



Panel Abstracts Booklet

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[PANEL 8] SHAPING ROMAN IDENTITY: SELF PERCEPTION AND ITS TENSIONS IN
ANCIENT BIOGRAPHY

[Wednesday]

Slot 3: 3:40 - 4:30pm

Carlo Pelloso, University of Verona – University of Padua

Quirites and Populus Romanus: new identities and old figures in archaic legal formulas

My paper will at first be devoted to limit the legal status of the so-called *quirites*. If the foundation by Romulus unifies the previous quiritary reality as an army and as a people, and so the kingdom goes to include in itself the system of the *curiae*, it is clear that the *quirites*, within the new system of reference, do not seem to be neither the *cives* ‘tout court’ of the republican age, nor the freemen in the etymological sense of the law of Numa. Moreover, the sign ‘*quirites*’ does not originally indicate the ‘*Sabini*’, nor the ‘members of a unitary pre-Servian organizational system’, nor the Roman citizens (whether ‘warriors’ or ‘patricians’), nor the ‘Romans’ ethnically connoted as such. More precisely, from the analysis of the *extra-formulam* uses of the noun at issue, its non-ethnic meaning in the sense of ‘male *puberi*’ actively taking part at the *populus Romanus* (that is, endowed with the ‘capacity to act under public law’) has emerged with predominant frequency both in civil contexts and, albeit secondarily, in military contexts. *Quirites* seem to be the only part of ‘citizens’ to whom kings, magistrates and priests (or their auxiliaries) officially and formally approach in the main institutional, if not solemn, frames. *Quirites*, in short, cannot be reduced to the *homines liberi* of the origins, if the latter sign stands only for those who directly belong to the people, including those who do not actively participate in the popular assemblies, as for instance a *pater familias* before his puberty. *Quirites* does not overlap with *cives* because whoever, albeit citizen, is excluded from popular *comitia* and army cannot be invoked as one of the *quirites*.

Secondly, as for the archaic formula *Populus Romanus Quiritium*, given the oldest meaning of *populus* as army, the genitive *quiritium* concerns the subjects that take part at the new Roman army itself (and not to an over-category including the *populus*). With regard to different formula *Populus Romanus Quirites*, once excluded the hypothesis of a proto-formula *Populus Quiritium Quirites* (since before the foundation of Rome neither a *populus*-army of *quirites* nor a *populus*-‘people’ of *quirites* existed), it has been read as a totalizing phrase: the Roman *populus* appears as an *exercitus* (primary meaning) and as a people in a non-military sense (derived yet coessential sense), being both overlapping the quiritary body. The foundation imprints a centralization under the banner of unity, but the formulas make it clear that the pre-existing pluralistic system of *quirites* remains in the *regnum* without dissolving in the abstract entity ‘people’. If it is true that historically in the sign *populus* the military connotation prevails whereas from the sign *quirites* the non-military one emerges, the formulaic juxtaposition reorients the first pole in a civil sense and the second one in a military sense: on the one hand, the pre-civic *quirites* overlooks the institutions of an army and an assembly, on the other hand, the *quirites* found and integrate both the functions of the Roman *populus*. Contrary to the centuriated people the pre-Servian *quirites*, at the same time and distinctly, is both an extra-urban army, and a urban assembly for a conservative founding impulse.

On the one hand, Rome is a new legal, political, religious and military reality, including and developing the earlier civic quiritarian system; on the other hand, a new and

more striking element of novelty emerges, i.e. the Roman army: against the backdrop of the structural and functional bivalence of the ‘new’ *populus* to which correspond two coinciding figures (the army and the assembly), the ‘ancient’ *status* of the *quiritis* rises, rewritten and recontextualized, as the foundation of a new identity.

Ália Rodrigues, University of Coimbra

Roman Self-Perception and Maiestas. The Legal Reification of a Changing Political Concept in the Late Republic

This paper explores Roman political self-perception through changes that occurred in Roman law between the Late Republic and Early Empire, by focusing on the development of the idea of *maiestas* both as a concept and as a crime. In particular, this paper examines the interaction between literary sources about *maiestas* and its emergence in legal discourse, together with the motivations for its relatively late adoption in criminal law.

