**Entertainers**

*Entertainers in Rome had a very problematic status. They might attain great wealth and get powerful fans, but ultimately they had only restricted legal rights, even if they were Roman citizens: like others who sold their bodies they had the status of infamis,[[1]](#footnote-1) which restricted their legal rights in a number of ways. As such they were often very vulnerable to the whims of their patrons and to any change in popular support.*

**Athletes**

*Many athletes, and in particular charioteers, were superstars. Fans were incredibly devoted to the various factions in chariot racing, which were run as private enterprises owned by those of equestrian status until quite late, only being taken over the emperors in the 300s CE. Most races involved all four factions racing against each other either in two or four horse chariots (there could be chariot teams that had up to 10 horses, but those were not used regularly). Sometimes the factions raced pairs of chariots or teamed up against each other, racing two against two. In addition to horses there were more exotic forms of chariot racing, with animals like elephants and camels. Once, when the charioteers refused to race until they were paid more money, one aedile threatened to race dogs; two crumbled but the Blues and Greens held out. Charioteers were the superstars of the ancient sporting world – far more so than gladiators – and some earned immense sums (see, for example, Diocles’ inscription below), although they risked life and limb to do so. We are not sure when the factions started, but our first mention of them is from the 70s BCE when one of the supporters of the Reds threw himself in the funeral pyre of the charioteer Felix:*

We find it stated in the *Annals*, that when Felix, a charioteer of the Reds, was placed on the funeral pile, one of his admirers threw himself upon the pile; a very stupid way to behave. In case, however, that this event might not be attributed to the great excellence of the dead man in his art, and so add to his glory, the other parties all declared that he had been overpowered by the strength of the perfumes.

Pliny the Elder, *Encyclopaedia* 7.54

*Charioteers could gain wide celebrity and have long careers, moving from faction to faction over the course of their time racing. However, they started their careers as slaves and could be sold to another faction by their masters, rather than picking and choosing between offers like a modern athlete (once freed they could presumably move as they wished). Given the incredibly dangerous nature of chariot racing many of them could also die as slaves, never managing to be given or buy their freedom. One short lived but extremely successful charioteer of the 1st century CE was Scorpus, about whom Martial wrote several poems; the two on his death show the extent of Scorpus’ celebrity.*

Poor Gaurus begged Praetor,[[2]](#footnote-2) a man he knew well from a long-standing friendship, for a hundred thousand sesterces, and told him that he only needed that sum to add to his three hundred thousand and qualify him to applaud the emperor as a full equestrian.[[3]](#footnote-3) Praetor replies, "You know, I shall have to give some money to Scorpus and Thallus;[[4]](#footnote-4) and would that I had only a hundred thousand sesterces to give them!" Ah! shame, shame on your ungrateful chests, filled to no good purpose! That which you refuse to an equestrian, Praetor, will you give to a horse?

Martial, *Epigrams* 5.67

Tragic Victory:[[5]](#footnote-5) shatter your Idumaean palms. Favour, strike your bare chest with wild blows. Honour, change your clothing. Sad Glory, cast your crowned locks as a gift for the unjust funeral pyre. Alas for the shame of it! Scorpus, cheated and cut down in your youth and so quickly yoking the horses of death. Your wheels always hastened the race – but why was the finishing line of your life so close?

Martial, *Epigrams* 10.50

O Rome, I am Scorpus, the glory of your noisy circus, the object of your applause, your short-lived favourite. The envious Lachesis,[[6]](#footnote-6) when she cut me off in my twenty-seventh year, considered me, judging by the number of my victories, to be an old man.

Martial, *Epigrams* 10.53

*Many emperors were enthusiastic spectators of the races; some even went so far as to train as charioteers, building their own private racetracks in the city for the purpose; Gaius Julius Caesar Augustus Germanicus, better known as Caligula, built his own on the Vatican Hill, which stood roughly where St Peters now stands.*

Caligula also gave many games in the Circus which lasted from early morning until evening; at one time he’d introduce between the races a baiting of panthers and now the manoeuvres of the game called Troy;[[7]](#footnote-7) some, too, of special splendour, in which the Circus race floor was strewn with red and green,[[8]](#footnote-8) while the charioteers were all senators. He also started some games at random, when a few people called for them from the neighbouring balconies,[[9]](#footnote-9) as he was inspecting the outfit of the Circus from the Gelotian house.[[10]](#footnote-10)

Suetonius, *Caligula* 18.3

*The historian Cassius Dio fills out the picture of Caligula’s enthusiasm for the games, which could turn dark for those he did not support:*

5 This was the kind of emperor into whose hands the Romans then fell into. Hence the deeds of Tiberius,[[11]](#footnote-11) though they were felt to have been very harsh, were nevertheless as far superior to those of Gaius [Caligula] as the deeds of Augustus were to those of Tiberius. 2 For Tiberius always kept power in his own hands and used others as agents for carrying out his wishes; whereas Gaius was ruled by the charioteers and gladiators, and was the slave of the actors and others connected with the stage. Indeed, he always kept Apelles, the most famous of the tragic actors of that day, with him even in public.[[12]](#footnote-12) 3 So he by himself and they by themselves did without any restraints all that people like that naturally dare to do when given power. He organized and arranged everything relevant to their art in the most lavish manner at the slightest excuse, and he forced the praetors and the consuls to do the same, so that almost every day some performance of the kind was sure to be given. 4 At first he was but a spectator and listener at these and would take sides for or against various performers like one of the crowd; and one time, when he was vexed with those of opposing tastes, he did not go to the spectacle. But as time went on, he came to imitate, and to contend in many events, 5 driving chariots, fighting as a gladiator, giving exhibitions of pantomimic dancing, and acting in tragedy. So much for how he normally behaved. Once he sent an urgent summons at night to the leading men of the Senate, as if for some important discussion, and then danced before them.[[13]](#footnote-13)

14. 5 Yet after doing all this he later killed the best and the most famous of these slaves by poisoning. He did the same also with the horses and charioteers of the rival factions; for he was strongly attached to the Greens, which from this colour was called also the Faction of the Leek. Even to‑day the place where he used to practise driving the chariots is called the Gaianum after him.[[14]](#footnote-14) 7 He used to invite one of the horses, which he named Incitatus, to dinner, where he would offer him golden barley and drink his health in wine from golden goblets; he swore by the animal's life and fortune and even promised to appoint him consul, a promise that he would certainly have carried out if he had lived longer.

