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Remember me thus: A Study of Latin Epitaphs of Mime Actresses

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Introduction[2]

Theatre in ancient Rome was diverse and many of the genres took their origin from Greece, so much so that many scholars have opted to consider Roman theatre as a sub-category of Greek theatre.[3] There were, nonetheless, uniquely Roman genres as well, such as the Atellan farce.[4]

Theatre also fulfilled specific roles in Roman society, including in both the public and the private spheres. In the public sphere, theatre was at first a part of ludi romani ('Roman games') and later evolved into ludi scaenici ('stage games') as the theatrical performances associated within the main festival. Rome had its first permanent theatre built in 55 B.C.E.; thus, until then, many performances took place in various temporary stages and locations and were not restricted to a specific place. Therefore, performances such as mimes, acrobats, storytellers, jugglers and poetry performers can be considered as 'paratheatrical performances' due to the venue of these acts.[5] Some of these were performed in the market place, at gladiatorial contests, funerals, and symposia and even in the streets. Theatre in general was a source of entertainment for the Romans, one which Petronius in

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3   Denard (2007) 140. Csapo (1995) 207 mentions that the Greek Livius Andronicus from Tarentum introduced translations of Greek drama to Rome in 240 B.C. and afterwards theatre flourished. Even though information regarding the origin of Roman drama is scanty, there is much detail regarding the dramatic festivals in Rome.

4   Denard (2007) 147–148. He further observes that 'the Atellanae may have fulfilled a culturally specific need for a non-professional, public theatre tradition (alongside the professional) in which the well-born could perform without payment and without removing their masks, thereby avoiding the social stigma of infamia that tainted the Roman actor'.

5   Denard (2007) 139.

his Satyricon distinguishes as an element of Roman daily life and thought.[6] In time, however, drama became increasingly 'privatized' as wealthy private individuals kept troupes for their social gatherings and for their political propaganda.

However, despite the popularity of theatre, the acting profession itself in Rome was subject to legal restrictions regarding civic rights, stemming from the categorization of actors as infames ('lacking public honor'). The Romans viewed actors, prostitutes, gladiators, gladiator-trainers and pimps as belonging to the lowest strata in Roman society. In a way the ones who earned money by using their bodies for the entertainment of others, lost the protection of Roman law that the citizen body enjoyed.[7] As a result, the Romans constantly made connections between actors and prostitutes, in relation to their sexuality, public life and performance. In such a way, the worlds of entertainment and prostitution in ancient Rome were certainly close, and this factor overshadowed many aspects of theatre. One area where we see this quite often was mime, and I intend to explore this matter shortly, after looking first at who were known as mimes and what constituted the genre according to the ancient Romans.[8]

Mime was a mixed art which included singing, dancing and acting. Diomedes the Latin grammarian states that 'mime is the imitation of someone's words and gestures that shows no respect or the lewd imitation of shameful deeds and words'.[9] Another reason for the low status of this type of drama is the inclusion of women and acting without masks. Scripts were used, but there was also a lot of improvisation.[10] Most of the time, mimes incorporated current situations into the plot, and involved the audience. Mimes acted in streets, near market places, as well as on stages; as Case points out, they found 'an alternate space' since they were barred from the dominant space.[11] The festival Floralia, which was celebrated in honor of the goddess Flora, was associated mainly with the mimes and celebrated by the city prostitutes.

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6   For instance in Petronius' Satyricon, the section which involves Trimalchio's dinner party presents several types of entertainment for the pleasure of the guests as well as to show off his wealth and status.

7   Edwards (1997) 76.

8   The term "mime" differed from the mime that we understand today as the theatrical technique of acting without words, using only gesture, expression, and movement.

9   mimus est sermonis cuis libet imitation et mortus sine reverentia, vel factorum et dictorum turpium cum lascivia imitatio (Diom. Ars Grammatica, 3; trans. Webb 2008: 103).

10   Webb (2008) 112. The two known mimographers from Rome are Decimus Laberius who belongs to the Roman equites class and Publilius Syrus who is a freedman from Antioch. The fragments of mimes written by Laberius available to us shed some light upon the type of themes these mimes are centered on.

11   Case (2008) 30.

Many ancient literary sources tend to look down on mime actresses and associate the word mime with negative qualities. For instance, the famous scene where Cato leaves the theatre during the Floralia in order for his fellow Romans to enjoy 'the traditional spectacle of the mime actress stripping' is quoted by several scholars as proof of mime having sexual content.[12] Wiseman explains that Cicero, as an aedile, was in charge of responsibilities regarding the Floralia[13] and notes the bewilderment of St. Augustine that such a dignified magistrate would oversee it and that a 'striptease show' was a part of Roman religion.[14]

In such a way certain historians and other ancient writers mainly criticize the mimes on a moral basis, stating that they are 'antithetical models of proper lifestyles.'[15] This is also due to the crude jokes and plots involving adultery, even though this is not the only plot they acted. For instance, Panayotakis mentions that the mimes included various types of plots ranging from cunning schemes, mock-marriages, shipwrecks to political satire and literary parody. Thus, focusing only on the theme of adultery does not accurately represent the genre.