Generally speaking, *maiestas* (literally “greatness”) implies a status of superiority that can be applied to gods, Roman institutions and its citizens (e.g. *pater familias*, *populus romanus*, and *res publica*). It was later applied to the Emperor and, eventually, to the Christian God. Despite its importance in the political sphere, this idea mostly appears in literary sources such as Cicero, the *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, Livy, Ovid and Tacitus, and was rarely mentioned by other canonical authors such as Virgil, Caesar and Sallust (Gaudemet, 1964). The first unified Roman law of treason was a relatively late development; it was likely defined in 103/100 BC as *crimen minutae* (or *laesae*) *maiestatis*—or simply *maiestas*. However, despite the gravity of its sanctions—which included death or banishment—the definition of *maiestas* remained conveniently vague and broad enough to include undefined cases (Seager, 2001), and it was mostly intended to keep elites under control (Harries, 2007). Scholars also agree that the fact that neither republican nor imperial jurists dedicated special attention to this crime clearly indicates that *maiestas* had mainly political (and religious) implications and resonances (Gaudemet, 1964; Bauman, 1967; Ando, 2011).

I will argue that the legal reification of the concept of *maiestas* emerged as a political response to a series of internal changes that influenced domestic politics in the late Republic. Consequently, the gradual integration of this concept in the legal discourse contributed to the re-shaping and crystallization of a specific version of Roman identity.

Works mentioned

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Slot 4: 4:40 - 5:30pm

Davide Morelli, «Sapienza» – Università di Roma

Shaping Roman identity as exemplum in Plutarch's Aemilius Paullus

Plutarch's *Life of Aemilius Paullus* depicts a particular character. Not only, in fact, does Paullus seem to be the heir of a long tradition, which puts the *gens Aemilia* and its very birth in the hands of Italian Pythagoreanism; but also, single actions and behaviours of the Roman aristocrat, as narrated in Polybius and Livy, demonstrate with good probability Pythagorean influences on him. Plutarch gathered these behaviours and, by collecting and emphasizing them, focused his biography on an almost Pythagorean characterisation of Aemilius Paullus.

The most important of these characteristics are, among others: the relationship between Τύχη and human sphere; the Pythagorean πολυμαθία; the consideration of ὁμόνοια. These aspects can also be simple Greek considerations on Paullus (Polybius is the most probable beginner for this tradition), but they can hardly reflect something totally different from the historical reality, which in this case could be very interesting for a IInd c. BC Roman aristocrat. The historiographical analysis - as Reiter's monography on Paullus, other works on Roman imperialism and philhellenism (Gruen, Harris, Ferrary), and studies on Roman Pythagoreanism (Ferrero, Humm) - hasn't openly pointed out this aspect of Paullus' characterisation.

The paper aims to briefly discuss these characteristics inherited from the Greek world (and in particular from Italian Pythagorean tradition) and contextualise them in the sources, starting from Polybius and arriving to Plutarch's biography. In the end, I will try to locate Plutarch's position in this tradition, and point out which could be his additions (or modifications) to the biographical characterisation of Paullus and which, on the contrary, should possibly be reflections, in his biographical work, of historical aspects. This can help in defining a model of shaping Roman (past) identity by the *exempla* put in the *Life* of one of the most important political and military characters of Republican Rome.

Joaquim Pinheiro, Madeira University

The greco-roman synkrisis and the construction of identity in Plutarch's Lives of Philopemen-Flamininus

The biographical pair *Philop.-Flam.* is the only one, in the biographical corpus of Plutarch, in which the two heroes are contemporaries. This has undoubtedly some consequences in the way the two are compared. Therefore, our paper will seek to identify and analyse the internal relations and, in particular, the final *synkrisis*. In fact, Plutarch combines, in the biographical narrative, the Hellenic decline and the expansion of the Roman Empire, oscillating between *philonikia* and *philotimia*, between historical facts and ethical interpretation. Therefore, these thematic elements are extremely revealing in an analysis about Greco-Roman identity.