Cassius Dio, *Roman History* 59

*Because charioteers could earn a considerable amount of money over their careers, as well as fame, they could afford to set up records of their lives and victories. This inscription, which commemorates the charioteer Scirtis and his wife, Carisia Nessis, a freedwoman, dates from 13-25 CE and shows the fondness for listing all victories in exhaustive detail that the more detailed honorific inscriptions for charioteers have; however, the sum total of wins is not great and reflects that this was not a good period for spectacles – Scirtis raced during Tiberius’ reign and Tiberius was notoriously cheap about giving spectacles.*

Scirtis, freedman, charioteer for the Whites.  
In the consulship of Lucius Munatius and Gaius Silius,[[15]](#footnote-15) in the four horse chariot 1 victory, 2nd 1 time, 3rd 1 …

In the consulship of Sextus Pomepius and Sextus Appuleius, 1 victory, 2nd 1 time, 3rd 2 times

In the consulship of Drusus Caesar and Gaius Norbanus, 2 victories, was recalled once, 2nd 5 times, 3rd 3 times

In the consulship of Gaius Caelius and Lucius Pomponius, 2 victories, was recalled once, 2nd 8 times, 3rd 6 times

In the 3rd consulship of Titus Caesar and the 2nd of Germanicus Caesar, 2nd 7 times, 3rd 12 times

In the consulship of Marcus Silanus and Lucius Norbanus, was recalled once, 2nd 5 times, 3rd 5 times

In the consulship of Marcus Valerius and Marcus Marcus Aurelius, 2nd 3 times, 3rd 4 times

In the 4th consulship of Titus Caesar and the 2nd of Drusus Caesar, 2nd 2 times, 3rd 5 times

In the consulship of Decimus Haterius Agrippa and Sulpicius 2nd 3, 3rd 4

In the consulship of Gaius Asinius and Gaius Antistius Vetus, was recalled once, 2nd 1 time, 3rd 5 times

In the consulship of Servilius Cornelius Cethegus and Lucius Visellenius 2nd 1 time, 3rd 4 times

In the consulship of Cossus Cornelius Lentulus and Marcus Asinius 3rd 2 times  
… Grand total: 7 victories in a four horse chariot, was recalled 4 times, second 39, third 60. He once raced during an official suspension of public business, and twice raced in a six horse chariot.

CIL 6.10051

*Diocles raced from the age of 18 and achieved immense success over the 24 years his career spanned as this monument from 146 CE details:*

Gaius Appuleius Diocles, charioteer for the Reds, born in Lusitania, Spain, aged 42 years, 7 months, 23 days. He first drove for the Whites during the consulship of Acilius Aviola and Corellius Pansa [122 CE]. He first won for the same faction during the consulship of Manlius Acilius Glabrio and Gaius Bellicius Torquatus [124 CE]. He first drove for the Greens during the second consulship of Torquatus Asprenatis and the first of Annius Libo [128 CE]. He first won for the Reds during the consulship of Laenatis Pontianus and Antonius Rufino [131 CE].

His wins: drove a four-horse chariot for 24 years. He started 4,257 races, won 1,462, he won the first race of the day 110 times.[[16]](#footnote-16) In races for single four horse chariots he won 1,064 times, and in this he took the largest purse 92 times; he won the 30,000 sesterces prize 32 times (3 of them in a 6 horse chariot), the 40,000 sesterces prize 28 times (twice in a 6 horse chariot), the 50,000 prize 28 times (one in a 6 horse chariot), the 60,000 sesterces prize three times. In races for pairs of four horse chariots he won 347 times; and won 15,000 4 times in a three horse chariot. In races for three chariots he won 51 times. He gained honours 1,000 times

He was second 861 times, third 576, fourth with 1,000 sesterces once, and took no prize 1,351 times. He won jointly with a charioteer for the Blues ten times; with one from the White 91, and shared the 20,000 purse twice. His total winnings were 35,863,120 sesterces. He also won 1,000 sesterces in a two-horse chariot, jointly with a White charioteer once and with a Green twice.

He won while leading from the gate 815 times, coming from behind 67, after being passed 36, in different ways 42, and at the finishing line 502. He won against the Greens 216 times, against the Blues 205, and against the Whites 81 times. Nine horses had 100 wins with him and one had 200.

His notable achievements:

In the year when he first won twice driving a four horse chariot, he won at the finishing line twice. The *acta* say that Avilius Teres was the first in his faction to win 1,011, and he won most often in one year for single chariots, but in that year Diocles won over 100 victories, winning 103 races, 83 of them for single chariots. Increasing his fame he passed Tallus of his faction, who was the first in the Reds to…But Diocles is the most distinguished of the charioteers, since in one year he won 134 races with another charioteer’s lead horse, 118 races for single chariot, which puts him ahead of all the charioteers who compete in the games.

It is noted by all, with well-deserved admiration, that in one year with unfamiliar lead horses, with Cotynes and Pompeianus as the inside pair, he won 99 times, winning the 60,000 purse once, the 50,000 four times, 40,000 once, and 30,000 twice.

…for the Greens winner 1025 times, Flavius Scorpus, winner 2048 times, and Pompeius Musclosus, winner 3550 times. Those three charioteers won 6,652 times and won the 50,000 purse 28 times, but Diocles, the greatest charioteer ever, won the 50,000 purse 29 times in 1,462 wins.

CIL 6.10048

*It was fashionable, however, to declare oneself above such interests as the chariot races. Pliny the Younger wrote rather smugly to his friend Calvisius about how superior he was to the regular, faction mad members of the Circus Maximus’ audience:*

I have spent the past few days among my papers with the most pleasing serenity you could dream of. You will ask how that can be possible in the middle of Rome? Why, the *Ludi Circenses* were taking place, a form of entertainment which does not appeal to me at all. The games have no novelty, no variety, nothing, in short, anyone would want to see again. This makes me even more astonished that so many thousands of grown men should be repeatedly possessed with a childish passion to look at galloping horses and men standing upright in their chariots. If, indeed, they were attracted by the swiftness of the horses or the skill of the men, we could account for such passions. But it is actually a scrap of cloth they favour, a scrap of cloth that captivates them. And if during the running the racers were to exchange colours, their supporters would change sides, and instantly abandon the very drivers and horses whom they were just before recognizing from afar, and loudly cheering by name. And that is the level of favour, of weighty influence, that one cheap tunic has with not only the common crowd who are more worthless than the tunics they wear, but with certain important people! When I observe such men so insatiably fond of so silly, so low, so uninteresting, so common an entertainment, I congratulate myself that I am insensible to these pleasures and am glad to devote the leisure of this season, which others throw away upon the most idle employment, to literature. Farewell.