Many ancient writers incorporate mimes to slander or cast as disreputable a person who is involved with a mime. Traina discusses how Publius Volumnius Eutrapelus' freedwoman, Volumnia Cytheris, also known as Lycoris[16] the mime, was associated with a few renowned men of her time, such as Antony, Brutus and Gallus. For instance, Antony kept Lycoris as his mistress and appeared together in public with her. This caused a lot of scandal. As Cicero notes, 'hoc quidem melius quam conlega noster Antonius, cuius inter lictores lectica mima portatur'

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12   For instance this example is used by Wiseman (1999) 197, Traina (2001) 88, Denard (2017) 150.

Eodem ludos Florales, quos Messius aedilis faciebat, spectante, populus ut mimae nudarentur postulare erubuit. quod cum ex Favonio amicissimo sibi una sedente cognosset, discessit e theatro, ne praesentia sua spectaculi consuetudinem impediret. 'When the same personage was watching Flora's games, put on by Aedile C. Messius, the people blushed to ask that the actresses be stripped naked. When Favonius, a great friend of Cato's who was sitting next to him, told him of this, he left the theatre, not wishing that his presence should interfere with the custom of the show' (Val. Max. 2.10.8; trans. Bailey (2000) 227).

13   Habeo rationem quid a populo Romano acceperim,… mihi Floram matrem populo plebique Romanae ludorum celebritate placandam. 'I think carefully about the task the Roman people has laid upon me:… I shall have to secure the good-will of Mother Flora for the people and the plebs of Rome by the celebration of games' (Cic. Verr. V. 36; trans. Wiseman (1999) 197).

14   Augustine, De civitate Dei contra paganos, 2.27. See Wiseman (1999) 197–200. What made them undress? Wiseman agrees that the mimes involved sex and farce, but they were not restricted simply to that. He explores in his article three storylines that made the mimes undress which interestingly involve water and streams. These stories involve a historical narrative and two etiological myths.

15   Starks (2004) 18.

16   These names, Cytheris and Lycoris, could be cognomina or stage names. As Traina mentions, she is of Hellenic origin and later settled in Rome due to its popularity. Traina (200) 83–84

(Cic. Att.10.16.5).[17] Here, he disdains the behavior of Antony because he parades around the city with Lycoris, whom Cicero considers unsuitable to a tribune's retinue.[18] Cicero himself describes his discomfort in the presence of a mime as follows,

> 'infra Eutrapelum Cytheris accubuit. 'in eo igitur,' inquis, 'convivio Cicero ille, quem aspectabant, cuius ob os Graii ora obvertebant sua?' non me hercule suspicatus sum illam adfore'

> '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.'[19]

Here, it shows how on certain occasions, for instance at banquets, everyone mingled together, regardless of gender and status. As Traina explains, even though Cytheris is a freedwoman at this moment, Cicero feels that such company among an elite male crowd is not decent.[20] But even Sulla hosted mimes in his entourage,[21] showing that if mimes turn out to be useful they could be a part of an entourage. However, the newly found status does not remove the infamy of being a mime;[22] as I mentioned earlier, mimes are often taken to be prostitutes. Even if Cicero and others are making up these kinds of interaction, it shows that respectable (i.e. upper class Romans) hanging around mimes was considered scandalous.

However, the lack of women's voices from history makes it difficult to discern the exact position mimes held in these patriarchal societies. Thus, the aristocratic male point of view dominates. The freedwomen who used to be mimes were still under the control of their masters; thus Lycoris, for example, had to entertain her former master along with being mistress to his wealthy friends.[23] It is important

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17 'Indeed, this is better than our companion Antony, among whose lictors is taken a mime in his couch'.

18 Traina (2001) 94. Antony's affair with her ended in 47 B.C.E. in order for him to maintain a "more moderate public image".

19 Cic. Fam. 9.26.1; trans. Traina (2001) 95.

20 On the other hand, Vidén (2010: 68) points out that both in old age and as a young man, Cicero was not interested in such company; Cicero states in Epistulae ad Familiares. 9.26.2, me vero nihil istorum nc iuoenem quidem movit umquam. ne nunc senem. "I was not tempted by such things even as a young man, and certainly not now when I am old" (trans. Vidén).

21 See Garton 1964.

22 Traina (2001) 89.

23 Traina (2001) 89.

to consider these women as professional artists employed in the entertainment sector and the biases in literary sources should be addressed as cultural realities.[24]

It is clear that the names of some of the well-known actresses survive to this day because of having famous lovers, even though they could have been famous stars themselves at that time. In addition, ancient writers' conflation of mime and prostitution prevents us from discerning authentic details of a mime's career in relation to the sphere of theatre. Most of the writers and the audience for whom they wrote were upper class people who looked down on people from stage as lower class. But they may not reflect the opinion of non-aristocratic members of Roman society who could have seen them similarly to how we perceive present day movie stars. And some upper class Romans could have seen them this way too but it's hard to tell when this genuinely happens and when such claims are simply aristocratic Romans slandering other aristocratic Romans. For such reasons, if one were to study the life of a mime in ancient Rome, therefore, their epitaphs provide better information about them as compared to their portrayal by ancient writers.

