Secular and Sacred in Late Roman Portraits

Sacro e secolare nei ritratti tardoromani

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- ¹ The portrait depicts a man, a high-ranking officer of the imperial service of the *annona*, standing behind a *modius* in the process of receiving and inspecting the grain brought to Rome¹ (Fig. 1). Flanked by two other officials (each in his own panel), the bearded man occupies a prominent position in the back wall of the grand chamber built in the middle of the fourth century in the first level of the Catacombs of Domitilla, the so-called *Cubiculo dei Pistori*.² Surrounded by images depicting different stages in the reception and procession of Rome's most crucial import, the placement and composition of the portrait make him a figure even more dominating than that of the Christ presiding over the apostolic college on the wall next to it. The *annona* was a crucial element in the daily life and survival of the inhabitants of Rome in the fourth century, a source of prestige and social power for all officials involved in it - an aspect that makes the identification of our subject as the owner or commissioner of the cubicle more likely.³ In this way, our portrait puts in very clear terms the problems that I want to discuss here: what was the relationship between portraits and what might be called the 'sacred' in late antique Rome? To what extent can the visual representation of an individual be classified as secular or sacred? More crucially, what can these images reveal about the way late antique Romans conceived the boundaries between secular and sacred (or religious) images?

Fig. 1: An officer of the imperial *Annona* (Rome, Catacomb of Domitilla, Mid-late fourth century)

Source: WILPERT 1903, Tav. 142.2

- 2 The notion of what was sacred came under fierce scrutiny during Late Antiquity. Who defined it, what was its proper place, what was the role of tradition, and even the relationship between the sacred and the secular were some of the debates that animated intellectual circles - and that continue to attract historians to this date.⁴ Following the work of the late Robert Markus, scholars have questioned the concepts and frontiers of what the influential historian called, based on his analysis of the writings of Augustine and Gregory the Great, the profane (associated with pagan cults), the sacred (associated with Christian teaching), and the secular - the area left in-between, devoid of religious meaning.⁵ Although fiercely contested by contemporaries, as intellectual giants like Augustine scrutinized old and new traditions and practices, these were still clearly identifiable spheres. More recently, however, a hazier and more sophisticated picture has begun to emerge - following the works of Markus himself.⁶ The definition of sacred or secular was not straightforward, and different groups could identify their boundaries in different ways. This is particularly visible in the case of statues and other forms of visual representation, which had an ambiguous standing in early (and later) Christian culture.⁷ This did not stop Christians - particularly members of the secular elite - to display appreciation and/or respect for these objects, even in the case of representations of pagan deities.⁸ Writing in the early fourth century, Eusebius of Caesarea observed that Constantine founded Constantinople free from all idol-worship, while bringing to the city statues of gods from all over the Greek world as a form of embellishing it. This would seem like a straightforward case of objects moved from the profane to the secular realm. However, the locals didn't see it this way, and showed great awe and fear of those images, which led the emperor to have them smashed so as to reveal their filthy content, showing that not everybody saw these objects in the same way.⁹

- 3 These ambiguities and opportunities for individual and social agency appear in a particularly marked way in the case of portraits. Portraits, or the visual representation of individuals, play a crucial role in modern understanding of Classical (and especially Roman) art. A variety of styles (idealizing, Hellenizing, veristic, etc.) and media (painted, sculpted, mosaic) were used to represent intellectuals, politicians, priests, patrons, and relatives in public and private contexts.¹⁰ Male and female figures were shown wearing specific items of clothing, holding particular objects, sometimes even accompanied by inscriptions, that defined and expressed their identity. Defined in this way, there was nothing that could be defined as sacred in a portrait: it was a mere representation of an individual, whether dead or alive. And yet, as the example of the officer of the *annona* in Figure 1 reminds us, portraits did not exist in isolation.¹¹ In this sense, portraits provide an invaluable perspective on the issue of how religious images were defined, and how they operated in their actual historical context. Neither here nor there, portraits could be made sacred by virtue of their physical context, or by being associated with other images next to it. The fact that certain portraits were made focus of particular attention on specific occasions - such as funerals - could also determine the way contemporaries saw them. This chapter will thus examine a type of image whose identification as religious or sacred is ambiguous by definition, at a time when these definitions were being called into question by different groups in society.

