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Urban Geographies of Human-Animal Relations in Classical Antiquity

Abstract: Understanding of the urban space of ancient cities has been subject to an anthropocentric bias with public and private space considered almost exclusively in terms of interactions between its human inhabitants. Yet, for example, even the grandiose House of the Faun at Pompeii, universally interpreted by modern archaeologists as an opulent residence designed for the comforts and social entertainments of its human residents, had the bones of two cows in it close to its principal peristyle. Ancient cities were, in fact, inhabited by a wide assortment of species, even wider than modern cities, which were vital for the utility, sustenance and entertainment of ancient communities and had a major impact on the perception of urban spaces. This complex urban ecology produced similar conflicts to those today regarding the competition for urban spaces and raised fundamental questions about which animals were allowed where and under what conditions. Urban animals in antiquity, as today, were difficult to discipline, frequently transgressed legal and cultural ordering systems, and roamed the city, sometimes uncontrollably. Just as modern geographers consider human beings too as “animals”, and part of the urban “zoo” that comprises the modern city, so in the ancient world the boundaries between human and non-human animals were sometimes transgressed. It has been said that ‘hunter-gatherer’ cultures generally view the distinction between human and animal as permeable and easily crossed, part of a cosmology in which humans and animals are supposed to co-exist in a relation of trust, so that, if humans behave well towards animals, animals can be trusted to provide for humans, to give their lives for human sustenance. Other kinds of society, by contrast, are characterized by a relation of enmity, distrust and domination, which creates rigid orthodoxies about the distinctions drawn between humans and animals and presupposes a need to live a life of ‘being against’ animals, rather than being ‘with’ them. This paper considers the transgressions in urban space in Rome and other cities in the Roman world and assesses the emergence of positive and negative attitudes towards animals through the street experiences in antiquity.

1 Introduction

Over the last twenty years the anthropocentric character of twentieth-century urban theory has been modified by a steady stream of writings in urban geography, anthropology and zoology which have brought animals back into the city. In the late 1990s, in the wake of a rising focus on the sociology of animal-human relations across different cultures by scholars from a range of disciplines including the social anthropologist Tim Ingold, the philosopher Mary Midgley and the animal welfare expert James Serpell, animals also started to enter the urban theory agenda when the urban scientist Jennifer Wolch started to show ‘why

animals matter (even in cities)'. The historical geographer Peter Atkins highlighted the role of animals in urban history with a conference session in 2006 which developed into his 2012 book *Animal Cities: Bestly Urban Histories*. The urban geographers Christopher Philo and Chris Wilbert have investigated more closely the spaces where human-animal relations (or 'humanimal relations' for short) are played out in the contemporary city (see Philo & Wilbert 2000). The American feminist Donna Haraway (2008) interrogated more closely the meetings between human and non-human animals in city spaces, and this work has been taken further by the Swedish sociologist Tora Holmberg, whose recent book *Urban Animals* (2015) considers how modern communities function as "zoocities". Ancient urban studies, however, remain steadfastly anthropocentric, and only the zoo-archaeologist Michael MacKinnon (2014), taking forward the older work of Rosemary-Margaret Luff (1984), has started to reconstruct more closely the role of animals in ancient city spaces.¹

In this paper I shall tentatively start to consider how the extensive recent work in other disciplines might help to provide a theoretical framework for reconsidering animal-human relations in the urban geographies of classical antiquity. In studies of ancient urbanism, the anthropocentric bias is also prevalent; thus Ray Laurence's study of "Street activity and public interaction" at Pompeii (1994: ch. 6) is concerned with exclusively human interaction. My focus will be mainly on the Roman world, but I will also consider evidence from Greece and the Near East. Understandings of what is meant by an animal here are variable, but I take this in the widest sense to include all non-human species, including birds, fish, amphibians and insects, as well as mammals. As Peter Atkins (2012) argues, the conceptualisation of the presence of animals in human cities has been driven by a human perspective. Animals are classified in four categories: (a) useful animals, for traction or meat; (b) animals for human enjoyment, such as wild garden song birds; (c) animals that are desirable, for example as companions; (d) transgressive species, such as rats, cockroaches, and pigeons, regarded as "vermin" or "animals out of place" in the city.

The anthropocentric bias in the viewing of animals in the city has led Holmberg in her recent book to look instead at "the multi-species experiences and politics of living in a city" (2015: 119). As Nigel Clark (2003: 188) has written:

¹ For studies of specific sites, see, for example, Cocca & al. (1995), De Cupere (2001), and Peters (1998).

“For by far the larger part of urban history, our species has willingly shared its urban spaces with the animals we prefer to feed on. In ancient and medieval cities, the proximity of pigs, fowl, goats, cattle and densely packed human bodies offered disease organisms the perfect conditions to make the leap between species – and from there to surge through urban populations, to spread from town to town and across whole continents.”

In this paper I want to argue that ancient cities too were inhabited by a wide assortment of species, far wider in fact than modern cities, which contributed to urban life and had a major impact on the perception of urban spaces. This complex urban ecology produced similar conflicts to those today regarding the use of urban spaces and questions such as which animals were allowed where and under what conditions. Urban animals in antiquity, as today, were difficult to discipline, frequently transgressed legal and cultural ordering systems, and roamed the city, sometimes uncontrollably. And, just as it is fundamental to Holmberg’s approach that human beings too should be considered as “animals”, and part of the urban “zoo” that comprises the modern city, so in the ancient world the boundaries between human and non-human animals are sometimes transgressed. Indeed, it has been said that ‘hunter-gatherer’ cultures generally view the distinction between human and animal as permeable and easily crossed, part of a cosmology in which humans and animals are supposed to co-exist in a relation of trust, so that, if humans behave well towards animals, animals can be trusted to provide for humans, to give their lives for human sustenance. Other kinds of society, by contrast, are characterised by a relation of enmity, distrust and domination, which creates rigid orthodoxies about the distinctions drawn between humans and animals and presupposes a need to live a life of ‘being against’ animals, rather than being ‘with’ them (see Ingold 1994).

Along these lines Philo and Wilbert (2000) have suggested that in the modern world the rationalisation of human-animal relations is played out differently in its various geographical spaces and zones: the city is the zone for pets, the countryside for livestock, and the wilderness for more exotic animals. Such schemes are, of course, simplistic. The sociologist Mike Michael (2006: 124) has noted that these zones are far from fixed and can become hybridised, for instance when exotic spaces are seen in the urban spaces of the zoo, defined as a space for animals no longer in the wild (see Philo & Wilbert 2000: 13), or transgressed, when animals travel into spaces where they do not ‘belong’ and become subject to what Adrian Franklin (1999) has called the “zoological gaze”, making the urban the potential saviour of the wild (see Kendall 2011: 129–130). Not all animals fit easily into the binary scheme “nature/culture: wild/domestic” which conditioned ancient understandings of the non-human animal kingdoms as much as it still does modern thought. Haraway (2008: 216–220) has referred to overlapping “contact zones”.

