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American Journal of Philology, Volume 131, Number 3 (Whole Number 523), Fall 2010, pp. 425-452 (Article)

Published by The Johns Hopkins University Press  
DOI: [10.1353/ajp.2010.0009](https://doi.org/10.1353/ajp.2010.0009)



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# THE *GENS TOGATA*: CHANGING STYLES AND CHANGING IDENTITIES

MELISSA A. ROTHFUS



*Abstract.* The end of the Republic and the early Augustan period witnessed several changes in the size and drape of the “elite” toga. The implementation of the toga, with its capacity to change, demonstrates elite anxiety over their rank and status and the ways in which elements of adornment could be used to assert, defend, and manipulate identities in response to changing political and social circumstances. As a tool for maintaining order by demonstrating legitimacy, the changeable toga was adopted by Augustus as he and members of Rome’s elite each negotiated his own place in the Roman world.

WHEN APPIAN (*B. Civ.* 2.17.120) DESCRIBES THE CHAOS AND DISORDER that characterized Roman society by the end of the Republic, he does so in terms of costume, παμμιγές τε γάρ ἐστιν ἤδη τὸ πλῆθος ὑπὸ ξενίας, καὶ ὁ ἐξελεύθερος αὐτοῖς ἰσοπολίτης ἐστὶ καὶ ὁ δουλεύων ἔτι τὸ σχῆμα τοῖς δεσπόταις ὅμοιος· χωρὶς γὰρ τῆς βουλευτικῆς ἢ ἄλλη στολὴ τοῖς θεράπουσιν ἐστὶν ἐπίκοινος (“For now the Roman people are much mixed with foreigners, there is equal citizenship for freedmen, and slaves dress like their masters. With the exception of the senators, free citizens and slaves wear the same costume”).<sup>1</sup> The clear implication is that distinctive costumes were symbols of an ordered society that the Romans had lost; furthermore, the overall health and stability of Rome’s highly stratified society could be measured by visual assessment of seemingly personal sartorial choices.

Although Appian was writing roughly two centuries later than the period he considers, concerns over matters of dress and their importance in demonstrating rank and status were important in the late Republic and Augustan period, as attention to matters of dress at the time demonstrates. It is then that the toga had begun to swell, growing longer, fuller and more elaborate in its drape. These developments were in response to changing political and social circumstances, including anxiety over

<sup>1</sup>All Greek and Latin texts are taken from the Loeb Classical Library. The translations are my own.

elite privilege, which form the backdrop of the princeps' own interest in the toga. The new togas, which arose primarily out of an elite assertion of identity and status, and Augustus' interest in, and measures concerning, the toga (as well as other forms of dress) should be read as a silent but explicit conversation in which each negotiated his own position in Roman society.

But precisely who was participating in this conversation? It has been argued that the longer togas of the late Republic, which were draped in a manner borrowed from the Greeks, were the consequence of increased cultural contacts with the Greek East and the number of Greek freedmen within Rome. These presumably combined the Roman toga with a Greek style of drape to reflect their mixed identity. The style was then adopted by Hellenophiles among Rome's elites.<sup>2</sup> The iconic nature of the toga as a fundamentally Roman garment, however, does cast some doubt on the degree to which elite Romans would take sartorial cues from their freedmen with respect to it. Very possibly the inspiration came from models like the fourth-century statue of the orator Aeschines, to which the Roman examples bear a striking resemblance and which would have had more acceptable connotations for Rome's elite Hellenophiles. Nevertheless, while Greek influence, parallel to the adoption or adaptation of other aspects of Greek culture, is certainly discernable in the changing style of the toga in the late Republic, this explanation does not consider why the toga continued to evolve to a style beyond Greek precedent.

For that, we must consider Rome's elite who were the most image-conscious consumers of the toga and most frequent subjects of representations in it.<sup>3</sup> I use the term "elite" here to refer in general to members of Rome's juridical elite within the city, the senatorial and equestrian orders.<sup>4</sup> This definition is admittedly problematic, as the parameters of these orders were not entirely clear in the period under consideration. This is particularly true of the equestrian order,<sup>5</sup> although the degree to

<sup>2</sup>Goette 1990, 24.

<sup>3</sup>Despite its close association with Roman identity, the impractical toga, as best known from literary descriptions and sculptural depictions, was not an everyday garment of most Romans. See Vout 1996.

<sup>4</sup>Toga wearing was by no means limited to the city of Rome; however, I have chosen to limit my study to that region in order to reduce the number of variables under consideration.

<sup>5</sup>With respect to the equestrian order, the definition continued to be nebulous into the Augustan period and complicated by loose, popular usage of the term. The possible decisive factors involved in equestrian status include the holding of the equestrian census (400,000 HS); the holding of a public horse (*equus publicus*); registration in the eighteen

which senatorial status resonated with family members, and the fact that men from a non-senatorial background could join that body, also left some ambiguity.<sup>6</sup> We see a visual manifestation of this imprecision in the fact that potential candidates for senatorial office from equestrian rank seem to have donned the senatorial *latus clavus* as a sign of their intentions and, I would argue, a symbol of their senatorial character and worth. This means that definition of the senatorial order would be complicated by the public presence of liminal figures such as these. Furthermore, in addition to juridically defined rank, there existed subjective and relative assessments of power, prestige and influence, which determined social status (to borrow Saller's terminology).<sup>7</sup> While status and rank were each determined by separate factors and could even contradict one another, the two variables were not always distinct or independent.

The expense and tradition associated with the toga meant that changes to it were primarily an elite phenomenon. While it is true that the toga was the required costume of even relatively humble Romans as they conducted business or attended patrons, these generally would have had less to gain by changes in the style or size of the toga.<sup>8</sup> Even if clients wore the same togas as their patrons (and Martial, writing later than the period under discussion here in the mid-first century C.E., suggests that

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equestrian centuries (which may or may not correspond to holding a public horse); serving as a *iudex* or in other specific civil capacities, such as *tribuni aerarii* (which probably required equestrian census, but probably did not come with a public horse); the right to sit in the fourteen rows of the theater assigned to equestrian use by the *Lex Roscia* of 67 B.C.E.; and possession of an *anulus aureus* (gold ring). Confusion is furthered by change through time, and the apparent disparity in "official" (possibly limited to those with a public horse and/or formally enrolled in the eighteen centuries, for example) to popular use of the term, which commonly appears to refer to everyone who met the equestrian census. There is some evidence from inscriptions to suggest that not all equestrians were *cum equo publico*, and those with a public horse constituted an elite within the order more generally. Sifting through the brief references from manifold genres in an attempt to find consistency between the use of the term and access to its symbols and privileges for the sake of a definition is enough to make one's head spin. I refer the reader to a useful summary of the various positions of this issue taken by Mommsen, Nicolet, Wiseman et al. by Linderski 1977, 55–60.

<sup>6</sup>For a good summary of the evidence and scholarship on the question of definitions of the senatorial order, see Ferrill 1985.