Problems of Definition

- 4 Throughout Antiquity, various types of images maintained a close association with religious concepts.¹² Statues of deities could be appreciated for their aesthetic value, but their religious dimension was probably clear to viewers. Statues that were object of cult, paintings that adorned temples, sculptures offered as the fulfillment of a vow (usually accompanied by an inscription) were clear markers of religious feelings. Portraits raised a different category of issues, requiring greater interpretative engagement from viewers. This is illustrated by Rutilius Namatianus' poem narrating his trip from Rome back to his native Gaul, in 417, where he describes his visit to Pisa:

Here I was shown the statue of my revered father, erected by the Pisans in their *forum*. The honour done to my late parent made me weep: tears of a saddened joy wet my cheeks with their flow. For my father once was governor of the land of Tuscany and administered the jurisdiction assigned to the six fasces. After he had passed through many offices, he used to tell, I can recall, that his governorship of Tuscany had been more to his liking than any: for neither the management of the Sacred Largesses, important though it be, nor the authority of a quaestor had brought him more pleasure. His affection, inclining more towards the Tuscans, did not hesitate to give an inferior place, if piety lets it be said, even to his prefecture in Rome. Nor was he mistaken, being an equal favourite with those whom he esteemed: their mutual regard inscribes in verse undying gratitude, and old men who can remember him make known to their sons how firm of purpose he was and at the same time how kindly.¹³

- 5 The affective reaction generated by the statue of Rutilius' father is an important reminder that portraits were not just representations, but agents in their own right. The people of Pisa, in showing the physical honour paid to the former governor of *Tuscia et Umbria*, were thus able to create an intimate personal and emotional bond with his son, a powerful patron. Whether in stone or painted, portraits could attract

powerful emotional responses, reinforcing social relations as well as enhancing religious experiences. In religious contexts, portraits could be just as efficient.

- 6 Statues of emperors, for example, could occupy an ambiguous position: they could be unequivocal religious monuments in the context of a temple, but their standing was less certain in a monumental context like the Forum of Trajan or an imperial bath, for example.¹⁴ This does not mean that the image of the emperor did not carry any religious quality in itself: Suetonius relates a string of situations for which one could get in to trouble for not showing proper respect for an imperial likeness.¹⁵ Sometime between 337 and 340, the prefect of the *annona* Flavius Crepereius Madalianus dedicated a statue to the recently deceased emperor Constantine in the area of the Forum Boarium, in Rome. The statue does not survive, but the inscribed base on top of which it was placed can now be seen in the entrance courtyard of the Capitoline Museums in Rome: "To the deified and venerable emperor Constantine, father of the most excellent princes, by Flavius Crepereius Madalianus, of *clarissimus* rank, prefect of the *annona* with judicial authority."¹⁶ The inscription celebrated Constantine as a *divus*, a title usually reserved to emperors deified by the Senate. Although there is no evidence for such ceremony, it is likely that the death of this particular emperor was an important event in Rome, including a period of official mourning.¹⁷ The statue was not just a political statement of loyalty to the ruling dynasty, but also important evidence for the religious status that was (still) accorded to deceased emperors in early fourth century Rome.
- 7 Although the divine status of deceased emperors remained a problematic issue for Christian and secular leaders, imperial statues frequently incorporated elements that reinforced its sacredness. Emperors were celebrated with titles that might seem like empty rhetoric to modern readers, but that appealed to important concepts in Roman and late Roman political culture: *fortissimus*, *invictus*, *piissimus*, *fundator pacis*, *florentissimus* were repeated in countless inscriptions.¹⁸ These expressed a fundamental change in the relationship between emperors and their subjects, celebrating the notion of a universal monarchy and an unparalleled political standing.¹⁹ But they also referred to conceptions that were super-human, associating the power and the position of the emperor portrayed with the well-being and safety of humankind. In Puteoli, Campania, the inscription on the base of statue celebrated the emperor Valentinian in precisely this way: "To the perpetual Fortune of the times of our lord Valentinian, victorious and triumphant, forever Augustus; Avianius Valentinus, of *clarissimus* rank, governor of Campania, devoted to his will and majesty [set this up]."²⁰ Whereas it is clear that the influence of Christianity in imperial circles had an impact on the divine standing of emperors from the reign of Constantine onwards, we should not forget that it was this same court that promoted rituals that celebrated the sacred identity of the ruler, such as keeling, prostrating, and kissing the purple.²¹ Portraits of emperors were bound to raise the same types of issues.
- 8 The rise of Christianity, and the development of specific visual codes (whether originally Christian or not) to express a particular set of religious conceptions, increased these ambiguities.²² Eusebius mentions, in his *Ecclesiastical History*, having seen in Caesarea Philippi a statue group of a woman, in the position of a suppliant, and a man wearing a double cloak, stretching his hands to her, which locals identified as a representation of Jesus.²³ Eusebius' attitude towards the image is ambivalent at the least: heathens produced these images, not Christians, and observed in other passages

