

## Reference Material: A Primer on the Culture and Traditions of Rome

Ancient Rome: a bastion of wealth and knowledge, a reminder of times long since passed, a place filled with intrigue and excitement, political machinations, and mysterious rituals. The very mention of Rome calls to mind lavish social events at wealthy villas and bloody displays of physical prowess in the Coliseum. Popular media often centers on the more exciting facets of Roman society — the corrupt political world, the violent gladiatorial fights, the gluttony and excess — and rarely offers more than a passing nod to the lesser-known aspects. However, in order to fully immerse one's self in this world, particularly as it relates to the *Mystical Rome* Morra Genre, a deeper understanding of the culture and era is necessary.

The Roman Empire is topic of fascination for serious historians and casual explorers alike. From religious ceremonies steeped in tradition and superstition to elaborate sporting events, Roman culture teems with unique and intricate details, alien to our modern lives. *Mystical Rome* focuses not only on the mystical aspects of the world, but also on the mundane facets of daily life in the Roman Empire. The Genre offers a wide array of character types and story potential to Directors and players.

The information provided in this section is a historically accurate overview of the traditions of Rome during the time period covered in *Mystical Rome*. It serves to provide Directors and players a glimpse into the world they are embracing, and bring any *Mystical Rome* event to life. The devil is in the details, as they say, and these seemingly trivial details allow for greater immersion.

Although the information here is historically accurate, it is a mere sliver of what we know about the world at the time. Directors should never be afraid to change the information found here for the sake of story, whether that be adjusting facts, delving more deeply into specific topics, or eschewing a particular facet entirely. Morra Cinematic Game System always supports inclusion and fun over historical accuracy.

The world of Ancient Rome could be, at times, beautiful and advanced, but that does not erase the society's darker side. Political power allowed patricians to rule harshly over lower-class citizens, while slaves struggled against an inherently exploitative system. Though the culture offered more independence to some marginalized groups, some aspects of Roman culture can still disturb some players. As with any game, a vital part of play is maintaining open lines of communication between players and Directors to ensure everyone leaves a game session feeling fulfilled and excited, rather than inadvertently traumatized. Whenever questionable topics are approached within the world of *Mystical Rome*, the OK Check-in System is to be utilized to gauge the comfort level of everyone involved.

### Family is Everything

In Rome, the family was the fundamental social unit, though their family dynamics were often quite different from those found in modern times.

At the head of each family was the *paterfamilias*, or father of the family, a role occupied by the father or eldest living male. The *mos maiorum*, or ancestral customs, gave the *paterfamilias*

absolute power — also known as *patria potestas* — over his household, including his wife, children, grandchildren, and slaves. He had the legal right to disown his children or sell them into slavery. Up until first century BCE, the paterfamilias even had the right to kill those household members who displeased him, though this right was rarely exercised. At times, these households swelled to large numbers, due to adoption and slavery.

Along with this power came many duties. He was expected to staunchly uphold the laws of the Twelve Tables and ensure his *familia* followed suit. In addition to fathering and raising healthy children for Rome, maintaining the moral standing of the household, and participating in Roman political, religious, and social events, the paterfamilias was expected to perform certain priestly duties on behalf of his family. These *sacra familiae* honored household gods and the ancestral gods of his gens.

Only a Roman citizen, be he patrician, plebian, or freedman, was allowed to hold the status of paterfamilias, and each household had only one at any given time. Additionally, these citizens were the only ones allowed to own property. Even grown sons were only given a stipend, or *peliculum*, to manage their individual homes. Once a paterfamilias passed away, the mantle of leadership went to his oldest son. This practice led to large extended families, many of whom lived in their own homes, beholden to the leader of the extended clan.

One of the more challenging duties of the paterfamilias was arranging marriages for his children. In most families, these were not love matches, but rather political arrangements intended to deliver power and wealth to the paterfamilias. Daughters were bartered and traded, with many finding themselves betrothed by age 12. While patrician women married at a young age, most plebian women did not marry until they were in their late teens or early 20s. A typical Roman wedding was a simple, private affair, and the couple only had to claim to be married in order for it to be so. Of course, within the elite households, these affairs were much more elaborate, involving expensive dowries, costly ceremonies with a priest and a marriage contract, and raucous festivities that could last for days.

In Rome, not all marriages were created equal, though all had similar qualities. Roman law recognized three kinds of marriage: *confarreatio*, which was symbolized by sharing spelt bread and elaborate patrician ceremonies presided over by the Flamen Dialis and Pontifex Maximus; *coemptio* marriage, practiced by plebeians and involving the groom purchasing the bride in a symbolic representation of traditional bridal customs; and *usus* marriages, which involved little more than extended cohabitation. Though there was no difference in the legal standing of these marriages, social standing was a different matter altogether. For patrician families, a wedding was a prime opportunity to showcase their affluence and power.

The night before her wedding, the bride offered her childhood toys and clothing to her family *lares*, a sacrifice symbolizing her coming of age. Among the items offered up were her *lunula*, a crescent moon pendant worn by young girls as a protective talisman against corrupting forces. Her wedding day was the first day she was allowed to wear an adult woman's Roman dress, when she was draped in opulent fabric in celebration of the occasion.

Just as marriage was a simple process, divorce was both common and uncomplicated, particularly if new political opportunities arose. Either the husband or wife could elect to initiate a divorce in order to foster more valuable family ties. As marriage was simply a matter of both parties choosing to be together, getting a divorce required only one person deciding they were no longer interested in the relationship. When a spouse wanted the marriage to end, the relationship

came to a quick close. Often, the dowry was one of the few points of contention between divorcing spouses. Typically, if the wife was not at fault for ending the marriage, such as if the husband was an adulterer or failed to manage household expenses appropriately—she could reclaim her dowry for her father or guardian. If children were involved, the husband could claim part of the dowry.

Additionally, a *paterfamilias* had the power to decide whether an infant would live or die. When a child was born, a midwife would place the infant on the ground, and its survival would be dependent on the whims of the father. Should the *paterfamilias* pick the child up, it was accepted into the family. If a child was deformed, or the *paterfamilias* felt his household could not support another child, the baby was exposed to the elements where it would either perish or taken in by another family, destined to become a slave. This ritual, called *tollere liberos*, was typically performed without permission from the mother. Even without these traditions, only half of all children survived to their 10<sup>th</sup> birthday. This mortality rate meant that women who successfully bore a certain number of live children would enjoy additional benefits.

Parents were expected to train and educate their children in Latin, reading, writing, arithmetic, and those virtues considered most vital in Ancient Rome—reverence for the gods, respect for the law, truthfulness, and self-reliance. Until the age of seven, when their education formally began, all children were considered infants. From there, young men left the home to pursue education and enjoy their first introduction to public society, while young women remained in the home to learn the finer arts of hearth and home. Sometime between the ages of 14 and 16, young boys transitioned into adulthood. This ceremony involved the discarding of the crimson-bordered toga of youth and donning the pure white toga of adult men. From here, the young man travelled to the Forum where his name was added to the list of citizens. For young women, childhood persisted until she was wed.

Though women often had multiple children, if they didn't perish during childbirth, many Roman families were quite small. With a heavy emphasis on accumulating respect for one's family name, adoption became commonplace within the Empire. Typically, a *paterfamilias* would adopt a nephew or grandson into his family, though some masters freed a slave in order to officially adopt him and name him an heir.

## **Roman Virtues**

The *Via Romana* or the Roman Way, described a large number of virtuous qualities that all citizens of the Roman Republic were required to uphold and strive for. Many of these virtues and qualities were drawn from the poets of antiquity and utopian tales describing men as cleaving closely to all virtues. The virtues presented were intended to act as moral and social guides, a means of preventing and correcting offenses as well as demanding self-reflection and community participation. All ethical and moral Romans were to embody these virtues, or at least make great efforts to do so.

Two categories of Roman existed: private virtues and public. Private virtues were to be embraced within a *domus* while public virtues were shared by society as a whole. Many virtues were personified as deities and worshipped during festivals and holidays. Those who failed to uphold the virtues were poorly received by others who firmly believed these virtues were the only way to ensure a civilization lasted.

Although the following list is not exhaustive, the most common private virtues are below:

- *Auctoritas* or Spiritual Authority, was a virtue largely aimed at the paterfamilias. It represented one's social standing in Roman society, built through exchanging favors, experience, and dedication to the Empire.
- *Comitas*, or Humor, referred to one's genial and affable behavior towards others. Romans were to treat others of similar social standing with courtesy and respect.
- *Clementia*, or Mercy, indicated one's compassion and kindness towards others. Many of the elite citizens of Rome practiced *Clementia* through charitable donations.
- *Dignitas*, or Dignity, was one's personal pride and their feeling of self-worth. Romans took pride in their achievements, rather than demurring.
- *Firmitas*, or Tenacity, refers to one's dedication to their purpose in life.
- *Frugalitas*, or Frugality, was simplicity of style and economy. Many patricians set this particular virtue to the side when entertaining, or otherwise seeking to impress their peers or clients.
- *Gravitas*, or Gravity, was one's sense of personal responsibility, and the ability to treat important and/or delicate matters appropriately.
- *Honestas*, or Respectability, referred to the overall image that one presented to others. Citizens who hoped to make a name for themselves took great care to cultivate their *Honestas*.
- *Humanitas*, or Humanity, was one's civility and culture. Foreigners and the uneducated were seen as severely lacking in *Humanitas*.
- *Industria*, or Industriousness, referred to one's dedication to their work. Most Romans worked diligently, whatever their profession might be. Of course, elite citizens often took credit for work performed by their slaves or servants.
- *Pietas*, or Dutifulness, referred to respecting Roman society as the natural order of life, as described by the Senate. Encompassing more than just religious piety, this virtue also included ideas of patriotism and devotion to others.
- *Prudentia*, or Prudence, involved foresight, wisdom, and personal discretion. While it was common knowledge that most patrician Roman citizens enjoyed sexual dalliances and wild parties, it was expected these activities were undertaken with a measure of discretion.
- *Salubritas*, or Wholesomeness, referred less to one's actions and more to physical health and cleanliness. Romans believed that prevention was the best method of maintaining health, and *Salubritas* was of utmost importance to most households.
- *Severitas*, or Sternness, referred to one's ability to control their emotions. Paterfamilias responded to any situation in their household with a calm and fair demeanor.
- *Veritas*, or Truthfulness, was one's ability to deal with others in an honest and forthright manner.

While some public virtues mirrored the private ones, this list was considered the height of import for most Roman citizens. Romans were to adhere to these virtues while in the public sphere, and fight for them if necessary.

