88</sup> But see Elsner 2011a: 380–3.

traditional culture within its identity claims. This is an extremely complex process – one may say a rhetorical challenge of real magnitude – since the entirety of the visual language, iconographic typologies, and formal design features of the Christian sarcophagi was inherited wholesale from pre-Christian culture.

In the case of sarcophagi, a rhetorical language that uses what we may call *psogos* is above all about marking what is specifically *not* Christian and defining the choices of avoidance, resistance or negation which go with the affirmation of Christian faith and identity. In order to justify the consolatory and eulogistic force of objects such as the Probus, Gorgonius or Catervius sarcophagi, as dependent on a divine order orchestrated by the Christian God, it was essential to be clear about precisely what God and what religion was being affirmed. That kind of clarity had hardly been necessary before the arrival of Christianity, since the religions of the polytheistic environment were not exclusivist. But if worship by Christians were accorded to anything that was not certainly, definitively and constitutively the Christian God, then it was a form of idolatry, heresy, apostasy or paganism. So, for Christianity and for Christian art, exclusions mattered. The rhetorical need for varieties of *psogos* – implying less invective or polemic than simply that line in the sand by which Christians said ‘no’ to any form of paganism or even potentially to pre-Christian Judaism – was thus fundamental in defining and affirming the kind of faith that made Christian identity possible. One means for such self-definition, in relation to Judaism, was that characteristic typological model of Christian argument whereby Old Testament events, prophecies and promises were fulfilled and transformed in the new Covenant of the Incarnation.<sup>89</sup> That model of the typological use of Old Testament themes to represent and prefigure New Testament events is already present in the earliest Christian art – so that the painting at the back of the *aediculum* in the Christian building at Dura Europos (our first surviving Christian liturgical space, certainly made before AD 250) juxtaposes Adam and Eve, representing the Fall, with the Good Shepherd, presumably symbolizing salvation in the new dispensation.<sup>90</sup> Typology became ubiquitous as the fundamental model for Christian art.<sup>91</sup>

<sup>89</sup> See e.g. Woolf 1957 and Daniélou 1960.

<sup>90</sup> See e.g. Kraeling 1967: 167–8, 180–3, 200–3.

<sup>91</sup> Generally, see Thümmel 1985 and Mohnhaupt 2000; on the phenomenon in early Christian art see Schrenk 1995 and Tkacz 2002: 51–62.





**Figure 10.6** Front of a frieze sarcophagus with a tondo portrait in the centre and from left to right: the adoration of the Magi, Moses or Peter striking the rock, Jonah beneath the gourd vine, the sacrifice of Isaac, the arrest of Peter, Daniel in the Lions' Den. First quarter of the fourth century AD. Vatican, Museo Pio Cristiano.

The significance of typology as a literary and iconographical trope is that it is, rhetorically speaking, always a form of *synkrisis* in which, to repeat Aphthonius, the greater is brought together with what is compared to it. This has two potential directions. While the Sacrifice of Christ may be prefigured in the image of Jonah and the Whale or Daniel in the Lions' Den or Abraham sacrificing Isaac, such scenes are also always the inferior end of the comparison – types to be fulfilled and surpassed by Christianity, as Jewish scripture and Jewish religion were to be completed and ultimately rendered irrelevant by the rise of the new Faith. At the same time, within the visual discourses of early Christian art, the prophets and the Jewish people may stand for and as the heroic Christians in a world of heathen idolaters and infidels.<sup>92</sup> Typology, as the prime visual discourse of Christian art, is always rhetorical, and in its particular form of synkristic action, it is always charged either with a touch of inclusivist idealism in which the images of Jews and Jewish heroes stand as Christian precursors, or with an element of *psogos* in that the Jews are precursors to be surpassed. For Christian identity both includes and turns its back on the Old Testament types that prefigure it. Let us take a relatively simple example, an early fourth-century sarcophagus now in the Museo Pio Clementino (Figure 10.6).<sup>93</sup> Here, beneath the portrait tondo with a female figure holding a scroll and with her right hand in a gesture of blessing, Jonah rests under the gourd-vine, following his encounter with the Whale. To the right are Abraham sacrificing Isaac, the arrest of St Peter between two Roman soldiers and Daniel in the Lions' Den. To the immediate left of

<sup>92</sup> This is certainly how the Red Sea Crossing sarcophagi work, see Elsner 2011a: 31–4.

<sup>93</sup> Bovini and Brandenburg 1967: no. 33, p. 29.

the medallion is Moses or Peter striking water from the rock,<sup>94</sup> and to the far left are the Magi before the Virgin and Child. In this series of visual juxtapositions, clearly male nudity signals the salvific afterlife in the cases of both Jonah and Daniel.<sup>95</sup>

The parallel of Peter between officers and Daniel between lions works as a before-and-after image of tribulation in this life (Peter) and salvation thereafter (typologically figured in the naked Daniel); but we may also see Peter as the post-Incarnation refiguration of Daniel, just as his striking the rock is a post-incarnational refiguring of Moses. The tripartite typology of Jonah, Abraham's sacrifice and Daniel (to which we may add Moses the miracle worker, if we read the figure to the immediate left of the tondo in this way) is fulfilled and surpassed in the Incarnation, on the left-hand side, with its offering of a full epiphany of the living God to believers like the Magi. The nudity of the Christ Child makes for a trio of naked salvific male figures at the two ends and in the centre, where Christ is the fulfilment of both the Jonah and Daniel types.<sup>96</sup> Yet, if we 'read' the sarcophagus from the left to the right, in the direction that an inscription on its lid would have read (as opposed, say, from the centre out to the two ends) then the Incarnation is its opening statement – a claim of identity, worship and Christian triumph – to which all the other scenes relate as a variety of commentaries or entailments. Peter striking the rock is a direct and immediate miraculous result of Christ's incarnational intervention in the world, as well as being simultaneously a prefiguration of that new dispensation if we see the scene as representing Moses. Jonah and Daniel can be read as types of the Resurrection and as models for the saved soul, while Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac prefigures God's sacrifice of His only Son. The arrest of Peter – which is to say both the martyrdom at Rome of the

<sup>94</sup> On the difficulty of distinguishing between Peter and Moses in this scene, see Sotomayor 1962: 57–63 and 147–52; Malbon 1990: 78–82. The Peter narrative is from apocryphal legend probably of the third century AD (see the sources in Sotomayor, 1962: 58); the Moses theme from Exodus 17.1–7.

<sup>95</sup> For positive associations with nudity in the early Church, see Smith 1993: 1–24.

<sup>96</sup> Christ is more commonly clothed in the iconography where he sits in his mother's lap: See for instance, for clothed examples, Bovini and Brandenburg 1967: nos. 5, 16, 43, 96, 145, 159, 161, 166, 241, 350, 352, 355, 525, 526, 527, 618, 625, 662, 690, 735, 745, 799, 800 (if this is the Magi), 803, 835, 887, 903, 949; Dresken-Weiland 1998: nos. 32, 148, 150, 205, 208, 209, 251, 378; Christern-Briesenick 2003: nos. 37, 38, 118. The fragments in Bovini and Brandenburg 1967: nos. 156, 163, 318, 343, 348, 494, 495, 496, 497 and Dresken-Weiland 1998: nos. 62 and 210 are uncertain as to the nakedness of the child, while Bovini and Brandenburg 1967: no. 648 and Dresken-Weiland 1998: nos. 185 and 206 certainly do show a nude child, no. 185 also in juxtaposition with a naked Jonah. On the iconography of the Magi, see Dassmann 1973: 316–22; Wischmeyer 1982: 106–8; Milinovic 1999: 301–3; Koch 2000: 157–9.



chief apostle and the establishment of the Roman Church – marks a move beyond the narrative of Jesus into the history of the Church and especially its presence in Rome, where this sarcophagus was found and almost certainly made.<sup>97</sup>

Obviously there is no compulsion to take the imagery of a sarcophagus like this as anything other than an incremental and repeated build-up of Old Testament types that affirm the Incarnation, as represented on the left side. But just as St Peter is a signal of the failure of the Roman state to control the new religion and by extension of the old religious order in the face of the new Faith, so the typological insistence of the imagery marks how the Old Testament – for all its prophetic depth – has been superseded by the New, how Judaism has been rendered *passé* by the coming of Christ. This is the same rhetorical trope of *synkrisis* used visually as in the Pianabella sarcophagus (Figure 10.4). But whereas *synkrisis* there was largely encomiastic (building from hero to hero and dead body to dead body until effectively the unrepresented dead body of the deceased inside the sarcophagus was the object of its praise), in the Christian sarcophagi the *synkrisis* resulting from typology is inevitably ambivalent (pointing both to paradigmatic precursors and to the lack of fulfillment of the types which Christianity surpasses). Rather than any other model of praise, the panegyric effect of the Christian sarcophagi lies in their claim of Christian identity for the deceased. Only in the relatively rare examples where extended inscriptions give some kind of *curriculum vitae* for the dead person can we see this logic of collective Christian identity (as opposed to a specific social individuality) to some extent tempered.<sup>98</sup>

What all this does to the medallion and its portrait by contrast with pagan examples (such as Figure 10.2) is complex. Instead of general intimations of amplification and elaboration or private apotheosis, the Christian imagery is firmly confessional. It is not eulogistic but identity-forming; an assertion of belief and not praise for the deceased (except in that he or she chose the right Faith); in so far as it is encomiastic, then the panegyric is of the Christian subjects rendered by the imagery and foreshadowed by the Old Testament types; in so far as it is consolatory, then the believer's reassurance lies in the Christian faith of its iconographic

<sup>97</sup> On the local claims implicit in the uses of Peter and Paul on Roman sarcophagi, see Elsner 2003: 86–97.

<sup>98</sup> Good examples are the verse inscriptions on the sarcophagus of Junius Bassus (found at St Peter's, see Bovini and Brandenburg 1967: no. 680 and, on the inscriptions, Cameron 2002) and of Bassa (found at the Praetextatus catacomb, see Bovini and Brandenburg 1967: no. 556 and Trout 2011: 339–47).

affirmations. Most strikingly, the figure in the roundel in this case is ambiguous as to whether it is to be taken as a portrait of the real person buried in the coffin (as is the case with such medallion portraits in the pagan sarcophagi) or an ideal devotional type – the figure of the saved person's soul (female perhaps even for a deceased man), or of a saint. Of course it is quite possible that images of this kind were meant to signify on all these levels, and even simultaneously – rendering both a person and that person's sainthood. But they differ fundamentally from the other imagery on the sarcophagus, not only through the formal distinction of the medallion frame but also through their refusal to represent a given scriptural narrative, a reference to an anterior text or story.

If we examine iconographic strategies that carry intimations of *psogos* on early Christian sarcophagi, as it goes beyond the general intimations of the typological method, two elements stand out. First, there is the extremely frequent representation of the theme of the arrest of a Christian hero-figure – especially that of Jesus as well as Peter and Paul (as in [Figures 10.6](#) and [10.7](#)), which may also be accompanied by images of persecution and martyrdom.<sup>99</sup> Clearly this theme places Christ and the Christian saints in a context of conflict with the authority of the state and its pagan religious structures. Such imagery is implicitly polemical against the failed religions, which were surpassed by Christianity – employing the 'historical' model of the Passion and saints' lives to make a rhetorically negative point about the previous dispensation, which has been replaced by a Christian imperium.<sup>100</sup> So, to take an impressive 'tree sarcophagus' known as 'Lateran 164' ([Figure 10.7](#)), found in a *hypogaeum* near the martyrdom of St Paul in Rome (later the basilica of San Paolo fuori le mura),<sup>101</sup> the three inner niches make a powerful image of the triple martyrdoms of Peter, Paul and Jesus – with the central scene showing the Crux Invicta surmounted by martyr-crown and Chi–Rho, framed by doves and with two Roman soldiers who appear to conflate the wakeful soldier at the Crucifixion who witnessed Christ's death and the sleeping soldiers at the Tomb.<sup>102</sup>

<sup>99</sup> For catalogues of Passion sarcophagi, all of which include the arrest of Christ or the scene of Jesus before Pilate, see von Campenhausen [1929](#); Gerke [1940](#); Saggiorato [1968](#): 11–80; Marti-i-Aixalà [1994](#). For cases including Peter and Paul, see Gerke [1940](#): 85–106; Sotomayor [1962](#): 63–7, 97–124; Saggiorato [1968](#): 92–131.

<sup>100</sup> Further, see Elsner [2011b](#).

<sup>101</sup> See Bovini and Brandenburg [1967](#): no. 61, pp. 57–8; Elsner [2003](#): 90. The iconography is replicated on a now damaged tree-sarcophagus in San Sebastiano (where the cult of Peter and Paul was celebrated) – see Bovini and Brandenburg [1967](#): no. 215 and potentially also in the fragments of no. 212.

<sup>102</sup> See Hellemo [1989](#): 98–100 on this theme.



**Figure 10.7** Front of a tree sarcophagus with five scenes, from left to right: the offering of Abel, the arrest of Peter, the Crux Invicta, the martyrdom of Paul, Job and his wife. Mid-fourth century AD. Vatican, Museo Pio Cristiano.

To the left is the arrest of Peter and to the right the martyrdom of Paul, with the soldier drawing his sword. On the far left is the offering of Abel to God (Genesis 4.4) – the Lamb prefiguring the Crucifixion, as does Abel’s murder on account of an act of pious sacrifice. To the right is Job in the scene where despite all adversity and his wife’s urging that he curse God, the prophet refuses (2.9–10). Here typological scenes of Old Testament suffering (and endurance in the case of Job) frame a centre of martyrological suffering in the early Church which culminates in the triumphant martyr crown at the peak of the Cross, taking the formal place of a portrait tondo. But from the point of view of the rhetoric of invective, we have a double turning away from the outdated past – the Jewish past of typological prefigurations on the two exterior niches and the Pagan Roman past of persecution in the second and fourth niches, all to be surpassed by the Chi–Rho of the new dispensation proclaimed as both Crucifixion and Resurrection at the centre.

Second, there are a number of narratives (especially from the Book of Daniel), which emphasize Jewish hero-figures standing fast by their faith when challenged by pagan authority. Of these, among the most popular are the image of Daniel in the Lions’ Den (Daniel 6.4–24, as in [Figure 10.6](#)) and the Three Hebrews in the Fiery Furnace (Daniel 3. 1–30, as in [Figure 10.8](#)). In the former, the prophet Daniel – although forbidden by royal decree to make a petition to any god or man but King Darius himself – nonetheless continues to pray to his God and is punished by being cast into the Lions’ den where he is protected by God.<sup>103</sup> Iconographically, the classic form of this image, with Daniel naked and in the orans position, both refers to his helplessness before the lions and

<sup>103</sup> On Daniel in the Lions’ den, see Dassmann 1973: 425–33 and Wischmeyer 1982: 103–6.



**Figure 10.8** Frieze sarcophagus of Marcia Romania Celsa. Lid: The Three Hebrews in the Fiery Furnace, inscription between winged erotes, the adoration of the Magi. Base: narratives of Peter and Jesus with a central Orant, c. AD 330. Musée d'Arles Antique, Arles.



**Figure 10.9** Front of a frieze sarcophagus with the Three Hebrews before Nebuchadnezzar and his idol, Christ enthroned and Jesus raising the daughter of Jairus. Early fourth century AD. Church of San Lorenzo, Florence.

to his saintly willingness to cast himself upon God's mercy in prayer, despite Darius' injunction. In the latter, Nebuchadnezzar, the King of Babylon, sets up an image of gold and orders that all who fail to worship it be flung into the fire (Figure 10.9).<sup>104</sup> But the three Hebrews Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, having refused to bow before the idol, are protected within the fiery furnace by an angel (Figure 10.8).<sup>105</sup> Both the idol

<sup>104</sup> On the iconography of the Hebrews refusing to worship Nebuchadnezzar's idol, see Carletti 1975: 64–87; Wegner 1980 with a list of twenty-one examples; Engemann 1984: 121–5.

<sup>105</sup> On the iconography of the three Hebrews in the Fiery Furnace, see Dassmann 1973: 433–8; Carletti 1975: 25–63; Rassart-Debergh 1978; Seeliger 1983, who counts thirty-one examples on sarcophagi and sixty-two altogether in early Christian art; Schmidt 1996; Dulaey 1997 on the texts; Engemann 2002.

scene and the Fiery Furnace are popular, and the idol usually takes the form of an imperial portrait on a column (sometimes a painting and sometimes a statue-bust), in which the portrait of the king and of the idol are markedly alike. Here there is a direct reference to the imperial cult and its resistance by Christians,<sup>106</sup> represented through the typological prism of a set of Old Testament narratives. Commentaries on the text of Daniel (for instance, that attributed to Hippolytus from the third century in Greek and that by Jerome in Latin from the very early fifth century) emphasize the heroic choice of martyrdom in the face of a monarch's tyrannical insistence on idolatry.<sup>107</sup> Jerome, in particular, going beyond the strict meaning of the scriptural text in order to tie it to the imperial cult, comments:

How soon he [Nebuchadnezzar] forgot the truth, when he had just been worshipping a servant of God as if he had been God Himself, but now commanded a statue to be made of himself in order that he personally might be worshipped in the statue. (*Comm. in Daniele* i.3.1)

In several cases, the visual rhetoric of polemicism implied by the Hebrews' refusal to worship the idol is made more pointed by juxtaposition with the three Magi adoring the Christ child – where the responses to false and true deities are given added bite by the resemblance of the three Hebrews to the three Magi in their Oriental dress and Phrygian caps (Figure 10.8).<sup>108</sup> Indeed in a number of cases, notably the two great late fourth-century sarcophagi at Ancona and Tolentino, the iconography of Nebuchadnezzar with the Three Hebrews and the idol appears to have been transferred to the theme of the three Magi before Herod (Figure 10.5b).<sup>109</sup> In such cases, the use of this imagery, evoking what I have called *psogos* in the rhetoric of Christian sarcophagi, is necessary to define what Christianity is not, so as to make possible the encomiastic space for the consolatory praise of the deceased within a definitive visual statement of what Christianity is.

These themes, often on the lids or ends of sarcophagi rather than on the main face of the casket (cf. Figure 10.8),<sup>110</sup> cast the object in terms of a

<sup>106</sup> Cf. the picture of the emergence of Christianity in part as a counter-cultural reaction against the imperial cult in Brent 1999.

<sup>107</sup> See Hippolytus, *Commentary on Daniel* (ed. G. Bardy and M. Lefèvre, Paris, 1947) ii.14–38 (on the Three Hebrews) and iii.19–31 (on Daniel in the Lions' Den); Jerome, *Commentarium in Daniele* (Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina 75A) i.3.1–98 (on the Three Hebrews).

<sup>108</sup> See Huskinson 1989 who catalogues ten examples of this juxtaposition as well as four of that between Christ washing Peter's feet and Pilate washing his hands in the presence of Jesus.

<sup>109</sup> See Carletti 1975: 83–7, 107–12; Koenen 1986: 136–8; Elsner 2011a: 380–3.

<sup>110</sup> Further on the effects of framing in early Christian art, see Elsner 2008. For these themes on lids see Wischmeyer 1982: 103–6.

turning away from the threat of others' faiths and idols to a full commitment to Christian identity. The element of rhetorical invective against paganism that underlies these images of heroes affirming the true Faith, and the implicit turn from Judaism in the way these themes function as types with a deeper Christian meaning, becomes the frame for the main narrative of Christian identity. Take the great early fourth-century sarcophagus, found in the river Arno in 1933 and reused for the reburial of the Counter-Reformation scholar Nicolas Steno in 1954 in the church of San Lorenzo in Florence (Figure 10.9).<sup>111</sup> A frieze sarcophagus without a surviving lid, it has three scenes on the main front.

The scene on the left shows the Three Hebrews before Nebuchadnezzar and his idol, which is depicted to represent a square plaque with a painted or relief head, whose hair and beard resemble Nebuchadnezzar himself, but frontally rather than in profile. This resemblance of king and idol (which is common in the sarcophagi with this theme) may be taken as an oblique reference beyond biblical idolatry to the centrality of the imperial cult to the Roman world from which the Christian sarcophagi emerged and to which they respond. The central scene shows Christ enthroned, his broken right hand raised (perhaps in blessing) and his left, to judge by the closely parallel iconography of a now fragmentary sarcophagus in Arles,<sup>112</sup> holding a scroll. The iconography of this scene is obscure and has proved problematic. Two figures kneel by Jesus' feet, two cover their faces with hands buried in the folds of their tunics as they bow towards him, three stand behind him, looking in towards him, one to the left and two to the right.<sup>113</sup> Some have supposed the scene to represent homage, others think that it represents the apostles taking leave of Jesus, but the key to the problem is that there is no obvious scriptural referent. On the other hand, the contrast with the scene of the Three Hebrews to its immediate left could not be more marked. Both Christ and Nebuchadnezzar are enthroned, but Jesus is frontal while the Babylonian king is in profile. The front-facing Jesus is God, while Nebuchadnezzar needs a frontal idol. The three Hebrews turn away from the scriptural type of idolatry (itself playing upon visual intimations of the imperial cult), while the enthroned Christ is offered three different visual models of

<sup>111</sup> See Dresken-Weiland 1998: no. 10, pp. 3–4 with bibliography.

<sup>112</sup> See Christern-Briesenick 2003: no. 32, pp. 15–17.

<sup>113</sup> The version in Arles has only one standing to each side. For discussion of the problems, see Deckers 1996: 147–8; Engemann 1996: 545–50; Engemann 1997: 73–5; Koch 2000: 110, 126, 211.



worship – kneeling from the figures beneath him who touch his footstool, bowing and covering of hands and faces from the two above them, and three figures at the same level as him looking in (the two immediately beside him may be Paul to the left and Peter to the right). One may say that iconography of the central scene is determined not by a scriptural referent but by the rhetorical impulse to establish a firm visual and theological contrast with the idolatry scene to its left.

The third scene, to the right, justifies the worship accorded to Jesus in the centre by showing the Saviour raising the daughter of Jairus from the dead (Mark 5.22–4, 35–43).<sup>114</sup> Here again there are figures on three levels turned towards Jesus – the woman kneeling at his feet, the daughter of Jairus rising back to life on her bed and the two male figures facing Jesus above her. While the central scene appears to be an extra-textual enthronement, the two scenes that flank it, respectively from the Old and New Testaments, are not only anchored in Scripture but use Scripture to polemical and apologetic effect. The Hebrews image attacks Nebuchadnezzar's idolatry (and by extension all false gods, including those of Roman paganism), while the image of Jesus' miraculous resurrection of a child from the dead is the justification for belief in Christ as Saviour, indeed as deity, as well as bringing to mind his own Resurrection (which is a narrative affirmation of his Godhead). The visual *synkrisis* of seated figures, and the body language of those asked to worship them, works to brilliant rhetorical effect through the simultaneous use of apology and polemic.

## Conclusions

Let us return to the striking psychological definition of rhetoric from the Introduction to Aphthonius, with which we began. The encomiastic thrust of the non-Christian sarcophagi as forms of celebration and consolation are fundamentally panegyric as forms of visual rhetoric and hence correspond to the appetitive part of the mind whose object of longing is the beautiful. In certain respects Christian visual culture remains encomiastic, in that there is certainly praise for the deceased person who stood by the True Faith to be buried in its emblems, and the traditional patterns of eulogy could be subordinated to the Christian message. But, despite the great range of similarities of medium, workmanship, function and so forth between pagan and Christian sarcophagi, the shift to a Christian

<sup>114</sup> On this subject in general, see Calcagnini 1993.

iconography is, rhetorically speaking, also a profound move of register. The turn to a greater use of *psogos*, as well as the synkrisistic nature of typology, build into the visual discourse of sarcophagi a call both to the deliberative and the judicial aspects of rhetoric – those that correspond to the logical and the passionate parts of the mind. It is (correct) passion but also judgment that turns the saint or the martyr or just the pious believer from the temptations of idolatry; and it is the rational mind in its deliberative function – when presented with the choice between ‘things not beneficial and ... the beneficial’, as beautifully caught in contrast of Nebuchadnezzar with his false god, to the left of the San Lorenzo sarcophagus, and Jesus raising the dead, to the right – that makes the correct choice in a balance of Faith and Reason.

The early period of the Christian empire sees ancient rhetoric as a vibrant and continuing force in culture and education.<sup>115</sup> I have attempted to argue that this is no less the case in Christian art. But the differences in rhetorical emphasis from non-Christian visual practice, which I have outlined here, are fundamental in two respects. First, although the formal means, the iconographic types, even the funerary functions of the Christian sarcophagi are largely recycled from the Graeco-Roman tradition, in a significant sense they are doing something different. The *ēthos* with which they speak is a profession of identity not in terms of social status or familial position (as deceased mother, father, daughter or son) but in terms of faith, grounded in a Scripture to which reference can be made, rather than an orally repeated mythology or the intimations of ritual commemoration. That *ēthos* itself presupposes a *pathos*, on the part of mourners and kin, whose response to Christian death is the hope of Salvation in Christian-defined terms, and a *logos* of iconography appropriate to that theme. Only in the relatively rare cases where extensive inscriptions add personal material to the generalized Christian imagery is this to some extent tempered. Second, by virtue of the rhetorical methods by which Christian identity is affirmed on the sarcophagi – typological *synkrisis*, implied invective, abbreviated narratives (mainly scriptural) selected and juxtaposed to allow creative interpretation within the boundaries demarcated by the newly dominant Christian culture – the early Christian art of the fourth century set up the models of visual exegesis of the Faith that would come to be typical of the arts of the Middle Ages east and west. For while individually any given sarcophagus is a statement of

<sup>115</sup> For instance, see Young 1989; Cameron 1991; Eden 1997: 41–63; Young 1997: 169–76; Mitchell 2002: 95–104; Mitchell 2010: 18–37.



*ēthos* on behalf of the deceased and his or her heirs, collectively – in the variety of their differences – the visual statements made by the sarcophagi constitute an extended, vibrant and creative commentary on the Scripture (and the religious meanings it bears) that they represent and draw upon. If the impulse to make Christian sarcophagi remained within the structure of Roman visual rhetoric as a profession of (Christian) *ēthos*, the resulting artefact – as a visual exegesis of the Faith, an iconographic summary of and commentary on Christianity – was something quite different from the visual and conceptual norms of earlier Roman culture.



PART IV



Rhetoric and the Visual



## 11 | The *ordo* of rhetoric and the rhetoric of order

MICHAEL SQUIRE

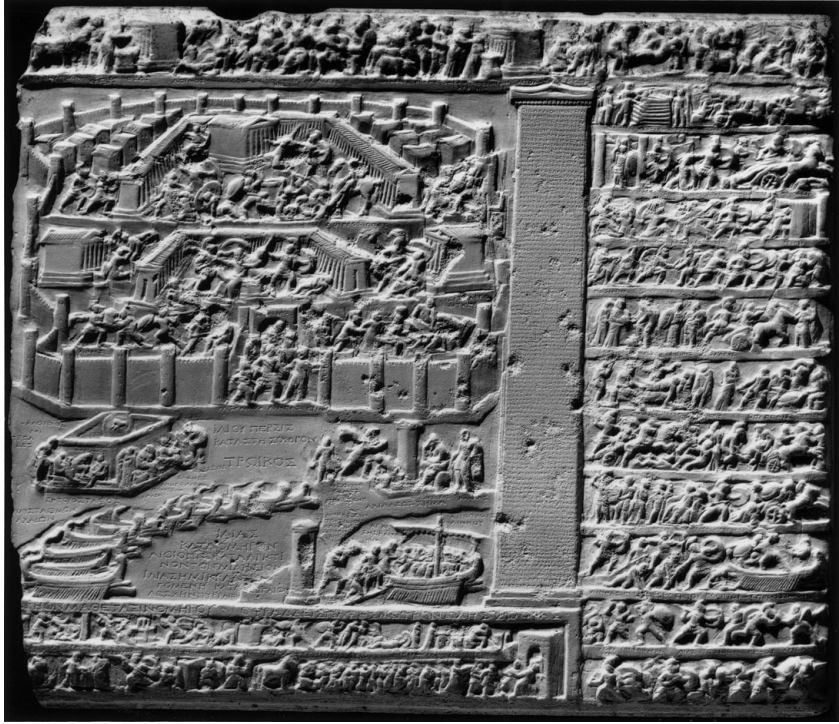
This chapter takes its rhetorical cue from an epigram inscribed in prominent Greek letters on a small tablet housed in Rome's Musei Capitolini (Figure 11.1). The marble relief is one of twenty-two objects that have come to be termed *Tabulae Iliacae* ('Iliac tablets'), dating from the late first century BC or early first century AD, and discovered (where provenances are known) in or around Rome. Like the majority of other examples, this particular tablet – the so-called *Tabula Capitolina* – concerns itself with images of epic poetry, visualizing not only the *Iliad* (in the lateral friezes to the side), but also the *Ilioupersis*, *Aethiopis* and *Little Iliad* (at the original centre and lower central bands); two stelai, framing the central scene of the sack of Troy, once added a verbal summary in miniature text (Figures 11.2–11.3). If the object brings together words and images, its epigram throws in a rhetorical invocation of its own:<sup>1</sup>

[τέχνην τὴν Θεοδ]ώρητον μάθε τάξιν Ὀμήρου  
 ὄφρα δαεῖς πάσης μέτρον ἔχης σοφίας.

Understand [the *technē* of Theod]orus so that, knowing the order of Homer, you may have the measure of all wisdom.

The present chapter derives from research begun at the Winckelmann-Institut für Klassische Archäologie at the Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin in 2008, and revised during the tenure of a generous fellowship at the Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin in 2012. My thanks to Richard Hunter and Luca Giuliani (who independently encouraged me to develop the rhetorical angle); to the volume's editors and two anonymous reviewers; and to Jonas Grethlein, John Henderson and Christopher Whitton for their subsequent comments, corrections and critiques.

<sup>1</sup> The restoration of the hexameter is beyond doubt (see Squire 2011a: 104, following Mancuso 1909: 729–30), although the syntax is decidedly polyvalent (cf. Squire 2011a: 195–6, along with Petrain 2012: 618–19). A parallel elegiac epigram was inscribed on a similar tablet in New York, of which only part of the pentameter survives (cf. Figures 11.6, 11.8): see Bulas 1950: 114, with further discussion in Squire 2011a: 103–21 and Petrain 2012: 615–19. The most detailed discussions of the *Tabula Capitolina* (= Musei Capitolini, Sala delle Colombe inv. 316) are Mancuso 1909, Maras 1999: esp. 17–67 and Valenzuela Montenegro 2004: 22–149 (citing additional bibliography); my own interpretations are indexed in Squire 2011a: 387–90, and the tablet's inscriptions can be found in IG 14: 328–33, no. 1284. Of the 22 extant tablets, at least 13 can be associated with the *Iliad*: see Squire 2011a: 33, table 2.



**Figure 11.1** Obverse of the *Tabula Capitolina* ('Capitoline tablet': Rome, Musei Capitolini, Sala delle Colombe, inv. 316 = *Tabula Iliaca* 1A), late first century BC or early first century AD; h. 25cm, w. 30cm, d. 1.5cm.

Following the conceits of numerous Hellenistic epigrams on artworks, these images (are said to) talk back to the reader.<sup>2</sup> Where Simonides famously declared that painting was 'silent poetry' and poetry 'speaking painting',<sup>3</sup> the inscription bestows our tablet with a literal voice. As a result, the object itself instructs audiences as to how to proceed; indeed, it even addresses the viewing/reading subject directly, speaking in both the second-person subjunctive (ἐχης, 'you may have') and imperative forms (μάθε, 'understand!').

<sup>2</sup> On the conceit, see especially Männlein-Robert 2007a; eadem 2007b: 157–67; Tueller 2008: 141–54; Squire 2010a: 609–14; idem 2010b: 82–8. For related games of talking pictures – integrated within the talking text depicted in the Elder Philostratus' *Imagines* – see Squire 2013a.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Plut. *Mor. (De glor. Ath.)* 346F (= Simon. frg. 190b Bergk): 'Simonides relates that a picture is a silent poem, and a poem a speaking picture' (ἡ δὲ Σιμωνίδης τὴν μὲν ζωγραφίαν ποίησιν σιωπῶσαν προσαγορεύει, τὴν δὲ ποίησιν ζωγραφίαν λαλοῦσαν); as Plutarch elsewhere puts it (*Mor. [Quomodo adul.]* 17F), this *bon mot* was 'frequently repeated' (θρυλούμενον); among the most stimulating modern discussions are Carson 1992, Franz 1999: 61–83, and Sprigath 2004. Note, for our purposes, the rhetorical context in which an earlier Latin rendition of the saying can be found: *poema loquens pictura, pictura tacitum poema debet esse (Rhet. ad Her. 4.28.39).*

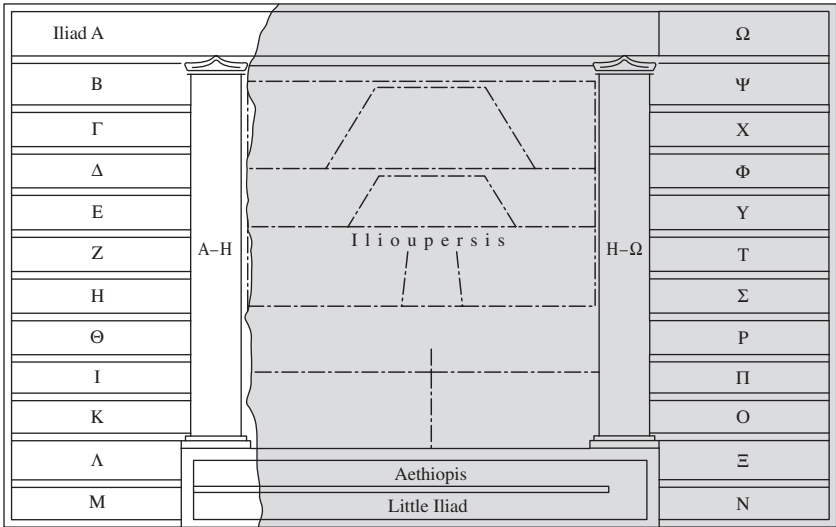


Figure 11.2 Reconstruction of the *Tabula Capitolina* showing the arrangement of subjects.

