

PLASTIC ACCOMMODATIONS OF FEMALE AGENCY: VERGIL, HORACE AND ANTIPATER OF THESSALONICA

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Introduction

Female figures abound in various art forms in the ancient tradition. Such figures are often cast in the role of objects. In Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Pygmalion's female ivory-statue, which subsequently even becomes alive through his workings, paradigmatically epitomises the female figure as an object. While the intersection between statuary portraits and poetry will remain central, as it is in the tale of Pygmalion, this paper strikes out a different approach and focuses on examples of female agency in plastic as well as literary art forms in Augustan Rome. By taking statues of female figures in the Portico of Pompey as a point of departure, the subsequent analysis scrutinises poems by less known as well as very famous Augustan poets that are rarely, if ever explored in relationship with each other in Classical scholarship.

Female figures in the Portico of Pompey

One of the most arresting testimonies to representations of female figures in plastic art in ancient Rome is found in the Portico of Pompey.¹ The Portico of Pompey was a part of the great Pompeian Complex, which was built during the sixties and fifties BC² in commemoration of the three triumphs of Pompey the Great.³ The gigantic complex included a lavish theatre with the first permanent stage in Rome,⁴ a temple for Pompey the Great's patron deity Venus Victrix ('Venus the victorious / giver of victory'), and an adjacent garden grove.⁵ The garden grove was framed by the aforementioned portico, at whose far end there was an *exedra*, an open recess for sitting in, where Julius Caesar was famously stabbed to death during a senatorial meeting on the Ides of March 44 BC.⁶

The portico was the first public park in Rome and richly decorated with various forms of art.⁷ Among the artistic decorations was a number of female figures, of which the following are of particular relevance to this investigation: the Cnidian Aphrodite (= Venus), made by the sculptor Praxiteles,⁸ a group of colossal marble statues, each about four meters tall, of which

¹ Almeida 1981, table 32.

² Cf. Steinby 1999, 148. The temple of Venus Victrix was inaugurated in 52 B.C. (cf. Aulus Gellius *Noctes Atticae* 10.1.7).

³ Cf. Beard 2007: 7–41 and Östenberg 2009 *passim*.

⁴ Pliny the elder reports that the theatre could host 40 000 spectators (*Historia Naturalis* 36.115) against 25 000 by modern, more modest estimates, cf. Beacham and Denard 2003: 129.

⁵ Cf. Martial 2.14.19 *nemus*, Propertius 2.32.11–16.

⁶ Cf. Plutarch, *Vitae Parallelae: Caesar*, 66.

⁷ Cf. Gleason 1994; Plutarch, *Vitae Parallelae: Caesar*, 66; and Pliny *Historia Naturalis* 7.34, 35.41, 59, 114, 126, 132.

⁸ Cf. Tatian, *Ad Graecos* 34.20; Athenaeus, *Deipnosophistae*, 13.591a; cf. also Pliny *Historia Naturalis* 34.79 and Dillon 2010, 48. For Tatian's *Ad Graecos* as testimony to the statues in question, see below, esp. n. 20.

the extant five, four have been identified as Muses,⁹ as well as an extraordinary assembly of statues that certainly included some¹⁰ and probably all¹¹ of the following women:

1. Praxilla, poet,¹² sculpted by Lysippus¹³
2. Learchis, sculpted by Menestratus
3. Sappho, poet,¹⁴ sculpted by Silanion
4. Corinna, poet, sculpted by Silanion
5. Erinna, poet, sculpted by Naucydes
6. Myrtis, poet, sculpted by Boiscus
7. Myro, poet, sculpted by Cephistodotus
8. Anyte, poet, sculpted by Cephistodotus and Euthykrates
9. Pantheuchis, made pregnant by rape, sculpted by Euthykrates
10. Taliarchis, sculpted by Euthykrates
11. Mnesarchis, sculpted by Euthykrates
12. Praxagoris, sculpted by Gomphus
13. Clito, sculpted by Amphistratus
14. Telesilla, poet, sculpted by Niceratus
15. Glaucippe / Alcippe,¹⁵ mother of an elephant, sculpted by Niceratus
16. Mystis,¹⁶ sculpted by Aristodotus¹⁷

⁹ Cf. Fuchs 1982.