- *Abundantia*, or Abundance, sought to ensure there was enough food, shelter, and prosperity for all segments of society; patrician, plebeian, and freedman alike.
- *Aequitas*, or Equity, referred to dealing with others in a fair and equitable manner. This virtue referred to both dealings within the government and between individuals.
- *Bonus Eventus*, or Good Fortune, referred to the commemoration of important, positive events within the Empire. All citizens were expected to celebrate the good fortune of not only their individual domus, but all of the Roman Empire.
- *Clementia*, or Mercy, as a public virtue referred to showing kindness and mercy to other nations and their citizens, particularly those who surrendered to the Empire.
- *Concordia*, or Concord, referred to harmony among the Roman people. Citizens attempted to maintain harmonious relationships with their neighbors. This virtue in the public sense also referred to the relationships between Rome and other nations, as well as the desire to maintain harmony whenever possible.
- *Felicitas*, or Happiness, was the public celebrations of all the positive aspects of Roman society. Citizens enjoyed and celebrated their rights and responsibilities.
- *Fides*, or Confidence, was holding faith in the government and the rulings of the Senate.
- *Genius*, or Spirit of Rome, was the public acknowledgement and celebration of the combined spirit of Rome and its people. Citizens were to express great loyalty towards Rome and its society.
- *Iusticia*, or Justice, was adherence to the laws of Roman society. All citizens were expected to uphold the laws, and ensure others did so as well.
- *Laetitia*, or Joy, was a celebration of thanksgiving, a virtue extolled after a major crisis was resolved. These celebrations were public events; however, this virtue could also refer to personal and familial crises.
- *Liberalitas*, or Liberality, referred to generosity towards others, particularly through charitable donations.
- *Libertas*, or Freedom, was one of the most important public virtues, and one that was also valued by many other cultures. Even slaves had the opportunity to gain their Libertas eventually, through hard work and dedication to their masters.
- *Nobilitas*, or Nobility, referred to noble actions within the public sphere. Although a paterfamilias was expected to treat those within his domus with a fair and even hand, he was held to an even higher standard when in public.
- *Ops*, or Wealth, was the acknowledgement and celebration of the prosperity of the Roman world. Even those who were part of the lower classes of society were told to celebrate the prosperity of others.
- *Patientia*, or Endurance, referred to the ability to weather a crisis with aplomb. Roman women in particular adhered to this public virtue.
- *Pax*, or Peace, was a celebration of the peace within Roman society and between nations. Although Rome was a society that most often conquered others, they still extolled the virtue of Pax within these subservient nations.
- *Pietas*, or Piety, in the scope of a public virtue referred to paying public homage to the gods in an appropriate manner.
- *Providentia*, or Providence, was the ability of Roman society to survive. As a private virtue, this referred to individuals capable of embracing their destiny; while the public virtue embraced the destiny of the Empire as a whole.

- *Pudicita*, or Modesty, referred to chaste and modest behavior while in public. Though many Romans engaged in hedonistic activities while in private, doing so in public was considered in poor taste. Such private activities were rarely discussed among mixed company.
- *Salus*, or Safety, referred to the concern for public health and welfare. While some affluent families could afford private healthcare from talented physicians, many Romans relied on the kindness of others and the altruism of the temples for their healing and health.
- *Spes*, or Hope, referred to holding onto hope of better days, particularly in times of difficulty. Many Romans believed better things were always to come, as long as they were worthy.
- *Virtus*, or Courage, was a virtue expected of leaders of Roman society and government officials. Any citizens in positions of power embraced this virtue in order to maintain their position and affluence.

Although these virtues were heavily extolled by philosophers and poets, there was very little literature on how one could embrace the virtues and model their lives in this manner. All Romans were to cleave to these virtues, with parents instilling these morals in their children at a young age. Young men, in particular, spent a great deal of time learning the public and private virtues in anticipation of the day when they would become paterfamilias.

## Society and Class

Ancient Rome had a complex, hierarchy-based social class structure, with freeborn Romans possessing different rights and privileges based on their position within the hierarchy. Perhaps the most important division found in Roman society was that between patrician and plebeian. Patricians descended from the first Senators, while the majority of Roman citizens belonged to the lower, plebeian class. Originally, only patricians were allowed to hold public offices, and the two classes forbade intermarriage. Over time, the plebeians rebelled against the oppressive rule of the patrician elite, eventually gaining somewhat-equal rights.

After the conflict between classes reached their climax, the division between patrician and plebeian gradually became less important. As plebeian families rose in prominence — some gaining status as *novus homo*, or ‘new man’ — some patrician families lost their wealth and prestige, and depended solely on their social capital to survive.

During the census, which occurred every five years, the government divided citizens into complex classes, based on the property owned by the paterfamilias. The *Senatores*, or Senators, were the richest landowners among the Roman elite. Their vast estates brought wealth and prestige to the family, and these patricians ruled the Senate and by extension, the Roman Empire. Traditionally, members of the *Senatores* class could not engage in commercial activity. While the position of Senator was inherited, should a member of this class fail to meet the expected standards, he was removed.

The *equites*, or equestrians, existed beneath the Senators’ rank. They chose business pursuits over political careers. This influential business class often occupied high-ranking military positions.

Beneath the equites class were the plebeians, who worked for a living at jobs such as artisans or craftsmen. The plebeians had further divisions based on relative wealth. Each division enjoyed certain rights within the Empire. At the bottom of the plebeian class were the *proletarii*, who owned little or no property. The Empire considered these Romans to have nothing to offer, save the ability to produce children. Due to their low social status, these citizens could not vote.

Slaves existed at the very bottom of the social heap, divided between freedmen who purchased or were granted their freedom, and those still under the yoke of their masters. Slaves were often prisoners of war and the reward of conquest, though some were the abandoned children of citizens. Slavery in ancient Rome was never a matter of ethnicity or race, but rather a circumstance of birth or conquest.

While many slaves worked manual labor, some — particularly highly-educated slaves of Greek origin — worked as accountants or physicians. Slaves had few rights, and though they gained some legal protection, they were always considered property.

Domestic slaves enjoyed relatively comfortable lives. Although their personal standard of living was nothing like the opulent life of their masters, they nevertheless enjoyed some part of their master's wealth, and many were well-educated. Some slaves were *servus publicus*, or slaves owned by the Roman Empire. Most of these slaves worked as servants to the College of Pontiffs, magistrates, or other officials. Some worked in temples or public buildings. All *servus publicus* could earn money for their personal use, as well as acquire reputation and influence to assist in their bid for manumission.

Slaves who earned or purchased their freedom acquired their *libertas*, or liberty, from their master. The former master then became the freedman's patron, sponsoring their entrance into Roman citizenship. In time, freedmen could gain the right to vote, and any future children were considered full citizens of Rome. Once freed, former slaves became members of the plebeian class.

Although free-born women of Rome were considered citizens, they could not vote or hold political office. A Roman woman held the same social status as her husband if she was married (even widowed) or her father if she was not. Despite such legal and social restrictions, women from affluent families exerted their influence through private negotiations.

Free subjects of the Empire not born as Roman citizens were called *peregrinus*, or foreigners. The term originally meant any person who didn't hold citizenship, regardless of if they were under Roman rule or not. In time, though, those outside of the Empire's borders came to be known as *barbari*, or barbarians. The vast majority of the Empire's inhabitants were peregrini.

Peregrini enjoyed only the most basic of rights. No laws preventing torture, or summary 'justice' at the command of the *legatus Augusti* or provincial governor, existed. Citizens held a significant advantage in legal disputes over peregrini, particularly in regard to land disputes, and social status of the parties involved often swayed verdicts. Additionally, peregrini had direct taxes which citizens were exempt from. They could not serve in the legions, though they could serve in the auxiliary regiments, and service of 25 years granted citizenship. Finally, peregrini could not legally marry a Roman citizen, and any children of the union were considered illegitimate. The lack of citizenship ensured peregrini could not designate heirs, and thus their assets became property of the state upon their death.

### **Writer's Room Commentary: Bleed and Class Warfare**

While Ancient Rome was a world filled with brilliant artwork, poetry, and fascinating advances in science and medicine, it certainly wasn't flawless. Her greatest shortcomings can be found among those who belonged to the lower classes. Although plebeians were citizens, patricians enjoyed greater wealth and privilege, and they often treated those of the lower class poorly, with little to no repercussions. This class division was one of the integral parts of Roman society.

It's important to keep in mind that actions taken in character which might be completely suitable for a patrician (or plebian) character can result in painful bleed for other players. Before beginning a scene in which a character of lower class might be mistreated or abused, it is always wise to utilize the OK Check-in System to ensure all participants are comfortable with the content. Additionally, any players uncomfortable with this type of roleplay should always feel empowered to remove themselves from a scene or scenario that might be damaging on an out-of-character level.

Remember, this game offers a high level of immersive roleplay opportunities, but the first concern of all players is safety and mutual enjoyment. Patrician players can be asked to shift their roleplay, and are required to do so, to help ensure a safe environment for all players.

### **Roman Naming Conventions: Tria Nomina**

Although Roman naming conventions varied wildly between plebeian and patrician families, nearly all citizens observed the *tria nomina*. This system included three separate names: the *praenomen*, the *nomen*, and the *cognomen*. While some Romans possessed more, or fewer, names, this particular practice remained one of the main distinguishing features between citizens and foreigners. Each of the three names had a different function, and was used at different times and in different contexts.

The oldest of Roman naming conventions, the *praenomen*, is a personal name chosen by the parents. This name was initially bestowed on the *dies lustricus*, or day of purification. This rite was carried out on the eighth day of life for newborn girls, and the ninth for boys, and involved gifting the child with his or her bulla, an amulet of protection, as well as a name. Prior to this ritual and the official naming ceremony, infants were believed to be vulnerable to malignant forces, as many of them did not survive their first week of life. The praenomen of the child was then formally conferred a second time, upon a girl's wedding day, or when a boy was gifted his *toga virilism* upon reaching his manhood. Sometimes, this name remained the same. For others, it changed based on an event in the child's life.

Typically, only by family members, clients, and close friends used praenomina. Outside of this group, most Romans used their nomen, cognomen, or any combination of their three names. Only the most formal of circumstances required the use of all three names together.

Ancient records listed about three dozen male praenomina, with only a handful used on a regular basis. At times, the most popular two or three names accounted for nearly half of the adult male population. Due to this, public records did not note most praenomina.



Many families, particularly the most affluent patrician households, utilized a small number of praenomina as a means of distinguishing themselves from the plebeians, as well as other patrician gens. Some prominent plebeian families also limited the names they used. In all cases, however, there were certainly exceptions, particularly whenever a family had many children. For example:

- Cornelli: Aulus, Gnaeus, Lucius, Marcus, Publius, Servius, Tiberius
- Julii: Lucius, Gaius, Sextus, Vopiscus
- Claudii: Appius, Gaius, Publius
- Postumii: Aulus, Gaius, Lucius, Publius, Spurius

Additionally, many families avoided certain names, though the reasons for this varied. Some, such as the Junii, avoided the names Titus and Tiberius because they were the sons of the founder of the Republic, and were executed when they plotted to restore the king's power. Senate forbade others, such as the praenomen of Marcus as one of their members, Marcus Manlius Capitolinus, was condemned for treason. Typically, though, this was left to the discretion of individual families.

At times, a praenomen was chosen based on the circumstance of a child's birth. Some, such as Quintus, Prima, Quarta, Sextus, or Decimus, referred to a child's order of birth or the month in which she was born. Other praenomina referred to the circumstances of the birth, such as Agrippa-- referring to a child who was born feet-first—or Numerius to one born easily. Others included Lucius to one born at dawn; Manius to one born in the morning; Opiter to a child whose father has died; Postumus to a last-born child; or Vopiscus to a child whose twin had died.

Occasionally, older and less popular names were revived by noble families in a bid to make a name for themselves. This helped to set the elite apart from one another, and from plebeian families. The most commonly used male praenomina in Rome during the 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE were:

- Appius
- Aulus
- Caeso
- Decimus
- Gaius
- Gnaeus
- Lucius
- Mamercus
- Manius
- Marcus
- Numerius
- Publius
- Quintus
- Servius
- Sextus
- Spurius
- Titus

- Tiberius

Although both men and women were granted praenomina on their dies lustricus, many women's praenomina were ignored in favor of utilizing their nomen and cognomen. Traditionally, women were known by their family name. For example, a daughter of a man named Antony Marcellus Livia would be named Marcella Livia. As all daughters adopted this family name, they were often further identified by cognomen such as Quinta, meaning the fifth daughter. Families might also elect to identify additional daughters by a cognomen that fitted her personality or appearance, such as Corda, meaning one who was born late. Although male naming conventions remained quite rigid, families took a great deal of liberty when it came to naming daughters. Variations could include naming a daughter after a location, after her grandparents or other family members, or through creating a new name all together.