Literature Review

Scholars have been most interested in exploring the connections of mimes with politicians and the sexual content of their performances through the study of extent literature. When we turn from the literary evidence to the study of epitaphs, the results present a much wider scope regarding mimes. Since it is often difficult to distinguish types of female entertainers (e.g., a dancer, mime, pantomime or an *emboliaria* [an actress who performed in interludes]) from one another in epigraphic sources, many scholars have discussed all of these professions under the category of 'actresses'. As Regina Höschelle mentions, one needs to be cautious when dealing with mime, since even though there are many definitions regarding the genre, properly defining mime 'remains elusive'.[25] And the term mime is used for many fields of entertainment in theatre, with the notable exception of tragedy and comedy.

With that being said, early scholarship used epigraphic evidence to recover discernable facts about Roman mimes. Building on that, John Starks attempted to reconstruct a narrative of the life of a mime (as part of a broader project about Roman actresses), using multiple forms of evidence, including epitaphs. In more recent scholarship, scholars have attempted to trace lost traditions like

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24   Starks (2004) 13.

25   Höschelle (2013) 42. Even Starks states the difficulty regarding their distinctions unless they are mentioned with a specific title (2008). For instance, regarding the epitaph of Eucharis (CIL 12.1214 = 1.1009 = 6.100961) there is still a debate whether to identify her as a dancer, pantomime or a mime.

mime to study the involvement of women in ancient theatre, often using feminist methodologies in the process. Concurrently, studies in other areas of Roman social history have shown the usefulness of epitaphs for recovering the voices of marginalized groups.

Robert Maxwell's 1992 dissertation The Documentary Evidence for Ancient Mime is an early, comprehensive work in the field of mime. In part I he examines both Greek and Latin inscriptions regarding both male and female mimes, concentrating on the different areas they specialized in, the troupes, their social status, and other aspects of their lives. In part II he analyzes the epitaphs individually. Through this study he tries to answer fundamental questions about mimes, which he does in a systematic way. However, if he had divided the inscriptions according to the language as well (Greek and Latin) it would have been an easy read. It is unfortunate that this work has not been properly published and not accessible for a wider audience.

At the same time, in the field of Roman slavery studies, Sandra Joshel's 1992 Work, Identity and Legal Status at Rome discusses how slaves in Rome—men and women who had no voice in the literary sources—spoke through the epitaphs. She mentions that scholars have 'struggled with the problem of writing about those excluded from the dominant historical narrative', but argues that, even though epitaphs give limited information like one's name, legal status and occupation, they are enough to unearth many buried aspects of daily life. As she points out, even though the epitaphs retain information on the world of the dead, 'they bespeak a lived social reality'. Her work is important because she examines how the workers themselves viewed their occupations, arguing that the occupational titles in their epitaphs gave slaves and freedmen a sense of identity which was otherwise lost in their life. What I found a bit problematic was her categorization. She makes a division of 'Skilled service' in which barbers, hairdressers, and masseurs are listed in one section, and entertainers in another. Under the category of entertainers she mentions cantor, comoedus, musicus, symphoniacus and such, but apart from the comoedus no one related to theatre is included. She deals with CIL 6, which does include mima, emboliaria and a few other titles, however these titles are not mentioned in her category. One would wonder whether they were not worthy of mentioning as an occupation, and if so, why.

John Starks' 2004 dissertation Actresses in the Roman World provides a comprehensive analysis of Roman actresses from the second century B.C.E. to the sixth century C.E., using available evidence from literature, epigraphy, law, papyrology and art. This is an extensive study of the different theatrical spheres women were involved in and a discussion of their occupations. His conclusion is unique because, through the information he gathered regarding these actresses, he writes out a prosopopoeia ('personification', 'dramatization') or life story of a

mime actress, in order to present the reader with what her life-story might have looked like if she had had the opportunity to record it.

In recent scholarship there is a shift of focus to unearthing facts about the first female performers. Sue-Ellen Case, in her 2008 chapter on "Women Pioneers", touches upon the idea of how mimes might have been the first women playwrights and how they could have had an influence upon the playwrights of their times. Her main argument in this chapter is that physical theatre like mime was lost in history due to the lack of written evidence for it. As she suggests, one should shift from the text-based theatrical history to study the unwritten one. Similarly, Live Hov in her 2014 article "The First Female Performers: Tumblers, Flute-girls, and Mime Actresses", deals with 'recovering the lost female traditions' and traces the first of the female performers by using available texts. She discusses how female performers have been objectified throughout history and how it made them be looked upon just as 'promiscuous actresses'. In this way, both Case and Hov grapple with the lost narrative of ancient female performers.

Finally, similarly to how Joshel discusses slaves in epigraphy, Maria Letizia Caldelli's 2014 article "Women in the Roman World" also maintains the idea that inscriptions are a useful source for learning about those who were less mentioned by the ancient writers, specifically, slaves and women. She upholds the view that men were accountable for the greater part of the inscriptions. However, she says, inscriptions are important regardless of the writer because they concern the middle and the lower strata of society.

