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Introduction

Dance at Rome – Roman Dance

KARIN SCHLAPBACH

Salva res est, saltat senex.

Servius, in *Aen.* 8.110

Dance at Rome

When we think of dance in Graeco-Roman antiquity, most of us think probably first of the Greeks. Dance was omnipresent in the ancient Greek world, and this perception is sustained and amplified by the modern poetic and philosophical imagination. In his famous poem *Die Götter Griechenlands* from 1788, Friedrich Schiller gives the beautiful dances around the altar their due: “Beautifully entwined soulful dances / circled around the resplendent altar” (“Schön geschlungne seelenvolle Tänze / Kreisten um den prangenden Altar”, lines 93–94); roughly a century later, Friedrich Nietzsche idealised the exuberant dances of Dionysos, and Paul Valéry gave his thoughts on dance the form of a “Socratic dialogue” between three philosophers and a dancer with Greek names (*L’Âme et la danse*, 1921). To a whole generation of critics the dances by Loïe Fuller seemed to resuscitate the Tanagra figurines or the dancers depicted on ancient Greek vases, and Edward Steichen’s famous photographs immortalised Isadora Duncan dancing among the ruins of ancient Greek temples. It is to a great extent a Greek universe that unfolds in the modern imagination around ancient dance.¹

¹ Accordingly, a vast majority of chapters in Fiona Macintosh’s edited volume *The Ancient Dancer in the Modern World* (2010) address the reception of ancient Greek dance; see also Fitzgerald 2019 (elucidating Egyptian, Minoan, and Mycenaean in addition to Greek aesthetic inspirations); Dorf 2021 and 2018; Shay 2017; Fabbri 2009; Caron 2006. Emmanuel 1896 documents attempts at reconstructing ancient Greek dance based on vase images and cinematographic animation; on the possibilities and limits of such an approach, see Smith 2010; Naerebout 1997, 209–253. In his book on Loïe Fuller from 1904, Roger Marx writes, “par elle l’orchestrique des anciens Hellènes nous est rendue” (Marx 1904, 7). On Steichen’s photographs of Isadora Duncan, see Marenzi 2018; on

Scholarship on ancient dance has followed the same pattern.² The Greek chorus, this crucial element of literary and musical culture in the archaic and classical epochs and beyond, has elicited the interest of countless scholars especially since German Idealism.³ In addition to aesthetic questions, groundbreaking studies since the 1970s addressed the social function of Greek choruses, and the last twenty years saw a new wave of studies on the chorus.⁴ More recently, the Greek solo dancer of the archaic and classical age has also come into the focus of research on ancient dance.⁵ By contrast, Roman dance has been far less prominent. Studies are few and far between, and only in recent years is there a surge in interest in Roman dance, and particularly in imperial pantomime, originally a Greek genre which ascended to great popularity under the Roman emperors.⁶

Turning to the history of modern ballet from the eighteenth century onward, however, it is interesting to note that practitioners – dancers, choreographers, and impresarios alike – mostly looked to imperial pantomime for inspiration in their endeavour to create dances that were able to tell stories.⁷ The tragic chorus, by contrast, elicited mixed responses and was often eliminated in modern tragedies inspired by ancient ones, as well as in stagings of ancient tragedies.⁸ The discovery of Pompeii in the eighteenth century fueled a craze for novels set in post-classical, Roman antiquity, inaugurated by Edward Bulwer-Lytton's *The Last Days of Pompei* (1834) and continuing for decades, and the fin-de-siècle fascination with spectacular entertainments found a

Duncan's study of ancient Greek images of dancers, see Duncan 1927, 79. Even in fascist Italy, it was Greek dance that appealed to the contemporary imagination, as Fiona Macintosh (Oxford) showed in a talk delivered on 15 Jan 2021: "Reconstructing Greek Dance with Fascist Ideology"; see also Taddeo 2017, 184 n. 40, 189–225. Unless stated otherwise, translations are mine.

2 Monographs on Greek dance include Emmanuel 1896; Séchan 1930; Lawler 1964a and 1964b; Prudhommeau 1965; Lonsdale 1993; Naerebout 1997. Despite its broader title, Weege 1926 focuses largely on Greek dance. Article-length overviews on "ancient dance" also routinely limit themselves to Greek dance, under which pantomime is subsumed: see, e.g., Zarifi 2007.

3 See Goldhill 2013; Billings 2013.

4 See Calame 1977; Mullen 1982; Henrichs 1994–1995; Ceccarelli 1998; Bierl 2001; Wilson 2003; David 2006; Perusino/Colantonio 2007; Athanassaki/Bowie 2011; Kowalzig 2011; Kurke 2012; Kowalzig/Wilson 2013; Billings/Budelman/Macintosh 2013; Gagné/Hopman 2013; Calame 2017; Gianvittorio 2017; Steiner 2021.

5 Olsen 2020.

6 On Roman dance, see Wille 1967, 187–202; Garelli-François 1995; Giannotta 2004; Fless/Moede 2007; Alonso Fernández 2011, 2013, 2015, 2016a, 2016b, 2017, 2020; Naerebout 2009; Curtis 2017, 1–19; on pantomime, see below pp. 20–21. New companions on dance in the (broadly conceived) ancient world are currently being prepared: Alonso Fernández/Olsen (forthcoming); Briand, in progress.

7 Hall 2008; Lada-Richards 2010; Fenböck 2021.

8 Corneille's *Cédipe* for instance, though heavily influenced by both Seneca and Sophocles, features no chorus. For the practice of omitting the chorus in stagings of Greek tragedies, common in the 19th century, see Hall/Macintosh 2005, 197. The reception of the ancient chorus in opera is a different matter; see Savage 2013. On new solutions for staging the chorus since the 2000s, see Papa-lexiou 2013.

welcome mirror in the imaginary decadence of ancient Rome, now illustrated by Pompeian frescoes of dancing figures.⁹ Female dancers feature repeatedly as protagonists of these novels, several of which include a reference to a mysterious ancient epitaph containing the laconic words *saltavit et placuit*, “she danced and pleased.” These Latin words were a more or less mediated reminiscence of an actual epitaph on a young slave named Septentrio, found in Antibes and made notorious among French readers interested in the past by Michelet’s incisive if brief discussion in his *Histoire de France* (CIL 12, 188, datable in the third century CE):

D M
PVERI SEPTENTRI
ONIS ANNOR XII QVI
ANTIPOLI IN THEATRO
BIDVO SALTAVIT ET PLA
CVIT.

To the manes of Septentrio, the boy of 12 years who, in the theatre in Antipolis, danced on two days and pleased.

Michelet’s musings on the boy’s premature death, not mourned by family members, anticipated the sense of loss that permeated a lot of the popular literature that aimed to revive antiquity and thrived on isolated glimpses of the ancient world as preserved in archeological remains, reducing an already sparse evidence to even tinier fragments and leaving ample space to the modern imagination: “Je ne connais rien de plus tragique que cette inscription dans sa brièveté, rien qui fasse mieux sentir la dureté du monde romain ...”, Michelet wrote.¹⁰ The unexpected fortune of this young Roman dancer as a source of inspiration for nineteenth century novelists may serve as a healthy reminder that classical Greece has not always eclipsed subsequent ancient dance cultures in the modern perception. It is an invitation to look harder for Roman dance and the impact it made on Roman literature and material culture, and to ask how it may enrich our understanding of the Roman world.

