

## Prostitutes in the Portico of Pompey? A Reconsideration\*

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SUMMARY: Tatian's *Oration to the Greeks* purports to find prostitutes in the Theater and Portico of Pompey in Rome. I examine this supposition in light of his entire *Oration*, other sources that mention the decorative program, and reactions to the program within Augustan buildings in Rome. I argue that the "prostitutes" are instead a group of women poets and comedic and tragic heroines, and I place them within the other females in the Portico, including Muses and Conquered Nations, to interpret the decorative program within its Late Republican milieu, and to demonstrate a strong response in the public decorative programs of Augustus.

THE DECORATION OF THE THEATER AND THE PORTICO OF POMPEY HAS attracted some attention in recent years, in part because of the physical remains left to us, and in part because ancient authors' descriptions of statues, paintings, and textiles which decorated the buildings tempt scholars to reconstruct the program. One group of statues in particular has called for comment from the moderns, and though the identity of a group of courtesans in the Portico is considered by all to be likely, there is still some unease with this identification. The unease is well founded, as it is based on a source that cannot be taken at face value; all other "evidence" for the identification of a group of courtesans in the complex is forced to fit this conclusion. I will suggest a more nuanced reading of the source, and propose a different identification of the group, that of comedic heroines. The comedic heroines can be understood as part of a program that celebrates female artists, especially

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\* My thanks to audiences in Princeton, Philadelphia, Storrs, CT, and the American Institute of Archaeology for questioning me closely on my material. I also benefited greatly from readings of the manuscript in varying stages of the work by Bettina Bergman, Richard Brilliant, Karen Hersh, and Richard Weigel. Each one made me think about a different aspect of my argument; none is responsible for the judgments and errors that remain.

women poets. For groups of females celebrated in sculpture, we must turn to prototypes in the East; for groups of looted statues, we have numerous examples in Rome itself. This group of females is part of a larger group that included female Captured Nations, Muses, and Marvels of Nature, and is unique in Rome for the number of females portrayed. It is answered in Augustan decorative programs.

In order to understand the group of the statues of women in the Portico and Theater of Pompey, it is first necessary to have an understanding of what was happening in the years when Pompey was planning this unique building. Pompey first came to public attention in 83 B.C.E. as a legate appointed by Sulla, in command of three legions he had himself raised in Picenum, using soldiers who had once served with his father and the wealth inherited from his father.<sup>1</sup> During the next three years, Pompey served successfully as a general in Sicily and North Africa. He was given an extraordinary command in Spain from 77 to 71, where he was again victorious. In all of these places, as was customary for a Roman general, he gathered clients or people who depended on him for gifts to the city and legal advice and who would vote for him or his allies; it is also likely that Pompey, like every other victorious general, took home Greek statues and paintings, which he would have acquired especially in Sicily and later in the eastern Mediterranean.<sup>2</sup>

In 70, Pompey was elected consul. As he would again, Pompey briefly retired from public life, until 67, when he was given a sweeping command (*imperium infinitum*) covering the whole of the Mediterranean and fifty miles inland, to put down pirates plaguing the shipping lanes to Rome. Since he finished this job in only one year, his command was extended to bring peace to the regions of Cilicia, Bithynia, and Pontus (in modern Turkey). Pompey remained in the east for several years attending to this "settlement," adding to or enlarging the Roman provinces Bithynia and Pontus, Asia, Cilicia, Syria, Crete, and Cyprus, thereby adding the eastern Mediterranean to his client base. Before returning to Italy he stayed—as a sightseer—in Mitylene on Lesbos, Ephesos, probably Rhodes, and Athens.

He returned in 62 to Rome, to great acclaim and trepidation (See Tatum 2006: 197ff). Again, it was clear he would retire from public duties. He did lobby the Senate to provide his veterans with land and to ratify his eastern

<sup>1</sup> For biographies of Pompey, see Leach 1978; Rawson 1978; Gelzer 1949; Greenhalgh 1981; Seager 2002.

<sup>2</sup> This looting of art from a captured city is especially well known to us from the story of Marcellus, the conqueror of Syracuse, who brought back with him many statues and paintings, a distinction the Romans recorded (Plut. *Vit. Marc.* 21). The Romans credited Marcellus as being the first to import Greek luxuries into Rome on a huge scale.

settlement, and was rebuffed. The Senate may have been reluctant to grant him these requests since Pompey had disbanded his army and was no longer a threat, but in part their reluctance may have stemmed from the senators' intense jealousy of Pompey's fame that resulted from his exploits and triumph. This setback shows that Pompey's reputation had fallen to a new low; he desperately wished to repair the situation, both with his peers and the lower orders, as Cicero informs his friend Atticus in May of 60, Pompey is "without largeness and loftiness of view, entirely given over to a mean pursuit of popularity" (*Att.* 1.20).<sup>3</sup>

His failure to succeed in obtaining land for his veterans was one of the factors leading to the formation of the First Triumvirate in 60. Pompey strengthened the Triumvirate by marrying Julia, Caesar's daughter, in 59. He still did not take up an office, though he supported Caesar's successful bid for the consulship. Plutarch records the bewilderment and distaste of Pompey's supporters who claimed his wife had "seduced" him to leave the manly ways of the forum and enter a more feminized life, spent in his gardens and villas (*Pompey* 48).<sup>4</sup> Of course this reaction was overstated—Pompey successfully pressed Caesar to find land for his veterans and arranged for the provinces in Gaul as well as an extra legion to be awarded Caesar after his consulship. Between 59 and the autumn of 57, Pompey planned his Theater and Portico complex, built his villa southeast of Rome, and worked on his gardens and house (which was described by Plutarch as a "small boat towed behind the Theater," *Pomp.* 40.5) on the Pincian hill.

He returned to public life in 57, securing a special office in charge of relieving the grain shortage in Rome. The Conference at Luca, in 56, guaranteed him a consulship for the following year, in which he celebrated the dedication of the Theater (although he dedicated the adjoining Temple to Venus Victrix in 52), which was said in antiquity to be modeled on the temple of Mytilene.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>3</sup> See recent discussions on the effect of aristocratic competition in Holliday 2002: 1–6; Treggiari 2003 *passim*, and Pompey's position in particular in Temelini 2006: 2–4. According to Cicero, between January of 61 and June of 60, Pompey attempted to mend fences with the ex-consul by praising him (*Att.* 1.13.4, 1.19.7, 2.1.6). He also assured the Senate that he backed their work (*Att.* 1.14.1–2), and he encouraged the tribune Flavius as the latter pursued agrarian reform legislation (*Att.* 1.19.4). All translations from Shackleton-Bailey 1965.