<sup>7</sup>Saller 2000, 829, is specifically addressing the imperial period, but his precision of terminology is useful here.

<sup>8</sup>George 2008, 96, says, "As with so many other kinds of distinguishing features, the display of status through dress seems to have been most important to those whom it most benefited, and was subsequently less significant to those outside the upper ranks of society."

was not always the case),<sup>9</sup> they did so not as independent consumers but as appendages of their patrons whose public image they enhanced.<sup>10</sup> On the other hand, sartorial symbols, which allowed for declaration and subtle manipulation of rank and status, were largely the tools of Rome's elite. Precisely who constituted these elite and how to separate them from the merely ambitious, however, was not a question that the Romans of the Republic themselves could always easily or unanimously resolve. The very development of the changes of the toga that I propose to examine is an attempt by some Romans to provide that answer, at least in part.

### THE IMPORTANCE OF APPEARANCES

Personal adornment was a useful tool for asserting one's identity in Roman society because there was a cultural belief that outward appearances available for public judgment were a (more or less) accurate guide to those habits and attitudes that could not be witnessed so easily.<sup>11</sup> This was applicable at the individual level and to society as a whole. In essence, the Romans were keenly and consciously aware that adornment was an inextricable element of identity, and it was furthermore an important way in which an individual indicated his attitude to the dominant culture and his place in Roman society.<sup>12</sup>

The frequent discussion of dress and adornment by a range of Roman authors writing on a variety of topics attests to the significance attached to this mode of communication and the appropriateness of considering the role of appearances in the creation of identity in the Roman context. Although some Roman writers acknowledge the possibility of discrepancy between inward attitudes and outward appearances, there was in Roman culture a strong current of belief that the way one looked was a reliable guide as to who one was, that is, his beliefs, attitudes, and positions in the social nexus. For example, we find that the Augustan-

<sup>9</sup>See Mart. 2.58, 3.36, 6.82.

<sup>10</sup>George 2008, 102.

<sup>11</sup>For a useful discussion of the relationship between dress and the public self, see Edmondson 2008.

<sup>12</sup>In discussing identity, I am following the perspective of symbolic interactionism, which posits that "individuals acquire identities through social interaction in various social, physical, and biological settings. So conceptualized, identities are communicated by dress as it announces the social position of the wearer to both wearer and observers within a particular interaction situation. . . . Through time the developing individual internalizes these and many other identities." Roach-Higgins et al. 1995, 12.

era jurist, Labeo, attests to the fact that respectable women not attired as such forfeited the protections against insult that their rank normally accorded them.<sup>13</sup> There was no room for a gap between appearance and substance. The protection against verbal assault that would otherwise be assured by law is denied to females who fail to make their respectability plain, and their rank, despite birth or wealth, is assimilated to that of lower, disreputable women by virtue of their costumes alone. Leaving off appropriate garments was a symbolic action and was seen as such by the jurists, who judged it not a matter of individual dress preference but an abandonment of the values those garments represented and the social role for which those values were essential. This nearly inextricable connection between symbol and substance meant that the symbols in dress served to create connections in the viewers' minds between the one wearing the garment and all the positive or negative attributes to which that garment might refer. Cicero (*Phil.* 2.76.8) makes use of this belief when he emphasizes the Greek clothing donned by Antony in contrast to his own, traditional, Roman dress. The underlying logic of Cicero's descriptions is that each man has articulated through his choice of adornment his place with respect to his society.

The absence of a gap between appearances and substance thus has an interesting implication: while character influences dress, so, too, does dress influence character. It follows, then, that items of adornment have agency to take those qualities with which they are associated and impress them on the wearer.<sup>14</sup> A very clear, albeit late illustration of this is provided by Macrobius, (*Sat.* 1.6.8–10). He records that the Roman ancestors allowed the *bulla* and the *toga praetexta* to noble-born Roman boys in the hope that they would take on such characteristics as bravery, manliness, and leadership, which those articles embodied as symbols of magistrates and triumphant generals. By granting young Romans the privilege of assuming these sartorial symbols, the Roman ancestors were also attempting to guide their development, identifying to those youths and those who interacted with them what values and characteristics were properly theirs.

<sup>13</sup> *Dig.* 47.10.15.15: *si igitur non matronali habitu femina fuerit et quis eam appellavit vel ei comitem abduxit, iniuriarum tenetur* ("If, therefore, a woman is not dressed respectably, no one who addresses her or removes her attendant is liable for the injury").

<sup>14</sup> The school uniform provides a contemporary instance. Examples can be found in the *Manual on School Uniforms* provided by the US Departments of Education and Justice (<http://www.ed.gov/updates/uniforms.html>) cited by Craik 2005, 71–72.

Such a close, reciprocal relationship between clothing and character suggests that control over adornment, on oneself or others, could have deeper consequences. After all, one of the recipients of the message communicated by costume is the wearer himself. In that way, dress and other seemingly superficial qualities play formative roles in the assertion, creation, and modification of identities. Encouragement to adorn oneself in specific ways, which may come from one's parents, peers, political leaders, or personal ambitions, can influence ways in which one conceives one's roles (with attendant values and behaviors) within the group as part of a dynamic interplay between oneself and one's environment.

### SARTORIAL SYMBOLS

In a strictly hierarchical society in which so much weight was attached to appearances, it is hardly surprising that sartorial symbols developed in the course of the Republican period. These were items of dress used to signify juridical status such as the *latus clavus*, a pair of purple stripes that adorned the tunic of the senator, the modest, floor-length stola of the respectable woman, and the like. The unfortunate paucity of contemporary evidence does not permit us to trace their development in detail, but Polybius (6.53.7) mentions that at elite funerals, representatives of the dead man would wear the toga that corresponded to his highest office, which at least confirms that the practice of correlating particular symbols with political offices was well-established by his day.<sup>15</sup> Macrobius, writing late in the imperial period, suggests that regulation of the stola predates the Second Punic War, at which time the right to wear the stola was extended to freedwomen. While the temporal distance between Macrobius and his subject enjoins caution, the very fact that Augustus sought to regulate the use of these symbols adds general confirmation that they already held important meaning by his day.