More recent discussions of epitaphs and honorary inscriptions on Roman dancers have shown that some of them both enjoyed fame and riches and were very much loved by their families and peers. On a funerary altar dedicated by the impresario Calpodius, the pantomime Theocritus Pylades is honoured “on account of his merits” by the band of musicians and dancers to which he belonged, the *grex Romanus* (CIL 5, 5889, from Lodi, second century CE), and an even younger boy than Septentrio, named Celadio, is mourned in an inscription from Petelia by the troupe of the panto-

9 Ducrey 2013 discusses the pioneering role of popular novels set in antiquity in the revival of ancient dance at the turn of the 20th century.

10 Michelet 1833, 96. See the excellent discussion by Ducrey 1996, 162–196.

mime Ionicus, his father, who endured “everlasting grief” (first century CE; see Graf in this volume).¹¹ The freedwoman dancer Licinia Eucharis is also commemorated by her father.¹² Michelet was certainly right to note the “hardship of the Roman world” in one regard, namely the high mortality of children and adolescents: Licinia Eucharis died at fourteen. But it would be mistaken to think that only individuals of the lowest social standing and deprived of agency and social networks were professional dancers.

Nor would a Roman citizen dance only if drunk or mad, as Cicero famously suggests at one point: “No one dances who is sober, except perhaps if the person is crazy, not in private nor at a decent and respectable dinner-party” (*Nemo enim fere saltat sobrius, nisi forte insanit, neque in solitudine neque in convivio moderato atque honesto*, *Pro Murena* 6.13), a passage which is routinely adduced to show that the Romans did not think highly of dancing.¹³ In reality Cicero attempts to assuage his client, Murena, from the charge of being a dancer leveled at him by Cato, whose austere morals were notorious. Cicero scolds Cato for using an “insult from the street” (*maledictum ex trivio*) and puts the charge into perspective by pointing out that dance (*saltatio*) is the “final accompaniment” (*comes ... extrema*) of banquets and amusements and the “last” (or “slightest”?) addition to all vices (*omnium vitiorum ... postremum*) – a mere accessory to depraved habits of which there is no trace in Murena.¹⁴ The problem of dancing, then, is one of shady contexts and disreputable practitioners, and for “dancer” to work as an insult, a whole set of additional parameters have to be in place. The passage offers by no means the wholesale dismissal of dancing that is often attributed to it, and its rhetorical exaggeration should not be taken absolutely.

A similar oscillation between positive and negative judgements can be observed in connection with Sempronia, a woman of Catiline’s entourage whom Sallust describes in characteristically ambivalent terms: she was beautiful and learned and could “play the lyre and dance more elegantly than was necessary for an honest woman” (*psallere et saltare elegantius quam necesse est probae*), but did not heed decency (*Catil.* 25). The

11 See Cadario 2009 for Theocritus Pylades; Lazzarini 2004 for Celadio; more generally on the epigraphical record, Tedeschi 2017; Caldelli 2005; Strasser 2004; Leppin 1992.

12 CLE 55 = CIL 6, 10096. See Alonso Fernández 2015, 322–330; on female dancers in the imperial period, see further Webb 1997; Starks 2008.

13 See, e.g., Lawler/Spawforth in the most recent edition of the *The Oxford companion to classical civilization* (2014), a perfect example of the perpetuation of this stereotype. RE and Dagr both argue that Roman hostility towards dance should not be taken at face value, but they dedicate the bulk of the entries, “Tanzkunst” and “*saltatio*” respectively, to Greek dance, reflecting the amount of extant information, rather than ancient reality.

14 “Cato calls Murena a dancer. It is an insult of a strong accuser when it is uttered with truth but of a defaming detractor when it is wrong. Hence, since you have this authority of yours, you should not, Marcus Cato, pick up an insult from the street corner or from some slanderous calumny, nor call a consul of the Roman people a dancer, but consider with what additional vices someone needs to be affected in order to be truly accused of this. No one dances who is sober (etc.).” See Alonso Fernández 2011, 479–481 and 2020, 177–180; Naerebout 2009, 149–150; Curtis 2017, 9.

passage is not lost on the dialogue characters in Macrobius' *Saturnalia*, written over four centuries later, who comment on various types of extravagance (*lascivia*) among their Roman ancestors, which they themselves claim to have "emended" (*sat.* 3.14.3). Broaching the subject of dance, Rufius says: "I'll pass over the fact that married women considered dancing not dishonourable; rather, even the honest among them applied themselves to dancing, albeit not to the point of perfecting the art. In fact, what did Sallust say? 'to play the lyre and dance more elegantly than was necessary for an honest woman.' So even he does not reproach Sempronia because she knew how to dance, but only because she knew how to dance really well" (*sat.* 3.14.5). But despite the somewhat ostentatiously raised eyebrows, the discussion of dance in this symposiac dialogue set at the twilight of pagan culture acknowledges that many respectable Romans of old enjoyed dancing, including, for instance, Appius Claudius, triumphator of 143 BCE (*sat.* 3.14.14).

A lot depended on circumstances and measure. Dissolute dancing during dinner parties was not a respectable pastime for Roman citizens, and Cicero himself uses this charge elsewhere (*In Pisonem* 22; *Pro Deiotaro* 26; *In Verrem* 2.3.23). What is often overlooked, though, is that similar dismissals can also be found in Greek sources, as Edith Hall showed in her 2010 article "The missing exemplary male dancer."¹⁵ In Homer, dance is repeatedly associated with non-Greeks (the Trojans, the Phaeacians), and Priam uses the word "dancer" as a slur no less than the Romans do: at the end of the *Iliad*, he calls his own sons – the ones who have not died like Hector – "liars and dancers" (ψεύσταί τ' ὀρχησται τε, *Iliad* 24.261). The most amusing instance of indecorous dancing from the Greek world is probably Herodotus' anecdote of Hippocleides, who displeased his prospective father-in-law by dancing upside down on a table (when underwear, it must be noted, was not part of the costume). "You danced away (ἀπορχήσας) your marriage", cried the father of the bride; to make things worse, Hippocleides famously replied that he did not care (οὐ φροντὶς Ἰπποκλείδῃ, 6.29).¹⁶ In short, dance is a social practice that is regulated and subject to policing not just at Rome, but probably in every culture, including ancient Greece. Plato was well aware of the potentially subversive power of choral dancing, and dedicated substantial parts his *Laws* to the topic.¹⁷

Roman philosophers did not ignore dance either, although we do not know of any Roman philosopher who enjoyed dancing himself, unlike Socrates, who allegedly liked to dance – at least if we believe his own words in Xenophon's *Symposium*, which are, as often, undercut by irony.¹⁸ But when it suited their purpose, they would mention dance

15 Hall 2010. The point was also made by Naerebout 2009, 149 n. 14.

16 See also Athenaeus 14, 628cd, where this negative example illustrates the idea attributed to Damon of Oa that dance is a transparent expression of one's character, and for a recent discussion, Olsen 2020, 180–188.

17 See Peponi 2013; Prauscello 2014; Folch 2015. Religious festivals and dancing as a backdrop of Plato's later philosophy are discussed by O'Meara 2017, 125–134.