Pliny the Younger, *Letters* 9.6

**Gladiators**

*Gladiators tended to be less individually famous than charioteers, for a number of reasons: their careers were shorter, they did not have a team structure to secure support.* Gladiatorial schools could be famous, however. The imperial school of gladiators was especially famous, and was one that elites in Italian towns would hire if they wanted to bring in more spectators to the show and attention to their generosity. Advertising for gladiators in Pompeii amentions when gladiators came from these schools for that reason – these come from the school of the Emperor Nero, and would appear at a nearby, smaller town:

At Nola there will be a *munus* of Marcus Cominius Heres[[17]](#footnote-17) for four days. Princeps of the Neronian *ludus* fought 13, 10 wins; Hilarius of the Neronian *ludus* fought 14, 12 victories, Creunus fought 7, 5 wins.

CIL 4.10237

*Here are two other advertisements for comparison:*

Twenty pairs of gladiators provided by Decimus Lucretius Satrius Valens perpetual priest of Nero, the son of the Emperor, and ten pairs of gladiators provided by Decimus Lucretius Valens his son, will fight at Pompeii April 8, 9, 10, 11, and 12. There will be a big *venatio* and awnings. Aemilius Celer wrote this by the light of the moon.

CIL 4.7795

There will be a *venatio* and 20 pairs of gladiators belonging to Marcus Tullius[[18]](#footnote-18) will fight at Pompeii, November 4-7.

*CIL* IV. 3.4 9979

*However, that said, there were programs for the combats and those did mention individual names, as this source references:*

For Gallus Antipater, the slave of honours and the dishonour of historians, composed a preface about Aureolus which began like this: "We have now come to an emperor who was like his own name." A marvelous thing, for sure, to get one's name from gold! I, however, know well that among gladiators this name has often been given to courageous fighters. Indeed, only recently your own announcement of games contained in the list of the combatants this name.

Historia Augusta, *Claudius Gothicus* 5

*Gladiators also seem to have attracted more opprobrium than charioteers, as can be seen from Calpurnius Flaccus comment in the second century CE that, “there is no meaner condition among the people than that of gladiator”. However, despite that, play acting as a gladiator was popular among elite men and women. The historian Tacitus mentions elite women appearing in the arena under Nero in the year 63 CE:*

To the Roman equestrians he assigned places in the circus in front of the seats of the people, for up to that time they used to enter in an indiscriminate mass, as the Roscian law extended only to fourteen rows in the theatre. The same year witnessed shows of gladiators as magnificent as those of the past. However, many prominent matrons and senators disgraced themselves by appearing in the amphitheatre.

Tacitus, *Annales* 15.32

*There were also professional female gladiators and hunters in the arena. The Emperor Titus held games for the inauguration of the Colosseum; these games included staged hunts with female* venatores (the term for trained hunters)*.*

There was a battle between cranes and also between four elephants; nine thousand animals both domestic and wild were killed and women (not those of any prominence, however) took part in dispatching them.

Cassius Dio, *Epitome* Book 66

*His brother and successor, the Emperor Domitian, also had female gladiators fight in the Colosseum, along with dwarfs.*

Domitian would also frequently stage the games also at night, and sometimes he would pit dwarfs and women against each other.

Cassius Dio, *Epitome* Book 67

In the middle of this noise and the new luxuries there appear women trained to wield the sword wildly daring to fight like men. You would believe that the Amazons of Thermodon were fighting wildly by Tanais or savage Phasis.[[19]](#footnote-19) Now a bold unit of dwarfs appears, whose growth nature suddenly cut short, binding them in one movement into a knotted lump. They give and receive wounds and threaten death with tiny hands. Mars, our father, and bloody *Virtus* laugh and cranes hover over the scattered loot marvel at the tiny fighters.

Statius, *Silvae* 1.6.52-64

*Martial’s poems on Domitian’s games in the Colosseum also mention female gladiators and* venatores.

It is not enough that warlike Mars serves you with his unconquerable weapons, Caesar: Venus herself also serves you.

Martial, *On Spectacles* 6

Legend used to sing of the lion killed in the great valley, a feat worthy of Hercules – let ancient belief be silent! For after your *munera,* Caesar, for we now admit that this has been done by a woman warrior.

Martial, *On Spectacles* 6b

*The historian Tacitus blamed passion for the games and spectacles for taking people away from more important matters:*

And indeed there are characteristic and specific vices in this city, which I think are formed in the mother’s womb: a love of actors and madness for gladiators and horses. How can someone totally occupied by and obsessed with these have time for the noble arts?

Tacitus, *Dialogue on Oratory* 29

*Gladiators could be seen as dangerous residents of Rome, due to their tendency to end up working as bodyguards and members of gangs for various members of the elite. Members of the elite might own a gladiatorial school for this reason. Julius Caesar had his own gladiatorial school in Capua; in this letter from Cicero to his friend Atticus written in January of 49 BCE, the same year and month in which Caesar led his troops across the Rubicon and began a civil war, Cicero talks about fears that those gladiators would break out and fight for Caesar against Pompey and the senatorial faction.*

I write this letter, though suffering from slight inflammation of the eyes, as I am just about to leave Cales for Capua. Lucius Caesar brought Caesar's message to Pompey on the 23rd, while the latter was at Teanum with the consuls. His proposal was accepted, but on condition that he withdrew his garrisons from the towns which he had occupied outside his province. If he did this, they said in their answer that we would return to Rome and conclude the negotiation in the Senate. I hope for the present we have peace: for Caesar is not quite easy about his mad enterprise, nor our general about the amount of his forces. Pompey has told me to come to Capua and assist the levy, to which the Campanian settlers are not making a very eager response. Pompey has very cleverly distributed Caesar's gladiators (about whom I gave you some incorrect information on the authority of a letter from A. Torquatus) at Capua among the heads of families, two to each family. There were 5,000 shields in the *ludus*: they were said to be contemplating breaking out. Pompey's measure was a very wise precaution for the safety of the Republic.