that it was not proper to represent Christ in images.²⁴ This did not stop bishops from being represented visually. Although no actual statues of bishops survive from Antiquity, painted and mosaic portraits were a frequent element in the decoration of churches and other religious structures. In the late fourth/early fifth century Basilica of S. Paul outside the walls, in Rome, portraits of the bishops of Rome were a key element in the iconographic programme, celebrating the idea of apostolic succession and legitimizing the religious authority of the holders of St Peter's chair.²⁵ Bishops were celebrated in apses as commissioners, donors, and founders of churches all over Rome - and beyond - in the company of saints or Christ.²⁶ The celebration of their pious initiatives on earth stressed their sacred and spiritual position among the faithful.

- 9 It is not difficult to acknowledge the sacred character of episcopal portraits on the apses of churches, since some of these men were treated by our (Christian) sources as saints themselves - for example, in the *Liber Pontificalis*. Could the same be observed in the case of priests of different - fading - religious traditions? How can we assess whether statues of pagan priests were sacred to any extent? The difficulty here is twofold: in the first place, because differently from their Christian counterparts, pagan priests were not exclusively religious men: as members of the Roman elite, they were usually involved in political careers and imperial service, which gives their statues - usually only known through their dedicatory inscriptions - a much stronger 'secular' flavour. The second difficulty is related to scholarly attitudes: it has become conventional to treat the inscribed dedications to pagan priests as purely honorific inscriptions, with no religious meaning. This view was recently reinstated by Alan Cameron in his influential *The Last Pagans of Rome*. According to him, pagan priesthoods were purely honorific titles, which successful aristocrats accumulated as a symbol of their social and political standing.²⁷ Cameron observed:

Much of our evidence for the religious affiliations of pagan aristocrats comes from inscribed dedications - more indeed than most people probably realize. In simpler times it was taken for granted that inscriptions provided a peculiarly uncomplicated sort of evidence, bare facts not mediated by human art or bias. We have now come to realize that few facts are bare. We need to know what sorts of monuments these dedications were inscribed on, where they were erected, by whom, and with what purpose. After all, if it is their honorand's private religious beliefs they are supposed to be attesting why was it considered appropriate to record this sort of information on public dedications?²⁸

- 10 There is no doubt that pagan priesthoods were an important honour in traditional senatorial culture, a sign of the prestige and public standing of a senator. The *atria* of senatorial houses, where many of these portraits were originally placed, were indeed very public places, frequented by friends, clients, and servants.²⁹ It is only the adoption of modern lenses, however, that makes the scholar see these facts as contradicting the religious meaning of these titles. This is demonstrated by Cameron's distinction between religion as a *private belief* (emphasis added) and the public character of these monuments.
- 11 A good example of these problems is the senator, prefect of the city, and pagan celebrity Vettius Agorius Praetextatus, dead in 384, who was celebrated with many statues in Rome. As the inscription on one of his statue bases records:

[Statue of] Agorius. To Vettius Agorius Praetextatus, of clarissimus rank, priest of Vesta, priest of the Sun god, member of the board of fifteen men (for sacred affairs), augur, tauroboliate, *curialis* (of Hercules), temple warden (*neocorus*), hierophant (of Hecate), father of the sacred rites (of the cult of Mithras), quaestor *candidatus*,

urban praetor, governor of Tuscia et Umbria, governor of Lusitania, governor of Achaia, prefect of the City, praetorian prefect of Italy and Illyricum for the second time, consul designate. [on the side] Dedicated on the Kalends of February, during the consulship of our lord Flavius Valentinianus (II) for the third time and Eutropius.³⁰