¹⁰ The localization in the portico of the female figures in question is certain where Tatian and Pliny concur (see note 9 and item 15 and 22 in the statuary list) and where the archaeological evidence and Tatian concur (see note 11 and item 16 in the list).

¹¹ Because both Pliny's testimony and the archaeological evidence overlap with Tatian's statuary catalogue on individual points (see note 9 and 10), it is generally assumed that all of the figures included in the catalogue were on display in the Portico of Pompey, cf. Coarelli 1971–1972 = 1996; Fuchs 1982, 77; Sauron 1987; Stewart 1998; Steinby 1999, 148–149; Kuttner 1999, 123–145; Dillon 2006: 40–41, 184, n. 28, and 2010, 48; Rosenmeyer 2007, 279; Bowditch 2009, 425; and Evans 2009, 123–145. For a sceptical view, see Beard 2007, 342, n. 50–51.

¹² Tatian does not call Praxilla a poet, but refers to her poetry (*Ad Graecos* 33.9).

¹³ For references outside of Tatian to the sculptors and their motifs, see the apparatus of Marcovich 1995, 61–65.

¹⁴ Tatian clearly knows Sappho too as a poet, but he, as the first extant author, also calls her a 'miserable little whore' (*Ad Graecos*, 33.20). Before Tatian, a certain Didymus is supposed to have speculated along the same lines according to Seneca (*Epistulae*, 88.37), see also Aelian, *Varia Historia*, 12.19.

¹⁵ It is generally assumed that Pliny's Alcippe (see note 9) and Tatian's Glaucippe refer to the same statue, since there were hardly many statues in Rome of women who had given birth to elephants and the difference in spelling may be due to textual corruption, cf. Brunn 1857, 272, with bibliographical references.

¹⁶ Mystis is attested in titles of comedies of Antiphanes (Athenaeus, *Deipnosophistae* 10.44c 9, 494c) and Philemon (Stobaeus 100.5).

¹⁷ The sculptor Aristodotus, like Gomphus (cf. item 12), is not known from other sources, cf. Brunn 1857, 525. The discovery of a base inscription, which was retrieved near the *Area sacra di Largo Argentina* in Rome – which once was covered by the far end of the Pompeian Portico and which displays the mutilated names of Mystis and Aristodotus, uniquely attested in Tatian and on this base inscription – therefore sensationally vouched for the accuracy of Tatian's account, see Coarelli 1996 and Stewart 1998. The inscription is of Augustan date and could have been a part of Augustus's restoration of the Pompeian Complex (*Res Gestae* 20). See also Thorsen 2012.

17. Phryne, hetaera, sculpted by Praxiteles and Herodotus
18. Glycera, hetaera, sculpted by Herodotus
19. Argaea, lyre player, sculpted by Herodotus
20. Besantis, mother of a black child, sculpted by Dinomedes
21. Melanippe, a wise woman, sculpted by Lysistratus
22. Eutyichis,¹⁸ mother who bore thirty children, sculpted by Periclymenus
23. Euanthe, a mother, sculpted by Calliastratus
24. Neaera, hetaera, sculpted by Calliades
25. Lais, hetaera, sculpted by an unnamed artist¹⁹

This remarkable catalogue, which is mainly based on the second-century AD *Oratio ad Graecos* ('Speech to the Greeks') 33–34 by the somewhat aberrant Christian apologetic Tatian,²⁰ includes the statues of eight poets (1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 14), five mothers (9, 15, 20, 23, and 22), four hetaerae (17, 18, 24, and 25), and six named but otherwise unidentified women (2, 10, 11, 12, 13, and 16); in addition, there are the statues of Argaea (19), who may have been another hetaera or even an otherwise unattested poet (inasmuch as she is described as a lyre player), and Melanippe (21), who may have been a philosopher and thus a writer or poet.²¹

As far as we can tell, this gallery does not represent divine or mythical characters, but historical persons.²² Though the mothers in this gallery seem to belong to a rather fantastic category defined by miraculous and monstrous births, which as such might align them to legend rather than history, the poets and hetaerae whose names are attested in other ancient sources were famously real persons.