2 Boundaries in urban space between animal and human

How far these divisions in animal occupation of human spaces can be considered appropriate to the ancient world is a matter of debate. Doubt has been cast over whether the most famous ancient example of a zoological garden in the Graeco-Roman world, that allegedly established by Ptolemy II Philadelphus in the royal quarter of Ptolemaic Alexandria and famed, among other things, for its collection of exotic birds, can in fact be considered a “zoo” in the modern sense intended for scientific observation (*BNJ* 234 F2a [= *FGrHist* 234 F2, taken from Athenaeus, *Deipn.* 14 654b–d]; my translation):²

Πτολεμαῖος ὁ βασιλεὺς ἐν τῷ [ἰ]β τῶν Ὑπομνημάτων περὶ τῶν ἐν Ἀλεξανδρείᾳ βασιλείων λέγων καὶ περὶ τῶν ἐν αὐτοῖς ζῴων τρεφομένων φησὶν· «τά τε τῶν φασιανῶν, οὓς τετάρους ὀνομάζουσιν, [οὔς] οὐ μόνον ἐκ Μηδίας μετεπέμπετο, ἀλλὰ καὶ νομάδας ὄρνιθας ὑποβαλῶν ἐποίησε πλῆθος, ὥστε καὶ σιτεῖσθαι· τὸ γὰρ βρῶμα πολυτελὲς ἀποφαινουσιν.» αὕτη <ή> τοῦ λαμπροτάτου βασιλέως φωνή, ὃς οὐδὲ φασιανικοῦ ὄρνιθος ποτε γεύσασθαι ὠμολόγησεν, ἀλλ’ ὥσπερ τι κειμήλιον ἀνακείμενον εἶχε τοῦσδε τοὺς ὄρνιθας. εἰ δὲ ἐωράκει ὡς ἡμῶν ἐκάστωι εἷς ἐστί παρακείμενος (...) προσαναπεληρώκει ἂν ταῖς πολυθρῦλῆτοις ἰστορίαις τῶν Ὑπομνημάτων τούτων τῶν εἰκοσιτεσσάρων καὶ ἄλλῃν μίαν.

“King Ptolemy, in the twelfth [emended by Jacoby to ‘second’: see *BNJ* F2b] book of his *Notebooks*, speaking about the palace at Alexandria and the animals reared in it, says, ‘Concerning the pheasants which are called *tetaroι*, he [Ptolemy II] not only sent for these from Media, but bred them with Numidian birds and produced a large number to be eaten, for they produce expensive food. These are the words of that most distinguished king, who admitted that he never even tasted a Phasian bird, but kept as a treasure these birds that are here.’ If he [Ptolemy VIII] had seen what is available to each one of us [a phrase of elaboration deleted], he would have filled up another book in the well-known narratives of his *Notebooks* with its 24 books.”

Jean Trinquier (2002) has preferred to consider this simply a collection of exotic animals publicly displayed at royal festivals. Even so, the intrusion of the wild and exotic into the urban space of Alexandria several times a year should make us think very differently about how the relations between humans and animals were manifested in urban space. Trinquier’s answer, however, sidesteps the question of how these animals fitted into the human world on a daily basis.

² Discussed by Fraser (1972 [vol. 1]: 15), based on *FGrHist* 234 F2. Further details in Fraser (1972 [vol. 2]: 30 n. 76, 743 n. 181). See also Hubbell (1935).

Outside these limited festival contexts, the location of these animals foreign to the normal experience of the inhabitants of Alexandria and far removed from their own natural habitats raises questions about the variability of human-animal interaction.

The attraction of these exotic, savage animals, captured and purchased at great expense and displayed to the people and royal guests, lay not just in their novelty, but because they belonged to an unknown, dangerous world. Apart from Dumont (2001: 332), who questions the existence of a zoo at Alexandria altogether, most historians have assumed that these exotic animals were kept in a zoological garden proper, but there are other kinds of places in which they might have been kept. Zoos as such have a restricted sense, developed only in the early nineteenth century and adapting the earlier tradition of menageries to the new requirements of the aesthetics of the picturesque garden;³ animals here are presented both for public curiosity and for scientific observation, in the form of a park with cages, enclosures and basins reserved for the animals. While the modern concept of zoo is defined in terms of a unified and permanent location with purpose of display for pedagogical, didactic or scientific motives, the animals of Ptolemaic Alexandria belong to a different context. Callixenus' account of the procession of Ptolemy Philadelphus describes a re-enactment of the Triumph of Dionysus, with the god shown lying on an elephant ornamented with gold and followed by donkeys, and carts drawn by elephants, billy-goats, hornless antelopes, oryxes, bubales, ostriches, 'onelaphoi', and onagers, then 2,400 Indian dogs, Molossians, Hyrcanians, and other breeds, sheep from Ethiopia, Arabia, Euboea, zebus, Ethiopian cows, a white bear, leopards, wild-cats, caracals, a giraffe, and a rhinoceros (see Athenaeus, *Deipn.* 5 200d–201c). Although Ptolemy Philadelphus is depicted by Strabo as having a passion for science (*Geogr.* 17.1.5: φιλιστορῶν), this was not profound scientific interest, but a desire to be seen as having discovered the unknown: bringing a giraffe into the streets of Alexandria gave him the not inconsiderable prestige of a πρῶτος εὐρετής. As Trinquier (2002: 872) observes, the animals brought to Alexandria have the appearance of the *dramatis personae* of a mythological theatre performance rather than the elements of a scientific collection. Yet they gained their greatest impact from the transgressive effect of passing through the stadium and the streets of the peopled city.

In the Roman world this sense of 'transgression' is evident in the accounts of prodigies defined by the unfamiliar intrusion of both wild and domestic ani-

3 See, for example, Hoage & Deiss (1996) and Baratay & Hardouin-Fugier (1998).

mals into areas of urban space from which they were normally excluded. Predatory wolves are particularly singled out as dangers for the modern city (see Clark 2003: 188) and were also a menace in ancient Rome. In 269 B.C. wolves ran into the centre of Rome with a corpse which they had ripped apart; in 207 B.C. a wolf entered the town of Capua and mangled a sentry (see Livy 27.37.3 and Orosius, *Hist.* 4.4.1–2). To some extent such prodigies can be viewed in terms of ‘liminality’, violating the boundary between wild and civilised (see Rosenberger 2007: 295). Yet such occurrences were very real epiphenomena of ancient existence, and similar prodigies feature domestic creatures in unfamiliar but plausible settings. Thus the terrifying prodigies of the winter of 218 B.C., after the disastrous military defeat at Trebia, included not only the rumour of a wolf in Gaul grabbing a sentry’s sword from its scabbard and running off with it, but also, strikingly, an ox seen on the third floor of a house in the Forum Boarium (see Livy 21.62.3). What is most notable about this text, however, is that it encourages the reader to see the intervention of this animal in urban space not solely from a human, ‘transgressive’ viewpoint, but from the perspective of the animal itself: not only did it climb to that height “of its own accord” (*sua sponte*), implying an intentionality usually applied only to humans, but, once it became marooned at the top of the building, it was “alarmed by the noise of the human occupants” more than the shrieking humans were by the appearance of the animal, and its resulting fall from that level (*sese deiecisse*) contains more than a hint of tragedy or Stoic self-immolation. If this seems counter-intuitive, there are other instances of non-human animal intuition in the experience of urban space. One of the most notorious is the Elder Pliny’s account (*Nat. hist.* 8.208) of how pigs were considered, not just on one occasion, but apparently in general, to have been smart enough to learn their way to the forum for sale in the market and back home again – assuming, of course, that they made it back.

A similar perspective is found with regard to the pack animals of Late Antique Antioch, of whom the Emperor Julian writes (*Mis.* 26 355b–c; my translation):

οὐδὲ ἀπέβλεψας ὄση καὶ μέχρι τῶν ὄνων ἐστὶν ἐλευθερία παρ’ αὐτοῖς καὶ τῶν καμήλων; ἄγουσί τοι καὶ ταύτας οἱ μισθωτοὶ διὰ τῶν στοῶν ὡσπερ τὰς νύμφας· οἱ γὰρ ὑπαίθριοι στενωποὶ καὶ αἱ πλατεῖαι τῶν ὁδῶν οὐκ ἐπὶ τούτῳ δῆπου πεποιήνται, τῷ χρῆσθαι αὐταῖς τοὺς κανθηλίους, ἀλλ’ ἐκεῖνα μὲν αὐτὸ δὴ τοῦτο κόσμου τινὸς ἔνεκα πρόκεινται καὶ πολυτελείας, χρῆσθαι δὲ ὑπ’ ἐλευθερίας οἱ ὄνοι βούλονται ταῖς στοαῖς, εἶργει δὲ αὐτοὺς οὐδεὶς οὐδενός, ἵνα μὴ τὴν ἐλευθερίαν ἀφέληται· οὕτως ἡ πόλις ἐστὶν ἐλευθέρα.