The *nomen gentilicium*, or gentile name, indicated which gens a Roman citizen belonged to. A gens, or clan, was an extended Roman family who all shared the same nomen due to their descent from a common ancestor. Once, the gens functioned as sovereign nations within the Empire, observing their own rites and rituals and upholding private laws that bound the members of the family. As some gens grew and gained prestige, while others faded into obscurity, these practices largely faded. Some of the more affluent gens retained familial rituals and laws, and many chose one or two of the Roman virtues to guide them.

Commonly used patrician and plebeian nomen in the Mystical Rome genre can be found on page XX. Players are encouraged to choose one of these nomen, when applicable.

The *cognomen* was the third name of a Roman citizen, and this took several different forms. Some families utilized the same cognomen in order to differentiate their particular branch of an extensive gens. This resulted in a hereditary combined nomen and cognomen surname, with only the praenomen to differentiate members of the same family. In contrast, the *cognomina ex virtute* was a name granted in recognition of a particularly heroic or virtuous act by the bearer. For example: Gnaeus Marcius Coriolanus was gifted his cognomen after capturing the city of Corioli, while Marcus Valerius Corvus gained his cognomen after defeating a vicious foe with aid from a raven. Publius Cornelius Scipio Africanus was responsible for bringing the Second Punic War to Africa, where he defeated Hannibal, and Aulus Postumius Albus Regillensis was the commander of the army at the Battle of Lake Regillus.

Other cognomina were derived from a citizen's occupation, such as Pictor for a painter or Caprarius for a goat-herd. Geographical cognomina referred to one's origins, such as a city or region where they were born — for example, Collantinus-- or man from Collatia-- and Campanus, or man from Campania. A geographical cognomen might also refer to the tribe one belonged to, such as Sabinus, or man of the Sabines. These names were not to be confused with honorific cognomina like Germanicus or Britannicus, which originated in the defeat of these places. Finally, there were adoptive cognomina to indicate when a citizen was adopted by another. This cognomen was formed from their former nomen with the -ius ending replaced by -ianus. For example, when L. Aemilius Paullus was adopted by P. Cornelius Scipio, he became P. Cornelius Scipio Aemilianus.

While many Roman citizens had only one cognomen, it was not uncommon for these to change over time or for additional cognomen to be added to their name. These came in the form of an *agnomen*, which followed the same rules as above, but functioned as a kind of nickname in order

to differentiate between citizens who held the same name. At times, these agnomina were physical descriptions of the bearer, such as Rufus, meaning red-haired, or Scaevola, meaning left-handed. Many prominent ancient Romans are now referred to only by their cognomen. Cicero, for example, is a shortened version of Marcus Tullius Cicero, and Caesar for Gaius Julius Caesar.

Below is a list of male and female cognomen, their meanings, and the gens they often belonged to. There are many possible cognomen, far too many to list here, and players are encouraged to create cognomen that fit their characters.

- Aculeo/Aculeo – One who is prickly or unfriendly
- Agricola/Agricola – One who is a farmer
- Agrippa/Agrippa – One who was born feet first, typically used by Gens Menenia
- Albinus/Albina – One who is pale, typically used by Gens Posturnia
- Albus/Alba – One who is fair-skinned, typically used by Gens Posturnia
- Ambustus/Ambusta – One who is scalded, typically used by Gens Fabia
- Aquillnus/Aquilina – One who is eagle-like
- Arvina/Arvina – One who is robust, typically used by Gens Cornelia
- Asellio/Asellio – One who keeps donkeys, typically used by Gens Sempronia
- Atellus/Atella – One who is dark-haired or dark skinned
- Avitus/Avita – One who is grandfatherly
- Balbus/Balba – One who stutters, typically used by Gentes Acilia, Cornelia, Lucilia, Naevia, Octavia
- Barbatus/Barbata – One who is bearded, typically used by Gentes Cornelia, Horatia, Quinctia
- Bassus/Bassa – One who is plump
- Bestia/Bestia – One who is like an animal, typically used by Gens Calpurnia
- Bibulus/Bibula – One who is a drunkard, typically used by Gentes Furia, Sextia, Calpurnia, Publicia
- Blaesus/Blaesa – One who mispronounces words, slurs speech, or has a lisp, typically used by Gens Sempronia
- Brocchus/Broccha – One who has pronounced teeth
- Brutus/Bruta – One who is stupid or dull-witted, typically used by Gens Iunia
- Bubulcus/Bubulca – One who is a cattle-driver, typically used by Gens Iunia
- Bulbus/Bulba – Onion bulb, typically used by Gens Atilia
- Buteo/Buteo – One who is like a buzzard, typically used by Gens Fabia
- Caecus/Caeca – One who is blind, typically used by Gens Claudia
- Caepio/Caepio – One who is an onion-seller, typically used by Gens Servilia
- Calidus/Calida – One who is hot-headed and rash, typically used by Gens Coelia
- Calvus/Calva – One who is bald, typically used by Gentes Domitia, Veturia
- Camillus/Camilla – A child who helps during sacrifices, typically used by Gens Furia
- Caninus/Canina – One who is dog-like, typically used by Gens Acilla
- Capito/Capito – One who has a large head, typically used by Gens Ateia
- Carbo/Carbo – Charcoal, typically used by Gens Papirii
- Catilina/Catilina – One who is pure or unsullied, typically used by Gens Sergia

- Cato/Cato – One who is shrewd and prudent, typically used by Gentes Hostilia, Porcia
- Catulus/Catula – One who is like a puppy or whelp, typically used by Gens Lutatia
- Celer/Celeris – One who is quick
- Celsus/Celsa – One who is tall, typically used by Gens Papia
- Cethegus/Cethega – Typically used by Gens Cornelia
- Cicero/Cicero – Chickpea, typically used by Gens Tullia
- Cicurinus/Cicurina – One who is gentle, typically used by Gens Veturia
- Cilo/Cilo – One who has a large forehead or large lips, typically used by Gens Flaminia
- Cincinnatus/Cincinnata – One who is curly-haired, typically used by Gens Quinctia
- Cordus/Corda – One who was born late
- Cornicen/Cornicen – One who is a military bugler
- Corvinus/Corvina – One who is crow-like, typically used by Gens Valeria
- Cossus/Cossa – From the archaic praenomen Cossus, typically used by Gens Cornelia
- Costa/Costa – A rib, typically used by Gens Pedania
- Cotta/Cotta – Brown or orange, typically used by Gens Aurelia
- Crassipes/Crassipes – One who is club-footed, typically used by Gens Furia
- Crassus/Crassa – One who is fat, typically used by Gentes Claudia, Licinia, Otacilia, Veturia
- Crispus/Crispa – One who has curly hair, typically used by Gentes Sallustia, Vibia
- Culleo/Culleo – A leather sack for carrying liquid, typically used by Gens Terentia
- Cursor/Cursor – One who is a runner or courier, typically used by Gens Papiria
- Curvus/Curva – One who stoops or is bent, typically used by Gens Fulvia
- Denter/Dentra – One who is toothy, typically used by Gens Caecilia
- Dives/Dives – One who is wealthy, typically used by Gens Licinia
- Dolabella/Dolabella – One who is like a hatchet, typically used by Gens Cornelia
- Dorsuo/Dorsuo – One who has a large back, typically used by Gens Fabia
- Drusus/Drusa – Typically used by Gens Livia
- Figulus/Figula – One who is a potter
- Fimbria/Fimbria – Edge of clothing or fringe, typically used by Gens Flavia
- Flaccus/Flacca – One who has floppy ears, typically used by Gentes Aviania, Fulvia, Valeria
- Flavius/Flava – One who has blonde hair, typically used by Gens Decimia
- Florus/Flora – One who has light coloration, typically used by Gens Aquilia
- Fronto/Fronto – One who has a prominent forehead
- Fullo/Fullo – One who is a fuller or launderer, typically used by Gens Apustia
- Fusus/Fusa – From the archaic praenomen Fusus, typically used by Gens Furia
- Galeo/Galeo – Helmet
- Gemellus/Gemella – One who is a twin, typically used by Gentes Servilia, Veturia
- Glabrio/Glabrio – One who is a relative of Glaber, typically used by Gens Acilia
- Gracchus/Graccha – Typically used by Gens Sempronia
- Gurgus/Gurgus – One who is greedy or prodigal, typically used by Gens Fabia
- Habitus/Habita – One who is in good physical condition, typically used by Gens Cluentia
- Helva/Helva – One who has dun-colored hair, typically used by Gens Aebutia
- Imperiosus/Imperiosa – One who is domineering, typically used by Gens Manlia

- Iullus/Iulla – From the archaic praenomen Iullus, typically used by Gens Iulia
- Labeo/Labeo – One who has prominent lips, typically used by Gentes Antistia, Atinia, Fabia
- Lactuca/Lactuca – Lettuce, typically used by Gens Valeria
- Laenas/Laenas – A woolly cloak, typically used by Gens Popilla
- Lanatus/Lanata – One who wears wool, typically used by Gens Menenia
- Laterensis/Laternis – One from the hill side, typically used by Gens Iuventia
- Lentulus/Lentula – One who is slow, typically used by Gens Cornelia
- Lepidus/Lepida – One who is charming or amusing, typically used by Gens Aemilia
- Licinus/Licina – One who is spiky or bristly-haired, typically used by Gens Mamilia
- Longus/Longa – One who is tall, typically used by Gentes Sempronia, Sulpicia
- Lucullus/Luculla – One from the grove, typically used by Gens Licinia
- Lupus/Lupa – One who is like a wolf, typically used by Gens Rutilia
- Lurco/Lurco – One who is gluttonous or greedy
- Macer/Macra – One who is thin, typically used by Gens Licinia
- Macula/Macula – One who has a blemish
- Malleolus/Malleola – One who is like a hammer, typically used by Gens Publicia
- Mamercus/Mamerca – From the praenomen Mamercus, typically used by Gens Aemilia
- Marcellus/Marcella – From the praenomen Marcus, typically used by Gens Claudia
- Maro/Maro – One who is bitter, typically used by Gens Vergilia
- Merenda/Merenda – Light afternoon meal, typically used by Gentes Antonia, Cornelia
- Mergus/Merga – One who is like a sea gull
- Merula/Merula – One who is like a blackbird, typically used by Gens Cornelia
- Messalla/Messalla – Typically used by Gens Valeria
- Metellus/Metella – One who follows the army, typically used by Gens Caecilia
- Murena/Murena – One who is like an eel, typically used by Gens Licinia
- Mus/Mus – One who is like a rodent, typically used by Gens Decia
- Musca/Musca – One who is like a fly, typically used by Gens Sempronia
- Nasica/Nasica – One who has a large nose, typically used by Gentes Sempronia, Ovidia
- Natta/Natta – One who is an artisan, typically used by Gens Pinaria
- Nepos/Nepos – One who is a grandchild, typically used by Gens Caecilia
- Nerva/Nerva – One who is vigorous, typically used by Gentes Cocceia, Licinia
- Novellus/Novella – One who is new, typically used by Gens Gavilia
- Ocella/Ocella – One who has small eyes, typically used by Gens Livia
- Pacilus/Pacila – From the praenomen Pacilus, typically used by Gens Furia
- Paetus/Paeta – One who squints or blinks, typically used by Gens Aelia
- Pansa/Pansa – One who is splay-footed, typically used by Gens Vibia
- Papus/Papa – From the praenomen Papus, typically used by Gens Aemilia
- Paterculus/Patercula – One who is like a little father, typically used by Gens Sulpicia
- Paullus/Paulla – One who is small, typically used by Gens Aemilia
- Pavo/Pavo – One who is like a peacock
- Pera/Pera – Shoulder bag, typically used by Gens Iunia
- Pictor/Pictrix – One who is a painter, typically used by Gens Fabia
- Piso/Piso – Mortar, typically used by Gens Calpurnia