It is no accident that the sartorial symbols of the Romans were elite ones. Despite Appian's lament, mentioned above, that the slave and free man dressed alike, neither in Appian's day nor at any time prior was there a slave uniform or other signifiers of juridical rank for slaves

<sup>15</sup> οὗτοι δὲ προσαναλαμβάνουσιν ἑσθῆτας, ἐὰν μὲν ὕπατος ἢ στρατηγὸς ἢ γεγωνός, περιπορφύρους, ἐὰν δὲ τιμητῆς, πορφυράς, ἐὰν δὲ καὶ τεθριαμβευκῶς ἢ τι τοιοῦτον κατεργασμένος, διαχρύσους (“These men take on their dress, and if the dead man was a consul or a praetor, a toga *praetexta*, if a censor, a toga *purpurea*, and if he had celebrated a triumph or similar honor, the toga *picta*”).

in Rome.<sup>16</sup> The lack of a slave uniform suggests that in Roman society, the burden of proof rested on the holder of rank. Any individual with juridical rank worthy of protection was obliged to demonstrate it; it was not assumed.<sup>17</sup>

At the other end of the social and juridical spectrum, elites created and managed symbols for their own benefit as an assertion, justification, and reinvigoration of their position of power and influence in Roman society. They served as links to the past, a demonstration of elite values and thus a legitimization of rank and power. As symbols interconnecting notions of order, legitimacy, and wealth, the sartorial symbols of the Romans fall under the definition of “high culture” proposed by anthropologists Baines and Yoffee, who have developed an approach that uses the variables of order, legitimacy, and wealth to analyze the influence of economic and cultural resources in the development of ancient states. High culture they regard as “the production and consumption of aesthetic items under the control, and for the benefit of, the inner elite.”<sup>18</sup> Rome’s senatorial elite in particular and possibly aspiring senatorial elite easily correspond to the Baines and Yoffee (2000, 16) definition of inner elite, which they consider to be “both the cultural and the administrative and executive core of a society.” High culture is, in their view, the way in which elites of ancient societies, and I argue the Romans among them, justified and legitimized their positions as those who rule and thereby preserved the order of their society. It is no surprise, then, that the elite toga arose at a time in which the position of Rome’s elite, as an order or as ambitious or conservative individuals, was insecure.

<sup>16</sup>On lack of slave uniform, see George 2002, 43. The lack of symbols of juridical rank does not mean that other types of status might not be communicated by dress of non-elites (including slaves), such as occupation. It is believed by some that slaves wore iron finger rings as symbols of their enslavement; the iron ring of a slave is mentioned by Pliny the Elder at *HN* 33.23. However, Pliny also tells us senators traditionally wore an iron ring at home (33.12). Triumphant generals traditionally wore an iron ring, as Marius did after his victory over Jugurtha (33.12), and so did *iudices* in the time of Augustus (33.30). In Pliny’s own day an unadorned iron ring is sent by a man to his betrothed (33.10).

<sup>17</sup>Instead, slave identities undoubtedly would have been focused around occupation and the *familia* of their masters. There would have been nothing to gain, from a Roman point of view, by encouraging a sense of shared identity and solidarity in such a diverse, internally stratified group.

<sup>18</sup>Van Buren and Richards 2000, 3–4, citing Baines and Yoffee 1998, 235.



## THE CHANGING TOGA OF THE LATE REPUBLIC

By the late Republic, the toga was a rhetorical symbol already rich in association with Roman identity, representing those duties, values, and qualities necessary to be a Roman.<sup>19</sup> Varro (ap. Non. 189M) records that the toga was the common ancestral garment of men and women, worn day and night, though certainly by Varro's day in the first century B.C.E., it was no longer the appropriate dress for respectable adult women.<sup>20</sup> When, if ever, the toga functioned as the general everyday garment Varro describes has been lost in time. Nevertheless, the Romans cherished the idea that the toga was their distinctive ancestral garment, a belief of interest not because it was or was not strictly rooted in actual practice, but because that belief allowed the toga to operate as a symbol of respect for the *maiores*, ancestral values, and service to the state, among other things. As Vout (1996, 206, 213–14) notes, the toga was an essentially rhetorical garment. It was, or became, the quintessentially Roman article not because it was the typical everyday garment of the Romans in general, but because it was worn by those seeking to affirm their quintessentially Roman identities. As such, it was especially significant in those places and occasions when the question of such identity was paramount, as in the coming-of-age ceremony when a youth donned his adult toga for the first time, while a man engaged in public business, in the senate house (and

<sup>19</sup>After all, Cisalpine Gaul, the part of Gaul nearest Italy and most influenced by Italian culture, was *Gallia Togata*. A comedy written in Latin and performed in Roman dress was a *fabula togata*. The obligation of the Latin allies to provide soldiers for Rome was determined by the *formula togatorum*. See the *Lex Agraria*, 111 B.C.E. in *FIRA* i, 80.50. Horace and Livy routinely use the toga as metonymy for Romans or Roman civilians: for example, Hor. *Carm.* 3.5.10; Livy 3.10.13; 3.50.10.

<sup>20</sup>Despite Varro and the implication that the toga is specifically Roman, postulated antecedents of the Roman toga are similar garments of the Etruscans and Greeks. The Etruscan cloak known as the *tabenna* exhibits the same rounded edge that constitutes the primary attribute of the Roman toga. See, for example, the edges of the Apollo of Veii as discussed by Bonfante 1975, 48–49. Pliny the Elder (*HN* 8.195) seems to concur with the idea of foreign origins, though he is specifically describing the toga *praetexta*. The *himation*, a Greek square-cornered mantle, has also been credited with early influence, particularly with respect to draping. For a thorough study of this style of drape, see Bieber 1959, 375. Furthermore, a rounded-edged mantle depicted in Greek-style paintings in Paestum also suggests Greek origins. Goette 1990, 2, citing examples of what he calls a rounded Greek *chlamys*, sees the form as coming from the Greeks and the symbol's significance arising from the Etruscans. Bonfante 1975, 41 (also see 15, 39, 45, 53, 91–93), however, does not believe that the Etruscans attached particular symbolic significance to particular decorations or correlated them with social status.

the route towards it) where he performed his civic duty, or when he was monumentalized in works of art for public display.<sup>21</sup>

Lamentably, our evidence does not allow us to trace the developments of the toga with great precision. As Goette (1990, 21) explains on the basis of an expansive survey of togate sculpture, the dating of Republican styles is based on a general shift from shorter togas with few folds to longer, fuller versions with more finely divided folds. Therefore, the dates of individual pieces, and the toga styles they exhibit, cannot be determined with precision or correlated with particular events. Within the earliest class of Republican togas, two styles of draping are attested by sculpture. The first is characterized by the toga worn by the *Arringatore* and figures in the so-called Altar of Domitius Ahenobarbus, which is relatively short and sparse, draped under the right arm so that arm might be used freely.<sup>22</sup> The other features a drape that encloses the right arm and binds it to the chest in the manner of a sling, as seen in figure 1.

This style of draping is clearly derived from the Greek *himation*, of which a fifth-century B.C.E. sculpture of Aeschines serves as the primary model.<sup>23</sup> Quite possibly, the Hellenic origins of this style of drape were intended to broadcast the level of education of the wearer and the successful imperialism of the Romans more generally, as they adopted what was Greek and adapted it to their own needs. It is not possible to determine whether or not these two different styles of drape necessarily reflect different cuts of the toga, or if the same garment was draped differently.<sup>24</sup> In the course of the latter half of the first century B.C.E. into the Augustan period, the cut of the toga as represented in sculpture became increasingly large and full, sometimes incorporating the *sinus* (an extra fold of cloth discussed in greater detail below) so that the arm-sling could no longer be pulled taught across the body.<sup>25</sup> Eventually, a more

<sup>21</sup>With respect to the latter, Goette 1990, 27, notes that of late Republican statues from the provinces, the distinctive curved edge of the toga was more apparent in the East than in those of the West, likely due to the fact that this was the distinguishing feature between the Roman toga and Greek pallium. The eastern toga was thus a response to the need to distinguish oneself from the similarly dressed Greeks and assert a specifically Roman identity.