Cicero, *Letters to Atticus* 7.14

*Here is Caesar’s account of the situation:*

At Capua they [the senatorial forces] first began to take courage and to rally, and determined to raise levies in the colonies, which had been established under Julian law: and Lentulus[[20]](#footnote-20) brought into the public market place the gladiators which Caesar maintained there for the entertainment of the people, and confirmed them in their liberty, and gave them horses and ordered them to accompany him; but afterward, being warned by his friends that everyone was criticizing his action, he distributed them among the slaves of the district of Campania, to keep guard there.

Julius Caesar, *Civil War* 1.14

*The Romans, however, were extremely reluctant to build a stone amphitheatre in Rome itself (or, indeed, a stone theatre), because they argued it would corrupt public morality. This did not stop people building incredibly elaborate temporary structures to host games. In 52 BCE Gaius Scribonius Curio created revolving wooden theatres that came together to form an amphitheatre.*

Curio (who died during the Civil War while fighting for Caesar)[[21]](#footnote-21) had no hope of outdoing Scaurus[[22]](#footnote-22) in expensive decorations in his games for his father…so he had to think hard and come up with some new scheme. It’s a valuable lesson for us to know what he came up with and to be pleased with *our* values and, in a shift from what is usual, to call ourselves [moral] ancestors. He constructed two large wooden theatres right beside each other, each of which pivoted on a revolving point. In the morning each one hosted a play, and each half faced away from the other so that the plays did not drown each other out. And, then, suddenly each one revolved (and the sources say that after the first few days some spectators kept sitting as it did so) and the corners met and the whole became an amphitheatre in which he gave gladiatorial battles – although the gladiators were less for sale than the Roman people as they whirled around. [Pliny then goes on a long rant about the sheer immorality of this.]

Pliny the Elder, *Encyclopaedia* 36.117

*Where did gladiators come from? A variety of sources: prisoners-of-war; slaves; criminals; and even some free men who sold themselves into service. However, this story about the brother of Titus Flamininus, the man who had 74 gladiators fight at his father’s* munera *in 174 BCE,* *shows how some unfortunates might find themselves in the* *role of* ‘gladiator’ *at an aristocrat’s whim:*

Titus had a brother, Lucius, who was unlike him in all other ways, and especially in his shameful addiction to pleasure and his utter contempt for decency. 3 This brother had as a companion a young boy whom he loved, and took him about and kept him always in his entourage, whether he was commanding an army or administering a province. At some drinking party, then, this boy was flirting with Lucius, and said he loved him so ardently that he had come away from a show of gladiators in order to be with him, although he had never in all his life seen a man killed; and he had done so, he said, because he cared more for his lover's pleasure than for his own. Lucius was delighted at this, and said: "Don't worry about that! I will give what you want most of all." 4 Then he ordered a man who had been condemned to death to be brought from his cell, and sending for a lictor, he commanded him to strike off the man's head there in the banquet-hall. Valerius Antias, however, says it was not a lover, but a mistress whom Lucius wanted to please in this way. And Livy says that in a speech of Cato himself it is written that a Gaulish deserter had come to the door with his wife and children, and that Lucius admitted him into the banquet-hall and killed him with his own hand to please his lover. 5 This feature, however, was probably introduced by Cato to strengthen the force of his denunciation; for that it was not a deserter, but a prisoner, who was put to death, and one who had been condemned to die, is the testimony of many others, and especially of Cicero the orator in his treatise "On Old Age," where he puts the story in the mouth of Cato himself.

Plutarch, *Titus Flaminius* 18.2-5

*Some slaves were sold or condemned to gladiatorial schools as a punishment or at the whim of their masters. The short-lived Emperor Vitellius once sold a favourite slave of his to a gladiatorial slave of his (obviously he wasn’t so favourite when he was being sold).*

12 1 After starting this way he regulated the greater part of his rule wholly according to the advice and whims of the lowest actors and charioteers, and in particular of his freedman Asiaticus. When he was a youth Asiaticus had been willingly ravished by him but soon grew tired of him and ran away.[[23]](#footnote-23) When Vitellius came upon him selling *posca[[24]](#footnote-24)* at Puteoli, he had him put in chains but at once freed him again and again made him his favourite. Then annoyed once more by his excessive insolence and thievishness, and he sold him to a travelling *lanista.* When, however, he was once reserved for the end of a gladiatorial show, Vitellius suddenly snatched him away, and finally on getting his province, set him free. On the first day of his reign he presented him with the golden ring at a banquet,[[25]](#footnote-25) although in the morning, when there was a general demand that Asiaticus be given that honour, he had deprecated in the strongest terms such a stain on the equestrian order.

Suetonius, *Vitellius* 12

*The Emperor Hadrian put some restrictions on people selling their slaves to gladiatorial* ludi *as a punishment.*

7 He stopped masters from killing their slaves, and ordered that any who deserved it should be sentenced by the courts. 8 He forbid anyone to sell a slave or a female slave to a pimp or *lanista* without giving a reason for it. 9 He ordered that those who had wasted their property, if legally responsible, should be flogged in the amphitheatre and then let go.

*Historia Augusta, Hadrian* 18

*The philosopher Seneca the Younger, who lived during the era of Nero, attacked the games for taking people’s minds off more serious things:*

And so they strive for something else to occupy them, and all the intervening time is irksome; exactly as they do when a gladiatorial exhibition is announced, or when they are waiting for the appointed time of some other show or amusement, they want to skip over the days that lie between.

Seneca the Younger, *On the Shortness of Life* 16.3

**Actors and Stage Performers**

*Like gladiators and charioteers – and all those who were perceived as selling their bodies – actors were* infamis *(except for those who acted in Atellan farce) and while they might acquire great fame and wealth, had a very low status in the Roman hierarchy.* *The Emperor Augustus took action against some actors who it was felt were getting above their status.*

Augustus was so especially strict about curbing the lawlessness of actors, that when he learned that Stephanio, an actor of Roman plays, was waited on by a matron with hair cut short to look like a boy, he had him whipped with rods through the three theatres and then banished him. Hylas, a pantomimic actor, was publicly lashed in the atrium of his own house, on complaint of a praetor, and Pylades[[26]](#footnote-26) was expelled from the city and from Italy as well, because by pointing at a spectator who was hissing at him with his finger he turned all eyes upon him.