18 Xen. *symp.* 2.16; see Huss 1999; Hall 2010, 149–150; Olsen 2020, 161–163.

and build it into their arguments. In one of his dialogues Cicero, for instance, has Cato (of all people!) refer to dance in order to elucidate the Stoic concept of wisdom (*De finibus* 3.24): like acting or dancing, Cato argues, wisdom does not aim at producing an outcome but is fulfilled in the practice itself. The argument is prepared by a more general comparison between life and the stage, especially popular among the Stoics:

For just as an actor or a dancer is given not just any but a certain particular role or movement (*histrioni actio, saltatori motus non quivis sed certus quidam est datus*), so life has to be lived in a certain way, not in just any way; and this way we call appropriate and suitable. For we do not think that wisdom is similar to seamanship or medicine but rather to the acting and dancing which I just mentioned, in such a way that its end – that is, the exercise of the art – lies in itself and is not sought outside (*ut in ipsa insit, non foris petatur extremum, id est artis effectio*).

The underlying distinction between the theoretical, practical, and producing arts is Aristotelian (*Nicomachean Ethics* 6.4, 1140a). But as far as we can see, Aristotle does not adduce dance as an example of a “practical” art. We find this example only in Roman authors (Cicero and Quintilian¹⁹). While we do not know for sure whether they were the first to use it or whether it appeared in Hellenistic sources, they would not have adopted it if it did not make immediate sense to their audience. Down to late antiquity, the specific expressive possibilities of dance caught the attention of philosophers, above all Augustine, who returned to the physical language of pantomime on various occasions and analysed it with great subtlety.²⁰

Priests, *matronae*, boys and girls

If even Cato can adduce dance as a matter of course in a philosophical dialogue by Cicero, it may be fair to conclude that dance permeated all walks of life in ancient Rome. One of the areas in which dancing features prominently is Roman religion. The most famous male Roman dancers are probably the *Salii*, a college of priests, whose very name according to Varro points to dancing: *Salii ab salitando, quod facere in comitiis in sacris quotannis et solent et debent* (*De lingua latina* 5.85).²¹ They performed a dance called *tripudium*, as did the Arval Brethren (see Prescendi in this volume).²² Interest-

¹⁹ *Inst.* 2.18.1–5.

²⁰ See Schlapbach 2018, 58–59, 66–69, 93, 144–148.

²¹ Similarly, *Ov. fast.* 3.387; *Porph. Hor. carm.* 1.36.12. Cf. *Livy* 1.20.4, on Numa: “He likewise chose twelve *Salii* for Mars Gradivus and gave them the distinction of the embroidered tunic and over the tunic a bronze breastplate and divine shields, which are called *ancilia*, and he bade them to carry them through the City and to proceed performing songs along with the three steps (*tripudiis*) of a stately dance (*saltatu*)” (see Prescendi in this volume, at n. 27).

²² Granino Cecere 2014; Alonso Fernández 2016a; Patzelt 2018, 179–186.

ingly, there seems to have been a debate in antiquity as to their name and origin. Various authors transmit versions of a minority view according to which the Salian priesthood took its name from a Greek – an Arcadian or Samothracian called Salios or Saïos – who brought the dance to Rome.²³ The endeavor to trace Roman religious institutions back to Greek roots was as common in antiquity as it is unfounded in the case of the Salii. But it is illustrative of the fact that the Romans tried to make sense of their own cultural and religious practices by relating them to similar practices of their neighbours. This is probably why Samothrace and Mantinea were singled out as possible places of origin of the Salians: the former is known for its cult of Magna Mater, and in the latter a festival in honour of Persephone and Kore was celebrated, the Koragia. Dancing very likely played an important role in both of them.²⁴ Despite these erudite but speculative associations, the perception of the Salii as an ancient and noble Roman institution formed by King Numa prevailed, although the connection with Numa must likewise be understood as a later fiction.²⁵

Dancers featured prominently in the *pompa circensis*, which is described in some detail in Dionysius of Halicarnassus' *Roman Antiquities*. The procession to the circus (as well as that to the theatre) was led by *ludiones*, "dancers", a word which was at the same time interpreted as *Lydioi*, i. e. Lydians who according to an ancient tradition settled on the Italian peninsula and became the Etruscans.²⁶ Their appearance, though apparently not their dance, resembled that of the Salii: they wore short tunics, helmets, swords, and bucklers. It is interesting to note that single *ludiones*, depicted in a static pose and recognisable by their attributes, continued to be represented on coins and reliefs as an iconographic shorthand of the *pompa circensis* or the *ludi* at large throughout the early imperial period.²⁷ The *ludiones* were followed by the *contendants*, and after those more dancers followed, arranged in three age groups and representing the Roman people at large. These bands of dancers, who performed a war dance in the fashion of the Greek *pyrrhiche*, introduced a playful element, as especially the young boys and youths were not warriors but posed as such. This ambiguous, liminal character of the dancing is further reinforced when on their heels followed choruses representing satyrs and Silens

23 Festus p. 438, 27–439, 10 Lindsay; Serv. *Aen.* 2.325; 8.285, 663; Isid. *orig.* 18.50 (relying on Varro); Plut. *Numa* 13.4 (on which see Buszard 2011). See Schlapbach (forthcoming).

24 On Samothracian influences on Roman religion, see Popkin 2015.

25 Bremmer 1993, 165. See Alonso Fernández 2016b, 312–313, on the Salian dance as befitting a Roman *vir*.

26 Dion. Hal. *Ant.* 2.71.4; Val. Max. 2.4.4.

27 See Latham 2016, 31–35, 156–157; Tagliafico 1994; Dupont 1993; Jannot 1992. Fless/Moede 2007, 256 note the relative absence of iconographic representations of dancers in action as part of processions; see also Fless 2004. In addition to the idiosyncrasies of iconographic conventions, this might also be an instance of the fact that what everybody knows does not have to be shown, i. e. that *ludiones* dance. Another example are the Muses, who are depicted as dancing in literature but not in the figurative arts (see Schlapbach 2018, 255).

aping and mocking the preceding dancers, a specifically Roman element, as Dionysius notes.²⁸

Energetic and exuberant dancing is also associated with the Galloi, the self-castrating worshippers of Magna Mater from Asia Minor, who are attested in Rome starting from the end of the second century BCE (see Curtis in this volume).²⁹ The pageant in honour of the Great Mother during her festival, the *ludi Megalenses* which took place in April, is memorably described by Lucretius (2.600–660). Not a neutral witness on religious matters, Lucretius' portrayal foregrounds the excessive and ecstatic nature of the cult, dwelling on the dances of an "armed band", whom he refers to as Curetes and who "leap up rhythmically, joyful with blood, shaking their awful crests with the nodding of their heads" (*ludunt in numerumque exultant sanguine laeti / terrificas capitum quatientes numine cristas*, 2.631–632).³⁰ The cult of Magna Mater, though firmly integrated into the Roman religious landscape, retained its foreign flavour, and Dionysius of Halicarnassus writes that in fact Roman citizens would assist but were not allowed to perform the rituals themselves (2.19.4). Some kind of participation of the public, and indeed of women, must nevertheless have characterised the cult. Discussing the elevated style of tragedy, Horace offers as a comparison the image of a *matrona* exceptionally given over to dancing: "as a married woman who is prompted to dance on holidays chastely mingles a bit with the impudent satyrs" (*ars* 232–233). A scholiast under the name of Ps.-Acro comments matter-of-factly that married women (*matronae*) danced during the festival of Magna Mater: "there are in fact certain cults, in which married women dance, such as during the sacrifices for the Mother of the Gods."³¹

Dancing *matronae* can also be assumed for the cult of Bona Dea, although the evidence for dancing as a component of the nocturnal ritual reserved for women is somewhat thin. One of the main sources, Plutarch's *Life of Caesar* 9–10, recounts how a male intruder – Clodius, the secret lover of Caesar's wife Pompeia, who dressed as a female harper (*psaltria*) for the occasion – is eventually discovered when he does not accept the invitation of a woman to play, or dance, with him: the word is *paizein*, which means more often "to dance" than "to play an instrument."³²

28 Dion. Hal. *Ant.* 7.72.5–11, based on Fabius Pictor (who apparently did not mention the *ludiones*). According to Bernstein 2007, 228–229, the representation of the people at large is also a specifically Roman element.