“Have you not seen how much independence there is in the citizens, right down to the asses and camels? The renters lead them through the porticoes as though they are brides, for the unroofed alleys and broad highways have certainly not been made for the use of

these pack animals, but are provided merely for show and indulgence; but in their independence the asses prefer to use the porticoes, and no one keeps them out of any one of these, so as not to rob them of their independence; so independent is our city!”

Navigating one’s way through a Roman town, then, was not just a human concern. Such accounts provide an important corrective to the prevailing distinctions in perceptions of human-animal relations, in both modern and ancient urban contexts, between ‘civilised’/‘rational’ and ‘animal’/‘bestial’ (see Philo & Wilbert 2000: 15). More typical are the reverse experiences of urban space, from a human perspective, a human world in which animals provide not just a beneficial means of transportation, but also sometimes an impediment. Thus Ausonius, in his *Epistle to Paulus*, complains of “a mucky sow in flight, (...) a mad dog in fell career, (...) [and] oxen too weak for the waggon” (*Epist.* 6.25–26). The first two images are echoes, virtually word for word, of Horace’s “mad dog” and “mud-bespattered sow” (*Epist.* 2.2.75). This picture of urban life goes back to the Republic when Plautus evokes soldiers leading donkeys through “the busy streets” (*Epid.* 208–209).

Such inconveniences belong among the animal nuisances which, as Peter Atkins (2012: 21–46) has shown, contributed to perceptions of urban space in nineteenth-century London. Many of these are recognisable in pre-industrial cities, including ancient Rome, for which Alex Scobie (1986) has set out the textual evidence. Particularly prevalent was the dung on the streets, not just ‘matter out of place’ contravening the implicit established order of human urbanism (Douglas 1966: 35), but with a positive and constructive value in urban farming, as both modern writers and ancient texts have indicated; non-human animal excrement had a utility, not just rotten fish to make *garum*, but potions made from wild boar’s dung (see Beard 2010: 56–57; MacKinnon 2013: 126; Kyle 1998: 190). If the noises that Seneca imagines outside his house in Rome (*Epist.* 56.1–2) are human irritants, the barking of guard dogs and the bellowing of animals brought to market or sacrifice also contributed to the incessant noise of the ancient city (see Howe 2014: 144–145). Yet this urban noise and dirt had a value (see Atkins 2012: 33). As Libanius reminds the reader in his *Fiftieth Oration (For the peasantry: About forced labour)*, pack animals had an important worth as property, hired out for income (see also Libanius, *Autob.* 259). In Egypt too it was common for the inhabitants of *metropoleis* to own or hire animal stables, with members of the ‘urban middle class’ regularly involved in buying and selling donkeys (see Adams 2007: 100). Yet these aspects of animals as nuisance and as display of the savage and exotic in the world of the city are not incompatible. Thus even in the Grand Procession of the Ptolemies the triumphal and warlike aspects of Dionysus are satirised and made ironic by the donkeys’ braying (see Pàmias 2004 on Pseudo-Eratosthenes, *Cat.* 11).

Urban animals included not just those that were of instrumental or utilitarian value, but others that can be considered pests. Vermin such as rats and mice were a frequent menace. Juvenal writes of “Irish mice gnawing at divine poems” (*Sat.* 3.207); Cicero refers to decaying shops abandoned not just by the tenants, but even by the mice (*Ad Att.* 14.9). Gregory Aldrete (2007: 127) imagines hordes of rats, displaced by floods, entering buildings from the river. Such animals had no respect for the boundaries of religious precincts. Mice were also found gnawing at gold in the temple of Jupiter at Cumae and at a gold crown in Antium (see Livy 27.23.2 and 30.2.10). What is interpreted as prodigious was a common consequence of the insanitary nature of the ancient city. The late Republican levels associated with the Temple of Apollo alongside the forum at Pompeii yielded the remains of several mice (see King 2002: 435). Feral cats and dogs also wandered freely through the streets and open spaces of ancient towns as in modern urban spaces. Cat bones have been found in the forum excavations at Pompeii, as have the skulls of a weasel, which before the widespread introduction of the cat played a similar role in catching vermin (see King 2002: 426, 436). The find spots, including the precinct of the Temple of Apollo, suggest that these creatures may not have been domestic pets, but feral cats, analogous to those common in modern urban space like the notorious cats of the Largo Argentina in Rome (see Holmberg 2014). The guard dogs of Pompeii are celebrated, such as the imposing species painted on a pillar in the front hall of the Caupona of Sotericus. If collared guard dogs were tied to their post, hunting hounds might accompany their owners through the streets, like Arrian’s dog escorting its master to the gymnasium and back, running on ahead but turning round intermittently to check that he had not deviated from the route (*Cyn.* 5.1–6; see Fögen, in this volume). So they exhibited a familiarity with urban space as the pigs mentioned by Pliny the Elder (see above). Funerary reliefs that show the deceased with their dogs, such as the young Moschion from Classical Attica, are supported by the evidence of actual burials going back to the Mesolithic Period.⁴ Bone and dental remains from Pompeii also

⁴ Relief: Malibu 73.AA.117; see Grossman (2001: 18–20 no. 5). On Mesolithic burials at Skateholm in Sweden, see Larsson (1993: e.g. 53): “A red deer antler was laid along [a dog’s] spine and three flint blades were placed in the hip region, in precisely the same fashion as that in which such objects appear in male human graves (...) a decorated antler hammer was laid on the dog’s chest”. See also Larsson (1991) and Larsson (1994). On Mesolithic animal burials more generally, see Grünberg (2013).

attest lapdogs, alongside the larger breeds used for hunting, sentries, and shepherding (see Zedda & al. 2006). But the less memorialised stray dogs were probably just as common.⁵

3 Animal dangers

It is a feature of human-animal relations in the modern city that places can be perceived as dangerous because of the presence of animals (see Gillespie, Lefler & Lerner 1996). In some urban locations human interactions are altered by the presence of dogs perceived to be aggressive, which problematises ordinary conceptions of safe and unsafe places and of public and private space. This human perspective finds further support from cases outside Rome where human injuries are blamed on animal violence. Accidents involving donkeys, a species considered particularly unresponsive to human demands, were especially common. A petition submitted by a lady called Thermouthion to the *strategos* of Oxyrhynchus gives a graphic account of a road accident involving her slave-girl, Peina (*P. Oxy.* L 3555, in Bowman & al. 1983: 142–145; republished by Llewelyn 1994: 163–164; his translation):

(unintelligible) [[Κλαυδι(ω)] Ἀσκληπε() στρατηγῶ
 παρὰ Θερμουθίου τῆς Πλουτάρχ(ου)
 τῶν ἀπ' Ὀξυρύγχων πόλεως,
 θεραπαινίδιον μου οἰκογενέ[ς],
 οὐ ἔστιν ὄνομα Πεῖνα, ἡγάπη- 5
 σα καὶ ἐτημέλησα ὡς θυγάτριον(v)
 ἐπ' ἐλπίδι τοῦ ἡλικίας γενόμε-
 νον ἔχειν με γηροβοσκόν,
 γυναῖκα ἀβοήθητον οὔσαν
 καὶ μόνην. τοῦτο δὲ διάγων 10
 τὴν πόλιν τῆ ἰθ τοῦ διελθόν-
 τος μηνός πρὸς μάθησιν
 ψδῆσεώς τε καὶ ἄλλων, παι-
 दाγωγούσης αὐτὴν Εὐχαρίου

⁵ The archaeological evidence is best for Roman military settlements in Germany, e.g. at *Vindelicum* just west of Augsburg (see Peters 1998: 186–187) and at Künzing (*Quintana*) in lower Bavaria (see Pöllath 2010: 254–256), where probably stray dogs were interred in the disused wooden amphitheatre of a military settlement; many of the dogs found died young.