In this paper, I explore how epitaphs render a different perspective of the mimes from that given by the ancient writers. I concentrate on three Latin epitaphs of mime actresses found in Rome which focus on their career and details relating to it. While other scholars have already dealt with the epitaphs that I discuss, I intend to focus more on how they help construct the missing links regarding the life of a mime, mainly their occupation. First, I discuss the epitaphs of Claudia Hermione and Fabia Arete, focusing on the importance of the terms *archimima*, *heredes*, *primus* and *diurnus*, and explaining how these terms become significant to their careers. Secondly, I look at the epitaph of Ecloga, especially examining her patron, private troupes, stage names, and then turn to a discussion of the age at death of these actresses. Finally, an overall analysis of the examined epitaphs follows the discussion.

Claudia Hermione the *archimima*: protagonist, leader or playwright?

<div align="center">

Dormi

Claudiae

Hermionae

archimimae su

i temporis pri

mae, here

des

</div>

'Sleep. Her heirs (dedicate this monument) to Claudia Hermione, best
female archimime of her time'. (CIL 6.10106 II =ILS 5211)

This epitaph is dated to the first to the second century C.E. and was found in
Rome on a marble sarcophagus.[26] According to the CIL commentary, scholars have
various opinions as to where it was first found but at the moment it is located in
the Vatican museum.[27]

On the one hand, Ogle speculates that this is a Christian epitaph due to the
word dormi, since the idea of death as sleep is very much associated with Christian
epitaphs.[28] On the other hand, the word heredes is rare in Christian epitaphs
and the profession of Claudia places it in the pagan tradition. In addition, Starks
believes that the term archimimae found in this epitaph was used in a certain time
period from the first to the third century C.E., but he does not present reasons for
this hypothesis.[29]

At a glance the structure of the epitaph is striking, both in CIL and in the
original epitaph itself. For one thing, the epitaph takes the shape of a clipeus/
clupeus. It was originally a shield used in war and eventually the names of heroes
were inscribed upon it. In addition, the goddess Victory is sometimes represented
in art inscribing upon a clipeus the name or merits of some deceased hero. The
Res gestae Divi Augusti also mentions a clupeus aureus (a golden shield) with

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26   See Starks (2004) 154 and Maxwell (1992) 173.

27   According to several commentators mentioned in CIL, it was found either in the atrium of S. Pietro
in 1612, or in Velletri and then moved to Rome.

28   See Ogle 1933: 86. He compares both literary and epigraphical evidence relating to the idea of
death and sleep. Maxwell (1992) 173 and Starks (2004) 154 also use his arguments regarding this
epitaph.

29   Starks (2004) 134.

an inscription upon it, reflecting the honor bestowed upon Augustus.[30] This text was also found inscribed on a marble replica, echoing what is mentioned in the res gestae. What, then, does the clipeus form highlight in an epitaph of a mime? I believe that this shows the great honor that her followers wanted to bestow on Claudia, in the same way that people wanted to honor their fallen heroes or emperors. Due to its shape, some words in the text were split in two and only the first three words appear to be in full form, dormi, Claudiae and Hermionae. It seems that the epitaph has given a prominent place for the name of the deceased with much respect, and anyone who reads it sees the name in full form.

Apart from the structure of the epitaph, there are several words which are important for this discussion. For instance, the title archimima is an important term to decipher. The Oxford Latin Dictionary and Lewis and Short's dictionary define the term as 'a chief mimic actress'. And the Thesaurus Linguae Latinae Epigraphicae defines the term as 'chief actress and directress of a troupe of female mimes'. In addition, according to Panayotakis, an archimima is the 'protagonist' of the show and, as Traina says, the 'head comedienne'.[31] This term, then, denotes appreciation of their acting skills and the fact that a woman can assume a leading role. The Greek word archimimos appears in Plutarch's portrayal of Sulla, who was famous for hosting performers at his court.[32] Even though the significance of this term is not highlighted in Plutarch's text, it was clearly a prevalent term used at that time. However, the female counterpart of this title is found only in the two epitaphs that I discuss in this article, and not in extant classical literature.

Intriguingly, Panayotakis mentions that the archimimus ('chief mime actor') might 'have seen to the plot-line or the script' and 'approved' of the scene.[33] Although there is hardly any evidence on Roman female mimographers, Fantham's analysis of the work of an archimima also suggests a similar interpretation. According to her, the 'largely improvisational' plots were devised by the archimimus/a, and he or she would assign the cast specific dialogues to improvise.[34] In that sense, this person had control over the show, whether it had an existing plotline or not. And if they were known as creating the plot-lines and

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30 [clu]peus [aureu]s in [c]uria Iulia positus, quem mihi senatum pop[ulumq]ue Rom[anu]m dare virtutis clement[iaequ]e et iustitiae et pieta[tis caus]sa testatu[m] est pe[r e]ius clupei [inscription]em, "a golden shield was set up in the Julian senate house; through an inscription on the shield that fact was declared that the Roman senate and people were giving it to me because of my valor, clemency, justice and piety" (Res gestae divi Augusti, 34.2; trans. Cooley 2009: 98).

31 Panayotakis (2006) 124. Traina (2001) 84. Starks (2004) 188 "leading lady".

32 As he states, among them there was Ῥώσκιος ὁ κωμῳδὸς καὶ Σῶριξ ὁ ἀρχιμῖμος, "Roscius the comedian, Sorex the archimime" (Plut. Sull. 36; trans. Perrin 1916: 439). Garton (1964) 142: He suggests that Sorex is known as a troupe master and Sulla associated with him very closely.