- 12 The secular and priestly titles of Praetextatus are laid out side by side, in two columns – the religious offices appearing first. His honours derived from his successful political engagement in the public life of the empire as much as from his dealing with different deities; there is no reason why the political should take precedence over the religious reading. Since the time of the Republic, Roman senators had been deeply involved in the city's religious life, occupying important priesthoods and deciding important matters of state based on their religious knowledge. The fact that the rise of Christianity called this association into question, affirming the preeminence of new types of religious authority, should not obscure the fact that powerful Romans continued to influence the religious lives of their contemporaries – whether pagans or not.³¹
- 13 Late Romans facing the likeness of the famous senator would be reminded of his powerful standing in both spheres of life at the same time. Perhaps more importantly, the sacred aspects of Praetextatus were acknowledged by contemporaries, most notably other priests. This is recorded on an inscribed base of a statue dedicated to the chief Vestal virgin Coelia Concordia by the senator's widow, Fabia Paulina:

To Coelia Concordia, chief vestal virgin. Fabia Paulina, of clarissimus rank, took care of the making and setting up of this statue, on account of her outstanding purity and remarkable piety concerning divine reverence, and because she [Coelia] had previously arranged a statue to be dedicated to her [Fabia's] husband, Vettius Agorius Praetextatus, of clarissimus rank, unique and deserving above all things, by the virgins and priests of her order.³²
- 14 Praetextatus, 'unique and deserving above all things', was celebrated by the 'virgins and priests' of Concordia's order with the dedication of a statue. Another prestigious pagan senator, Quintus Aurelius Symmachus, expressed his disagreement with this honour, stating that it was not proper for virtuous virgins to honour a man in this way, but his vote was defeated in the pontifical college.³³ Symmachus' personal opinion is beside the point: the fact that the Vestals, a group of priests founded by the mythical king Numa, dedicated the monument with the agreement of Rome's college of priests, indicates that this was more than a mere human honour.
- 15 Whereas marble statues and mosaics on the apses of churches were reserved to members of the Roman elite, other social groups also had spaces where they could be celebrated and associated with the sacred. Men and women, whether Christian or not, were presented associated with religious motifs, stories, or rituals, sometimes in a scenery that had clear religious associations. A good example is the painting that decorated the rear wall of a *cubiculum* in Area III of the Catacombs of Callixtus on the via Appia, the so-called cubicle 'of the Five Saints' (Fig. 2).³⁴

Fig. 2: Women and men in praying position (Rome, Catacomb of Callixtus, Late third century)

Source: WILPERT 1903, Tav. 110

- 16 The painting, datable to the early fourth century, depicts five individuals (three female and two male), identified by their names painted in red followed by the expression *in pace*. The five are shown in a paradisiacal garden, with flowers, plants, and peacocks, in a praying position, with their raised hands.³⁵ The funerary context, the setting, and the position of the portraits of the deceased are a clear marker of the sacred connotations of that painting. The mere position of the raised hands, ‘praying’, worked as a religious marker, emphasizing the pious character of the individual portrayed, as in a late third century portrait of a woman, from the Catacombs of Domitilla (Fig. 3).

Fig. 3: Woman in praying position wearing a veil (Rome, Catacomb of Domitilla, Late third century)

SOURCE: WILPERT 1903, Tav. 84.2

- 17 Paintings like these are an important reminder of another way in which portraits could establish an intimate relationship with the sacred. The women and men depicted in the walls of funerary spaces were not – as far as we can tell – individuals of ambiguous standing in Roman society, in the sense of emperors and pagan priests discussed above. There was nothing inherently religious or sacred in their position or in their specific visual representation. And yet, portraits could serve as a means of appropriating the sacred, of claiming a connection with a non-human dimension that was not possible in the day-to-day interactions of Romans. This is the issue that we must explore now.

Appropriating the Sacred

- 18 There was a close connection between funerary occasions and visual language. Scenes of banquets appear in catacombs from the third century onwards, harking back to a variety of religious traditions. Scholars have discussed the cultural origins of late antique funerary meals as well as of their iconographic representations, oscillating between Hellenistic evergetism, early Christian *refrigeria*, or simply the idea of abundance and commensality. What made banquets – whether in ritual or iconographic form – meaningful was precisely the fact that all these different elements could be mobilized in the celebration of the deceased and their family.³⁶ In the Catacombs of Saints Pietro e Marcellino, in Rome, a painting in an *arcosolium* shows a group of three individuals reclining for a meal, with a table in the centre (possibly with a fish), with a woman serving them clearly visible to the right – and possibly another to the left (Fig. 4).