τινὸς ἀπελευθέρας Λογγεῖνου,	15
ἧτις ὑπὸ τὴν ὥραν τῆς ἐκ τῆς οἰκίας μου ἀφείξεως εἰσεκόμισεν τὴν Πείναν ἔχουσαν δεδεμένην τὴν δεξιὰν χεῖρα, καὶ πυθομένη	20
παρ' αὐτῆς τὸ αἴτιον ἀπήγ- γειλέν μοι ὑπὸ τινος παιδαρίο(υ) Πολυδεύκουσ ἀκολουθοῦντος ὄνῳ καταβεβλήσθαι ταύτην, ὡς ἐκ τούτου ὄλην αὐτῆς	25
τὴν χεῖρα συντετρεῖφθαι καὶ τὰ πλείστα μέρη λελω- βῆσθαι, τὰ δ' ἄλλα ἀχανῆ εἶναι. καὶ τότε μὴ ἔχουσα τὸν προ- ιστανόμενον τῆς στρατηγί(ας) <οὐ(?)>	30
κατεχώρισα ἀναφόριον περὶ τούτου, οἰομένη παροδικὸν εἶναι τὸ ἔλκος, ἀνίατον δὲ ὄν καὶ μὴ φέρουσα τὴν περὶ τῆς θεραπαίνης ὁδύνην, τῷ	35
αὐτὴν μὲν κινδυνεύειν τῷ ζῆν, ἐμὲ δὲ δυσθυμίᾳ τοῦ ζῆν περιεχομένην ὅπερ ἐκ τῶν φανερῶν καὶ σὺ ἐποψόμε\νος/ ἀγανακτήσεις ἀναγκαίως	40
οὖν καταπεφρυγῖα ἐπὶ σὲ τὸν ἀντιλήμπτωρα ἀξιῶ βρη- θῆναι καὶ τυχεῖν τῆς ἀπό [σ]οῦ ...[.] [- ca.? -]	

“To Asclep..., strategus, from Thermuthion, daughter of Plutarchus, from the city of Oxyrhynchus. My home-born slave, whose name is Peina, I loved and looked after as a daughter in the hope that when she is of age I will have her to tend my old age, being myself a woman without help and alone. She (was) crossing the city on the 19th day of the past month to learn singing and other things with Eucharion, a certain freedwoman of Longinus, accompanying her, who at the time of their departure from my house brought Peina in with her right arm bound, and when I asked her the reason she told me that she had been thrown down by a certain slave (of?) Polydeuces whilst driving a donkey so that as a result of this her whole arm had been crushed, very many parts (of her body) injured and for the rest she has become dumb. As at that time I did not have an official in charge of the strategia (to appeal to), I did (not?) lodge a petition concerning this matter, thinking that the wound was passing, but as it is incurable and I do not bear up under grief for the slave because of her being at risk of her life and me encompassed by despair of her life – which clearly you also, when you see it, will be troubled – necessarily therefore having fled to you my defender I ask to be helped and to receive your [beneficence] (...).”

The girl had been walking to a music lesson and was trampled by donkeys, injuring her right arm. As with many legal disputes, what exactly happened is unclear. The petitioner blamed the slave Polydeuces who had been driving the donkeys, but her petition had been delayed since the incident, and it is not clear why. The editors of the text (Bowman & al. 1983: 144–145) suggest that the girl may have got in the way of the donkey, which consequently trod on her hand. If this was the case, it again provides an instance of situations focalised from a human perspective where an alternative non-human animal perspective can be easily imagined.

Cases like this were so frequent in urban situations that Roman lawyers devised a particular way of dealing with damage caused by animals to persons or property. Such damage was considered to be *pauperies* (“impoverishment”), defined as “damage done by a four-footed animal” or as “damage done without any legal wrong on the part of the doer”, because an animal is considered devoid of reasoning and therefore incapable of committing a legal wrong.⁶ A statute in the Twelve Tables provided that, “if a four-footed animal is said to have committed *pauperies*, (...) either that which has caused the offence (that is, the animal which caused harm) should be handed over, or compensation should be offered for the harm” (*Dig.* 9.1.1 pr.). When a horse kicked someone, it did so because its wildness had been excited (*commota feritate*); a mule did damage “because of excessive fierceness” (*propter nimiam ferociam*); and when a dog broke free of its lead and harmed a passer-by, it did so from its “wildness” (*Dig.* 9.1.1.5: *asperitate sua*). Yet if it could have been better restrained by someone else, the animal’s owner was liable to pay the victim compensation.

The underlying wildness of the animal gave it a certain agency. A similar case occurred at Parium in north-western Asia Minor, where a six-year-old boy was killed by a horse “in a built-up street”. The inscriptions provide details of the event.⁷ In large letters at the top is recorded the memorial to a lady and her family (my translation):

Ὑπόμνημα· Π(όπλιος) Ναίβιος Μαξιμος Φλ(αβίφ) Κλυμένη θρεψάση καὶ τοῖς προενκειμένοις πτώμασιν κατεσκεύασεν τὴν σορόν· εἰ δὲ τις ἕτερον σῶμα τολμήσει βαλεῖν ἢ τὴν σορόν ματακινήσαι, δώσει ἰς τὸ ἱερώτατον ταμεῖον προστείμου (δηνάρια) ,Β καὶ τῆι Παριανῶν πόλει (δηνάρια) ,Α.

⁶ Paul., *Fest.* 220 M.: *Pauperies damnum dicitur, quod quadrupes facit.* See further *Dig.* 9.1.1.3: *damnum sine iniuria facientis datum.*

⁷ *SEG* 15.765 (Istanbul, Archaeological Museum, inv. 4449). See also Frisch (1983: 37–41, no. 52).

“Memorial. P(ublius) Naevius Maximus built the sarcophagus for Flavia Clymene his foster-mother and those who died before her; if someone dares to lay another body or to move the sarcophagus, he will pay as punishment 2000 denarii to the imperial treasury and 1000 denarii to the city of Parium.”

Among those who predeceased her, an epitaph in elegiac couplets, added below in smaller letters, singles out a young child (my translation):

Κωφή μὲν λίθος εἰμί, βοῶ δ' ὑπὸ γράμμασι τοῖσδε
 σοί, παροδεῖτα, μαθεῖν ὄντιν' ἔχω λαγόσιν·
 Ἥλείου τόδε σῆμα, τὸν ἤρπασε νηλεόθυμος
 Μοῖρα καὶ εἰς Αἴδεω πέμψε τάχιστα δόμους,
 ὄν ποτε κουρίζοντα κατ' εὐδῶμητον ἀγυιάν
 ἵππος ἀελλοπόδης μέρσε φίλοιο φάους.

Μοῖρα με νηλειη καὶ λοίγιος ἵππος ἀπέκτα,
 ὄν κατ' ἐμεῖο φάους ἤγαγον Αἰνεάδαι.
 Ἥλείος δ' ὄνομα ἔσχον, ἄγων δὲ ἔβδομον λυκάβαντα
 αἴλινος ὠκύμορος ἤλυθον εἰς Αἴδαν.

Ξεῖνε, μαθὼν παρόδευε τίνος τόδε σῆμα τέτυκται
 γράμμ' ἀναλεξάμενος ἐν πλακί ληινέη·
 ἔξ μὲν ἄγων λυκάβαντας ἀπέστιχον· οὐνομα δ' ἦν μοι
 Ἥλείος, Μοίρης δ' οἰκτροτάτης ἔτυχο[ν].
 ἵππος γὰρ μ' ἔκτεινε καὶ εἰς ἀδίαυλον ἔπεμψ<εν>
 Ἄιδαν καὶ Λήθης πικρὸν ἔγευσεν ὕδωρ.
 Χαῖρε, Ἑλλησποντιανέ.

“I am a dumb stone, but with these letters I call on you, passer-by, to learn what I hold within my flanks. This is the monument of Heleius, who was snatched away by ruthless Fate and very speedily sent to the halls of Hades, who once as a young man was robbed of dear daylight by a storm-footed horse on a built-up street.