<sup>4</sup> Boatwright 1998: 71, 74 emphasized the link made between "womanly men" and gardens, and the criticism of Pompey for withdrawing from the activities of the forum. Kuttner 1999: 349 sees the contrast instead as "Roman" and "Greek."

<sup>5</sup> Although Plutarch *Vit. Pomp.* 42.4 tells us the theater was modeled on the Theater of Mytilene, few parallels can be made with that particular building. Modern scholars

Plutarch says the festivities included dramatic performances, music, gladiatorial games, exhibitions of animals (the Indian rhinoceros exhibited were the first seen in Rome) and gymnastic shows. The wild beast hunts were considered to be the most impressive part of the events, with 600 lions, and over 400 leopards and panthers. It was the weeping elephants that truly stunned the crowd.<sup>6</sup> The theater remained in use until it was abandoned in the sixth century; however, we are not again privileged with information about the types or frequency of shows presented.

Little remains of the Theater and Portico today. The outlines of the theater's cavea are easily traced in the streets, but the entire complex was probably within the area enclosed by the Via di Grotta Pinta, Via dei Giubbonari, and the Via de'Chiavari. The theater and part of the portico are depicted on the third-century C.E. Marble Plan of Rome. Vaulted substructures can still be seen in the cellars of the buildings built on top of the site. The diameter of the cavea is estimated to be about 150 to 160 meters, and though Pliny says it held 40,000 people, modern scholars are skeptical of that high number.<sup>7</sup> The Theater held shrines to Honos, Virtus, Fortuna, and Victory along with the temple to Venus Victrix; the Curia Pompeia, made famous as the spot near which Julius Caesar was stabbed to death, bounded the eastern end of the portico. Between the Curia and the Temple to Venus could be found a huge number of statues, gardens with bubbling fountains and plane trees, and gold and purple textiles made in Pergamon (Mart. *Epig.* 2.14, 6.9; Prop. 2.32; Val. Max. 2.4.6). Some of the statues have survived, including an overlife-sized statue of Hercules (the "Hercules Righetti," now in the Museo Pio-Clementino in the Vatican), Apollo Kitharoidos, and "Melpomene/Euterpe." The latter two were found in the 16<sup>th</sup> century near the Church of S. Salvatore in Lauro; Apollo is in Rome, while Melpomene was taken by Napoleon to the Louvre where she remains today. Another heavily restored Muse belonged to the Farnese family, and it rests in Naples ("Erato"); two are in the Palazzo Borghese

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have suggested stronger parallels to the theater-temple complexes of Latium (e.g. Coarelli 1987), but Gros 1999: 36 suggests that Pergamon is the best.

<sup>6</sup> For Pompey's life during this period in which we have little information from Cicero, see Leach 1978: 101, 117, 132–35; Rawson 1978: 55; Greenhalgh 1981: 54–55; Seager 2002: 37, 52, 72–77. For the inaugural games and the date of the dedication, see Seneca *De brevitate Vitae* 13.6; Pliny *Nat. Hist.* 8.20–21, 53, 64, 70, 71; Dio Cassius *Roman History* 38.2–4, and especially the eyewitness account in Cicero *Letters to Friends* 7.1.3

<sup>7</sup> For a history of the Theater complex after the time of Pompey, see especially Cencetti Capoferro 1979, and Gagliardo and Packer 2006; other introductions to the Theater are Platner and Ashby 1926; L. Richardson, Jr. 1992; Sear 1993; Gros 1999: 35–38. Recent excavations of a small area of the sub-cavea are described in Gagliardo and Packer 2006.

(“Thalia” and “Klio?”); finally, a seated female, perhaps a Muse on a rock, probably belongs to the Theater.<sup>8</sup>

The building was restored several times by the second century C.E.: the first time by Augustus, when he closed up the Curia attached to the Complex, made it into a latrine, and moved Pompey’s statue—which was by the Curia Pompeia and under which Caesar died—to the Theater (*Res Gest.* 20, Suet. *Aug.* 31). The physical reminders of this refurbishment are new statue bases made of Luna marble, some of which still survive (Coarelli 1971/2: 101 and n13, 104–5). After a fire in 21, Tiberius began to repair the damage. It appears that Caligula or Claudius finished the work (Vell. Pat. 2.130.1; Tac. *Ann.* 3.72; Suet. *Tib.* 47, *Calig.* 21, *Claud.* 21), though it may have been superficial. The *scaenae frons* burned (again?) in 80, and was repaired by Domitian (Dio Cassius 6.24). Thereafter, the physical remains attest to rebuilding in the third century, which may have been extensive, according to excavators (Gagliardo and Packer 2006).

We have a few near-contemporary sources revealing the nature of some of the statues in the Portico and Theater. Cicero mentions a statue that I believe ended up in the Theater, a wonderful Sappho that had been owned by Syracuse and stolen by Verres (*Verr.* 2.4.57C.126–7). Propertius (2.32.11–12) and Martial (*Epig.* 6.9) fleetingly describe the gold and purple hangings, and statues of Maron, nymphs, Triton, and Oceanus, which were arranged around fountains.

More information comes from Pliny, who lists in the Theater complex several sculptures of “Marvels of Nature,” sculptures of the fourteen “Nations” conquered by Pompey, and paintings.<sup>9</sup> Pliny too infrequently says where he saw the objects he was discussing in his chapters on painting, bronze-working, and stone-carving. But he describes a statue group in the Theater complex of a woman, Eutychis, shown with the twenty surviving children of the thirty she bore. Pliny writes in the first century C.E., before the restorations Domitian made to the Theater. He is an encyclopedist, and besides being familiar with the monuments in Rome, he had read a huge number of manuscripts. His information is usually considered to be sound.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>8</sup> See Coarelli 1971/2 and 1997; Fuchs 1982 and 1987: 5–11. The statues are, as Coarelli argues, first century B.C.E. originals; the seated female is in the Museo Capitolino in Rome.