29 Iulius Obsequens 44a mentions them for the year 101 BCE; Val. Max. 7.7.6 for 77 BCE. See Dubosson-Sbrigione 2018, 140–143 and 283–284.

30 The Curetes were often associated with the Corybantes, followers of the Magna Mater (Strab. 10.3.12).

31 *ars* 232–233: *ut festis matrona moveri iussa diebus / intererit Satyris paululum pudibunda protervis*; Ps.-Acro ad loc.: *sunt enim quaedam sacra, in quibus saltant matronae, sicut in sacrificiis Matris deum*. On the participation of women in the cult of the Mother goddess, see Borgeaud 1996, 165. Alonso Fernández 2011, 224 n. 402 suggests that the scholion might refer to the cult of Bona Dea.

32 LSJ s. v. 2) dance; 4) play on a musical instrument; dance and sing. Plu. *Caes.* 9.4: "And the most important rites are celebrated by night, when merrymaking is added to the nocturnal festival and a lot of music is played as well." 10.2: "as he (sc. Clodius dressed as a *psaltria*) was prowling in the

On other occasions, mature women may have joined maidens in their dances. Horace's Ode 2.12, which celebrates the poet's mistress Licymnia, portrays her as dancing in honour of Diana on the occasion of the latter's festival, not without hinting, via *litotes*, at a tension between Licymnia (a typical name for a *hetaera*) and the maidens who danced for the chaste goddess (lines 17–20):

*quam nec ferre pedem dedecuit choris
nec certare ioco nec dare brachia
ludentem nitidis virginibus sacro
Dianae celebris die.*

For her it brought no disgrace to bring her foot in the choruses, nor to compete in fun nor to give her arms as she played with the radiant maidens on the sacred day of Diana's crowded worship. (Trans. Curtis 2017, 115)³³

Festus reports that on March 1, the *Salii* were accompanied by girls, the *Saliae virgines*, who performed the sacrifice and perhaps also the dances with the priests. By the late Republic they were hired (*conducticias*) for the occasion of the ritual, but they may originally have been aristocratic maidens with priestly functions.³⁴ For the year 207, Livy mentions a chorus of twenty-seven girls, who performed a dance on the forum to avert danger.³⁵ Augustus' secular games of the year 17 BCE featured a mixed chorus composed of 27 boys and 27 girls (*virgines lectas puerosque castos*) who performed Horace's *carmen saeculare* – certainly with reference to the ritual of 207 BCE.³⁶ The inscription of the Severan secular games also mentions girls (and boys, if the integration of the line is correct) performing a song (line 235):

*pueri et puel]LAE PALLIOLATAE CVM DISCRIMINALIBVS, MANIBVS CONNEXIS,
CA[rm]EN C[ecinerunt nove compositum]*

boys and girls, adorned with mantles and hair-pins, having joined their hands sang a newly composed song.

large house and trying to avoid the lights, an attendant of Aurelia came upon him and asked him to dance (παίζειν), as one woman would another, and when he refused, she dragged him forward and asked who he was, and where from." The incident is mentioned also at Cic. *Sest.* 116; *har. resp.* 4–5 and 37. Mastrocinque 2014 emphasises the overlap between the cult of Bona Dea and Dionysism, which might point to the inclusion of dancing.

- 33 The metapoetic overtones Licymnia's name, which used to be interpreted as a pseudonym for Maecenas' wife Terentia, are discussed by Harrison 2017, 148–149; Curtis 2017, 118–119.
- 34 Festus p. 439, 18–22 Lindsay; cf. CIL 6, 2177, an epitaph on a young woman called *praesula*. See Alonso Fernández 2011, 268; Glinister 2011, 112–113.
- 35 27.37.14: *in foro pompa constitit, et per manus recte data virgines sonum vocis pulsu pedum modulantes incesseunt*; 31.12.8. See Prescendi and Curtis in this volume; Curtis 2021.
- 36 See Schnegg 2020, 247–264; Curtis 2017, 149–158; Habinek 2005, 150–157. The quote is line 6 of the *Carmen saeculare*.

The words that interest us are *manibus conexas*, a seemingly unspectacular detail but in antiquity an unambiguous shorthand for dancing (see Bellia in this volume).³⁷

The examples of dancing in Roman culture adduced so far belong to religious contexts. Servius mentions dancing in Roman religion as a matter of course, rooted in the body and sanctioned by ancient custom. He writes that “our ancestors did not want any part of our body not to feel *religio*; in fact, song pertains to the spirit, and dance pertains to the mobility of the body” (*sane ut in religionibus saltaretur, haec ratio est, quod nullam maiores nostri partem corporis esse voluerunt, quae non sentiret religionem: nam cantus ad animum, saltatio ad mobilitatem pertinet corporis*, Serv. Ecl. 5.73).³⁸ On this view, religious practice derives from primeval biological conditions, and among them is physical movement. The most basic property of the living body is that it moves and is mobile. The newborn, in order to take her first breath, must move, and once dead, the body is distinguished by its irrevocable immobility and rigidity. Movement in turn encompasses and characterises the entire living body. By anchoring dance in this simple experiential fact, Servius suggests that there is a strong connection between physical movement, sensation, and religious practice, a view that finds support in cross-cultural studies of religion.³⁹ The idea that there should be “no part of our body not to feel *religio*” implies that the attention, care, and observation that characterise *religio* are ideally felt in and through the body, and dance is their physical expression.⁴⁰

Servius distinguishes furthermore between dance as part of religious practice and dance as an art or a skill, characterising the former precisely in opposition to the latter. Commenting on Virgil’s first *Georgic* 1.347–350 (“And let no one apply the sickle to the ripe ears before adorning his temples with plaited oak branches and performing disordered dance movements for Ceres and singing songs”), Servius notes: “disordered movements’, that is, a dance connected to religion and not coming from any art whatsoever” (*motus incompósitos id est saltationem aptam religioni, nec ex ulla arte uenientem*). Servius’ distinction, which associates cultic dancing with the spontaneous, untutored physical expression of reverence, seems rather modern and clashes with the abovementioned accounts of ritual dances consisting of regular patterns of movement that could be learned and brought to perfection. Rather than indicating a clear-cut dichotomy

37 See Schnegg 2020, 324 and 389. Bärbel Schnegg drew my attention to an ingenious conjecture made by Giovanni Battista Pighi, who integrated a mere three letters in line 260, *VAV*, as *antr[uau]erunt* – “they danced” (see Schnegg 2020, 330 and 392; the subject is *matronae*).