- Plancus/Planca – One who is flat-footed, typically used by Gens Munatia
- Poplicola/Poplicola – One who is a friend of the people, typically used by Gens Valeria
- Postumus/Postuma – One who is born after their father's death, typically used by Gens Curtia
- Potitus/Potita – One who has authority, typically used by Gens Valeria
- Praeconinus/Praeconina – One who is related to a herald
- Praetextatus/Praetextata – One who is young, typically used by Gens Sulpicia
- Priscus/Prisca – One who is ancient
- Proculus/Procula – One born during their father's absence, typically used by Gens Plautia
- Pulcher/Pulchra – One who is attractive, typically used by Gens Claudia
- Pullus/Pulla – One who is a child
- Pulvillus/Pulvilla – A small cushion, typically used by Gens Horatia
- Purpureo/Purpureo – One who wears purple or has a purplish complexion
- Quadratus/Quadrata – One who is stocky
- Ralla/Ralla – A tunic of expensive fabric, typically used by Gens Marcia
- Regulus/Regula – One who is a prince, typically used by Gentes Aemilia, Atilia
- Rufus/Rufa – One who has red hair
- Ruga/Ruga – One who is wrinkled
- Rullus/Rulla – One who is uncultivated or boorish, typically used by Gens Servilia
- Rutilus/Rutila – One who has reddish-gold hair
- Salinator/Salinatrix – One who harvests salt, typically used by Gens Livia
- Saturninus/Saturnina – One dedicated to Saturnus
- Scaeva/Scaeva – One who is left-handed, typically used by Gentes Iunia, Marcia, Mucia
- Scapula/Scapula – Shoulder blade, typically used by Gens Quinctia
- Scaurus/Scaura – One who is lame, typically used by Gentes Aemilia, Aurelia
- Scipio/Scipio – Rod or staff, typically used by Gens Cornelii
- Scrofa/Scrofa – One who is like a sow, typically used by Gens Tremelia
- Seneca/Seneca – One who is elderly, typically used by Gens Annaea
- Severus/Severa – One who is strict
- Silanus/Silana – Nose, typically used by Gens Iunia
- Silus/Sila – One who is snub-nosed, typically used by Gens Sergia
- Stolo/Stolo – Shoot of a plant, typically used by Gens Licinia
- Strabo/Strabo – One who is squinty, typically used by Gens Titia
- Structus/Structa – Typically used by Gens Servilia
- Sulla/Sulla – Typically used by Gens Cornelia
- Taurus/Taura – One who is like a bull
- Triarius/Triaria – One who is like a soldier, typically used by Gens Valeria
- Triginus/Trigemina – One who is a triplet, typically used by Gens Curiatia
- Trio/Trio – One of the stars of the Big Dipper, typically used by Gens Lucretia
- Tubertus/Tuberta – One who has a tumor or swelling, typically used by Gens Posturnia
- Tubulus/Tubula – One who is like a tube, typically used by Gens Hostilia
- Tuditanus/Tuditana – One who is like a mallet, typically used by Gens Sempronia
- Tullus/Tulla – From the praenomen Tullus, typically used by Gens Volcatia
- Turdus/Turda – One who is like a thrush, typically used by Gens Papiria

- Varro/Varro – One who is thick-headed, typically used by Gens Terentia
- Varus/Vara – One who is bow-legged, typically used by Gentes Atilia, Licinia, Quinctilia
- Vatia/Vatia – One who is knock-kneed, typically used by Gens Servilia
- Verres/Verres – Pig, typically used by Gens Cornelia
- Vespillo/Vespillo – One who buries the dead, typically used by Gens Lucretia
- Vetus/Vetus – One who is old, typically used by Gens Antistia
- Vitulus/Vitula – One who is like a calf, typically used by Gentes Mamilia, Pomponia
- Volusus/Volusa – From the praenomen Volusus, typically used by Gens Valeria

Although many Roman names followed these naming conventions, players and Directors should utilize whichever conventions best fit their particular game and characters. These lists are far from exhaustive, and players are encouraged to seek naming outside of them when needed.

### **Women's Rights Under the Law**

Life as a woman in the ancient world was never easy, and despite the many advances of the culture, Rome was no exception. No matter their station in life, or their status as citizens, women in ancient Rome enjoyed no public rights. They were not allowed to vote, hold public office, stand witness in legal proceedings, or publicly serve in the military. Roman women, patrician and plebian alike, were expected to bear sons in hopes of bolstering the Empire, as well as managing their household.

A Roman woman oversaw cooking and clothing production, supervised slaves, and managed the economic affairs of the home. While the paterfamilias ruled in name, the women of the household met the day-to-day needs of the family.

Though a woman's paterfamilias was charged with finding her a suitable husband, she did have some legal power to refuse the marriage. In order to refuse such a match, a woman was responsible for proving to the courts that her proposed husband was of poor moral character. Though women were allowed to do so, the very young age of first marriages made this a rare occurrence more typically seen in subsequent marriages. Often, women had little choice but to marry, as those who refused the commands of her paterfamilias ran the risk of banishment from their family. When a woman married, she remained under the control of her father, despite moving into her husband's home, and she maintained the social status of her paterfamilias. Her father remained her legal guardian, and her husband had no legal power over her actions. These so-called free marriages offered the woman a great deal more independence, as fathers rarely concerned themselves with the day-to-day activities of his daughter's household. She was allowed to own property, and any inheritance she received belonged solely to her. Further, if a couple separated without her adultery as the cause, most of the bride's dowry was returned to her.

A divorce from a free marriage was relatively simple and involved a wife leaving her husband's home and taking control of her dowry. During the time of Caesar's reign, divorce was common and socially acceptable, often leading to little more than idle gossip rather than any kind of social ostracism or disgrace. Divorce could be initiated by either party for any reason; however, unless

the wife could prove before the courts that her spouse was of bad character, the children remained in his custody.

Among the elite, remarriage was frequent, often happening quite soon after the death of a spouse or a divorce. Though men observed no formal waiting period, women customarily waited ten months to ensure there was no question of paternity if a child was born. Patrician families often married and divorced in quick succession as these relationships were solely based on political advantage and social advancement. Some women, particularly those who were older or held a great deal of esteem or property, were granted the leniency to choose their own partner, without the approval of their paterfamilias or legal guardian. Children from a wife's first marriage were absorbed into their step-father's family and adopted as his own. When a man retained custody of the children, their mother rarely ever saw them again.

Women who were unable to marry whom they desired — either due to a disparity in social class or the objection of her male guardian — often resorted to concubinage. Unlike affairs or pre-marital relationships, this arrangement was legal and socially acceptable, though a paterfamilias could use this as justification for banishing a wayward child. A concubinage occurred when an otherwise unmarried couple resided together in a monogamous relationship. Gifts were freely exchanged in such relationships, and concubines had the option of becoming a wife, should the law allow. The primary difference between marriage and concubinage was the status of any children born to the couple. Rather than carrying their father's social standing, they bore that of their mother. Concubines were not derided for their position; however, they weren't afforded the respect they might otherwise gain for being legally and appropriately wed. As there was no shame in these relationships, a concubine was treated like a wife in every respect, even holding power over a household despite what her social status was before. In many concubinage situations, the concubine found herself with her own political influence and power.

Though women in ancient Rome held no formal rights regarding voting or holding office, they still wielded a great deal of influence over the men in their lives. Wives of high-ranked officials and politicians used this influence to support or impede issues that impacted other women within the Empire, funneling their own resources through their husband in order to effect change. Unlike their patrician husbands, these women operated in subtle, behind-the-scenes ways.

For example, when taxes on cosmetics and jewelry were proposed in order to fund war efforts, many patrician women used their influence on male relatives to stop such motions. Others continued to deal in cosmetics, turning to back-alley sellers. These high-born women maintained a whisper network to exchange information, gossip, and plan events without the influence of men. Women's bathing facilities were popular social gathering spots. Just as the men built Empires while steaming in the calidarium, so too did their wives, though in a subtler manner.

Within high-class families, a woman was expected to be demure, genteel, and compliant to the wills of her father and husband. She was to be intelligent and well-spoken, but not so knowledgeable that she seemed overbearing and presumptuous. She was the keeper of hearth and home, charged with managing all household activities and needs, all the while bearing as many children as possible in order to ensure the continuation of her husband's name. It was her duty to educate the children — sons and daughters alike — and ensure they grew to be model Roman citizens. Children were viewed as more than just a means of continuing a familial lineage, but also as a continuation of Roman culture as a whole.



Although patrician women needed to be knowledgeable in all household duties — from dyeing and weaving to cooking elaborate meals — it was considered uncouth for her to take any kind of paid position outside of the home. However, within the lower-class, women were forced to take on outside work. Many found employment as launderesses or seamstresses, both of which were considered respectable vocations. Some even worked as midwives or wet nurses, positions that brought a great deal of acclaim and influence to their family. Women who worked as barmaids, actresses, or sex workers were thought to be disreputable and were poorly treated, particularly in legal matters. While men largely dominated the business world, finding a savvy businesswoman who managed her own estates and finances was not uncommon. Affluent women regularly lent money to their peers, or financed public works without permission or input from their husbands or fathers.

In addition to their duties within the home, Roman women appeared as though they effortlessly adhered to the beauty standards of the time — small breasts, wide hips, and rounded bellies were seen as the height of beauty, and a symbol of wealth and affluence. Young girls bound their breasts in an effort to achieve the preferred look, and grown women turned to a wide range of cosmetics and beauty products in hopes of maintaining the youthful appearance expected of elite women. Composed of material such as lead, tin, excrement, and sulfur, these products were dangerous to the wearer. Pale, unblemished skin and long eyelashes were marks of great beauty. Long eyelashes, in particular, were viewed as a physical manifestation of a woman's chastity. Women removed all body hair by regularly shaving, plucking, utilizing pumice stones, or waxing using a resin paste. Elite women had access to a *cosmetae*, a female slave skilled in the art of adorning her mistress in *cultus* — jewelry, makeup, and perfume.

Although Roman men expected women to maintain their appearance even as they aged, the use of cosmetics to achieve the ideal aesthetic was met with ridicule and derision. The Latin word for makeup — *lenocinium* — was the same word used to reference sex workers. Nearly all surviving texts illustrate this point succinctly, with many men equating the use of too many cosmetics to a kind of witchcraft. Despite the disapproval of men, Roman women from all classes enjoyed the use of cosmetics, as indicated by the thriving trade dealing in such items.

From birth, women were taught how to behave as befit their social station. Mothers taught their daughters how to behave properly in public, how to successfully manage a household, and other domestic duties expected of proper Roman women. These included simple math and reading skills, as well as learning to spin, weave, and dye fabric for household clothing. Young women were commanded to staunchly defend their chastity, modesty, and reputation. Though young girls attended public school alongside their male counterparts, this education was limited and ceased when the girl was still quite young. Elite families continued the education of the daughters at home with private tutors, encouraging their skills and interests in hopes of molding them into better wives and citizens.

Some believed the overeducation of young women would lead to pretentious behavior and sexual promiscuity, viewing the lack of education as another protection for the chastity of the daughters of Rome. Despite this fear, some elite Roman women rose to prominence as musicians, philosophers, poets, and even orators. Hortensia, the daughter of one of Cicero's greatest rivals, was well-renowned for her eloquence and oration skills. Though many of the bright young women of Rome had little access to education — particularly in the areas that were seen as belonging to the purview of men — it was possible to achieve success in areas where males traditionally dominated.