<sup>9</sup> In *Nat. Hist.* 7.34, Pliny mentions the places of a human mother who birthed an elephant, Eutychis, and a hermaphrodite. The Conquered Nations are mentioned in *Nat. Hist.* 36.41 and Suetonius *Nero* 46. Paintings of Alexander, and an Armed Man are mentioned in *Nat. Hist.* 35.132 and 35.59, respectively.

<sup>10</sup> For a general overview of Pliny’s writings about art, see Isager 1998.

Since the restorations before the second century appear to have been minor, or confined to the *scaenae frons* (which may have been erected only after Pompey's death),<sup>11</sup> we can also use Tatian in deciding the subject matter and even the program of the sculptural groups at the time when Pompey built the Theater and Portico. It is his mention of a sculpture with a unique subject matter—a woman who bore thirty children—that allows us to place his ekphrasis of female sculptures within the Theater complex of Pompey, and most likely in the Portico.

Although Tatian's personality is vividly displayed in his apology, his biography can only be dimly fathomed. He was by birth an Assyrian of the upper class, and had been educated in Greek rhetoric and philosophy. Between 150 and 165, when he was in Rome, he became a Christian and a pupil of Justin Martyr. Tatian wrote his apology of the Christian faith to the "Greeks," by which he surely meant "pagans" (*Oration to the Greeks*). This apology sought to defend the Christian faith by proving that Christian culture was superior to Greek, as could be seen (for instance) in the way that Greeks and Christians treated their aged and women. In order to argue the point, he turned to the largest collection of female sculptures in Rome, in the Theater complex. The first indication that Tatian is looking at a sculptural group is his conclusion to the section on pagan role models, for he says, "All this I set down not from second-hand knowledge, but after much travel. I followed [Greek] studies and came across many devices and many notions, and finally I spent time in the city of the Romans and got to know the varieties of statues which they brought home with them from [Greece]." (*Orat.* 35).

Tatian subsequently returned to the east, where most scholars would say that he became a Gnostic, perhaps founding the ascetic sect the Encratites. It is not entirely clear that he wrote his apology in Rome, but likely, in part because it seems to come from his earlier, non-Gnostic, phase and in part because the information he has about Rome is quite specific. Interestingly, he says that he saw many theatrical performances in Rome, possibly at the Theater of Pompey (*Orat.* 22).<sup>12</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Gleason 1994: 20–22, and Nielsen 2002: 197–202 agree that a *scaenae frons* existed in Pompey's time. Beacham 1991: 67 and Sear 1993: 687 (reiterated in Sear 2006: 87–88) argue that the *scaenae frons* is a later addition.

<sup>12</sup> Interest in Tatian's writings today centers on works other than the *Oration*; see now Whittaker 1982, McGehee 1993, Hunt 2003, Karadimas 2004; all the translations of Tatian are from Whittaker. Scholars of religious history and apologetics are fully aware of the vituperative, sarcastic, and abusive tone of the apology—though crucially, art historians and archaeologists have not faced the oration as a whole. Hunt 2003 dates the *Oration* to c. 160 C.E.

Tatian named the subject, usually named the sculptor (whose name could be found on the base), and often inserted editorial comments on why he had singled out this woman as indicative of the baseness of pagan culture. In this way, the descriptions of the artwork vary considerably from the descriptions of Pliny, who was interested in technique and artists. Tatian was appealing to educated Greeks, but not necessarily those interested in matters of art. His goal was theological or even sociological, comparing the mores of the old world with the mores of the new. Thus, reading his entries as if he were Pliny is a mistake, although it is a mistake that modern scholars have made.

As an example of how we must tread carefully when reading Tatian, he notes that the best pagan role models are inferior to the lowest Christian woman; he begins his “proof” of this thesis by mentioning the statue of Sappho, sculpted by a certain Silanion (*Orat.* 33). His editorial comment was that “Sappho was a *gynaeion pornaeion*, maddened by love, and sang of her own lewdness.”<sup>13</sup> In his prosecution of Verres, Cicero was intent on having the jury understand the reason why the Syracusans wanted the statue back, and so he described the statue, not the supposed character of the poet: he writes that this work by Silanion is a “choice and highly-finished masterpiece . . . an exceptionally fine work of art.” (*Verr.* 2 4.57C.126–7). And so the first contrast is telling: Tatian castigates the character of the individual woman represented, and skews the calling of the female represented. If one understands that Sappho is a poet, and one who sang of love, especially her love for females, one can begin to understand why Tatian dismissed her as an artist. She was likely included in the Portico of Pompey’s Theater as one of a group of women poets; we know of other women poets (whom Tatian also dismisses as saying “nothing useful”) in the Portico.

Tatian lists eight more poets known to us: Antye, Corinna, Erinna, Myro, Myrtis, Nossis, Praxilla,<sup>14</sup> and Telesilla. These were perhaps grouped as the nine

<sup>13</sup> Whittaker 1982 translates this rather tamely as “a wanton girl.” Hunt 2003: 60 and cf. 152–53 noted Tatian’s unease with the sexual mores of Roman society. There is a controversy on how to translate *hetaira* and *porne*. Since Tatian seems to have used the words interchangeably, I have vacillated between using the words prostitute and courtesan. I make no argument whether these are “high-class” or “common” working women; see McClure 2003: 9–18 and Cohen 2006: 95–124.

<sup>14</sup> All are known from fragments, complete poems, or (most commonly) as names in lists of poets: see Goodwater 1975. For the sculpture by Lysippos, see comments in Moreno 1987: 33–34, who believes the statue should date to c.350–340 B.C.E., when civic pride was being advertised in commissions to the artists Apelles, Melanthius, and Pausias. Moreno suggests that Praxilla was shown with her flutes, and suggests that her songs celebrating wine incurred Tatian’s displeasure, which is why he places her name in

mortal Muses, who visually paired with the nine immortal Muses grouped around Apollo. Yet this does not complete the list of the women found in the Portico, for Tatian has also notes Clito, Learchis, Mnesarchis, Praxigoris, and Thaliarchis the Argive. Perhaps they were part of a group of the nine “lesser mortal” Muses; such a conceit is not unknown in the literary world. Thus, we would have the nine immortal Muses, the nine mortal Muses, and the nine “lesser mortal” Muses within the complex.