<sup>22</sup>This is Goette's A a category (1990, 22–24).

<sup>23</sup>This is Goette's A b category (1990, 24–27).

<sup>24</sup>Richardson and Richardson 1966, 266, and Goette 1990, 25, suggest both these styles were achieved with a toga of the same cut, draped under or around the right arm based on the circumstances in which it would be worn. This is not certain, however.

<sup>25</sup>This is Goette's A c category (1990, 27).



Figure 1. Togate figure, latter half of the first century B.C.E. from the Tomb of Caecilia Metella. Photo courtesy of the Ministero per i Beni Culturali Soprintendenza Speciale per i Beni Archeologici di Roma.

complicated drape that required greater volume to create both the *sinus* and *umbo* left the arm-sling behind.

Quintilian, whose late first-century C.E. guide for orators contains one of the lengthiest discussions of the toga in Roman literature, relates some remarks pertinent to the late Republic. In one passage (11.3.143),

he preserves advice of the mid-first-century B.C.E. rhetoricians Plotius Gallus and Nigidius Figulus, who apparently stated: *togam veteres ad calceos usque demittebant ut Graeci pallium* (“Romans of old allowed the toga’s edge to fall to the ankle like a Greek pallium”). Not only does this confirm that longer togas developed prior to the principate of Augustus but also provides further suggestion that the changes involved conscious and deliberate imitation of a Greek model. Then again, the same author (11.3.143) preserves a brief criticism of the length of Cicero’s toga from the younger Pliny, which seems to suggest that the pallium-length toga, as opposed to the shorter one seen on the Altar of Domitius Ahenobarbus, for example, did not meet with universal approval even in the late Republic. Unfortunately, the mention is brief; yielding the insight only that Quintilian himself does not understand Pliny’s remark on this topic, since Quintilian is familiar with the evidence that shows Cicero’s longer toga was not unusual for the period. As with other elements of Greek culture embraced by the Romans of the Republic, it appears that the longer toga was an ideologically loaded symbol whose public acceptance or rejection was part of a political power game, played by those who chose to demonstrate their broad education and mastery over a conquered people’s culture on the one hand, and those who preferred to emphasize their conservative allegiance to the *mos maiorum* on the other. Incidentally, the younger Pliny mentioned that the longer toga served to cover Cicero’s varicose veins, thereby making his Greek-length toga doubly offensive to Roman conservatives on the grounds of unmanly vanity.

Of course, one is forced to acknowledge that a gulf may lie between what is depicted or recommended in ancient sources and actual practice. The occasions when the toga would be worn with the arm sling were surely limited and possibly as artificial as the togate statuary: at the beginning of a speech, for example, when the wearer would be most concerned to declare his identity to this audience and particularly conscious of his self-presentation. In fact, a man of the late Republic who struck this pose in his toga would surely have been conscious of the degree to which he resembled togate statuary, alluding to and reinforcing the information such statues conveyed and facilitating the internalization of the values and character they evoked.<sup>26</sup> It is this dynamic interplay between subject, both in art and in person, and viewer, which justifies the consideration of evidence from art in pursuit of greater understanding of the toga in

<sup>26</sup>For more on the dynamic process that creates meaning through interaction, see Tanner 2000, 18–50, esp. 22–24.

Roman society more generally. In the public context, the wool toga on flesh is no less rhetorical than that carved in stone. A distinction between the expensive and carefully plotted works of art and the actual practice of elite Romans in public life is unnecessary and indeed counterproductive here.

The corpus of extant Republican-era togate figures functioned primarily as symbols, not records of daily habit. When paging through the collections assembled by Goette and the Kleiners, one is immediately struck by their uniformity.<sup>27</sup> This uniformity demonstrates that the subject was depicted not as a unique individual, but one fitted into a standard type—a type whose qualities are articulated in large part by his costume. Men depicted in this garment were not merely advertising their respect for Roman tradition by wearing traditional clothing. Indeed, the self-consciously Greek influences in size and drape are deliberately untraditional. While the toga in all its forms remained fundamentally Roman as the garment in which elite Romans presented themselves to the public both in person and in art, it also communicated and reinforced more subtle messages about themselves and their places in the social nexus. In addition to the Greek origins of that manner of drape, it immobilized the hands so that one could not engage in physical labor of even the lightest kind. While the toga itself was not an elite garment, this manner of presentation signaled elite status. Added to that was the fact that the pose itself seemed to shelter the body and required care and discipline to maintain; it would require a stiffness of posture and solemn, measured step when walking. Furthermore, its light color would require care and expense to keep clean. All these factors combined to create a complex message that the wearer had access to economic and cultural power, which often corresponded to social and political power as well.<sup>28</sup> Another feature repeated throughout the assemblage of statues with the Aeschines-inspired drape is the position of the left arm that falls at the side while the left hand is holding a scroll. The Aeschines statue shows the subject with his left hand held behind his back. The scroll is a particular characteristic of Roman portraiture perhaps alluding to literary sophistication.<sup>29</sup> A thorough education was, of course, a critical element of “high culture” and one that could never be acquired in a quick and unexpected stroke of good fortune, as wealth could be. Greek inspirations

<sup>27</sup>The conformity of type is particularly striking in Goette’s plates, where images of each classification are grouped together.

<sup>28</sup>Bieber 1959, 413.

<sup>29</sup>Kleiner and Kleiner 1980–81, 128.

were present, understood, and utilized in the service of a Roman garment in a combined gesture of respect, cultural imperialism, and cultural capital. The cut of the garment with its curved edge declared that the wearer was a Roman, taking cues from the Greeks as he chose, and not the reverse. This garment was still a toga, still quintessentially Roman. The negotiation of styles was accomplished by a man who adopted not what was Greek or foreign so much as what was new. Soon, the novelty of the Greek style of drape was lost, and innovations without foreign precedent were adopted.