As historical persons, Sappho and Corinna most conspicuously stand out among the female figures in the Portico of Pompey, simply because they are the two most famous women poets of Antiquity. Furthermore, these women poets represent as such striking examples of female agency, in as much as they are composers of poetry. At the same time Sappho and Corinna, at least her name, figure in Augustan poetry, where they appear as objects of the attention of male poets. Sappho and Corinna are therefore cast both in subject and object positions in the ancient tradition. The two women poets are thus highly relevant to the present investigation into the question of female agency in interartistic representations in ancient Rome. However, as I have already treated such aspects in the case of Sappho and Corinna in other works, I wish in the following to focus on the women poets as a group, the Muses, Glycera, one of the

¹⁸ Both Tatian and Pliny mention this mother by drawing attention to the overwhelming number of births she gave; Pliny alone gives her name (*Historia Naturalis* 7.34).

¹⁹ Tatian merely refers to the artist as a 'male whore' (per Wilamowitz's conjecture), for example in the critical apparatus of Marcovich 1995, 65.

²⁰ Tatian, a Greek speaking Assyrian, was a follower of the apologetic Justin Martyr, who, after his teacher's death, turned to asceticism and became an apostate, see e.g. *Oxford Classical Dictionary* 2012: 1433. Prompted by the singular attestation of the sculptors Aristodotus and Gomphus, as pointed out by Brunn (see note 17), Kalkmann 1887 dismissed the accuracy of Tatian's entire account of the statues in question. The reliability of Tatian's account was, however, vindicated by the discovery of the base inscription mentioned above (see note 17), which displays the name of Mystis and Aristodotus, thus uniquely matching Tatian's text. Unfortunately, the evidence in stone has not been taken into account in the latest editions of Tatian, cf. Whittaker 1982, 60; Marcovich 1995, 62; and Trelenberg 2012, 172. See also Thorsen 2012.

²¹ *Melanippe the Wise* is also the title of a fragmentary tragedy by Euripides, cf. Collard, Cropp and Lee 1995, 248–252.

²² For an analysis of the portrait-gallery from an overall archaeological point of view, see Sande 2014.

hetaerae, and Venus, all figures that appear both in the Portico of Pompey and in Augustan poetry.²³ The main focus will be on the plastic appearances of these figures in poetry.

Antipater of Thessalonica: A group of female poets

The largest group that is distinct as such among the female portraits in the Portico of Pompey is the collegium of poets. The intellectual faculties of the female figures in this portrait gallery are therefore just as, if not more conspicuous than the erotic and procreative qualities. Furthermore, the intellectual faculties render the group of poets particularly relevant to the present investigation into female agency.

Strikingly, a Greek text of Augustan date includes all the names of the eight woman poets that are identified as such in the Pompeian Portico, as well as a ninth. In his epigram 19 Antipater of Thessalonica, who enjoyed the patronage of the Scipio family, describes the poets thus:

τάσδε θεογλώσσους Ἑλικῶν ἔθρεψε γυναῖκας
 ὕμνοις καὶ Μακεδῶν Πιερίας σκόπελος,
 Πρήξιλλαν, Μοιρώ, Ἀνύτης στόμα, θῆλυν Ὅμηρον,
 Λεσβιάδων Σαπφῶ κόσμον ἐυπλοκάμων,
 Ἑρινναν, Τελέσιλλαν ἀγακλέα, καὶ σέ, Κόριννα,
 θοῦριν Ἀθηναίης ἀσπίδα μελψαμέναν,
 Νοσσίδα θηλύγλωσσον, ἰδὲ γλυκυαχέα Μύρτιν
 πάσας ἀενάων ἐργατίδας σελίδων.
 ἐννέα μὲν Μούσας μέγας Οὐρανὸς ἐννέα δ' αὐτά
 Γαῖα τέκεν, θνατοῖς ἄφθιτον εὐφροσύναν.