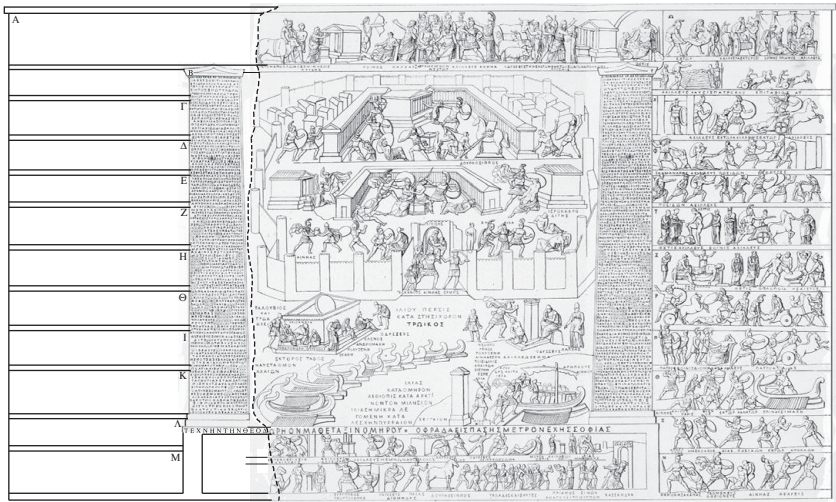


Figure 11.3 Reconstruction of the original complete *Tabula Capitolina*, integrated with a drawing of the fragmentary surviving right-hand side; h. 25cm, w. 40cm (estimated).

I have written elsewhere about this inscription and the knowingly ‘intermedial’ tablet on which it appears. As I have argued, the epigram puns upon the vocabulary of both literary and art-historical criticism: just as *technē* could refer to artistic and literary craftsmanship, so too

was *sophia* a quality attributed to artists and poets alike.<sup>4</sup> The pun on *metron* adds a further Callimachean twist, flagging the self-conscious recalibration of grand Homeric epic on this manifestly miniature marble tablet (despite containing some 400 figures, the original object measured just 0.25m x c.0.40m, i.e. 0.1m<sup>2</sup>). By the same token, there appears more to the adjectival ‘Theodorean’ name than first meets the eye: if, in a literal sense, the word attributes the object to some real-life artist (‘Theodorus’), it also associates it more figuratively with one of antiquity’s most famous miniature artists, the homonymous Archaic sculptor from Samos.<sup>5</sup>

The present chapter takes a different tack. By approaching this object – and other related visual and literary materials – from a Roman rhetorical perspective, my aim is to explore an additional register of cultural significance, one previously left unspoken. As with so many Roman objects, rhetoric looms large in this inscription. After all, the underlying trope of depicting through language – of ekphrastically summoning up pictures through words, reversed in such playful series of images on texts – was a mainstay of ancient rhetorical theory.<sup>6</sup> Rhetoricians could plead the respective powers of each medium in turn: ‘although a picture is a silent work that always maintains the same attitude’, as Quintilian explains, ‘it can penetrate our innermost feelings to such an extent that it would seem sometimes to be more powerful than the force of speech itself’ (*pictura, tacens opus et habitus semper eiusdem, sic in intimos penetret adfectus ut ipsam uim dicendi nonnumquam superare uideatur*, *Inst. or.* 11.3.67).<sup>7</sup> For any educated (*viz.* rhetorically trained) audience,<sup>8</sup> the very image of

<sup>4</sup> Pace e.g. Burford 1972: 207, arguing that ‘only the poet worked in the realm of *sophia*’. One need only think of the opening sentence of the Elder Philostratus’ *Imagines* to appreciate the shared critical language for theorizing the literary and visual arts: cf. Maffei 1991: esp. 261.

<sup>5</sup> See Squire 2011a: 87–126 (on *technē* and *sophia*), 248–59 (on *metron*), 283–302 (on the ‘Theodorean’ name). More generally on the size and the Callimachean aesthetic backdrop, see *ibid.* 31–9, 247–302 (esp. 248–59). There are three major catalogues of the *Tabulae Iliacae*: Jahn 1873 (cataloguing 12 examples), Sadurska 1964 (treating 19), and Valenzuela Montenegro 2004 (surveying 22): I provide an overview of all 22 objects in Squire 2011a: 387–416, along with an introduction to a supposed twenty-third example found in the forum at Cumae in 2006. David Petrain’s forthcoming book – which will focus on nine individual tablets – is eagerly awaited (Petrain 2014).

<sup>6</sup> The best introduction to rhetorical ekphrasis is Webb 2009, with the appendix of passages from the *Progymnasmata* on pp. 197–211.

<sup>7</sup> For Quintilian’s subsequent advice about the rhetorical ‘summoning up’ of images, associated with Greek concepts of *phantasia*, see Webb 2009: 93–6 on e.g. Quint. *Inst. or.* 6.2.29–32; more generally on the relationship between Quintilian’s rhetorical theories and the Greek *Progymnasmata*, see Henderson 1991, and compare Vasaly 1993 on related passages in Cicero.

<sup>8</sup> To my mind, there can be no doubt that the tablets’ clientele was educated (Squire 2011a: 87–102). The predominant anglophone view of the *Tabulae Iliacae*, however, is that ‘the lover of Greek



making pictures speak goes hand in hand with the rhetorical figure of making speeches like a picture: the tablet's intermedial games with image and text, in other words, were first and foremost a *rhetorical* issue, explicitly theorized during the course of an orator's education.

This chapter consequently uses our miniature Capitoline text (or at least one microscopic aspect of it) as a springboard for exploring some larger intersections between Roman art and rhetoric. My particular concern will be not with *technē*, *sophia* or *metron*, but rather with a concept which previous discussions have downplayed: that of *taxis* – i.e. 'array', 'order' and 'arrangement'. What is so fascinating about this word, and so revealing about its appearance on our tablet, is its rhetorical ring. On the one hand, the idea of *taxis* (*ordo* in Latin) is drawn from rhetorical discussions about how best to 'order' a speech; on the other, the specific use of this term in association with the 'order of Homer' (τάξις Ὁμήρου) resonates with rhetorically derived readings of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, which expressly rationalised the narratological arrangements of Homeric storytelling in line with more contemporary rhetorical practice. As we shall see, the Homeric mode of narrative ordering was itself fundamental for appreciating Homer's own canonical ranking in the hierarchical 'order' of poets.

While the *Tabulae Iliacae* are among the most outspoken objects to deal with these issues, their rhetorical games find numerous archaeological and literary parallels. In the second part of the chapter, I turn to two particular comparanda, one drawn from the visual arts (the oecus of the Casa di Octavius Quartio), the other from a contemporary text (the ekphrastic descriptions of two sets of images in Virgil's *Aeneid*). In both cases, I argue, artists and writers experimented with arrangement in closely related ways: we find Roman literary and visual cultures drawing on the same rhetorical frameworks of *taxis* and *ordo*, thereby demonstrating the deep-rooted associations between rhetoric, literature and visual culture in the early Roman empire.

The chapter's third and final section proceeds to relate these discourses of narrative order to broader rhetorical ideas about memory and oratorical innovation. By comparing the order-games on the *Tabulae* with those of other images and texts, we are able to appreciate how different media had different recourse to similar sets of underlying rhetorical theories; indeed,

literature would have been appalled by such a combination of the obvious, the trivial and the false', just as 'the serious lover of art cannot have derived much pleasure from pictures so tiny that the sculptor could add little if anything of his own interpretations and emotions' (Horsfall 1994: 79; cf. e.g. McLeod 1985: 165, on the tablets as a 'pretence of literacy for the unlettered').

as we shall see, each of my diverse case studies exploits rhetorical frameworks to raise associated questions about how images order (and are ordered) in relation to words, and in the most self-referential of ways. Greek and Roman rhetorical discussions of memory add a unique and under-exploited perspective here. For among Roman orators, at least, the very act of remembering a speech was predicated upon an assumed analogy between the order (*taxis/ordo*) of images and the order (*taxis/ordo*) of verbal speech. At the same time, rhetorical theory also vocalized the problems belying any straightforward equation between pictures and speech. As we shall see, rhetorical theories of memory were themselves sensitive to the ways in which visual images structure ideas at once similarly to and differently from verbal language: as such, Roman rhetoric can shed new historicist light not only on how pictures engage with the orderings of words, but also how words engage with the orderings of pictures.

### Beginning: understanding the ‘order of Homer’

Let me begin by returning to our opening object and inscription: what might an early imperial audience have understood by the reference to the ‘order of Homer’ (τάξιν Ὁμήρου) on the Capitoline tablet, and how might rhetorically derived ideas have informed subsequent viewings and readings?<sup>9</sup>

To answer those questions, it is necessary to say something about the etymology of *taxis* itself. The earliest use of the word seems to have been in a military sense (from the verb τάσσω): it described the spatial arrangement of troops in battle formation, and by extension a constituent band or squadron. But *taxis* quickly took on a metaphorical meaning, referring to other modes of spatial organization, and above all the structural arrangement of spoken language.<sup>10</sup> This is the etymological backdrop for Plato’s much-analysed discussion of Sophistic rhetoric in the *Phaedrus*. One of the problems with Lysias’ speeches, Plato has Socrates declare, lies in their formal structure: complaining about how Lysias orders everything

<sup>9</sup> The discussion that follows has benefited in particular from Wuellner 1997 – one of the most accessible guides to rhetorical theories of arrangement (73–8), as well as their development (52–73). Wuellner offers more detailed references to the key bibliography (e.g. Hamberger 1914; Stroh 1975; Krings 1982). More sensitive to the literary critical stakes is Meijering 1987: 138–48, surveying a wider range of rhetorical texts.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. *LSJ* s.v. *taxis* I.1–5 for the military meanings, and II for ‘arrangement’ and ‘order’ more generally (with rhetorical discussions ordered under II.1).

(συνταξάμενος πάντα, *Phdr.* 263e), Plato objects that ‘he does not even begin at the beginning, but undertakes to swim on his back up the current of his discourse from its end’ (οὐδὲ ἀπ’ ἀρχῆς ἀλλ’ ἀπὸ τελευτῆς ἐξ ὑπτίας ἀνάπαλιν διανεῖν ἐπιχειρεῖ τὸν λόγον, 264a).<sup>11</sup>

Aristotle would develop the critical idea later in the fourth century. Drawing on Plato’s discussion, as well as those of numerous other philosophers (among them Isocrates, Alcidas and Theodectes), the third book of Aristotle’s *Art of Rhetoric* provides one of the most important surviving discussions. ‘There are three things which need special attention when it comes to speech’, as Aristotle puts it, ‘first the sources of proofs [*pisteis*], second style [*lexis*], and third how we must order the parts of the speech [τρίτον δὲ πῶς χρὴ τάξαι τὰ μέρη τοῦ λόγου]’ (3.1.1 = 1403b). Aristotle revisits the theme at the end of the twelfth chapter. Although different sorts of speeches require different sorts of structures, the metaphor of *taxis* helps establish some common rules for ordering the spatial parts of a speech (τὰ μέρη τοῦ λόγου).

Numerous scholars have written about Aristotelian notions of *taxis* and their immediate critical reception.<sup>12</sup> For our purposes, it is important to observe a slightly different aspect: namely, how Aristotle drew his examples not only from forensic oratory, but also from epic and tragedy. Although Aristotle treats ‘the art of rhetoric’ (ἡ τέχνη ῥητορική) as something distinct from his work ‘on poetics’ (περὶ ποιητικῆς), there is clear overlap between his ‘rhetorical’ and ‘poetic’ discussions of *taxis*. The association is most conspicuous in the *Poetics*. Just as the *Art of Rhetoric* discusses the orator’s speech in terms of its constituent parts (analysing each in turn, together with their proper sequence), so too does the *Poetics* analyse the separable sections of tragedy, deeming *taxis* ‘both the first and greatest thing in tragedy’ (τοῦτο καὶ πρῶτον καὶ μέγιστον τῆς τραγωδίας, 1450b). The idea of poetic plots ‘structuring’ events (σύστασις τῶν πραγμάτων) is fundamental to the *Poetics*. Fleshing out the organic image of Plato’s *Phaedrus* (and other rhetorical treatises),<sup>13</sup> Aristotle goes on to draw a zoomorphic metaphor for figuring literary arrangement. A tragedy, Aristotle declares in

<sup>11</sup> On the Platonic critique here, see e.g. Fuhrmann 1960: 135–7 (with earlier bibliography); Wuellner 1997: 58–60; Ford 2002: 240–4.

<sup>12</sup> For a brief overview of different scholarly positions, complete with further bibliography, see Wuellner 1997: 60–1.

<sup>13</sup> For the Aristotelian debt to Plato (and others), see Meijering 1987: 139, and esp. 268, n.16 (on Anaximenes’ instruction that ‘it is necessary to structure words in the image of a body’, χρὴ τάττειν τοὺς λόγους σωματοειδῶς, with further discussion by Fuhrmann 1960: 138–42); Sicking 1963 and Heath 1989: 18–21 provide more detailed accounts of the intellectual context.

the seventh chapter of the *Poetics*, has to be considered an organic whole, complete with beginning, middle and end (1450b):<sup>14</sup>

ἔτι δ' ἐπεὶ τὸ καλὸν καὶ ζῶον καὶ ἅπαν πρᾶγμα ὃ συνέστηκεν ἐκ τινῶν οὐ μόνον ταῦτα τεταγμένα δεῖ ἔχειν ἀλλὰ καὶ μέγεθος ὑπάρχειν μὴ τὸ τυχόν· τὸ γὰρ καλὸν ἐν μεγέθει καὶ τάξει ἐστίν . . .

Moreover, for something to be beautiful, whether it be a living creature, or any other holistic form constructed out of individual parts, not only must it have those parts arranged in good order, it must also have a certain magnitude of its own, for beauty consists in magnitude and order alike . . .

Beauty entails both magnitude (*megethos*) and order (*taxis*), writes Aristotle. But the latter must always temper the former: although (generally speaking) the bigger the poem the better it will be, size is meaningless without structure. Aristotle later elaborates his argument with reference to the concept of *synopsis* – of ‘viewing’ the whole poem ‘at once’: when it comes to tragedy, the crucial thing is that audiences ‘must be able to see the beginning and end together and at the same time’ (δύνασθαι γὰρ δεῖ συνορᾶσθαι τὴν ἀρχὴν καὶ τὸ τέλος, 1459b).<sup>15</sup>

Aristotle’s discussion of *taxis* reminds us of the cross-pollination – right from the very start – of Greek rhetorical theory with nascent traditions of literary criticism. Even by the fourth century, discourses of verbal structure, organization and arrangement were feeding into critical responses to Greek poetry, and vice versa.<sup>16</sup> Subsequent treatises would draw on related ideas: one of the three overarching topics that structures the *Rhetorica ad Alexandrum*, for example, is the question of how best to organize different sorts of speeches (chs. 29–38); indeed, the treatise even echoes Aristotle’s figurative language of ‘arranging speeches organically’ (or, more literally, ‘in body-like form’: τάττειν τοὺς λόγους σωματοειδῶς, ch. 28).<sup>17</sup>

Such theories of *taxis* came to be elaborated in all sorts of ways. In his masterly compendium to literary rhetoric, Heinrich Lausberg has shown

<sup>14</sup> There is an excellent discussion (with further references) by Purves 2010: 24–32. For the passage and its Hellenistic literary critical reception, see Hutchinson 2008: 67–72.

<sup>15</sup> I have discussed the importance of Aristotelian *synopsis* on the *Tabulae Iliacae* in Squire 2011a: 248–59.

<sup>16</sup> As Pernot 2005: 135–6 nicely puts it, ‘the intellectual resemblance and the precise contact points between Aristotle’s *Poetics* and *Rhetoric* reveal the bridges existing in antiquity between rhetoric and poetics, and more broadly between rhetoric and literary criticism’.

<sup>17</sup> Wuellner 1997: 61–2 provides an informative guide to different critical readings. The afterlife of this ‘organic’ image is reflected in Greek and Latin treatises alike: among countless other echoes, the Aristotelian discussion provides the rhetorical-cum-literary-critical backdrop for Horace’s famous image at the beginning of the *Ars Poetica*, with its description of the painted grotesque human–horse–bird–fish creature (*Ars P.* 1–15: cf. Brink 1971: esp. 75–85, and the wonderful discussion of visual parallels in Platt 2009b).

how the Latin word *ordo*, which translated Greek ideas of *taxis*, at once perpetuated and developed earlier Greek thinking. According to this equally disparate Latin framework, *ordo* referred to the discernible results of an act of rhetorical structuring – what Latin writers termed *dispositio* (corresponding to Greek οἰκονομία): ‘the action of *dispositio* (οἰκονομία) performed by the *artifex* results in *ordo* (τάξις) in the opus’.<sup>18</sup> *Ordo*, like *taxis*, could denote different strategies of arrangement, not only the ordering of parts and the formation of the whole, but also the ordering of events within a narrative, or indeed the syntactical sequence of words within a sentence. Roman rhetoricians furnished their audiences with ordered discussions of each in turn.<sup>19</sup>

So what might this rhetorical backdrop mean for our opening inscription on the Capitoline tablet? My suggestion is that the *Tabula Capitolina* (like other *Tabulae Iliacae*) excavates these rhetorical ideas while simultaneously literalizing the underlying spatial metaphor: if the inscribed language explicitly recalls rhetorical theories of order, the accompanying pictures show how such rhetoric is itself derived from a visually mediated mode of contemplating narrative structure. At stake here are larger questions about how to convert visual images into verbal stories, and vice versa.<sup>20</sup>

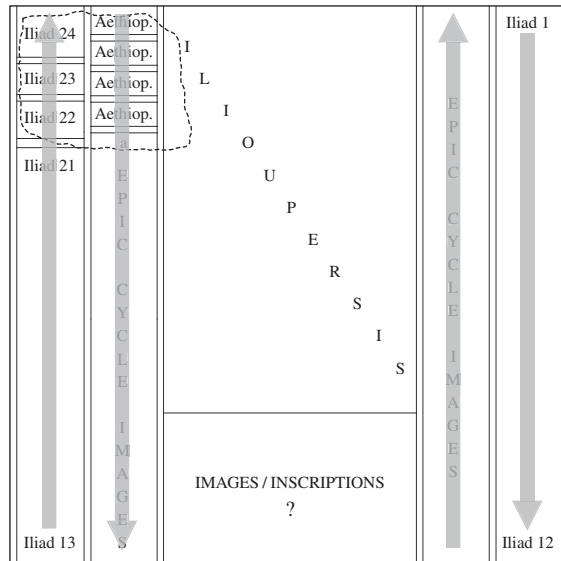
In my previous analyses of the tablets, I have argued that the *Tabulae Iliacae* made much of their spatial arrangements, toying with pictorial order in all manner of playful ways. This is true of individual objects – the way in which the *Tabula Capitolina* exploits its spatial layout, composition and iconography to spark new structural readings (not least by putting Aeneas at its literal and metaphorical centre, or else by having the first and last books of the *Iliad* meet in the upper frieze (Figures 11.1–11.3)).<sup>21</sup> But it is also true of the corpus as a collective: one tablet, for instance, likely reversed the direction of opening Iliadic scenes from top-left (as on the Capitoline tablet: Figures 11.1–11.3) to top-right corner (Figure 11.4), just as another example

<sup>18</sup> Lausberg 1998: 209–14, nos. 443–52 (quotation from p. 209).

<sup>19</sup> Lausberg 1998: 728 (s.v. *ordo*) provides an index to various Latin rhetorical discussions.

<sup>20</sup> Such questions prove all the more poignant in light of the *Tabula Capitolina* inscription’s ambiguous phrasing: however we read τάξιν Ὁμήρου (whether we understand the genitive as either objective or subjective, i.e. as referring to Homer’s metaphorical spatial orderings or to the literal orderings imposed on Homer by the present pictures: see below, pp. 366–7), its precise relationship with ‘Theodorean *technē*’ is left unclear.

<sup>21</sup> See Squire 2011a: 148–76. Particularly noteworthy are the structural orderings of the tablet’s central *Ilioupersis* panel, informed by both a geographical principle (depicting the city of Troy as spatially defined) and a chronological rationale (whereby events unfold from top to bottom, with numerous protagonists repeated from one register to the next).



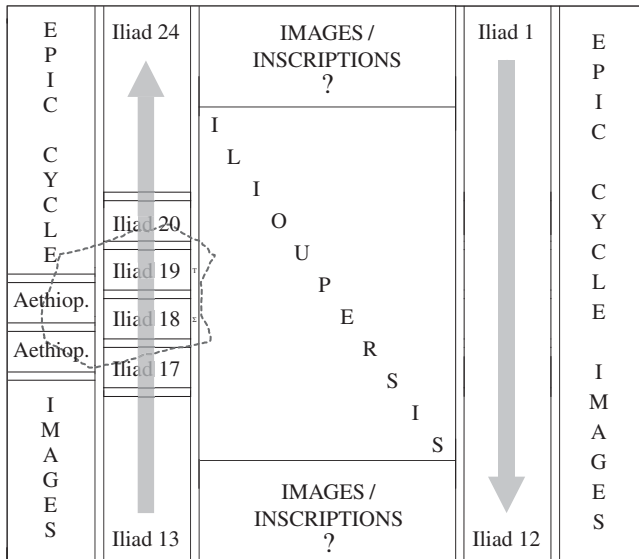
**Figure 11.4** Possible reconstruction of the obverse of a *Tabula Iliaca* in Paris (*Tabula Veronensis* II: Paris, Cabinet des Médailles, Département des Monnaies, Médailles et Antiques, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, inv. 3119 = *Tabula Iliaca* 9D), late first century BC or early first century AD.

sandwiches Iliadic scenes between columns of chronologically removed epic cyclical subjects (Figure 11.5). In terms of their overall compositions, no two tablets share the precise same spatial layout: each one subtly varies the selection and order of episodes, as well as the overall arrangement of the different poems visualized.<sup>22</sup>

If questions of *taxis* lie at the heart of the tablets' intellectual agenda, at least seven *Tabulae* developed the theme on their reverse sides.<sup>23</sup> On each of these versos, inscribed letters or *grammata* are arranged in a literally 'diagrammatic' way, as if to be viewed as pictures rather than read as unilinear texts: so long as audiences start from the central letter and proceed outwards to any corner, they are able to choose their own visual-cum-verbal *taxis*; indeed, they can even *change* their processual direction in the process – whether horizontally, vertically or diagonally. Each of the 'magic squares' furnishes a title for the obverse scenes, and

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Squire 2011a: 176–96, esp. 187–91 and Squire 2011b. Both cited tablets come from the Cabinet des Médailles in the Bibliothèque Nationale de France in Paris (inv. 3319 and Froehner inv. VIII.148).

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Squire 2011a: 197–246.



**Figure 11.5** Possible reconstruction of the obverse of a *Tabula Iliaca* in Paris (*Tabula Froehner* I: Paris, Cabinet des Médailles, Département des Monnaies, Médailles et Antiques, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Froehner inv. VIII.148 = *Tabula Iliaca* 20Par), late first century BC or early first century AD.

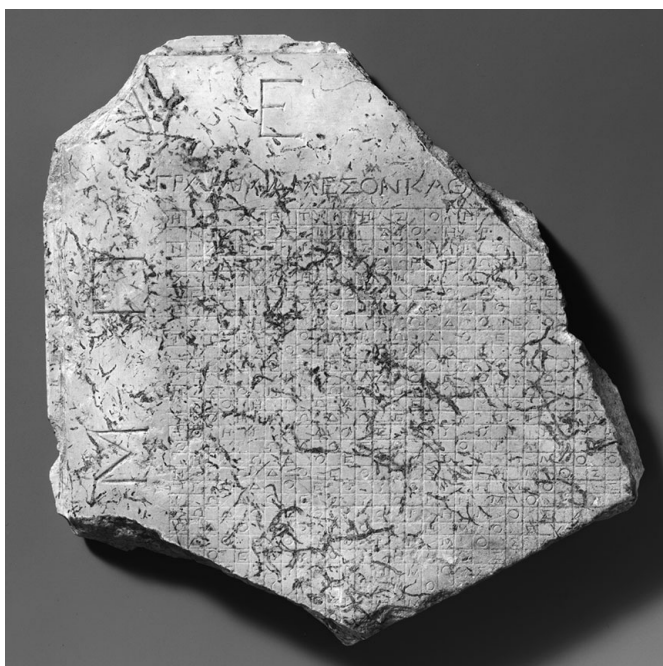
four of them mention Homer explicitly (including one of the most interesting tablets, today housed in New York ([Figures 11.6–11.9](#))).<sup>24</sup> as a reconstructed hexameter above two different diagrammatic grids puts it, again addressing the audience in the imperative, the objective was to ‘look at the middle letter [*gramma*] and continue wherever you choose’ (γράμμα μέσον καθ[ορῶν παραλάβει]νε οὐ ποτε βούλει).<sup>25</sup> In each case, the respective recto and verso games of visual–verbal/verbal–visual order comprise the literal and metaphorical flipsides of

<sup>24</sup> Metropolitan Museum, New York, inv. 24.97.11: starting from the central iota square, the verso text reads ‘the *Iliad* of Homer: the *technē* is Theodorean’, [Ἰλ]ί[ας] Ὀμήρου Θεοδώρου ἡ[ι] τέχνη. The *taxi*s of the verso letters here finds an exact parallel on a tablet in Paris (Cabinet des Médailles in the Paris Bibliothèque Nationale de France, inv. 3318): in both cases, the additional iota after the definite article was necessitated by the desire for an uneven number of letters (Bua 1971: 6, 14; Squire 2011a: 209).

<sup>25</sup> For the hexameter text (evidently repeated on both examples), and two different attempts to restore its missing second to fourth feet, see Squire 2011a: 204–5; my reconstruction of the missing central section here follows that of Gallavotti. The Greek word *gramma* underscores the visual–verbal point: the term, after all, could refer simultaneously to the ‘strokes’ of both letters and pictures, and Hellenistic ekphrastic epigrams were well versed in the pun (cf. Männlein-Robert 2007a: 255–6; Männlein-Robert 2007b: 127–34; Tueller 2008: 141–54, esp. 143).

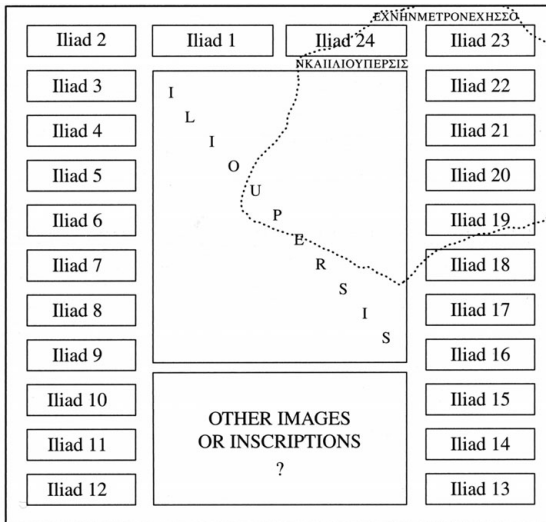


**Figure 11.6** Obverse of a *Tabula Iliaca* in New York (*Tabula New York*: New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, inv. 24.97.11 = *Tabula Iliaca* 2NY), late first century BC or early first century AD; h. 18.1cm, w. 17.6cm, d. 2.5cm.



**Figure 11.7** Reverse of the same New York *Tabula Iliaca* (2NY).



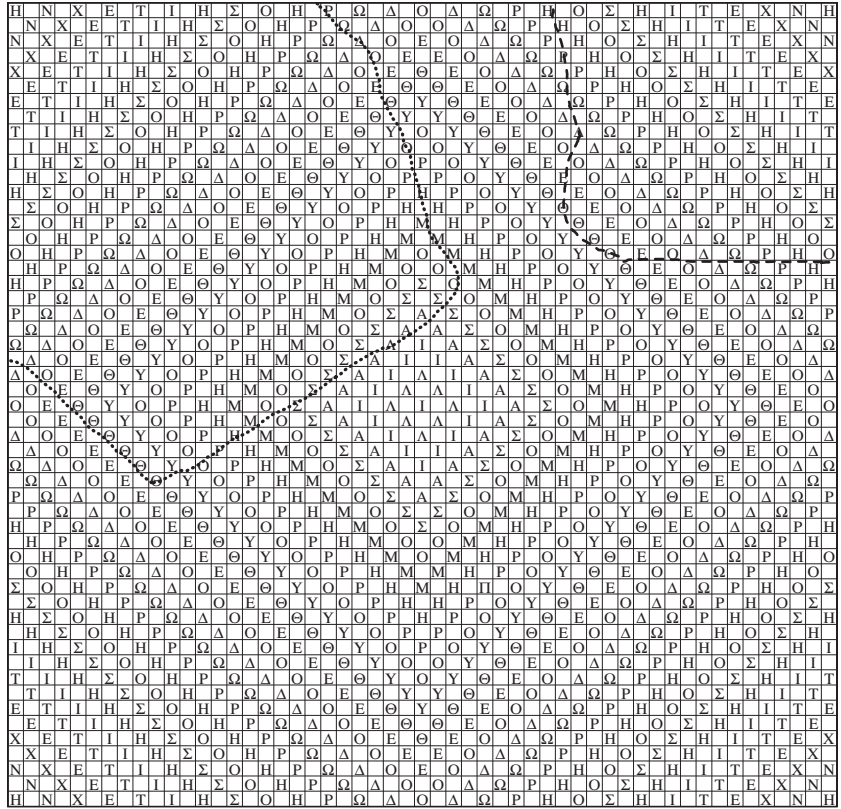


**Figure 11.8** Possible reconstruction of the obverse of the same New York *Tabula Iliaca* (2NY).

one another: if the versos of these seven tablets interrogate the sequentiality-cum-spatiality of written language, the *grammata* (at once ‘letters’ and ‘pictures’) of the recto interrogate the spatial orders of the ‘original’ poetic texts.

Rhetoric looms large here, not only for coming to terms with the specific *taxis* of the pictures and poems, but also in framing the underlying relationships between words and images. The Capitoline tablet with which we began (Figures 11.1–11.3) is not inscribed on its verso. But the rhetoric of *taxis* is very much in tune with such games of both visual and verbal layout. If, as we have seen, *taxis/ordo* referred to the rhetorical ordering of a speech, that conceptual framework is here brought to bear on verbal responses to the object at hand: audiences are prompted to apply frameworks for theorizing verbal arrangement to their rhetorical reactions to these visualized epic texts.

While the Iliac tablets sound out rhetorical questions of *taxis*, however, they are conspicuously silent about how best to order a view. Despite the promise of neat linear sequence – each Iliadic book contained in a single frieze on the recto of the *Tabula Capitolina*, with the *Aethiopis* and *Little Iliad* below and the *Ilioupersis* in the centre (Figures 11.1–11.3) – the *taxis* is far from straightforward: consider, for example, the numerous visual rhymes between different registers of the Capitoline tablet, or the way in which the first book of the *Iliad* is stretched over



**Figure 11.9** Reconstruction of the ‘magic square’ on the reverse of the same New York tablet (2NY); the marked left-hand section refers to the surviving portion of the New York tablet, while the right-hand markings pertain to the extant fragment of a parallel ‘magic square’ on the verso of another tablet in Paris (*Tabula Veronensis* I, Cabinet des Médailles, Département des Monnaies, Médailles et Antiques, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, inv. 3118 = *Tabula Iliaca* 3C).

the upper register so as to meet the last (spurring ‘clockwise’ as well as ‘anti-clockwise’ modes of interpreting the whole).<sup>26</sup> To what extent, then, does the visual ordering of these pictures relate to the poetic *taxis* of Homeric epic? The tablet’s elegiac inscription develops that question

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Squire 2011a: 165–76. At the same time, of course, the tablet’s juxtaposition of Iliadic beginning and end resonates with the Aristotelian prescription (in the twenty-fourth chapter of the *Poetics*) that, when it comes to epic poetry, ‘it should be possible to see together [*synorasthai*] the beginning and end’ (δύνασθαι γὰρ δεῖ συνορᾶσθαι τὴν ἀρχὴν καὶ τὸ τέλος, 1459b).

through a characteristic verbal ambivalence: after all, it is left poignantly unspoken whether the ‘order of Homer’ (τάξιν Ὀμήρου) refers to the ‘order’ originally laid down by Homer (Ὀμήρου as subjective genitive), or one that has been artistically imposed on the poet by the artist or viewer (objective genitive). Exactly what is the ‘order’ that we are instructed to learn and understand, and how does it relate to the Homeric original?<sup>27</sup>

Such questions lead full circle back to rhetorical discussions of *taxis*. As Aristotle’s respective discussions of poetic *systasis* testify, *taxis* was a term of literary criticism as much as of rhetorical theory: the same language was used to theorize the order both of a delivered speech and of a poetic text. Within objects that expressly parade their literary (and literary critical) credentials – in the Capitoline tablet’s case, its association with not only the ‘Iliad according to Homer’, but also the ‘Aethiopis according to Arctinus of Miletus, *Little Iliad* as told by Lesches of Pyrrha’ and not least the ‘Ilioupersis according to Stesichorus’<sup>28</sup> – this strikes me as highly significant. For if the talk of *taxis* taps into rationalized discourses about how best to structure speech, those discourses are themselves bound up with literary critical responses to poetic texts.