In the turbulent final decades of the Republic, the toga as worn and as depicted in statuary served as a symbol whose manipulation articulated one's position and identity in a changing world. The attention to the toga is significant because sartorial symbols that were the exclusive prerogative of members of the elite orders already existed. Senators and patricians had special shoes. The *latus clavus* appeared on the tunics senators wore under their togas, and within the senatorial ranks, symbols that are more specific existed, such as the toga *praetexta*, a toga bordered in purple, which signified a magistrate. The equestrian order, as noted above, was a more complicated story, undoubtedly reflecting the fact that the equestrian order was in the process of evolving and finding its purpose during the late Republic and early imperial period. The *angustus clavus*, the narrower version of the senatorial stripes, seems to have developed as a parallel to the senatorial *clavus* and little heed is paid to it by the ancient authors.<sup>30</sup> The *anulus aureus*, the definitive symbol of the equestrian order after the principate of Tiberius, has a less precise connection in the Republic and Augustan period.<sup>31</sup> Indeed, while the *anulus aureus* had strong associations with the equestrian order, the ability to bestow or wear it was not strictly regulated, resulting in some confusion for the modern scholar and ambiguity among the Romans themselves.<sup>32</sup> In that sense, the *anulus aureus* could also be a means of manipulating status in the same way I believe the larger togas were.

Since the *latus clavus* was already available, why would members of

<sup>30</sup>The association between equestrians and the *angustus clavus* was plain by Augustus' time, as demonstrated by Velleius Paterculus (2.88.2). As a symbol however, its resonance was relatively weak. Pliny the Elder (*HN* 33.29), in a discussion on the equestrian order, makes no mention of the *angustus clavus*. He refers to the tunic (*tunica*) with the implication that it would be decorated with the *latus clavus*, as the distinctive symbol of the senatorial order, leaving no room for a tunic with an *angustus clavus* to have any noteworthy significance.

<sup>31</sup>See Pliny *HN* 33.32.

<sup>32</sup>For example, see Suet. *Iul.* 33.1; Cicero, *Verr.* 3.76, 80; *Fam.* 10.32.

the senatorial elite need to modify the togas they wore to create something bulkier and consequently more ostentatious? For it is surely they who benefited from the advice of Plotius Gallus and Nigidius Figulus, mentioned above, and who constitute many of the now anonymous individuals depicted in this toga in honorific statuary. The answer surely lies in the toga's capacity for change which made it capable of more subtle messages and manipulation than the *latus clavus*. In essence, I believe we are looking at the nascent (though incomplete) development of "fashion." This a term used in a specific sense by scholars of the phenomenon to refer to a continual and rapid change of style accompanied by an appreciation of meanings attached to "fashionable styles."

The study of fashion continues to the present day to be influenced by the late nineteenth-century sociologist, Thorstein Veblen, whose *The Theory of the Leisure Class* devotes a chapter to dress. It was Veblen who coined the popular expression "conspicuous consumption." Veblen (2001, 52–75) saw fashion as economic in origin, arising from a desire to demonstrate wealth (and thereby social superiority) by an ability to pay. In those societies lacking complete stability—with fluidity or ambiguity between social strata—he observed the essential beginnings of fashion. Veblen understood the rapid change that characterizes fashion as arising from the efforts of lower-class people to adopt the visual signs of status exhibited by those of higher standing. Those of higher status, struggling to maintain their unique position (and unique status symbols) would then change those visual signs of status, which in turn would be imitated again. The ambition of the lower classes to imitate those above them, and the desire of upper classes to be distinct, would form a never-ending cycle of innovation and imitation.<sup>33</sup>

The social and economic circumstances of late Republican Rome were a far cry from those of the early modern period considered by Veblen. Further, the modern rapidity of change and capacity of social advancement is largely lacking in the ancient period. Yet the basic principles of Veblen's theory, carefully applied, do provide insight into the impetus for change in the Roman context. For, if we are not looking at social mobility on the modern scale, we are not looking at complete stasis

<sup>33</sup>Veblen's thesis has been criticized rightly by more recent scholars for failing to acknowledge and explain phenomena such as "trickle-up" trends in modern fashion, whereby *haute couture* and elite dress habits are influenced by those of the lower classes. Nevertheless, Veblen's model has useful applications in consideration of the changing toga, which is primarily an elite phenomenon that arises out of elite insecurity. For a summary of the criticism and a defense of Veblen, see Trigg 2001.

either. The ranks of the upper orders were penetrable,<sup>34</sup> and access to the elements of “high culture” was not necessarily exclusive or easily subject to control. The threats thus posed to elite privilege would provide a spur for a fashionable change of the toga. Likewise, competition within the elite ranks could also spur competition for social status, which would include demonstrations of wealth and special knowledge.

The toga was closely associated with Rome’s *maiores* and, as such, a legitimizing symbol of power and authority, and this message was precisely what the elite, particularly senatorial elite or those with aspirations, would have been at particular pains to communicate. More than that, the greater complexity and bulk of the new toga styles would, as Stone has asserted, render it an essentially elite garment, too expensive and difficult for most people to wear.<sup>35</sup> To whatever degree a common man might wear the toga at all, the new toga (one characterized by greater length, bulk, and eventually, complexity of drape) would stand out and apart. This is not to say that it could not have been adopted by a Roman man of any rank, including a freedman, but the terms of the competition were established by the elite among whom the impetus for change first arose as argued above. It was part of definition and distinction, asserting through conspicuous consumption of an unnecessary quantity of expensive fabric, whose light color could only be kept in pristine condition through the further expense of cleaning, that the wearer was a man with the power of wealth.<sup>36</sup> Whether or not he actually was one might be a different matter altogether. It was to a certain degree an assertion of rank, to the extent that wealth was a prerequisite for membership in the upper orders, but it was even more so an assertion of status: a response to the upheaval of the times in which the power of the senate as a body was subject to challenge and the cultural impetus for individuals within that body was to compete with one another. The limited state of our evidence and the apparently gradual nature of the change in the toga itself (relative to modern changes in fashionable styles) do not permit us to tie this development with particular events or voices more precisely. What we

<sup>34</sup>This had always been true, of course. What matters for our purposes is the degree to which this may have been a cause for anxiety among an elite already on the defensive, not the actual numbers, though certainly Caesar’s expanded senate would have been a tangible enough cause for concern.

<sup>35</sup>Stone 1994, 17. Stone provides useful analysis of development of the toga over the centuries.

<sup>36</sup>The color of the ordinary toga *virilis* (also called the toga *pura*) was the natural color of the wool of a white sheep. The toga *candida* of the candidate for office would be bleached to brighter whiteness.



can say is that the toga was well-suited to present manifold messages of legitimacy and wealth of value to those in the upper orders.

While the toga connected one to the revered ancestors whose example set the pattern for Rome's greatness, the novelty of a new toga also established the cultural capital of the wearer, that he had access to information known perhaps to a limited elite but not widely available to all. The uniqueness of the new elements would serve to distinguish him who wore it from the general toga-wearing population, all the while highlighting the connection of the wearer to Rome's ancestors by virtue of the fact that the design changes drew attention to the toga. Indeed, while change is evident, the new toga styles nevertheless maintain clear links to Republican precedent.<sup>37</sup> The highlighted link to tradition, combined with the demonstration of economic means and privileged information—the insider's scoop, as it were—all combine to assert, justify, and legitimize elite privilege. The wearer of such a toga was asserting his position of leadership within the dominant culture of Roman society. If his claim to that position were shaky, the adoption of this toga may have been used to bolster it, but only to a limited degree.