38 See Alonso Fernández 2011, 184; Wille 1967, 187 assumes that Servius’ source is Varro. The line in Virgil is *saltantis Satyros imitabitur Alpheisiboeus*.

39 See, e. g., Corrigan 2008 and 2017; Brandstetter 2016; Binder 2019; Schlapbach 2021.

40 On Roman dance as an intensified form of prayer, see Patzelt 2018, 178–213; Klinghardt 2011; Hahn 2007, 236–237.

between art and religion, Servius' comment points to a sliding scale of skilfulness that characterised dances according to different occasions, functions, and practitioners.⁴¹

Spectacle culture: practices and interpretations

According to our own standards, some of the dances mentioned so far may have resembled processions rather than dances, for instance the chorus of twenty-seven girls mentioned by Livy for the year 207. A strong emphasis on rhythmical movement, a sense of harmony, and a musical accompaniment – key criteria for a definition of dance in antiquity – could also characterise processions. But apart from the fact that it is easy to adduce comparative evidence for group dances characterised by linear or one-directional movement, what matters is that from an emic perspective, only a minimal alteration and formalisation of habitual physical behaviour seems to be required for dance to be recognizable as such, especially if the movements are also perceived as harmonious and graceful (as in the case of the boys and girls), or energetic and skilful (as in the case of the Salians).⁴² We may assume that dance movements were based on conventional styles, and that especially in cultic contexts transmitted patterns were carefully preserved and reiterated, especially if only select groups executed the dances. What is more, the spaces and the occasions on which dances were performed contributed also to the distinctness of dance movements.⁴³

In addition to eminently cultic contexts, there are of course the theatres, the dinner parties, the private entertainments, where dances were generally performed by professionals. The primary connection between theatrical entertainments and religious occasions and practices can be seen in Livy's account, which is probably based on Varro, of how public spectacles (*ludi scaenici*) began in Rome. In the year 364 BCE a plague persisted and required ritual actions. The Romans first resorted to a *lectisternium*, a ritual meal offered to the gods, and getting no respite, they brought in dancers, *ludiones*, from Etruria (Livy 7.2).⁴⁴ Their dances had a precise function, namely to end a public health crisis brought upon the city by the gods, and they succeeded in reestablishing an equilibrium with the gods and bringing well-being to the community. At the same time this moment marked the official beginning of a Roman tradition of dancing for entertainment. The Etruscan dancers were soon imitated by Roman youths, and Livy's account, which is in certain respects influenced by Greek ideas about the ori-

41 The idea of spontaneous, inexpert dancing among rustics recurs in Tibullus 1.7.38; 2.1.55–56. See Schlapbach 2021.

42 Contemporary Greek folk dances often follow linear patterns and involve holding hands. See Raftis 1987.

43 On the space of dance, see Curtis (forthcoming).

44 Cf. Valerius Maximus 2.4.4. See Jory 1981, 152–156; Oakley 1998, 40–72; Feldherr 1998, 178–187; Graf 2007, 57–60; Manuwald 2011, 30–34; on the *ludiones*, see above p. 15.

gin of drama in improvised performances, details the subsequent stages until the first performance of a play in Latin, composed by Livius Andronicus and based on Greek models, in the year 240 BCE on the occasion of the *ludi Romani*.⁴⁵ In this development, ritual and entertainment remain connected, if less closely than in Greece: tragedies and comedies were performed during the main festivals, as well as upon the dedication of temples or at funerals.⁴⁶ Both genres comprised dances: tragedies in the choral parts, which feature a great variety of metres, comedies often in or near the finale (see below Gianvittorio and Moore, respectively).

Other dramatic forms which were thriving in the fervent theatre culture of Magna Graecia and made their way to the city of Rome also featured dances.⁴⁷ Among them is the mime, a popular and ubiquitous genre based on improvisation, which was integrated into the festival dedicated to Flora and from the first century BCE onward became part of the spectacles performed at theatres, usually as a complement to tragedies in the form of an entracte (*interludium*, *embolium*) or an epilogue (*exodium*) featuring dances.⁴⁸ The somewhat obscure *ludus talarium* presumably also belongs here: perhaps a type of spectacle performed with a cloak reaching to the ankle (*talus*), Cicero adds it as the last item to a list of “occupations unworthy of the free man”, which culminates in “perfumers, dancers, and the whole *ludus talarium*” (*unguentarios, saltatores, totumque ludum talarium*, *off.* 1.150).⁴⁹ If the interpretation of the name is correct, it would suggest a prominent role for the long flowing robe of the performer, an aspect which was exploited to great effect in other dance genres too, especially pantomime.⁵⁰

The solo dance of the pantomime artist, simply called “dance” in Latin and Greek (*saltatio*, ὄρχησις), became the most prominent dance genre from the latter part of the first century BCE onward. Although the traditional date of its “beginning” in Rome transmitted by Jerome, 22 BCE, should not be taken absolutely, the genre enjoyed the enthusiasm and support of Augustus and Maecenas and thrived thanks to the accomplished skill of two performers, Bathyllus of Alexandria and the famous Pylades of Cilicia, who reorganised the musical accompaniment and authored a treatise on the genre.⁵¹ Tacitus informs us that around that time Augustus adopted pantomime into the *ludi Augustales*, apparently influenced by Maecenas’ crush on Bathyllus (*ann.* 1.54.2:

45 Cf. Cic. *Brut.* 72; Gell. 17.21.42–43; Cassiod. *Chron.* p. 120 Mommsen. On parallels between Livy’s and Greek accounts, see Oakley 1998, 47; 54–55.

46 In particular the *ludi Romani* (*ludi magni*), *ludi plebei*, *ludi Apollinares* and *ludi Megalenses* (dedicated to the Great Mother); see Bernstein 2007; Rehm 2007, 192–199.

47 For an overview of theatre culture on the Italian peninsula, see Griffith 2007, 26–33.

48 This can be deduced from Cic. *fam.* 9.16.7; Plin. *hist. nat.* 7.158; Festus p. 438 Lindsay.

49 See Garelli 2007, 104–105; Garelli-François 2000.

50 See, e.g., Fronto, *De orationibus* 4 (p. 154, 14–20 van den Hout); Wyles 2008.

51 Hier. *chron.* 165,5–8 Helm; cf. Athen. 1, 20d. See Jory 1981, 1996, 1998 and 2008; Molloy 1996, 40–79; Easterling 1997; Lada-Richards 2003a, 2003b, 2004, 2007; Garelli 2006, 2007; Vesterinen 2007; Webb 2008; Hall/Wyles 2008; Schlapbach 2009, 2018; Hall 2013; Wiseman 2014; Tedeschi 2019; Viccei 2019. Roman attestations of pantomime before the 20s BCE include Var. *Men.* 513 (see

indulserat ei ludicro Augustus, dum Maecenati obtemperat effuso in amorem Bathylli).⁵² Pantomime dancers were acclaimed for the “clarity” of their choreographic body language, which enabled them to portray entire myths by concentrating on crucial moments of the narrative, and by impersonating different characters in quick succession. While they were accompanied by a singer or a chorus, it was their eloquent dance that drew the attention of the audience.⁵³