[Thursday]

Slot 6: 10:00 - 10:50am

Kelly Nguyen, Brown University

What's in a Natio? Rethinking Ethnic Identity in the Roman Empire

Natio is a poorly understood term whose multifaceted meaning ranges from communities with shared traits to those with shared boundaries. As such, *natio* describes an aspect of identity that is defined and redefined as Roman rule reshapes the geopolitical landscape of the provinces. There has been no comprehensive study of *natio* and recent scholarship on related concepts, such as ethnicity, has overlooked its various nuances. This paper proposes to explore the changing connotations of *natio* within the Roman world over the *longue durée*, from the late 3rd century BCE to the late 2nd century CE. This paper will fall into two parts. In the first part, I assess the historiography of the term and its relationship with related concepts such as ethnicity and identity. This section also provides a brief survey of how *natio* has been employed in Latin literature, from the first extant example in the 3rd century BCE to the high Imperial period. In the second part, I examine auxiliary soldiers and their epigraphic habit in relation to ethnic identity as a case study. Opportunely for our purposes, auxiliary soldiers comprise the largest group to employ the term *natio* within inscriptions, namely epitaphs. By examining how *natio* was deployed over time through different medium and in different contexts, this paper investigates how people from across the socioeconomic spectrum, as well as from different parts of the Roman world, employed the term *natio* and what this suggests about Roman conceptions of group identity. Overall, this paper aims to demonstrate that *natio* was not a one-dimensional static identity, but one that oscillated between emic and etic perceptions, between socio-cultural and geo-political definitions, and between local and global identities.

Federica Lazzerini, University of Oxford

Rome in the mirror: a quest for the past, for a present goal

The 1st century BC, approaching the sunset of the Roman Republic, was an age of distress. Centuries of wars had brought Rome in contact with various civilizations which were now politically and economically tied to the *Urbs*, and its growing (but strained) relationship with the Italic peoples had transformed the fabric of Roman society and the ethnical composition of its elite. As a result, the Roman *nobilitas* was now engaged in a discussion: To what extent should other ethnicities be integrated in the Roman civilization, and what did it ultimately mean to be a Roman?

The great scholar Varro was not impervious to this climate: being himself a Sabine, he was clearly invested in such questions on the Roman identity. From his works (where an antiquarian approach prevails) a preoccupation emerges with reconstructing a portrait of “Roman-ness” for the benefit of his fellow citizens.

In undertaking this task, Varro gave prominence to selected facts and events from historical accounts. His emphasis on the Sabine contribution to the Roman civilization sometimes overrun historical accuracy; but he also stressed the involvement of Etruscans and Greeks and went to great lengths to combine clashing mythological traditions (Aeneas, Hercules, Romulus) into an inclusive account of the origins of the Roman people. This effort is especially visible in his linguistic works; there is reason to believe that he even considered the establishment of Romulus’ asylum – where beseechers and refugees from a multitude of peoples gathered, forming the first core of Roman citizenry – as the very founding event of the Latin language.

I will argue that Varro’s selection of key-events from Rome’s mythological history promotes a narrative in which the Roman people emerges as the product of ethnic,

cultural, and linguistic syncretism; and that this narrative was designed to defend a specific standpoint in the ongoing debate on Roman identity.

Slot 7: 11:10 - 12:00am

José Luís Brandão, University of Coimbra
Modes of Roman Identity-Building in Suetonius

In this paper, I aim to explore the metamorphosis and consolidation process of Roman identity in the *Lives of the Caesars* through the analysis of crucial elements such as language, religion, citizenship, clothing, and class consciousness. In particular, I examine the ways in which these elements are employed in the characterization of biographical statesmen, in addition to how they define their policies.