Consider, once again, Aristotle’s *Poetics*. What is so special about the *Iliad*, writes Aristotle, is its narratological scope. Rather than dramatize the whole Trojan War (which would be too long for ‘seeing all at once’), Homer ‘takes only one part of the story, making use of many incidents from others’ (ἐν μέρος ἀπολαβὼν ἐπεισοδίοις κέχρηται αὐτῶν πολλοῖς, 1459a). Other epic poems – Aristotle compares the *Odyssey* and *Iliad* with the *Cypria* and *Little Iliad* specifically – are judged to have been less successful. Whereas a single tragedy (‘or at most two’) can be made from the poems of Homer, ‘many can be made from the *Cypria*, and more

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Squire 2011a: 195–6, and compare Petrain 2012: 618. (Petrain 2013 was published while the present book was in proofs: the analysis of the *Tabula Iliaca Capitolina* and two painted ‘epic cycles’, approached through Russian Formalist theories of *sjuzhet* and *fabula*, is highly germane to my own interpretation here.) The tablet’s two inscribed steles, which offer an inscribed summary of events in the *Iliad*, evidently raised related themes. Only the right-hand stele survives, inscribed with a summary of *Iliad* 7–24 in tiny letters: of the 108 lines, some 69 feature words split between one line to the next, necessitating a simultaneously horizontal and vertical mode of reading.

<sup>28</sup> Ἰλίου πέρις | κατὰ Στήσιχρον | Τρωϊκός. | Ἰλιάς | κατὰ Ὀμηρον | Αἰθιοπίς κατὰ Ἄρκτι- | νον τὸν Μιλήσιον | Ἰλιάς ἢ μικρὰ λε- | γομένη κατὰ | Λέσχην Πυρραῖον: for the inscription, at the tablet’s original lower centre (underneath the Trojan gate of the central *Ilioupersis* scene), see Mancuso 1909: 670–1; for the controversial ‘Stesichorean’ claim, see the bibliography cited at Squire 2011a: 18–19, n. 54.

than eight from the *Little Iliad*: Homer's inspired superiority in regard to his successors (θεσπέσιος . . . παρὰ τοὺς ἄλλους), in other words, lies in the selectiveness of his plots and the incorporation of other stories into his overarching poetic structure.<sup>29</sup>

Pursuing the Aristotelian analogy between the *taxis* of rhetoric and that of poetry, subsequent ancient commentators continued to analyse Homeric storytelling in terms of its rhetorical ordering of events.<sup>30</sup> Inevitably, perhaps, different critics appropriated the language of *taxis* in different – and in some sense contradictory – ways: for early rhetoricians, *taxis* seems to have implied simply the general arrangement of subject matter to form a complete and organic rhetorical entity (also known as *oikonomia*); for later critics, it came to mean the natural, 'chronological' order of events, therefore opposed to the more artful arrangement of *oikonomia*.<sup>31</sup> Whether praising Homeric *taxis* specifically, or else admiring the poet's 'economy' in avoiding chronological sequence (κατὰ τάξιν), commentators understood that the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* were rhetorically distinctive. In modern narratological terms, Homeric poetry was said to experiment with the relations between 'plot' and 'narrative':<sup>32</sup> Homer pioneered a system of anachronic *analēpsis* and *prolēpsis* that defied 'real' time; his so-called

<sup>29</sup> On Aristotle's critique of Homer and other epic poets here, see e.g. Heath 1989: 38–55, along with Fantuzzi forthcoming. Although the best epics are said to deal with a single story, Aristotle defines the epic genre in terms of its 'multiple plot' (τὸ πολύμυθον, 1456a): 'in epic, the narrative mode enables the poem to include many simultaneous sections' (ἐν δὲ τῇ ἐποποιίᾳ διὰ τὸ διήγησιν εἶναι ἔστι πολλὰ μέρη ἅμα ποιεῖν περαινόμενα, 1459b); some epic poems are more 'multiparted' (πολυμερῆ, 1459a) than others, but epic's extended length means that, when compared with tragedy, epic is structured from 'more multiple actions' (ἐκ πλείονων πράξεων, 1462b). The spatial layout of the *Tabulae Iliacae* might be said to visualize the thinking, laying out the single poem, but doing so through a series of partitioned friezes. For all its unity of plot, the *Iliad* is revealed as a poem of multiple parts (and, both literally and metaphorically, thereby as something 'greater' than the *Aethiopis* and *Little Iliad*).

<sup>30</sup> There are numerous discussions of *taxis* as literary critical term, but I have learned in particular from Richardson 1980: esp. 267–70; Meijering 1987: 138–48; Hunter 2001: 105–19; Nünlist 2009a: 69–93, esp. 87–92; idem 2009b: 65–9. Hunter 2009a: esp. 52–5 demonstrates just how widespread this critical language proved for Second Sophistic authors: if Dio Chrysostom's eleventh ('Trojan') *Oration* has recourse to the language of Homeric *taxis*, it simultaneously turns that rhetorical framework on its head (cf. also Kim 2010: 101–8).

<sup>31</sup> On the underlying developments in critical thinking, see Meijering 1987: 141–2, along with Nünlist 2009a: 24–5.

<sup>32</sup> The key modern discussion, of course, is that of Gérard Genette, especially Genette 1980: 33–85 (discussing 'anachrony' at 35–6). As Nünlist 2009b: 69 concludes, 'ancient critics had a well-established and differentiated notion of and interest in questions of narrative structure and coherence that are not unlike the ones which modern narratology discusses under the general rubric "order"'.

‘anastrophic’ mode (ἐξ ἀναστροφῆς) consequently ‘inverted’ strict chronological sequence.<sup>33</sup>

One of the most detailed appraisals comes amid a second-century AD treatise on the *Life of Homer*, falsely attributed to Plutarch. The author discusses the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* in terms of various rhetorical qualities, among them narrative structure. After praising the ingenuities of Homeric word order – Homer’s rhetorical penchant for ‘inverting the regular *taxis*’ of words (τὴν εἰθισμένην τάξιν ἀναστρέφων, 30) – the analysis proceeds to; evaluate the poetic structure of the Homeric poems at large (162):<sup>34</sup>

καὶ πρῶτόν ἐστι τῆς τέχνης ἡ οἰκονομία, ἣν δι’ ὅλης τῆς ποιήσεως παρίστησι, καὶ μάλιστα ἐν ταῖς ἀρχαῖς τῶν πραγμάτων. οὐ γὰρ πόρρωθεν ἐμβαλὼν τὴν ἀρχὴν τῆς Ἰλιάδος ἐποίησατο ἀλλὰ καὶ καθ’ ὃν χρόνον αἱ πράξεις ἐνεργότεραι καὶ ἀκμαιότεραι κατέστησαν· τὰ δὲ τούτων ἀργότερα, ὅσα ἐν τῷ παρελθόντι χρόνῳ ἐγένοντο, συντόμως ἐν ἄλλοις τόποις παραδιηγῆσατο. τὸ δὲ αὐτὸ καὶ ἐν τῇ Ὀδυσσεΐα πεποίηκεν, ἀρξάμενος μὲν ἀπὸ τῶν τελευταίων τῆς πλάνης τοῦ Ὀδυσσεύως χρόνων, ἐν οἷς καιρὸς ἦν ἤδη καὶ τὸν Τηλέμαχον εἰσάγειν καὶ τὴν τῶν μνηστήρων ὕβριν ἐμφανίζειν· τὰ δὲ πρὸ τούτων, ὅσα τῷ Ὀδυσσεΐ ἄλωμένῳ συνέπεσεν, αὐτὸν παράγει διηγούμενον, ἃ καὶ δεινότερα καὶ πιθανώτερα ἔμελλε φαίνεσθαι, ὑπὸ αὐτοῦ τοῦ παθόντος λεγόμενα.

The first element of Homer’s art is his *oikonomia*, which he demonstrates in his whole poetic work, but particularly at the beginnings of events. For Homer did not make a beginning for the *Iliad* in the far-off past, but began it at a time when the action was gathering impetus and culminating. The things that had happened before this were less significant and Homer summarized them in various places. He did the same in the *Odyssey*, beginning with the very last part of the wanderings of Odysseus, at the time appropriate for introducing Telemachus and revealing the suitors’ arrogance. The things that had gone before – and all the things that happened to Odysseus in his wanderings – these he has Odysseus himself tell. Such events would also seem more ingenious and more credible when narrated by the man who actually experienced them.

By the time the *Tabulae Iliacae* were made, this trope was so commonplace as to appear almost trite. Horace offers the neatest encapsulation of the argument, nodding to the critical language of *taxis* and *ordo* specifically:

<sup>33</sup> For ancient testimonies to Homer’s ‘anastrophic’ narratological mode, and some modern critical discussions, see Richardson 1980: 267–70; Rengakos 2004: 290–7; Nünlist 2009a: 69–93, esp. 89 (with further bibliography); idem 2009b: 65–9. Meijering 1987: 146–7 nicely compares not only a scholion on the *Iliad*’s opening verse (Erbse 1969–88: 1.4), but also Eustathius’ comment on the ‘rather clever’ (δεινότερον) structuring of Homeric poetry (van der Valk 1971–87: 1.11; cf. Fantuzzi forthcoming). De Jong 2007 provides a solid introduction to Homer’s structuring of narrative and poetic time; the best modern discussion of the *Iliad*’s narrative complexity is Grethlein 2006: esp. 205–310.

<sup>34</sup> For discussion and further parallels, see Hillgruber 1994–9: 2.348–51. My translation adapts that of Keaney and Lamberton 1996: 265.

the *Iliad*'s account of the Trojan War 'is not ordered from the twin egg' laid by Leda (*nec gemino bellum Troianum orditur ab ovo*), as Horace insists, but 'instead always hastens straight to the point and spirits the listener into the middle of things as if they were already known' (*semper ad euentum festinat et in medias res | non secus ac notas auditorem rapit*, AP 148–9).<sup>35</sup>

Other commentators took due rhetorical note. Discussing numerous individual passages, ancient scholiasts analysed not only the large-scale ordering of Homeric poetry, but also the 'rhetorical way' (ῥητορικῶς) in which those speaking in the *Iliad* invert the order of their narratives.<sup>36</sup> Here, as elsewhere, non-Homeric epic poets were judged markedly less effective. Take the following scholiast, commenting upon the Homeric Catalogue of Ships:<sup>37</sup>

θαυμάσιος ὁ ποιητὴς μὴδ' ὅτι οὖν παραλιμπάνων τῆς ὑποθέσεως, πάντα δ' ἐξ ἀναστροφῆς κατὰ τὸν ἐπιβάλλοντα καιρὸν διηγούμενος, τὴν τῶν θεῶν ἔριν, τὴν τῆς Ἑλένης ἀρπαγὴν, τὸν Ἀχιλλέως θάνατον. ἡ γὰρ κατὰ τάξιν διήγησις νεωτερικὸν καὶ συγγραφικὸν καὶ τῆς ποιητικῆς ἀπὸ σεμνότητος.

The poet is admirable: he omits no part of the story, but narrates everything at the appropriate moment in inverse order [ἐξ ἀναστροφῆς] – the strife of the goddesses, the seizure of Helen, the death of Achilles. For chronological [κατὰ τάξιν] narrative is typical of later epic poetry [*neōterikon*] and prose writing and lacks poetic grandeur.

Unlike 'more recent' poets and historians,<sup>38</sup> Homer is said to play freely with narrative sequence: the Homeric mode of 'anastrophic' storytelling (ἐξ ἀναστροφῆς) eschews simple narrative sequence (κατὰ τάξιν διήγησις); indeed, this is why Homer is qualitatively better than his successors.<sup>39</sup> Quintilian noted something similar. Differentiating between what

<sup>35</sup> For further parallels, see Brink 1971: 221–2 ad loc.: these include e.g. Cic. *Ad Att.* 1.16.1 (a lettered reply imitating the inside-out order of Homer – ὕστερον πρότερον Ὀμηρικῶς) and Plin. *Epist.* 3.9.28 (on inverted sequence – *praepostere* – as favoured in Homer and his imitators).

<sup>36</sup> Among the examples quoted by Nünlist 2009a: 90 is a scholion on *Il.* 24.605, discussing a speech of Achilles: 'in a rhetorical way he inverted the order of the narrative' (ῥητορικῶς ἀνέστρεψε τὴν διήγησιν, Erbse 1969–88: 5.620).

<sup>37</sup> See Erbse 1969–88: 1.288 (= schol. b. ad *Il.* 2.494–877). For discussion and further parallels, see e.g. Rengakos 2004: 290–7; Sistakou 2008: 20; Nünlist 2009a: 88–9; idem 2009b: 67–8. As Meijering 1987: 139–40 notes, the Homeric proem to the *Odyssey* itself foreshadows such later critical thinking: 'having proposed to himself to relate the entire history of Odysseus . . . He [Homer] chooses to plunge *in medias res*'.

<sup>38</sup> On *taxis* as rhetorical criterion for evaluating history writing, compare e.g. Dion. *Thuc.* 10–12, who discusses how 'some critics find fault with Thucydides' order' (αἰτιῶνται δὲ καὶ τὴν τάξιν αὐτοῦ τινες, 10); for the trope in relation to Hellenistic epic (especially Apollonius), see the excellent analysis of Rengakos 2004.

<sup>39</sup> Later critics would draw attention to the 'order' of epic cyclical poems for quite different reasons: according to Photius' summary of Proclus (*Bibl.* 319a30), the poems of the cycle 'are of

he labels the ‘natural order’ (*ordo naturalis*) and ‘artificial order’ (*ordo artificialis* / *ordo artificiosus*) of narrative,<sup>40</sup> Quintilian associates the latter with the ‘Homeric mode’, or *mos Homericus*, specifically. When it comes to structuring a speech, writes Quintilian, students have to be pragmatic, making up their own minds as to what works best in any given scenario: ‘when to begin at the beginning and when, in the manner of Homer, to start in the middle or at the end’ (*ubi ab initiis incipiendum, ubi more Homérico a mediis uel ultimis, Inst. or. 7.10.11*).<sup>41</sup>

Rhetorical discussions like these shed new light on the *taxis* of the *Tabulae*, and on the express *taxis* of the *Tabula Capitolina* in particular. To my mind, the reference to *taxis Homērou* reminded rhetorically trained audiences of what was (said to be) most distinctive about the Homeric poems: namely, narratological order itself. But the witty and self-referential conceit is that the very mention of *taxis* in turn complicates narratological response. We have already noted the ambivalence of the genitive ‘Ομήρου, referring at once to the *original* order of Homer and the artistic order *imposed* on Homer thanks to the tablet’s ‘Theodorean *technē*’. But we now see how this ambivalence is itself tied up with the spatial games of the pictures. When approaching the ‘order of Homer’ on this tablet, after all, should audiences simply *re-tell* the Homeric tale and follow it to the letter, proceeding from beginning to end (i.e. κατὰ τάξιν – precisely what Homer did *not* do)? Or would they do better instead to emulate the ‘manner of Homer’ (*mos Homericus*) – to imitate that non-linear mode of ordering

interest to most not so much for their value as for the orderly sequence [*akolouthian*] of events in it’ (σπουδάζεται τοῖς πολλοῖς οὐχ οὕτω διὰ τὴν ἀρετὴν ὡς διὰ τὴν ἀκολουθίαν τῶν ἐν αὐτῷ πραγμάτων: cf. West 2013: esp. 4–16). Much later, in the sixth century AD, John Philoponus’ commentary on Aristotle’s *Posterior Analytics* would express something similar, framing his analysis in terms of *taxis* explicitly: ‘concerning the epic circle, some have written about how many poets there were, what each of them wrote, how many verses were contained in each poem and their order [*taxin*], as well as about which one a person needs to learn first, which second, and so on’ (γεγράφασι γοῦν τινες περὶ τοῦ κύκλου ἀναγράφοντες πόσοι τε ποιηταὶ γεγόνασι καὶ τί ἕκαστος ἔγραψε καὶ πόσοι στίχοι ἑκάστου ποιήματος καὶ τὴν τούτων τάξιν, τίνα τε πρῶτα δεῖ μανθάνειν καὶ δεύτερα καὶ ἐφεξῆς: see Wallies 1909: 157.11–14, with McKirahan 2012: 57). Such discussions chime with the Iliac tablets’ games of not only literary order, but also mnemonic arrangement (see below, pp. 411–16).

<sup>40</sup> For one of the clearest ancient distinctions between the two modes, and the circumstances under which each was to be used, see Sulpicius Victor 14 (= Halm 1863: 320), associating the *ordo artificiosus* with Greek *oikonomia*. Other sources are discussed by Lausberg 1998: 212–14, nos. 446–52.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. Quint. *Inst. or.* 4.2.83–4, discussing *narratio* specifically.



for which Homer was so famous?<sup>42</sup> Expressly commenting on ‘the order of Homer’, the tablet has it both ways, rhetorically punning upon these two seemingly irreconcilable narratological modes.<sup>43</sup>

There is at least one other rhetorical game besides. What rhetoricians deemed so special about Homer, we have said, was his narratological ordering of events. In this sense, it is worth noting how the rhetoric of order was itself used to ‘order’ Homer rhetorically within the rank and file of other epic poets: there is an established *ordo* or of canonical authors, as Quintilian enthuses, with Homer occupying the number-one spot.<sup>44</sup> If Homer ‘provided the model and origin for all parts of rhetoric’ (*hic enim ... omnibus eloquentiae partibus exemplum et ortum dedit, Inst. or.* 10.1.46),<sup>45</sup> each form of deliberative and forensic oratory can duly be found among his poems (*Inst. or.* 10.1.51):

Verum hic omnis sine dubio et in omni genere eloquentiae procul a se reliquit, epicos tamen praecipue, uidelicet quia durissima in materia simili comparatio est.

<sup>42</sup> In this connection, it is worth noting the potential significance of plunging quite literally *in medias res*. On the *Tabula Capitolina*, as on some three other examples (including the New York tablet, emblazoned with a ‘magic square’ diagram on its verso [Figures 11.6–11.9]), to proceed ‘into the middle of things’ would entail centring one’s tales of Greek epic around the fulcrum of Rome’s own founding epic hero: not for nothing does Aeneas occupy monumental pride of place at the tablet’s literal and metaphorical centre (cf. Squire 2011a: 240–3, along more generally with *ibid.* 148–58). The Homeric narrative mode of *in medias res* is also literalized in the spatial layout of the verso letter diagrams, which depend on audiences beginning with the ‘middle letter’ (γράμμα μέσον).

<sup>43</sup> For rhetorical theories of ‘inverting narrative taxis’, see *inter alios* Hermog. *Id.* 4 (= Rabe 1913: 235, ἀναστρέφειν τὴν τάξιν) and Theon *Prog.* (= Patillon and Bolognesi 1997: 48), who lists ‘five ways for the inversion of taxis’, τὴν δὲ ἀναστροφὴν τῆς τάξεως πενταχῶς. Theon begins his rhetorical advice with the example of Homer’s *Odyssey* explicitly, which ‘in effect begins in the middle, moving from there to the beginning, and then going on to the end’ (καὶ γὰρ ἀπὸ τῶν μέσων ἐστὶν ἀρξάμενον ἐπὶ τὴν ἀρχὴν ἀναδραμεῖν, εἴτα ἐπὶ τὰ τελευταῖα καταπῆσαι; one might compare the spatial layout of the *Tabula Tomassetti*, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana inv. 0066, as discussed in Squire 2011a: 182–5). Such rhetorical tropes of ‘inverting’ order are themselves inverted in Dio’s highly rhetorical ‘Trojan narration’, as Hunter 2009a: 52–3 demonstrates.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. Lausberg 1998: 14, no. 27 citing *Inst. or.* 1.4.3 (discussing how the old *grammatici* dismissed some writers ‘but included other authors in their *ordo*’, *sed auctores alios in ordinem redegerint*) and 10.1.54 (on how ‘Apollonius does not find a place in the grammarians’ *ordo*’, *Apollonius in ordinem a grammaticis datum non uenit*).

<sup>45</sup> The statement was a rhetorical commonplace: compare e.g. Ps.-Plut. *Vit. Hom.* 171, on how, after discussing some examples, ‘it is possible to find many other [Iliadic] places where speeches illustrate the art of rhetoric’ (ἔστι δὲ καὶ ἐν ἄλλοις πολλοῖς τῆς ποιήσεως τόποις εὐρεῖν λόγους τῆς ῥητορικῆς τέχνης ἐχομένους): no reasonable critic, the writer concludes, could deny that Homer was ‘a craftsman of words’ (τεχνίτης λόγων).



But Homer has undoubtedly left all the others far behind in every branch of rhetorical eloquence, but especially writers of epic: for similar material of course makes for the harshest comparison.

There can be no doubting Quintilian's own order of preference: Homer takes rhetorical pride of place among Greek and Roman poets, above all on account of his rhetorical ordering – the *ordo artificialis* by which his narratives unfold.

This adds further colour to the *Tabula Capitolina*'s taxing talk of *taxis Homērou*. Whatever their structured narrative response to the epic pictures portrayed, audiences were invited to evaluate how Homer 'orders' events like and unlike other epic poets: the 'order of Homer' becomes a criterion for ranking Homer (and Homer's anastrophic orderings) in relation to his epic successors – to Lesches, Arctinus, and not least the lyrical pseudo-epic poet, Stesichorus, whose respective works are depicted alongside the *Iliad* on the *Tabula Capitolina*.<sup>46</sup> Such exercises in 'comparative judgment' (*synkrisis/comparatio*) are of course themselves rhetorically informed.<sup>47</sup> By comparing and contrasting the narratological strategies of Homer with those of other epic poets, viewers were able not only to view at once a whole panorama of epic (according to the Aristotelian discussions of *synopsis*), but also to see why Homer was, rhetorically speaking, the biggest and greatest of them all. Such is the tablet's 'Theodorean *technē*' that we (re-)view Homer's ordering of events on the one hand, and see how his poetry ranks within a hierarchical *ordo* of poets on the other: in every sense, this 'ordering of Homer' consequently provides a 'measure of all wisdom'.

<sup>46</sup> For a rhetorical 'ordering' of various poets in relation to Homer, see e.g. Quint. *Inst. or.* 10.1.51–64. Quintilian ranks Homer at the top and proceeds to compare other 'lesser' writers. Among them is Stesichorus, one of the poets cited on the *Tabula Capitolina*: 'Stesichorus also reveals his powerful genius by way of his subject matter, for he sings of very great wars and the most famous of leaders, so as to make his lyre bear the weight of epic poetry. He gives his characters due dignity both in their actions and in their words: if he had exercised restraint, I think he could have very nearly rivalled Homer; as it is, he is redundant and diffuse – which is a fault, but a fault of richness' (*Stesichorum quam sit ingenio ualidus materiae quoque ostendunt, maxima bella et clarissimos canentem duces et epici carminis onera lyra sustinentem. reddit enim personis in agendo simul loquendoque debitam dignitatem, ac si tenuisset modum uidetur aemulari proximus Homerum potuisse, sed redundat atque effunditur, quod ut est reprehendendum, ita copiae uitium est*, 10.1.62). On the Capitoline tablet, the size and mass of the object might be thought to literalize such critical *tenuitas*, perhaps prompting broader comparison between the differently weighted poetics of Stesichorus and Homer.

<sup>47</sup> Tanner 2006: 250–4 provides an excellent brief introduction to the 'rhetoric of art criticism' here, discussing *synkrisis* on 253.

## Middle: knowing epic backwards?

There is much more to be said about the *Tabulae Iliacae* and the Capitoline tablet's inscription in particular. But my opening discussion suffices to demonstrate the overriding rhetorical stakes. To undertake a viewing of these miniature objects was in part to exercise – and I think show off<sup>48</sup> – the extent of one's own rhetorical education.

At this stage, I want to put the *Tabulae Iliacae* momentarily aside in order to situate their rhetorical games alongside those of other contemporary monuments and texts. All manner of case studies could be cited here, but I focus on just two: first, a series of paintings drawn from epic (in the Fourth Style oecus of the Casa di Octavius Quartio at Pompeii); and second, a pair of literary counterparts from Virgil's *Aeneid* (almost exactly contemporary with the Capitoline tablet).<sup>49</sup> In each case, my suggestion is that these works appropriate and play upon related discourses of rhetorical arrangement – whether in the context of pictorial displays of poems (at Pompeii), or else poetic descriptions of pictures (in the *Aeneid*).

Let me begin with the oecus (room h) of the Casa di Octavius Quartio, also known as the Casa di Loreius Tiburtinus, Pompeii II.2.2 (Figure 11.10), unearthed during excavations along the Via dell'Abbondanza in October 1919.<sup>50</sup> The house stirred immediate excitement, not least on account of the extraordinary villa-style garden landscapes at its south end, complete with two intersecting water-features (*euripi*).<sup>51</sup> What made the decoration of oecus h so special, though, was the Homeric subject matter displayed. During the same series of Via dell'Abbondanza excavations, two other related Iliadic cycles were uncovered (in the eponymous rooms of the Casa del Criptoportico and Casa del Sacello Iliaco, Pompeii I.6.2 and I.6.4 –

<sup>48</sup> For the functions and cultural contexts of the *Tabulae*, compare Squire 2011a: 67–86.

<sup>49</sup> More generally on the connections between the *Tabulae* and the *Aeneid*, see Squire 2011a: 148–58, along with Valenzuela Montenegro 2004: 387–91.

<sup>50</sup> The key publication is Aurigemma 1953: 971–1008; on the house more generally, see PPM 3: 42–108, with overviews in Zanker 1998: 145–56 and Nappo 2007: 362–4. The most important discussions of the oecus are Bianchi Bandinelli 1955: 29–30; Brilliant 1984: 60–61; Croisille 1985; idem 2005: 161–5; Clarke 1991: 201–7; de Vos 1993; Corralini 2001: 165–73, no. P.038; eadem 2002. My own thinking has greatly benefited from discussions with Katharina Lorenz, who kindly shared with me her forthcoming article on the room's paintings (Lorenz 2013).

<sup>51</sup> See Maiuri and Pane 1947 and Spinazzola 1953; among the most influential subsequent discussions is Zanker 1979. The oecus evidently occupied a privileged position in the house, with its southern doorway aligned with the intersecting southern and northern *euripus* (running north to south, and along a west–east axis respectively); the upper, northern *euripus* was complete with pergola and central colonnaded garden feature.

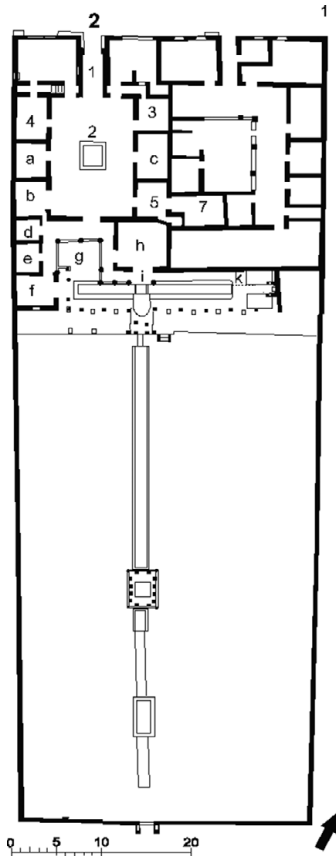


Figure 11.10 Groundplan of the Casa di Octavius Quartio, Pompeii II.2.2: the oecus is labelled room h, and measures 5.05m by 5.25m.

once part of the same dwelling);<sup>52</sup> collectively, the three cycles seemed to vindicate Vitruvius' attested popularity of wall paintings depicting 'the battles of Troy or the wanderings of Odysseus through landscapes' (*Troianas pugnas seu Ulixis errationes per topia*, 7.5.2).<sup>53</sup> In the Casa di Octavius Quartio, the alignment of the oecus – with one offset western doorway leading out into the *uiridarium* (space g), and a second facing

<sup>52</sup> The other cycles are also published by Aurigemma 1953. Subsequent discussions include Scheffold 1975: 129–34; Brilliant 1984: 60–5; Croisille 2005: 154–65; Santoro 2005: 106–9, 113–14; Squire forthcoming.

<sup>53</sup> Compare also Pliny's reference to a series of paintings on the Trojan War displayed in Rome's Portico of Philip (*bellumque Iliacum pluribus tabulis*, HN 35.144): Santoro 2005 surveys the full range of extant painted parallels, and Lorenz 2013: 225–9 discusses the chronology of the different stylistic frameworks.

south onto an elaborate pergola complex which in turns looks out onto the landscaped garden – leaves little doubt that the room was primarily designed as a *triclinium*, intended as a space for drinking and dining (especially in summer).<sup>54</sup> As for the painted decoration, this seems in fact to postdate Vitruvius: because of the connections with the so-called ‘Fourth Style’ of Pompeian painting, the mural framework can most likely be dated to sometime around AD 70. On each wall, the mural field is divided into a series of horizontal registers, with make-believe marble panelling below and whimsical architectural features above (Figures 11.11–11.12).<sup>55</sup> Slotted between these, wrapping a length of some 18 metres around the room, are two narrative friezes: where the lower frieze deals with events drawn from the *Iliad* (with accompanying Latin inscriptions),<sup>56</sup> the upper frieze treats episodes from the life of Heracles.<sup>57</sup> It is worth noting from the outset that the upper band is much taller than the lower Iliadic cycle below (c. 80cm as opposed to c. 30cm): as a result, the two friezes operate to different scales.<sup>58</sup>

What to make, though, of the overarching arrangement of cyclical scenes? Reconstructing the episodic order of the lower Iliadic frieze,

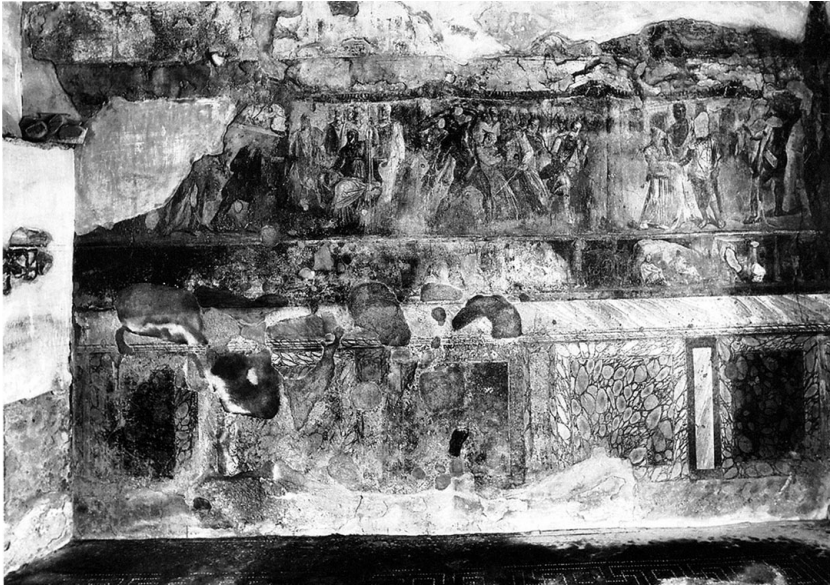
<sup>54</sup> On the topographic importance of the room within the house, see Clarke 1991: 201–2, rightly stressing the tailor-made ingenuity of the painted decoration (‘Someone standing in its southern doorway could view the whole of the canal’s long axis . . . Little wonder that the patron hired an artist able to paint not one, but two, narrative friezes on the walls of this important room’). The offset wide doorway to the west, which provides access onto the *uiridarium*, suggests that the room was designed with the arrangement of three couches in mind; whatever its earlier prototypes, the frieze decoration ‘is thoroughly remodelled for its new context’ (Lorenz 2013: 234).

<sup>55</sup> See *PPM* 3: 98–99, no. 85: the room’s vaulted ceiling was originally stuccoed, its floor decked out with a marble roundel at its centre, all adding to the luxurious feel (cf. Aurigemma 1953: 973). On the significance of painted *faux* marble at Pompeii, see e.g. Fant 2007.

<sup>56</sup> Although the room’s inscriptions are written in Latin script, a clear Greek influence can be seen in their spellings (‘Patroclos’, ‘Xantos’, ‘Lykaon’ etc.; there seems no evidence, *pace* Lorenz 2013: 242, that the Greek word for ‘plague’ was written in transliterated Latin letters – *loimos* – beside the ‘first’ scene at the west end of the south wall): cf. E. Thomas 1995: esp. 113–14, with 121, n. 26 (comparing another frieze with Heracleian inscriptions from Herculaneum, and suggesting that ‘in eklektizistischer Manier einzelne Szenen des Frieses nach verschiedenen Vorlagen möglicherweise gearbeitet worden sein können’).

<sup>57</sup> A make-believe curtain straddles the transition from the wall’s upper register to the larger, Heracleian frieze, ‘intended to heighten the illusion that the friezes are valuable Greek originals’ (Zanker 1998: 148). There is a good introduction to the ‘Fourth Style’ by Croisille 2005: 81–103; on the contested date of this particular room, see the bibliography cited by Coralini 2001: 172.