These are the women of heavenly voice whom Helicon and Pieria's Macedonian rock nourished on songs, – Praxilla; Moero; the lips of Anytê; the female Homer, Sappho, the glory of the fair-tressed ladies of Lesbos; Erinna, illustrious Telesilla; and you, Corinna, who sang of Athena's warlike shield; Nossis, the tender-voiced; and sweet-singing Myrtis; all craftswomen of immortal pages. The great heavens created nine Muses, and Earth herself nine others for mortals' undying delight.²⁴

Here Antipater mentions all the eight women poets that Tatian names in his *Speech to the Greeks*, plus Nossis.²⁵ The match between the individual women poets among the effigies in question and the women poets included in the epigram of Antipater is remarkable. The striking correspondence, along with the deictic qualities of the poem (τάσδε 1, 'these'; ἰδὲ 7, 'look') has prompted the suggestion that the epigram represents the poet's stroll in the Portico of Pompey, where he addresses the individual portraits of the women poets, finally comparing them with the group of Muses that was also present in the Portico.²⁶

Within the framework of the epigram, it is the number of nine that allows Antipater to claim that the women poets represent a parallel to the celestial Muses, whose number

²³ See Thorsen 2012 and 2014, 84.

²⁴ Translation by Gow and Page 1968.

²⁵ Before the discovery of the Mystis and Aristodotus inscription mentioned above (see note 17), the name 'Mystis,' universally transmitted in the manuscripts of Tatian, was replaced with 'Nossis' from Kalkmann 1887 onwards, including the latest editions of Tatian by Whittaker 1982 and Marcovich 1995), which thus incorrectly recorded the same number of poets in Tatian as in Antipater's epigram 19 (GP). Although not exact, the match between Tatian and Antipater is nevertheless remarkable. Gow and Page (1968 I, 36): '[W]e know of no other lists of poetesses.' See also Thorsen 2012.

²⁶ Cf. Kuttner 1999, 361–362 and Fuchs 1982, n. 9.

famously also is nine. The epigram might thus be regarded as an elaboration on the notion most prominently promoted in Hellenistic poetry of Sappho as the tenth Muse.²⁷ In Roman poetry, especially in the genre of Latin love elegy, which flourished at the time of Antipater, the idea of the human Muse is common. Notably, in this poetry, this idea serves first and foremost to confirm the agency of the male poet-lover,²⁸ since the task of the human Muse is to inspire him so that he acts and creates, that is: produces poetry. Thus, in the context of Augustan poetry the alignment of a female figure with the Muses, even in the few cases where that figure is known as a woman poet, tends to diminish her agency in favor of that of the male poet who writes about her in his verse.

A closer look at how Antipater distributes thematic as well as linguistic gender markers in his poem suggests, however, that he not so much reduces these women poets to Muses, as he leaves room for authorial agency on their part. While certain ring-compositional elements strike a balance between thematic and linguistic gender markers in the *femininum* and the *masculinum* (male: Helicon, 1, Uranus, 9; female: Pieria 2, Gaia 10), the beginning as well as the end of the poem is framed by verbs, which evoke experiences that are exclusive to women (τρέφω 1, ‘to nurse’; τίκτω 10, ‘to give birth’), employed figuratively. Similarly, while there is a sophisticated distribution not only of male and female gender markers, but also of the neuter in the descriptions of Anyte, Sappho, and Corinna,²⁹ the overall emphasis is on their authorial agency. Indeed, Antipater compares these women to human Muses, which is an apt comparison of the women poets inasmuch as the Muses are female figures associated with literature. There is, however, a major difference between the two kinds of female figures in Antipater’s poem: unlike the divine Muses, the human women do not *inspire* poetry; they are instead ἐργατίδας (8, ‘craftswomen’) who *compose* – in the post-archaic culture of letters – pages that will never perish.

By thus assigning authorial agency to the nine women poets in his epigram, Antipater offers a strikingly close parallel to the honorific portraits of the women poets in the Pompeian Portico. Far from being a simple list, Antipater’s unique poem enhances the relationship between Muses and poets, which is complex whether the poet is male or female, by stressing these women’s authorial agency.