33 Panayotakis (2006) 124.

34 Fantham (1989) 155.

assigning dialogues for the actors, in a way they were doing the work of a script writer. As I have mentioned earlier, Case argues that mimes could have been 'the first women playwrights'.[35] Her chapter on "Women Pioneers" deals with mimes as a starting point in history where women were involved in devising a plot. She stresses the fact that 'their bodies were the sites of their texts', thus calling them 'silent women playwrights'. Here she compares a script to the movements of the mimes because the plays were not written down. She also refers to the mimes as 'a silent tradition', most probably referring to the pantomimes, who did not use words but just their body.[36] But even then, mimes are still 'playwrights' who emerge from a hidden history. If we consider the interpretations presented by Panayotakis and Fantham along with that of Case, they make clear that these women played prominent roles in the theatre.

Considering all these ideas, it is evident that a woman could hold a high position within the mime group or be the leader of the troupe. As with any other field, within their field there was also a hierarchy;however, the bond the troupe members had with each other is also clearly manifested in these epitaphs. The word heredes or 'heirs' gives the idea that the dead mime actress's legend will be carried on by them. Both Claudia Hermione and Fabia Arete (discussed below) had heirs, implying that they were proud of their careers and their own troupes. As Joshel notes, when an epitaph has the name of the 'epitaph's commemorator and the dead', it memorialized both of them as well as their relationship.[37] I think it also shows that the archimima has done her role well as a leader, providing proper heirs to carry out the work they have done so far.

This epitaph thus shows the importance of the occupational title archimima, which literary sources fail to mention regarding any female mime. Also, a woman leading a troupe shows her authority and power within a male dominated sphere. Finally, the structure of the epitaph itself signifies the honor that her heirs wanted to bestow upon her.

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35   Case (2008) 29–31.

36   As I have mentioned in the introduction, many scholars tend to use the term mime as a common term for mime or pantomime, without distinguishing the differences between the two professions.

37   Joshel (1992) 8.

Fabia Arete: A wealthy archimima

dis manibus

M. Fabi M. f(ilii) Esq(uilina) Regilli et Fabiae […]

Fabia M.et lib(erta) Arete archim[ima]

temporis sui prima diurna fec[it]

sibi et suis, quibus legavit testa[mento]:

M. Fabio Chrysanto	M. Fabio Antigono	p osterisq[ue eorum. monumentum]
M. Fabio Phileto	M. Fabio Carpo l(iberto)	ne abalien[etur maneatque]
M. Fabio Salvio vest.	M. Fabio Peculiari l.	in familia [exceptis his]
M. Fabio Hermeti	M. Fabio Hilaro l.	S ex. Pompeio […]
M. Fabio Torquato	M. Fabio Secundo l.	l(ibero) Neriano […]
Fabiae Mimesi	M. Fabio Aucto l.A. Cosio Iucu[ndo quos cum Fabiis]
M. Fabio Azbes[to]	Fabiae Cypare l.	et in eod(em) mon[umento sepeliri volo]

'To the dead spirits of M. Fabius Regillus, son of Marcus, of the Esquiline tribe and to Fabia…Fabia Arete, freedwoman of Marcus and his wife, premier archimima of her time, a free-lance (or salaried) woman, dedicated this for herself and those of her household to whom she left bequests in her will: to M. Fabius Chrysantus, etc… and their descendants. Let this monument not be sold and remain in the family, with these exceptions, Sex. Pompeius Nerianus, freedman of…, and A. Cosius Iucundus, [whom I wish to be buried with the Fabii and] in the same tomb…' (CIL 6.10107 = ILS 5212 trans. Starks 2004)

Fabia Arete's epitaph is dated to the first century C.E. based on its 'tribal designation' Esq(uilina)[38] and the dis manibus formula. It was found in Rome on

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38   Urban tribal designations were used in the late republic and imperial era, often as part of one's name. See Starks 2004: 143n.106.

a marble tablet.[39] According to the CIL commentary there is much disagreement regarding the specific place that it was first found.[40]

Starks' argument regarding the epitaph of Arete provides insights into her career as a wealthy archimima.[41] First, the epitaph states that she set up this tomb for her patrons, herself, fourteen members of the Fabii household and a few others. He believes that these fourteen named people are freed persons belonging to her, and that she must have assumed the role of managing or training a troupe as Roscius (the actor mentioned by Plutarch) did when he retired from acting. However, the training of actors or actresses by women is not mentioned, but this could be one such instance. The size of the tomb, along with the number of people present, also denote how wealthy she was.