I was killed by cruel Fate and a deadly horse driven against my life by sons of Aeneas. Heleius was my name, and in my seventh year I came tragically and prematurely to Hades.

Stranger, go on our way knowing whose monument has been constructed here, reading the letters on this stone slab. Spending six years of my life I have passed away; my name was Heleius, and I met a most pitiful fate. A horse killed me and sent me to Hades from where there is no return and made me taste Lethe's bitter water. Farewell, Helle-spontianus.”

The epitaph relates the death of a six-year-old boy, Heleius Hellepontianus, and behind the plaintive tragic language can be understood the circumstances of a dreadful road accident: a horse driven by Romans appears to have struck

the little boy on a busy street of the Hellespontine town of Parium.⁸ Yet what may seem remarkable here is that there is no apparent bitterness against the human drivers. Indeed, although it seems strange to identify them as Romans on a tomb built by a man with fine colonial *tria nomina* for a child who may also have been considered Roman, this identification is made in a heroising language: the patronymic *Aeniadae* (“sons of Aeneas”) is an intertextual echo of archaic epic and appropriate enough as a denomination for Romans in a town that was still sometimes considered to be part of the Troad.⁹ Nor, as with other accidents memorialised in funerary inscriptions, is the responsibility attributed to a divine agency, the “Fate of the Streets” (Μοίρας Εἰβοδῆς) or the victim’s own actions.¹⁰ Instead, the repeated structure of the text, three times bitterly giving the victim’s gentilician name and the chilling fact of his killing, assigns responsibility for that event to the horse. Swift of foot (ἄλλοπόδης, literally “storm-footed”), but also “deadly” (λοίγιος), the horse is both a divine force of epic – the epithet “storm-footed”, in the variant form ἄλλοπόος, is used in archaic epic of Iris (Homer, *Il.* 8.409, 24.77 and 24.159) and of the horses of the messenger Argeiophontes (*Hom. Hymn. Aphr.* 217) – and an instrument of death.

The human agents are similarly absent from the pictorial record of the boy’s death on his sarcophagus. The low-relief images inscribed over the text (see Fig. 1) visualise and memorialise this incident as a confrontation between boy and horse, who both stand on pedestals. The boy is shown nude and recoiling from the horse, which rears towards him on its hind-legs with the bit between its teeth. The pair is flanked by standing images of a veiled woman and a man, also on pedestals, at the edges of the sarcophagus. The texts are both carved around these reliefs, suggesting that the latter were carved first onto the sarcophagus before it was inscribed for the specific deceased.

8 The *hapax legomenon* εὐδῶμητον emphasises that this was no rural accident, but a very urban situation.

9 *Hom. Hymn. Aph.* 200–201: “from your stock the most godlike of mortal men in form and physique”. For Parium as the start of the Troad region, see Strabon, *Geogr.* 13.1.4, citing Damastes of Sigeum (*FGrHist* 5).

10 See the other epitaphs from the same region of north-western Asia Minor cited by Robert (1955: 280–282), a young man who left only tears for his wife and child after “the threads of the Fate of the Streets brought me to destruction from my carriage”; another who “collapsed suddenly in my haste chasing a horse”; another, Isidorus, “thrown from a carriage away from the horses” escaped and dedicated his “lucky footprint” in a sanctuary near Alexandria; a three-year-old at Rhodes was crushed under a heavy wagon after taking out the fork which held the pole in place, but horses seem to have played no part in this accident.

The attitude here, whereby the horse has a clear agency in the boy's death and is presented on the relief as his principal adversary, is very different from that in a similar incident which occurred in central Rome and was presented by the jurist Alfenus in terms of potential liability (*Dig.* 9.2.52.2; my translation):

In clivo Capitolino duo plostra onusta mulae ducebant: prioris plostri muliones conversum plostrum sublevabant, quo facile mulae ducerent: inter superius plostrum cessim ire coepit et cum muliones, qui inter duo plostra fuerunt, e medio exissent, posterius plostrum a priore percussum retro redierat et puerum cuiusdam obriverat.

“Some mules were pulling two loaded carts up the Clivus Capitolinus. The front cart had tipped over, and its muleteers were trying to lift it up so that the mules could pull it easily. Meanwhile, the cart that was higher up the slope gradually began to move, and when the muleteers, who were between the two carts, had moved out of the way, the cart at the back had been hit by the front cart and gone backwards down the hill and had crushed somebody's slave boy.”

Here Alfenus overlooks the agency of the mules themselves and focuses on the responsibility of the driver to restrain the animals he was driving. Even in the next case he cites, of oxen striking the slave of a buyer, animal agency is completely rejected (*Dig.* 9.2.52.3).

These vignettes presented by textual and visual evidence are supported by inferences that can be made from the archaeological evidence of ancient streets. Ruts in the paving stones hint at the potential pitfalls of daily transportation. While some carts would have been hauled by human porters, many, like the carriage of the House of the Menander, found complete with harness, were pulled by an animal, or more frequently a pair of animals; so the ruts testify indirectly to the high volume of animal-human interaction in the very heavy traffic of the Roman town (see Tsujimura 1991 and Beard 2008: 53–67). Mary Beard has imagined that the harness bells found with the House of the Menander cart may have served to warn oncoming traffic to avoid collisions in the town's narrow streets. The evidence of tethering holes on street-side walls leads her also to envisage “the delivery man's donkeys, tethered to the edge of the narrow street, being forced to join the pedestrians on the pavement in order to clear the way for a cart squeezing its way through” (Beard 2010: 70). One may recall the young colt which Jesus' disciples found tied to a doorway on a street corner.¹¹

¹¹ *Vulgate*, Mark 11.4: *Et abeuntes invenerunt pullum ligatum ante ianuam foris in bivio: et solvunt eum.*

The sarcophagus image of the murderous horse at Parium finds an unexpected correlate in the domestic sphere on a famous relief in the Capitoline Museums (see Fig. 2). Again, an animal is shown in human posture, on its hind legs, but this time a cat in a less disturbing situation.¹² This is usually interpreted as depicting a lady training a cat, “clearly (...) being taught to dance to the music of the lyre” in the garden or courtyard of a house (Engels 1999: 98; following Toynbee 1973: 90); but that may be to impose too anthropocentric a reading, assuming that the animal’s rearing on its hind legs is a specific interaction with, and premeditated by, the human instructor on the left, rather than an independent response to the game hanging above.¹³

4 Animals in Rome and Pompeii

But there are also more unexpected appearances of animals in the domestic space of the city. At the House of the Faun at Pompeii, the skeletons of two oxen were found with four human skeletons, which show that agricultural animals were stabled close to the peristyle of this luxurious mansion.¹⁴ Horses are even more common. One of the distinctive bestial features of Pompeian houses are their stables. The House of the Menander, the ninth largest house in the city at 1,835 m², had a vast stable area (169.53 m²) in the south-east corner. A variety of ramp forms still visible in the town – inclined paving off the street, ruts made through the kerbstones, or parking areas along the side of a street – provided access to commercial properties, inns, houses, and public buildings including baths and theatres (see Poehler 2011). Over half of these areas are found on the edges of the ancient town, in the immediate vicinity of the city gates. But what is most striking from the point of view of human-animal interaction is the direct juxtaposition of these stables with residential spaces. At the House of the Chaste Lovers (Casa dei Casti Amanti, IX.12.6), the triclinium with banqueting paintings was directly next to the stable where skeletons of three mules and two

12 Musei Capitolini, inv. Albani, C 40. See Jones (1912: 271–272 no. 120, pl. 63), Keller (1909: 80, fig. 26), and Pietrangeli (1964: 57).

13 See also Keller (1908: 65, fig. 11). Donalson (1999: 132) suggests that the cat “probably learned to raise itself to the two-legged posture to obtain a bit of duck, or perhaps other meat or fowl”. See also Donalson (1999: 100–101), for a terracotta lamp in the British Museum with cats climbing an urn (shown in Clayton 1997: 176).