Modern scholars have skipped over Tatian’s remarks about Sappho and focused on a group that they then restore in the Portico. As examples of pagan women who are esteemed enough to receive statues in the Portico, he lists (*Orat.* 33–34):

Phryne the prostitute [*hetaira*] . . . Glyceria the prostitute [*hetaira*] and Argeia the lyre player . . . [and] Pasiphae, and when you thus record her lasciviousness you almost show that you would prefer women now to be like her. There was a Melanippe who was “wise” and because of this Lysistratus sculpted her . . . After all this, are you not ashamed, when you have so many good-for-nothing poetesses, innumerable prostitutes and scoundrels, and yet you disparage the fair name of our [Christian] women? What good does it do me to learn that Euanthe gave birth in the Peripatus or to gape at Callistratus’s art? Or to glue my eyes to Calliades’ Neaira—that prostitute [*hetaira*]? Lais too was a prostitute [*porne*], and her seducer made her statue in memory of her prostitution. (translation modified)

Because of this text, and parallels to names of well-known mistresses or courtesans, Coarelli first proposed a group of statues in the Portico that featured famous courtesans.<sup>15</sup>

Coarelli supported his theory with the evidence of a base made of Luna marble, found in the excavations of the Largo Argentina, the area adjoining the Portico; it would have been used in the refurbishment of the Complex under Augustus. The base reads “Mystis . . . / Aristodot . . .” Aristodotos is a sculptor, recorded by Tatian to have made the statue of Nossis. Since other

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the list of prostitutes. Stewart 1990: 296n4.31 says Praxilla is rendered as the “drunken flute player” (the “Berlin Dancer”); Ridgway 1988: 290 disagrees.

<sup>15</sup> Coarelli 1971/2: 100–2; he is followed in his interpretation by Fuchs 1987: 8, Sauron 1987: 459 and Kutter 1999: 347. Sauron 1994: 262 suggested the identity of comedic heroines in the Complex, but did not follow up on the suggestion to argue his case. Moreno 1987: 34 was uncomfortable with seeing prostitutes in the Complex, though he takes much interest in their iconographical significance. He prefers to see a very limited number of them, perhaps only seven. For a discussion of the increasingly prominent role of Hellenistic courtesans, see Ogden 1999, esp. xxi ff.



sculptors have two or three sculptures in the complex, and since the other known sculpture by Aristodotos is a women poet, I would argue that this base is likely to have recorded an unknown poet. Yet Coarelli restored the base to read: *Mustis hetaira, Aristodotos Athenaios epoiei* (Mystis the courtesan, sculpted by Aristodotos the Athenian).<sup>16</sup>

Although Coarelli's argument has been accepted by most scholars, there are good arguments against seeing any famous prostitutes or courtesans in the Complex. We have two lists of prostitutes in the literary conceits of Alciphron ("Letters from the Town II: The Courtesans") and Lucian ("Dialogues of the Courtesans"); both were supposedly dialogues or letters between courtesans and their clients.<sup>17</sup> Alciphron and Lucian wrote around the time Tatian was in Rome, c.150 C.E. About fifty years later, Athenaeus wrote extensively about historical courtesans and mistresses, in his *Deipnosophistae* (especially book 13), giving us the names of about one hundred women.<sup>18</sup> Tatian specifically calls Phryne, Glycera, Neaira, and Lais prostitutes. Six of the women he lists he does not identify further, nor are they known poets: Clito, Learchis, Melannipe (the "wise"), Mnesarchis, Praxigoris, and Thaliarchis. If these unknowns were famous courtesans, it is very likely that their names would be found in texts written when Tatian had access to the "courtesan statue-groups." In other words, we could expect the famous courtesans in the Theater to be found among the courtesans writing and speaking in Alciphron and Lucian, and possibly Athenaeus.<sup>19</sup>

Yet of all the women in Tatian's list, only three names are repeated in Alciphron, Lucian, and Athenaeus—Glycera, Phryne, and Lais (Corinna is also given in Alciphron and Lucian, but she appears in Tatian specifically as a poet, and so this coincidence of names can be discounted). The "unknowns"—Clito, Learchis, Melannipe, Mnesarchis, Mystis, Praxigoris, Thaliarchis, and . . .

<sup>16</sup> Coarelli 1971/2: 104–5; three other bases were found, of a more fragmentary nature: . . . *moumel* . . . ; . . . [*e*]poiei . . . ; and —*poinos ma* . . . / *Polykles St* . . . (Coarelli 1971/2: 101 and n13). The last may be sculptors' names, Dipoinos and Polykles. Coarelli does not address the variant in the manuscripts of Tatian that name Mystis in the Portico. Coarelli first advanced his reading of the base in 1969: 34–39.

<sup>17</sup> About Alciphron, nothing is known; according to the biographical information from his own works, Lucian was born in Assyria, had traveled widely in Ionia, Greece, Gaul, and Italy, and it appears that he died in Athens. See Howatson and Chilvers 1996 and Sidwell 2004.

<sup>18</sup> Athenaeus may have been born in Naucratis, but it appears that his work was intended to portray a dinner in Imperial Rome; see Braund 2000: 3–22.

<sup>19</sup> See also lists of royal courtesans known from Hellenistic sources (esp. Ogden 1999: 221ff); none of our unknowns appear as the name of a Hellenistic courtesan.

oumel . . .—are not listed; nor is Neaira, whom Tatian specifically calls a prostitute. If there were statues of famous prostitutes in Pompey's Portico, more names should appear in common with Alciphron, Lucian, and Athenaeus, in order to evoke in the reader associations with famous prostitutes of the past.