Who are these named people? Is there a possibility that they were in her troupe? Maxwell assumes that the two women mentioned here could be mimes. For instance, he conjectures that Fabia Mimesis, Fabia Cypare and even Fabia Arete could be stage names: Arete meaning 'excellence', Cypare referring to Cyprus and connected to Aphrodite, and finally Mimesis for 'imitation', thus rendering a perfect connection to Arete's profession itself. Then, analogously, some names of the men mentioned, as in Fabius Hilarus ('cheerful') and Fabius Peculiaris ('peculiar' or 'special'), would be appropriate stage names too. However, both Starks and Maxwell discuss the issues regarding stage names in detail and explain that a name alone cannot help us determine their profession.[42] In this situation, since Arete is mentioned as an archimima, there is a reason to think that some of these freedmen and women had a connection to theatre.[43]

Similarly, the phrase *archimima sui temporis prima* is worth looking into, since this appears in Claudia's epitaph as well. Starks believes that 'the best lead mime actress of her time' is the best interpretation of *prima*, rather than 'first of her

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39   Maxwell (1992) 174.

40   Certain commentators like Metellus believes that it was found in the vineyard of Alfronsus Hispanus the physician. However, the details are not exactly clear therefore its original location is problematic (CIL 6. 10107 = ILS 5212)

41   Starks (2004) 144; here I summarize the relevant details for my discussion of his interpretation regarding this epitaph.

42   Maxwell (1992) 94–95, Starks (2004) 108n.144.

43   The word appearing next to M. Fabius Salvius is vest, and it is believed to be an abbreviation of the word vestiarius, vestifex, vestificus, or vestitor meaning dressmaker. However, this could mean either her personal dressmaker or that of the troupe. Regarding the costume of the mimes, several details are available. For one thing, during Juvenal's time they intentionally imitated the dress of the common people or the spectators themselves to be more connected to them (Juv. 3.177–78). But also, Ovid and Apuleius mention a centunculus (a cloth of many colors), a patchwork cloak worn by mimes (Ov. Fast. 5.355–56. Apul. Apol. 13.5. Maybe the pattern changed from colorful costumes to the plain costumes. See Maxwell (1992) 7–8.

day'.[44] The word prima appears in several other epitaphs of female performers as well. For instance, the epitaph dedicated to Eucharis by her parents mentions Graeca in scaena prima populo apparui.[45] Here also there is much dispute regarding whether the word prima should be rendered 'first' or 'best'. Some take it as 'the first' in order to denote that she was the first to perform on a Greek stage, meaning reciting in Greek on a Roman stage. However, there were actresses prior to her, since her epitaph is dated around the first century B.C.E. Maxwell, however, still interprets prima as 'first', taking it as a 'hyperbole' by the writer of the epitaph.[46] I, on the other hand, think it is most logical to consider prima as 'best'.

Another significant term here is diurna, meaning 'daily'. Csapo translates it as 'daily salary' in an epitaph regarding the archimime Eutyches.[47] Maxwell states that this is an 'uncommon' term that appears specifically with archimimes and suggests that it might signify that they were paid for holding this position (26). He believes that this could also mean free-lance workers who worked outside their own troupes and made 'special appearances' in other plays.[48] It is not known exactly how much they were paid or on what basis. For instance, the mimes who were in the entourage of Sulla and Antony received a considerable amount of wealth and land either for professional or personal reasons. Likewise, Cicero in his speech Pro Roscio comoedo mentions that a mime actress named Dionysia earned 200,000 sesterces.[49] However, it is not exactly clear whether this amount was per year or over a lifetime. Thus, it is evident that at least some of the mimes achieved a high status, just like present-day stars who earn a substantial income.

Moreover, setting up epitaphs especially ones with long inscriptions on marble, like this one, for the dead in order to preserve their memory also costs money. In a way, an epitaph itself represents only those with financial resources, since the ones who have no means will be buried in the city's potter's fields, in unmarked amphorae or with grave markers of wood or stucco which have not survived.[50] As Joshel and Webb point out, sometimes people from outside the family, like

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44   Starks (2004) 145.

45   CIL 12. 1214 = 1.1009 = 6.100961, line 13.

46   Maxwell (1992) 139.

47   CIL 14.2408 = ILS 5196: L. Acilio. L. F. Pompt. Eutyche nobili archimimo commun mimor adlecto diuron… "For Lucius Acilius Pompteius Eutyches, son of Lucius, noble archimime, appointee on daily salary (diurnus) in the Commune of Mimes…" (trans. Csapo 1995: 375).

48   Starks states these points quoting the ideas of Leppin, Mommsen and Maxwell (2004) 146.

49   Cic. QRosc. 23: qui HS ccciɔɔɔ ccciɔɔɔ ccciɔɔɔ quaestus facere noluit (nam certe HS ccciɔɔɔ ccciɔɔɔ ccciɔɔɔ merere et potuit et debuit, si potest Dionysia HS ccciɔɔɔ ccciɔɔɔ merere…"a man who refused to make a profit of 300,000 sesterces (for certainly he could and ought have earned that amount if Dionysia can earn 200,000…" (trans. Freese 1930: 295).

50   Joshel (1992) 19. She also mentions that "even cheap epitaphs may have cost around the equivalent of 3 months' wages of an unskilled labor."

the deceased's friends, colleagues, even fellow slaves and ex-slaves or 'generous friends' helped to set up a tombstone for people who could not afford it.[51] The epitaph for Fabia Arete demonstrates that some mime actresses were wealthy enough to put up epitaphs for themselves and also for their former masters and fellow members of their troupe.