Much like modern children, young Roman girls were given dolls to play with, which were constructed according to Roman beauty ideals. Upon her transition to adulthood, these dolls were sacrificed to either the goddess Diana or Venus. Unlike many societies of the time, young girls were encouraged to attend social events and religious ceremonies so she could learn proper behavior and Roman culture. Children fully participated in society, and they were exposed to the views and ideals of Rome from a young age.

The college of the Vestals was one place where Roman women could enjoy freedom, status, privilege, and political influence. The mandatory vow of chastity ensured these women were not required to marry or bear children; however, harsh consequences were levied against any Vestal who broke her vow.

Vestals were chosen between the ages of 6 and 10, and were immediately taken to the temple. For 30 years, a Vestal served the temple, maintaining Vesta's sacred fire, gathering water from the sacred well, preparing and participating in religious rituals, and maintaining the temple's sanctuary. These women were above reproach, with politicians and officials often seeking their wisdom and guidance. They were held in great regard, and anyone attempting to harm a Vestal in any way faced death. In addition to their public service as keepers of the hearth for all of Rome, Vestals had the power to free condemned prisoners or slaves with little more than a look or a touch of the hand.

For many years, Vestals were chosen from affluent households only, with twenty elite households presenting their daughters for the selection ceremony. As birth rates continued to plummet, many patrician paterfamilias elected not to send their daughters to the temple. In response, the position became open to any Roman girl who had two living parents, were the daughter of a free-born resident of Rome, and were free of mental or physical defects. After released from her service to the temple, she was free to marry, with a match often arranged by the Pontifex Maximus. Marriage to former Vestals was considered a great honor and very lucky, as these women carried with them a great deal of esteem and wealth from their time in service to the temple.

As in many cultures of the time, women in Ancient Rome had relatively little freedom or control over their lives. In many ways, they were treated as little more than property, belonging to their father even after they had reached the age of majority. Even their names were not their own, as infant daughters were given the feminized version of her father's nomen, with subsequent daughters using distinguishers such as Julia the Younger or Lepida Quarta. Despite the harshness of legal and societal restrictions, however, many women of the era thrived and excelled in all areas of expertise, even surpassing their male counterparts.

### **Writers Room Commentary: Playing a Woman in a Time of Extreme Misogyny**

Though women in Ancient Rome were limited in their independence, there were always outliers and exceptions. Some women earned places in male-dominated spheres such as public speaking or gladiatorial fights, while others found freedom in a more subversive manner. The women of Rome were strong and proud, and deeply involved in society and culture, despite those who tried to prevent them from such.

It is important to remember that in the *Mystical Rome* Genre, the most important aspect of the game is the enjoyment of the players, rather than historical accuracy.

Women should be encouraged and welcomed to create characters who buck traditional Roman gender roles. While these characters might wreak havoc within the game world, the enjoyment of all is of the utmost importance.

Female players, and/or players of female characters, are encouraged to utilize the safety methods (page XX) in order to prevent unwanted topics or advances from other players.

## Sexuality

Ancient Rome was seen by many as place of depravity and excess. Lavish parties, extravagant gladiatorial events, and treacherous politics were nothing compared to the sex lives of most Romans. Sexuality was promoted as a matter of state security and a method of ensuring the success of the Roman Empire. Men and women were encouraged to indulge in sexual excess — within legal bounds, of course — so that Roman culture would continue to propagate through the generations. Among the educated elite, different philosophical viewpoints held sex in different lights; however, all agreed it was a necessary part of Roman life. Reproduction and children were physical manifestations of the blessings of Rome, and a wide host of deities were devoted to relationships, sex, and reproduction.

Roman sexuality was incredibly phallocentric, as can be surmised by much of the literature, artwork, philosophical treatises, and jewelry of the time. Young Roman boys were given a *bullula* to wear, a phallic-shaped amulet intended to ward off the evil eye and malevolent supernatural forces. Other artwork, such as wind chimes, were crafted to resemble the uncircumcised penis. Over 120 terms and metaphors existed for penis, with many of them referring to it as an instrument of aggression or war.

There was also a great deal of superstition surrounding sex and intimacy. For example, bad breath and rotten teeth were widely believed to be caused by performing oral sex. This was seen as a physical manifestation of moral decay and corruption, as the mouth was intended to provide a citizen the ability to speak. Free men known to perform oral sex were often mocked by their peers, and respectable men were not to expect or desire fellatio from their wives. However, sex workers specializing in performing oral sex were hired by both men and women, and their services were in high demand.

Sex was so important to the Romans that it was regulated by religious traditions and rituals. Citizens used these rituals and magic to improve their sex lives. An *amatorium* was a love charm or potion, and *defixiones* were binding spells. Aphrodisiacs, anaphrodisiacs, contraceptives, and abortifacients were readily available in markets, from physicians, or even in sacred temples. Some of these were potions or poultices, while others were intricate rituals intended to solve the problem. Freelance priests plied their goods to unwitting clients, claiming they had divine blessings. Votive offerings in the form of breasts or penises were left at healing sanctums, and even the Vestal Virgins, with their staunch vow of chastity, worshipped a sacred phallus as one of their religious relics. The fire the Vestals were charged with maintaining was seen as the embodiment of sexual purity of Rome as a whole.

### **Writers Room Commentary: Abortion in Ancient Rome**

Priests, herbalists, and charlatans alike peddled a wide variety of contraception and abortion options for women in need. These varied wildly from blessed items to

surgical interventions. Roman law did not forbid abortions, however many believed it was immoral to perform an abortion after 40 days of gestation (or, in the case of a female fetus, 80 days). When Rome's population declined, societal pressure to procreate was on the rise, and with it, those vital medical offerings were at risk.

Though public nudity was seen as distasteful, many public religious rituals and celebrations involved sex and nudity. Traditional Lupercalia celebrations, for example, involved fertility rites. Floralia, a plebian fertility celebration held in April, involved nude dancing and sex workers staging mock gladiator games. Some of these rites were open only to female participants, such as the Bona Dea rituals, led and organized by the Vestal Virgins. A great deal of mystery surrounds the Bona Dea rituals, as men were strictly forbidden from participating or even viewing the rites. For the duration of the ritual, women of all social classes — from slave to patrician — were invited to celebrate womanhood, virginity, and fertility. These rituals were filled with music and entertainment, with any mention of men or male influence strictly forbidden. In 62 BC, Publius Clodius Pulcher became infamous for his attempt to gain entrance to the Bona Dea rituals by disguising himself as a woman, resulting in a political scandal in which he was accused of incest. Many men at the time imagined these all-female rites were drunken lesbian orgies that they might enjoy watching.

Although Romans enjoyed a great deal of sexual freedom, they remained a society strictly governed by the social mores of the time. All citizens were to show a level of *pudor*, or modesty, while in the public sphere, and those who strayed too far found themselves punished by censors for sexual misconduct. These strict virtues applied to men and women alike, though women were held to a far higher standard than their male counterparts.

Outside of specific festivals and within the public baths, where men and women often bathed together, public nudity was considered a disgrace and a sign of the Empire's descent into moral depravity. This disapproval was less a matter of suppressing the sexual desires of citizens — as physicians and philosophers alike extolled the virtue of regular, satisfying intercourse — and more an additional means of dignifying and marking a citizen. Often, public nudity was only seen in war, when captives were stripped and led away, or among slaves who were displayed naked in order to allow potential buyers to evaluate their purchase.

Despite the social more against public nudity, erotic artwork was present in both private homes and in public locations. A great deal of Roman artwork was homoerotic, particularly pieces found in public spaces. Unlike the penis, many Romans believed the vagina was a filthy body part, and very little art or literature focused on the female body. Breasts were not sexualized, and they were seen as a method for feeding young or expressing grief.

Free men in Ancient Rome had a great deal of sexual agency, which they utilized to the fullest. It was considered natural and socially unremarkable for men to be attracted to teenage youths of both sexes, and there was no moral censure for men who were sexual with other men-- provided the relationship didn't infringe on the rights and prerogatives of his male peers. As with all aspects of Roman life, men adhered to the rigid class structure in this situation. For example, there was no shame in taking a male slave or freedman as a lover. However, the hypermasculinity of the era dictated that citizens ought to take on the active role in these relationships.

Romans believed men who allowed themselves to be penetrated threatened their sexual integrity and liberty as free citizens. They specifically believed that men who enjoyed taking on the passive role in such relationships were a danger to society branded a *cinaedus*, which led to social ostracization. Legally, same-sex marriages were not recognized by the state; however, some couples went through traditional marriage rites when entering into a same-sex concubinage relationship.

Although Roman men were expected to father children within their marriage, there was no shame or moral failing should he form relationships with sex workers, slaves, or concubines. Unmarried men enjoyed relationships with women of any social or legal status, and part of a young man's coming of age involved a trip to a reputable brothel. Men were to control their sexual relationships, as a lack of control indicated a man who could not govern others. Furthermore, men eschewed so-called low sensual pleasures, as it would erode the elite male's identity as a cultured person.

Unmarried women, on the other hand, were strictly forbidden from participating in any activities that might insinuate that she was not chaste. Though young unmarried Roman women were charged with safeguarding their chastity, the new bride was to be an immodest lover within the confines of her marriage. She was expected to express and explore her passions within the marriage. Women were expected to be chaste or loyal to their husbands, many women—married and unmarried alike—enjoyed decadent sapphic relationships while their husbands were none the wiser. Such friendships were encouraged by unwitting husbands so their wives could maintain an active social life.

Whereas men were encouraged to take lovers of both sexes, women who were attracted to other women were seen as an unnatural anomaly. At the time, those who participated in lesbian relationships were believed to have overly large sexual appetites, a symptom of moral failure. Furthermore, Romans believed sex required penetration, so many assumed these affairs involved toys or a comically enlarged clitoris. Despite attempts to demonize these relationships, it was not uncommon for women to have female lovers. Slaves, sex workers, and concubines often filled this role. Many women maintained romantic relationships with one another, framed as simply close friendships.

Despite this disparity, men and women alike enjoyed affairs with sex workers and concubines. Though illegal, particularly for women, these cases were rarely brought before the courts and then only in cases to preserve the social standing of the husband. However, a wife's infidelity was grounds for divorce, and husband's the same if it interfered with his other responsibilities to the Empire.

Sexual intimacy between couples was a private matter. Even when consulting a physician or seeking marital assistance from a temple, married couples maintained a level of discretion. Despite this, the wedding of a Roman couple was peppered with dirty jokes and bawdy songs intended to bless the couple with an exciting love life and great fecundity.

As the vast majority of surviving writings come from the male hand, there is little information regarding the true love lives of Roman women. Many Roman men felt it was their duty to control the sexuality of the women in their lives, by which they safeguarded the future of Rome. Moral legislation focused on removing women's sexual freedom.

Sex work was legal, and widespread throughout the entirety of the Roman Empire, with the state regulating the industry. Women obtained a license in order to deal in prostitution, and they faced heavy taxes against their wages. Men from all classes utilized sex workers, and there was no moral failing in hiring one. Although men were expected and even encouraged to engage such workers, there was a great deal of shame in *being* a sex worker. Women who legally practiced sex work were required to register with the aediles. Occasionally, socially prominent women would register as a sex worker in order to avoid prosecution for adultery.