14 See Sogliano (1900: 31), Jashemski (1979: 216), and King (2002: 409).

horses were found (see Cocca & al. 1995 and Nuviala 2014). Closer study of their anatomical characteristics have suggested that these animals were intended for use in the adjacent bakery, and such industrial uses are attested elsewhere in Pompeii. The House of the Baker at Pompeii (VI.3.3), an old residence with a Tuscan atrium and some refined paintings, was partially converted after the earthquake of A.D. 62 to the baker's business; and the reception room off the peristyle garden (room M) was used as a stable for the animals pulling the mills, as indicated by a fully harnessed mule skeleton found in the space (see Gros 2001: 110 fig. 103).

There is little evidence, however, of such stables in houses in central Rome. A few spaces indicated on the Severan Marble Plan show the possible location of stables or animal enclosures in areas away from the city centre. The Vicus Stab(u)larius in the south-western Campus Martius may have been so called after the stables of the city's chariot teams (*FUR fr. 37f* Stanford). If so, they still had some way to go through the marbled porticoes of the Circus Flaminius district and the animal chaos of the Forum Boarium to reach the Circus Maximus where they would have raced. At the start of the Via Appia, the Mutatorium Caesaris, where the imperial staff changed from a litter to a carriage when leaving Rome, was characterised by a large colonnaded area (*fr. 1a–e*) which was perhaps used as stables for horses. Apparently further out, along the river, the enclosures depicted on other fragments (*fr. 121a–c*) would have been suited for livestock or stables. On the unidentified *fr. 567* the large enclosure centre right may also be a stable, with the small square to its right perhaps a watering basin for the horses.

Michael MacKinnon's estimates for animal numbers in imperial Rome (2013: 122), based on dietary contributions and comparisons with other pre-industrial cities, are vast, testifying to their centrality and value to the ancient city, as well as to their prominence in urban space: an "absolute low" of 60,000 pigs, 2,000 sheep and goats and 7,500 cattle, up to a high estimate of ten times those numbers; about 5,000–10,000 horses, donkeys, mules and traction oxen; the same number of "personal animals"; on average, 1,000 exotic animals a year; 20,000–50,000 sacrificial animals a year. But Suetonius reports that Caligula sacrificed 160,000 in just three months (*Cal. 14.1*). On top of that should be added all types of birds, game animals and fish.

MacKinnon (2013) surmises that most of the horses and traction animals were stabled in the suburban areas of Rome, while only essential mill animals and horses for special purposes were kept in the city. Yet, as with Pompeii, the situation in ancient cities does not reflect so starkly as modern cities that "strong human sense of the 'proper places' which animals should occupy physically" identified by urban geographers (Philo & Wilbert 2000: 10). Unlike

modern cities, animals beyond domestic pets such as cats and dogs were not overwhelmingly restricted to the marginal spaces in and around towns (see Philo & Wilbert 2000: 10–11, 21).

One area where one might have expected an exception was with feral animals, which were considered not to belong naturally to the urban sphere. There was a perception of such animals, particularly predatory species such as wolves, as dangers, which had the potential of penetrating into the city centre (see Clark 2003: 188). Yet even such species could sometimes be observed entering the city limits, with fatal results. In 23 B.C. and 16 B.C., people were killed when wolves entered the city (see Cassius Dio, *Hist.* 53.33, 54.19). In A.D. 211 wolves were found on the Capitol, one of which was killed in the Forum and the other outside the *pomerium*, presumably after it had been chased beyond that important urban boundary (see Cassius Dio, *Hist.* 78.1).

But other, equally dangerous wild species were welcomed into the city. This was, of course, the case with the elephants, lions, bears, and bulls which from the middle Republic onwards were famously paraded in increasing numbers at the *venationes* presented in venues within the city, and from the last years of the Republic into the Empire more exotic species were added, including crocodiles, rhinoceroses, and tigers.¹⁵ These seem to have been exceptional intrusions of the wild into the city and, after the displays, they were either publicly killed in a demonstration of imperial power, as in 2 B.C. for the dedication of the Temple of Mars Ultor, or they returned to marginal spaces outside the city, including the imperial game enclosure at the *ager Laurens*, where in the later imperial period camels, elephants and other creatures were curated by imperial officials.¹⁶ Yet by the sixth century A.D. a purpose-built enclosure existed outside the *Porta Praenestina*, “where undomesticated (μη χειροθήτη) animals are looked after”, enclosed by a short wall extending from the city walls.¹⁷ This may have already

¹⁵ Starting with elephants in 252 B.C. For details, see Ville (1981: 88–90) and Coleman (1996: 60–68).

¹⁶ See Coleman (1996: 61). On Mars Ultor, see Cassius Dio, *Hist.* 55.10.8. On the *ager Laurens*, see *AE* 1955.181. For T. Flavius Stephanus (*praepositus camellorum*) and Ti. Claudius Speclator Aug. lib. (*procurator Laurento ad elephantos*), see Kolendo (1969: 291–292) and Epplett (2003: 79); Stephanus is also called a *praepositus herbariarum* (“herbivores”, such as antelopes, elephants and camels, as opposed to the carnivorous, and thus more dangerous, *ferae bestiae*). For the enclosure at *ager Laurens*, see Epplett (2002: 67–70).

¹⁷ Procopius, *Bell. Goth.* 1.22.10 and 23.16–17. La Regina (1999a: 208) unconvincingly identifies this with the Amphitheatrum Castrense of the Sessorian Palace. Although Lanciani (1897: 385–387; 1990: 277–278) infers from the discovery in 1547 of wall paintings of exotic animals in an underground chamber near the *Castra Praetoria* (known from the later Middle Ages as the

existed in 241 B.C., as suggested by an inscribed dedication to the huntress Diana by two *venatores immunes* and a *custos vivari* of the Pretorian and Urban Cohorts.¹⁸ Situated just outside the Porta Praenestina, and just on the outer boundary of the Sessorian Palace with its amphitheatre, the *vivarium* was emblematic of that marginality of animals identified in modern cities. Yet if the Roman amphitheatre brought something of the exoticism of novel animal species that was sought by the Ptolemies of Alexandria, the *vivarium* outside Porta Praenestina was also no zoo. If the purpose of the *vivarium* was to keep wild animals to the margins of the city – in John Chrysostom’s words, “in the city we take so much care, as to shut up the wild beasts in solitary places and in cages, and neither at the senate house of the city, nor at the courts of justice, nor at the king’s palace, but far off somewhere at a distance do we keep them chained” (*Hom.* 59) – it was only partially successful. As Tertullian wrote, “how often have wild beasts escaped from their cages and devoured men in the middle of cities!” (*Ad Mart.* 5). Paul the Deacon recorded how an elephant escaped from its stall at night and killed many people, wounding others; Libanius noted how “when a long-starved ravenous creature finds itself at liberty, the mere sight of it spreads panic – everyone seeks shelter and locks his door” (*Or.* 14; quoted by Jennison 1937: 174). That this was an issue at Rome itself is suggested by the concern of Roman lawyers for the control of animals. The edict of the curule aediles placed responsibilities on the keepers of dogs and wild animals (*Dig.* 21.1.40–42, passage in square brackets added by Paulus; my translation):

[Ulpian:] *ne quis canem, verrem vel minorem aprum, lupum, ursum, pantheram, leonem, [et generaliter aliudve quod noceret animal, sive soluta sint, sive alligata, ut contineri vinculis, quo minus damnum inferant, non possint,] qua vulgo iter fiet, ita habuisse velit, ut cuiquam*

Vivarium) that a rectangular enclosure with a similar purpose existed on the south side of the Castra Praetoria which was known in late medieval documents as a Vivariolum or “little Vivarium”, it is not clear that it served this function in antiquity. Jennison (1937: 175) mentions a similar painting under the Via Tiburtina and suggests that these belonged to the keepers’ rooms of different *vivaria*. Yet, as indicated by the mosaic from Castelporziano near the *ager Laurens* of *venatores* with their prey (see Helbig 1969: 241–242 no. 2322), such images suggest no more than proximity to *vivarium* sites, rather than their actual location. For further discussion, see Epplert (2002: 70–74) and Epplert (2003: 81–84), who, however, argues for more than one *vivarium* outside the city walls.