A certain delicacy of touch was required in using a symbol such as the toga, which was technically available to all but whose permutations were regulated socially. Because appearances were so important, and the messages they presented were so persuasive, they were also subject to scrutiny. Horace's *Epode* 4, which was probably published at the cusp of the Augustan era,<sup>38</sup> presents a freedman who flaunted his wealth with his voluminous toga and thus invited the scorn of his social and juridical betters (4.5–10): *fortuna non mutat genus. / videsne, sacram metiente te viam / cum bis trium ulnarum toga, / ut ora vertat huc et huc euntium / liberrima indignatio?* ("Fortune will not change your stock. As your stride measures the Sacred Way with a toga of six spans, do you not see the brimming indignation of gawking passers-by?"). It is true that over-large or loose-fitting clothing had associations of dandyism or effeminacy in Roman culture.<sup>39</sup> Horace's complaints, however, are class-based and concern the appropriateness of matching the size of the toga with appropriate juridical station. From the point of view of the dominant culture, the messages in clothing, such as the length of the toga, could only be

<sup>37</sup> Goette 1990, 27.

<sup>38</sup>The book of *Epodes* is believed to have been published in 30 B.C.E. See Watson 2007, 93.

<sup>39</sup>In the Augustan period, we see references to an overly full or loose toga *laxa* as the mark of the dandy. For examples, see Tibullus 1.6.40, 2.3.78.

persuasive and valuable to those whose elite status could be affirmed by other circumstances; one could not create a new identity based on symbols of that identity alone.

At least, that is what a voice in Horace's epistle to Lollius asserts (1.18.28–31). In the poem, which probably dates to about 20 B.C.E.,<sup>40</sup> he presents a man who admonishes a client for attempting to mimic the quality of his dress, including the fullness of his toga: *meae (contendere noli) / stultitiam patiuntur opes; tibi parvola res est. / arta decet sanum comitem toga; desine mecum / certare* (“Don’t compete with me—my wealth allows stupidity, your means are small. A narrow toga suits a sensible client; don’t contend with me”). In referring to his own toga as *stultitiam* in contrast to one which is *arta*, Horace is clearly presenting a satirical voice that mocks the habit of using the bulky toga as a means of conspicuous consumption. This poem confirms that volume was one of the means by which some members of Roman society of the early Augustan period chose to distinguish themselves from humbler members. In doing this, it also confirms that the bulkier toga, and adornment in general, may also have been a way of attempting to claim a higher social status by means of the symbols of such status. The client has taken on an appearance inconsistent with his social status, arousing the ire of his better who chafes at the competition. The poem is of value, then, in confirming the use of clothing to shape perception and manipulate identities, and further, in confirming that the fullness of the toga was not adopted accidentally or without an eye towards assertion of status or rank. In addition, this poem suggests that Rome’s traditional elite—or those with pretensions to that status—saw this kind of toga as something that was (or should be) unique to themselves. At the same time, the testiness of the narrator’s voice may be an indication of his own insecurity and the degree to which his own status hangs on appearances that cannot be fully backed up. The voice that Horace (himself the son of a freedman and perhaps even more conservative because his status and rank were so newly acquired) presents as the poet, who provides the word *stultitiam*, is that of the conservative who values the traditional *mores*, not economic means, which should be demonstrated by the toga.

This is a reminder that not all members of the elite orders were likely to have adopted the larger togas at the same time; some would have resisted the pressure to compete in this way and fallen back on staunch conservatism instead. That seems to have been the case for wealthy

<sup>40</sup>For a discussion of the date of composition and publication, see McGann 1969, 86–87.

freedmen of the late Republic and Augustan periods, who used the size of their monuments to demonstrate their economic means but often used the clothes in which they depicted themselves to declare their absolute respectability and allegiance to traditional Roman values.<sup>41</sup> Nevertheless, there is no reason to assume that all those who adopted the larger togas were of the elite orders. There was nothing to prevent anyone else from wearing this kind of toga, provided he could acquire one.<sup>42</sup> The need for juridical elites to distinguish themselves as a group from upstarts able to copy their apparel was possibly a reason for continued innovation in toga design into the Augustan period and beyond.

### THE AUGUSTAN TOGA

While it seems clear that the size and drape of the toga had already experienced changes by the late Republic, both literary evidence and artistic representations from the Augustan period suggest that the toga underwent a number of significant changes at about that time. It was then that an even more voluminous toga appeared, longer and bulkier and with new features, the *sinus* and the *umbo*.<sup>43</sup> The *sinus* was a curved fold of fabric that was bunched over the left shoulder, draped behind the back of the neck, and then brought loosely over the front of the body under the right arm to create a curved fold of fabric along the right hip back towards the left shoulder. This effect was created by doubling the toga, so that it was formed in two layers, not one. The length of the *sinus* varied according to fashion, from mid-thigh to below the knee. The *umbo* was a loop of fabric formed by loosening the edge that ran from the left shoulder straight down to the left foot, so that it created a hook-shaped fold over the *sinus*. Early examples of a slight *umbo* are observed on the Ara Pacis (consecrated in 9 B.C.E.), while more prominent *umbones* are attested in late Augustan and early Tiberian examples.<sup>44</sup> The statue of Augustus from the Via Labicana (Fig. 2) illustrates these features, and the overall bulk of his toga, which is voluminous enough to allow his head to

<sup>41</sup> In fact, in the late Republican and Augustan periods considered here, the evidence of wealthy freedmen as depicted on their tombstones suggests conservatism with respect to the toga (Kleiner 1977, 185–89). The limited nature of our evidence does not allow us to consider if the new “elite” styles of toga were adopted with different connotations within Roman subcultures.

<sup>42</sup> Evidence that the toga was an exclusive privilege of Roman citizens is limited and later than the period under discussion here; see Suet. *Claud.* 15, Pliny, *Ep.* 4.11.3.

<sup>43</sup> Stone 1994, 17, 20–21; see also Goette 1990, 29–33.

<sup>44</sup> Goette 1990, 29–31.



Figure 2. Augustus of Via Labicana, early first century C.E., currently in the Crypta Balbi Museum, Rome. Photo courtesy of the Ministero per i Beni Culturali Soprintendenza Speciale per i Beni Archeologici di Roma.

be covered without loosening the *umbo*. Pliny the Elder (*HN* 8.195) adds that the toga *rasa* of Phryxian wool developed in the very late years of the Augustan principate.<sup>45</sup> This kind of toga was constructed from wool which had then been brushed and carefully close-clipped to create a particularly smooth and soft finish.