Sex workers were one of the classes of people categorized as *infames*, or those of ill repute. This legal status could not be escaped once given, as once a woman defiled herself in such a manner, she could never regain her honor. Those who gained this status were subject to corporal punishment — which was otherwise reserved only for slaves. Furthermore, infames were not protected by many laws, particularly those governing rape.

Despite the difficulties many sex workers faced, it was a thriving trade within Rome, and some sex workers even achieved a certain measure of respect. Often, clients were entertained in lavish brothels, though many workers did not have such support. Female sex workers typically wore distinctive clothing, ranging from decadent sheer silk tunicas to male togas. They were the only women to wear togas.

As Romans viewed slaves as property, they were exempt from the protections offered citizens of Rome, and had little sexual agency. Owners were allowed to do as they pleased with their slaves, be it a forced relationship, or hiring them out for sex work. Owners carefully controlled the relationships of their slaves, as any children born would add to their overall wealth.

As in all arenas of their lives, Roman soldiers were expected to show great self-discipline in matters of sex and romance. Soldiers convicted of adultery were dishonorably discharged, and convicted adulterers were barred from enlisting. Of course, the army was nearly always attended by a large number of camp followers, which included sex workers. While some commanders attempted to bar sex workers from the camps, these commands were largely ignored.

Although Romans cared little for the sexual desires of slaves or sex workers, rape or sexual assault against a citizen of Rome was considered a capital offense. Every Roman citizen in good standing, regardless of status, was theoretically protected by these laws. Raping a citizen was widely regarded as primitive and immoral, and carried punishments up to death. Men who were raped bore no loss of legal or social standings, nor were they considered morally corrupt or emasculated. Many female victims elected not to prosecute, for fear of dragging their personal lives out in the open. Even with these laws in place, and the disgust many expressed for rapists, it was a common occurrence, particularly among slaves, sex workers, and lower-class citizens.

## **Gender**

The citizens of Ancient Rome viewed gender quite differently than most ancient societies. Rather than male or female, they adhered simply to *vir*, or the idea of traditional male masculinity. There were men, and then there was everyone else. Men who did not adhere to the strict moral codes of masculinity, or who preferred to embrace a more effeminate method of living, were scrutinized and shunned. Since it was illegal for Roman Citizens to be emasculated, living a life counter to the beliefs of *vir* led to a great deal of trouble.

Despite societal pressures and views, there were many in the Roman Empire who elected to eschew their biological sex. For women, this was often accomplished by strict adherence to

social mores and a great deal of time spent proving she was worthy. Although rare, this led to female senators and even soldiers. If one had enough power and wealth, they could make nearly any social controversy disappear. While male citizens of Rome were to behave in a certain manner, including serving the Empire in the military, some preferred to put aside their *vir*—and the accompanying benefits—and enjoy a less brutal lifestyle.

Some who sought to throw off the chains of their gender found their way to Cybele's cults. Her priests, known as the Galli, castrated themselves and lived their lives as eunuchs. This practice was illegal for Roman citizens; however, the cult was always willing to support and protect those who dedicated themselves to Cybele, also known as *Magna Mater*, or the Great Mother. As a cult, they put aside traditional gender expectations.

### **Roman Graffiti: Poetic Warfare**

Unlike modern times, graffiti in Ancient Rome was not discouraged, but encouraged as a form of self-expression or advertisement. Graffiti was found everywhere, from the opulent dining rooms of patrician homes to the popina of the common man. Men, women, and children from all walks of life, from illiterate slave to senate speaker, utilized graffiti as a means of communicating with one another, sharing their pleasure or distaste, advertising, or artwork and poetry. At times, the scrawlings found on Roman walls were vulgar, such as a picture depicting a sex worker and her patron; or wild boasts such as *My many lovers walk crooked*. Some items, such as popina menus or business advertisements, were carved into the walls directly, while the more expensive and elaborate political bids were typically painted.

Some Romans hired talented graffiti artists to share information, or defeat their rivals through wit and art. This came in the form of politicians seeking votes or looking to discredit rivals, or new businesses seeking to build their customer base. At times, these insult artists warred over a wall or sliver of space, each responding to the previous messages with new insults or threats. Such displays invariably drew a crowd of onlookers anxious to see who won in the war of words. Successful graffiti artists were highly sought after, and well-paid by affluent politicians or businessmen in need.

Without regular publications such as magazines or newspapers, residents of Rome depended on graffiti for news and gossip they might otherwise miss. Walls were easily repaired or painted over, whereas paper was far too expensive for any but the most affluent households. Graffiti messages also quickly spread through the streets. Furthermore, graffiti was utilized by those of the lower classes to help improve their reading and writing abilities.

In many ways, the graffiti of ancient Rome was the first form of social media.

### **Night Life**

When night fell in the imperial city, the streets transformed from gleaming colonnades of marble to poorly-patrolled, dark and dangerous streets. Narrow alleyways with no light provided the perfect cover for cretins looking for an easy payday. Watchmen spent their time looking for the fires that regularly broke out in the tenement blocks, rather than stopping petty thieves. Despite the inherent dangers, night time in Rome was filled with excitement and parties for plebeians and patricians alike, though their celebrations differed wildly.

For plebeians, one of the most popular gathering places was the *popina*, a wine bar typically stocked with simple, easy-to-prepare foods, and a variety of wines of varying qualities. With most tenement housing lacking basic cooking amenities, many plebeians depended on the *popina* for meals and as a central location for socialization.

Found on street corners or in the midst of busy thoroughfares, most *popina* were easily spotted due to a wide shop front opening that faced the street, and a low counter to display available goods. Stools and tables were available for patrons to eat, drink, socialize, or participate in more illicit activities, such as prostitution or gambling. Elaborate decorations and graffiti adorned the walls of the *popina*, all intended to draw the eye of passersby.

Unlike the *popina*, which only offered food and drink, the *caupona* was more akin to modern inns or motels, as they also offered overnight accommodations. Although the *xenia* of the time, or laws of hospitality, demanded travelers be given shelter and sustenance, the central location of Rome and its incredible influx of travelers, especially during festivals, meant more housing was necessary. These *caupona* were found along all roads leading to Rome, though largely used by foreigners and plebeians, as most aristocracy could easily find lodging with other patrician families.

In both the *popina* and *caupona*, visitors spent their time enjoying board games such as *tali*, or knucklebones; *nux*, or marbles; *Latrunculi*, a form of Roman chess; and *Terni Lapilli*, a game similar to tic-tac-toe. A game called Lucky Sixes resembled backgammon and involved figures that came together to form a philosophical phrase or joke. Though these games were commonly found amidst social events of the plebeians, the aristocracy also played.

In 55 BCE, the first permanent theater structure was erected in Rome. The Theater of Pompey was built by a general of the same name and stood in the southern section of the *Campus Martius*, or Field of Mars. The first permanent building erected in the *Campus Martius*, Pompey was only able to secure permission to build the theater by claiming it would become a building dedicated to Venus. With seating for 20,000 attendants and a 300-foot stage, the theater was yet another mark of the glory of Roman construction. Along with an expansive collection of fountains and statues, the Theater of Pompey became a popular location for political meetings. The building only grew in infamy after the failed attempt on Caesar's life.

Though public opinion of actors was low — placing them within the same social strata as prostitutes and criminals — plebeians and patricians alike flocked to the theater to enjoy a variety of entertainment. Many of the tragedies and comedies performed on the stage were adapted from popular Greek works. Rome treated even her most popular actors quite poorly, though. Most actors were slaves who performed at the behest of their masters, subject to harsh discipline if their performance was faulty. Roman plays were often violent, and it was not unheard of for actors to die during their performances. In time, theater would become an outlet for political statements, though they largely remained related to religious festivals honoring the gods.

All other entertainment, even the arena, paled in comparison to the lavish dinner parties hosted by the wealthiest patrician families. Often lasting as long as eight hours, these parties were the height of excess, intended to impress clients and business partners with the family's wealth, as displayed by food and entertainment.



Among the aristocracy of Ancient Rome, the consumption of food and drink was a vital social ritual known as the *convivium*, or banquet. There were three different types of gatherings typically hosted by the patricians: the *epulum*, or public feast, was open to all inhabitants of a city and accommodated large numbers of diners; the *cena*, or dinner party, typically began in mid-afternoon; and the *comissatio* was the drinking party.

These private parties were held in the *triclinium*, the three-couch room. This room had three long couches arranged along the walls of the room in a U-shape, with a single table in the center for serving food. Seating was arranged by importance, with the host and honored guests enjoying the couches that allowed them to socialize easily with everyone, as well as enjoy the view out the main doorway. Particularly large rooms could accommodate more couches and more guests. While banqueting, guests lounged on these couches, with only small children sitting upright while dining.

During the festivities, guests enjoyed opulent meals, including expensive and difficult to obtain delicacies such as pheasant, oysters, shellfish, venison, or wild boar. Even foods that were forbidden due to *sumptuary* laws were consumed at the most exclusive and lavish feasts. These laws in theory prevented the mob from rising up against the patricians for excessive wealth. At these banquets, wine mixed with water heated in boilers known as *authepsae* flowed freely throughout the meal, with the parties lasting long into the night.

Entertainment at these feasts was just as lavish as the meal, and yet another mark of the host's affluence. Entertainment ranged from poetry recitations to gladiatorial fights. Musical performances involved choral, flute, water organ, and lyre arrangements, while more active forms of entertainment could include acrobats, dancing girls, pantomime, and even tricks performed by trained lions and leopards. Poetic, historical, or dramatic performances were also quite popular, particularly during the early hours of the soiree. Staff and slaves were expected to participate in the entertainment, singing while serving guests or providing visual distraction with attractive waiters.

Though much of Roman life was dedicated to work and business, all inhabitants enjoyed feasts and festivals, private parties, and evocative entertainment. From slave to patrician, Romans spent their days working hard and their nights indulging.

## **Bath Houses**

Bathing in Ancient Rome was more than just a private means of maintaining cleanliness, but rather a popular social activity practiced by all classes. Thanks in large part to taxes based on the size of pipes entering a home, most private *domus* could not afford to maintain baths of their own, which eventually gave rise to the popular *balnae* and *thermae*. *Balnae* were smaller, simple facilities, privately owned by wealthy families, while the *thermae* were sprawling imperial bath complexes. Both were open to the public for a small fee, though this fee was waived on holidays or festival days. *Thermae* typically opened around lunchtime and continued to serve patrons until dusk.

While many smaller *balnae* dotted the city, the larger *thermae* offered more amenities, exquisite art and entertainment, and better social opportunities. Some of the largest *thermae* could service up to 8,000 people daily, and went through up to 10 tons of wood each day. Opulent marble

walls, intricate tiled designs, and large windows made these popular spots as beautiful as they were functional.

The larger *thermae* all contained three principal rooms: the *caldarium*, or hot bath; the *tepidarium*, or warm bath; and the *frigidarium*, or cold bath. Particularly opulent *thermae* also offered steam baths: the *sudatorium*, or moist steam bath, and the *laconicum*, a dry, hot room. Additional amenities were offered in some paths such as the *plaestra*, an open-air gymnasium for men to participate in weight lifting, discus throwing, or other strenuous exercise. It was believed that sweating heavily allowed the body to be purged of toxins and dirt, and many patrons enjoyed breaking up their bathing with brisk jogs, weight lifting, or wrestling.

Some of the more opulent *thermae* offered additional luxuries to their patrons such as libraries, sitting rooms for socializing, lecture halls, art galleries, and small restaurants for extended visits. Many Roman citizens visited the *thermae* on a daily basis, and the lengthy bathing process made this the perfect opportunity for business dealings, marriage arrangements, and courtship. Although men and women alike were allowed to use the *thermae*, there were separate entrances for slaves, men, and women. Women's facilities were significantly smaller. Children were not permitted within the public *thermae*. Though many facilities offered separate bathing facilities for men and women, others allowed for any patrons to freely mingle. Often, a separate set of baths were maintained for women, who were allowed to utilize either the female bathing facilities or the main pools as they desired.