Suetonius, *Augustus* 14

*Most actors were men, as they played both male and female roles in masks, as was traditional in Greece and Rome. The one exception was a form of unmasked mime where female actresses were allowed. Women, however, were acrobats, dancers and musicians and were essential parts of theatrical troops, though we tend to know less about their careers than we do of famous male mime actors, who held immense power over their fans). One exception is Volumnia Cytheris, an actress of the first century BCE, who was the freedwoman of Volumnius Eutrapelus, a Roman aristocrat. Cicero once had dinner with the two of them, much to his rather embarassed excitement, as he wrote in a letter to a friend:*

I have just laid down to dinner at three o'clock, when I scribble a copy of this note to you in my notebook. You will ask, "Where are you?" With Volumnius Eutrapelus. One place above me is Atticus, one below Verrius, both friends of yours. Do you wonder that our slavery is so pleasant? Well, what am I to do? I ask your advice as the pupil of a philosopher. Am I to be miserable, to torment myself? What should I get by that? And, moreover, how long? "Live with your books," say you. Well, do you suppose that I do anything else? Or could I have kept alive, had I not lived with my books? But even to them there is, I don't say a surfeit, but a certain limit. When I have left them, though I care very little about my dinner—the one problem which you put before the philosopher Dion—still, what better to do with my time before taking myself off to bed I cannot discover.

Now listen to the rest. Below Eutrapelus lay Cytheris. At such a party as that, say you, was the famous Cicero, "To whom all looked with reverence, on whose face Greeks turned their eyes with wonder?" To tell you the truth, I had no suspicion that she would be there. But, after all, even the Socratic Aristippus himself did not blush when he was taunted with having Lais as his mistress: "Yes," he said, "Lais is my mistress, but not my master." It is better in Greek; you must make a translation yourself, if you want one. As for myself, the fact is that that sort of thing never had any attraction for me when I was a young man, much less now I am an old one. I like a dinner party. I talk freely there, whatever comes upon the tapis, as the phrase is, and convert sighs into loud bursts of laughter. Did you behave better in jeering at a philosopher and saying, when he invited anyone to put any question he chose, that the question you asked the first thing in the morning was: "Where shall I dine?" The moron thought that you were going to inquire whether there was one heaven or an infinite number! What did you care about that? "Well, but, in heaven's name—you will say to me—"was a dinner a great matter to you, and there of all places ?"

Well then, my course of life is this. Every day something read or written: then, not to be quite churlish to my friends, I dine with them, not only without exceeding the law, but even within it, and that by a good deal.[[27]](#footnote-27) So you have no reason to be terrified at the idea of my arrival. You will receive a guest of moderate appetite, but filled with jokes.

Cicero, *Letters to his Family* 9.26

*Although she must have been very talented, Cytheris is better known as the mistress of Brutus and of Mark Antony, who was also fond of other mime actors in general, than for her talent. Here is Cicero talking about her again, but in a much nastier tone:*

We are told, at any rate, that Antony once feasted at the wedding of Hippias the mime, drank all night, and then, early in the morning, when the people summoned him to the forum, came before them still stuffed with food and vomited into his toga, which one of his friends held out to help. Sergius the mime also was one of those who had the greatest influence with him, and Cytheris, a woman from the same school of acting, was also a great favourite – he took her with him in a litter on his visits to the cities and her litter was followed by as many attendants as that of his mother.

Plutarch, *Antony* 9.4

*She accompanied Antony on an official tour of Italy in 49 BCE, after Julius Caesar had won the Civil War against the Senate:*

The Tribune of the Plebs was borne along in a chariot, lictors crowned with laurel preceded him; among whom, on an open litter, was carried an actress; whom honorable men, citizens of the different municipalities, coming out from their towns under compulsion to meet him, saluted not by the name by which she was well known on the stage, but by that of Volumnia. A car followed full of pimps; then a lot of debauched companions; and then his mother, utterly neglected, followed the mistress of her profligate son, as if she were her daughter-in-law. O the disastrous fecundity of that miserable woman! That man stamped every municipality, and prefecture and, in short, the whole of Italy with the marks of such wickedness as this.

Cicero, *Philippics* 2.58

*And then to the army camp at Brundisium, the chief port for anyone sailing to Greece, and hence a place that the army used for embarking and disembarking:*

You came to Brundusium, to the bosom and embraces of your actress. What is the matter? Am I speaking falsely? How miserable is it not to be able to deny a fact which you are ashamed to confess! If you had no shame before the municipal towns, had you none even before your veteran army?[[28]](#footnote-28) For what soldier was there who did not see her at Brundusium? Who was there who did not know that she had come so many days' journey to congratulate you? who was there who did not grieve that he was so late in finding out how worthless a man he had been following? 62. And again you made a tour through Italy, with that same actress for your companion.

Cicero, *Philippics* 2.61-62.

*Cicero mentioned this event in a number of letters to his friend Atticus (Letters to Atticus 10.10.5 & 10.16.5). Despite that, his wife Terentia went to her to ask for helpin 47 BCE when she was stuck in Rome during the Civil War between Caesar and the Senate – whch was difficult for her, because Caesar took Rome early, and Cicero was off with the Senatorial forces being miserable:*

TO Terentia at Rome from Brundisium, 4 January

If you are well, I am glad. I am well. Though my circumstances are such that I have no motive for expecting a letter from you or anything to tell you myself, yet somehow or another I do look for letters from you all, and do write to you when I have anyone to convey it. Volumnia[[29]](#footnote-29) ought to have been more attentive to you than she has been, and even what she has done she might have done with greater zeal and caution. However, there are other things for us to be more anxious about and vexed at. These latter distress me quite as much as was desired by those who forced me to act against my better judgment. Take care of your health.

Cicero, *Letters to his Family* 14.16

*Mime actresses had at least one association in Rome, the Sociae Mimae, as we know from an undated inscription from Rome (CIL 6.10109; the same volume has other inscriptions relating to various mime actresses). They also performed across the empire, as can be seen in the following extract from a 2nd century CE novel about a young man who is turned into a donkey and gets into all sorts of trouble along the way.[[30]](#footnote-30)*

The day appointed for the show came at last. I was led to the amphitheatre’s outer wall, by an enthusiastic crowd, in procession. The entertainment began with actor’s comic mimes, while I enjoyed myself by the gate browsing the rich and juicy grass growing at the entrance, and now and then refreshing my eyes with a glance at the show through the open portal. There were boys and girls in the bloom of youth, outstanding in their fresh beauty, splendid costumes, and graceful movements, ready to perform the Pyrrhic dance. They moved in decorous unwavering order, now weaving in and out in a whirling circle, now linking hands in a slanting chain, now in wedges forming a hollow square, now separating into distinct troops. When the trumpet’s final note un-wove the knotted complexities of their intricate motion, the curtain was raised, the screens folded back, and the stage was set.