<sup>45</sup>*togas rasas Phryxianasque divi Augusti novissimis temporibus coepisse scribit Fenestella.*

The changes that emerged in the cut, size, drape, and finish of the toga meant that it was even more expensive and cumbersome, a furtherance of the late-Republican trend. The full draping of the Augustan toga with *sinus* and *umbo* required a more substantial amount of cloth which needed to be purchased and kept clean, while the complexity of the drape required assistance to achieve. The bulk and drape would have restricted movement significantly. The very awkwardness of the newer, fuller garment would contain its own reward as a conspicuous declaration that the wearer was a man of wealth and education who did not engage in vulgar labor to earn his livelihood. In addition to the changed nature of the garment itself, the manner of wearing the toga would also be modified to accommodate the heavier, bulkier volume of cloth. As represented in sculpture, the Republican toga was often worn with the arm sling that strapped the arm modestly across the torso. As discussed above, this pose was probably adopted under specific circumstances when the wearer was most conscious of the message conveyed by his appearance.

There is some question as to the degree to which Augustus was personally responsible for the new form of the toga. Zanker (1990, 162) supposes that the new fashion was inspired by the example of the princeps and those close to him. Goette (1990, 102), too, sees Augustus' active promotion of the new toga form in its resemblance to the cut of the priestly *laena*, worn by the *flamines*, which was also formed in double layers, though draped differently. The new form was thus not only drawing on tradition but further infusing the toga with religious association, all in keeping with Augustus' role as restorer of the *mos maiorum* and *pax deorum*. This interesting observation not only supports the notion that Augustus played a conscious and active role in toga fashion change but also identifies the inspiration of an apparently new form—one that was intimately Roman and not Greek. Yet, in light of the fact these changes were part of a broader series, we must be wary of simple top-down explanations.

As the composition of the senate held an increasing proportion of new men, and the Augustan constitution created opportunities for individual senators to rise to powerful positions, competition within the body of senators and ambitious equestrians was keen. While this continued to be true through the Julio-Claudian period and beyond (when toga changes were more subtle but nevertheless existed), it was particularly true of the Augustan era. Assertion of elite status, legitimized by proven access to wealth and culture, was as critical as ever. One aspect of the newer togas was that they required the wearer to dominate more space. Observing the togate statues of the imperial period that feature expansive arm gestures

in contrast to those from the Republican period, Davies (2005, 126) notes that such statues, “are designed to express masculine power and control.” To wear such a toga, “was the ultimate in power dressing, and articulated the Roman elite’s control of the government.”<sup>46</sup> Added to the physical presence of the weighty new toga was the possible religious overtone provided by the increased resemblance to the *laena*, mentioned above. This would be an important message from Rome’s elite as they ceded key powers (over finance, foreign affairs, and the military) to Augustus and later emperors. Furthermore, as the late Republican-style toga lost its novelty, it may no longer have served to distinguish those who wore it, necessitating further innovation. Using the power of appearances to declare, and to a degree create, an identity, the Augustan toga and later incarnations under subsequent emperors amounted to a forceful assertion of dominance and control for a segment of Roman society whose claim to dominance and control had just been weakened by the developments of the Augustan constitution.

### AUGUSTUS AND THE TOGA

Whether or not Augustus actively promoted the new toga styles, there is no denying that he styled himself as a promoter of the toga. The tradition of skillful rhetoric, combined with the rich symbolism of the toga, were obvious tools for the princeps when he set about the task of stabilizing Roman society in the wake of civil war and unrest. The toga embodied traditional values while its flexibility and capacity for change allowed for more nuance and ambiguity. As with the elite and would-be elites of the Republic, Augustus was concerned with both order and legitimacy. His measures relating to dress, and particularly the toga which is my focus here, conveyed layered messages to both the Roman population in general and the Roman elite in particular. His broader message should be understood as related to the building programs, religious reform, and moral legislation that constituted key elements of his restoration of peace, political order, and social stability. The toga was a symbol with which Romans and the more recently enfranchised Italian citizens identified and was conveniently steeped in the concept of Roman tradition, which Augustus was most anxious to appear to restore. In the face of a perceived cultural estrangement between the contemporary Roman and his ancestors, the toga could serve as a tangible, visual link to the past and impress on

<sup>46</sup>Davies 2005, 128.

each man who wore it a sense of who he was and the role he played in the world Augustus ruled. Taking advantage of its uniform-like potential to distinguish insiders from outsiders, the toga could be used to instill civic pride, to serve as a reminder of what it meant to be Roman, and to provide an opportunity to try to internalize those values, exploiting the cultural assimilation of external appearances and internal character.

At the same time, Augustus was entering a conversation with the elite already begun by the late Republican toga changes in which he acknowledged their privileged position and adopted their message. In part for this reason, Augustus tried to enforce the wearing of the toga in two specific public places: the forum and the theater. As Suetonius tells us (*Aug.* 40.5):

Etiam habitum vestitumque pristinum reducere studuit, ac visa quondam pro contione pullatorum turba indignabundus et clamitans: “en Romanos, rerum dominos, gentemque togatam!” negotium aedilibus dedit, ne quem posthac paterentur in foro circave nisi positis lacernis togatum consistere.

Furthermore, he took pains to revive the old style of dress, and once when he saw a group sporting dark cloaks in an assembly, he indignantly exclaimed, “Behold the Romans, masters of world, the toga-clad race” and instructed the aediles that no one should be allowed in the Forum or its environs unless wearing a toga without a cloak.<sup>47</sup>

As the longstanding center of civic business and responsibility, the forum was a place symbolically linked with the toga. It was here that the Romans conducted the business of being Roman, so it was particularly important that this business be conducted in the proper spirit, with reverence for tradition and the role a good Roman must play. It has long been recognized that such a regulation was part of a larger program of restoring traditional Roman morality. As Roman traditional dress *par excellence*, the toga was a useful vehicle for demonstrating respect for traditional values and Roman identity.<sup>48</sup> The longing for the Roman past, full of virtuous ancestors and noble deeds, could be attained in the Augustan present as Roman tradition, with its particular costume and unique character, would be visibly alive and relevant.<sup>49</sup> The act of influencing

<sup>47</sup> Here the princeps quotes Virg. *Aen.* 1.282.

<sup>48</sup> So potentially useful was the restoration of the toga as an act of broader restoration of Republican morality (or appearances thereof) that Augustus' remark is of no value in determining the actual daily toga-wearing habits of the late Republic.

<sup>49</sup> Zanker 1990, 163–64.

appearances was far from superficial but a step towards creating deeper change. By requiring and guiding his fellow Romans into a certain manner of dress, Augustus was attempting to impress on them a particular identity which corresponded with the symbolic significance of that dress. His demand that citizens wear the toga in the forum was a step taken to give Roman society the appearance of order and stability, and with appearances, make it so.