Once a visitor paid their entrance fee, they were free to utilize the baths as long as desired. A typical visit to the *thermae* was quite similar to modern day spa trips. First, the visitor would disrobe and hand their clothes to an attendant or *capsarius*, a slave dedicated to carrying their master's towels, oils, and other necessities. From there, a visitor might participate in physical activity to build up a sweat before moving into the *tepidarium*, which would in turn prepare them for a visit to the *caldarium*. Upon exiting the *caldarium*, slaves or a professional masseuse would massage olive oil into the visitor's skin before scraping it off with a *strigil*, a dull curved blade that helped to remove excess dirt and sweat from the visitor's skin. From here, the visitor would return to the *tepidarium* and then *frigidarium* to cool down, before stepping into the main pool to swim or socialize.

Like many structures in the Roman Empire, the *thermae* were architectural wonders. Where natural hot springs already existed, *thermae* were built around them, and where water was piped in from aquifers, visitors depended on the *hypocaust*, an ancient central heating technique that produced and circulated hot air below a room in order to warm it. These engineering marvels were carefully constructed to allow the *caldarium* to reach proper temperatures. The ceiling of the *hypocaust* was raised by pillars of tile and concrete, allowing heat and smoke to circulate through the enclosed area and up into the floor of the pools above. As the *hypocaust* required a great deal of fuel and manpower, it was only utilized in large public baths or the homes of the most affluent.

Although the *thermae* were used regularly by most Romans, there were some who found the entire practice distasteful and with good reason. Water was rarely replaced, and pools often gathered dirt, oil, and excrement from the many regular visitors. Despite the dangers of bacteria-ridden waters, the baths fulfilled many aspects of life that the Romans believed led to good health: bathing, eating, massage, and exercise.

## Economy of Rome

With vast stretches of land and great stores of both natural and human resources, Rome was a mercantile juggernaut. With such a huge population, there was a heavy focus on both farming and importing food in order to ensure citizens of the Empire were well fed. At this time, thanks to ongoing war and conquest, slaves were cheap and plentiful and made up much of the labor force.

Agriculture was a necessity in Ancient Rome, and many of the social elite idealized this way of life. Of course, the patricians imagined farming was little more than sitting back and gazing over fields of grain and vines heavy with grapes. The elite rarely actively participated in a rural lifestyle, instead hiring free men or citizens to oversee the slaves who worked the land. Given the Empire stretched over huge areas of land, with great variety in soil quality and climates, crops could range from the more popular wheat and barley to figs, poppy, or peaches. Over time, advances in irrigation using aqueducts and massive mills allowed more produce to be grown and prepared for the populace. Wheat, emmer, spelt, barley, grapes, and olives were the main crops produced, though much of the wheat necessary for feeding Rome came from Egypt. Cows, sheep, and goats were also raised, utilized for their milk and cheese production, meat, and their hides.

During the Republic, Roman economy centered on trade in grain and wine, largely wheat and unique regional wines. As more regions were conquered, mining in Spain, Gaul, Britain, and Asia Minor also became popular economic endeavors. Hushing and ground sluicing — where diverted streams of water to eroded soil and exposed precious metal ore — were popular methods of mining, allowing metal production in the Empire to soar. While much of this ore was used for the constant development of Rome and other regions, it was also used in trade. Mining was dangerous work, and the majority of these workers were slaves.

An integral part of the Roman economy, trade was the driving force behind the rapid expansion of the Empire. *Argentarii* acted as bankers and agents, helping to facilitate trade and barter between multiple parties. They maintained strict *tabulae*, or books, which were used for legal proof of a trade when necessary. In Rome itself, the Forum Cuppedinis was a large market where most general goods could be found. Other large markets specialized in specific goods, but nearly everything could be found at the Forum.

Trade was conducted between regions of the Roman Empire; however, many goods intended for the elite of Roman society, such as perfumes, dyes, silk, and spices, were imported from all across the known world. Trade routes along the Tiber River and the port of Ostia offered Rome opportunities to utilize both sea and land routes. Bulk commodities such as grain and construction materials were only shipped via maritime trade routes, due to the low cost of the produce and relatively cheap cost of transportation by sea.

Although barter was common in Rome, and even occasionally used for tax collection purposes, the Empire had a well-developed currency. This system was introduced by the government in 300 BC, far later than many other southern European locations. Despite this, Romans were quite familiar with the use of coin, thanks to trade with the Greeks. Early coins included *aes signatum*, or struck bronze - large tin bronze bars quite unlike any other currency produced at the time. Additionally, the Roman state issued bronze and silver coins depicting mythical scenes or personifications of the gods and goddesses. The decisions regarding what images would appear on the coins was made by the committee of *tresviri monetales*, or trio of money men. These

young statesmen, who aspired to eventually become Senators, were responsible for conveying meanings or ideas through the images on the coins. Often, the *tresviri monetales* would use imagery from their family or ancestry, or wealthy patricians would pay to have their own desired images used. This imagery was intended to be seen and used by the elite as the money circulated.

While local authorities were allowed to mint bronze coins, the more popular and valuable *denarius* was minted from silver, and authority to create these coins was limited to Rome itself. This was done as a means of controlling provinces and ensuring there was a common currency throughout the Empire. Though there were many different types of coins minted, the *denarius* was the most commonly used.

The following is the exchange rate for coinage at the time:

- *As* – A bronze coin
- *Dupondius* – A brass coin worth two asses
- *Sestertius* – A brass coin worth four asses or two dupondii
- *Denarius* – A silver coin worth four sestertii, eight dupondii, or 16 asses
- *Aureus* – A gold coin worth 25 denarii, 100 sestertii, 200 dupondii, or 400 asses

Banking and coin minting in Rome began in the temples. With constant security at these locations, they were the perfect place for patricians to store their excess wealth. Often, the elite would parcel their money out to various temples, in order to protect their wealth from fire or theft. Over time, public banking houses known as *Taberae Argentarioe* were opened by the state, allowing patricians and plebeians alike to store their money in safe locations. Although these public banking houses became popular, some of the most elite continued to store their wealth in temples.

Among the patricians, money changed hands on a constant basis. Though the public banking houses rarely offered loans to citizens, private loans were common, even among the elite. Even Caesar himself was forced to request private loans from other wealthy patricians.

### **Panem et Circenses – the Arena**

Long before the introduction of gladiators and their bloody games, citizens of Ancient Rome enjoyed public events and games. Known as *ludi*, these games were the center of Roman religious festivals. Along with public games, such as horse racing, mock hunts, and theatrical performances, days on which *ludi* opened her gates were considered to be public holidays where business transactions were forbidden. Over time, many festivals lost their religious significance, as state leaders used these holidays as a means of distracting citizens from the issues facing Rome.

Though many different kinds of *ludi* were found throughout Rome, gladiator battles were the most violent and well-known. The first gladiatorial games, involving three pairs of gladiators fighting to the death, took place during the First Punic War against Carthage, following the death of Brutus Pera. Drawing inspiration from Campanian funeral rites and frescoes depicting opulently decorated fighters, the games were initially introduced by Decimus Iunius Brutus Scaeva in honor of his deceased father.

These early games were seen as a *munus*, or duty, owed to the *manes*, or souls of deceased loved ones. Unlike the *ludi*, which were worship of a particular deity associated with the religious

festival in question, munera were dedicated to a deceased ancestor chosen by the aristocratic sponsor of the event. Over time, gladiatorial munera became commonplace, with many smaller events sponsored by low-ranking officials. Some, however, remained vast public affairs, such as the munus hosted by Titus Flaminius which involved public banquets, artistic performances, and 74 gladiators battling one another. In 105 BCE, a military training program demonstrated barbarian combat styles in the public forums. These training exercises became so popular among citizens that gladiator contests were regularly included in state-sponsored major religious festivals.

At the peak of gladiatorial popularity, the games offered a wide variety of business opportunities. Trainers and owners shared in the winnings of their gladiators, wealthy patricians sponsored events in lavish shows of self-promotion, and politicians used private and public events to drum up support for future elections. Owning an enslaved gladiator marked one as a true member of the aristocracy, offering political and literal muscle at their disposal. Fearing the potential of vast private armies, the Senate eventually imposed an ownership limit of 640 gladiators, due in large part to the extreme number of combatants owned by Caesar. Although anti-corruption laws were proposed in hopes of curbing the mounting commercialization of the games, these attempts all failed. The popularity of gladiatorial games continued to rise sharply after the failed attempt on Caesar's life.

Potential gladiators could come from any social class; however, they were typically either slaves, criminals, or prisoners of war. The gladiator slave trade was Empire-wide, and carefully supervised by the state. The slaves who found their way to the arena were prisoners of war and had the opportunity to win back their honor and freedom in the games. Young lower-class men and non-citizens enrolled in one of the many gladiatorial schools in exchange for food, housing, and the potential for fame and glory. Some patricians even found their way to the arena, using the games as a way to garner popularity, though these bouts were typically heavily weighted in their favor). Patricians participating in the games had to be careful not to accept any payment or compensation for their appearance, as this would immediately name them as *infamia*.

Despite Roman views on women, there were many female gladiators throughout the Roman Empire, some of whom became popular. Although no official gladiator school was ever opened for women, many found private tutelage through official youth organizations, much like their male counterparts. Female gladiatorial bouts were seen as a rare delicacy at the games, and they were some of the most popular matches. Female gladiators fought one another, either in paired combat or larger melees; however, it was not uncommon to see a smaller female gladiator face down a much larger opponent. Though they could participate in any type of gladiator battle, most women mirrored the *Secutores*—a gladiator style that favored heavy armor and short swords. While participation in the games could name one as *infamia*, these women enjoyed a great deal of wealth, popularity, and acclaim.

Some of the earliest gladiator training schools started as a means of instructing the Roman legion. They became highly effective training facilities for young gladiators. All prospective gladiators, whether volunteer or condemned, were only allowed to join a school if the school's physician deemed them suitable and capable of the rigorous training programs. Once accepted by a school, all gladiators swore a sacred oath, binding them into service. Training programs were non-lethal, and focused on teaching trainees various fighting styles and how to die stoically. Although the life and training of a gladiator was grueling, those who were not condemned criminals enjoyed a healthy, abundant diet, regular massage, and excellent medical care. Owning

a gladiator was a substantial investment, and most wise owners took great care with their property.

As many gladiators originated from foreign lands, combatants utilized a variety of weapons, fighting styles, and armor, allowing them to be easily recognized. Gladiators from two different schools, cultures or traditions would face one another, such as matching heavily armored Samnites against dexterous Laquerarii. Though not all gladiators fell neatly into just one category, most combatants embraced one or more of the following types:

- *Andabatae*: Unlike many types of gladiator, the Andabatae were not trained in schools. They were criminals who were sentenced to death. These fighters were used as filler events that took place in the morning or during downtime in the arena. Their only armor was a helmet, which rendered these fighters blind. Andabatae fought to the death, and they were often matched in large 'last man standing' type battles, with an arena attendant on hand to swiftly dispatch the injured.
- *Bestiarii*: This classification of gladiator referred to anyone closely connected to the wild animals used in the arena. It referenced not only highly-trained gladiators who specialized in the popular animal fights, but also criminals or prisoners of war ordered to be executed *damnatio ad bestia*. Those who procured, trained, and cared for the animals also fell into this category.