According to this analysis, Arete's epitaph not only portrays how a woman was able to be an *archimima* but also the fact that she gained a considerable amount of wealth through her career. She managed to set up an epitaph for herself and several others and was *prima* of her time. Another such epitaph which discusses being part of a troupe or entourage is Ecloga's epitaph.

Ecloga: A mime from a king's troupe

E c l o g a e

regis. Iubae

mimae. quae

u(ixit) a(nnos) XVIII [m(enses)]

'To Ecloga, mime of King Juba, who lived eighteen years and…
months' (CIL 6.10110 II =ILS 5216)

The epitaph is dated to the second half of the first century B.C.E. – first quarter of first century C.E. and was found on the Esquiline Hill, according to the CIL entry. The name of the Mauretanian king, Juba, aids to date the epitaph of Ecloga to around 52/50 B.C.E – 23 C.E.[52]

This epitaph is important for my discussion for several reasons. For one thing, it presents the name of Ecloga's patron or the person to whose troupe she belonged. As I have mentioned in the introduction, mimes were also a part of the private troupes. This epitaph includes the name of Juba, the client-king of Mauretania, who came to Rome when he was a child and later obtained Roman citizenship during the reign of Augustus.[53] He is said to have had an interest in the arts and he employed Ecloga in his court in Rome.[54] What does identifying her with the king

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51 Joshel (1992) 8, Webb (2008) 49.

52 Höschelle (2013) 37.

53 Momigliano (2012) and Maxwell (1992) 105.

54 Starks (2004) 98.

himself in her epitaph denote about her social status? It is uncertain who set up this epitaph for her but whoever did, wanted to make the world remember her as the mime of Juba. Thus, her identity is aligned with a royal political leader of her time. In most epitaphs the patron or the patroness is mentioned, and here the king is her patron.

Secondly, her name "Ecloga" is significant because it is probably her stage name. For one thing, in the previous epitaphs that I have examined, the epitaphs present full names, Claudia Hermione and Fabia Arete. Here we see only Ecloga, which would imply that she was a slave.[55] Or she was Mauretanian and therefore not subject to Roman nomenclatural rules. In a way this explanation makes her far more interesting because she could be a foreigner mime who gained incredible prominence at Rome.

While Ecloga's origin or background is uncertain, her name implies the following: The word ecloga is originally a Greek word, ἐκλογή, meaning 'choice' or 'selection', and her name in Latin means 'selections from a larger work' or 'short pieces of poetry'.[56] Höschele thus suggests that she might have acted in brief sketches which are taken from longer plays. This could probably be her stage name as there were other mimes who also had stage names, including Volumnia Cytheris (mentioned in the introduction) and Eucharis (discussed above). 'Cytheris' is another term for Venus the goddess of love, beauty, desire and sex, and 'Eucharis' means pleasing, agreeable or charming. Thus, these names give them a sensual appeal. It is not quite clear whether the mimes themselves or their masters chose these stage names for them.[57] In the situation of a slave, the master had power over naming and in a way most of these names further objectified the slave or, as here, the mime.

In addition, Höschele mentions that the name Ecloga could define her 'outstanding status as an actress, the chosen one'.[58] Also, this term is prominent in classical literature due to Virgil's Eclogues. Servius claimed that Volumnia Cytheris recited or acted out Virgil's Eclogues 6 and Höschele argues that Ecloga

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55   Joshel (1992) 36. A slave is given a single name and it clearly indicates that they didn't belong to any legitimate social order. The master had the power to name their "possession" the way they desired.

56   Liddell and Scott. Höschele (2013) 38.

57   Maxwell states that due to the lack of written evidence regarding this naming practice, it is difficult to arrive at a proper conclusion. However, he discusses stage names found in epitaphs and categorizes them according to their types as related to attributes, emotions, myths, objects etc. See Maxwell (1992) 94–5 and 136. See Joshel (1992) 35–6 regarding naming practices of slaves.

58   Lewis and Short. Höschele (2013) 38n.6. This idea came about during a discussion she had with Glenn Most.

might have acted in similar works.[59] These points indicate the importance of a name, whether it be a king, mime or a slave, since it states their identity and status. Although the king is mentioned with only a single name, his status is made clear by his title (regis), rendering clear the social hierarchy within the epitaph.

Another important aspect of this epitaph is Ecloga's early age at death (18 years old), a recurrent factor in the epitaphs of female actresses. For comparison, Eucharis died when she was 14; Hellas, a pantomime, also died at the age of 14; and Luria Privata at the age of 19.[60] When did they start their careers in order to be praised in their teens? Quoting Procopius, Starks mentions that some mothers of these actresses introduced them to this career when they 'were old enough for the job'.[61]

> 'And when these children came of age, the mother immediately put them on the stage there—since they were fair to look upon—not all three at the same time, but as each one seemed to her to be ripe for this calling.'[62]

This meant that they were physically mature and available for sex. In such a way, the life of an actress or a mime sometimes overlapped with that of a prostitute, as I mentioned in the introduction. This was one of the reasons why being an actress in the ancient world was considered a profession for the lower classes. But some

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59 Höschele (2013) 48. Servius writes, dicitur autem ingenti favore a Vergilio esse recitata, adeo ut, cum eam postea Cytheris meretrix cantasset in theatro, quam in fine Lycoridem vocat, stupefactus Cicero, cuius esset, requireret, "It is, moreover, told that [Eclogue 6] was recited by Vergil to gigantic acclaim, so much so that, when Cytheris, the courtesan, whom he calls Lycoris in the last poem, had chanted/recited/acted (cantasset) it in the theater later on, Cicero asked in amazement whose it was" (Commentary on the Eclogues of Vergil 6.11; trans. Höschele 2013: 48).