The identities of the four singled out by Tatian (I ignore Sappho, as no scholar groups her with the courtesans, even if Tatian did) are thus less stable than first appears. Tatian is commenting on the qualities of the pagan women depicted in the statues, women that he finds deficient as role models. In terms of his ekphrasis, he begins his commentary on the unsuitability of pagan female role models in the Theater complex. He begins with the poets Praxilla, Learchis (of unknown and unstated fame, I include her as a poet since she is surrounded by them in Tatian), Sappho, Erinna, Myrtis, and Myro, finishing with two unknowns (to us), Praxigoris and Clito. These are perhaps poets as well, as he moves to Anyte and Telesilla, Nossis, the unknown Mnesarchis, Corinna, and the unknown Thaliarchis the Argive (Tatian seems to limit his geographical indicators to poets). He then breaks off to comment on their worth as role models, before resuming in a more disorganized fashion, with a "marvel of nature" (one of the monstrous mothers in the Portico), a "prostitute" Phryne, more "marvels" and figures from Greek myth. As his harangue begins to catch fire, he moves among Glycera, a lyre-player, Pasiphae, Melanippe the wise, the tyrant Phaleris, Polynices and Eteocles (why males figure in his section on women is not explained), the woman who bore 30 children (her, and her children's, only claim to fame, as she remains nameless in Tatian), Harmonia (offspring of Mars and Venus), and the writers Sophron and Aesop. Finally, in his rhetorical crescendo, he excoriates the Romans for erecting statues to Euanthe (whose crime was giving birth in public), the prostitutes Neaira and Lais, Hephaestion (Alexander's companion), Ganymede, and a woman with bracelets; and for reading the erotic writings of Philaenis and Elephantis. Since Clito, Learchis, Mnesarchis, Praxigoris, and Thaliarchis the Argive are listed among the poets at the beginning of Tatian's diatribe, and since they are not given as names of prostitutes (even by Tatian), I think it likely that they are indeed poets. That leaves several women, four of whom Tatian represents as prostitutes.

I begin with Neaira. Neaira is the name of several historical courtesans in the fourth century B.C.E. (Athen. *Deip.* 13.593F), including the courtesan prosecuted for illegally marrying an Athenian citizen." (*Deip.* 13.5). Philemon and Timocles both used the name of this historical courtesan as the title figure of their comedies *Neaira* (*Deip.* 13.590A, 5910).<sup>20</sup> Neaira was indeed a fictive

<sup>20</sup> Timocles was a writer of Middle Comedy of uncertain date, but after 317 B.C.E.; Philemon wrote New Comedy in Syracuse. He is said to have died in 263 C.E.

hetaira, but not celebrated for her career; instead, I argue, she is the first of five comedic heroines that we hear of in the Theater complex, a highly appropriate subject matter.

Glycera is the name of the mistress of Menander (Alciphron 4, 18, and 19), as well as the name of at least one Hellenistic courtesan, who is said to have had a bronze statue erected for her by her patron among portrait statues of kings (Athen. *Deip.* 13.586C, 595D).<sup>21</sup> It is possible that Glycera was shown with Menander, and other playwrights may have been shown with their wives or mistresses. However, Glycera is the name of the heroine who is mistaken by the hero for a short time as a prostitute, though she is actually a free citizen in Menander's "The Girl Who Gets Her Hair Cut Short" ("Perikeiromene"). Thus, we may have a second comedic heroine in the Portico.

Athenaeus mentions at least two courtesans named Lais, although the most famous was Lais of Corinth, whose perfect breasts were used as models by painters, including Apelles. She became the mistress of Aristippus (D. L. *Vitae et Sententiae Philosophorum* 4) and Diogenes (Athen. *Deip.* 13.588C), and spurned Demosthenes (Aul. Gell. *Noctes Atticae* 1.8.45).<sup>22</sup> Pausanias tells us she had two tombs, one in Corinth, and one in Thessaly, the former had a crouching lion sculpted for it in the grove of Craneion (Paus. 2.2.4–5; see also Athen. *Deip.* 13.588C).<sup>23</sup> Lais is also the name of the daughter of Alcibiades and his mistress Timandra (Plut. *Nicias* 15.4). Propertius 2.6.3–18 tells us that Menander used the name for his title character in the play *Lais*.

This leaves Phryne and Mystis. Phryne is the name of the mistress of Praxiteles (Plin. *Nat. Hist.* 34.70), and the supposed model for Praxiteles' "Aphrodite of Cnidos," and Apelles' painting "Aphrodite Emerging from the Sea" (Athen. *Deip.* 13.590). Pliny also records that Praxiteles erected a gilded bronze statue of her in Delphi (*Nat. Hist.* 34.70).<sup>24</sup> But she is given an odd place in Tatian's list, in the section on miraculous births. She could be the "woman with bracelets by Praxiteles," who is the last female mentioned by

<sup>21</sup> Dedications by *hetairae* in Greek sanctuaries are uncommon in any time period; at least in the 4<sup>th</sup> century, women were only shown as part of their families, as priestesses, or other religious figures. See Keesling 2006: 59–76. Athenaeus lists three portrait statues of prostitutes: Phryne, Cottina of Sparta, and the portrait of Glycera placed in a group with kings. See also Ogden 1999: 262ff for other privileges and honors accorded to Hellenistic courtesans, including statues of Cleino put up by Ptolemy Philadelphus in Alexandria.

<sup>22</sup> Athenaeus says that Demosthenes did become a customer (13.588C).

<sup>23</sup> See the discussion in Henry 1985; for the tomb and the punning association between lion and Lais, see Keesling 2006: 59–76. Kuttner 1999: 348 identified Lais as a writer of a medical text.

<sup>24</sup> See Keesling 2006: 59–76 for a discussion of the rarity of this kind of commemorative statue in the fourth century; but cf. McClure 2003: 126–32, 151–55.

Tatian. Again, a playwright used a historical figure to provide a name for his fictional courtesan, as Phryne was the name of a prostitute in a play by Timocles, says Athenaeus (*Deip.* 13.567E–F). Phryne therefore is the fourth comedic heroine from the Theater complex. Mystis is the female for whom we have a statue base, and possibly a mention in Tatian. She is not known as a prostitute, nor a poet, but her name is given to the title role of a comedy by Antiphanes (Athen. *Deip.* 11.494c). She would be our fifth comedic heroine. While this argument rests on speculation, there has long been acknowledged a link between historical courtesans and theatrical heroines—at least in name. When we know something of the play, we can see that the comedy is not a retelling of the life of the courtesan, but that the playwrights used the names to evoke a sense of both their heroines' lives and the society they belonged to. In addition, the evocation of the theater makes more sense in the Theater complex than the calling up of the historical figures of famous prostitutes.

Finally, there is a hint that tragic heroines may have been found in the Portico as well. Melannipe is given the modifier “the wise” in Tatian. Although this could be a sarcastic reference to a poet, he may simply be reading a statue base here, as “Melannipe Sophe” was the name of a tragedy by Euripides (Collard, Cropp & Lee 1995). If so, these figures of tragedy would be visual counterparts to the comedic heroines.