Zsuzsa Varhelyi, Boston University

Self and emperor: the tensions of self-writing between imperial biographies and Seneca's Moral Epistles

In Seneca the Younger's most self-reflective work, his *Moral epistles*, he sets himself up as an example of a good Roman. Such exemplariness is of course a traditional Roman paradigm, but in this paper I argue that Seneca fashions his model self in ways that undermine long-established approaches to self-definition (via history, comparison to other cultures and social status) in particular by engaging the appropriation of Roman identity by emperors. Building on recent literature on exemplarity and its challenges under imperial rule (Langlands 2018, Roller 2018), I investigate Seneca's strategies not only to defend himself and his legacy in the increasingly obvious failure of Neronian rule in the Rome of the 60s CE, but also to maintain some sense of what it means to be a good Roman. My particular focus will be on how Seneca's work contrasts with imperial self-representation, in particular the tradition of imperial biographies (by Augustus, Tiberius, Claudius, as well as Agrippina the Younger). Although other than that of Augustus, imperial biographies do not survive in full, they were likely at least somewhat accessible to members of the Roman elite, and together with large-scale representations of imperial rule shaped the self-conceptualizations of individuals, such as Seneca.

[Friday]

Slot 12: 10:00 - 10:50am

Elisabeth Slingsby, University of Sidney
A King by Any Other Name: Reconsidering Roman Identity in Cornelius Nepos' Lives of Miltiades and Timoleon

In his *Life of Miltiades* and *Life of Timoleon*, Cornelius Nepos wrote that these two Greek generals were given the opportunity to become the sole rulers of their respective communities. Although Miltiades immediately accepts and Timoleon initially declines, both are eventually voted kingly powers, which they exercise justly and benevolently. At the end of these *Lives* however, Miltiades and Timoleon face charges laid by dissatisfied citizens. Should these be considered misguided complaints, or legitimate grievances

which justify the Romans' aversion to sole rule?

My proposed solution to this question rests on an examination of the contrast Nepos draws between tyranny and liberty. While this dichotomy is often present in texts composed during the Triumviral period, the 'tyrant' is rarely as virtuous as Miltiades or Timoleon. In this paper, I contend that Nepos' depiction of two upstanding Greeks, who hold a much maligned system of rule, reflects his thinking about Roman political identity during the shift from Republic to Principate. Specifically, I will focus on Nepos' interpretation of *libertas*, as well as the extent to which his use of such language reflects that of his contemporaries. I will demonstrate that Nepos believed so long as citizen liberty was preserved, the Romans must recognise that a state under an elected sole ruler could not only function, but flourish.

Bibliography

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Eelco Glas, University of Groningen

Shaping Jewish Identity in Flavian Rome: Josephus' Autobiographical Narrative in the Bellum Judaicum

This paper aims to show how Josephus designed his autobiographical narrative in the *Bellum Judaicum* in accordance with literary and rhetorical stock themes demonstrably fashionable in Flavian Rome. By doing so, Josephus attempts to bridge the cultural gap between himself and his Roman audience. He shapes his distinctively and explicitly Jewish identity in the language of Roman culture.

Building upon recent scholarship, this paper takes as its starting point that Josephus wrote his *Bellum* as an intelligent author to communicate with an audience in Flavian Rome. This specific approach provides an excellent vantage point for increasing our understanding Josephus' intentions with his autobiographical narrative and the literary and rhetorical dynamics underpinning this narrative. The value of this approach will be illustrated by scrutinizing the "tragic" framing of the *Bellum* generally and Josephus' autobiographical narrative specifically. Already in the prologue of the *Bellum* Josephus talks about his actions in tragic terms, and this vocabulary persists in the remainder of the work.

The particular framing of Josephus' autobiographical narrative is in fact something we encounter frequently Roman and imperial Greek discourse, not in the least among contemporaries such as Plutarch and Quintilian. Josephus' vocabulary is distinctively (provincial) Roman, meant to affect Roman emotions. Tragic themes and vividness – such as the reversals of fortune, detailed descriptions of horrors in war, tragic heroism – were stock themes Graeco-Roman rhetoric and historiography, *particularly* advisable in autobiographical discourse. By employing such themes, Josephus invites his Roman audience to think about his character on terms they would both appreciate and understand.

Slot 13: 11:10 - 12:00am

Fabio Faversoni, Federal University of Ouro Preto

Provincials, freedmen and “self-Romanization”: a study on multiple identities in the Roman empire

Our paper analyses the issue of Roman cultural identity considering the role played by provincials and freedmen, particularly those that ascended in the Roman hierarchy and proclaimed themselves as Romans, even if they keep being provincials or former slaves as well. Roman Empire was a multicultural empire, and binary oppositions revealed to be insufficient to understand complex situations when individuals or groups manipulated multiple identities for themselves. These cases invite to think about Romanization beyond the bidirectional relationships of acculturation and resistances. In our analysis, we will focus mainly on the “biographies” of Trimalchio, by Petronius, and Agricola, by Tacitus.