Horace: Gleaming Glycera

Hetaerae are not as clearly associated with intellectual qualities as women poets. Yet, they might nevertheless be associated with agency. In his poetry, Horace includes the names of three hetaerae whose statues appear in the portrait gallery of the Portico of Pompey: Phryne (*Epodes*, 14.16), Neaera (*Odes*, 3.14.21 and *Epodes* 15.11), and Glycera (*Odes* 1.19.5, 1.30.3, 1.33.2, and 3.19.28). Glycera is by far the least famous of the three hetaerae. Tellingly, Horace is the only Augustan poet who mentions her name, while the names of Phryne and Neaera appear in other poets of the time. Though largely neglected as such, Glycera thus stands out as markedly Horatian. The importance of Glycera in the Horatian *Odes* is furthermore confirmed by the frequency with which Glycera is mentioned: the occurrences of Glycera’s name can only be matched by the case of Chloe among all of Horace’s girls, a fact which adds to her conspicuous presence in the Horatian corpus.³⁰

²⁷ Cf. *Anthologia Palatina* 7.14, 407; 9.66, 506, 571 and Gosetti-Murrayjohn 2006.

²⁸ E.g., Propertius 2.1.4 and Ovid *Amores* 1.3.19–20, 2.17.34.

²⁹ Anyte’s poetic talent is represented *pars pro toto* by her eloquent στόμα (3, mouth), a word in the neuter; Sappho is the female Homer, θῆλυν Ὅμηρον ... Σαπφῶ (3–4), a phrase that proves that, linguistically, the male Homer can be female; and finally, Corinna is said to have sung of the mighty goddess Athena (5–6).

³⁰ Cf. *Odes* 1.23.1, 3.7.10, 3.9.6, 9, 19, and 3.26.12.

This is how Glycera is described as she appears for the first time, in a poem that has the form of the poet's excuse (*recusatio*) for the not being able to write of important issues (i.e. war), now that Venus assails him – again:

*urit me Glycerae nitor,
splendentis Pario marmore purius;
urit grata protervitas
et vultus nimium lubricus aspici.*

The splendour of Glycera, shining more purely than Parian marble, burns me; the pleasing forwardness burns [me] as does the face, too slippery to be looked upon. (*Odes*, 1.19.4–8; my translation)

The goddess of love attacks the *ego* of the poem (*in me tota ruens Venus*, *Odes*, 1.19.9, 'all of Venus assails me') and his attention is directed towards Glycera. Furthermore, the description of this erotic object of desire explicitly evokes statuary imagery. The hyperbolic comparison of her splendour (*nitor*) to Parian marble³¹ particularly underscores Glycera's resemblance to a plastic portrait. As such, Horace's Glycera appears as an erotic object, compared to a piece of art.

At the same time, Horace's Glycera hardly appears passive. The agency with which Horace's Glycera is endowed in this passage is apparent even on a lexical level. Glycera and qualities belonging to her are grammatically rendered as active in comparison with the poem's *ego*, who remains passive: her 'splendour' burns him, as does her 'welcome forwardness' and her 'face'. Important is also the choice of the word *protervitas* 'forwardness', even 'lustfulness'.³² Firstly, this quality, which belongs to Glycera, is associated with sexual lasciviousness, which is readily connected with hetaerae. Next, the very term *protervitas* remains hard to reconcile with an idea of passivity, since forwardness necessarily implies a certain engagement of will and action. Finally, the way in which Glycera's face is 'too slippery to be looked upon' seems brilliantly to capture an act of defiance on her part against being objectified. It is as if the agency of Glycera intervenes with the viewer; she is indeed an object of the viewer's passion, but at the same time she actively attempts resisting her on-looker's objectification.³³

This resistance towards objectification is significant and holds potential insights not only into this, but also into another poem in the Horatian corpus. Notably, the *nitor* ('splendour'), which is so crucial to Glycera's resistance against being objectified, and hence to her agency, is reflected in the *nitor* of the young man Hebrus in Horace's *Odes* 3.12. *Odes* 1.19 and 3.12 are the only instances in the Horatian corpus where this specific word occurs. Consequently, this common lexical feature – which is glaringly conspicuous, as it were – invites the reader to look for further connections between *Odes* 1.19 and 3.12.