The argument that there were famous prostitutes in the Theater complex rests on two main pieces of evidence: the language of Tatian and the names of four famous mistresses. Tatian's words must not be isolated from their context, for he is using the statues of females in the Theater to disparage pagan culture. Noteworthy is his continual linkage of poetry and prostitution, beginning with Sappho (who “sang of her own lewdness,” *Orat.* 33.2), and his argument that the Romans should be ashamed of their women poets, prostitutes, and scoundrels.<sup>25</sup> Tatian's words would resonate with his readers, who were aware of the links between theater and prostitution.<sup>26</sup> It is difficult

<sup>25</sup> The equating of female poets with courtesans was not new to Tatian. As Parker 1992: 106 has noted, the “sexual slander of the intellectual woman as a form of social control” was especially endured by poets, including Sappho, Nossis, and Erinna. For instance, Aelian *Varia Historia* 12.19 states, “I learn that there was another Sappho on Lesbos, a courtesan, not a poet,” and Seneca records the argument that he read in the grammarian Didymus on whether or not Sappho was a prostitute (*Letters*, 88, in *Lyra Graeca* v.1). For Erinna and Nossis, see Herodas, *Mime* 6. For the use of sexual slander against prominent late Republican and Early Imperial women, see Hallard 1992; see also the link between female authors of erotic or sympotic works in McClure 2003: 83–86.

<sup>26</sup> Note the Games of Flora, when prostitutes performed on stage. Roman law prohibited marriages between senators and actresses or prostitutes. Thanks to Karen Hersch for discussing these issues with me.

to believe that statue bases of prostitutes were refurbished in Augustan times; his moral reforms of 18 B.C.E. would almost have precluded his drawing attention to such a collection in Rome.<sup>27</sup> Lastly, very few names match the second century lists of prostitutes, and those that do match are also known as comedic heroines. Thus prostitutes *qua* prostitutes were not displayed in Pompey's Theater complex; they were instead comedic heroines. Such a group of comedic heroines would have been highly original and very appropriate for the complex, especially if they were matched with tragic heroines and placed near the Muses.

Groups of female statues were unknown in Rome, as far as we know, until Pompey's Theater.<sup>28</sup> In fact, statues of single females were extraordinarily rare in the city, in contrast to Hellenistic cities, where portrait statues of females had become part of the urban fabric in the third century and later. The statues of females we do know about in Rome are the archaic statue of the heroine Cloelia (Pliny *Nat. Hist.* 34.28) and the later (possibly even Augustan) statue of Cornelia, mother of the Gracchi (Plut. *Vit. C. Gracch.* 4.3).<sup>29</sup>

In order to find parallels to a large group of females, we must go to the Hellenistic east, where a telling example is found in the pavilion of Ptolemy II Philadelphos.<sup>30</sup> The pavilion was made with carved wooden columns hung

<sup>27</sup> See his *Leges Juliae* on adultery and marriage (Suet. *Aug.* 34, Dio Cassius, *Roman History* 54.16.1–2, Tacitus, *Annales* 3.25); McGinn 1998: 126–35. Note that a portion of the law, as recorded in the *Acta divi Augusti* forbade marriage between free men and prostitutes; McGinn 1998: 207–15 argues that Augustus maintained a list of “legal” prostitutes in order to clearly distinguish between these “non-respectable” women and matrons. In the Republican period, *stuprum* (criminal sexual intercourse) was not considered an offense to be prosecuted by the state; and consorting with a prostitute was not considered *stuprum*. But most prostitutes must have been slaves or freedwomen, that is, women of very low status (see Cic *Verr.* 2.1.120, 137 for the reluctance of high-status men to be seen entering the house of Verres' mistress, which is like entering a brothel); Gardner 1986: 121, 132–33; see also James 2006: 224–51, especially 243nn5, 6 and Duncan 2006: 252–73, esp. 255.

<sup>28</sup> Lewis 1988: 200 suggests that there were many more females in Rome, but he is unique in this viewpoint (e.g. Fory 1993: 287–308). The only groups of females noted are other Muse groups. On the other hand, groups of males are common. See for instance the bronze statues of Alexander and his bodyguard at the Battle of Granikos, displayed in the nearby Porticus Octaviae (Vell. Pat. 1.11.3–4).

<sup>29</sup> Coarelli 1978: 15–16 suggested that this statue dates to the Augustan period, which would mean that only one mortal female is recorded in Rome in the Republican period. Only two examples of Republican female portraiture were included in Kleiner and Matheson 1996: 167, 197.

<sup>30</sup> The parade that proceeded to the pavilion took place in 276 B.C.E.; educated Romans would have known about it through descriptions. A description survives for us in Athen. *Deip.* 5.196A–197C; see also Rice 1983.

with rich cloths, tapestries, and animal pelts. One hundred marble statues stood in front of the columns, "the work of the foremost artists," and between the columns were hung paintings, portraits, tunics of gold, and military cloaks. Shields decorated the columns, and tucked among the other statues were figures from tragedy, comedy and satiric plays.

There are other eastern monuments that are more distantly reflected in Pompey's Theater complex, especially in the use of groups of females between columns. In the Mausoleum of Halicarnassos, males and females were placed between the columns; females only flit between the columns of the Nereid Monument from Xanthos; or are quietly seated or standing on the Mourning Women Sarcophagus from Sidon, the Altar of Athena Polias at Priene, and the Great Altar at Pergamon.<sup>31</sup> Yet another source for inspiration might be Greek gymnasia, where ruler portraits mingled with Muses, and those of athletes, and intellectual heroes.<sup>32</sup> Thus, the very idea of making a large group of women in the Theater may have appealed to Pompey because he had seen such groups in his travels in the east; it was certainly not a conventional Roman subject matter.

As Tatian lists the names of the females found in the Portico, he normally names the sculptor of the statue. This is information that was accessible to him on the statue base, and as can be seen by the surviving bases, little, if anything else, was added to that information. As can be seen in his list, the sculptors are Greek, and their works can be dated between the fifth and third centuries, if they are known. Even while the Theater complex was being built, the spectator could have walked around the Campus Martius to view collections of looted art. For instance, the Porticus Metelli enclosed the Granikos Group, thirty-four bronze equestrian statues of the companions of Alexander the Great by Lysippos (Vell. Pat. 1.11.3–4).<sup>33</sup> The nearby Temple of Hercules

<sup>31</sup> For the reconstruction of the Mausoleum of Halicarnassos, see Hoepfner 1996a; for the Mourning Women Sarcophagus, see Fleischer 1983 and Hitzl 1991: kat. 18. For the Altar of Athena Polias, see Carter 1983: Chap. 3; for the Pergamene Altar, see Hoepfner 1996b, though his reconstruction has been criticized. For expressions of intense interest in Pergamene art in first century B.C.E. Rome, see Fuchs 1982: 69–80, Gros 1987: 324 and Kuttner 1995: 172 who adds gardens with art collections in Pergamon, and statues of Muses and intellectuals (both male and female) in the libraries at Pergamon. For an exploration of the tie between the female form and the Ionic order, see Onians 1988. Also note Pausanias's description of the Altar of Athena at Tegea (8.47.3), which no longer survives, with the Muses, Apollo, and other figures between columns.