There stood a mountain of wood, built with noble skill to resemble that illustrious Mount Ida that Homer sang. It was planted out with living trees and bushes, and from its summit a stream of water flowed from a fountain made by the designer’s own hand. A handful of goats were cropping the grass and a youth, beautifully dressed in the manner of Paris, as Phrygian shepherd, an Asiatic robe flowing over his shoulders, a gold tiara on his brow, pretended to be tending the flock. Then a shining lad appeared, naked except for a cloak worn on his left shoulder, attracting all gazes with his blond hair, with little gold wings on either side projecting from his curls and a wand, proclaiming him as Mercury. He danced forward bearing in his right hand an apple covered in gold leaf, and offered it to the actor playing Paris. Then, relaying Jupiter’s instructions for the action to follow, he nodded, swiftly and gracefully retraced his steps, and vanished. Next arrived a respectable looking girl dressed as the goddess Juno, a pure white diadem on her brow and a sceptre in her hand. Then on came another you’d have recognised as Minerva, a shining helm crowned with an olive wreath on her head, holding a shield and brandishing a spear as if off to battle. Then another girl made her entrance, a real beauty with an ambrosial complexion, playing Venus, as Venus looked before marriage. Her exquisite naked form was bare except for a piece of silken gauze with which she veiled her sweet charms. An inquisitive little breeze kept blowing this veil aside in wanton playfulness so that it lifted now to show her ripening bud, or now pressed madly against her, clinging tightly, smoothly delineating her voluptuous limbs. The goddess’ very colouring offered interest to the eye, her body the white of heaven from which she came, her veil the cerulean blue of the sea from which she rose.

Each of the girls who played a goddess was accompanied by attendants; Juno by two lads from the acting troop, depicting Castor and Pollux, heads capped with helmets shaped like halves of the egg they came from, topped by stars to signify the Twins, their constellation. To the sound of an Ionian flute piping melodies, the goddess advanced with calm unpretentious steps, and with graceful gestures promised Paris rule over all Asia if he granted her the prize for beauty. The girl whose weapons denoted Minerva was guarded by two boys, depicting Terror and Fear, armour-bearers to the war-goddess, leaping forward with drawn swords. Behind them a piper played a battle tune in the Dorian mode, a deep droning intermingled with shrill screeches, stirring them to energetic dance. Minerva tossed her head, glared threateningly, and informed Paris in swift and abrupt gestures that should he grant her victory in the beauty contest then with her assistance he would be renowned for his bravery and his triumphs in war.

Then came Venus, to the audience’s loud applause, taking her place gracefully at centre-stage, sweetly smiling and ringed by a host of happy little boys, so chubby and milky-white you’d have thought them real cupids flown down from heaven or in from the sea. With little wings and archery sets and all the rest they truly fitted the part, lighting their mistress’ way with glowing torches as if they were off to a wedding feast. Next a crowd of beautiful girls streamed in, the most graceful of Graces, the loveliest of Hours, scattering garlands and loose flowers in tribute to their goddess, paying honour to the queen of all pleasure with the blossoms of spring.

Now flutes of many notes played Lydian airs in sweet harmony, and as their soft melodies charmed the hearts of the audience, Venus began a gentle dance, with slow hesitant steps and sinuously swaying body and head, advancing with delicate movements to the sweet sound of the flutes. Letting fly passionate or sharp and menacing glances, she often seemed to be dancing by means of her eyelids alone. As soon as she reached the judge, Paris, she promised with transparent gestures, that if he preferred her above the other two goddesses she would grant him a bride of marvellous beauty, the very image of herself. At this the Phrygian youth, gladly handed her the golden apple, in token of yielding her the victory.

Apuleius, *The Golden Ass* Book 10, (Translation A.S. Kline)

*There were other female performers including dancers. Martial wrote the following on an unnamed dancer from Cadiz:*

She quivers so sexily, she makes her so charmingly available, that she would make a masturbator even out of Hippolytus.[[31]](#footnote-31)

Martial, *Epigrams* 14.203

*Martial wrote the following on Telethusa, also from Cadiz and perhaps the same as the above dancer:*

Telethusa, skilled in displaying attractive gestures to the sound of her Spanish castanets, and in dancing the beats of Cadiz; Telethusa, capable of exciting the decrepit Pelias, and of moving the husband of Hecuba at the tomb of Hector; Telethusa inflames and tortures her former master. He sold her a slave, he now buys her back a mistress.

Martial, *Epigrams* 71

*This* [*link*](http://www.stoa.org/diotima/anthology/wlgr/wlgr-mensopinions40.shtml) *takes you to an inscription for a female performer who died at 14; it gives you some idea of the training and skill of these female performers.*

**Mime: pantomime**

*Pantomime, however, was focused on star male performers. It was introduced to Rome by Augustus’ freedman Pylades in 22 BCE and became immediately popular:*

Augustus allowed the praetors who wanted to do so to spend three times as much on the public festivals as the amount granted them from the treasury. Thus, even if some people were vexed at the strictness of his other regulations, this action and his restoration of one Pylades, a mime, who had been exiled on account of sedition, ensured they remembered them no longer. This is why Pylades is said to have replied very cleverly, when the emperor rebuked him for having quarrelled with Bathyllus, a fellow-artist, and a favourite of Maecenas: "It is to your advantage, Caesar, that the people should devote their spare time to us."

Cassius Dio, *Roman History* 54.17

*Like gladiators and charioteers – and all those who were perceived as selling their bodies – actors were* infamis *(except for those who acted in Atellan farce) and while they might acquire great fame and wealth, had a very low status in the Roman hierarchy.* *The Emperor Augustus took action against some actors who it was felt were getting above their status.*

Augustus was so especially strict about curbing the lawlessness of actors, that when he learned that Stephanio, an actor of Roman plays, was waited on by a matron with hair cut short to look like a boy, he had him whipped with rods through the three theatres and then banished him. Hylas, a pantomimic actor, was publicly lashed in the atrium of his own house, on complaint of a praetor, and Pylades[[32]](#footnote-32) was expelled from the city and from Italy as well, because by pointing at a spectator who was hissing at him with his finger he turned all eyes upon him.