Yet, in light of the fact that some of Rome's elite (and aspiring elite, as Horace suggests) were already using the toga to promote their positions, we must also see Augustus' concern with the toga as a response to theirs.<sup>50</sup> How practical, after all, would it be to police the dress of everyone who came to the forum? Neither Suetonius nor any other source provides us with specifics as to how the aediles were to enforce this pronouncement. While the area in question is limited geographically, the throngs of people who converged or passed through there, including women, slaves, and foreigners, could not be garbed appropriately in the toga and would hardly have been the objects of Augustus' concern. While non-elite Romans were not excluded from this measure, surely the senatorial elite were particularly targeted. This group would be most symbolically linked to the forum, as those who shouldered the burden of public business in the physical center of public life. The togas of clients who accompanied their patrons were reflections of the patron's status and so should not be considered separately. In addition, some of the elites had themselves been drawing attention to their togas with the modifications they had undergone in recent decades. To the degree to which the senatorial elite were adding bulk to their togas in an assertion that it and its connotations were rightfully theirs, Augustus appropriated that message for his own benefit with this measure, styling himself as a champion of elite status and as one complicit in their symbolic justification of legitimacy. He was acknowledging that the toga was a medium for asserting elite status as well as traditional values and reinforcing the elite's particular claim to the toga by insisting on its usage in a public place best suited to demonstrating their status. He preempted their message of legitimacy and assimilated it into his own.

Furthermore, those who might be inclined to assert alternate statuses or identities with other modes of dress were denied that outlet. This is not only because the toga was required. If Augustus did indeed quote Virgil, as Suetonius reports, the line he used was part of Jupiter's

<sup>50</sup>In fact, Augustus' motion, coming after the publication of the *Aeneid*, may be roughly contemporary with Horace's poem.



prophesy of Roman greatness. Thus, the toga is emphasized as the symbol of the Romans in their role as a victorious people especially dear to the gods. In this context, Augustus' appeal to tradition styled other forms of dress as essentially un-Roman—falling short of the gods' expectations. Whatever individual variation of toga style may have existed between the skimpier, old-style versions and the bulkier, longer ones, the forum would serve as a venue where Roman elites, those best prepared to recognize the source of the quotation, would appear in concentrated numbers in the toga at Augustus' insistence, as if he were compelling them to take up their rightful positions within Roman society over their own reluctance. Far from challenging their traditional and legitimate authority articulated by their togas, he was exerting himself to protect it, perhaps more than they deserved since some apparently needed some coaxing (at least according to Augustus' rhetoric). It was then left to the elite to answer the call, to wear their togas proudly, and conspicuously to confirm their worthiness.

The other public place where the toga was specifically required by Augustus was the theater, as Suetonius (*Aug.* 44.2) tells us: *sanxitque ne quis pullatorum media cavea sederet* (“and he forbade anyone to sit in the middle of the theater in a dark cloak”). The toga is not specifically mentioned here, but as a usually light-colored garment, it is implied through contrast and the wording is generally understood this way.<sup>51</sup> This measure worked in tandem with a new seating arrangement that included separate sections for senators, equestrians, soldiers, married men, citizen boys, paedagogues, and women.<sup>52</sup> The theater was the simultaneous gathering place of Romans from every segment of society; in the seating arrangements, Augustus presented a clear model for the organization of society as a whole. This was a place where everyone could both witness and actively participate in the order (and implied stability) that Augustus had brought to them. The togas worn in public spaces would also create a visual ordering of the greater public world and a return to traditional order and morality, in keeping with Augustus' desire to frame the past conflicts as a matter of moral degeneration and his administration as a power justified by moral restoration.

While the matter of the theater seems to be more generally focused by a dress regulation that would apply beyond the elite, once again it is clearly they who were a specific target; the unity of the Roman people as a community is not emphasized at the expense of the privileged posi-

<sup>51</sup> Davies 2005, 127.

<sup>52</sup> Suet. *Aug.* 40.1–2.

tion of the elite. Indeed, the section of Suetonius' text (*Aug.* 44.1) which mentions this dress code opens with Augustus' concern that senatorial dignity be given its due in the theater after a shocking incident in Puteoli in which no one would yield his seat in a crowded theater to a senator.<sup>53</sup> Thus, the measures that follow, the new seating arrangement and dress code, are presented as steps taken to preserve senatorial dignity. Following as it does in the wake of the Puteoli incident, the seating arrangement was designed to teach everyone his place, and for the elite, their specific place was confirmed as a privileged one. The senators who accepted their privileged seats while wearing their prescribed costume were then visibly, publicly accepting Augustus' assessment of their position in the theatre and in Roman society as a whole. The equestrians, too, in their own privileged section and dressed much like the senators had their elite standing and perhaps the potential for mobility confirmed. Augustus was doing tradition one better on their own behalf, reinforcing a message that they themselves were at pains to assert and with which they could hardly find fault.

This association of the Augustan toga with the elite finds some confirmation in the self-depiction of freedmen on their tombstones. While the class of wealthy freedmen was quick to jump on the toga bandwagon, solemnly depicting themselves in the toga as a claim to participation and worthiness in Augustus' restored society, their togas were most conservative, slow to follow the new trends in toga size and drape.<sup>54</sup> This was not for a lack of funds. Undoubtedly, for some within this class of people, whose claim to Roman citizenship and respectability was tenuous, establishing the strongest possible claim to Roman tradition was particularly important, and this was best done with a particularly conservative, traditional style of toga by which they avoided the sort of censure for presumption noted by Horace.

In conclusion, as a symbol, the toga had the capacity to assert, confirm, and legitimize status, and to those ends, it was employed by Rome's elite. For the Romans and for us, that means that the gray area in rank definition and an appreciation of the distinction supplied by the elite toga operated in two ways. For an order anxious to preserve its prestige, it confirmed elite status. It also provided a tool for individuals seeking to defend or assert their rank, whether well entrenched or newly arrived. The traditional associations of the toga, combined with the luxury and

<sup>53</sup>*Spectandi confusissimum ac solutissimum morem correxerat ordinavitque, motus iniuria senatoris, quem Puteolis per celeberrimos ludos consessu frequenti nemo receperat.*

<sup>54</sup>This point is thoroughly illustrated in Kleiner 1977, 187.

exclusivity of the newer toga, presented a combined assertion of rank and status, which made it a useful tool for the negotiation of place on both scales.

The absence of a gap between appearances and substance, and the capacity of adornment to influence him who wears it in addition to others who view it, made the use of appearances a double-edged tool, however. The same implement utilized by the elite to assert their superior status was also employed by Augustus, who sought to usurp that message and define a place for the elite that was consistent with his own agenda. The situation is of course more complex than a simple tug-of-war between two sides, as Augustus sought to fashion himself in so many ways as a mere member of Rome's elite (only better). The true importance and influence of these symbols is confirmed by Appian, writing in the heyday of Rome's "good emperors," who describes a disordered society in terms of sartorial turmoil.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> I would like to extend particular thanks to Stephen Dyson, John Dugan, Jen Hill, Myles McCallum, and the anonymous reviewers of this and earlier drafts whose expertise and suggestions greatly improved my work.

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