Activity versus passivity and masculinity versus femininity are crucial elements in both poems. In *Odes* 1.19 the poem's *ego* is easily confounded with that of the poet, inasmuch as he excuses his inability to produce martial poetry because he has fallen in love again. The assumed male poet-lover thus embodies the subject position of poem 1.19, while the object of his desire remains the female Glycera, who, as we have seen, nevertheless retains agency on her part.

The contrast between active masculinity and passive femininity is at the heart of *Odes* 3.12 as well, where the girl Neobule is not only confined to the household occupation of weaving,

³¹ Cf. Pindar *Nemean Odes*, 4.81.

³² Cf. e.g. *protervo ... marito*, *Odes*. 3.11.11–12, 'lustful husband'.

³³ Cf. Sutherland 2003, 70.

she is frequently even unable to work her wool, as she is immobilized by love.³⁴ In contrast, it may safely be assumed that Hebrus, the poem's male figure, has access to the game of love (*Odes*, 3.12.1, *amori ... ludum*) and sweet wine (*Odes*, 3.12.1–2, *dulci /...vino*) in addition to his reported swimming in the Tiber, riding, sporting and hunting (*Odes*, 3.12.7–12), pleasures that are all denied a girl from a good family such as Neobule (cf. *Odes*, 3.12.3).

Nevertheless, despite the fact that Hebrus seems to be as active as Neobule is passive, she assumes the subject position of the poem,³⁵ by loving and lusting for Hebrus, while he remains the object of her desire:

*tibi qualum Cythereae puer ales, tibi telas
operosaeque Minervae studium aufert, Neobule,
Liparaei nitor Hebri
simul unctos Tiberinis umeros lavit in undis*

From thee, O Neobule, Cytherea's winged child snatches away thy wool-basket, thy web, and thy devotion to busy Minerva, so soon as radiant Liparean Hebrus has bathed his well-anointed shoulders in Tiber's flood. (*Odes*, 3.12.4–7)³⁶

The choice of the word *nitor* not only underscores the naked attractiveness of Hebrus, juxtaposed with *Liparaei*, which recalls the Greek λιπαρός ('oily, shiny with oil')³⁷ on whom Neobule feasts her eyes, but also reflects, as already touched upon, the gleam of Glycera in *Odes* 1.19.

This gleam arguably infuses Hebrus with Glycera's statuary qualities and renders him too, by association, similar to an object of art. The objectification of Hebrus and Glycera is emphasized by the fact that their names are given in the genitive while their *nitor* functions grammatically as the agent of their erotic power.³⁸ Thus the gleam of Glycera shines within the Horatian corpus, intertextually reflecting the objectification of Hebrus through Neobule's focus on his *nitor*, and in turn contributing to the confounding of subject/object, male/female, and active/passive that is so essential to the fundamental plot of the two Horatian poems.

Horace and Vergil: Reflecting female agency in Homer

Aphrodite is a powerful agent in both Horace's *Odes* 1.19 and 3.12 (cf. *Cythereae*, line 4). As a female figure she represents a category endowed with special power, since she is one of the Olympic gods. Fittingly, she appears as one of the most important female figures in the Portico of Pompey: not only is the entire complex dedicated to Venus Victrix as the patron deity of Pompey, she is also represented in the portico by Praxiteles' statue known as the Cnidian Aphrodite.

³⁴ The name Neobule also occurs in Archilochus (fr. 171 West). Furthermore, Horace's poem has been seen as evoking Alcaeus (fr. 10 L-P) and Sappho (fr. 102 L-P), cf. Nisbet and Rudd 2004, 164–165. Thus Horace *Odes*, 3.12 most notably may evoke all of the Greek poets with whom he associates himself (more or less closely) at *Epist.* 1.19.23–31.

³⁵ The agency of Horace's Neobule is disputed, cf. Nisbet and Rudd 2004, 165. Recently, Davis 2010, 122, observes that 'Horace is not beyond appropriating the name Neobule, which Archilochus had notoriously conferred upon a female victim of his defamatory verse. He does so, however, in order to further his lyric subtext by transforming the figure of Neobule from an object of verbal abuse to a speaking subject who delivers a brief monologue.'

³⁶ Translation by Bennett 1995.