Other occasions for dancing in the public space were provided by the *pompa funebris*, which had of course a religious dimension but was not tied to the festival calendar. In his chapter on the *pompa*, Dionysius of Halicarnassus writes: “And also at the funerals of illustrious men I have seen, along with the other processions and leading on the bier, the choruses of satyr-dancers performing the *sikinnis*, especially at the funerals of the rich” (*Roman Antiquities* 7.72.12). The *sikinnis* of the satyrs was a particularly vigorous dance, and it is easy to imagine that it was meant to emphasise vitality in the face of death. There may have been an Etruscan influence on this practice, considering the famous depictions of dance scenes in Etruscan tombs, for instance the Tomb of the Triclinium at Tarquinia, but the evidence remains scant.⁵⁴

In private houses, the shrines containing the household gods (*lararia*) typically featured dancing Lares holding a drinking vessel in one hand, “a genuine Roman invention.”⁵⁵ The dancing may be related to the *Compitalia*, the popular festival at the “crossroads” for the *lares publici*, which took place in the streets after the agricultural cycle was completed (*finita agricultura*: schol. Pers. 4.28) and involved drinking generous amounts of wine and the performance of bawdy lines, the *fescennini versus*. But the dancing may also be interpreted as an affirmation of vitality and joy, perhaps in a carnevalesque reversal, given that the household Lares seem to have been associated with the spirits of the deceased.⁵⁶

Inside the house, dinner parties were privileged occasions for professional dancers to perform (see Alonso Fernández in this volume). Pliny the Younger informs us in a letter that Ummidia Quadratilla, a wealthy *matrona*, housed her own pantomime troupe, whom she “treasured more profusely than befits a leading woman” (*fovebatque effusius quam principi feminae convenit*) and whom she liked to watch in order to relax (*ep.* 7.24.4–5). Pliny’s moral judgement, like that of Sallust on Sempronia, does not

Garelli 2007, 105); Flower 2014, 380 assumes pantomime performances as far back as in the fourth century BCE.

52 Leppin 1996 argues that the year 23/22 is a *terminus ante quem* for this innovation.

53 On narrative dance in antiquity, see Gianvittorio-Ungar/Schlapbach 2021.

54 See Gouy 2019; Shapiro 2004; Wiseman 1988, 3–7; Andresen 1961, 244–245. In late antiquity, Christians performed dances on the feast days of martyrs; see Andresen 1961, 248–251; MacMullen 1997, 103–104.

55 Kaufmann-Heinimann 2007, 198.

56 As the visual record suggests; see Flower 2017, 46–75 (who, despite its title, does not expand on the dance of the *lares*); Rüpke 2018, 250; Latham 2016, 35 (with n. 84); Giannotta 2004, 342.

aim at the fact itself of Ummidia's pastime, but at her exceeding emotional investment. Depending on the financial means of the host, during dinner parties dancers would compete for the attention of the guests with acrobats, jesters, solo singers or troupes of "Homeristae". Like in Xenophon's *Symposium*, acrobatics, pure dance, and representational dance feature together in Petronius' *Cena Trimalchionis*, drawing attention to the singularly wide range of expressive possibilities of the human body in motion. But while in Xenophon acrobatic feats, a ballet showing Graces and nymphs, and a pantomimic dance with a plot are neatly distinguished (2.7–14, 7.5, and 9.2–7, respectively), in Petronius' *Cena* it is precisely the overlap of these ostensibly different types of bodily performance that seems to be of interest. In this highly sophisticated literary banquet, the entire dinner is framed as a pantomime show, the host himself being the soloist surrounded by the chorus of his waiter-performers (31). Their dances repeatedly draw attention to the arbitrary meaning and, consequently, the need for interpretation of the entire spectacle the guests are witnessing with growing unease, for instance when four dancers introduce Trimalchio's play on the word *Carpe* – both the vocative of a personal name and the imperative of the verb "to carve" – an ambiguity which is choregraphically performed by the slave Carpus both responding to the vocative of his name and executing the imperative as he expertly cuts the meat (36), or when a dancing slave boy tumbles onto Trimalchio and is freed by the latter, so that no one may say that he was injured by a slave (53). In both instances, the performance possesses multiple and variable meanings, and the dance scenes illustrate precisely the uncertain boundaries between skilfully executed practical actions, acrobatic feats, pure dances, representations, and symbolic interpretations.⁵⁷

Dancing belongs to the refined and elegant environments associated with courtship and amorous encounters. In his *Amores* 2.4, Ovid exalts the diverse qualities of young women, all of whom attract the poet. There is the *puella* who walks elegantly or seductively (*molliter incedit*, line 23), as it were embodying with her soft steps the rhythm of the elegy; the one who sings beautifully or plays the lyre with skilful hands (*doctas ... manus*, 28), and the one who "pleases through her gestures as she moves her arms in the rhythm and turns her tender flank with seductive skill" (*illa placet gestu numerosaque brachia ducit / et tenerum molli torquet ab arte latus*, 29–30). The self-referential dimension of the passage is highlighted with the playful allusion to the elegiac topos of the *docta puella*, the cultivated and musical young woman who mirrors the poetry itself, a topos whose boundaries are stretched by the inclusion of the art of seduction through the dancing body among the skills of the young woman.⁵⁸

Dance oscillates here between literal meanings and metapoetic connotations. This kind of semantic enrichment is frequent, both in poetry and in prose, and the versa-

⁵⁷ See Schlapbach, in progress.

⁵⁸ See Alonso Fernández 2015, 307–309.

tility of dance vocabulary is indicative of the fundamental importance of dance as a cultural practice in ancient Rome. The dancer is a point of reference, a cultural icon to reckon with in a multitude of different contexts, whether as a symbol for a poetic genre, as in love elegy, or as an inspirational figure for the lyric poet, a comparison for the orator, or a mirror image of the ruler (see below the contributions by Schlapbach, Rocconi, Curtis, respectively).

Roman dance

This preliminary discussion has shown that the study of Roman dance is intimately tied to the questions of what is Roman in the first place, or rather of how the Romans adopted and integrated cultural practices of their neighbours. The enquiry into Roman dance is complicated in particular by the successive integration and amalgamation of Greek culture into the Roman horizon, as Frits Naerebout noted in 2009.⁵⁹ This was not a uniform process, and various intermediaries also played a role, above all the Etruscans, as the *ludiones* mentioned by Livy and Dionysius of Halicarnassus suggest (see above). As we saw, the Romans themselves, obviously interested in knowing the origin of their own practices, alternately foreground foreign influences on their dance culture or stress indigenous elements.

In the imperial period, the appropriation and assimilation of Greek practices is most evident in the ubiquitous success of pantomime, which originally came from the Greek East but by the second century was called the “Italian style of dancing”, as Athenaeus writes in his *Deipnosophistae* (20e).⁶⁰ Athenaeus’ passage is interesting in that it acknowledges Rome, the Capital, as the ‘epitome’ of the inhabited world (20b), and pantomime as its universal language, so to speak.⁶¹ It might not be out of place to compare the global success of musicians such as Bob Marley, Jimi Hendrix, or Freddie Mercury who, coming from geographically and/or socially ‘marginal’ places, made their music known worldwide, fashioning themselves at once as culturally hybrid figures and as mainstream artists who, at least in the case of Freddie Mercury, knew to avail themselves of the symbols of imperial power.⁶²

A similar amalgamation of older Greek and contemporary Roman imperial elements can be witnessed in the ancient theoretical discourse on dance, for instance

59 2009, 146–147; see also Hunt 2008. Very much to the point is Lauren Curtis who writes that “the chorus is a space that can express Greco-Roman cultural blending” (2017, 18).