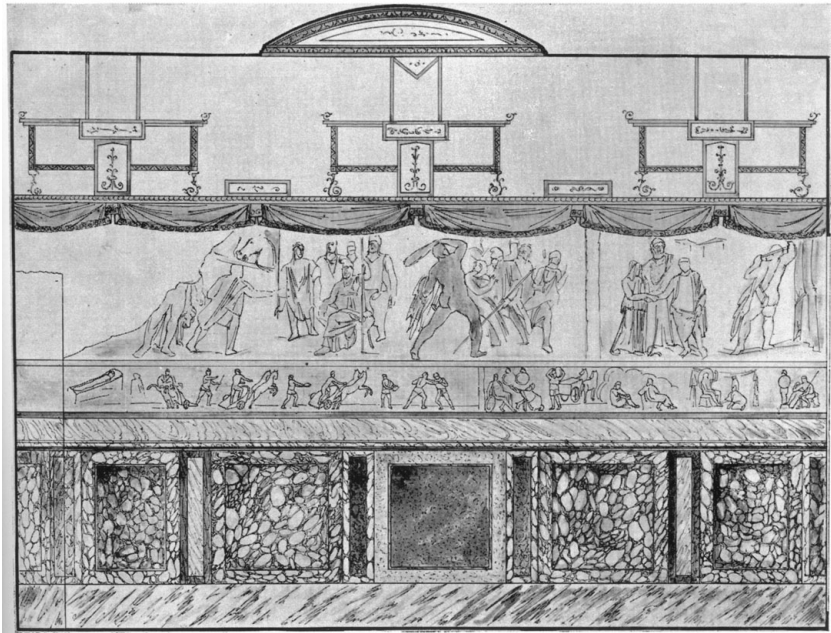
<sup>58</sup> In addition to their difference in height, the two friezes are characterized by different background colours and overarching compositional principles (see Lorenz 2013: 222–3): where the figures of the Iliadic frieze stand out against a dark background (which displays a particular interest in topography and landscape), the background of the Heracles frieze is markedly lighter, its overlapping figures arranged into more crowded groups.



**Figure 11.11** Photograph of the extant east wall of oecus h in the Casa di Octavius Quartio, Pompeii II.2.2, c. AD 70.

scholars have long noted that something odd happens along the east wall. If the scenes begin with the plague on the isolated section of south-west wall (between the room's two entrances), proceeding along to the south-east corner and then stretching onto the east side of the room, their order then suddenly shifts; if we wish to trace the 'order of Homer', we have to move from the east wall to the opposite western side (next to the room's western doorway). Following Homer consequently means coiling around the room in an s-shaped formation: the scenes originally start in an anticlockwise ring, before switching unexpectedly to form a clockwise arrangement on the west, north and east walls ([Figure 11.13](#)). As on the *Tabula Iliaca Capitolina*, where the first Iliadic book meets and connects with the last (alpha stretching to omega, bypassing the *grammata* in between: [Figures 11.1–11.3](#)), the east wall sees two different narrative moments collide: episodes from the ninth book of the *Iliad* (no. 5 in [Figure 11.13](#)) are placed next to those from Book 24 (nos. 13–14 in [Figure 11.13](#)), so that Priam's embassy to Achilles and recovery of Hector's body at the poem's close is juxtaposed alongside Phoenix's earlier embassy to Achilles.<sup>59</sup>

<sup>59</sup> Anglophone scholars have tended to underplay the complexities of this arrangement. Brilliant [1984](#): 61, for example, incorrectly supposes of the Iliadic and Heracles friezes that 'both narratives progress from left to right'. Mayer [2012](#): 199–202 likewise overlooks the challenges of



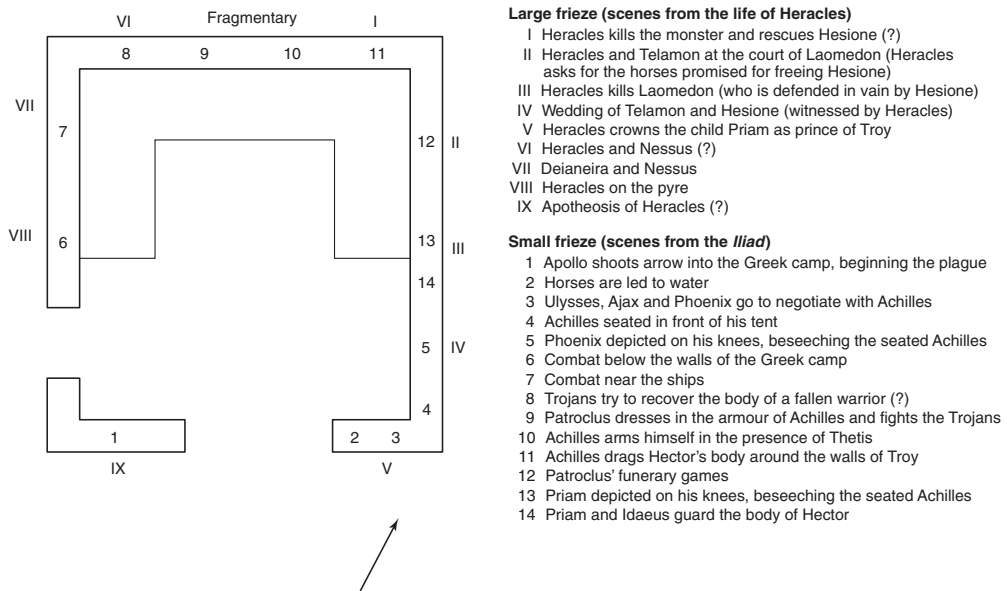
**Figure 11.12** Drawing of the same wall, showing the Heracles frieze above, and the smaller Iliadic frieze below. Progressing from left to right, the lower frieze shows first scenes from the end of the poem – the funerary games of Patroclus at the left, and the embassy to Achilles to the central right; the subjects then switch to earlier episodes – Phoenix beseeching Achilles, and Achilles sulking alone in his tent.

The fragmentary nature of the Heracleian subjects makes it somewhat more difficult to reconstruct the arrangement of scenes.<sup>60</sup> Following Jean-Michel Croisille's analysis, it appears likely that at least two separate (albeit connected) 'narrative cycles' are combined, the first dealing with Heracles' rescue of Hesione and the sack of Laomedon's Troy (running

visual order (and wrongly asserts that the Iliadic inscriptions are written in Greek, not Latin (202)). For Mayer, falling back on an anachronistic ideology of 'illustration', and championing the petite bourgeoisie of what he anachronistically labels Pompeian 'middle-class' tastes, the room's domestic decoration, 'shows a remarkable disinterest in telling a myth in anything resembling one of its literary versions' (203). When one actually *looks* at the imagery, though, there can be no doubting that it worked in markedly different – and yes, to our eyes much more sophisticated – ways.

<sup>60</sup> The east section of the Heracles frieze survives relatively well, as does the east end of the south frieze; by contrast, the north frieze and the west section of the south frieze are almost entirely lost and only fragments of the west frieze survive. The identifications and reconstructions in [Figure 11.13](#) largely follow those of [Coralini 2001](#): 78–81, 165–73, 249, no. P.038; needless to say, the iconography is not always as clear as my labelling descriptions suggest (especially on the west wall).





**Figure 11.13** Diagram showing the arrangement of scenes in the two lateral friezes of the Casa di Octavius Quartio oecus (largely following the identifications of Aurigemma 1953: 971–1027 and Coralini 2001: 165–73).

from the west end of the north wall, round the full length of the west wall, and then onto the south (labelled I–V in Figure 11.13)), the second treating Heracles' life with Deianeira and his subsequent death and apotheosis (running now from the east end of the north wall, along the east wall, and onto the south (labelled VI–IX in Figure 11.13)).<sup>61</sup> Once again, there can be no denying that the combined Heracleian cycles run in opposite directions: the Heracleian 'Trojan' scenes progress in clockwise order, whereas the Deianeira scenes run in an anti-clockwise arrangement.<sup>62</sup>

<sup>61</sup> Cf. Croisille 1985, with excellent summary (and further bibliography) in Coralini 2001: 165–73, no. P.038. Coralini may be right in suggesting that 'è possibile, quindi, che sulle pareti Est, Ovest e Nord fossero rappresentati tre cicli erculei fra loro indipendenti (a Est, il ciclo di Deianeira; a Ovest, il ciclo iliaco; a Nord, un ciclo non riconoscibile)' (168–9): the fragmentary nature of the north wall militates against any definitive conclusion (cf. Lorenz 2013: 229–34). For the (very) tentative association with the paintings by Artemon and Antiphilus set up in Rome's *Porticus Octaviae* (cf. Plin. *HN* 35.114, 139), see Schefold 1988: 196, Ritter 1995: 134–6, Coralini 2001: 165–6 and Lorenz 2013: 231–2.

<sup>62</sup> It is worth noting here that both the larger Heracleian and smaller Iliadic friezes seem to have been executed by the same hand as part of an integrated design: see Richardson 2000: 151 and Coralini 2001: esp. 172.

Untrained in Roman rhetoric, classical archaeologists have been quick to condemn the sequence of pictures in this oecus. Assuming that the scenes derive from (badly copied) 'illustrated manuscripts', Richard Brilliant declares that the 'scenes were readable only with a great deal of effort';<sup>63</sup> 'the sequence of episodes is illogically organised', adds Roger Ling, complaining that 'the heroic compositions have clearly been reproduced without a great deal of care or conviction'.<sup>64</sup>

But the problem here lies in scholarly assumptions of a single readerly order, with insufficient attention to the underlying rhetoric of *taxis* and *ordo*.<sup>65</sup> Like the *Tabulae Iliacae*, this painted room would seem to have audiences *re-viewing* the 'original' *taxis* of the *Iliad*. The challenge is not only to replicate the preserved Homeric narrative, but also to explore the sorts of analeptic and proleptic narrative for which Homer was so celebrated. Katharina Lorenz has recently championed a related point: that understanding Homer here means deconstructing as much as reconstructing Homeric narrative;<sup>66</sup> better, perhaps, the frieze caters to audiences who knew their Homer – and who quite literally knew it backwards. There is a rhetorical rationale to such arrangements. Just as rhetoricians championed the multidirectional narrative structures of Homeric poetry, the room challenges its viewers to rethink episodic connections – whether putting the scenes back into their Homeric *ordo*, or else

<sup>63</sup> Brilliant 1984: 60, proceeding to suggest 'an origin in illustrated manuscripts or picture books'. The 'illustration' hypothesis derives from Weitzmann 1959: 37–9 (although Weitzmann puzzlingly omits reference to this house, focusing instead on the Trojan frieze of the Casa del Criptoportico); it is developed in e.g. Maras 1999: 78–86. In my view, the whole language of 'illustration' here is hopelessly reductive.

<sup>64</sup> Ling 1991: 111–12. Cf. e.g. E. Thomas 1995: 114: 'Der Künstler hat die Reihenfolge der Szenen durcheinandergebracht, und die lateinischen Beischriften sind fehlerhaft. Darüber hinaus hat der Maler seine sicherlich griechisch-späthellenistischen Vorlagen auch im Hinblick auf Komposition und Figurenproportionen nur unvollkommen umgesetzt.' To label the spellings 'erroneous' is to put the point too strongly, and at least in first-century Pompeian terms, somewhat anachronistically: as the author elsewhere puts it, such Greek-influenced spellings more likely comprise 'ein deutlicher Hinweis auf die Herkunft der Maler' (E. Thomas 1995: 114); the only substantial 'error' – the repeated 'Badius' for 'Balios' (Aurigemma 1953: 993, 995) – is easily explained in terms of the similarity between the Greek letters lambda and delta (Aurigemma 1953: 1006–7).

<sup>65</sup> Nowhere more spectacularly, we might add, than in the original publication of the frieze (Aurigemma 1953), which reorders the fourteen extant scenes of the Iliadic frieze according to their chronological Homeric sequence rather than their spatial layout, while also downplaying the sequential relationships with the Heracleian frieze.

<sup>66</sup> See Lorenz 2013, comparing 1950s 'split-screen' cinema: 'the deconstructive power of the double frieze, while dismantling the narrative continuum of each individual frieze, produces new storylines and opens uncharted territory for metaphorical or allegorical viewing of what is on display' (242).



departing from Homer so as to compose stories in (still more) ‘Homeric mode’. Audiences, in short, are faced with a painterly puzzle, and one which taxes new modes of rhetorical panache: this exercise in narrative structure invites viewers to break free from both spatial and chronological ranks – to appreciate (even indeed potentially to try and outdo) the narratological complexity of Homer’s original.<sup>67</sup>

Once we recognize this conceptual framework, we see how the room exploits iconography as a rhetorical prompt of its own. Take, most strikingly, the east section of the Iliadic frieze (Figures 11.12–11.13). As we have said, a variety of events are depicted here, drawn from different parts of the *Iliad*. Proceeding from left to right, treating the frieze as though it were

<sup>67</sup> The complexity of this spatial arrangement finds other Pompeian parallels, including the panelled paintings that once adorned the Temple of Apollo portico (although today lost, Morelli’s nineteenth-century documentation gives some idea of the original presentation: cf. Schefold 1957: 192–3, along with PPM 7: 295–6, nos. 15 and PPM *Disegnatori* 112–13; it is probably too far-fetched to compare Theorus’ alleged paintings in Rome’s Portico of Philip, which Plin. *HN* 35.144 labels as depicting the ‘Trojan war in many panels’, *bellumque Iliacum pluribus tabulis*: cf. above, n.53). One remarkable – and remarkably overlooked – parallel, though, comes in the cavernous, covered corridor complex that gave its name to the Casa del Criptoportico, Pompeii I.6.2 (cf. Squire forthcoming; for the arrangement of scenes, see Spinazzola 1953: Tav. 87–9). Although only scattered fragments survive from the house’s cryptoporticus (Aurigemma 1953: 903–70 identifies twenty-five scenes from a supposed total of eighty-six), the space clearly brought together a number of epic events drawn not only from the *Iliad*, but also from the pre-Iliadic stories of the *Cypria* and post-Iliadic narratives of the *Aethiopis* (cf. Schefold 1975: 129). The ludic *taxis* distributes scenes in a cyclical order around the eight walls of the *u*-shaped cryptoporticus, with figures frequently (though not always) labelled in Greek: the strict sequence proceeds clockwise from Apollo’s plague (approximately midway along the west wall of the west wing), through, *inter alia*, Hector’s challenging of the Achaeans in *Iliad* 7 (on the north wall of the north wing), and on to the removal of Patroclus’ body in *Iliad* 17 (on the east and south walls of the east wing); at this stage, the scenes then turn back in on themselves on the opposite wall of the east wing, proceeding in what might be deemed an anti-clockwise motion, through Achilles’ return to battle (*Iliad* 20 and 21: west wall of the east wing), Patroclus’ funerary games (*Iliad* 23: south wall of the north wing), and finally on to the events of the *Aethiopis* (on the east wall of the west wing), reaching their cyclical climax on the south wall of the same western wing where we began, which gives pride of place to Aeneas’ departure from Troy (for the parallel pivotal centrality on several of the *Tabulae Iliacae*, see above, p. 361). Audiences had to navigate various obstacles along the way – not only windows and passageways, but also figurative herms directing their gaze. At any moment, moreover, viewers could look around them and see multiple scenes on multiple walls, themselves sometimes even pertaining to multiple different epics (or indeed, as sometimes seems to have been the case, to no specific textual precedents). Unlike the two continuous friezes in the oecus of the Casa di Octavius Quartio, the epic events were here serialized in separate juxtaposed panels. For all the unity of the whole, one was forced to put together the separate episodic components of the depicted *Iliad* (which Aristotle himself praises for its unified ‘many parts’, πολλὰ . . . μέρη, in the twenty-sixth chapter of the *Poetics*, 1462b); at the same time, following Aristotle’s example, the prompt might have been to relate the narrative fabric of the Homeric scenes to their non-Iliadic counterparts.

an unfolding papyrus scroll,<sup>68</sup> we first see the funerary games of Patroclus (the cadaver itself, a series of three charioteers – one interestingly proceeding right to left, reversing our flow of direction, the other two moving from left to right – and next to it a wrestling scene). Slowly but surely, around the wall's midpoint fulcrum, we subsequently arrive at the poem's final book: a pilaster segregates the left-hand scenes from the ones that follow (doubling up as a support for Achilles' tent), and we then find Priam on his knees before the seated Achilles (with Priam's gifts loaded in the cart to the right, and next to that Priam and Idaeus now guarding Hector's body).<sup>69</sup> Finally, towards the right-hand corner of the wall, are scenes from much earlier in the poem – Phoenix kneeling before Achilles, and then, at the frieze's southern edge, a further image of the seated and sulking Achilles.

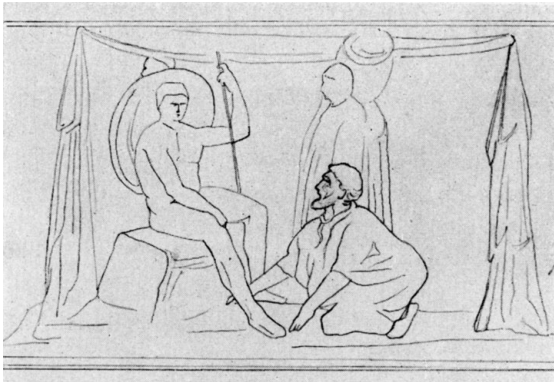
Approached iconographically, these combined scenes from *Iliad* 9 and 24 clearly recycle a shared visual formula (Figures 11.14–16). There are of course differences between the three images of the seated Achilles which occupy the right-hand section of the wall (the framing figures; the way in which the kneeling Phoenix lowers his hands, whereas Priam raises one in supplication; the position of Achilles' left hand – in his lap before Priam, but outstretched and supporting a spear before Phoenix, etc.). In each case, however, the same schema is to be found: a seated figure shown in three-quarter view. Where the pictures of Achilles receiving a suppliant have the hero face left to right (Figures 11.14–11.15), the corner image of the lone Achilles figures him gazing from right to left (Figure 11.16): in this mirror image, it is as though Achilles were looking forward (which is to say spatially backward) to the vision of his own parallel acts of looking at Priam and Phoenix. With one arm raised to his chin, the other supporting

<sup>68</sup> On the physical medium of the scroll and its historical importance for reading and conceptualizing Greek and Latin epic, see Haslam 2005: 150–7. For cycles of painting deliberately breaking such conventional linearity, cf. Bergmann 1994: 254 on the Casa del Poeta Tragico (Pompeii VI.8.3–5): 'The narrative program of the house thus transcends the necessarily linear reading of literary texts, a process that at the time was further restricted by the conventions of the papyrus roll', as Bergmann writes. 'A spectator could "rewrite" the story in a variety of ways simply by starting the viewing in different places and moving around and within rooms in different sequences'.

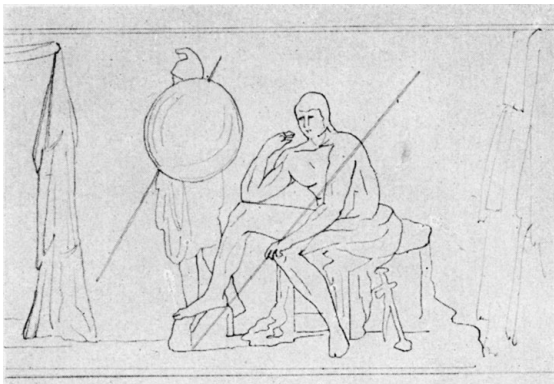
<sup>69</sup> That pilaster (to the left of no. 13 in Figure 11.13) amounts, of course, to a *false* sort of architectural interruption: the disjuncture between the two separate Iliadic books comes later (i.e. to the right) of the scene, and goes poignantly unmarked by any such architectural feature. One might also observe how the same lower-frieze pilaster is visually recalled by the one just to the upper right in the Heracles frieze above (which this time separates Heracles' killing of Laomedon from the subsequent wedding of Telamon and Hesione: nos. III and IV in Figure 11.13). As ever, the visual echo draws attention to a narratological mismatch between the lower and upper painted registers.



**Figure 11.14** Reconstruction drawing of Priam kneeling before the seated Achilles (= no. 13 in [Figure 11.13](#)), from the east wall of the Casa di Octavius Quartio oecus.



**Figure 11.15** Reconstruction drawing of Phoenix kneeling before the seated Achilles (= no. 5 in [Figure 11.13](#)), from the east wall of the Casa di Octavius Quartio oecus.



**Figure 11.16** Reconstruction drawing of the seated Achilles (= no. 4 in [Figure 11.13](#)), from the south end of the east wall of the Casa di Octavius Quartio oecus.

a spear (again reflecting the one held before Phoenix), Achilles sees these *two* critical speeches at once, sandwiched either side of the poem's silent climax (the landscape scene of Priam and Idæus: [Figure 11.13](#)). The visual arrangement invites audiences to read new narrative associations into the narrative text – to make innovative connections between the segregated books of the textual poem, which they may or may not previously have seen.<sup>70</sup> Just as the iconographic associations reopen the issue of the poem's closure, the cyclical spatial ordering of the frieze rules out any single straightforward conclusion.

The order of scenes proves provocative in another sense besides. For even when one settles upon an Iliadic *taxis/ordo*, this must in turn be reconciled with that of the Heracleian scenes above.<sup>71</sup> We have already said something about the difficulties of reconstructing this frieze. When it comes to subject matter, it is also impossible to know whether audiences might have had particular poetic precedents in mind: if, as seems likely, they did not, one of the rhetorical games must have lain in drawing out from the pictures an epic poem in 'Homeric mode'.<sup>72</sup> Regardless of that question, however, the artist or patron evidently delighted in a Heracleian arrangement of scenes which was at narrative odds with the Iliadic frieze depicted below. Spatially speaking, the Heracleian scenes appear to have begun in the opposite corner from those which pertain to the opening of the *Iliad*: they first snake around in clockwise direction, then swap back over to the same north wall on which they began, before proceeding in an anti-clockwise order until their chronological culmination at the room's south-east corner (where we see Heracles' apotheosis: [Figure 11.13](#), no. IX). Isolated by the doorways on either side of it, this 'floating' eastern section of the south wall constitutes at once a chronological beginning (for the

<sup>70</sup> Perhaps the scenes also prompted actual citation of the relevant Homeric passages, just as has been argued of other 'literary' paintings at Pompeii (cf. e.g. Bergmann 1994: 249; eadem 1999: 93). Alternatively, we might think that such images served as cues for *new* imagined speeches: following the rhetorical models of contemporary mythological *suasoriae*, one response might have been to refashion Phoenix's Homeric speech to Achilles – and thereby do better in persuading the protagonist to return to the battlefield. . .

<sup>71</sup> Cf. Lorenz 2013: 238–45 on the 'productively disturbing' effect (241).

<sup>72</sup> For the frieze's associations with 'Heracleian' epic tradition(s), see e.g. Croisille 1985: 93–6; for its relation to other extant paintings from Campania, see Lorenz 2013: 230–3 (with further bibliography). As on the *Tabulae Iliacae*, the semantics of size (whereby the Heracleian frieze is so much larger than the Iliadic) only adds to the interpretative challenge: in devising their new epic, could audiences come up with something 'greater' (in every sense) than the *Iliad* (for the trope – *nescio quid maius nascitur Iliade* – cf. Prop. 2.34.66)? For a 'Heracleian' *Tabula Iliaca*, and one with close formal resemblances to e.g. the *Tabula Capitolina*, see Cain 1989 and the discussions indexed in Squire 2011a: 406–7 (on Rome, Villa Albani, inv. 957).

Iliadic stories) and an end (for those pertaining to Heracles): depending on one's view – on which *taxis/ordo* one chooses to prioritize, no less than around which frieze one focalizes one's narratives – audiences are free to construct different frameworks for approaching the duo of cyclical scenes. There were various thematic connections to be made between the upper and lower cycles along the way, as is again most evident on the surviving east wall (Figure 11.12). For one thing, there is a common Trojan connection between these pictures of Heracles' vengeance on the Trojan king Laomedon (culminating in his the coronation of the young Priam) shown in the upper frieze and the events from the later Trojan War depicted below (with Priam, now an aged father, again taking a leading role). But there are some more specific connections too. Not for nothing, for instance, does the east wall set the *furor* of Heracles (attacking Laomedon) directly above the *clementia* of Achilles; similarly, we might observe how the repeated iconography of the seated Achilles is recalled in the image of the seated Laomedon (holding a sceptre) to the upper left, inviting further questions about the cyclical interconnectedness even between these two independent and segregated cycles.<sup>73</sup>

Whatever story viewers ended up telling of the Octavius Quartio oecus, rhetorical discourses of narrative order played a decisive role. As with the *Tabulae Iliacae*, the room monumentalizes questions about pictorial arrangement: it invites audiences to consider how visual responses relate to verbal readings of the poems depicted. Unlike the *Tabula Capitolina*, which allows audiences to handle (quite literally) the whole panorama of epic at once, the four walls of this oecus provide segregated snapshots. The arrangement of scenes across different walls – with obstacles and other distractions straddling the spaces in between – consequently makes for a different sort of viewing experience: where the diminutive size of the tablets places the order in the hands of the viewer, materializing an Aristotelian sort of *synopsis*, the oecus exploits literal movement as viewers pace back and forth across the room to survey its connected pictures.<sup>74</sup> But such structural differences only underscore the underlying semantic similarities. Putting the pictures into sequence, viewers of the oecus and *Tabulae* were prompted to devise new verbal orders: comparing and contrasting Homeric *taxis* with the order of other poems (whether pre-existing or impromptu),

<sup>73</sup> There is a good discussion by Coralini 2001: 172–3 (with further bibliography).

<sup>74</sup> For the stimulating argument that another cycle of 'Homeric' pictures knowingly incorporated such 'perambulatory' markers within its painterly frame, see O'Sullivan 2007 on the Esquiline 'Odyssey frieze', now developed by Petrain 2013: 149–52.

audiences gain new insights into how Homer outsizes (or indeed fails to outsize) his literary rivals in a rhetorical ranking of epic storytellings.

With this rhetorical backdrop in mind, I move now from images on verbal narratives to verbal narratives on images. As we have said, responses to the oecus of the Casa di Octavius Quartio, like those to the *Tabula Capitolina*, depended on the perspectives of individual viewers: they champion the audience's subjective freedom, whether in retelling old stories, or else in inventing new ones; in each case, the challenge lies in transforming a visual *ordo* (derived from the verbal *ordo* of verbal narratives) back into winning words. From this perspective, what is so revealing about contemporary Greek and Latin texts is that Roman writers played with this same rhetorical theme. A plethora of case studies could profitably be introduced here.<sup>75</sup> In the interests of my own structured argument, though, I focus on a single text, and one that draws on rhetorical discussions of Homeric order specifically: Virgil's *Aeneid*.

The Virgilian description of artworks has attracted a burgeoning bibliography in recent years.<sup>76</sup> Ekphrasis looms large in the *Aeneid*, with its varied poetic evocations of various visual objects: among the most famous are the descriptions of the Carthaginian temple reliefs (*Aen.* 1.453–93); the silver-gilt dishes (1.630–2); the embroidered cloak given to Cloanthus (5.250–57); the bronze doors made by Daedalus at Cumae (6.20–37); Latinus' cedar-wood statues (7.177–91); the shield of Turnus (7.789–92); the shield of Aeneas (8.626–728); and Pallas' sword-belt (10.495–505). In each case, scholars have shown how ekphrastic description enacts a narrative pause in which to rethink relations with epic (and other) literary forebears.<sup>77</sup> At the same time, ekphrasis has been said to forge an alternative image of the emerging principate: for some, Virgil's recourse to the narrative ambiguities of ekphrasis paint

<sup>75</sup> Among the most obvious is Catull. 64 (cf. Klingner 1964: 156–224; Fitzgerald 1995: 140–68; Theodorakopoulos 2000): within a poem that plays fast and loose with its own labyrinthine order, the poet has recourse to a central woven tapestry which pictorially figures the rhetorical (dis-)order of the epyllion at large. After a series of false starts, Catullus cuts to the wedding of Peleus and Thetis before spinning a yarn about a wedding tapestry featuring Ariadne: as an image, albeit one that talks (cf. Laird 1993), the tapestry allows the poet to proceed both backwards and forwards in time, weaving a narrative that reflects the at once analeptic and proleptic structure of the framing poetic artefact. Harrison 2001 provides a wider-ranging introduction to the proleptic functions of ekphrasis in both Greek and Latin poetry.

<sup>76</sup> Among the most important discussions are Boyd 1995; Barchiesi 1997; idem 2005a: 294–300; Bartsch 1998; Putnam 1998; idem 2001; Alden Smith 2005.

<sup>77</sup> The classic classicist discussion of these two poles of 'narrative' and 'description' is Fowler 1991.



a decidedly ambivalent (if not undecidedly bleak) picture of contemporary Augustan politics.<sup>78</sup>

In what follows, I focus on a different aspect: namely, Virgil's knowing and self-conscious manipulations of rhetorical order, within an epic that itself resonates with contemporary critical responses to earlier epic texts. With that aim in mind, we turn to just two passages: first the description of the temple reliefs at Carthage (*Aen.* 1.453–93), and second the evocation of Aeneas' shield (8.626–728). Like the material case studies so far examined, both descriptions have Homer very much in their sights: the first ekphrasis provides a particular sort of *synopsis*, focalized through the eyes of the poem's protagonist; the second, by contrast, turns to the *Iliad*'s own paradigmatic description of an artwork (in the eighteenth book), reforging the cosmic shield forged by the Homeric Hephaestus into a shield which depicts the whole history of Rome. If both descriptions raise questions about narrative order, they both expressly allude to the visual-cum-verbal rhetorical stakes, and precisely in terms that this chapter has discussed: just as the Carthaginian reliefs show 'Iliac/Iliadic battles in order' (*Iliacas ex ordine pugnas*, *Aen.* 1.456), so too is the shield said to depict 'battles fought in order' (*pugnataque in ordine bella*, *Aen.* 8.629).<sup>79</sup> In each case, the language of *ordo* taps into rhetorical discussions about structuring a story, applied here to the transformation of visual imagery back into verbal narrative.

As the *Aeneid*'s opening set-piece ekphrasis, the description of the Carthaginian reliefs provides an appropriate place to begin.<sup>80</sup> After arriving in Carthage and making his way towards the city, Aeneas stumbles across a grove in which a temple to Juno is being built, 'rich in gifts and the presence of the goddess' (*donis opulentum et numine diuae* 1.447). This

<sup>78</sup> Crucial here is Johnson 1976: 99–114. Cf. Boyle 1986, on the *Aeneid* as itself a literary form of the *pictura inanis* (*Aen.* 1.464): 'Like the works of art it entexts and the *oeuvre* to which it is bound, the *Aeneid* is a cogent illustration of the uselessness of the artist's perceptions: it is itself a *pictura inanis*' (176). More attuned to the equivocal functions of Virgilian ekphrasis is Bartsch 1998 ('What the thriving industry of the interpretations of the *Aeneid* demonstrates is the success of the artwork at producing differing and ambiguous interpretations, even those that undermine its overt message', 339).

<sup>79</sup> For the *ex ordine/in ordine* phrase, and other parallels in both Virgilian and post-Virgilian ekphrasis, see Ravenna 1974: 16–17.

<sup>80</sup> Among the many other discussions of the passage, my own readings have especially learned from Williams 1960; Johnson 1976: 99–105; Dubois 1982: 32–5; Clay 1988: esp. 201–3; Leach 1988: 311–8; Fowler 1991: 31–3; Lowenstam 1993; Barchiesi 1994: 114–24; Boyd 1995: esp. 76–84; Laird 1996: 87–94; Bartsch 1998: 326–9; Putnam 1998: 23–54; La Penna 2000; Beck 2007; Elsner 2007d: 79–82. For the argument that 'le "tavole iliache" sono il corrispettivo romano (e reale) del tempio di Cartagine', see Barchiesi 1994: 117; cf. Leach 1988: 321 and La Penna 2000: 3–4.

provides an occasion to recap the *Aeneid's* literary lineage. For somewhere on or near the temple – the precise location, like the medium, is left decidedly undecided<sup>81</sup> – is a series of panels relating to the Trojan War (1.453–65).

namque sub ingenti lustrat dum singula templo,  
 reginam opperiens, dum quae fortuna sit urbi  
 artificumque manus inter se operumque laborem 455  
 miratur, uidet Iliacas ex ordine pugnas,  
 bellaque iam fama totum uolgata per orbem,  
 Atridas Priamumque et saeuum ambobus Achillem.  
 constitit, et lacrimans 'quis iam locus' inquit 'Achate,  
 quae regio in terris nostri non plena laboris? 460  
 en Priamus! sunt hic etiam sua praemia laudi;  
 sunt lacrimae rerum et mentem mortalia tangunt.  
 solue metus; feret haec aliquam tibi fama salutem.'  
 sic ait, atque animum pictura pascit inani,  
 multa gemens, largoque umectat flumine uultum. 465

For standing beneath the huge temple Aeneas scans each individual object while he waits for the queen. As he marvels at the prosperity of the city, the respective handicraft of the artists, and the labour of their works, he sees the Iliac battles laid out in order and the wars whose fame had now spread across the whole world – the sons of Atreus and Priam and Achilles merciless to both. He stands still and weeps: 'What place is there now, Achates', he says, 'what land on earth that is not full of our labour? See, there is Priam! Even here does virtue have its due reward: events find their tears, and mortality touches the heart. Let go your fears: this fame will bring you some salvation!' So he speaks and feasts his mind on the empty picture with many a sigh, dampening his face in a stream of tears.

Virgil's image of epic protagonist weeping before his represented past is itself drawn from Homeric precedent. In the eighth book of the *Odyssey* (8.83–92, 521–30), Homer tells of Odysseus reduced to tears by Demodocus' song about Troy.<sup>82</sup> But the verbal mode of Homeric song is here reversed: the words which mediate Demodocus' epic song (within Homer's own sung epic) are translated into pictures – albeit pictures that Virgil knowingly turns

<sup>81</sup> Cf. Leach 1988: 312–13 (with earlier bibliography), concluding that 'Virgil assigns no position or form to the pictures' (p. 312); compare also Boyd 1995: 81–3.

<sup>82</sup> For the playful adaptation of Homeric precedent here, see e.g. Johnson 1976: 100–3; Putnam 1998: 47–54; Beck 2007: 540–6. The Virgilian intertext itself draws on the *Odyssey's* own interpoetic drawing on the *Iliad* (cf. Goldhill 1991: 52–4): 'as that intertext is specifically a written one', argues Laird 1996: 297 n.25, 'Virgil's substitution of a visual medium is all the more striking'.



back into epic words.<sup>83</sup> All this is stage-managed with a keen eye on the protagonist's own visual subjectivity. With each detail, we see not the scenes themselves, but rather Aeneas depicted in the act of seeing them, making collective verbal sense of the 'individual' (*singula*, v. 453) images displayed.