<sup>32</sup> See Delormé 1960: 347ff; see also Kuttner 1999 *passim*, who focuses on the Pergamene inspiration for the groups.

<sup>33</sup> There are many other statues listed by Pliny as belonging to the Porticus Octaviae, which is considered a replacement for the Porticus Metelli; for the refurbished Augustan portico, see Platner and Ashby 1926, Richardson 1992, and Petruccioli 2002.

Musarum housed a statue of Hercules playing the lyre, surrounded by nine Muses (Plin. *Nat. Hist.* 35.66 and coins of Q. Pomponius Musa, which appear to show this group). Neptune, Thetis, Achilles, and the Nereids riding dolphins, sea-dragons, or hippocamps, Tritons, and other marine creatures, sculpted by Scopas Minor (?) could be found in the Temple of Neptune in the Circus Flaminius (Plin. *Nat. Hist.* 36.26; see Kuttner 1993 that the first century reliefs in Paris and Munich served as a base for this group). And Pompey had certainly acquired a great deal of loot in his life; Plutarch asserts that even the two days allotted to Pompey's third triumph were not enough to show everything that he had brought back from the East with him, for he had enough things he didn't show that would have "dignified and adorned yet another triumph." (*Pomp.* 45).

It is very likely that the looted statues seen by Tatian were statues of females taken from Greek public spaces; they were likely renamed poets for the Theater complex. The bulk of the statues would have conformed to the Greek ideal of a heavily swathed female, with little to distinguish her specific identity, beyond her name on the base. This may be why Tatian mentions only a few as having attributes (the woman with bracelets and Argeia the lyre player, who may be a refurbished Muse). The process of refurbishing, and even attaching new identities to sculptures, is an ancient one. Sometimes refurbishment occurs due to damage, loss of attributes, or the formation of a new group due to additions or movement to a new location (Keesling 2006, esp. 71ff). Greek originals could be repainted, or have new attributes given to them in order to change the sculptures' identities from idealized portraits (originally found within family groups) to poets, or comedic or tragic heroines, by the addition of a mask or bucket of scrolls placed by the feet.

Depictions of actors and masks representing roles in comedy (and tragedy) are found from the fifth century on; these include young women and old hags, from Old Comedy and Middle Comedy (picked out by protruding bellies and masks; later statuettes show the loss of the belly-pillow), and New Comedy (who are shown in masks specific to this genre; see Bieber 1961). For example, the second century B.C.E. mosaics in Naples show a masked flute player, and perhaps a scene from a comedy with an old "witch" and her young marks. The role of the woman in the play would easily be recognizable by the mask she wore: the old woman, the false virgin, the slave-girl, the bourgeois, the courtesan.<sup>34</sup> The statuettes show the women wearing a *chiton*, or a long tunic, and a mantle, or *himation* or *pallium*. Such a costume is exactly that of

<sup>34</sup> See Pollux, *Onomasticon* 4.99–154, who lists the characteristics of each mask type. He writes in Athens c.150–200, and perhaps bases his list on first or even second century B.C.E. sources.



the swathed females that Greek sculptors made and that Pompey evidently picked up for his collection. Interestingly, we are told that the *pallium* was saffron-colored in comedies, in order to distinguish free-born women from prostitutes, as the mask alone would not make this crucial identification for the audience; indeed such a color is depicted in the mosaic for two of the women.<sup>35</sup> It may be that the mask and saffron-colored *pallium* picked out the comedic heroines in the Theater complex. And that may be the visual cue that first attracted Tatian's notice, leading to his branding of several of the women in the Portico as prostitutes, even if they were comedic heroines. Thus, I would reconstruct the bases to give the essential clue to the viewer: for instance, "Neaira Kolax/Kalliades epoiei." The educated viewer of the second century C.E. might well have had some hesitation in identifying these women as Middle and New Comedy heroines, as these comedies were rarely performed at this point.

Women may have been drawn to the complex by the large number of representations of females, a unique feature in Rome. Catullus stops all the women in the Portico as he seeks Camerius (55.6), and one would expect Catullus to look for females in a building dedicated to Venus. Ovid suggests the building as a pick-up spot when the sun is hot, due to the numbers of women congregating in the Portico (*Ars amatoria*, 11.67); Martial baits his friend Latta when he suggests that if she does walk there, she will be tempted by erotic interests (11.47.3). The spectator was thus confronted with a number of females, but a full understanding of the group may only have been possible for the highly educated women who had read the poems of the women poets, the plays of Menander and other comic playwrights, and perhaps tragedies. But even without such an education, such a group would have aroused interest, since it was unique when Pompey dedicated his Theater.

The impact of this decorative program is answered especially in Augustan monuments, in two very different ways. The Forum of Augustus was dedicated in 2 B.C.E., and included a large number of statues of the famous men of Roman antiquity. In his Portico Pompey was surrounded by the female Captured Nations, Muses, women poets, and heroines of comedy and tragedy—the spectator must literally make his way through groups of females in order to arrive at the male enclave at the far end, where the statue of Pompey stood

<sup>35</sup> Evanthius, *Commentum Terenti* 8.6; see Olson 2006: 186–204. According to Olson 2006, prostitutes are not depicted in the Roman world as wearing the toga, as they were legally entitled to wear or, according to McGinn 1998: 154–61, forced to wear, at least in the Forum, during the reign of Augustus. The saffron color of the *pallium* could be added in paint to a marble statue, or by gilding that portion of a bronze statue.