60 Something similar can be observed in relation to Roman processions, which may well have influenced Hellenistic ones and became part of a “Mediterranean *koine* of spectacle” (Latham 2016, 12–13).

61 See Schlapbach 2020b.

62 The name of the band, Queen, is only the most obvious move in this direction, the mixing of disparate cultural references, as for instance in the song *Bohemian Rhapsody*, another.

when Plutarch presents a theory of the components of dance which probably originated in the Peripatos but seems informed by contemporary practices (*Quaestiones convivales* 9.15). Down to the dance imagery of the Neoplatonic philosophers, the influence of imperial pantomime is palpable, for instance when Plotinus offers a variation on the topos of the dance of the heavenly bodies, a conventional image of order and harmony, by describing the solo dancer's mastery and control over the different parts of his body (4.4.33).⁶³

What should not be doubted, then, is that the Romans, like the Greeks, did have a very rich and multifaceted dance culture. A typical set of passages selected with the aim to show how much less important dance was for the Romans than for the Greeks includes not only Cicero's *Pro Murena* discussed above, but also Scipio Aemilianus' indignation at the dance lessons of the children of aristocrats (*Macr. sat.* 3.14.6–7) or Nepos' observation that Romans might find it strange to read that Greek statesmen, such as Epaminondas, were praised for their skilful dancing (*praef.* 1; *Epam.* 1.1–2).⁶⁴ But just as with Septentrio's epitaph, whose apparent desolation can be counterbalanced with others expressing grief and affection for a deceased young dancer, the stern moralism of a Scipio Aemilianus (if historically accurate) suggests that dancing was in fact part of the curriculum of well-to-do Romans, and Nepos makes it clear that he is concerned only with the *summi viri* (*praef.* 1).⁶⁵

The complexity of Roman attitudes to cultural innovations has largely been acknowledged in relation to other cultural domains and pursuits, including philosophy, rhetoric, mythology, and indeed literature as a whole – all of them profoundly shaped by outside influences, and in particular by the Greeks.⁶⁶ Occasionally, Roman reticence towards eminently Greek cultural practices translated into decisions to ban them, sometimes even driving away the practitioners. In 161 BCE a senatorial edict exiled philosophers and rhetoricians, and in 92 BCE a censorial edict expressed disapproval specifically of “Latin rhetoricians” (Suetonius, *De grammaticis et rhetoribus* 25.1–2; cf. Cicero, *De oratore* 3.93). None of this stopped the overall process of appropriation, and today no one would deny that both philosophy and rhetoric are fundamental aspects of Roman culture. When it comes to Roman dance, however, there is room for further enquiry.

63 Webb 2008, 91; Sheppard 2017; on Plutarch, see Schlapbach 2018, 25–73.

64 See, for instance, Poignault 2013, 8–9.

65 It should be noted furthermore that Scipio Aemilianus' ethics and values are Greek-inspired: see Barlow 2018.

66 See, for instance, Vesperini 2017 for philosophy; Stroup 2007 for rhetoric; Newby 2016 for mythology, and Feeney 2016 for literature.

The present volume

This introduction has touched upon the main areas and questions that are addressed in this volume: dance and religion, dance in spectacle culture, and dance as a concept and a metaphor. These three areas correspond to three sections in the book – “Religion”, “Spectacle culture”, “Discourses” – accommodating fourteen chapters, most of which were first presented at a conference which took place at the University of Fribourg in June 2019.⁶⁷ As the above discussion has shown, these sections do not represent mutually exclusive categories, but rather a provisional grid for organising the material. Dances in religious contexts often have a public, spectacular dimension (the exception of the Arvales confirms the rule); conversely, the theatre, as part of the festivals for the gods, is embedded into sacred space and time, and metaphorical connotations of dance are exploited in many different contexts, reflecting back on and enriching the understanding of dance as a practice.⁶⁸ The contributions draw on literary texts, inscriptions, documentary papyri, and the visual record in order to elucidate various aspects of Roman dance, including its contexts, functions, practitioners, and appreciations.

The first section, on dance and religion, assembles five chapters which explore the uses and functions of dancing in an eclectic set of religious contexts ranging from the seventh century BCE to the fourth century CE. Angela Bellia (“Between Magna Graecia and Rome: Towards an Archaeological Approach to Dance Performance in Cults”) examines images of female figures holding each other by their hands found in various parts of the Italian peninsula down to the second century CE, and argues that these “chain dancers” may be related to the cult of the *Matres* or *Matronae*, Celtic goddesses of fertility, and to the cycle of death and rebirth. Drawing also on epigraphic dedications on the artifacts she studied, Bellia interprets the dance scenes as visual commemorations of ritual practices and situates them within their local sacred landscapes. Francesca Prescendi (“Trois pas vers les dieux: Le *tripudium* entre danse et divination”) sheds new light on the notion of the *tripudium*, addressing the curious fact that this word refers both to a dance and to a divinatory practice involving chickens eating grains. She argues that the two practices designated by the same word might be connected if one posits an archaic divinatory ritual consisting in the observation of chickens, and she corroborates this hypothesis by examining the divinatory rituals performed by the Salians, as well as the symbolism of their dance and their mythic origin. Fritz Graf (“Ritual Dances in the Imperial Epoch: What Epigraphy Can Teach

67 Two papers delivered at the conference could not be included in the present volume: Marie-Hélène Delavaud-Roux, “Aspects grecs de la danse à Rome”, and Henriette Harich-Schwarzbauer, “Das Übrige mögen die Dichter singen: Tanz in der lateinischen Dichtung der Spätantike”, whereas two chapters were added (by Timothy J. Moore and Karin Schlapbach, respectively). For a conference report, see Schlapbach 2020a.

68 On the Arvales dancing without an audience, see Prescendi in this volume.

about Dancing”) taps into the rich epigraphic evidence on dance and dancers from the Greek cities of the Roman empire, focusing on dancing in mystery cults and dancing as part of the civic religious tradition. Inscriptions honouring sponsors and dancers crop up after the first Mithridatic war and especially during the Augustan period; they illustrate the endeavour to revive traditional dance rituals and to construe a cultural continuity with the archaic age. Innovation is palpable in the fact that the main form of dance is solo rather than choral, betraying the influence of contemporary pantomime. René Bloch (“‘Tänze, die keine Tänze waren’: Widersprüchliches über den Tanz bei Philon von Alexandrien”) turns to Philo’s meandering views on dance in its cosmic and real life-varieties, illuminating the Platonic, Roman, and Jewish strands of Philo’s thought while leaving the contradictions intact. Addressing recent scholarship on Philo, Bloch argues that Philo’s stay in Rome cannot be understood as a unifying background for his thought and that it hardly had any bearing on his depiction of the ritual dances of the ascetic *therapeutai*. Ruth Webb (“‘Making the God Present within Himself’: Pantomime Dance and Devotion in Fourth-century Antioch”) discusses the late antique idea that the dancer, through the animated and dynamic *mimēsis* of his (her) body, is singularly able to conjure up the presence of the god he (she) impersonates. Webb shows that this idea, which is concisely expressed in Libanius’ speech *On behalf of the Dancers* (or. 64), is not unique to him but underlies certain poems of the Greek Anthology dwelling on the comparison between dancers and statues and finds echoes in theurgic practices current in Neoplatonic circles. Each in its own way, the five chapters explore dance as a means of communication with the divine, drawing on the pictorial, literary, epigraphical and philosophical traces that the diverse practices examined here left behind.