But what to make of the opening assurance of *ordo* – of seeing *Iliacas ex ordine pugnās* (*Aen.* 1.456)? As we have seen, this term came complete with a variety of rhetorical associations: the word resonated with analytical discussions of narrative arrangement in particular, implying a distinction between the chronologically derived structure of the *ordo naturalis* as opposed to the more artful arrangements of an *ordo artificialis*; that distinction, we have also said, was itself used to theorize the narratological distinctiveness of Homeric narrative in relation to the (more linear) storytelling techniques of other epic cyclical poets.<sup>84</sup> The critical backdrop has a special importance here. The pictures that Virgil evokes, after all, are themselves drawn from a miscellany of different epic poetic paradigms: just as the *Tabulae* combined different poems from the epic cycle, and just as the Octavius Quartio oecus brought together two wholly different epic subjects within its duo of cyclical friezes, the *Aeneid's* opening poetic ekphrasis describes pictures which themselves derive not only from the *Iliad*, but also from a cycle of other, non-Homeric texts.<sup>85</sup>

<sup>83</sup> In this connection, note how Virgil's very language blurs the boundaries between literary and artistic products: in line with a long-standing Greek and Latin pun (cf. Squire 2011a: 293, n. 147), 'the hands of the artists' (*artificumque manus*, v. 455) could refer simultaneously to pictorial and to literary handicraft, just as 'the toil of their works' (*operumque laborem*, v. 455) could at once pertain to visual and verbal artefacts (a pun further developed at v. 460, when Aeneas himself speaks of 'our labour' [*nostri . . . laboris*] before the image of Priam).

<sup>84</sup> One of the best discussions of the Virgilian phrase is Laird 1996. As Laird notes (297, n. 32), "Ex ordine" can mean three things: (i) the chronological order of the events themselves; (ii) the order in which they might appear in the depiction; (iii) the order in which Aeneas looks at them.'

<sup>85</sup> For the references to events from the *Cypria* and *Aethiopis*, as well as from the *Iliad*, see below, pp. 392–3. The self-consciousness with which Homeric poetry is here pitched against other epic cyclical treatments is all the more conspicuous in light of the wordplay at *Aen.* 1.457 (*bellaque iam fama totum uolgata per orbem*, 'and the wars whose fame had now spread across the whole world'), as Alessandro Barchiesi has suggested (Barchiesi 1994: 117–18; idem 1997: 273–4; cf. Hardie 2012: 142, 154–6). Given that *orbs* refers to a 'cyclical' shape, and that *uulgatum* seemingly echoes a literary critical evaluation of the 'epic cycle' as something trite or commonplace, Barchiesi argues that the line might equally be translated as 'wars made known through the whole Epic Cycle'. 'So the description of the scenes of the Trojan War', Barchiesi 1997: 273–4 concludes, 'acts as a foil for Virgilian poetics: Virgil will invent a new "Trojan" epic which will be about the foundation of a new order and the recuperation of the Greek legacy within a different culture . . . The new poem needs the Cyclic tradition, but it will not be simply a Roman continuation; it will confront the Cycle at an oblique angle'. In this connection, it is

The plurality of epic precedents evoked here makes Virgil's opening promise of *ordo* all the more intriguing. 'Ordo', Sulpicius Victor would later write, 'is when we run through events in individual narrative succession according to their natural pattern' (*ordo est, ut secundum textum naturalem singula persequamur*).<sup>86</sup> But if the opening précis promises a 'natural' chronological arrangement of scenes – κατὰ τάξιν, as it were – the subsequent description offers something wholly more artificial: in the same way that Aeneas instructs Priam to 'let go his fears' (*solue metus*, v. 463), so too does Aeneas' view of this imagery disband any impression of chronological linearity.<sup>87</sup> The precise number of pictures and events is left unclear:<sup>88</sup> the description is specifically vague about how many episodes are depicted (and about how each scene relates to every other).<sup>89</sup> Upon reading the description that follows, however, we see Aeneas' vision encompass a truly complex chronological span (1.466–93):

namque uidebat, uti bellantes Pergama circum  
 hac fugerent Graii, premeret Troiana iuuentus,  
 hac Phryges, instaret curru cristatus Achilles.  
 nec procul hinc Rhesi niueis tentoria uelis  
 adgnoscit lacrimans, primo quae prodita somno 470  
 Tydides multa uastabat caede cruentus,  
 ardentisque auertit equos in castra, prius quam  
 pabula gustassent Troiae Xanthumque bibissent.  
 parte alia fugiens amissis Troilus armis,  
 infelix puer atque impar congressus Achilli, 475  
 fertur equis, curruque haeret resupinus inani,  
 lora tenens tamen; huic ceruixque comaeque trahuntur

perhaps worth noting the parallel language of Horace's *Ars Poetica*, advising the would-be composer of the poetic advantages that come 'if you do not keep slowly circling the broad and beaten track' (*si | non circa uilem patulumque moraberis orbem*, *Ars P.* 31–2): given the *uilis* epithet, one might well understand the reference in terms not only of a circular space, but also of the epic cycle in particular (cf. Brink 1971: 210 ad loc.), thereby offering a direct analogy for the metapoetics of the Virgilian reference.

<sup>86</sup> Sulp. Vict. 14 (= Halm 1863: 320).

<sup>87</sup> For this meaning, see *OLD* s.v. *soluo*, 11b, citing e.g. Quint. *Inst. or.* 9.4.14 on 'breaking up and disarranging' (*soluat et turbet*) the order of a sentence, and above all Hor. *S.* 1.4.56–62.

<sup>88</sup> For different attempts to calculate the number, see Lowenstam 1993: 38, n. 4: Lowenstam himself reckons on 'six scenes', whereas Putnam 1998: 23–54 distinguishes 'eight'. As with the medium of the 'pictures', their precise number and division are left unclear: it all depends on the reader's own perspective on Aeneas' perspective.

<sup>89</sup> A handful of connective phrases are used – 'in one part', 'in another part', 'not far from here', etc. (*nec procul hunc*, v. 469; *parte alia*, v. 474; *interea*, v. 479; *quoque*, 488) – poignantly fusing the spatial dimensions of the imagery with the temporal dimensions of the associated narrative.

per terram, et uersa puluis inscribitur hasta.  
 interea ad templum non aequae Palladis ibant  
 crinibus Iliades passis peplumque ferebant, 480  
 suppliciter tristes et tunsae pectora palmis;  
 diua solo fixos oculos auersa tenebat.  
 ter circum Iliacos raptauerat Hectora muros,  
 exanimumque auro corpus uendebat Achilles.  
 tum uero ingentem gemitum dat pectore ab imo, 485  
 ut spolia, ut currus, utque ipsum corpus amici,  
 tendentemque manus Priamum conspexit inermis.  
 se quoque principibus permixtum adgnouit Achiuis,  
 Eoasque acies et nigri Memnonis arma.  
 ducit Amazonidum lunatis agmina peltis 490  
 Penthesilea furens, mediisque in milibus ardet,  
 aurea subnectens exsertae cingula mammae,  
 bellatrix, audetque uiris concurrere uirgo.

For he saw how, here at one point, the Greeks fled as they were fighting around Troy (the Trojan youth hard on their heels), and how, there at another, the Trojans fled, with plumed Achilles pressing them close in his chariot. Not far away, he recognizes through his tears the snowy-canvassed tents of Rhesus which, betrayed in their first sleep, the blood-stained son of Tydeus laid waste in a great massacre, turning his fiery horses away to his camp before they could have tasted Trojan fodder, or drunk from the river Xanthus. In another part is Troilus, his armour discarded in flight – unhappy boy, and unequally matched in battle with Achilles: he is dragged along by his horses, clinging face-up to the empty chariot, but still clasping the reins; his neck and hair trail along the ground, and the dust is inscribed with the reverse side of his spear. Meanwhile the Trojan women were passing along with their streaming hair to the temple of unjust Pallas Athena, carrying the sacred robe, mourning in suppliant guise and beating their breasts with their hands: with averted face the goddess kept her eyes fixed upon the ground. Three times had Achilles dragged Hector round the walls of Troy, and now he was selling the lifeless corpse for gold. Then indeed does Aeneas heave a deep groan from the depths of his heart as he caught sight of the spoils, the chariot, the very corpse of his friend, and Priam stretching out his unarmed hands. Himself, too, he recognized, in close combat with the Greek chiefs, and the Eastern ranks, and the armour of black Memnon. The raging Penthesilea leads the crescent-shielded ranks of Amazons, resplendent among her thousands; a golden girdle is fastened beneath her exposed breast, a female warrior – and one who dares, a maiden, to fight with men.

In formal terms, the description begins with a generalized battle between Greeks and Trojans (vv. 466–8); it then proceeds to list the exploits of

Diomedes (vv. 469–73), the death of Troilus (vv. 474–8), the supplications of the Trojan women (vv. 479–82), the ransom of Hector (vv. 483–7) and Aeneas' own exploits ('mixed in', *permixtum*, with the rest, vv. 488–9); the description finally concludes with Penthesilea and her female troop of fellow Amazons (vv. 490–3).

So how might readers have understood this professed narrative progression? Many of the described pictorial scenes have real-life visual comparanda, and audiences were no doubt intended to imagine visual parallels of the sort found on the *Tabulae* or reflected in extant paintings from Pompeii. From a literary perspective, however, what is so interesting about this particular constructed pictorial/poetic narrative is its knowing reworking of established narrative order. Although the reference to 'Trojan battles' (*Iliacas* . . . *pugnas*, 1.456) might be read as alluding to the *Iliad* specifically, the ensuing description nods to a host of both pre- and post-Iliadic subjects: the death of Troilus (vv. 474–8) refers to events treated in the *Cypria*, while the mention of both Penthesilea's arrival (vv. 490–3) and Memnon (v. 489) look forward to the plot of the *Aethiopis*. In recycling epic, this ekphrastic evocation poignantly shuffles the proper epic cyclical sequence: the pre-Iliadic death of Troilus (as told in the *Cypria*) is placed *between* the exploits of Diomedes in *Iliad* 10 and the dedication of the *peplos* in *Il.* 6.297–312;<sup>90</sup> moreover, those two framing events are themselves presented in reverse chronological order, first treating events from a later Iliadic book, and then alluding to those narrated earlier in the Homeric poem, so that this (text describing a) pictorial sequence departs from the strict narrative *taxis* of prescribed poetic precedent.<sup>91</sup> The pictures about which we read – or at least our

<sup>90</sup> Cf. Putnam 1998: 27: 'We are at the mercy of a master deployer of words who manipulates what we see by what we read, fomenting a conspiracy between the reading eye and the seeing eye and proving, at least for the ekphrastic moment, the complementarity between the dimensionality of tangible art and the spatial quality of writing . . . The fact that the episodes are out of chronological order . . . prepares the reader for divining that Virgil's purpose is more than the mere exposition of historical detail.' In this connection, one cannot help wonder about the recourse to the story of Achilles and Troilus: does it serve as a poignant stand-in for the (markedly *unheroic*) Iliadic story of Aeneas' own encounter with Achilles at *Il.* 20.156–352?

<sup>91</sup> The best discussion of the anachrony is La Penna 2000: esp. 4–7. La Penna observes an additional anomaly in the final scenes of the evoked pictures, which move from the *Iliad* to *Aethiopis*: from what we know of the poem, Penthesilea's arrival and death *preceded* its treatment of Memnon; here, though, that order is reversed, so that Memnon is mentioned before Penthesilea. Boyd 1995: 77 notes how such anachrony is also incorporated within the very frame of the ekphrastic description, thanks to Aeneas' opening evocation of (an image of) Priam: "'*En Priamus*", 461, announces a view of Priam not made available to the reader until line 487'.

picture of Aeneas ‘reading’ them – breaks the temporal logic prescribed by Homer, constructing a markedly more complex narrative image.<sup>92</sup>

Instead of speculating about the rationale of Virgil’s own particular pictorial-poetic arrangement, I want simply to suggest that order is here flagged as an issue to contemplate and ponder. In this connection, it is worth observing how later Roman readers explicitly worried about the disordered *ordo* of the Virgilian description. Take Servius’ fourth-century gloss. Commenting on the opening promise of *ordo* at 1.148 (*pugnataque ex ordine bella*), Servius attempted to explain the narratological anomalies in terms of Aeneas’ own visual idiosyncrasies, as brilliantly crafted by the poet.<sup>93</sup>

EX ORDINE: hoc loco ostendit omnem pugnam esse depictam, sed haec tantum dicit quae aut Diomedes gessit aut Achilles: per quod excusatur Aeneas, si est a fortibus uictus.

IN ORDER: He shows here that every battle has been depicted, but he talks about only those things which either Diomedes or Achilles did; in this way Aeneas is excused, if he has been conquered by strong enemies.

It is a remarkable comment, and one that duly recognizes the subjectivity of Aeneas’ purported view – the way in which the protagonist’s literal and metaphorical involvement in the represented action turns this ‘empty picture’ (*pictura inanis*, 1.464) into meaningful sequence.<sup>94</sup> When we look at the actual composition of the ekphrastic description, though, we see

<sup>92</sup> At the same time, of course, the ekphrasis’ complex imagery itself prefigures the narrative fabric of the new Roman epic in which it appears. Many of the pictorial narratives evoked foreshadow their corresponding poetic counterparts in the *Aeneid*: if Penthesilea anticipates both Dido (who enters immediately after Penthesilea’s description) and Camilla, Troilus foreshadows the figure of Pallas, and the raid of Achilles and Diomedes prefigures that of Nisus and Euryalus. One might also note the additional narrative frisson of framing the described pictures in terms of a Temple of Juno – the arch-nemesis of the *Aeneid*’s own protagonist.

<sup>93</sup> Serv. ad *Aen.* 1.456 (= Thilo and Hagen 1923–7: 1.148). Servius returned to the point later, in the context of a similar phrase describing the shield of Achilles (below, n. 102): for discussion, see Laird 1996: 90–1. By ‘Servius’, I of course mean the Servian corpus: ‘it is this nature of the comments rather than the identity of the commentator(s) which is of most interest’ (Laird 1996: 295, n. 12).

<sup>94</sup> On the paradox of the ‘empty’ picture – and Aeneas’ subsequent self-insertion into that poetic-pictorial void – see Porter 2004: 143; cf. Leach 1988: 318 (‘Vergil’s phrase “*animum pictura pascit inani*” aptly describes the cognitive process of Aeneas’ reading by which the emotions and knowledge brought into the text become the effective determinants of perception’). Revealingly, perhaps, another ‘empty’ image is said to feature even within such empty imagery: at v. 476, Troilus is said to be dragged along the ground, clinging to his ‘empty chariot’ (*curruque . . . inani*).

that something more is at stake: this explains not only the rhetorical arrangements within each described detail,<sup>95</sup> but also the knowing shifts in tense.<sup>96</sup> Virgil has the viewing Aeneas verbalize exactly the sorts of narratological games which we find monumentalized by contemporary visual artists. True to the kinds of ‘readings’ prompted by the *Tabulae Iliacae* and the Octavius Quartio oecus, Aeneas’ own view moves simultaneously backwards and forwards through time. There is an obvious metapoetic significance to such games of *taxis* or *ordo*: within an ekphrasis sketching the *Aeneid*’s own relation to a literary lineage, this description depicts Virgil himself departing from Homer while also thereby remaining true to the artificial *ordo* that characterizes the ‘Homeric mode’.<sup>97</sup>

<sup>95</sup> Putnam 1998: 27–38 nicely discusses Virgil’s various and varied means of rhetorical structure in the passage, ‘emanating from the tension which Virgil again builds between the seeing and the reading eye, between the multidimensionality of notional ekphrasis and the unforgiving drive of the narrative’ (30).

<sup>96</sup> The described images successively interweave past, present and future tenses, often even within the same evoked pictorial event – Achilles meeting Priam after he *had* dragged Hector’s body around Troy (pluperfect *raptauerat*, v. 482), for example, or Diomedes turning away his horses before they *would have* eaten or drunk (pluperfect subjunctive, *prius quam . . . gustassent . . . bibissent*, vv. 472–3). As Leach 1988: 317 writes, ‘the tenses of the verbs in this long *ekphrasis* have broken through the visual synchronicity of painted actions to trace a series of intellectual movements across time’.

It is worth observing how such games with temporal sequence are themselves inscribed into the poetic description framing the description of the pictures, not least at v. 466: almost as soon as he describes Aeneas’ reaction to the images in the *present* tense (*ait*, v. 464; *pascit*, v. 464; *umectat*, v. 465), the poet subsequently goes *backwards* in time so to explain the cause in the imperfect (‘for he was looking upon . . .’: *namque uidebat*, v. 466). The passage subsequently describes Aeneas’ own visions and actions in interwoven present and perfect tenses (*agnoscat*, v. 470; *ingentem gemitum dat*, v. 485 *conspexit*, v. 487). At the end of the description, the poet proceeds cyclically forward, having final recourse to the same present tense with which he began (vv. 494–5: *uidentur, stupet, haeret*). As Mack 1978 discusses, tenses always matter in the *Aeneid*. As ancient commentators themselves were well aware, however, tenses especially matter in the context of ekphrastic description: contrasting the use of past tenses in Virgil’s description of the shield of Aeneas with that of the present in the Homer ekphrasis of Achilles’ shield, Servius would comment upon the difference explicitly (ad *Aen.* 8.625 = Thilo and Hagen 1923–7: 2.285, with discussion by Laird 1996: 78–9).

<sup>97</sup> For the suggestion that the poetic narrative constructed from the imagery of earlier epic here foreshadows the unfolding events arranged in the *Aeneid*, see Lowenstam 1993: ‘The order of the Carthaginian reliefs is determined neither by the chronology of Trojan events nor by their treatment in Homer but by Vergil’s arrangement of the Italian War scenes to which the reliefs correspond’ (p. 43). Whatever we make of this particular ekphrasis and its relation to epic precedent, we can be sure that ancient commentators compared and contrasted the order of Virgilian epic with that of Homer: cf. e.g. Servius ad *Aen.* 1.34 (= Thilo and Hagen 1923–7: 1.25): ‘just as Homer left out the origins of the Trojan war, so too did this poet not begin with the start of his wanderings’ (*ut Homerus omisit initia belli Troiani, sic hic non ab initio coepit erroris* (with further parallels discussed by Mühlhelt 1965: 115–29)).

At this stage, let me move sequentially forward to a related ekphrastic description – Virgil’s famous evocation of a shield crafted for Aeneas by Vulcan (*Aen.* 8.626–728). Whereas Virgil’s description of the Carthaginian reliefs at once promises and denies sequential order (*Iliacas ex ordine pugnas*, *Aen.* 1.456), the description of Aeneas’ shield might seem to deliver on its opening summary of ‘battles fought in order’ (*pugnataque in ordine bella*, 8.629).<sup>98</sup> Once again, access to the shield is framed in terms of Aeneas’ response, with opening and closing descriptions of his ‘marvelling’ (vv. 617–18, 729–31; *miraturque*, v. 619; *miratur*, v. 730).<sup>99</sup> As at Carthage, the whole episode provides a narrative pause from the surrounding action of the poem: the scenic backdrop is a grove at Caere, where the hero and his weary followers ‘tend to their horses and their bodies’ (*fessique et equos et corpora curant*, v. 607).

If the earlier ekphrasis of Book 1 recast the Homeric song of Demodocus in the *Odyssey*, this latter ekphrastic shield-description has a still more prominent Homeric prototype in view: the *Aeneid* takes the Homeric description of Achilles’ shield (*Il.* 18.847–608) – the paradigm for all ancient writing about visual objects – and turns it into an outline for the future history of Rome, one that reaches its climax in Augustus (or more specifically, in Augustus’ triumph at Actium).<sup>100</sup> Unlike the earlier description at Carthage, the Virgilian evocation of Aeneas’ shield does adhere to an *ordo naturalis*. It forges a sequential (albeit highly selective) chronological narrative from the time of Ascanius to that of Augustus. The lineage of Aeneas’ descendants proves in line with the linearity of the ekphrastic narrative progression. In this latter case, however, the physical shape of the imagined object, radiating around

<sup>98</sup> Again, the passage has attracted a substantial bibliography: foundational is Hardie 1986: 337–76, although I have also learnt much from Griffith 1967–8; Binder 1971: 150–282; Johnson 1976: 99–114; DuBois 1982: 28–51, esp. 41–8; Gurval 1995: 209–47; Putnam 1998: 119–88 (with more detailed bibliography at 234, n. 1), Bartsch 1998: 327–9; Boyle 1999: 153–61; Faber 2000; Casali 2006.

<sup>99</sup> In this latter ekphrasis, though, the narrative description is also circumscribed with the would-be visual reactions of the reading audience, couched in unreal imperfect subjunctives (‘you would see’, *aspiceret*, v. 650; ‘you might look at’, *uideret*, v. 676; compare also *credas* at v. 691 – simultaneously serving as a future and present subjunctive).

<sup>100</sup> On the adoption and adaptation of Homeric precedent here – already discussed by Servius ad *Aen.* 8.625 (= Thilo and Hagen 1923–7: 2.285), with astute commentary by Laird 1996: 78–9 – see Putnam 1998: 167–80. The Homeric description of the Achillean shield gives only the barest impression of layout and composition (cf. Stanley 1993: 5–6 on the ‘five layers’, πέντε . . . πτύχες, mentioned at *Il.* 18.481): the Virgilian shield, by extension, at once replicates and exaggerates such vagueness. For my own views of the Homeric ‘original’ and its literary and artistic reception in antiquity, see Squire 2013b.

an imagined pictorial-poetic centre, shields it from too straight a view. As we shall see, the forward march of the poetic narrative jars with the imagined circularity of the visual artefact.<sup>101</sup> Once again, the description is informed by rhetorical discussions about narrative order on the one hand, and by the rhetorically informed games of contemporary Roman art on the other.

To explain what I mean here, we need to look more closely at the description itself. Like the opening ekphrasis of the Carthaginian reliefs, the evocation of the shield begins with a summary. The poet first treats the other gifts crafted by Vulcan: just as he responded to the Carthaginian reliefs (*lustrat dum singula*, *Aen.* 1.453), Aeneas is here said to ‘turn his eyes from one bit to the next’ (*oculos per singula uoluit*, 8.618). The poet then homes in on the shield specifically (vv. 617–29), framing the subsequent evocation in terms of the ‘battles fought in order’ (*pugnataque in ordine bella*, v.629):

ille deae donis et tanto laetus honore  
 expleri nequit atque oculos per singula uoluit,  
 miraturque interque manus et brachia uersat  
 terribilem cristis galeam flammisque uomentem, 620  
 fatiferumque ensem, loricam ex aere rigentem,  
 sanguineam, ingentem, qualis cum caerulea nubes  
 solis inardescit radiis longeque refulget;  
 tum leuis ocreas electro auroque recocto,  
 hastamque et clipei non enarrabile textum. 625  
 illic res Italas Romanorumque triumphos  
 haud uatum ignarus uenturique inscius aevi  
 fecerat ignipotens, illic genus omne futurae  
 stirpis ab Ascanio pugnataque in ordine bella.

Aeneas rejoices in the gifts of the goddess and in so great an honour: he cannot sate himself, but instead turns his eyes from one thing to the next and marvels. He turns in his hands and arms first the helmet that terrifies with its plumes and which spouts out flames; next comes the death-dealing sword, and the corselet stiff with bronze and as huge and blood-red as when a dark cloud is kindled by the rays of the sun and shines in the distance; next come the greaves polished and smooth with electrum and refined gold, and the spear, and the non-narratable fabric of the shield. There the god of fire had fashioned the deeds of Italy and the triumphs of the Romans, not unaware of the prophets nor unknowing of the age to come;

<sup>101</sup> Putnam 1998: 122 foreshadows the point in miniature: ‘the historical linearity of the shield’s contents finds its counterpoise in the circularity of its shape’; cf. *ibid.* 154–5.



there he had fashioned the whole lineage of future generations from Ascanius onwards and the wars fought, all laid out in order.

In his commentary on these lines, Servius was once again struck by the promise of *ordo*, noting the shared language that connects the shield description with the earlier evocation of the Carthaginian reliefs. After drawing attention to the opening image of the shield's non-narratability (*clipei non enarrabile textum*, v. 625), Servius supposes that the phrase *in ordine* might this time be explained with reference to the poet's own narrative selectivity: whereas Virgil had previously told how Aeneas saw the battles *ex ordine* (but did not recount them all), it is the *poet* who is now deemed to have selected the scenes for his reading audience.<sup>102</sup>

Whatever we make of Servius' explanation, there is a fundamental difference in how this latter ekphrasis goes about structuring its narrative description. In contrast to the Carthaginian temple ekphrasis, the shield description adheres much more closely to the *ordo* of strict chronology, at least to begin with: as Philip Hardie has shown, the evocation is structured around a historical (almost annalistic) framework that creates 'an impression of growth and expansion on both the historical and the cosmic levels'.<sup>103</sup> In this sense, the shield's chronological lineage 'from Ascanius' (*ab Ascanio*, v. 629)<sup>104</sup> recalls the 'images of ancient ancestors in order' assembled at Latinus' palace in Book 7 (*ueterum effigies ex ordine auorum*, 7.177), or

<sup>102</sup> See Serv. ad *Aen.* 8.625 (= Thilo and Hagen 1923–7: 2.285): 'NON ENARRABILE TEXTVM: "non-narratable" is well put, for although Virgil wants Roman history to be described complete on the shield (in saying "the whole lineage of future generations from Ascanius onwards and the wars fought, all laid out in order"), he nonetheless records just a few of them selectively (just as when, in the first book, he talks about Aeneas "seeing the Iliac battles in order", but did not describe them in their entirety)' (*NON ENARRABILE TEXTVM: bene 'non enarrabile': cum enim in clipeo omnem Romanam historiam uelit esse descriptam dicendo 'illic genus omne futurae | stirpis ab Ascanio pugnataque in ordine bella', carptim tamen pauca commemorat, sicut in primo ait 'uidet Iliacas ex ordine pugnas' nec tamen uniuersa descriptit*). For discussion, see Laird 1996: 78–9.

<sup>103</sup> Hardie 1986: 347, adding that 'chronological order is strictly adhered to in the following scenes'; cf. idem 1998: 97: 'The Shield of Aeneas presents itself as a visual summary of the Latin epic tradition, and of Ennius' *Annals* in particular'. For the Ennian link, cf. Servius ad *Aen.* 8.631 (= Thilo and Hagen 1923–7: 2.286: 'This whole section is of course Ennian', *sane totus hic locus Ennianus est*; cf. Putnam 1998: 180–1). Barchiesi 1997: 275 is probably right to see a metapoetic significance at work here: 'the reuse of Greek epic in the Carthaginian ekphrasis is in accordance with the poetics of the *Aeneid*, while the appropriation of Ennius and traditional Roman epic in the ekphrasis of the shield reflects a kind of antagonistic poetics, a road not taken'.

<sup>104</sup> Servius duly recognized the linear progression: commenting on the words *stirpis ab Ascanio* (v. 829), Servius adds the words *usque ad Augustum Caesarem* ('up to Augustus Caesar': Thilo and Hagen 1923–7: 2.285).

indeed the ancestral sequence in which Anchises recounts the future of Rome at the end of Book 6 (*longo ordine*, 6.754).<sup>105</sup> We are dealing, it seems, less with a shield than with a literal and metaphorical timeline: the narrative proceeds from the she-wolf (vv. 630–4), through the rape of the Sabine women (vv. 635–41), the kings of Rome (vv. 642–5), the foundations of the Republic (vv. 646–51) and the Gallic invasion of the fourth century (vv. 652–62), and on finally to the various upheavals of the first century BC (vv. 666–70).

But things are somewhat more complex than any such ‘timeline’ might suggest. For Virgil narrates this forward chronological march only to spin a subsequent narratological twist. Once again, the described arrangement of different scenes collapses divisions of space and time (‘not far from here’, ‘after this’, ‘not far from there’, ‘next to this’, ‘among them’, etc.: *illic nec procul hinc*, v. 635; *post idem*, v. 639; *haud procul inde*, v. 642; *hinc procul*, v. 666; *haec inter*, v. 671). In this case, though, the shield’s linear lineage leads not only to a teleological and chronological conclusion, but also to a metaphorical and literal *mid*-point; as a result, the description proceeds to take its reading audience quite literally *in medias res*. While the narrative description reaches its climax in the battle of Actium in 31 BC, this culmination of the action – which accounts for just over half its total length (vv. 675–728) – is reserved for the professed *centre* of the visualized shield (vv. 675–7):<sup>106</sup>

in medio classis aeratas, Actia bella,  
cernere erat, totumque instructo Marte uideres  
feruere Leucaten auroque effulgere fluctus.

<sup>105</sup> Compare also *Aen.* 7.177–8: ‘and there also are images of their ancestral forefathers, in order and made of ancient cedar wood’, *quin etiam ueterum effigies ex ordine auorum | antiqua e cedro*.

<sup>106</sup> The stichometric symmetry of both object and description is hugely important, as R. Thomas 1983: 178–9 first analysed (‘Virgil created the practice of referring to the medial item in the middle of the actual description, and . . . this practice establishes an approximation between the work of art and the poem in which it appears’, 179). Thomas compares the centre-point of the Carthaginian ekphrasis, highlighting the possible significance of the central robe (*Aen.* 1.479–81: ‘at the centre of the murals we find a work of art within a work of art within a poem’, 184), as well as the significance of the centre in the cups described by Menalcas and Damoetas in Virgil’s third *Eclogue* (*in medio*: *Ecl.* 3.40, 3.46 – the first occurring midway through Menalcas’ description, the second capping it by occupying ‘the medial caesura in the central line of his five-line response’, 178). In the case of Aeneas’ shield, the total description is 103 lines long (vv. 626–728), meaning that the text’s own midpoint corresponds to that of the switch to Actium ‘in the middle’ (midway through v. 677). We might add that the actual centre in fact comes midway through the glow and gleams of v. 8.677 – which in turn gives way to Augustus’ debut appearance in the following verse. On the broader rhetorical significance of such number-counting, see Whitton forthcoming.

In the middle the bronze fleets battling at Actium were to be seen, and you would see all of Leucate aglow with the War that had been drawn up and the waves shining out in gold.

In line with what Quintilian termed the *ordo artificialis* – leaving it to orators to decide ‘when to begin at the beginning and when in the manner of Homer, to start in the middle or at the end’ – this description, which so knowingly responds to Homeric precedent, comes to a Homeric head in the middle.<sup>107</sup> There can be no doubting Virgil’s rhetorical self-awareness here.<sup>108</sup> Indeed, the lines immediately preceding the Actium description offer their own cyclical reminder: where Homer situated the Ocean around the circling rim of the Achillean shield, repeating the detail at the description’s beginning and end (so that the verbal ring-composition figures the shield’s own visual rim), Virgil relocates the sea from the shield’s periphery to its centre;<sup>109</sup> the ‘likeness of the swelling sea’ (*tumidi . . . mari . . . imago*) consequently forms a mid-way transition from the *ordo naturalis* which opens the description to Virgil’s closing account of Actium.<sup>110</sup> The overarching impression is of words straightening out the circular form of the imagined shield (and, vice versa, of the imagined shield restructuring

<sup>107</sup> At the same time, the structure of this mid-point vignette may be said to recall that of the description as a whole. The *Actia bella* at v. 675 resonate to the sound of the *pugnataque in ordine bella* at *Aen.* 8.629. In a striking structural recession, moreover, the ‘conquered peoples who move in a long line’ (*incedunt uictae longo ordine gentes*, v. 722) themselves recall the opening claim concerning battles laid out *in ordine*; similarly, at the close of this central description, Cleopatra is herself finally situated ‘in the midst’ of it (*in mediis*, v. 696), just as, immediately after her, Mars too is said to be ‘storming in the middle of battle’ (*saeuit medio in certamine Mauors*, v. 700). Was there ever a poet who played so self-consciously with the *ordo* of ekphrastic arrangement?

<sup>108</sup> Not least in the Virgilian detail that the image of Manlius attacking the Capitol was itself situated ‘at the top’ (*in summo*, 652): as Servius implies (= Thilo and Hagen 1923–7: 2.293), this can at once refer to the ‘high part of the shield’ (*in summa clipei parte*), and to the Capitoline hill itself. For Servius, all this testifies to the ‘good rationale used for distributing appropriate places for everything in the picture’ (*et bona ratione utitur in pictura apta unicuique rei loca distribuens*).

<sup>109</sup> For the Homeric rendering of the Ocean around the Achillean shield’s rim (*Il.* 18.843–9, 607–8), and its material literalization on an inscribed object more or less contemporary with the Virgilian description, see Squire 2012: 13–15, along more generally with Squire 2011a: 303–70.