Suetonius, *Augustus* 14

*There was also the chance that some lines might suddenly be turned against the emperor:*

How grossly Tiberius was in the habit of abusing women even of high birth is very clearly shown by the death of a certain Mallonia. When she was brought to his bed and refused most vigorously to submit to his lust, he turned her over to the informers, and even when she was on trial he did not cease to call out and ask her "whether she was sorry"; so that finally she left the court and went home, where she stabbed herself, openly upbraiding the ugly old man for his obscenity. Hence a stigma put upon him at the next plays in an Atellan farce was received with great applause and became a saying, that "the old goat[[33]](#footnote-33) was licking the does."

Suetonius, *Life of Tiberius* 45.4

*Others, like the satirist Juvenal, rabidly attacked what they saw as the moral dangers of mime:*

Can you find any woman that’s worthy of you under our porticoes? Does any seat at the theatre hold one you could take from there and love with confidence? When sinuous Bathyllus[[34]](#footnote-34) dances his pantomime Leda, Tucia wets herself and Apula cries out as if she were making love with sharp tedious cries. Thymele watches carefullt: naive Thymele learns something.

Juvenal *Satire* 6[[35]](#footnote-35) (Translated by A. S. Kline)

*However, all this criticism was ignored by most. Some wealthy Romans kept troops of actors in their house for private entertainment – and also rented them out for various* ludi. *One such was Numidia Quadratilla, a very wealthy lady of the late 1st century CE:*

Numidia Quadratilla has died, having almost reached the age of eighty. Up until her last illness she enjoyed uninterrupted good health, and was unusually strong and robust for a woman. She has left a very prudent will, having disposed of two-thirds of her estate to her grandson, and the rest to her grand-daughter. The young lady I know very slightly, but the grandson is one of my closest friends. He is a remarkable young man, and his merit entitles him to the affection of a relation, even where his blood does not. Notwithstanding his remarkable attractiveness he escaped all malicious gossip both as a boy and a youth: he was a husband at twenty-four, and would have been a father if fate had not disappointed his hopes. He lived in close quarters with his luxury-loving grandmother, but was very scrupulous about his own behaviour, although he respected her. She kept a company of pantomimes and was an encourager of this class of people to a degree not appropriate for one of her gender and social status. But Quadratus was never at these entertainments whether she gave them in the theatre or in her own house; nor, indeed, did she require him to be present. I once heard her say, when she was recommending to me the supervision of her grandson’s studies, that it was her custom, in order to pass away some of those unemployed hours with which female life abounds to amuse herself with playing at draughts or watching her pantomimes, but that whenever she engaged in either of those amusements she always sent away her grandson to his studies: she appeared to me to act in this way as much out of reverence for the youth as from affection. I was a good deal surprised, as I am sure you will be too, at what he told me the last time the priestly games were on.[[36]](#footnote-36) As we were coming out of the theatre together, where we had been entertained with a show of these pantomimes, “Do you know,” said he, “to-day is the first time I ever saw my grandmother’s freedman dance?” Such was the grandson’s speech! While a set of men of a far different stamp, in order to do honour to Quadratilla (I am ashamed to call it *honour*), were running up and down the theatre, pretending to be struck with the utmost admiration and rapture at the performances of those pantomimes and then imitating in musical chant the expression and manner of their lady patroness. But now all the reward they have got, in return for their theatrical performances, is just a few small legacies, which they have the mortification to receive from an heir who was never so much as present at these shows.

Pliny the Younger, *Letters* 7.24

*There were a number of forms of mime; the mime that inspired rioting in 14/15 and 23 CE was pantomime, a spectacular form of mime that was a form of solo ballet often retelling classical myths, with a star mime who danced and did spectacular acrobatics, a chorus, and an orchestra – you need to think about something akin to Cirque du Soleil, rather than Marcel Marceau.[[37]](#footnote-37) Mime in this form inspired fanatical devotion on a level that equals anything modern fandom can produce, and perhaps on an even greater level – we do not hear of capital cities laid waste by hordes of Beliebers, for example. In 14 CE Augustus – who enjoyed the theatre and sponsored mime – died, and Tiberius came to the throne. Tiberius did not enjoy spectacles, especially after he was forced by the crowd to give freedom to Actius, a comic actor or mime.*

That year [14 CE] saw a new form of religious ritual with the addition of a new college of Priests of Augustus, which was patterned on the ancient Titian brotherhood founded by Titus Tatius[[38]](#footnote-38) to safeguard the Sabine rites. Twenty-one members were drawn by lot from the leading Roman houses and Tiberius, Drusus, Claudius, and Germanicus were added.[[39]](#footnote-39) The *Ludi Augustales*, celebrated for the first time, were marred by a disturbance caused by the rivalry of the mime actors. Augustus had allowed these theatrical shows to please Maecenas, who was deeply in love with Bathyllus. He himself also had no personal dislike for amusements of this type, and considered it a graceful act to take part in the pleasures of the crowd. Tiberius had other tendencies, but as yet he lacked the courage to force into the ways of austerity a nation which had been indulged for so many years.

Tacitus, *Annales* 1.54

*Cassius Dio adds a little more information, which suggests that the riots started when one of the stars refused to enter the theatre until he was paid more:*

Meanwhile the people rioted, because at the *Ludi Augustales* one of the actors would not enter the theatre for the regular pay and they did not stop rioting until the tribunes of the plebs convened the senate that very day and begged it to permit them to spend more than the legal amount.

Cassius Dio, *Roman History* 56.47.2

*15 CE saw more riots on a larger scale; it appears Tiberius cut the fee for mimes (*Suetonius, *Tiberius* 34.1), *while his son Drusus (then around 30) was extremely friendly with them:*

9 While Tiberius was carrying out these measures, Drusus performed the duties pertaining to the consulship equally with his colleague [Tiberius], just as any ordinary citizen might have done; and when he was left heir to someone's estate, he assisted in carrying out the body. Yet he was so given to violent anger that he struck upon a distinguished equestrian and for this exploit received the nickname of Castor. 10 And he was becoming so heavy a drinker, that one night, when he was forced to lend aid with the Praetorians to some people whose property was on fire and they called for water, he gave the order: "Serve it to them hot." He was so friendly with the actors, that this class created a riot and could not be brought to order even by the laws that Tiberius had introduced for regulating them.