³⁷ Cf. West 2002, 114–15. Horace's Neobule delights in the oily nakedness of Hebrus, like Theocritus's Simaetha delights in that of Delphis (*Idylls* 2.79–82) and Ovid's Hero delights in that of Leander (*Heroides* 19.43–4).

³⁸ Parallel, of course, to the real agent of *Odes* 3.12, *Cythereae puer ales*.

Aphrodite's image occurs too in a web of literary-sculptural allusions where Horace and Vergil reflect female agency of divine dimensions that arguably goes back to Homer. In fact, with his *nitor* ('splendour'), *unctos umeros* ('anointed shoulders') and *lavit* ('he washes'), Horace's Hebrus arguably recalls Odysseus, as he is about to impress first Nausica in Book 6 (lines 224–31) and then Penelope in Book 23 (lines 153–58) of the *Odyssey*. At these instances in the *Odyssey*, which are so striking because they are so identical,³⁹ Odysseus is about to become an object of female desire, by means of washing and anointing his body, similar to how Hebrus distracts Neobule from her chores, by doing the same.

In both of the Homeric passages the goddess Athena actively uses her divine power and renders Odysseus's hair and shoulders particularly attractive, in an act of divine beautification, which is described thus:

ὥς δ' ὅτε τις χρυσὸν περιχεύεται ἀργύφ' ἀνήρ
ἴδρις, ὃν Ἥφαιστος δέδαεν καὶ Παλλὰς Ἀθήνη
τέχνην παντοίην, χαρίεντα δὲ ἔργα τελείει·
ὥς ἄρα / μὲν τῷ περίχευε χάριν κεφαλῆ τε καὶ ὤμοις

As when a man overlays silver with gold, a cunning workman whom Hephaestus and Pallas Athena have taught all sorts of craft, and full of grace is the work he produces, just so the goddess shed grace on his head and shoulders.

(*Odyssey* 6.232–5, with Nausicaa = *Odyssey* 23.159–162, with Penelope)⁴⁰

Strikingly, the goddess Athena is here compared to a craftsman in the process of moulding an extremely precious object. In the Homeric passages the nature of the object remains uncertain, but associations towards sculpturing is close at hand, as suggested by a passage in the Vergilian corpus.

Even more conspicuously, Vergil too alludes to these Homeric verses in the crucial passage where his hero Aeneas is about to dazzle Dido in the *Aeneid*:

*restitit Aeneas claraque in luce refulsit,
os umeroque deo similis; namque ipsa decoram
caesariem nato genetrix lumenque iuventae
purpureum et laetos oculis adflaret honores:
quale manus addunt ebori decus, aut ubi flavo
argentum Pariusve lapis circumdatur auro*

Aeneas stood forth, gleaming in the clear light, godlike in face and shoulders; for his mother herself had shed upon her son the beauty of flowing locks, with youth's ruddy bloom, and on his eyes a joyous lustre; even as the beauty which the hand gives to the ivory, or when silver or Parian marble is set in yellow gold. (*Aen.* 1.589–93)⁴¹

The Greek and Latin passages resemble each other to the degree that the latter version has been deemed 'almost a translation'.⁴² Indeed, in both passages the goddess contributes to the beauty of the hero's hair and his attractive lustre, as well as grace (χάριν / *decus*). These

³⁹ Only the small words ἄρα / μὲν in the last line of the passage differ, see below.

⁴⁰ Translation by Murray 2002.

⁴¹ Translation by Fairclough 2006.

⁴² Austin 1971, 185.

details underscore the main point in both Homer and Vergil, which is that the heroes in question are endowed with supernatural beauty in order to stir female desire. This is a striking feature shared by the Homeric and the Vergilian passage.

There are however also certain variations worthy of note between the two. The most obvious difference between the Homeric and the Vergilian passage is that Vergil's Venus replaces Homer's Athena. Moreover, Venus has a closer relationship with the hero in question in the Latin passage compared to Athena in the Greek, as Venus is also the mother (cf. *genetrix*) of Aeneas.