Fig. 4: Scene of banquet with inscription (Rome, Catacomb of Saints Peter and Marcellinus, Late fourth century)

Source: WILPERT 1903, Tav. 157.2

- 19 The inscription on the top (*Agape porge calda; Irene misce*) might refer to the women serving the guests, or more likely allude to the more general concepts of Agape and Irene.³⁷ A poorly preserved image, from the same cemeterial complex, shows a group of men reclining on the right, attended by their servants on the left (Fig. 5).

Fig. 5: Scene of funerary banquet (Rome, Catacomb of Saints Peter and Marcellinus, Early-Middle fourth century)

Source: WILPERT 1903, Tav. 167

- 20 Paulinus of Nola, in a letter to his friend the Roman senator Pammachius, offers a complementary interpretation of a different banquet, which shows how powerful were the associations raised by funerary banquets.³⁸ In describing the lavish banquet offered

by his wealthy Roman friends to beggars from all over the city in the *atrium* of the basilica of St Peter in the Vatican, Paulinus establishes a parallel between that funerary celebration and the occasion when Christ commanded the apostles to recline and share their food with the poor:

“Indeed the Lord Himself was and is in you, because no man performs Christ’s work without His aid. By His gift and blessing you received for yourself abundance of bread in His name and, like the disciples who received from Him blessed bread to distribute, you apportioned it to the countless mouths of the poor. (...) For at the feast of Christ, clothed in a wedding garment you will deservedly recline with our fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, since here on earth Christ reclines with you amongst His poor, and in you ‘the son of man has a place to lay His head.’”³⁹

- 21 Although the occasion celebrated by the bishop of Nola explicitly referred to the feeding of the poor and vulnerable, his rhetoric illuminates the possibilities offered by banquets and similar rituals in late Roman culture.
- 22 The painting of the banquets in different tombs raises the issue of how religious notions and ideas could be appropriated by different people. More than literary and theological interpretations, however, portraits could act in a much more direct way, through visual association (Fig. 6).

Fig. 6: Good Shepherd flanked by prayers (Rome, Catacomb of Domitilla, Mid-fourth century)

Source: WILPERT 1903, Tav. 190

- 23 The painted *arcossolium* from the Catacomb of Domitilla depicts, from left to right, Moses drawing water from the rock, the Good Shepherd flanked by two smaller figures, and the scene of the resurrection of Lazarus. It is impossible to be certain about the identification of the two smaller figures flanking the Good Shepherd, but the fact that they are represented in a smaller size and in praying position suggests that they are “historical” intrusions into this collection of religious scenes. Scholars have discussed the extent to which painted portraits in catacombs could be seen as biographical and physiognomically accurate.⁴⁰ As the examples discussed above indicate, portraits were sometimes accompanied by labelling inscriptions that identified the person represented. There is no doubt either that at least in certain complexes the painters involved were careful enough to present a consistent depiction of the person deceased, as in the case of Trebius Iustus, who is recognizably shown in different panels painted on his hypogaeum.⁴¹ And yet, we should be careful not to expect late antique portraits –

whether in painting or sculpture – to follow earlier (or later) conceptions of realism. Whether in the *atrium* of a house, in one of the imperial *fora*, or in a room in a catacomb, context was everything. In this case, what we have are two smaller human figures displaying their piety in association with images with powerful religious meaning.

- 24 There were different elements, in the religious life of late antique Romans, that made the experience of the sacred part of daily life: rituals, objects, sites, and stories. Portraits could incorporate these elements, asserting the commitment and/or standing of the individual represented before a community of believers, appropriating the sacred. One way in which this could be achieved was through the association of the deceased and a saint or, in certain cases, even Christ.⁴² In the Catacomb of Domitilla, a painted *arcosolium* shows the deceased Veneranda being introduced into paradise by St Petronilla, both of them identified by inscriptions (Fig. 7).⁴³

Fig. 7: Veneranda and S. Petronilla (Rome, Catacomb of Domitilla, Mid-late fourth century)

Source: WILPERT 1903, Tav. 213

- 25 The fresco, datable to the second half of the fourth century, is part of a wider series of ‘scene teofaniche’ that present the individual portrayed in close association with the saint, who acts as colleague, patron, and guide.⁴⁴ The portraits of a man and a woman praying, from the Coemeterium Maius, flanked the image of Christ in the centre, announcing the fate of their souls after a life of piety and religious observance (Fig. 8).