18 See *ILS* 2091 = *CIL* VI 130 (“disseppelita in Roma tra i confini del castro pretorio e dell’ agere di Servio”). La Regina (1999b: 209) attaches this inscription to Lanciani’s hypothetical vivarium adjoining the Castra Praetoria. Epplert (2003: 84) suggests that the *vivarium* mentioned on the inscription was replaced in the fourth century by the one described by Procopius.

nocere damnumve dare possit. si adversus ea factum erit et homo liber ex ea re perierit, solidi ducenti, si nocitum homini libero esse dicetur, quanti bonum aequum iudici videbitur, condemnetur, ceterarum rerum, quanti damnum datum factumve sit, dupli.

“Nobody should keep a dog, wild boar or lesser boar, wolf, bear, panther, lion, [and generally any animal which might do harm, whether these animals are free or bound or tied up so that they cannot be confined with chains to stop them doing injury,] in a place where public passage is made, in such a way that it might harm anyone or cause damage. If this is contravened and a free person has been killed, the penalty will be 200 *solidi*; if a free person is said to have been injured, it will be as much a judge considers good and fair; and for all other cases, double the value of the damage that has been done or caused.”

However, while, in general, the animal’s owner could be sued for any damage, a distinction was made between domesticated animals, for which this was universally true, and wild animals such as bears, for which the owner could be said to be no longer responsible after it had escaped.¹⁹ This mirrors the differentiation between wild and domesticated animals in Roman medical literature: wild animals were considered “lighter” and less nutritious than domesticated creatures, yet the bites of dogs could be as much a source of danger to humans as wounds caused by wild animals.²⁰ The Urban Prefect is thought to have acquired jurisdiction over wild animals as part of his responsibility for *disciplina spectulorum*.²¹ But perhaps gladiators would have to be sent by the contractor or official in charge of the entertainment.

Where real animals were lacking, bestial images filled the open spaces of the city. The painting of a *venatio* at the House of the Ceii in Pompeii brings an intrusion of the wild. In Rome, the *nemus* of Agrippa, perhaps the same as *Platanon*, was adorned with statuary of animals, as can be seen from the following epigram (Martial 3.19; my translation):

*Proxima centenis ostenditur ursa columnis,
exornant fictae qua platanona ferae.*

¹⁹ See *Dig.* 9.1.1.10. Robinson (1992: 207) speculates as to who might have been considered responsible in case of such damage, whether the magistrates or emperor who imported the animals or the head keeper, but guesses “that a person who actually found a bear loose in the park probably screamed for the Urban cohorts”.

²⁰ Von Staden (2012: 184–190) discusses the “repeated division into ‘wild’ and ‘domesticated’” in Celsus’ *De medicina*.

²¹ See Robinson (1992: 108). The Urban Prefect’s responsibility for *disciplina spectulorum* is mentioned at *Dig.* 1.12.1.12.

*Huius dum patulos adludens temptat hiatus
 pulcher Hylas, teneram mersit in ora manum:
 vipera sed caeco scelerata latebat in aere
 vivebatque anima dereriere fera.
 Non sensit puer esse dolos, nisi dente recepto
 dum perit. O facinus, falsa quod ursa fuit!*

“A she-bear is exhibited near the hundred columns, where images of wild animals adorn the Plane Grove (Platanon). While the handsome Hylas, playing close by, was exploring its gaping jaws, he sank his tender hand into its mouth; but a wicked viper was lurking in the recesses of the bronze and the bear was brought to life with a more deadly breath. The child did not notice the deceits there, until he was dying from the bite he received. Oh, what a crime, that that was a false bear!”

Many such marble images, either reworked from antique objects or made completely new, now fill the “Sala degli Animali” of the Vatican, a “marble zoo” of which the core was collected under Pius VI in the eighteenth century and worked by the sculptor Francesco Antonio Franzoni (see Spinola 1996: 125–188).

5 The search for “zoopolis”

Philo and Wolch (1998), reacting against the exclusion of animals from modern cities and the consequent emotional distancing between humans and animals and concomitant practices of extermination of species and habitat destruction, seek to recreate small-scale urban sites where people and animals might interact on a daily basis, a “zoopolis” where residents can adopt “animal standpoints” and networks of friendship to break down city-country dualisms destroying animal life-chances. In ancient Rome one area that has some claim to be such a “zoopolis” are the *horti*, those aristocratically and later imperially owned domains. In this “landscape of property” studied by Nicholas Purcell (2007: 292), private plots were penned in by high walls, not just to protect the produce from theft or damage by animals, but also, surely, to keep in the animals themselves.

The archetypal instance of such *horti*, yet extreme in both its centrality and its spatial extent, is Nero’s Golden House (Suetonius, *Nero* 31.1; my translation):

rura insuper arvis atque vinetis et pascuis silvisque varia, cum multitudine omnis generis pecudum ac ferarum.

“on top of that [there were] rural areas landscaped in a variety of arable fields, vineyards, pastures, and forests, containing a vast number of every kind of animal, both domestic herds and wild creatures.”

Purcell (1987: 200) has stressed how Tacitus’ description of the same complex (*Ann.* 15.42.1: “fields and pools and, in the fashion of wildernesses, woods here and open spaces and vistas there”) distinguished between wild and tame landscapes (both forests and empty spaces, groves inhabited by rustic divinities, and agricultural plots with plantations). But this dualism also extends to the non-human animals there, both flocks of sheep and herds of cattle (*pecudes*) and also undomesticated beasts (*ferae*). The “zoopolis” of Nero’s Golden House broke down these binary oppositions by juxtaposing not only city and country, but domesticated and wild animals. Centuries later, when Nero’s project was only a memory, the twelfth-century writer Richard of St Victor used the unique juxtaposition of humans and other animals in a “Golden House” to compare their diverging intellectual capabilities (*Benjamin Minor [Book of the Twelve Patriarchs]* 16, p. 132.9–14; see Palmén 2014: 97; my translation):

Rationalis autem est illa, quando ex his quae per sensum corporeum novimus, aliquid imaginabiliter fingimus. Verbi gratia: aurum vidimus, domum vidimus, auream autem domum nunquam; auream tamen domum imaginare possumus, si volumus. Hoc utique bestia facere non potest, soli rationali creaturae hoc possibile est.

“The rational is the capacity we have when we form something in our imagination out of the things we know through physical sensation. We (humans) have seen gold and we have seen a house, but never a golden house; yet we can form images of a golden house if we want; but an animal is not able to, as only a rational being can do so.”

By a similar stretch of the imagination, this time pictorial rather than conceptual, the nineteenth-century Brescian artist Modesto Faustini (1839–1891) was able to evoke the potential of human-animal interactions in the ancient city to reach this ideal level of “zoopolis” with networks of friendship between humans and animals that go beyond the distancing objectification of animals found in the modern and imperial city. After travelling to Rome in 1869 and meeting the artist Nino Costa (1826–1903), Faustini developed as a narrative painter whose closest aesthetic links were with the English Pre-Raphaelites. He was best known for his execution of Christian and religious themes, including the Cappella degli Spagnoli at Loreto (1886–1890), and for his frescoes in the new glamour residences of Risorgimento Rome like the angels adorning Palazzo Menotti and his ceiling fresco of birds and exotic animals in an imaginary gazebo in Villa Mirafiori. But his earlier training at the Milan Academy in 1861–1864 under Giuseppe Bertini

(1825–1898) drew him to reconstructions of ancient genre scenes in the Academic manner. A painting sold at auction at Phillips London in 1997 (see Fig. 3) is particularly notable for the fondness with which he recreates a scene of daily life.²² Faustini combines here exact details from Pompeii such as the dipinto and street sign over the door of an aristocratic Roman house with, in the left-hand background, a flavour of the impoverished lifestyle of contemporary Italy.