Sérgio Ferreira, University of Coimbra

Comparison between slavery and other power relations in Roman society: Contribution to the study of the proslavery side of Roman identity

This study analyses the comparisons that different authors establish between the relation of the master to the slave and that of the god to the men, the king to the subjects, the general to the soldiers, the husband to the wife, and the father to the son. It seeks to demonstrate that the differences are more clearly marked in Greek culture. In the mid-fifth century, they are shed because of the archaic family structure. Later, they are now reflecting fragmentary views of slavery that derive from the prejudices with which the dominant strata looked to the slaves, now fit into a more comprehensive view of the obligation / devotion dichotomy in the relationship between the master and the slave.

Slot 15: 2:30 - 3:20pm

Stefan E. A. Wagner, Independent Scholar

Augustus, The Res Gestae and Early Imperial Ruler Portraiture: How a Self Representation strategy was forged

My paper is an interdisciplinary survey and deals with a field of classical studies, where the step by step formation of Roman identity through concurrence of different influences can be grasped in a very obvious and therefore amazing way: it deals with the emergence of early imperial ruler portrait under Octavian Augustus and his early successors. The focus of the analysis is on the Primaporta statue, which clearly shows how the newly founded empire was given a ruler portrait intentionally constructed out of hellenistic elements, for example the juvenility that showed kings as Antiochus VI. (144-142 B.C.) on his famous and excellent coin portraits. Another element that was transferred into Roman ruler portrait iconography was the sun ray crown („Strahlenaureole“), which became a constituent feature in many Roman Ruler portraits even after the end of the Claudian dynasty.

The paper wants to reach three objectives: First: Working out clearly the Early Imperial representation strategy by incorporating all sources (biographical texts like Sueton,

Plutarch etc. as well as archaeological material). Second: Analysing the question to which extent early Roman ruler portraiture and political representation consists out of foreign, namely Hellenistic influences, and: Third: Discussing the most interesting question to which extent the newly forged Augustan ruler portrait and self-representation strategy became part of the Roman political identity over the times, until the final fall of the empire.

Helen Kaufmann, University of Oxford
Roman identity in Latin verse autobiography

Latin verse autobiography provides a unique insight into how Roman poets wished to represent themselves to their readers. As a literary form it is only attested at two moments in the history of the Roman empire, and that in a rather small number of poems. Its first peak coincided with Augustus' rule in Rome when Horace (*Letters*1,20), Propertius (1,22) and Ovid (*Tristia*4,10) each closed a book of their poetry with sketches of their respective lives. The late Roman Empire in the West saw its second bloom when a number of poets introduced their collections of poetry by autobiographies (Ausonius, *Preface*1; Prudentius, *Preface*1) or recounted their lives within praises of God (Paulinus of Pella, *Eucharisticos*) or of saints (Paulinus of Nola, *Carmen*21,365–487, Venantius Fortunatus, *Vita Martini*4,621–680).

In this paper, I will first analyse the markers used by the Augustan poets to represent themselves, for example, geographical and social origins, education, civic roles and then compare these findings with the evidence of the late antique poems. It will emerge that the Christian poets developed the genre in such a way that they present their lives as part of God's or a saint's story while – in most cases – continuing to use secular markers such as offices and status. In fact, I will argue that in Latin verse autobiography, secular and Christian aspects of Roman identities complement each other in a similar way to how local origins relate to the Roman empire: Christianity and the Roman empire function as frames for the secular aspects of life and local origins respectively, the Roman empire mostly as a common background that is hardly mentioned, Christianity, by contrast, as a prominent marker of difference.

Slot 16: 3:30 - 4:20pm

Lautaro R. Lanzillota

Cláudia Teixeira

Shaping Roman Identity: Self Perception and its tensions in Ancient Biography