Common weapons for Bestiarii included spears, knives, or whips. Armor was basic leather arm and leg wraps, a galea with decorative crests, and the occasional small shield. These fights typically took place in the morning, with both slaves and volunteers trained in this method of combat. Within the Bestiarii were several subsets such as the *Paegniarius*, or fighters who faced their animal opponent with only a whip, and the *Venatores*, who hunted down wild game using spears and bows. Venatores were also known for working with the animals and performing tricks.

- *Bustuarii*: The Bustuarii were one of the first classes of gladiators, so named for the *bustum*, or funeral pyre of a deceased Roman. These gladiators were slaves purchased for the express purpose of training them to fight to the death at a funeral. They fought with the *gladius graecus*, a leaf-shaped sword that originated in Ancient Greece. They wore no armor, though were allowed a small shield.
- *Cataphractarius*: The heavily armored gladiators of the Cataphractarius originated in the cavalry of Germany and Parthia, along with the Sarmatians from Russia and central Asia. These gladiators were completely covered in a heavy armor, and when mounted combat took place, they likewise armored their mounts. These combatants were paired with lightly armored gladiators, such as the Retiarius or Dimachaeri, offering a striking dichotomy between the two fighters. Cataphractarius gladiators fought with a *contus*, or long, heavy lance, and wore *lorica squamata*, scale armor laced onto a leather backing.
- *Cestus*: Though some question if cestus fighters were truly gladiators, there's no question that this boxing-type fighting style was immensely popular among Roman citizens. Typically, cestus fighters wore gloves of the same name, which ranged from simple leather wrappings to elaborate iron gauntlets studded with spikes and blades. They used

no additional weapons and armor was not allowed. Occasionally, these fighters faced other armed gladiators.

- *Dimachaerus*: These gladiators were renowned for their skills with utilizing two swords in combat. They were armed with *sicca*, a short scimitar also favored by the Thracians, and wore light leather armor to allow for freedom of movement. Dimachaerus gladiators were highly skilled and greatly prized as fighters.
- *Equites*: The Equites gladiators participated in mounted combat and only fought other Equites. The first round of combat for these gladiators involved throwing a light spear or lance. Combatants then dismounted and continued their battle on foot with a gladius or spatha sword. These gladiators wore a galea with feathers, an arm-guard, and carried either a *parma equestris*, or cavalry shield, or a body-shield called a *clipeus*.
- *Essedari*: The Essedari gladiators fought from the back of light two-wheeled chariots. These fights were inspired by Celtic warfare, and often re-enacted famous battles. Wooden spears reinforced with iron were the weapon of choice, along with Celtic-inspired armor such as the Montefortino helmet.
- *Gallus*: Much like the Cataphraccarii gladiators, the Gallus were heavily armed combatants who fought in the Gallic fashion. Though these gladiators originated in Gaul and fought in the games as enslaved prisoners of war this style of fighting was later imitated by free-born and volunteer gladiators. Gallus gladiators wore a galea with decorative crests, a metal greave on their lower left leg, and leather over their right arm. They fought with a gladius or lance, and utilized a *scutum*, or large body shield. As the Gauls integrated into Roman society, this class fell out of style and was reformed as the *Murmillio*.
- *Hoplomachi*: These gladiators originated with the Hellenic Hoplites, though several other heavy fighter types such as the Samnites were rolled into this category. Hoplomachi were often paired against one another, but occasional bouts set the encumbered combatants against speedier opponents. Hoplomachi preferred to fight with the gladius graecus and a lance called a *hasta*, and they were armored similarly to the Gallus.
- *Laquerarii*: The Laquerarii were gladiators who fought with a *laqueus*, or lasso, in one hand, and a bladed weapon in the other. These gladiators wore very little armor to allow for unrestricted movement. Typically, they were matched against heavily armored gladiators. The Laquerarii originated in the Retiarii Gladiator group, and they were one of the few types of gladiators who did not wear any kind of helmet.
- *Noxii*: These gladiators were prisoners of war or criminals, pitted against opponents who grossly outclassed them. They were used in battles with Sagittarius archers, with little armor or weaponry of their own. They were untrained, and rarely survived their first bout.
- *Provocatores*: The Provocatores were one of the more popular types of gladiatorial battle styles, pitting two highly-trained combatants against one another. Provocatores only fought others of this same class of gladiators, and they were one of the few types who had armor protection on their torso thanks to a small breastplate called a *spongia*. They fought using a gladius, and often utilized a scutum shield. These matches were long-lasting, high-energy bouts between skilled combatants.
- *Retiarii*: These gladiators fought with equipment styled after that of a fisherman. They were equipped with a *rete*, or a weighted net, a three-pointed trident called a *fuscina*, and a dagger called a *pugio*. Retiarii had access to multiple fuscina with varying distances

between the prongs, which allowed them to perform a number of combat maneuvers such as wrenching a sword from an opponent or stabbing into the eyes of a helmet. Retiarii were considered to be one of the most effeminate, and thus poorly viewed, groups of gladiators as they relied on speed and dexterity over brute force. Despite the low status of the Retiarii, they were popular with crowds, due in large part to attendees seeing their faces.

- *Rudiarius*: These rare gladiators were those who earned their freedom, either through winning a set number of combats or by popular vote of the spectators. A gladiator who won their freedom was granted a wooden sword known as a *rudis* as a symbol of their new status. After exiting through the Gate of Life, a new Rudiarius had the opportunity to choose how they would spend their life. Many retired from the games and lived off their winnings, while others elected to work as bodyguards for wealthy citizens. Work could easily be found for these combatants in the many gladiatorial schools, or in the arena as an arbiter or referee. Some Rudiarius elected to continue to fight, earning them greater wealth and accolades. Although Rudiarius could not become Roman citizens, their children were eligible for the privilege.
- *Sagittarius*: The Sagittarius were mounted bowmen who typically participated in mock battles, picking off Noxii gladiators from a distance. Due to the danger to spectators, Sagittarius were highly-trained and well-paid fighters. They participated in wild animal hunting shows. Sagittarius wore scale armor and pointed helmets, and they used Parthian short bows.
- *Samnites*: The Samnite fighting style came into popularity after the defeat of Samnium (southern Italy). Similar to other heavy fighters of the time, Samnites fought with a gladius, and had an easily distinguished plume on their helmets. In time, gladiator types such as the Murmillones, Secutores, and Hoplomachus evolved from this fighting style.
- *Tertiarius*: These highly-trained gladiators fulfilled several roles in the arena fights. First, they were often called upon as a *Suppositicius*, or a substitute for a gladiator unable to fight in the top-billed matches. Additionally, these gladiators participated in the rare fight that required three combatants. In these matches, two Noxii would fight to the death, and the survivor faced the Tertiarius.
- *Thraex*: Though Thracian gladiators were one of the first types of gladiators, they did not truly rise to prominence until after they replaced the Gallus. They used a curved *sicca* and wore light armor with a distinctive griffin on their helmet crest. They were also called *parmulata*, after the small rectangular shield favored by these combatants.
- *Velites*: The Velites were named after a class of Roman infantry, and they fought together in groups against a common enemy. They typically fought with a spear attached to their wrist called a *hasta*, along with a gladius. They were one of the few groups of gladiators who fought without a helmet. Groups of Velites working together were called Catervarii, and they often reenacted battles and faced foes such as chariot riders.

In addition to the Gladiators themselves, there were numerous people who assisted the games in various ways.

- *Editor*: The sponsor financing the gladiatorial games. Although private citizens were allowed to sponsor and finance games, the state eventually took ownership of most major events.



- *Lanista*: The owner and trainer of a group of gladiators. They were active participants in the slave trade and rented out their gladiators to editors in need of combatants. Despite the great renown found in the games, lanista were looked down upon by upper-class patricians.
- *Lorarius*: An attendant who whipped combatants and animals that were reluctant to fight.
- *Paegniarius*: An entertainer who participated in mock battles while gladiators rested between bouts. They were seen as comic relief, and dressed in overly decorated fake armor.
- *Rudis*: The arena referee or his assistants. These were former gladiators with intimate knowledge of the rules of each game.

Along with the popular combat matches, gladiator games offered special events such as chariot racing — occasionally even using elephants or camels rather than horses — and sea battles. Sea battles were a rare occurrence, typically taking place in a naturally-occurring body of water. In these matches, *Naumachiarii* faced one another in mock sea battles. Combatants were dressed and armed as appropriate to who they were imitating. In these vast spectacles, gladiators slayed their opponents or drowned in the process. In time, amphitheaters were built with the capacity to rapidly flood the arena floor, allowing for smaller sea battles to take place within the confines of the city. This required adaptation of the vessels to a smaller, flat-bottomed boat. These battles, while quite impressive, often had huge death tolls, and the participants were almost exclusively made up of captives and criminals.

As wildly popular public events, gladiator games were advertised well in advance, informing spectators of the date and location, number of paired bouts, event editor, as well as any luxuries available at the event, such as food or door prizes. Detailed programs were distributed on the day of the event, showing the details of each match.

The night before events, banquets and parties were thrown in honor of the gladiators. This offered all combatants the opportunity to settle their affairs, even the condemned *Noxii*. As the events continued to grow in popularity, large amphitheaters were constructed to maximize availability of the games to the populace. The oval shape allowed for all spectators to witness the action, with premium seating afforded to patricians and the editor of the event. Although tickets to these events were purchased, a lottery system allowed poor citizens the opportunity to attend.

Most *munera* followed the same standard practices. The games opened with a procession that included images of the gods who were asked to witness the events, a scribe charged with recording the events, the editor or sponsor of the event, and finally the gladiators themselves. Following the parade, the entertainment began with *Bestiarii* hunting or fighting wild creatures. This was followed by public executions of *Noxii*, either through combat or as the subjects of fatal battle reenactments. These bouts granted the *Noxii* a minimal weapon, to make for a more exciting match. These matches were followed by the more light-hearted comedy bouts — thought even these could turn deadly — and trained animals performing tricks. In the afternoon, the main gladiator events started with warm-up bouts involving blunt weapons. At the start of each scheduled match, the editor inspected each weapon. This was an opportunity for the editor to display their affluence, through elaborate weapons and armor provided to the gladiators.

Although the fights appeared chaotic, each match had strict rules which all combatants followed. Referees remained on hand to ensure participants obeyed the rules of the game in question, and a

lorarius prodded reluctant gladiators into action. Trained gladiators fought with a certain amount of honor and adhere to professional rules of combat. These experienced gladiators also displayed a certain level of showmanship and stagecraft. The more entertained the crowd, the more likely the loser of the bout would be spared.

Matches were often to the death, with the victor receiving a palm branch and an award from the editor of the event. Occasionally, extremely popular fighters were given extra gifts or money. A gladiator could stop a match and acknowledge their defeat by lifting a finger, at which point their fate was in the hands of the editor and the crowd. After the crowd expressed their opinion on the fate of the gladiator — death or mercy — the editor made the final decision to spare the fighter or not. Editors rarely went against the will of the crowd, as this could lead to bad business down the road.

The bodies of deceased Noxii were thrown into rivers, and such a denial of proper funeral rites was believed to condemn the spirit. Noxii who performed extraordinarily well could earn funeral rites. Sparing a Noxii was exceedingly rare, even if they won their match. Professional gladiators were buried in private cemeteries, and the bodies of citizens, slaves, and freedmen were given funeral rites and buried outside of city limits. The family or lanista of a deceased gladiator would finance elaborate memorials, intended to bolster the reputation and memory of the departed.

Although some gladiators gained a great deal of respect and accolades during their time fighting in the Games, there were few opportunities for those who were granted their manumission. Although technically freed from their servitude, the infamia of performing as a gladiator remained a roadblock to citizenship or social status.