The bearded form of the Barbary ape in the foreground accompanying the musicians may owe something to the animals shown in David Teniers' painting *Apes in the Kitchen* (St. Petersburg, Hermitage, c. 1645). Yet, while Teniers' animals have the human kitchen to themselves and are entirely detached from human contact, Faustini's animals, by contrast, interact with humans in an engaged manner. At the same time, this interaction is a studied contrast with the way in which animals interact with humans in ancient representations. The inclusion of the monkey seems indebted to a painting in the House of the Dioscuri at Pompeii (VI.ix.6), re-discovered in 1828, but more widely disseminated only a few years before Faustini's painting.²³ The ancient fresco (see Fig. 4) shows an ape dressed in a hooded sleeved coat, walking on its hind legs at the end of a lead held by a young boy twice its height, who directs its movements with a whip. It was recognised very soon after its discovery as a representation of a boy teaching an ape to dance, controlled under the boy's whip, and the ape's costume was interpreted as the "Santonian *bardocucullus*" from Gaul recalled by Martial (14.128) as a costume for monkeys at a recent performance.²⁴ Later interpreters have assumed that this was done for the delight of an audience at a theatre or circus show, pointing out the amphora in the corner to which the animal reaches in vain, constrained by its leash from accessing the still tantis-

22 A painting entitled *Marriage Festival at Pompeii* was sold at New York in April 1909 for \$ 325; see Bénézit (1913: 262). It is unclear whether or not this is the same painting as the street scene sold in London in 1997.

23 The fresco was painted on a pilaster in the south-east corner of the large peristyle. It was found in April 1828, the discoveries were reported on 18 June 1828; see Fiorelli (1860: 207–213). First illustrated by Daremberg & Saglio (1875 [vol. 1]: 694 fig. 831) and Gusman (1899: 285–286 fig.), whose drawing shows the monkey exaggeratedly smaller than the boy.

24 Reported by Laglandière, first as "un Pigmeo che fa danzare una scimia" (1829a: 22) and then as "un enfant qui joue avec un singe" (1829b: 24). It was subsequently cited by Avellino (1831: 13) who identified the *bardocucullus*, and further interpreted by Panofka (1843: 3, pl. I.6) as a "Knabe, der einen Affen tanzen lehrt" and similarly by Jahn (1847: 435), who called the boy the animal's "trainer (Affenabrichter)", pointing out the whip. Later, Fiorelli, whose more widely disseminated work was perhaps Faustini's source, pilloried the image as "la grottesca figura di un giovinetto, il quale fassi a domare una scimia vestita con camisciola e cappuccino" (1860: 210); the latter was synthesised by Helbig (1868: 335 no. 1417).

ingly distant prize.²⁵ The humanoid characteristics of this species are further exploited in other painted caricatures, perhaps likewise derived from amusements at the *ludi*: one from Torre della Annunziata with two apes drawing a cart; the other (in the House of the Wild Boar, VIII.iii.8, the third room from the peristyle) with an ape (or possibly a dog – the painting is much damaged) standing in a cart drawn by two pigs with the reins around its neck.²⁶ Yet, while in these ancient scenes the apes are highly objectified, Faustini's painting, by contrast, shows the ape in its natural guise, without clothes, already holding a pot in its arms, and dancing freely in an idealised resolution of the ancient scenario in which it dances only under duress. The donkey too is no longer a street menace, alienated from the humans with whom it shares the urban space, but has wandered onto the kerb of the pavement where two well-dressed Roman matrons seem to interact with him, no doubt an allusion to Apuleius' account of the Corinthian lady's passion for the human-asinine Lucius (*Met.* 10.19–22; see Fögen, in this volume). A small boy restrains a dog on a leash which starts to move forward interestedly towards the donkey. Faustini successfully depicts the reality of a world where ape and donkey alike engage naturally and intimately with their human neighbours and where the humans seem unbothered by the nuisances they might cause to their social lives or to the cityscape, be they ones of smell, noise or conceptual barriers between rational and irrational.

In human-animal relations, as in so much else, ancient Rome was both the fore-runner of the modern city and a place apart. Elite attitudes embedded in literary texts and legal prescriptions alike present an attempt to order the urban environment in a way that is comparable to more recent differentiations between the wild and the domesticated. In these contexts, animals were often the instruments of human convenience, productivity and entertainment, as well as being sources of potential danger, and the structures of urban space show signs of regulation that kept animals “in their proper place”. Yet their economic role was so central to the ancient city (Morley 1996: 121) that a clearly delineated anthropocentric model was not always possible. The categories of “wild” and “domesticated” proved to be artificial poles, as domestic animals were viewed as being potentially as hazardous to their human neighbours as wild ones might be useful or beneficial. Moreover, in the representation of the common interac-

²⁵ Gusman (1899: 285–286) interpreted the scene as a comic turn exhibited on market days). See, more recently, McDermott (1938: 280 no. 479) and Toynbee (1973: 58).

²⁶ See King (2002: 434), McDermott (1938: 281 nos. 481–482; considered on p. 122 to be scenes from the circus), and Helbig (1868: 384, 479, nos. 1552 and 1553b). The two apes drawing the cart are reported by Roque Joaquín Alcubierre for 4 September 1750; see Fiorelli (1860: 10).

tions between humans and animals, both verbal and visual, we see not only a human perspective delineated, but a kind of *sympatheia* to the viewpoint of animals. Some areas of the ancient city reflected, in the close proximity of humans to both feral and domestic animals, that ideal of the zoopolis which modern theorists crave. Yet it was never complete. While the ideal of the zoopolis is hinted in ancient literary and visual representations, it was never fully embodied in ancient urban space.

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Illustrations



Figure 1: Sarcophagus from Parium (Istanbul Archaeological Museum, inv. 4447)
Photo: Forschungsarchiv, Cologne
© Archaeological Museum Istanbul



Figure 2: Funerary relief from Rome
Roma, Musei Capitolini, Sala dei Filosofi, inv. MC 624/S
Archivio Fotografico dei Musei Capitolini (photograph by Zeno Colantoni)
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Figure 3: Modesto Faustini (1839–1891), *Roman Street Scene*
Photo: Pinterest

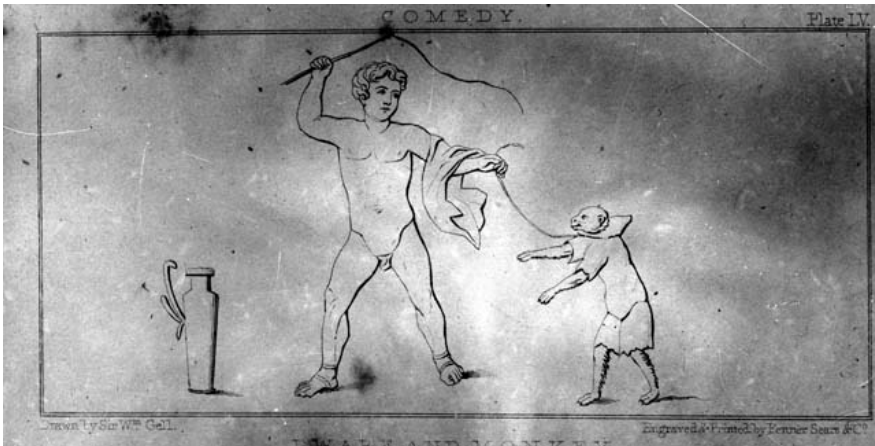


Figure 4: Boy and ape, painting from the House of the Dioscuri at Pompeii
Photo: German Archaeological Institute Rome