Cassius Dio, *Roman History* 57.14.9-10

*Some of the measures that were taken are listed below:*

The disorderliness of the stage, which had become apparent the year before, now broke out on a more serious scale. In addition to casualties among the people, several soldiers and a centurion were killed, and an officer of the Praetorian Guards wounded, in the attempt to repress the insults levelled at the magistracy and the dissension of the crowd. The riot was discussed in the Senate and it was suggested that the praetors should be given the authority to punish actors. Haterius Agrippa, a tribune of the plebs, vetoed this proposal and was attacked in a speech by Asinius Gallus. Tiberius said nothing, allowing the Senate to have this simulacrum of liberty. Still the veto held good, for the deified Augustus had once answered a question by saying that actors were immune from the whip, and it would be blasphemy for Tiberius to now do the opposite of what he had said. They passed a great number of laws to limit the expenditure on entertainments and to curb the extravagance of the fans. The most striking were: that no senator was to enter the houses of pantomime actors; that, if they came out into public, Roman equestrians were not to gather around them, nor were their performances to be followed except in the theatre; while the praetors were to be authorized to punish any disorder among the spectators with exile.

Tacitus, *Annales* 1.77

*Clearly this did not work, as in 23 CE (the same year Drusus died) the riots broke out once more:*

Next, after various and generally ineffective complaints from the praetors, Tiberius at last brought up the question of the effrontery of the *histriones*:[[40]](#footnote-40) "They were frequently the instigators of sedition against the state and of depravity in private houses; the old Oscan farce, the trivial delight of the crowd, had come to such a pitch of indecency and power that it needed the authority of the Senate to check it." The *histriones* were then expelled from Italy.

Tacitus, *Annales* 4.14

*It was not just the actors who were expelled, but the leaders of their factions:*

2 He took great pains to prevent disturbances by the people and punished those that occurred very, very severely. When a quarrel in the theatre ended in bloodshed, he banished the leaders of the factions, as well as the actors who were the cause of the trouble - and no entreaties of the people could ever induce him to recall them.

Suetonius, *Tiberius* 37.2

1. This is a very important term to understand for thinking about stigma within the ranks of Roman citizens (non-Romans would *de facto* not fall within the categories of Roman law, though they could be classified among those unworthy of being freed if slaves, or being given Roman citizenship or Latin rights. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. This is not the name of any particular Roman, but is a (high) ranking office in Rome, so stands in for any very wealthy Roman. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Equestrians had to have 400,000 sesterces in property to qualify for that rank. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Thallus is not mentioned elsewhere by Martial, although there is an inscription from 90 CE to a charioteer Thallus (ILS 3532). [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Victory, Favour, Honour, and Glory were all Roman gods. Palms were often called Idumaean, because although they could be found in Southern Italy, they were said to be from Idumaea, a region in Judea. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. One of the three Fates and the one responsible for allotting people the years that they would live. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. This, the *lusus Troaia,* was a complicated set of equestrian manouvers by aristocratic youths. It usually took place on the Campus Martius and sometimes resulted in major injuries. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. To match the colours of the Reds and Greens respectively. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Of the houses surrounding the Circus Maximus. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Located on the Palatine Hill. It was originally a private house owned by a wealthy freedman of Augustus, called Gelos, but was incorporated into the imperial palace at some point. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. The previous emperor, who was not well liked. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. The modern cult of celebrity makes this seem innocuous, but in Rome actors were *infamis,* that is they were not at all respectable company for a senator, let alone an emperor. Not that that really stopped most people. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Whenever I try and visualize this words fail me. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Originally, an open racetrack it became a circus and was known as the Circus of Gaius or the Vatican Circus. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. 13 CE; each consulship after that represents a year. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. The Latin says he won from the *pompa,* that is right after the parade that opened the races. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. This is the name of the person responsible for paying for the games and organizing them. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Not to be confused with Marcus Tullius Cicero, though presumably descended from the family or, more likely, from a freedperson of the family. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. The Amazons, a legendary race of female warriors, were thought to have lived by the River Thermondon. Tanais and Phasis are rivers in Scythia – the Tanais is the modern Don and Phasis is the river Bion. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. One of the consuls, who was attempting to recruit troops. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. He died in 49 BCE. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. See [here](#Scaurustheatre) for that theatre. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Slaves had little choice but to accede to their masters’ demands, and so consent in these relationships is always a moot point. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. A popular drink of sour wine mixed with herbs and water. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. The awarding of the gold ring was to show that Asiaticus had been elevated to the rank of equestrian. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. He was a freedman of Augustus and one of those who introduced pantomime to the Romans; he focused on tragic pantomime. He attacked the audience on other occasions: one when he was acting out the madness of Hercules the audience hissed at him for not dancing properly; he threw off his mask and screamed “idiots! I am acting the role of a madman!” His exile was in 18 BCE – he was back within a year. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. Every once in a while the Romans would pass sumptuary laws that restricted how much people could spend on feasts and dinners. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. I have a feeling that the veteran army did not mind that much at all. Antony was very popular with the soldiers. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. As the freewoman of Volumnius, this would have been her legal, Roman name, i.e. the name under which she held Roman citizenship and hence more respectful than Cytheris, her professional name as an actress. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. I apologize for this translation. I did not have time to look at the Latin and update and correct it. It would be a good project to take on, if you have some Latin. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. Hippolytus is a mythical Greek hero who had an almost fanatical commitment to chastity. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. He was a freedman of Augustus and one of those who introduced pantomime to the Romans; he focused on tragic pantomime. He attacked the audience on other occasions: one when he was acting out the madness of Hercules the audience hissed at him for not dancing properly; he threw off his mask and screamed “idiots! I am acting the role of a madman!” His exile was in 18 BCE – he was back within a year. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. Tiberius had retired to the island of Capri,; the Latin for goat is *caper,* hence the double meaning. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. One of Augustan artists who introduced pantomime to Rome; he appears to have focused on comic pantomime and rather sexy version of myths. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. This is a satire against women in which Juvenal basically accuses them of all the evils that a Roman could imagine. And that was quite a few. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. Games run and put on by members of the priestly colleges, rather than the magistrates. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. If you don’t know who Marcel Marceau is you should look him up on YouTube. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. A legendary king of the Sabines, who eventually co-ruled that people and the Romans along with Romulus. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. All were members of the imperial family. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. This can refer to a wide range of actors, though probably mime actors are intended here. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)