60 CIL 12.1916:Hellas | pantomim(a) | hic quiescit, | ann(is) xiiii., "Hellas, the pantomime actress, rests here, age 14..."

CIL 12.1214: Eucharis Liciniae l(iberta) docta, erodita omnes artes virgo vixit an(nos) XIIII. "Eucharis, freedwoman of Licinia, a young girl trained and skilled in all arts, lived fourteen years..."

CIL 6.10111 II: Luria Priuata, mima, u(ixit) a(nnos) XIX. "Luria Privata, mime actress, lived nineteen years".

61 Starks (2008) 120.

62 ἐπεὶ δὲ τὰ παιδία ταῦτα ἐς ἥβην ἦλθε, καθῆκεν αὐτὰ ἐπὶ τῆς ἐνταῦθα σκηνῆς αὐτίκα ἡ μήτηρ, ἐπεὶ εὐπρεπεῖς τὴν ὄψιν ἦσαν, οὐ μέντοι ὑπὸ χρόνον τὸν αὐτὸν ἁπάσας, ἀλλ᾽ ὡς ἑκάστη ἔδοξέν οἱ ἐς τὸ ἔργον τοῦτο ὡραία εἶναι (Procopius, Historia Arcana (Anecdota) [Secret History], 9.8; trans. Dewing 1935: 105).

actresses, like Theodora, achieved a position much higher than that they were born into, moving from being a courtesan to the wife of an emperor.[63]

With regard to many of these mimes, their parents have set up the epitaphs, meaning that they outlived their children, which is a sad incident. Maxwell points out that this unfortunate occurrence is a common theme in the epitaphs of children.[64] In Claudia Hermione's and Fabia Arete's epitaphs the age at death is not mentioned; however, based on an archmimus diurnus (CIL 6.33965=ILS 5209) who was aged 26 when he died, Starks assumes that they were in their twenties as well when they achieved this title (333). According to his analysis of the list, he figures that many of the youngest actresses were dancers and assumes that dancing is the first skill that they developed in their professional life. And by the time they were in their late teens, their specialization was noticeable.

In other words, from an early age these girls were trained to be good at what they did, whether they liked it or not. One can only speculate about their aspirations since we do not have their own testimonials. But the epitaphs do provide useful information. Ecloga's epitaph, for example, shows that certain mimes were even part of a royal troupe and that they were remembered for it. In most instances, moreover, the mimes were remembered by their stage names, further implying that they were known to the public by that name and that their identity was merged with their career itself.

Conclusion

It is evident that the final remembrance that these mimes or their close relations wanted them to have was related to their career, thus revealing that they took pride in what they did. At the same time, since they are funerary inscriptions, one shouldn't forget the fact that the dead person is presented in 'a highly positive and idealized light'.[65] That is, they would not have put in their profession if they did not want the rest of the world to remember that because 'in epitaphs the living remember the dead'.[66] Therefore, it is important that whoever wrote the epitaph should do justice to the dead person.

Pride is a key element even in epitaphs where the exact profession is not mentioned. For example, Eucharis' epitaph doesn't include a specific title but

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63   Procopius describes the upbringing of Theodora the actress, who later became the wife of Justinian. After this description, he describes how she gradually learnt sexual acts and became a courtesan.

64   Maxwell (1992) 139.

65   Caldelli (2014) 583.

66   Joshel (1992) 7.

does mention her skills in arts, *artibus*, and how she adorned the games of the nobles with song and dance, *quae modo nobilium ludos decoravi choro*.[67] In that sense, certain epitaphs are not specific but nonetheless the commemorator draws attention to the skills of the performer and thus shows pride in her job.

These epitaphs clearly manifest the power and authority that female mimes had in Roman society and render a different perspective than literary sources (which focus on their association with politicians or their scandalous behaviors). Having a number of freedmen and heirs denoted their wealth as well as their successful careers in the field of theatre. Claudia Hermione and Fabia Arete do not appear in any extant literary works but only in epitaphs, which preserve their names because they had enough wealth to commission a tomb for themselves. But it wouldn't have been the same for all. Poorer mimes, however, have vanished without having any means to tell their story.

A gravestone with an epitaph is itself an honor. Despite not knowing for certain who commissioned the epitaph, even a single word like *archimima* or the woman's name itself speaks volumes if one is willing to listen well and disregard the established norms and stereotypical ideas about mimes we find in literature. Female entertainers like mime actresses, flute-girls, and dancers have been hidden or erased from history, but they deserve a space in current discussions. Therefore, I argue that their family, friends, and fellow actresses or troupe wanted to make the world remember them for their occupational achievements through these epitaphs.

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67   CIL 12. 1214 = 1.1009 = 6.100961.

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