The next section zooms in on the spectacle culture on the theatrical stage and at the dinner-party. Laura Gianvittorio-Ungar (“Envisioning and Reenacting the Chorus in Republican Tragedy: The Cases of Naevius’ *Lycurgus* and Ennius’ *Eumenides*”) investigates the Roman reception of choral scenes from Aeschylus’ *Edonians* and *Eumenides*, two tragedies which were most certainly reperformed in Magna Graecia. She argues convincingly that these two tragedies were known to Naevius and Ennius not just as texts, but as plays, and she illustrates points of contact between the Greek models and their Roman counterparts not just in dance imagery but in actual dance performance. Timothy J. Moore (“Roman Comedy and the Final Dance”) discusses the evidence for dancing at or near the end of comedies by Plautus and Terence. In addition to metre and actual references to dancing in the final scenes of *Persa*, *Pseudolus*, and *Stichus*, Moore examines scenes that call for energetic and excited motion at crucial moments of the plot. He concludes that another twenty of the total of twenty-six surviving plays by Plautus and Terence feature scenes of lively motion performed in accompanied meters either in their final scenes or just before, or at the moment of the play’s climactic crisis or its dénouement. Zoa Alonso Fernández (“Dance and the Senses at the *convivium*”) draws on Plautus, Pliny the Younger, Martial, and Juvenal to delineate a set

of sensorial parameters within which the impact of dance in the synesthetic ambiance of the *convivium*, where food, scents, spectacles, and erotic excitement compete for the attention of the dinner guests, can be understood. Engaging with recent advances regarding the cognitive role of the senses – including kinesthesia – in experiencing performances, Alonso Fernández is able to look beyond the ostensible denigration of dance in the texts and to uncover a deep awareness of its affective power, which may extend even to the readers of literary dance scenes. Sylvain Perrot, in “Toute peine mérite salaire: l’*orchēstopalaistodidaktos* Stephanos (P. Daris 7)”, examines a recently published document which enriches our knowledge of dance in Roman Egypt. P. Daris 7, a papyrus attributed to the third century CE, contains a hapax designating a practitioner of the *orchestopala*, a dance genre attested also on inscriptions, for instance in an epitaph from the Vatican necropolis from the third century CE. The new document (first published in 2011) demonstrates that the *orchestopala* was known in different parts of the empire; in addition, it sheds light on the socio-economic conditions under which dancers were hired and on the relationship between music and dance. Perrot adduces many parallels to elucidate the occasions on which dancers performed as well as the composition of dance troupes, and he concludes that the *orchestopala* was probably performed to the sounds of the *aulos* and the rhythms of castagnettes. The two remaining papers of this section focus on pantomime. Helen Slaney (“The Kinetic Vocabulary of Tragedy”) compares passages from Senecan drama (which was informed by pantomime) with Euripides in order to get a sense of how tragic scenarios may have been transposed into pantomime, arguing that the latter genre used single words – notably words indicating physical movement – as focal points around which the highly dynamic performance was organised. Raffaella Viccei (“Performative Aspects of the Pantomime and Performative Spaces: *Alcestis Barcinonensis* and Archaeological Sites”) discusses the dramatic potential of the late antique *Alcestis*, a hexameter poem preserved on papyrus, highlighting the intense textual presence of the body and its sensations, the rapid shifts between movement and stillness, the frequent alternations of male and female characters. To flesh out her observations, Viccei adduces insights from contemporary reperformances at the Roman theatres of *Faesulae* (2003) and *Mediolanum* (2009), which give clues as to how theatrical spaces inform and interact with the dance. Together, these chapters convey a sense of the manifold dramatic genres and social spaces of which dances were part and to whose appeal they greatly contributed.

The last section, entitled “Discourses”, contains three chapters which explore dance as a concept and a metaphor. Dance was the subject of analysis, reflection, and evaluation in a wide range of contexts, among them the theatre or rhetorical practice and theory, and dance imagery enriches both prose and poetry with its manifold connotations and symbolic meanings, mirroring the important place of dance in Roman culture. Eleonora Rocconi (“The Orator and the Dancer: Conceptualizing Gestures in Roman Performances”) details the development of the comparison between two specialists of expressing emotions through the body, the orator and the dancer, from

Cicero to Quintilian, showing that the influence of pantomime becomes more and more palpable in this discussion, for instance in the attention to the dancer's hand gestures and their relation to keywords in the accompanying text (an aspect addressed by Slaney as well). Karin Schlapbach ("Der Dichter als Tänzer und Körperperformer: Die Kinetik des Dichtens bei Horaz") examines metapoetic dance images in Horace. Focusing on a set of passages from the Epistles which cast the poet alternately as a gladiator, a racehorse, a pantomime, or a tightrope artist, the chapter argues that these images foreground the spectacular and awe-inspiring dimension of these competitive or performative disciplines, and that they portray the making of poetry less as an exercise in representation than as a virtuosic physical art. This interpretation is complemented with a discussion of select dance images in the Odes. Finally, Lauren Curtis ("Roman Rhythms: Music, Dance, and Imperial Ethics in Suetonius' *Life of Augustus*") elucidates the political implications of a passage from Suetonius' *Life of Augustus*: when at the theatre a *cinaedus* plays his circular hand-drum, the crowd mockingly compares his sounds and gestures to Octavian's endeavour to control the globe. In this Roman variation on the connection between dance and political power which is better known from Greek culture, the Roman *populus* draws a clear and sophisticated parallel between the performance of a solo dancer and Roman imperial power. Curtis' discussion shows that in this anecdote theatrical dance is not just symbolic of political order but participates in the interactions that define the relationship between the future *princeps* and the people.

Without making any claim to exhaustivity, the fourteen chapters of this book shed light on Roman dance by focusing on specific periods and contexts. Taken together, they suggest that dance not only permeated the fabric of Roman culture, but that it served perhaps also to connect various dimensions of Roman culture that we tend to think of as separate: a ritual libation could be accompanied by a pantomime of sorts (Graf), and a pantomime impersonating a god could make the divine singularly present (Webb), dancers were as eloquent as orators, and orators as expressive as dancers (Rocconi), dancing, dining, and erotic excitement all converged in providing deeply affecting multi-sensory impressions (Alonso Fernández), and the connotations of dance could colour the public perception of the ruler (Curtis). What connects these seemingly disparate contexts and functions of dance is not only the variable physical practice of dance as such, but also the kinesthetic experience of the spectator, whose own body assures a kind of continuity by storing memories of past instances and occasions of dance which inform responses to present ones.⁶⁹ If the case studies collected in this volume cannot add up to a comprehensive overview of the Roman "dancescape",

69 On the notion of kinesthesia in dance studies, see for instance Foster 2011; Olsen 2017; Slaney in this volume.

they will hopefully give an impression of its richness and serve as an invitation for further study.⁷⁰

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70 The term "dancescape" is used in connection with Rome by Naerebout 2009, 147–148. I would like to thank the Swiss Academy of the Humanities and Social Sciences, the University of Fribourg, and the Swiss National Science Foundation for their generous conference grants, and the Swiss National Science Foundation for supporting the open access publication of this volume. Many thanks also to Isabela Grigoraş, Caroline Bélanger, and Thibault Emonet for their precious help at various stages of editing this volume.

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Part I: Religion