alongside the Curia. Along the way, he was treated to the sparkle of light on water from the fountains, the whisper of the breeze in plane trees, and the colors of the gold and purple textiles, marble, and the costumes of the female figures. The spectator was treated to a more austere and virile vision in the Forum of Augustus. One entered the monumentalized entrance to a Forum that was largely sheathed with white marble. Once inside, the gilded bronze emperor controlling a quadriga confronted the spectator.<sup>36</sup>

Between the columns of his portico, the toga or armor-clad statues of famous men of the Republic stood above long *elogia* proclaiming their office titles and deeds; pride of place was given to men who had earned the honor of a triumph. In the hemicycles, the spectator would come upon more rows of marble and bronze statues, of Aeneas, Romulus, the Alban kings, more “great men” of the Republic, and male ancestors of the Julian line. The overwhelmingly male orientation of the Forum was only secondarily home to statues of females—the caryatids confined to the entablature of the portico. Augustus replaces the female-oriented decorative scheme with an aggressively masculine program, where females are only shown as architectural supports, and as indicative of his own conquered nations. This contrast of the virile male population within the portico of Augustus’s Forum must have been a direct response to the “feminized” space of Pompey’s portico—we hear of no fountains, no vegetation, no textiles. Instead, the space was partly used as a museum to house trophies of war alongside the statues of the triumphators and kings. And overseeing all this array was the Temple to Mars Ultor, Mars the Avenger. Pompey had already co-opted Venus Victrix, and so Augustus attaches an unusual epithet to his god, in order to emphasize the militaristic nature of his Forum—which was reflected in its use by young men in the ceremony for assuming the *toga virilis*.

Another answer to the decorative program in the Theater of Pompey could be found in the Temple of Apollo Palatinus, dedicated in 28 B.C.E. As Barbara Kellum 1985 has pointed out, the outside of the temple reminds

<sup>36</sup> For a discussion of some of the themes found in the Forum, see Evans 1992: Chapter 6; Zanker 1988: 24 first says that the Theater of Pompey was influential in the formation of propagandistic show, but then he seems to forget this, for on 112, he states, “Never before had [the Roman viewer] encountered such an extensive, fully integrated set of images” in the Forum of Augustus. Note that in a recent exhibition of sculptures from the Forum of Augustus and the Forum of Trajan, one fragmentary statue of a female was exhibited from the Forum of Augustus. Now see also Kellum 1996, who sees the overall shape of the Forum as aggressively masculine. Her theory may need some revision now that the excavators have announced traces of a second hemicycle on each side.

the viewer of Augustus's military victories in "thinly-veiled allegorical victory trophies" such as the death of the children of Niobe, the turning away of the Gauls from Delphi, Hercules struggling with Apollo to control the sacred tripod, and statues of the Danaids—fifty women who killed their husbands. The viewer "then proceeded inside the temple to experience in three-dimensional terms the central message of the peace brought by that victory," especially looted Greek statues (Kellum 1985: 175).<sup>37</sup> But unlike the male-dominated Forum of Augustus, the Portico and Temple to Apollo on the Palatine housed a huge number of females, though they were certainly not females to be imitated: half of the children of Niobe were female; it is still being debated whether the Danaids were shown with or without their murdered husbands. The Danaids were shown as dark-skinned herms (not even as complete figures)—the "other" in comparison to Roman women. The females who were depicted were those with overweening pride (Niobe) or helpless victims of that pride (Niobe's children), or scheming murderers of their husbands; while the males have an abundance of positive role models in the Forum of Augustus, the female role models both in the Forum and the Temple of Apollos are negative *exempla*. And, while the grouping was of more than fifty women, these were essentially nameless, and famous only for the death they inflicted or was inflicted upon them. We do not hear that the Portico of the Temple of Apollo was a favorite haunt for strolling women, but it can more aptly be compared to the aggressively masculine program in the Forum. While Pompey's own *virtus* could not be challenged, Augustus answered the "feminization" of Pompey's retirement and his interest in the decorative program of his Theater by asserting his own *virtus*, and unmistakably challenging the viewer to compare his Forum and Portico of the Temple of Apollo with the Theater and Portico of Pompey.

Augustus began planning the Forum after the Battle of Philippi (Suet. *Aug.* 29) and the Temple to Apollo immediately after his victories over Sextus Pompey, in 36 B.C.E. (Vell. Pat. 2.81, cf. Prop. 4.6). Since the Temple of Apollo was the smaller of the two projects, it was finished by 28 B.C.E.; Augustus's moral reforms were published in 18 B.C.E., and the Forum was dedicated in 2 B.C.E.<sup>38</sup> In the meantime, the Ara Pacis (dedicated 9 B.C.E.) was the only

<sup>37</sup> Interestingly, Propertius begins to describe the Apollo Temple on the Palatine in 2.31, 32, and encourages his lover to move to Pompey's Portico, where he describes the garden. For the Danaids, see Quenemoen 2006, where the Danaids are herms of women carrying jars, and no husbands are present.

<sup>38</sup> Although Suetonius *Aug.* 31 links the building of the Forum and the refurbishment of the Theater complex, he does not tell us when the latter took place.

monument that presented positive female role models, in the forms of the imperial family.<sup>39</sup> These women are shown interacting with their husbands and children, and so their roles as mother and wife are emphasized, unlike the stand-alone females in the Portico of Pompey. After 2 B.C.E., the great spate of building projects ended.

Although much has been written lately about the Theater of Pompey, a re-examination of the sources and assumptions of modern scholars shows a weakness in the argument. We are too ready to accept descriptions of statues in ancient authors and too reluctant to examine the reasons why these authors are providing their ekphrases. By carefully examining the context of Tatian's remarks, we can then begin to assemble the decorative program of Pompey's Theater and Portico. Only then can we begin to grasp its radical nature—the introduction of a large group of females (Muses, Marvels of Nature, Conquered Nations, poets, comedic and tragic heroines) and the introduction of new subject matters highly appropriate to the Theater complex. Reactions to the groups were immediate, intense, and long-lasting. They ranged from the delight of the female spectator in Rome, who could now walk among the only large group of females in Rome, to the Augustan propagandistic response in marble and bronze, to the vituperation of Tatian. Women poets and dramatic heroines—but not celebrated courtesans—were the innovative and striking new theme Pompey presented to Rome.

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<sup>39</sup> As noted above, it has been argued that Augustus also refurbished the statue of Cornelia, which was housed in the Porticus Octaviae. For dynastic groups that featured the women of the Imperial house in the provinces, see Rose 1997.

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