<sup>110</sup> The detail of the dolphins laid out cyclically ‘around’ the sea (*circum*, v. 673), with their tails curved into a circle (*in orbem*, v. 674), serves to curve the linearity of the description, while of course symbolically looking forwards to the ensuing central description of a battle at sea. According to this interpretation, *in medio* could refer simultaneously to the middles both of the ‘shield’ and of the ‘sea’ (a reading foreshadowed by Serv. ad *Aen.* 6.675, = Thilo and Hagen 1923–7: 2.298: ‘whether of the shield or of the sea’, *utrum clipeo an mari*; cf. R. Thomas 1983: 179).

the words ringing round it): this verbal engagement with an image – which in turn engages full cycle with a text on the images of Achilles' shield, citing Homer's prototypical text as much as the sight of Aeneas' shield itself – toys not only with the rhetoric of narrative order, but also with how words order things similarly to and differently from images.<sup>111</sup>

There is much more to say about these two passages. In introducing both descriptions, and analysing them alongside contemporary material counterparts, however, my aim is to demonstrate the common rhetorical framework that binds works of art to poetry and works of poetry to art. Where contemporary artists used various devices to raise questions about the rhetoric of order – to get viewers thinking about how to turn images on words back into words on images – Virgil reverses the process, exploring now through the medium of language the rhetorical views that poetic narrative can (and cannot) impose on pictures. In both Virgilian epic ekphrases, the artwork serves as a sort of narratological time-machine, relating the present story both to the past (in the case of the Carthaginian reliefs) and to the future pasts as seen from the reader's own present perspective (in the case of Aeneas' shield, itself destined to defend the hero in the poem's subsequent battles). In this sense, the differences between the two passages prove as revealing as their similarities. With the ekphrasis of the Carthaginian reliefs, Virgil has Aeneas himself invert the rhetorical promise of *ordo*: whatever images we imagine, Aeneas' subjective perusal moves both backwards and forwards in time (in turn envisioning something about the *Aeneid*'s own narrative line, as well as its literary lineage). With the shield description, by contrast, the linear *ordo* of the verbal narrative appears irreconcilable with its imagined figurative form: just as artists manipulated spatial composition to ask how visually and verbally derived narratives relate to one another, our poet verbalizes a monumental disjuncture between the linearity of verbal narrative and the non-linearity of professed visual object.

Before leaving Virgil, I allow myself one final *digressus*. *Ordo* is of course a term used throughout the *Aeneid*, and with a due range of meanings – to denote military 'rank' (e.g. *ordine* 7.152) and retinue (e.g. *ordo* 11.94), for example, a line of chieftains (*longo ordine*, 7.482), as well as a mode of

<sup>111</sup> All this, moreover, within a narrative description that begins by knowingly stating and describing the shield's own ineffable fabric (*clipei non enarrabile textum*, v. 625 – the prefix of the term *enarrabile* at once translating and negating the terminology of 'ekphrasis' as 'a speaking out': Squire 2011a: 329, n. 60); within a narrative description, too, which is itself artistically forged around the dual poles of being 'not ignorant' and 'ignorant' (*haud ignarus*, v. 627; *ignarus*, v. 730) about the imagery and its described interpretative significance.

sequential spoken narrative (*remque ordine pando*, 3.179). Not for nothing, though, does the word feature in the poet's most explicit and programmatic discussion of the *Aeneid*'s own epic arrangement (7.37–45):

nunc age, qui reges, Erato, quae tempora, rerum  
 quis Latio antiquo fuerit status, aduena classem  
 cum primum Ausoniis exercitus appulit oris,  
 expediam, et primae reuocabo exordia pugnae. 40  
 tu uatem, tu, diua, mone. dicam horrida bella,  
 dicam acies actosque animis in funera reges,  
 Tyrrhenamque manum totamque sub arma coactam  
 Hesperiam. maior rerum mihi nascitur ordo,  
 maius opus moueo. 45

Come now, Erato: who were the kings, what the times, what the state of affairs in ancient Latium when the foreign army first landed its fleet on Ausonian shores – these are the things I shall disclose, and I shall recall how the first fighting began. And you, goddess, instruct your bard! I shall speak of grim wars, I shall speak of pitched battle and princes driven to their deaths through their proud spirits, and of a Tyrrhenian troop and all Hesperia mustered under arms. A greater sequence of events [*rerum . . . ordo*] opens up before me – it is a greater enterprise that I now begin.

Here we see – which is to say read<sup>112</sup> – how the rhetoric of *ordo* structures both words and pictures alike. Just as *ordo* proves critical to the Virgilian ekphrastic project of forging poem after picture (itself derived from poetry. . .), the same rhetoric is here applied to Virgil's poetic project as a whole. We are back with literal space – the spatial arrangements of *ordo*, as evoked in the contexts of ekphrastic description – being used metaphorically to structure Virgil's own rhetorical arrangements of words: the rhetoric of *ordo* proves fundamental not only to conceptualizing pictures on poems, but also to structuring (our views of) the poem as crafted literary *opus*.

## End: the orderings of memory

Up to this point in my ordered argument, the aim of this chapter has been to demonstrate just some of the ways in which Roman rhetoric mediated

<sup>112</sup> Ancient readers were well versed in the pun, as is clear from Servius' gloss on the verb *perlegere*, describing it as synonymous with *perspectare* in his commentary of *Aen.* 6.34 (= Thilo and Hagen 1923–7: 2.11). The choice of word is not incongruous, Servius continues, since in Greek γράψαι may be said to mean both 'to paint' and 'to write' (*cum Graece γράψαι et pingere dicatur et scribere*).

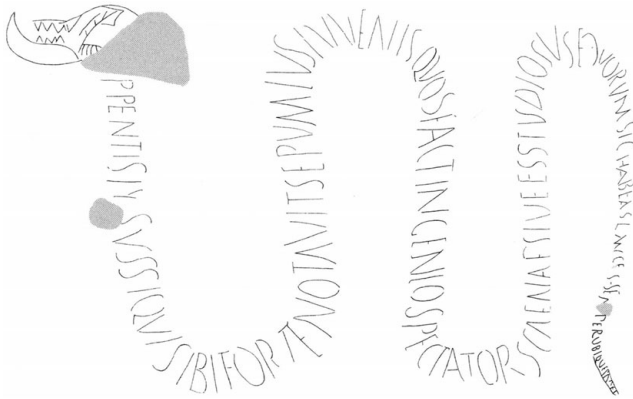
the production and reception of art and poetry: the remarkably visual means of theorizing narrative order among ancient rhetoricians on the one hand, and the resoundingly rhetorical means in which such spatial metaphors were employed among contemporary artists and poets on the other.<sup>113</sup> We have focused on artistic and literary retellings of Homeric epic, although we might equally have cast a wider net, looking to both the Roman and Hellenistic worlds. One way of approaching the Greek ‘picture-poems’ (so-called *technopaegnia*) of Simmias and others from the third century BC onwards, for instance, would be to view them as literal games with *taxis*, whereby Hellenistic and imperial Greek epigrammatists varied the lengths of their poetic verses so as to visualize the objects to which they verbally allude.<sup>114</sup> Certain neoteric Latin poets attempted something similar,<sup>115</sup> just as Roman graffiti likewise explored how the order of writing corresponded with the themes of their written-about subjects – in the context of two suitably ludic serpentine couplets on ‘snake games’, for example (Figure 11.17).<sup>116</sup> Somewhat later, in the early fourth century AD, P. Optatian Porphyry would exploit related conceits in the context of his own patterned ‘wordsearch’ hexameter poems. Whereas Virgil had explored the respective ways in which words and images arrange their subjects, Optatian would use the order of his words to figure emblems among his figurative texts, encrypting metrical text-embedded figures even *within* his literary *opera* (e.g. Figure 11.18): in

<sup>113</sup> For a related point, compare Baroin 2005: 199: ‘La vue et, en même temps, la vision d’images mentales joint donc dans le contexte oratoire un rôle fondamental’. Orders of ‘mental images’, I would only add, are themselves shaped by actual practices of contemporary visual cultural display.

<sup>114</sup> See AP 15.21–2, 24–7. The best discussion is Luz 2008, developed in eadem 2010: 327–53; cf. e.g. Wojaczek 1969: 67–126; Ernst 1991: 54–94; Poltke 2005; Männlein-Robert 2007b: 140–54; Squire 2011a: esp. 230–6 (with further bibliography); Pappas 2013. On Simmias’ poems specifically, see Strodel 2002: 158–262. With two of Simmias’ epigrams (AP 15.22, 27), the visual presentation of the poetic text was itself out of harmony with the verbal arrangement of verses: each poem seems to have made verbal sense only when its visual *taxis* was unscrambled, with the result that readers had to tackle first the opening line, then the final verse, followed by the second line and the penultimate verse, etc. Alternatively, as Christine Luz argues, perhaps the exercise worked in reverse order, so that the challenge was to ‘figure out’ (quite literally) the shape of the picture from the poetic clues (Luz 2008: 23: ‘Der Leser muss also, wenn er das Gedicht in der Figur lesen will, mit den Augen auf- und niederspringen, und kommt am Schluss der Lektüre in der Mitte des Textkörpers an’).

<sup>115</sup> Cf. Morel 1963: 60–1, fr. 22 (a picture-poem by Laevius), with discussion by Ernst 1991: 95–6.

<sup>116</sup> Figure 11.17 is taken from CIL 4.1595 (= CLE 927): for discussion, see e.g. Wojaczek 1988: 248–52, Ernst 2002: 232–3 and Kruschwitz 2008: 256–7, along with Langner 2001: 27–9 and Clarke 2007: 44–9 for related examples. More generally on the ‘propensity among the Romans to intensify the constraints upon writing beyond what is needed for the communication of speech’, one might consult the excellent discussion of Habinek 2009 (quotation from p. 136).



**Figure 11.17** Latin graffito in the image of a snake, from Pompeii IV.5. The text consists of two couplets, and each line begins with a sibilantly serpentine ‘s’ (siding both sight and sound with the snaky subject): *[Ser]pentis lusus si qui sibi forte notauit, | Sepumius iuuenis quos fac(it) ingenio, | Spectator scaenae siue es studiosus e[q]uorum: | Sic habeas [lanc]es se[mp]er ubiq[ue] pares* (‘If anyone has by chance noticed the snaking games which the young Sepumius skilfully makes, may you always – wherever you are, whether a spectator of the theatre or fond of horses – maintain your impartiality’).

doing so, Optatian literalizes – which is to say quite literally depicts – the Horatian poetic figure of *ut pictura poesis*.<sup>117</sup> Erudite games like these only work in a cultural context highly attuned to both the visual properties of words and the verbal properties of images. Rhetoric, I have argued, was instrumental in fostering such inter-medial connections.

<sup>117</sup> For an edition with commentary, see Polara 1973, together with idem 2004 for an Italian translation; for discussions, see Levitan 1985, Polara 1987, Ernst 1991: 95–142, Bruhat 1999, Rühl 2006, Hernández Lobato 2012: esp. 307–11, 471–9, and Squire 2014 (with more detailed guide to bibliography). Figure 11.18 shows a folio from a sixteenth-century edition of Optatian’s poems: within the figurative fabric of this Latin hexameter poem (which consists of thirty-eight hexameter lines), a number of hidden messages and verses are marked out, with each lettered grid highlighted in yellow; these verses themselves make up the figurative lines of a picture – including not only further letters (VOT and XX), but also the outline of a ship, complete with a stern (at the right-hand side), prow (at the left, with what might be understood as a ramming spike below), as well as tiller, rudder and three oars down below. In the middle of the ship can be found the schematic outline of a mast, in turn emblazoned with a *chi–rho* monogram (doubling up as a make-believe sail). When converted into their Greek figurative equivalents, the Latin letters of this *chi–rho*, which continue into the tiller and rudder below, make up an additional elegiac couplet, and one that translates the picture of the present poem back into invisible allegory: τὴν ναῦν δεῖ κόσμον, σὲ δὲ ἄρμενον εἶνι νομίζειν | θούροις τεινόμενον σῆς ἀρετῆς ἀνέμοις (‘one must think that the ship is the world, and that you are the hoisted rigging, tautened by the strong winds of your virtue’).







In the third and final part of this essay I turn to one explicit way in which Roman rhetoric theorized the relations between visual and verbal modes of arrangement: namely, in their discussions of memory and mnemonics. While advocating particular systems for remembering a speech, Roman rhetoricians expressly comment on how sequences of visual imagery might be used to remember structured sequences of ideas and words. As we shall see, these discussions are founded upon a supposed parity between ordering words and images. At the same time, though, the same rhetoricians recognized the problems of reducing words to images (no less than of converting images back into ordered words). By explicitly theorizing the disjuncture between visual and verbal modes of ordering, and in the express context of oratorical training, Roman rhetorical analyses of memory give voice to precisely the themes discussed in relation to the production of Roman images on narrative texts on the one hand, and of Roman narrative texts describing hypothetical images on the other.<sup>118</sup>

There are three detailed extant Roman discussions of rhetorical memory, and each discusses the relation of mnemonics to the spatial arrangements of visual imagery. The earliest is by the anonymous author of the *Ad Herennium* (3.16.28–24.40), with Cicero and Quintilian subsequently delivering their own advice to the would-be orator (*De or.* 2.86.350–88.360; *Inst. or.* 11.2.1–51).<sup>119</sup> In each case, memory is understood as a fundamental part of a rhetorician's education: not only is it the 'treasury of inventions' (*thesaurus inuentorum*), as the *Ad Herennium* puts it, memory is also the 'guardian of all parts of rhetoric' (*omnium partium rhetoricae custodem*, *Ad Her.* 3.16.28).<sup>120</sup> The precise derivation of these ideas is debated.<sup>121</sup>

<sup>118</sup> The most influential discussion of Roman memory remains Yates 1966: esp. 1–26; more sensitive to the cultural and ideological stakes is Baroin 2010: esp. 202–30. I have also benefited from the following additional analyses: Blum 1969; Rouveret 1982; eadem 1989: 303–79; Carruthers 1990: esp. 71–5; eadem 1998; Coleman 1992: esp. 39–59; Elsner 1995: 76–80; Small 1997: esp. 81–137 (much of it reprised in eadem 2007); Rodríguez Mayorgas 2007; Baroin 2007.

<sup>119</sup> Among the most explicit discussions of memory's role within rhetoric is Cic. *De inv.* 1.7.9, defining the five parts of rhetoric as 'invention', 'disposition', 'elocution', 'memory' and 'pronunciation': cf. Yates 1966: 8–9, Baroin 2007: 149–50, eadem 2010: 214–15. As Baroin 2010: 16 concludes, 'ces *artes* occupent une place centrale dans l'art oratoire et même dans la culture en général'.

<sup>120</sup> For the image of memory as *thesaurus eloquentiae*, cf. Quint. *Inst. or.* 11.2.1 and Cic. *De or.* 1.5.18; on the enduring legacy of the metaphor within the western cultural imagination, see Carruthers 1990: 33–45. The image goes back at least to the Stoics, but the recourse to a building paradigm seems especially appropriate given the associated concern with segregated architectural spaces.

<sup>121</sup> Among the most detailed attempts to reconstruct that derivation is Blum 1969: 38–149.

By at least the first century BC, however, it was customary to associate the origins of mnemonic training with the Archaic poet Simonides. Cicero and Quintilian preserve the same essential story: after escaping from a building that subsequently collapsed, killing and disfiguring all those contained within it, Simonides alone was able to remember the seating arrangement. By identifying the corpses, Simonides also identified a new mode of memorizing and remembering details (Cic. *De or.* 2.86.353–4):<sup>122</sup>

Simonides dicitur ex eo, quod meminisset quo eorum loco quisque cubuisset, demonstrator unius cuiusque sepeliendi fuisse; hac tum re admonitus inuenisse fertur ordinem esse maxime, qui memoriae lumen adferret. itaque eis, qui hanc partem ingeni exercerent, locos esse capiendos et ea, quae memoria tenere uellent effingenda animo atque in eis locis conlocanda; sic fore, ut ordinem rerum locorum ordo conseruaret, res autem ipsas rerum effigies notaret atque ut locis pro cera, simulacris pro litteris uteremur.

By his recollection of the place in which each of them had been reclining Simonides is said to have been able to identify each one individually for burial. This is the circumstance that suggested his discovery that order [*ordinem*] is the best way of achieving clarity of memory. The inference followed that those who wish to develop this aspect of their intellect must first select backgrounds [*locos*], second form mental images of the things which they wish to remember, and third store these images in the aforementioned places. The result is that the arrangement [*ordo*] of the backgrounds will preserve the order of things to be remembered, and the images [*effigies*] of the things will designate the things themselves. We should therefore employ the backgrounds as we would a wax tablet, and the images as we would its letters.

The exact connection between Simonides' experience and his new mnemonic mode is somewhat difficult to fathom. But as far as Cicero and Quintilian were concerned, it was Simonides' new model of ordering memory that mattered.<sup>123</sup> Just as Simonides could identify crushed cadavers on the basis of the *ordo* in which diners were positioned, modern-day rhetoricians should associate particular images with particular things, setting them in line with a pre-established topographical order.

<sup>122</sup> For the Simonidean connection, see Blum 1969: 41–6 (adducing other ancient testimonia); cf. Yates 1966: 27–9; Small 1997: 82–6; Baroin 2007: esp. 136–7 (and the discussion of the Ciceronian passage on pp. 151–2); eadem 2010: esp. 203–4. For the Ciceronian framing of the anecdote in the *De oratore*, see Farrell 1997: 375–83.

<sup>123</sup> Cf. Quint. *Inst. or.* 11.2.13, on how Simonides remembered the order (*memor ordinis*) of those in the room. The story was evidently well known, which is why Quintilian can recall so many variant accounts.

This concept of mnemonic *ordo* clearly looked back to earlier Greek discussions of mnemonic recollection. Although making no reference to Simonides, Aristotle's treatise *On Memory and Reminding Oneself* conceptualized memory in a related way. Just as Aristotle had used *taxis* to rationalize the arrangement of both speech and poetic composition, he employs the same spatial metaphor to discuss how we remember: 'things which have a certain *taxis*', writes Aristotle, 'are easily recalled' (ἐστὶν εὐμνημόνευτα ὅσα τάξιν τινὰ ἔχει, *de Mem.* 452a).<sup>124</sup> After introducing the trope of using 'places' (*topoi*) specifically,<sup>125</sup> Aristotle gives the example of a group of thoughts symbolized by individual letters, alphabetically arranged from alpha to eta (452a): because memory works by way of sequential process, one can move both backwards and forwards from any point through a given series, thereby recalling the lettered ideas in either direction; if one starts towards the middle of the sequence (e.g. with the letter epsilon), according to Aristotle, it would be possible to proceed both backwards (e.g. to the letter delta) and forwards (e.g. to the letter zeta).<sup>126</sup> In each case, memory is understood to work in a spatially determined way: as Aristotle begins his discussion, 'it is impossible to think without an image, for the same phenomenon occurs in thinking as is found in the construction of geometrical figures' (καὶ νοεῖν οὐκ ἔστιν ἄνευ φαντάσματος· συμβαίνει γὰρ οὐθὲν προσχρῶμενοι τῷ νοεῖν ὅπερ καὶ ἐν τῷ διαγράφειν, 449b).<sup>127</sup>

Roman analyses of memory follow the general track of the Aristotelian line. While all of our three authors provide a slightly different spin – and while each carefully differentiates between a system of remembering words

<sup>124</sup> On the passage, and its intellectual debts and influence, see Sorabji 2004: 102. As Coleman 1992: 36–7 paraphrases, 'recollection is [for Aristotle] a thinking process whereby one works out a conclusion, deriving it syllogistically from logical premises': 'it derives from the habit of thinking of things in a certain order, a habit that produces in men a second nature of thinking of B after A'. For further discussions, see Blum 1969: 70–80; Yates 1966: 31–9 (on the connection with Platonic ideas); Coleman 1992: 15–38; Small 1997: 87–94; Baroin 2007: 140–3; eadem 2010: 207–9.

<sup>125</sup> For discussion, see e.g. Ross 1906: 269–70 ad 452a14, along with Sorabji 2004: 22–31, 104–5. Small 1997: 94 consequently concludes that 'Aristotle provides the first full description of the system of places invented by Simonides'.

<sup>126</sup> Sorabji 2004: 31–4 provides an excellent discussion.

<sup>127</sup> For a review of Aristotle's meaning here, see Sorabji 2004: xi–xxi, along with *ibid.* 2–8; for Aristotle's influence on the formation of subsequent ancient memory systems, see Baroin 2005: esp. 203–5. Cicero likewise begins his discussion of memory by reminding his readers that the sense of seeing is the sharpest of all our senses (*acerrimum autem ex omnibus sensibus esse sensum uidendi*, 2.87.357), just as Quintilian remembers that 'the sense of the eyes is sharper than that of the ears' (*acrior est oculorum quam aurium sensus*, *Inst. or.* 11.2.34; cf. *ibid.* 11.2.10).

(*uerba*) and things (*res*)<sup>128</sup> – each rhetorician nonetheless teaches that mnemonic emblems (*imagines*) should be set against a prefabricated series of backgrounds (literally ‘sites’, *loci*): ideas can be grasped by means of the emblems, as Cicero writes, and their order by way of their backgrounds (*ut sententias imaginibus, ordinem locis comprehendamus, De or. 2.88.359*). The system operates in two stages. First, students must associate an idea of a word with a particular image (the more unusual and striking the image, the better). Second, in order to remember the sequence of things remembered, the *imagines* have to be situated within a pre-established series of *loci*. The backgrounds themselves can be anything, and they can also be reused at whim (in the same way that a wax tablet can be scraped clean and inscribed once more from scratch). Quintilian gives the example of a large house divided into separate rooms, observing that alternative sites would work just as well (whether public buildings, a long road, a town perambulation, or even, interestingly, paintings: *Inst. or. 11.2.20–1*).<sup>129</sup> Whatever the pre-selected space, the mnemonic process remains the same: by mentally perambulating around the imagined spatial area (with the images duly scattered around it), orators could recall both the things remembered and their proper sequence.

In the discussions that follow, it is the resulting quality of *ordo* that rhetoricians deem most important. Take the following passage of the *Ad Herennium*, which is clearly indebted to earlier Aristotelian ideas of *taxis* (3.17.30):

item putamus oportere ex ordine hos locos habere, ne quando perturbatione ordinis impediamur quo setius quotoquoque loco libebit, uel ab superiore uel ab inferiore parte, imagines sequi, et ea quae mandata locis erunt edere possimus. nam ut, si in ordine stantes notos complures uiderimus, nihil nostra intersit utrum ab summo an ab imo an ab medio nomina eorum dicere incipiamus, item in locis ex ordine conlocatis eueniet ut in quamlibet partem quoque loco libebit, imaginibus commoniti, dicere possimus id quod locis mandauerimus. quare placet et ex ordine locos comparare.

I likewise think that is necessary to have these backgrounds in order [*ex ordine*] so that we are never prevented from following the images by being confused as to their order: proceeding from any background we wish, and whether we go

<sup>128</sup> Cf. Yates 1966: 8, paraphrasing the *Ad Herennium*: “memory of things” makes images to remind of an argument, a notion of a “thing”; but “memory for words” has to find images to remind of a single word’. More detailed is Blum 1969: 12–32.

<sup>129</sup> On the significance of the architectural image, see Bergmann 1994: esp. 225–7; Elsner 1995: 77–9; Baroin 1998.

forwards or backwards, we are able to express the things which we have committed to the backgrounds. Just as, if we see a great number of acquaintances standing in a certain order, it would make no difference to us whether we should speak their names beginning with the person at the end, at the beginning or in the middle, so too with the backgrounds, as long as they have been arranged in order: the result will be that we are reminded by the images so that we can speak the things which we have committed to the backgrounds, proceeding in any direction and from whatever background we like. This is why it is best to arrange the backgrounds in a series.

Our anonymous author proceeds to give some examples, both in the context of remembering subjects (single images incorporating all the key facts, each one laid out in *ex ordine* turn), and with regard to remembering words (two pictures that could together be said to visualize a single line of verse).<sup>130</sup> Irrespective of the images chosen, and regardless of whether or not those images refer to words or ideas, the ingenuity of the *loci* system is said to lie in its implicit flexibility.<sup>131</sup> Walking around his mental stageset, decoding each and every visual cue that he figuratively encounters, the speaker has at once a fixed order for remembering things and a series of spatially arranged images that facilitate *ex tempore* innovation. This association between memory and ‘creative thinking’ is hugely important. As Mary Carruthers has argued, Roman rhetoricians, like their medieval monastic successors,

<sup>130</sup> For discussion, see especially Small 1997: 112–15. The notion of representing words by way of images evidently harked back to earlier precedent: most important is the *Dialexis* (or *Dissoi Logoi*), composed around 400 BC, which advises that speakers turn punning names into punning emblems (= Diels 1922: 2.345; cf. Yates 1966: 29–30; Carruthers 1990: 28; Small 1997: 113; Sorabji 2004: 30–1; Baroin 2007: 137–8; eadem 2010: 204–5). According to the examples cited in the *Dialexis*, the name ‘Chrysippus’ could be remembered by imagining gold (*chrysos*) on a horse (*hippos*); moreover, the same process used for names could be repeated in relation to concepts – by placing ‘courage’ on the image of Mars and Achilles, for example, ‘metal-working’ on that of Hephaestus, or ‘cowardice’ on that of Epeius. Quint. *Inst. or.* 11.2.30–1 testifies to a similar system among Roman orators: with certain names like ‘Aper’ (‘Mr Boar’), Quintilian argues, the ‘origin of the name can be fixed in our memory’ (*id memoriae adfigatur unde sunt nomina*, *Inst. or.* 11.2.31; interestingly, sculpted funerary memorials corroborate the same visual-cum-onomastic word-game, as demonstrated by a Hadrianic cinerary grave altar dedicated to Titus Statilius Aper – see Squire 2009: 173–5).

<sup>131</sup> Cf. Elsner 1995: 79–80. Although the ‘Roman speech is a rhetorisation of a prior and visually re-lived view’, as Elsner notes, the use of *imagines* and *loci* bestows a particular sort of oratorical licence, ‘exploiting this three-dimensional environmental sense with all its flexibility to the needs and demands of rhetoric’: ‘unlike ekphrasis which necessarily freezes the speaker’s *phantasia* in a particular order or structure, the range of possibilities for the ordering of paragraphs in a speech allows a much greater flexibility and freedom to the orator’s use of his memorised vision, his *phantasia*’.

conceive of memory not only as ‘rote’, the ability to reproduce something (whether a text, a formula, a list of items, an incident), but as the matrix of a reminiscing cogitation, shuffling and collating ‘things’ stored in a random-access memory scheme, or set of schemes – a memory *architecture* and a library . . . with the express intention that it be used inventively.<sup>132</sup>

In modern pedagogical parlance, Roman rhetorical mnemonics might be thought to rely on ‘deep memory’ as much as on ‘surface’ recall.

For anyone interested in the intersection between Roman art and rhetoric, these passages are remarkable for their implied parallelism between the ordered structures of seeing on the one hand, and of reading – and in turn speaking – on the other. This explains the recurrent comparison between the visual props of memory and the implements used for writing out a text: ‘the backgrounds are very similar to a wax tablet or papyrus, the images to the letters’, declares the *Ad Herennium*, adding that ‘the rhetorical arrangement and structuring of images is very similar to the script, and the delivery to the act of reading’ (*nam loci cerae aut chartae simillimi sunt, imagines litteris, dispositio et conlocatio imaginum scripturae, pronuntiatio lectioni*, 3.17.30).<sup>133</sup> While predicating their advice on a supposed alignment between image and text, however, our three rhetoricians nonetheless offer a series of sophisticated critiques: if they presume that ideas or words *can* be transformed to visual images (and indeed that images may in turn be translated back into spoken language), they also expressly problematize that critical assumption. Each writer concerns himself with a different difficulty. The *Ad Herennium* observes the sheer

<sup>132</sup> Carruthers 1998: 4 (her emphasis). Cf. *ibid.* 8: ‘Thus the orator’s “art of memory” was not an art of recitation and reiteration but an art of invention, an art that made it possible for a person to act competently within the “arena” of debate (a favourite commonplace), to respond to interruptions and questions, or to dilate upon the ideas that momentarily occurred to him, without becoming hopelessly distracted, or losing his place in the scheme of his basic speech. That was the elementary good of having an “artificial memory”’. Compare also Dupont 2000: 27 on *memoria* ‘qui consiste non seulement à se souvenir de ce qu’on a préparé pour ce discours précis mais qui est plus généralement la capacité de mobiliser tout son savoir, toute son expérience en même temps que de souvenir de ce que l’adversaire vient de dire et qui n’était pas nécessairement prévu’.

<sup>133</sup> Cf. Cic. *De or.* 2.86.354, itself quoted by Quint. *Inst. or.* 11.2.21; Carruthers 1990: 16–32 provides the best discussion. The association with Simonides – the sage attributed, we recall, with the comparison between poetry as ‘speaking painting’ and painting as ‘silent poetry’ (above, p. 354) – is significant here (cf. Yates 1966: 28). As Cicero himself puts it, this advocated system of mnemonics turns the orator into a metaphorical painter (*De or.* 2.87.358, discussing ‘the representation of a whole concept by the image of a single word, according to the rationale and method of some virtuoso painter who distinguishes positions of objects by varying their shapes’, *unius uerbi imagine totius sententiae informatio pictoris cuiusdam summi ratione et modo formarum uarietate locos distinguentis*).

number of images that would be needed, adding that any pairing of word and image would necessarily prove subjective (dependent upon the perspective of any given individual: 3.23.38–39). Cicero, for his part, notes that it is not possible to find images for certain sorts of words: do conjunctions, for instance, not require a more conventional type of symbol?<sup>134</sup> Still more sceptical is Quintilian (*Inst. or.* 11.2.23–6).<sup>135</sup> The system of *imagines* and *loci* may be pragmatic for running through an order (*per ordinem*) of names, as Quintilian puts it, but it is less useful for remembering the parts of a continuous speech (*orationis perpetuae*). Like Cicero, Quintilian notes the problem of finding images for words such as conjunctions, for which no obvious images exist. But he also complains that *loci* and *imagines* will fail to capture the cohesive fabric of words – the so-called *contextus uerborum*. Far from facilitating speech, complains Quintilian, the Simoni-dean system in fact doubles the amount of material which the orator has to remember: ‘for how will we be able to produce a continuous flow of words if we have to look back to an individual symbol for each individual word?’ (*nam quo modo potuerunt copulata fluere si propter singula uerba ad singulas formas respiciendum erit?* *Inst. or.* 11.2.26).

Such rhetorical commentary on the *problems* of transforming words into images (and back again) has an obvious relevance for the interpretation of contemporary Roman pictures, not least pictures which themselves engage with the verbal fabric of Greek and Latin texts. As we have seen, Virgilian ekphrasis explores this same congruence and incompatibility between visual and verbal media, probing the gap between an imagined sequence of individual images and the narrative *ordo* of language. Objects like the *Tabulae Iliacae* and the painted oecus frieze from Pompeii do something similar, albeit this time through the medium of pictures rather than words. In each case, we are dealing with images which, through their compositional arrangement, at once emulate and challenge the *ordo* or *taxis* of established textual precedents. Roman discussions of memory showcase the sophistication with which Roman viewers might verbally rationalize the underlying issues, interrogating not only the similarities between words and pictures, but also their differences.<sup>136</sup>

<sup>134</sup> See Cic. *De or.* 2.88.359: ‘For there are many words which serve like joints to connect the limbs of a speech, and those words cannot be formed by any sort of likeness: for these we have instead to construct images to use reiteratively’ (*multa enim sunt uerba quae quasi articuli connectunt membra orationis quae formari similitudine nulla possunt; eorum fingendae nobis sunt imagines quibus semper utamur*).

<sup>135</sup> For discussion, see especially Small 1997: 109–11, 117–22.

<sup>136</sup> Rouveret 1982: 588 nicely captures the point when she writes that ‘l’art de la mémoire pose une relation (qui est de l’ordre du transfert) entre des éléments d’un discours et des images’.

I am by no means the first to note the significance of these rhetorical passages for the production of contemporary Roman art. Numerous scholars have discussed the importance of memory for approaching different Roman visual media. Michael Koortbojian, for example, has associated the various tableaux of imperial Roman sarcophagi with the rhetorical prescription for ‘exceptionally striking images that would easily be called to mind’;<sup>137</sup> likewise, Bettina Bergmann has analysed the wall paintings of the *atrium* in Pompeii’s Casa del Poeta Tragico (VI.8.3–5) alongside Quintilian’s implied mnemonic movement through the architectural *loci* of a house (‘sustained contemplation of the arrangements exercised the educated viewer’s memory by unlocking a variety of associations and inviting a sequence of reasoned conclusions’, as Bergmann puts it).<sup>138</sup> Agnès Rouveret has developed a similar argument in the context of the *Tabulae Iliacae* specifically.<sup>139</sup> According to Rouveret, the composition of the *Tabula Capitolina* served to associate particular epic episodes with specific topographical props; Rouveret has also suggested that the ‘magic squares’ inscribed on the verso of seven other tablets might have developed this mnemonic programme, so as to associate particular epic episodes with particular letters of the alphabet.<sup>140</sup>

I draw on Roman rhetorical discussions of memory in order to advance a slightly different hypothesis. Rather than simply treat the *Tabulae* (or indeed the objects and texts examined in this chapter) as straightforward mnemonic devices, my aim is to situate their pitching of visual and verbal arrangements against the sorts of mnemonic frameworks for theorizing words and pictures found among contemporary rhetoricians. According to our three different rhetorical guides, the visual imagination was understood to facilitate a speaker’s recall of a given sequence of ideas; at the same

<sup>137</sup> Koortbojian 1995: 114–26 (quotation from 116). Compare also Müller 1994: 139–70, associating the rise of Roman mythological sarcophagi with the rise of Second Sophistic Greek rhetoric, as well as e.g. Zanker and Ewald 2004: 110–15 and Elsner 2011a.

<sup>138</sup> Bergmann 1994: 255.

<sup>139</sup> See Rouveret 1988, arguing of the tablets that ‘elles constituent de véritables “tablettes à mémoriser”’ (p. 168); cf. eadem 1989: 359–69, and the earlier claims of eadem 1982 (referring to the *Tabulae* on p. 588, n. 45). Rouveret’s interpretation of the tablets is followed by e.g. Stramaglia 2010: 629–30, n. 185 and Dardenay 2010: 207–9; for my own response, see Squire 2011a: 71–2.