An even more significant difference in the context of the present discussion is that the non-specified character of the works (*ἔργα*) in the Homeric passages, are rendered by mentioning material that evoke the precise imagery of statues, such as marble and ivory, in the Vergilian verses. Notably, marble is the material Horace's *Glycera* is compared with, while ivory is the material from which Pygmalion famously sculpts his *eburna*, ivory-doll. Furthermore, the 'skilled man' (*ἀνὴρ / ἴδιος*) of Homer disappears in Vergil's plural of the impersonal 'hands' (*manus*), which thus contribute to reducing the distance between the goddess and the simile used to convey her action. By means of these variations Venus arguably emerges as 'sculpting' Aeneas much more 'hands on', as it were, than Homer's Athena, in her process of beautifying Odysseus.

In Vergil's Rome, Venus was famously represented by Praxiteles' statue known as the Cnidian Aphrodite in the Portico of Pompey. Against this backdrop, the Vergilian passage acquires a delicate irony in as much as the sculpture appears a sculptor in these verses. Significantly, this confounding of artist and model, object and subject all happens in a passage where Vergil conspicuously re-sculpts Homer.

Concluding remarks

By looking beyond the portrait of Pygmalion, other representations of the relationship between creator, portrait and viewer than those that confirm conventional patterns of male and female gender expectations emerge in Augustan poetry.⁴³ From our point of view, the portrait of Pygmalion in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* seems paradigmatic, not only of ancient culture, but even of the later tradition.⁴⁴ Yet, as seen from the examples assembled here, literary motives in sculptures and sculptural motives in literature, less known as well as very prominent, provide fruitful interartistic connections, which allow Augustan culture to accommodate striking representations of female agency.⁴⁵

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⁴³ For further, different examples, though from a later period than that of Augustan Rome, see Rosenmeyer 2001.

⁴⁴ Bömer 1980; Sharrock 1991; Elsner 1991 and 2007, 113-131; Hardie 2002, 186-193; Salzman-Mitchell 2008.

⁴⁵ I would like to thank Rasmus Brandt, Stephen Harrison, Marina Prusac and Greg Wolf for their helpful commentaries on this topic.

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Latin summary (slightly enhanced)

De adaptationibus plasticis actuum femineorum: de Vergilio, Horatio, Antipatreque Thessalicensi. Figurae femineae in traditione antiquā variis in formis artis abundant. Tales figurae saepe exhibentur ut obiecta. In Ovidii opere, q.e. *Metamorphoses*, feminea statua eburnea a Pygmalione facta, quae deinde eius operibus fit viva, modo paradigmatico figuram femineam ut obiectum repraesentat. Cum decussatio inter statuas anthropographicas atque poesim remaneat quaestio centralis, ut est in fabula Pygmalionis, haec symbola alium aditum ad thema praebet et investigationem dirigit ad exempla feminea et in arte figurativā et in arte litterariā Augustianā inveniendā. Initium sumens ab statuis Porticūs Pompeianae investigatio sequens imprimis spectat ad Antipatrum Thessalonicensem poetam minus notum, qui epigrammata Graeca Romae tempore Augustiano composuit, et ad Horatium Vergiliūque poetas clarissimos illius temporis. Perceptiones figurarum marium, quae iam apud Homerum inveniuntur, sunt alicuius momenti, ut diversitas figurarum feminearum exhibeatur. Ut demonstratur, Antipater, Horatius Vergiliusque clare exponunt figuras femineas et ut subiecta et ut obiecta, quae cum nonnullis figuris femineis Porticūs Pompeianae coniunguntur, hunc in modum aliquid attribuentes ad quaestionem, quomodo mulieres in antiquā arte figurativā atque in arte litterariā repraesentatae sint.

English summary

By taking statues in the Portico of Pompey as a point of departure, the present investigation centres on the less known poet Antipater of Thessalonica, who composed epigrams in Greek in Augustan Rome, as well as the famous Augustan poets Horace and Vergil. Representations of male figures in the object position that go back to Homer will be important as a contrast to representations of female agency in Augustan Rome. As will be shown, Antipater, Horace and Vergil highlight female agency in subject as well as object positions that resonate with a number of the female figures in the Pompeian Portico, thus contributing to a richer understanding of how women may be represented in ancient art forms.

Keywords

Female agency, Portico of Pompey, Homer, Vergil, Horace, Antipater of Thessalonica.