<sup>140</sup> Cf. Rouveret 1988: 174; eadem 1989: 368: ‘Il se pourrait même que l’ordre des lettres dans la grille, au verso des “Tables Iliques”, ait un rapport avec l’ordre, le nombre des scènes figurées au recto’. For Rouveret, the nod to ‘Theodorean *technē*’ makes explicit this mnemonic ring, referring to an art of memory that is specifically *Theodorean*: ‘nous verrions bien plutôt dans la “technique de Théodore” une allusion à la méthode de mémorisation que nous avons essayé de décrire’ (eadem 1989: 173).



time, the visual realm was understood as granting a sort of rhetorical licence – it enabled the speaker to *re-structure* his narrative fabric. Better, perhaps, we might say that mnemonic systems were thought to grant a certain sort of literal-cum-metaphorical mobility: just as Quintilian had earlier commented on the need for speakers to arrange the *ordo* of a speech around the requirements of any particular occasion, so too his system of ordered mnemonics is designed to respond most effectively to an adversary's argument – 'not necessarily refuting it in the order in which it was said, but arranging it in the most advantageous way' (*nec utique eo quo dicta sunt ordine refutare sed opportunis locis ponere, Inst. or. 11.2.2*).<sup>141</sup>

Objects like the *Tabulae Iliacae* facilitate a process very much akin to the one advocated by Quintilian. If, like Agnès Rouveret, we understand the composition of the *Tabula Capitolina* (Figures 11.1–11.3) as a sort of material counterpart to the imaginary mnemonic spaces recommended by Roman rhetoricians, its system of *imagines* and *loci* at once preserves a narrative structure and allows the speaker to depart from it – and in whichever way he chooses. Far from simply preserving 'the' order of Homer, the tablet operates within a rhetorical culture where orators were trained in using visual prompts to reorder their speech according to the needs of any given scenario: the objective, as the hexameter inscribed on the verso of two tablets puts it, is to 'look at the middle letter [*gramma*] and *continue wherever you choose*'.<sup>142</sup> In this sense, the 'magic square' arrangements of letters on the verso of seven tablets might be said (literally) to literalize Aristotelian theories of mnemonic recall (Figures 11.7, 11.9). Just as Aristotle associates individual ideas with individual alphabetic letters, conceptualizing memory in terms of multidirectional sequence, our reading of these reverse *grammata* moves at once backwards and forwards through its lettered sequence.<sup>143</sup> Greek rhetoricians developed a closely related image. Consider, for example, the terms in which Dionysius of Halicarnassus instructs students to structure (*taxai*) their speech (*Errors in Declamation 6*):<sup>144</sup>

ἀλλὰ δεῖ κατὰ τὴν χρεῖαν τοῦ ἀγῶνος διακοσμεῖν τὰς πίστεις, ἕνεια καὶ μετατιθέντα, καὶ τάξαι τὸ συμφέρον ἡγούμενον, ἀλλὰ μὴ ὥσπερ στοιχεῖους χρῆσθαι τοῖς κεφαλαίοις

<sup>141</sup> For the significance of the thinking to Roman concepts of domestic space, see especially Baroin 1998: esp. p. 185. On the underlying ideas of *decor* at stake here, and its pertinence for rhetorically derived notions of 'proper' visual display, see Perry 2005.

<sup>142</sup> See above, pp. 362–5.

<sup>143</sup> The palindromic text (IEPEIAIEPEI) inscribed on another of the tablets, situated beneath an altar-shaped magic square inscription, might be understood in a similar light: see Squire 2011a: 307–10, 348–9, on tablet 4N (Rome, Musei Capitolini, Sala delle Colombe inv. 83a).

<sup>144</sup> For the text, see Usener and Radermacher 1904–29: 2.363.

κατὰ τὴν τάξιν ἀπὸ τοῦ α ἕως ω, καθάπερ γραμματικὸν ἄνδρα, ἀλλὰ πρὸς τὴν χρεῖαν τῶν ἀγώνων, ὥσπερ τὰ γράμματα πρὸς τὰ ὀνόματα, οὕτω καὶ τὰ κεφάλαια πρὸς τὰ πράγματα διακοσμεῖν.

But you should arrange your arguments according to the requirements of your speech, even swapping some of them around, and you should order [*taxai*] things by letting yourself be led by considerations of what is advantageous. You should not deal with the headings of your argument as a schoolmaster deals with alphabetical letters according to the order [*kata tēn taxin*] of alpha to omega, but instead according to the requirements of the argument. In the same way that you use letters for making up words, so too should you organize your points so as to advance your cause.

By defying the unilinear conventions of reading, the arrangements of letters on the tablets' versos are very much in line with Dionysius' prescription. The same holds true of the arrangement of images on the tablets' rectos (e.g. [Figures 11.3, 11.4, 11.5, 11.8](#)). While the Iliadic friezes were literally laid out from alpha to omega, arranged according to the poem's alphabetical book divisions (which are often themselves inscribed as *grammata* above or beside each individual frieze), Dionysius' lesson would be to devise new orders, 'according to the requirements of the argument'.<sup>145</sup> As with the oecus in the Casa di Octavius Quartio, it is not enough simply to recall the *Iliad* to the letter, rehearsing the established *taxis* or *ordo* of the poem. The rhetorical challenge, rather, is to reorder one's narrative, weaving the visual prompts into a new verbal response, one 'suitable' to the contextual requirements (whatever they may be).<sup>146</sup>

In this connection, it is worth remembering how ancient writers themselves discussed the virtues and vices of committing Homer to memory.

<sup>145</sup> The use of *grammata* to refer to individual Iliadic books are clearest to see on the *Tabula Capitolina* (Squire 2011a: 388), but they recur on numerous other Iliac tablets (cf. *ibid.*, pp. 95–9: tablets 1A, 2NY, 3C, 9D, 11H, 12F, 20Par, 21Fro).

<sup>146</sup> For the pedagogical trope of reversing alphabetical *ordo* and 'muddling up' its sequence in various ways (*uaria permutatione turbent*), cf. Quint. *Inst. or.* 1.1.25. Quintilian recommends the procedure for young children, alongside the 'widespread' practice of giving them ivory letters with which to play (*eburneas . . . litterarum formas in lusum offerre*, 1.1.26), later connecting such practices to the development of memory (*Inst. or.* 1.1.36); toddlers are thereby encouraged to learn things in their own right rather than by sequential rote (for discussion, see Baroin 2010: 79–80, with parallels from the letters of Jerome at pp. 264–5, nn. 36–7). In my view (cf. Squire 2011a: 239–40), this trope helps to make sense of the large 'nonsensical' letters inscribed around the rim of the 'magic square' on the New York *Tabula Iliaca* verso ([Figure 11.7](#)): these letters do not make any literal sense (*M, Π, Λ, E*) but, like the letters of the 'magic square' itself ([Figure 11.9](#)), they nonetheless 'muddle' any impression of sequence; as such, they prompt audiences to think anew about the *ordo* of letters on the tablet's obverse side, which are likewise organized according to an alphabetical sequence of books, from alpha to omega ([Figures 11.6, 11.8](#)).

If the *Tabula Capitolina* epigram instructs users at once to ‘learn’ (μάθε) and ‘know’ (δασείς) Homer, it also taps into learned philosophical discussions about understanding Homeric epic. When it comes to Homeric poetry, as Socrates himself is said to have opined, rote learning was not enough. So it is, for example, that Plato’s *Ion* makes a clear distinction between knowing the ‘inner thought’ of Homer and merely learning his words (καὶ τὴν τούτου διάνοιαν ἐκμανθάνειν, μὴ μόνον τὰ ἔπη, *Ion* 530c). Likewise, when Xenophon’s *Symposium* has Niceratus declare that his father had made him learn all the words of Homer (ἡνάγκασέ με πάντα τὰ Ὀμήρου ἔπη μαθεῖν), so that he can even now recite the whole *Iliad* and *Odyssey* word for word (literally ‘by mouth’: Ἰλιάδα ὅλην καὶ Ὀδύσσειαν ἀπὸ στόματος εἰπεῖν),<sup>147</sup> Socrates differentiates between knowing the poems to the letter and truly understanding their content. After all, observes Socrates, even rhapsodes know Homer, although it is clear that they do not understand his poems’ inner meanings (δῆλον γάρ . . . ὅτι τὰς ὑπονοίας οὐκ ἐπίστανται, *Symp.* 3.5–6). True to the epistemological distinction drawn out by Socrates, the monuments and texts discussed in this chapter might be thought to facilitate a different sort of mnemonic understanding: the visual prompts enable the rhetorically trained viewer not only to see the poems anew, but also to innovate by way of *retelling* their stories.

For some, no doubt, all this will sound overly fanciful: were ancient mnemonic systems – and their associated rhetorics of order – really so complex? In responding to that question, we might do well to remember that rhetorically trained authors themselves commented on related mnemonic feats, many of them revolving around poetry specifically. The Elder Seneca, for example, boasts of a mnemonic versatility that enabled him to recite verses both backwards and forwards: there once was a time, Seneca relates in his proem to the first book of *Controversiae*, when, after 200 or so students each composed a line of poetry, the author could relay the ensuing poem in either direction, ‘beginning from end to start’ (*ab ultimo incipiens usque ad primum*, *Contr.* 1.praef.2).<sup>148</sup> Similarly, St Augustine tells of a certain (ironically named?) Simplicius who he believed could recite not only Virgil in reverse order (*credidimus eum posse retrorsus recitare*

<sup>147</sup> For discussion, see Small 1997: 126–31, along with *ibid.* 134 on the Greek ideology of learning ‘by mouth’.

<sup>148</sup> For this and other Roman mnemonic claims, compare Small 1997: 127–9 and Baroin 2010: 80–1: ‘Nul doute que les exercices scolaires de récitation dans le désordre le préparent à cette “gymnastique mentale” avec les éléments du discours’ (81).

*Virgilium*), but also prose speeches by Cicero (*De natura et origine animae* 4.7.9).<sup>149</sup> Quintilian even advises that related exercises be incorporated within the early education of would-be orators so as to improve their future capacity for storytelling or *narratio* (*Inst. or.* 2.4.15):<sup>150</sup>

nam ut primo, cum sermo instituitur, dicere quae audierint utile est pueris ad loquendi facultatem, ideoque et retro agere expositionem et a media in utramque partem discurrere . . . ut protinus memoriam firment.

For when boys are first taught how to talk, it is useful for them to repeat what they have heard in order to improve their faculty of speech. And they might usefully be made to tell the story in reverse, and to start from the middle and go either backwards or forwards . . . in order, from the very start, to strengthen their powers of memory.

Quintilian makes clear the association between dexterity of memory and dexterity in ordering language. As we have seen, though, visual stimuli were understood to facilitate this process: rhetorical training was premised on contested ideas about how images order things in relation to words, and how words order things in relation to images.<sup>151</sup>

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How, then, to draw a close to my present narrative about the *ordo* of rhetoric and the rhetoric of order? This chapter has examined the intersection between Roman art and rhetoric in three related ways. First, it explored images of Greek epic poems on the *Tabulae Iliacae* in association with contemporary rhetorical discussions about ordering narrative. Second, it looked to additional comparanda, in the context of both Roman wall

<sup>149</sup> Cf. Yates 1966: 16, along with Coleman 1992: 80–111 on Augustine’s understanding of memory more generally. As Carruthers 1990: 19 notes, ‘the proof of a good memory lies not in the simple retention even of large amounts of material; rather, it is the ability to move it about instantly, directly, and securely that is admired’.

<sup>150</sup> There is an excellent analysis by Baroin 2010: 79–81.

<sup>151</sup> To my mind, such rhetorical discussions about space and order have an additional – and as yet undeveloped – literary significance for approaching the physical orderings of collected poems and tableaux in Hellenistic and Roman papyrus scrolls (for some discussions, see e.g. Gutzwiller 1998 and Krevans 2007 on the orderings of Hellenistic anthologies of epigram, supplemented by Gutzwiller 2005 – including especially Barchiesi 2005b – on the ‘New Posidippus’; Lyne 2005 on Horace’s *Epodes*; Nelis 2005 on the poems of Propertius; Fitzgerald 2007: 106–38 on Martial’s epigrams; and Beard 2002, Gibson and Morello 2012: 36–73, and Whitton 2013: esp. 11–20 on collections of letters). In each of these cases, authors – or at least subsequent anthologists – actively flaunted the hermeneutic suggestiveness of spatial juxtapositions. The Elder Philostratus’ *Imagines* would go still further, translating the spatial juxtapositions of paintings in a gallery back into a linear text, albeit one that deliberately allows for a ‘mehrfaches Lesen’ thanks to the graphic structure of its own textual arrangement (Baumann 2011: 91–164, quotation from p. 194; cf. Squire 2009: 354–6).

painting (in the Casa di Octavius Quartio) and of ekphrastic descriptions of images drawn from the same epic tradition (Virgil's *Aeneid*). Third, the chapter turned to analyse such visual–verbal play with *ordo* through the lens of rhetorical ideas about memory, concerned explicitly with the relations between the *ordo* of vision and the *ordo* of spoken speech.

Rather than rehearse these arguments further – whether forwards or backwards – allow me to close with two broader conclusions. My first concerns the interpenetrations between Roman rhetoric and art. As we have seen, the discourses of Roman rhetoric exert an influence upon the production and consumption of Roman visual culture, just as Roman visual culture in turn shaped the thinking of Roman rhetoricians: instead of comprising a discrete or self-contained area of letters, Roman ideas about rhetoric seeped into all aspects of Roman culture, cutting across the subdisciplinary boundaries of modern-day classical scholarship.<sup>152</sup>

My second conclusion follows on from the first: namely, that rhetorical theory was highly attuned to the resources of words in relation to pictures, and of pictures in relation to words. Were we to play up the rhetoric, we might conclude that Roman rhetoricians were markedly more sophisticated in conceptualizing image–text relations than many modern-day classical archaeologists. Even in the twenty-first century, the predominant model for approaching the intersection between Roman verbal and visual media has been that of ‘illustration’, whereby images are thought to engage with texts only when they follow them to the letter.<sup>153</sup> Roman rhetoric, I would argue, helps in excavating a markedly more sophisticated model for theorizing the interconnections between words and pictures.<sup>154</sup> Just as it informed ancient Roman responses to images and texts, Roman rhetoric has much to teach us as modern-day cultural historians – when it comes to understanding the classical past, certainly, but also for contemplating visual–verbal relations in the present. This chapter comprises just one attempt at reordering scholarship in that dynamic interpretative direction.

<sup>152</sup> I would add here that such rhetorical concerns cut across many of our modern-day sociological distinctions between ancient ‘lower-’, ‘middle-’ and ‘upper-class’ groups. Recent attempts to champion a supposed hermetically sealed set of, for example, ‘middle-class’ viewers strike me as both historically flawed and intellectually suspect: the modern heuristic category of the ‘middle class’, for example, all too easily serves as anachronistic portmanteau term for a particular set of reductionist disciplinary agendas. Needless to say, to talk of ‘iconotexts’ is not to imply ‘that images only developed their full potential when viewed by the erudite’ (Mayer 2012: 275, n. 15).

<sup>153</sup> For a critique, cf. Squire 2009: esp. 122–39 and idem 2011a: 127–48.

<sup>154</sup> My language of (culturally specific) ‘ideologies’ for theorizing relations between words and pictures is derived from Mitchell 1986.

*The Rhetoric of Roman Painting within the History of Culture: A Global Interpretation*

MICHEL MEYER

**What is the significance of Roman painting for the history of Western art?**

When I published a book on Roman art several years ago,<sup>1</sup> friends of mine – philosophers like myself, but also historians of art – asked me: ‘Why should a philosopher be interested in Roman art?’. It appeared strange to them. They would have probably sympathized if I had written a book on the art of classical Greece, because it would have corresponded with the Golden Age of Philosophy, or on painting during the Italian Renaissance, because of the revival of rhetoric at that time. But why Roman art? Did the Romans add anything significant to the contributions of the Greeks, either in philosophy or in art, where, as Winckelmann suggested, the Romans only continued the baroquization that began during the Hellenistic period, without great originality?

My contribution here is meant to respond to and to undermine the long chain of prejudice against Roman art, and especially against Roman painting, by offering a new, consistent and systematic interpretation of Roman painting, and in particular the usual four styles, spanning from c. 200 BC to c. AD 100. In contrast to traditional and current views, I want to suggest that Roman painting occupies a unique role in the history of art. With the exception of a few Etruscan funerary decorations, it represents the first surviving body of a wide range of painting in the Western tradition, and furthermore the only *major* non-Christian corpus before the Christian era, which has an unequalled variety of themes and styles, alongside the complexity of its symbolism. In fact, we are accustomed to Christian symbolism. This explains in part why it is so difficult to interpret Roman painting in a systematic way: we cannot avail ourselves of a code or body of symbols beyond the textual materials of mythological narratives, such as can be found in Christian doctrine, to give us the same level of interpretative entrée into the themes and functions of Roman painting.

Yet Roman painting is strikingly original. The multifariousness of its themes and symbols, its virtuoso development of *trompe l'œil*, its vivid realism in rendering gardens and cities, and even the representation of mythological scenes, which are quite different from those painted on Greek vases, bear witness to that originality. Such features, especially when taken as a whole, may have had antecedents in Greek art, but were marshalled as a holistic visual discourse in ways quite different from anything that survives from Greece or the Hellenistic world.

The Romans certainly adopted many of the techniques of Greek sculpture and architecture. But even in sculpture, the effects of Roman innovation were significant: Romans added images of ancestors to those of the gods and made much headway in conflating the two. In architecture, they used an eclectic range of columns for their buildings, introducing the vault for imperial arches or amphitheatres. Even where their techniques of construction were similar, and even if the temples themselves look alike, the intentions behind them were different, because rhetoric, i.e. the means by which such buildings exert an effect upon their audience, did not have the same purpose and nature in Greece and in Rome. Greek rhetoric, as conceived and developed in democratic Athens, was mainly argumentative, modelled upon the need to persuade an audience in political debates or in the law courts. In this context, rhetoric aimed to be rational, or at least, inferential. Its goal was to provide a solution, when analytically conclusive arguments were not available. Roman rhetoric, for its part, was less argumentative and more narrative. As a consequence, it centred itself more on the identity of the speaker and his status, in order to reinforce the link between the orator and his audience, enhancing a community of values. It was also meant to confirm and enhance the position of the speaker, as much as to create a sense of community. What was sought was more an effect upon the audience than an attempt at proving a point. Rhetoric was used to impress the audience and to create a sense of agreement, a consensus and a unity through various formal devices. Hence, the social and political role of rhetoric in Rome.

Art, as a social function, had an impact within the larger rhetorical matrix of Roman culture. The unity and reality of *Romanitas* had to be enhanced, because of the numerous peoples composing the Roman world and its empire. The notion of difference is crucial at this point. Social differences – such as that between patricians and plebeians – had been fundamental to Rome since its foundation, while in Athens, the classical spirit was associated with the preservation of democratic equality for free male citizens. This profound difference between the Greek and Roman

worlds could not but impregnate the architecture, sculpture and painting of cities. The Romans generally built their temples at the heart of their cities. In the Greek world, the difference between the sacred and the profane was marked by the distinct places where temples were erected (like hills for a city's acropolis), but was also marked within the buildings themselves through marked specific architectural differences. The Greeks put the acropolis above the city, to show that differences, in this case between men and gods, were socially and politically manifest. Conversely, the Romans, who lived with (social) differences, accepted their gods in the midst of their cities, provided that the difference between the humans and the gods was inscribed within the architecture itself. Theatres in Greece were situated on hillsides, while, in the Roman world, they were located in the heart of the cities. The Roman world integrated the spectacle of social differences amidst social life as 'natural', whereas the Greek world, at least in its democratic era, placed this spectacle outside its political boundaries, in spaces demarcated by ritual or natural difference – as if there were a political or civic contradiction (itself a regular theme of drama). Differences are essential in any society. They have to be respected: the difference between father and son, between gods and humans, between life and death. A characteristic of Greek tragic heroes is that they flout these legitimate differences, acting as if their status put them above such laws. Oedipus kills his father and marries his mother, Agamemnon sacrifices his daughter, Orestes murders his mother. In times of trouble, it is not always easy to respect legitimate differences or even to see which can be neglected for good reasons. But differences in general are hard to bear for the democratic spirit, while they reflect the social structure of the Roman world from its beginnings. Athenian theatre highlighted the dire (or ridiculous, in the case of comedy) consequences of all the confusions between the good and the bad differences. While differences were a *problem* in classical Greece, they remained a real question in the Roman world, where differences had to be justified or were unjustifiable. In Rome, differences are socially accepted in the political landscape, but confusions as to what is legitimate can arise too, and the spectacle of wrong combinations remained alive as a function of rhetorical education and to highlight the kinds of wrong paths that could be taken, when lucidity is missing. Theatrical buildings, in Rome, belong to the city and do not have to be put at a distance. Differences and their spectacles belong to the inner structure of the Roman world, and do not have to be located on the hills or at the outskirts of towns, between gods and mortals, as they were in Greece. Wrong differences also exist in the Roman world, but they take on the



extreme appearance of *monstra*, as characterized by Florence Dupont, who regards it as the specific theme of Senecan tragedy, which so much inspired Shakespeare.<sup>2</sup>

### **The contrasting roles of theatre in Greece and in Rome: the mixture of differences and their tragic or comic effect as a spectacle of society**

In spite of what one might think, Greek art was never very philosophical, even though the Greeks invented philosophy, or, perhaps, *because* they invented philosophy. For the Romans, philosophy was a matter of practical rhetoric and wisdom, as attested by the success of Stoicism, which, from Cicero via Seneca to Marcus Aurelius, was perhaps the dominant doctrine of the Roman elite. Stoic restraint and resignation in the face of adversity was the counterpart of Roman grandeur and imperial *maiestas*, with all its dangers and threats, a *maiestas* intended to create or confirm social and cultural distance. Art, in a system like that of the Hellenistic monarchies or the later Roman Republic and Empire, had a precise social function, which was to convey messages of grandeur, pride and consensus through an appropriate rhetoric of display. The Greeks, by contrast (at any rate the Athenians and the Greek cities from the fourth century BC), who were more democratic and somewhat more egalitarian, used art less to express grandeur, than to inspire awe and distance in front of the differences necessary to social life, such as those between gods and men, where the former constantly interfered in the world of the latter, and where men were capable of evil action against the gods and each other. In Rome, a major role of public art was to convince people that they belonged to a unique and real community, though made up of differences, from the imperial city to the farthest regions of the empire; that Rome's achievement was what was best for them; and that it meant civilization. Such a message had to be delivered through adequate forms of speech, comprehensible by a polyglot and multicultural population, mostly illiterate: art was therefore a perfect medium for this purpose. Rhetoric is, in a way, the Roman philosophical counterpart to Greek speculation. It gives the discursive and aesthetic means to elaborate the necessary distance between speaker and audience and to reinforce, or simply legitimize, existing social links. Roman rhetoric

<sup>2</sup> Dupont 2012.

helped to ward off everything that potentially threatened the unity of the community. The bloody games of the amphitheatre, unknown to the Greeks, contributed to that function: they were meant to strengthen social cohesion, at the expense of those who were deemed different, calling to mind the differences that counted and those that were rejected (especially when theatre had lost its creative impact), in order to make acceptable those differences deemed to be legitimate even where they were difficult to endure. As a building, the amphitheatre is circular, reflecting the closed unity of the Roman world. Theatres, in contrast, where the importance of social differences is already marked in the way seats are distributed, were built in semicircles, embodying social differences internally.

Theatre in the Roman context not only preserves differences, but shows on stage what happens when differences are ignored, when one cannot discriminate between the 'good' and the 'bad' in society. A tragic fate ensues, when the differences ignored are essential to society (like legitimacy of power, or the due respect for life). A comic fate ensues, when the values that are threatened are not essential (like differences of age between lovers in Terence, for instance). Theatre flourishes in periods of the acceleration of history, when confusion between new answers and old ones becomes a real and common issue. Rhetoric also flourishes in such times. But there is a sharp difference between rhetoric and theatre. Tragedy offers spectacles of the amalgamation of past answers and new ones, of former answers which seem to be devalued and new answers which are deemed to be better, leading to a conflict between the adherents and opponents of modern solutions to the old problems. When the values at stake are not essential, laughter at comic characters replaces the death of tragic heroes. Rhetoric, on the other hand, plays on the ambivalence of answers in an historical world marked by its acceleration. It can also lead to conflict or debate. Hence, Plato's accusation that rhetoric is the manipulation of answers that are not what they claim to be and Aristotle's choice to demarcate the right answers from those that are wrong through argumentation, in spite of their similarity in terms of formal appearances. Theatre shows the consequences entailed by wrong answers in essential or comic questions, while rhetoric analyses the fact that both types of answer, the right ones and the apparently right ones, cannot be formally differentiated. How can we distinguish between the right differences, the right answers and the obsolete ones? At such times, a society's fundamental values are in danger, and theatre aims to show what happens when they are threatened.

The exhibition of differences is not directly meant to create unity, but serves as a reminder of the multiplicity that the Roman world is made of.

Transgression is a threat posed to the nature of that Roman world. Tragedies, for example, express essential differences which have been neglected or transgressed, whereas comedy displays differences which some main character resists or of which he is unaware, as if History had not crossed his path. Murdering people or marrying one's own mother, for example, violate essential values of society, such as the prohibition of incest or the respect for life. Those who violate these constitutive differences (between life and death, man and wife, parents and children) will suffer a tragic fate because of this transgression. Tragedy is a reminder for those who would like to seize the political opportunities offered by the circumstances of history. It offers the spectacle of essential differences that have been negated and unfolds the unavoidable consequences of such a negation. As a spectacle, it creates a distance, which enables the spectator to become explicitly aware of the essential differences that must be respected for the social order to continue. In comedy, differences that should have been taken into account are overlooked. Since they are not really essential, the spectacle of their ignorance is rather comic, as in the example of a person who does not see a transparent window and falls when he bangs into it.

In Terence, for instance, we can see ridiculous old men who fall in love with very young girls, ignoring an age gap which makes spectators laugh. But still more ridiculous than for an old man to marry a girl the age of his daughter is the fact that she is his son's fiancée. Theatre, in general, is an art that is meant to warn us against wrong differences, those which are violated as well as those which are neglected, while the games of the amphitheatre aimed to reinforce unity in a world of differences, at the expense of some pinpointed difference, external to the collective group. Tragedy metaphorizes differences that should have remained literal, for example by justifying murder as if it were not murder (Iphigenia's death is then described as a justified act which has nothing to do with Agamemnon's killing of his own daughter).

I have spoken of theatre and amphitheatre, of spectacle and buildings, seen what is common to the Greeks and the Romans, and in which respects there are differences. The contrast between these two worlds is painting. This is why Roman painting, in my eyes, is so philosophically interesting. It is not the sole reason. The amplitude and the novelty of techniques render it unique too. My view is that Roman painting plays a singular part among the other art forms and raises the question of the specific complementarities at work in Roman art – both material-cultural and literary. We cannot isolate painting from literature or mythology, because it

borrow its themes from them, or from architecture or sculpture, within which and alongside which it is embedded. Hence the need for a global view, a civilizational view, in matters of Roman aesthetics.

Let me now be more specific. Roman painting is intentionally enigmatic in its themes and its forms. It also embodies a problematic of aesthetics, from questions about the invention of new techniques, to the evolution of forms, especially with regard to other kinds of art, such as literature for instance. Unfortunately, historians of art often concentrate on individual works analysed *per se*, or on single forms of art, such as painting, as if art forms evolved independently of one another in a kind of autonomous logic of self-development. How many histories of opera are there, for example, where the influence of theatre or music is barely considered? We should not overlook the fact that sculptures and paintings are artistic statements within buildings. The same is true for the Italian Renaissance, when paintings were intentionally designed for churches, as were statues and relief sculptures. We should not forget those interconnections when we study sculpture, architecture or painting, and especially when we consider the Roman world. This is why I speak of *aesthetic complementarities* between them, especially when we want to understand their evolution.

The fascinating aspect of Roman painting lies therefore in the multiple questions it raises: it is, in its own right, an intentionally enigmatic form of painting, due to the themes it chooses and the manner in which they are treated, even when it is meant to be realistic, recalling equally enigmatic works like those of Piero della Francesca's *Flagellation* or Giorgione's *Tempest*. These *are* enigmatic even within the Christian framework of reading, with which we are more familiar. A key feature of Roman painting lies in the complexity of the system of questions it raises for the viewer,<sup>3</sup> in particular in respect of the range of the social functions that painting adopted at different moments in Roman history. For philosophy, Roman painting is a gold mine, in part because philosophy has questioning as its ground theme, and the philosopher's answers are meant to enable the audience to understand and explore the basic questions raised by philosophy. The task of philosophers is to establish links between the questions raised in a specific field or in life as a whole, and to ask why those links prevail, in order to discover a possible general meaning. *Problematological answers* materialize the types of answers that keep questioning (and questions) alive in all the forms of art.<sup>4</sup> Problematological answers are

<sup>3</sup> Elsner 1995: ch. 2.

<sup>4</sup> See Meyer 1995.

nonetheless expressed in the form of propositions and statements, even if they explicitly refer to the underlying questions and positively indicate the meaning of the questions people have in mind, for example when they are painting this or that subject. Roman art, and in particular Roman painting, is a challenging problematic for today, because very few historians have considered it as something more than an avatar of the largely lost (and, in usual expectations, much greater) tradition of Greek painting. It problematizes us, most of us at any rate, who are accustomed to Christian models of reading art.

### The historicity of artistic forms

Nobody can predict and know the goals of History, so Hegel claimed.<sup>5</sup> There is probably no such goal. Nonetheless, this does not mean that history unfolds at random: there is at least a formal principle which explains what the sentence 'History brings new changes' means, however partial such changes are with respect to what already exists. What *is* is no longer exactly the same as it was before, it is different, and as a result, the sense of difference is how History affects us, for better or worse. Existing answers become problematic, and new answers emerge alongside them. How can we differentiate between true or real answers (by which I mean answers that are satisfying at a given time) and problematic ones, between propositions that have become questions and answers that have remained answers? We find the problem in King Lear's response to his daughters' answers, since he cannot tell the difference between the problematic answers of Regan and Goneril and the non-problematic one given by Cordelia. The acceleration of History is the source of this confusion. How can we distinguish correctly between the right differences and the wrong ones, when all the important distinctions are blurred by the acceleration of History? There would be no Shakespearian tragedy, if the answers to this question were easy to give. History, by definition, erodes previous answers in their very identity. They become affected by the differences imposed and deepened by History. They cease to be literal and become figurative: they literally are no longer answers in effect, but become metaphors of answers, and in that sense, they are also realistic, i.e. they represent reality as evolving. They represent the real as

<sup>5</sup> Hegel 1980.

being more or less what it was, and alongside those answers, we have the new ones that simply stick to the real as it has become.

This duality is of the essence of art, which always hosts the duality of figurativity and realism. The dualism of the realistic and the figurative is even sometimes the very object of art, and as a result, the art of a given society expresses the problematics of that society. Increased figurativity is thus a function of the way the movement of History affects art, as well as imposing the necessity to find realistic counterparts. Problematic answers have to be opposed and complemented with non-problematic, and therefore, referential ones. For example, we have the paintings of Roman gardens with theatrical masks, which break the general realistic illusionism of the painting. The fine arts at times are as figurative as they are realistic, and when they cannot be anything but figurative, they exhaust themselves in being so, and a new set of realistic forms of art are needed to succeed. Differences – historical differences, religious differences (between gods and mortals) – have to be captured through the duality of the literal and the figurative. This duality displaces, reflects, and expresses in its own ways the difference between *questions* and *positive propositions*. I have called this the *problematological difference*.<sup>6</sup> Art purports to articulate both, in order to keep History alive in the present, through presentification (or *Darstellung*, of which both German philosophers and art historians speak). Art expresses the problematization of the world at a given moment of History. The Prima Porta statue of Augustus as a general renders him present, as if he were standing in front of us, but his posture and the little creature at his feet render the sculpture enigmatic in many ways (Figure 12.1). Art uses differences to highlight what people usually do not see or hear, differences which enable people to keep the past present in their minds, and it problematizes the contemporary by underlining what has become essential through time. In an ever-changing world, art operates to render us conscious of what remains true (as Heidegger put it in the *Origin of the Work of Art*) underlying the process of change in the essential or existential state of what human beings are throughout History. Art therefore works to articulate change and permanence through its categories of the figurative and the realistic.

Let us consider a well-known example of extinction and appearance. In Venice, by 1607, Italian painting had exhausted its figurative power. In paintings, there was no room left to add more angels to the sky.

<sup>6</sup> Meyer 1995.



**Figure 12.1** The statue of Augustus from Prima Porta, marble, c. 20 B.C. Now in the Vatican Museum.

A new art form was needed to express reality and it had to be different from painting, and the opera appeared as this new art form. Opera was representational, while painting would continue to be figurative and, in its most baroque forms, enigmatically allegorical, while being more repetitive than ever in its style and failing to see the new realities. But in the eighteenth century things changed: Canaletto was a realistic painter, just as Goldoni's comedies are realistic. It was only in the nineteenth century that the Italian opera would be resuscitated on the ruins of realism, combining theatrical realism with music. This was the Golden Age of Italian opera, from Verdi to Puccini. When a society undergoes a strong acceleration of History, the figurative is the best means to render present what is no longer the case, by expressing things in metaphorical form. As a consequence, symbolism, allegory and analogy play an increasing role, due to the acceleration of History. Things are what they are and what they used to be, but (to avoid the contradiction)

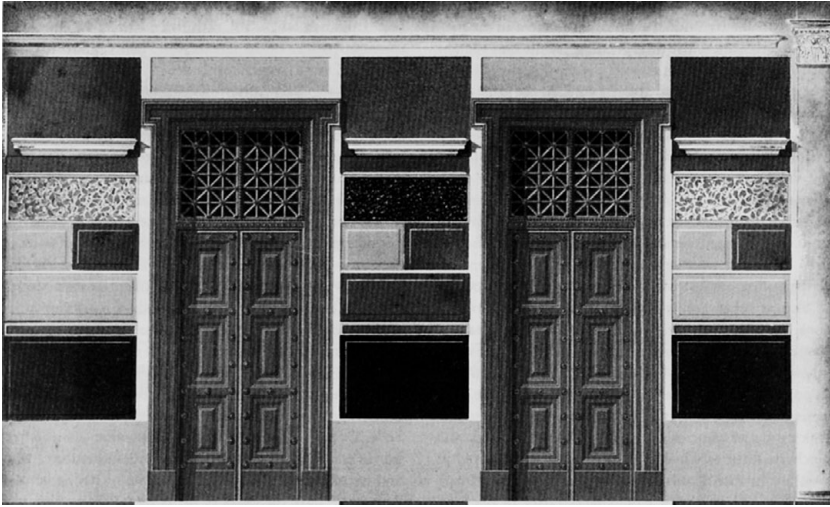
not literally so. They are the metaphors of what they used to be, a way of continuing to be *in another form* (the word 'form' here is essential).

The metaphorization of answers, as was already noted by Aristotle in his *Rhetoric* (Book 3), is meant to increase enigmaticity (raising the question 'What does that mean?'). Symbols become less readily interpretable and more problematic, and without a key for understanding them, the question emerges as to what they may refer to, what they may express, what hidden purpose lies behind the symbol. A good example is the introduction of landscape in Christian painting. Is this a symbol for the Christian saint separated from the people? Does it signify some access to the Garden of Eden? Is nature the symbol of God's creation? Is it the representation of the distance between the sacred and the profane? Is it the expression of the mystery of faith? Is it simply a backdrop of realism?

The more History accelerates, the more figurative art tends to become, looking for realistic counterparts. This is fairly obvious in the twentieth century, for instance. Painting became cubist, fauvist, or abstract, but whatever the label adopted, it became more and more figurative, i.e. enigmatic. A Rothko painting, bi- or tri-chromatic, is really an interrogation for the viewer. But so is a Brancusi sculpture or the dissonant music of Stockhausen or Boulez. When art is overwhelmed by the enigmaticity of the figurative, to the extent that the answer to the question of meaning becomes the question itself, rather than being a reductive answer of the kind that would be as valid as any other (Derrida), new answers emerge to capture the necessity of having real answers, i.e. answers about the real, and so art gives rise to realistic forms. That is how the equilibrium of realism and symbolism is ensured: by invention. We have many examples of this logic in the history of art. During the Northern or Flemish Renaissance, one could observe a strong realism in the paintings created in churches as a counterpart to the widespread gothic symbolism of the architecture of the cathedrals. This explains why there was no original Flemish sculpture: it would have been a redundant realistic answer to the already existing realistic forms of painting. In Italy, we observe quite the opposite tendency, at least during the fifteenth century. Painting had become highly symbolic and figurative, hence the necessity of a realistic counterpart, to be found in the sculpture of Donatello and Michelangelo.

*The fact is that we observe the same mechanisms at work in Roman art.* Increased figurativity was underlined by Ranuccio Bianchi Bandinelli, in his famous two volumes on Roman art, *Rome: The Centre of Power* and *Rome: The Late Empire*. In a way, we could even say that the evolution towards formalism from the Republic until the end of the empire is the





**Figure 12.2** House of Sallust, Pompeii 4.2.4: *atrium* (first style), second or first century BC.

object of those two volumes. This feature of the evolution of Roman painting is pretty obvious when we look at the so-called four styles that characterize Roman painting.

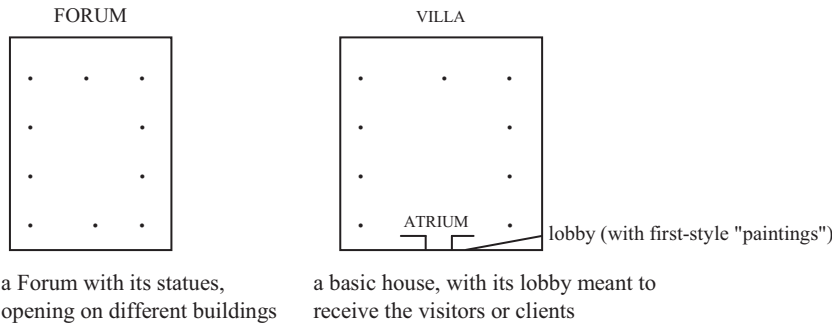
### The descriptive account of the so-called four styles of Roman painting and the questions it raises

The so-called four styles of Pompeian painting evidence an interesting pictorial evolution, spanning from the second century BC until the first century AD. The rhythm of this evolution was described in terms of four major types or styles of painting by August Mau in 1882, and these types were themselves later subdivided into different phases.<sup>7</sup> The four styles serve as cursors on the arrow of time, in the same way that, in modern times, we speak of mannerist and baroque periods to characterize the evolution of art since the Renaissance. Why did Roman painting undergo such changes over three centuries? What happened before and after, and especially *why*? Is it because painting became, in a way, the predominant form of art, with respect of other fine arts and even to literature? Before, among the dominant forms of art, theatre certainly occupied a primary position due to the major

<sup>7</sup> E.g. Beyen 1938/1960; Ling 1991; Croisille 2005.

influence of Greek culture; after, the novel must have begun to play that role, along with sculpture and architecture, themselves in constant evolution. But why did painting play such an important role between 200 BC and AD 100? Those questions at least underpin the necessity to elaborate a theoretical and historical framework for the understanding of the aesthetic complementarities between the different art forms. It is true that such a phenomenon of complementarity is common in the history of art. The predominance of a given art form often supposes a lesser originality in other art forms, as we know from the history of art, for example at the end of the Renaissance, when music attracted more original creations than painting.

(a) The *First Style* (200–90 BC), also called the incrustation style, translates the external surface of buildings, that is their covering of dressed stone, into an internal form of decoration (see Figure 12.2, House of Sallust). The masonry presented as faux-marble panelling made of stucco then becomes apparent inside the house, on the walls of the rooms, but especially in the lobby that gives visitors access to the *atrium*, the heart of the house. The superimposed rectangles of different sizes and colours that compose the painting of the walls are meant to express the fact that the outside now is *in* the inside, or rather *is* the inside. This painting denotes a transition of the public sphere into the private one, establishing a visual link between them. Mau called this first style *Incrustationstil*, to underline that illusion of exteriority. Nothing is really painted in the sense we usually understand the word ‘painting’ today since, once we put aside the colours and the geometric dispositions, no figure or scene is represented. Such decorations nonetheless convey the following message: ‘you have entered a building’, and also (maybe), ‘this is the transition from the outside to the inside’, because the form of the house has geometric parallels with public space like the forum, and the difference between the two, the private and the public, and the continuity of the public life into the private sphere had to be demarcated.



The similarity of form between a villa and a Forum, which repeats itself in the buildings themselves, is striking. It is as if the public and the political had entered the house with their clients, when coming to ask for favours. The corridor (*fauces*) is the first internal marking of the public role played by the master outside the house. When we look at the dates of First-Style Roman painting, it is strikingly a republican phenomenon, in which senators and rich men played decisive political roles in the cities. The structure of their villas seems to be a replica of the structure of a forum. The system of clientelism was the key. Was not the house the 'other' place to pursue politics and grant political favours and the place where, personally, the master could test, check and exert his political influence? The blocks of the 'First Style' reveal the ambition and the power of the patron. They indicate that access to his private house, as a replica of public space, confirms his continuing public role and power, outside the official public space. Politics goes on, due to the social importance of the owner, who therefore must rhetorically assert his difference from his clients (i.e. what he is socially) right from the beginning, from the entrance in the lobby. The lobby, already then, was closely associated with *lobbying*. The private aspect of the house had then to be rhetorically confirmed as a public marker.

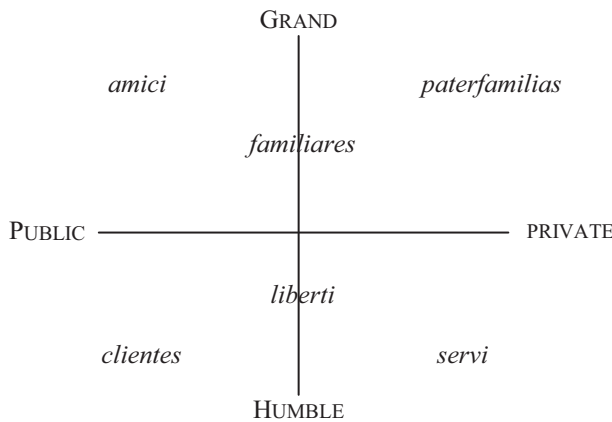
The first style is therefore a rhetoric of confirmation of the external role played by the owner of the house, the patron, and marked internally, through decoration. This mode of painting, which is usually called the 'First Style', is above all a mode of announcement meant to confirm to the visitor that he is entering a sort of miniature Forum. Gaining access to the *atrium* is then arriving on what could be recognized as the owner's 'private Forum'. From the *atrium*, you can see the whole house of the master unfold, since you are in the central part of the house, just as you can see the square shape of the Forum when you walk amidst its colonnades.

(b) The *Second Style* (90–17 BC), often called the architectural style, might better be called 'the *trompe l'œil* style' or the *distance-making* style, in virtue of the landscapes, columns, and buildings figured with perspective and *trompe l'œil*. These are the two essential devices, invented well before the Renaissance by Roman painters. But if rhetoric as a formal means to exert communicative influence and have an impressive impact on audiences is similar at both epochs, it had a different aim in both societies, simply because perspective and *trompe l'œil* painting were taken over at the Renaissance to stage Christian scenes and offer exempla of the Christian doctrine.

Once visitors penetrate into the *atrium*, the whole house is offered to their sight. The articulation of Roman houses has been carefully analysed by Andrew Wallace-Hadrill:

The two axes of differentiation proposed earlier distinguish between the outsiders and the insiders; both slaves and family are insiders, though in social rank (grand/humble) they differ greatly. Friends are outsiders, if to varying degrees (a Roman called his closest friends his *familiares*), while their variation in social rank is reflected in the linguistic distinction of *amici* and *clientes*. Architecture and decoration served to channel the flow of these categories around the house, simultaneously distinguishing outsiders from intimates and grand from humble.

(Wallace-Hadrill 1994: 38)



We find different types of paintings according to the type of room we are in. These paintings are different because they have a different purpose (the rhetorical impact sought is different) in each of these places, and the styles, although successive, will finally coexist literally *in* (or *as*) the so-called *Fourth Style*.

Broadly speaking, we find two important phases in the Second Style, although Beyen divided them into four. The Second Style can be characterized as a specific wall painting, meant to compensate for the lack of windows in Roman villas. The evolution within the Second Style is progressive and has a rationality of its own.

The characteristic of the Second Style is that the wall is painted as a substitute for windows open to the external world, i.e. to the city and its buildings, which are frequently the objects represented. Paintings of the Second Style *are* often representations of this public environment. Even the windows and their frames are part of the painted wall, in order

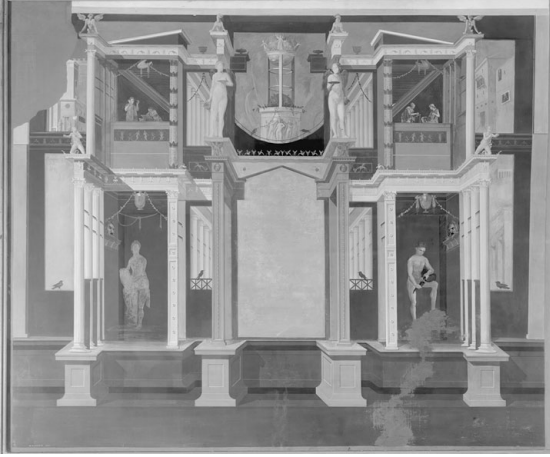


Figure 12.3 House of the Cryptoportico, Pompeii 1.6.2: reconstruction of the decorative scheme of the north and south walls, c. 40–30 B.C.

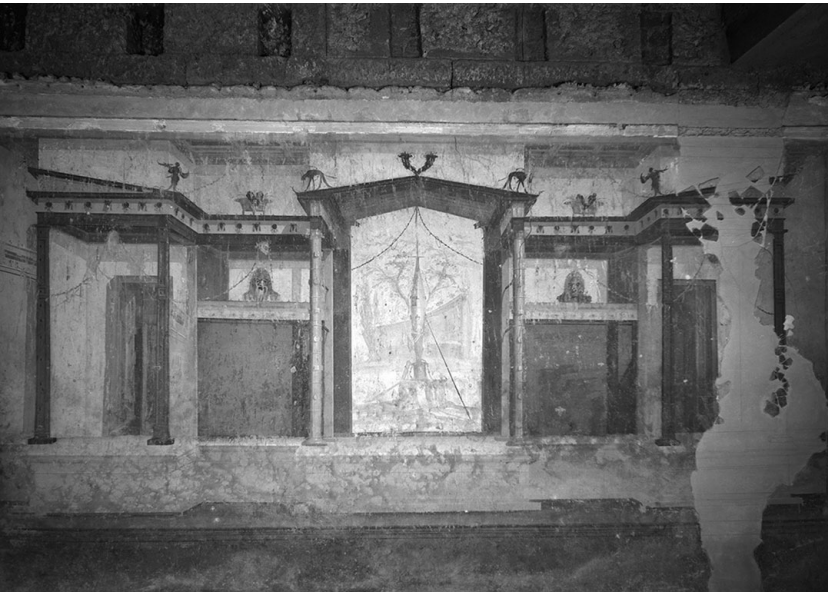


Figure 12.4 House of Augustus, Palatine, Rome. Room of the Masks, c. 30 B.C.

to underline the sense of a vista. As representations, they are intensely theatrical; they offer a spectacle,<sup>8</sup> that of city life. This explains why the painted room, known as *Gardens of Livia*, contains scattered theatrical

<sup>8</sup> Leach 2004: 114.

masks. These remind us that we face a *spectacle* and not a mere representation of reality. Roman painting is a mode of fiction, which is a substitute for theatre. The theatrical function of art was assumed by pictorial representation from the mid-second century BC (Terence died in 159 BC): painting took over the theatrical aspect of representation), *before architectural and urbanistic contributions became theatrical in turn*, with Augustus' reconstruction of Rome and the performative use of a display of statues against the theatrical setting of his Forum. At the point that the new imperial civic planning became theatrical in its own right, painting evolved a new rhetoric, which is called the *Third Style*.

Two famous paintings serve to exemplify this theatrical form of the Second Style – the decorative scheme of the north and south walls of the Frigidarium from the House of the Cryptoportico in Pompeii (1.6.2) and the west wall of the so-called room of the masks in the House of Augustus on the Palatine in Rome. A striking feature of the Second Style is the coexistence of two modes of painting, realistic and figurative. (1) We have an architectural mode, in which parts of cities are superposed against others in *trompe l'œil* vistas, so that – when it is not a theatre itself that is painted – the spectacle becomes its own object. The *Frons Scaenae* seems to be what is represented, as if we, the spectators, were sitting in a theatre while remaining at home to look 'through' the painted wall at some exemplary scene of social life, itself the result of pictorial illusion. (2) But we are also offered the recurring presence of a formal and structural pattern, present in the panels themselves, through their use of columns, statues, ceilings, and other architectonic devices meant to demarcate the various panels on the wall. These demarcations all but disappear in the *Megalography* of the *Villa of Mysteries* where we are plunged into a realistic theatrical sequence, as if we were in some kind of theatre (Figures 12.5–12.7).

From an evolutionary point of view the surrounding elements of the picture that belong to the wall and compose the frame of the represented scenes will progressively take precedence, as in the *House of the Cryptoportico*, where the object of painting is what makes the panels into panels: columns, long rows of ornament and garlands linking columns to one another. Sometimes, there remains a large painting in the middle of the wall, but it will get smaller and smaller with time. This feature is a characteristic of what is called the Third Style. As Roger Ling puts it, 'The Second Style preferred to concentrate upon the structural patterns obtainable from the main architectural framework, and gradually the principle of the closed wall (which had never disappeared in places where the new manner was deemed unnecessary or unsuitable) began to



**Figure 12.5** Villa of the Mysteries, Pompeii. Oecus 5, east wall, c. 60–50 B.C. Dionysus and Ariadne with mythological and ritual vignettes to right and left.

win the day.<sup>9</sup> These architectural and ornamental elements, painted on the frame and the wall surrounding the painting, while belonging to the fresco itself, will acquire more importance and even independence by becoming the object of painting itself. Inserted scenes come to recede, creating a distance from the spectator by the miniaturization of the painting inserted in the middle of the wall, which is often mythological or an imaginary landscape. All this gives rise to the impression of an increased formalism in the Third Style.

Even in realistic representation, we have figurative markers, to recall that there is a distance from reality, a difference which is the indirect object of painting in general. If one thinks of the realistic masks in the *Augustan Room of the Masks*, they are symbolic of a certain point of view on reality. Columns, which were part of the represented space, recede outside the object of representation and will belong to the wall itself, enlarging the vista which, more and more, comes to focus on other types of scenes, namely mythological ones. The figurative aspect of decoration is

<sup>9</sup> Ling 1991: 31–3.





**Figure 12.6** Villa of the Mysteries, Pompeii. Oecus 5, west wall, c. 60–50 BC. Detail of the *domina*.



**Figure 12.7** Villa of the Mysteries, Pompeii. Oecus 5, south-west corner, c. 60–50 BC. The 'bride' attended by cupids.

counterbalanced by realistic landscapes where the mythological scenes take place. But the coexistence of both types of painting, which will eventually turn into a breaking up of the figurative and the realistic into distinct modes of painting, should not hide the fact that we can be plunged into the middle



of enigmatic themes, whose realistic aspects may, at times, be overwhelming as in the *Mysteries* frieze. There Dionysus (Figure 12.5) and the lady of the house seem engaged in their respective initiations (Figures 12.6–12.7), observing themselves doing this in a retrospective gaze, though this is physically impossible. It seems as if the lady, the *domina* (Figure 12.6) could also become godlike, by fully assuming her own role, like Dionysus. Why Dionysus? Dionysus is the god of all identities, despite the differences imposed by History. He transforms differences and equalizes them through a form of ritual immersion. The orgies and drinking excesses of his ritual activity aim at giving the impression that everything is possible, in spite of social realities and their moral constraints. He is the god who abolishes all the differences in life by turning them into identities that are necessarily figurative and rhetorical, because literally unrealistic: how could he himself be an animal and a human? The identical becomes a fiction, as Dionysus is a fiction. Did not Nietzsche put it at the origin of tragedy? The *domina* observing herself in the process of becoming a *domina* reveals an impossible identity from a realistic and literal point of view. It can only be a literary and theatrical version of her becoming herself, while undergoing a transformative change. Dionysus offers a *figurative* consolation by creating a figurative identity as in the megalography, where women – the same woman? – of different ages (the two women of scene I, the ‘bride’ of scene XIII, the woman on the couch at scene XIV) both move through an apparent process of becoming and observe the spectacle of this process as it develops. This is an impossibility that only pictorial fiction can express in a theatrical way, under the auspices of the right god, Dionysus, here reclining in Ariadne’s lap, with his power lying precisely in the maintenance of equivalences, which are problematical (indeed, arguably impossible) in real life. Some differences affirmed in the frescoes of the *Mysteries* room are literally impossible or unverifiable (the survival of the soul, the presence of satyrs, maenads and gods among real people, the transformation of humans, such as Ariadne, into divinities); they become real in the sense of representable through fiction, especially under the auspices of the god of equivalences. The young woman is led through a movement simultaneously of marriage and sacred initiation that overwhelms her body through flagellation. For the *domina*, what counts is ruling her house. To embody such a position, she has to accomplish a sequence of rituals which enable her to transcend her bodily nature, and she is led to accept her social position through the renunciation of pleasure and even through physical suffering. This offers a visual version of the passage from nature to culture, essential for women, since a woman pertains to both realms:

she gives birth to children (a natural role) and assumes the transmission of the social values of the community (a cultural role, evidenced in scene I where she presides over the child reading). Dionysus, by identifying what cannot be *literally* identified, allows women to manage their dual nature in marriage, symbolized by the *domina* who is shown looking at herself during the process that leads her to becoming what she is. This series of frescoes is the ideal painting for a young bride poised to become the ruling lady of the house. The 'death' of the luscious female in her and her rebirth as a wife is well depicted. She has incorporated the virtues of a wife, the virtues that make her a *domina*; because of the divine she has assimilated and the initiatory rigours she has been through. She has gone beyond the Dionysian metaphor of perfect licence and in a sense become herself and nothing else. Moreover, through the realism of art and within the fresco cycle, she is able to see herself and the process of her transformation at the end of the process of ritual initiation. Gods and humans are different, but through ritual, gods can bestow divine virtues on humans. The *domina* can enjoy the relevant divine attributes of an accomplished *domina*. In the words of Gilles Sauron: 'One of the most characteristic features of this enigmatic painting is the compenetration of the sphere of the Gods and of the sphere of the humans. That fresco is nothing but the unfolding of the theme of identification with the God'.<sup>10</sup> In the same room, Dionysus can be seen as becoming himself, the real Dionysus. Let us not forget that, in times of uncertainty, reality and appearance are often blurred. They coexist as a problematic question for some and a stimulus to hope for others, who adhere to the questionable as if it were real. Without that credo, what religion could have arisen or continued? The ancient mysteries did not escape this. Differences became divine in the profane world, and their divinity justifies the existence of difference, both social and political. The *domina* is metaphorically divine, in the same way as Dionysus is. The *domina* seems to attend retrospectively to her own initiation, the flagellation marking the transition from her old status to her new one. She has now a new role. No more theatre in these frescoes: they *are* theatre in their own right. This explains, correspondingly, why the mosaics on the floors of Roman houses come to bear the charge of figurativity through geometrical forms. They were more realistic in the times of the First Style. And the frescoes of the *Villa of Mysteries* put an end, in a sense, to the theatrical style.

<sup>10</sup> Sauron 1998: 89.

In many ways, the Second Style is the last moment of some equilibrium between the realistic and the figurative elements of painting. It is the last moment, because afterwards we observe the breaking up of the elements composing the sense of coherent unity in frescoes. Theatrical or architectural elements, such as columns and pedestals, being part of the painting, come in the Third and Fourth Styles to acquire autonomy and importance. They will be painted as self-standing pictures or occupy the most important section of frescoes. The frames of the scenes of mythology or landscape represented in the centre of walls, and the formal elements that constitute those frames (such as columns), come to take precedence over the central scene itself (in the Third Style), which recedes into the distance, while the elements of the frame wind up by becoming the main scene of representation itself, so to speak (in the Fourth Style). The increase of figurativity is the key to that evolution.

(c) The *Third Style* sometimes called the imperial style (14 BC–AD 45), should rather be characterized as the typically *rhetorical style*. The acceleration of History has the effect of increasing figurativity. The frame (the opening of the window) of painting had already become the object of painting. Take for example the pure play of forms – entablatures, dados, elongated columns – in an example like the west wall of cubiculum H in the House of G. Sulpicius Rufus (Pompeii 9.9.c). Identities are hidden (or metaphorical) differences. Increased figurativity also means more enigmaticity. The play of pure forms does not denote anything in reality we can recognize as the usual objects of the external world. They are therefore symbolic. A new form of mannerism is usually associated with such figurativity. It is made of the predominance of lines and curves, but it is also marked by the presence of strange candelabras, giving rise to paintings that are increasingly organized into geometrical structures, which compose the essential aspects of the fresco. Augustus ascribed the theatrical functions previously filled by painting to his programme of urban reconstruction, and so painting had to evolve beyond the theatrical spectacle of differences. What took place instead in the Third and Fourth Styles was a spectacle of the enigmatic.

The function of mythological scenes, when we find them in the midst of the geometrization of Third Style walls, as in the small panel of the west wall of cubiculum 5 of the House of Lucretius Fronto (Pompeii 5.4.a), underlines the exemplary virtues possessed by Greek heroes, and by extension and implication also possessed by the inhabitant of the room or the owner of the house. There is a specific rhetoric behind this. The painting is meant to valorize the owner of the house, through his or her virtues or, at least, the

person living in the room, as if visual adornment were some kind of ‘proof’ or evidence that the owner or occupant actually commanded the virtues he or she cherished, through their display on the wall. Landscapes, too, were meant to stir up the imagination in terms of the special qualities and hence differences from the run of humanity enjoyed by the owner, and to exalt such differences as socially essential. And at the same time, landscape is more enigmatic because its *mise-en-scène* is strange, taking place in unknown and unrecognizable locations. If genre landscape flourished ‘at the end of Second Style and the beginning of the Third’,<sup>11</sup> it is probably due to an evolution of the theatrical aspect of representationalism, which fades away along with the firm establishment of Augustus’ reign.

(d) The *Fourth Style* (c. AD 45–80) corresponds to what may be called the baroque period of art. Small characters, curved lines and figurative porticos become generalized. The most famous site of this genre of painting is Nero’s Palace at Rome, the *Domus Aurea*. Whereas the Second Style had been dominated by the principle of architectural illusionism and the Third by the rhetoric of ornamental forms based upon colour, curves or miniaturism, the Fourth seems to mix all the elements of the preceding styles, taking its characteristic forms from past styles to combine them in new and often unexpected ways, more enigmatic than ever, because more figurative and formal in so many ways.

This mixture of all the previous styles gives a new richness and range to the painter’s numerous combinations, which become the new form taken by figurativity. In a complex example, like the *Triclinium* of the House of the Vettii (Figure 12.8), the architectural features which serve as framing devices come also to be the subjects of the multiple inset panels (or are they pretending to be windows), which themselves compete with the mythological scenes as the main subjects of decoration. The result is that framing elements, no less than mythological subjects, are the substance of the wall (themselves framed as if they were pictures), as well as performing the role of devices that frame the insets and give cohesion to the scheme as a whole.

But it is striking that this stylistic inventiveness seems to stop around AD 80–100. Is this because of the eruption of Vesuvius in AD 79 and the drastic diminution of our empirical evidence as a result, or is it due to the role of painting in this baroque form having become exhausted? No additional combinations can really add anything new or unexpected in relation to the complexity on display at the House of the Vettii, for instance. At stake here

<sup>11</sup> Ling 1991: 143.



**Figure 12.8** House of the Vettii, Pompeii 6.15.1, Anderson 26468, Triclinium P (Ixion room), c. AD 62.

is the essential problem of this essay: what is the artistic mission or meaning of painting, not only socially, but in relation to the other forms of art?

### What is the rhetoric of art?

In order to discover why Roman painting appeared around 200 BC and 'died' (or became repetitious) after AD 100, we should linger on the role and meanings of painting in relationship with other artistic forms.

Clearly painting has a representational role, even when its figurative aspects increase. In the latter case, one can expect the rhetoric of figures to take the first role and a realistic counterpart to emerge in response to this lack of realism, maybe not in the same artistic form as painting but in the creation of some new art form. As mentioned earlier, opera played that role when, at the beginning of the seventeenth century in Italy, the possibilities of describing reality were exhausted in Italian painting.

The aim of art is to illustrate the differences created by History to capture them in their (fictional, i.e. figurative) identity. The artist's answers necessarily express this identity metaphorically, in order rhetorically to

annihilate those differences through this figurative identity, but he can also find new answers that will represent the real through new rhetorical means, generally corresponding to a new art form. What painting could no longer do in 1607, i.e. represent the world, opera would do, and we know that the success of *Orfeo* by Monteverdi was immediate.

Art is rhetorical, combining the figurative with the representational. The proportion of these is variable. Instrumental music is hardly representational, even if the imagination (and the title given to a piece) can compensate.

A rhetorical relationship is always based on the following tripartition: (1) *ēthos*, which is to say, the speaker, the narrator, or even the author. He (or she) gives *answers*; (2) *logos*, used by the speaker or the creator to cover all the forms of communication, meaning speech of course but also non verbal forms of discourse such as art and images; (3) *pathos*, which includes the audience and its emotions. To please or to convince, we must presuppose that someone (*ēthos*) addresses someone else (*pathos*) with a *question* in mind, to which an answer is offered, which expresses or resolves that question (*logos*). Such an answer always embodies more or less the question at stake, it 'relates' to it, even when the question seems completely swallowed or abolished by the answer. The relation of answer to question is more obvious when enigmaticity is put 'on the table', for the audience (or in the case of literary art, a reader) has to solve it, as in enigmatic novels such as those of Joyce or Kafka. Enigmaticity is itself variable according to the extent of figurativity used. *Logos* is the variable relationship of questions and answers. This relationship spans the implicit (commonplaces, shared knowledge, culture at large) as well as the explicit, when questions and answers are marked directly. One asks something by what one answers: the answers are effectively a question posed to the reader, the spectator, the listener, or in a word, the audience.

*Ēthos*, *logos*, *pathos* are the three main components of rhetoric and it is no wonder that we find them at work in art. Some forms are more centred on *ēthos*, on the self or the 'I', as is the case with poetry or sculpture, others are centred upon the *logos*, such as epic, where the values of society receive a narrative confirmation of their preeminence, or architecture, which is an objective world in itself, a kind of *cosmos*. Finally, *pathos* is the name for what is *other*: the audience, the spectator, the listener, the reader. In art, we find *pathos* above all in the spectacle of others confronting themselves, such as in theatre. *Pathos* is also the main feature of painting, because painting is the spectacle of otherness, of alterity. Strange encounters, enigmatic beings, symbolic relationships often coexist to underline strangeness or even aggression (for instance in the Alexander Mosaic, or the paintings of Pygmies).

## The place of painting in the structural table of arts

### *Aristotle's table of literary forms*

<i>Ēthos</i> (the 'I')	<i>Logos</i> (the 'It')	<i>Pathos</i> (the 'Thou')
lyric genre	epic genre	dramatic genre

When we consider the duality of figurativity and realism, we have:

### *Complete table of literary forms*

	<i>Ēthos</i>	<i>Logos</i>	<i>Pathos</i>
figurativism	Poetry	epic	tragedy
realism	eloquence novels	history philosophy	comedy

What about the fine arts? Another table will give us the answer.

### *The table of fine arts*

	<i>Ēthos</i>	<i>Logos</i>	<i>Pathos</i>
figurative		architecture	painting (symbolic)
realistic	sculpture		painting (realistic)

Clearly, there are gaps in the system of fine arts at different periods of time. Literary forms will have to supplement them.

Now, to see the evolution let us combine the two tables in order to understand how literary genres can succeed exhausted art forms (i.e. those which have nothing more or original to say), or complete them to express one of the six problematics embodied in those tables.

### *Complete table of fine arts and literature: the structure of the complementarities and their evolution*

	<i>Ēthos</i>	<i>Logos</i>	<i>Pathos</i>
figurativism	poetry	architecture	the detheatralization of painting:
realism	sculpture	epic	from the ornamental to the baroque
	novels	history	(between 15 BC and AD 79 )
	(>second century AD)	philosophy	tragedy (first century AD, Seneca)
			comedy (<second century BC, Terence)
			from brick-like to theatrical
			painting (>second century BC)

Now we can see why, for instance, when theatre is less original, painting will take over the mission of representing human characters, human virtues, and even nature (through landscapes), to give the feeling of distance and difference in a world subjected to History. When History accelerates, some answers cease to be what they are and become problematic. This also reflects the real. So sameness is an identity in a non-literal way, it is a rhetorical one. Metaphorical discourses, hence *images*, represent what is different through the lenses of identity. In poetry, one might think of Petrarch's regrets before *his* love, who disappeared. Time makes him see reality as a metaphor of his impossible love, of distance, annihilated through poetic metaphors, but since it is as a figure, it is no longer *the* reality. His poetry (metaphors, images) enables him to keep present his beloved one as if she were still alive and physically there, whereas it is pure fiction. Painting, because it is made of images, has the same rhetorical effect of creating presence.

The fine arts need literature to complete the mission of articulating *ēthos*, *pathos*, and *logos*, the three fundamental questions of mankind ('Who am I?', 'What is the world in which we live?', and 'How shall we act in relation to others?'). They recall the three parts of Hume's *Treatise of Human Nature* (of the Understanding, of the Passions, of Morals), and the three *Critiques* written by Kant.

When Roman theatre became extinct after Terence's death in 159 BC, painting came to play an increased representational role. Moreover, when the city became a theatre in itself, with Augustus, it was no longer necessary to introduce theatrical elements into painting to recall the realistic aspects of the depicted external world. Hence, figurativity and formalism increased, with a realistic counterpart in landscapes and mythological scenes that take place in imaginary settings, to underline the virtues of the heroes one wished to have, rather than to illustrate a political role that patrons were ceasing to have. As a result, the object of painting became the otherness, the specific difference which powerful Roman citizens claim to have, in order to define their own identity (or difference), because those distant heroes *were* heroes, even if mythological and divine.

Now, when painting became too figurative, in order to capture the pace of historical differentiation, the kind of identity painters wanted to represent had become baroque, mixed and more abstract. Painting ceased to be representational after AD 100, increasingly giving way to a new form of writing, called the novel, beginning with the *Satyricon*. Likewise cinema would come to replace opera, extinct in the 1930s, because it introduced more action, more movement, and more acceleration than the forms



then prevailing in opera. Roman novels were to paintings what cinema would be to opera. In those novels, the passions, as manifested in wandering and postponed love, were submitted to Fortuna rather than to the gods. The substitute of theatre, painting's themes of confrontations became then novelistic. Painting, less representational than ever, continued to become more decorative and stylized, rather like baroque painting would be later, at the end of the European Renaissance.

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