Fig. 8: Man and woman praying, with Christ in the centre (Rome, Coemeterium Maius, fourth century)

SOURCE: WILPERT 1903, Tav. 164.1

- 26 This process should be seen in conjunction with the trend, in Christian circles, to be buried *ad sanctos*, a development that marked funerary architecture and habits in Rome and in the Mediterranean.⁴⁵ The image served both as a focus of remembrance and worship, combining deceased and saint.

Conclusion

- 27 As this chapter has argued, portraits – whether sculpted, painted, or mosaic – serve an important role in our understanding of religious images. Although not religious strictly speaking, they could be made religious depending on how and where they were presented. Depending on who was represented in visual form, these images could assume a religious dimension, being marked by elements that were more directly associated with what scholars have conventionally identified as the sacred. An accompanying inscription or even the physical context of display could emphasise this dimension of the portrait. The images that surrounded it – whether statues or paintings of pagan deities or Christian saints – could also play an important part in this process of interpreting them. More important, however, portraits were a specific form of discourse that allowed the individual commemorated as well as the commissioner of the work to appropriate elements that were not immediately (or physically) possible to incorporate. In this sense, portraits did not only represent the sacred, but actually contributed to its definition. As they remind us, a sacred, or religious, image did not have such character in and of itself. It acquired and constructed this dimension, defining itself as religious at the same time that it identified the individual(s) represented as such.
- 28 The discussion above highlights another important element in the definition of sacredness: the audience. A statue in the forum did not address the same viewer as a fresco in a catacomb, just as it was not commissioned by the same agent. An image in the forum spoke to the members of the community, passers-by, members of what we might call ‘the public’ (although this too is a modern category, therefore problematic for our understanding of ancient visual culture). A painted portrait in a catacomb was aimed at a much narrower audience, for a much shorter period of time: a family, perhaps with its inner circle of friends, visited the tomb and saw the portrait on a few occasions before new generations moved on and eventually the complex was either abandoned or repurposed. This did not make the message of funerary monuments

weaker: it was targeted to those who mattered the most, emphasizing familial identity and links, confirming to members of that group their own standing before the eyes of the wider community.

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NOTES

1. I would like to thank Claudia Beltrão da Rosa and Federico Santangelo for their kind invitation and hospitality during the conference in Rio de Janeiro that gave origin to this paper, as well as for their support and patience amidst the Covid-pandemic.
2. The room has been amply studied by scholars. See for recent discussion of the imagery, date, and identification of the structure, PERGOLA 1990; ZIMMERMANN, TSAMAKDA 2009; MAZZEI 2016.
3. MAZZEI 2016, 1929; BRACONI 2016, 63; for the relationship between the *annona* and social power in late antique Rome, see MACHADO 2019, 45-49.
4. See the chapters collected in REBILLARD, SOTINEL 2010. See more recently GASSMAN 2020 and WHELAN 2021.
5. Most famously in MARKUS 1985 and 1990.
6. MARKUS 2010; SOTINEL 2010; Gassman 2020.
7. MANGO 1963; SARADI-MENDELOVICI 1990.
8. See, of a very long bibliography, STIRLING 2005; BASSET 2004; MACHADO 2009.

9. Eus. *vita Const.* 3.54-57; see on this issue JACOBS 2020, 797-799.
10. Here again the bibliography is too long; see FEJFER 2008 for a good overview of sculpture; for painting, see NOWICKA 1993, LIVERANI 2018.
11. See the interesting methodological remarks of BORG 2012.
12. See, for examples, ELSNER 1998, 199-235; STEWART 2003, 184-222.
13. Rut. Nam., 1.575-92 (transl. J. W. Duff).
14. Price 1984, 170-206 for statues of emperors and the imperial cult in Asia Minor.
15. Suet., *Tib.* 58.1.
16. *CIL* VI, 1151 =*Last Statues of Antiquity*-273: "Divo ac venerabili/ principi Constantino/ patri principum/ maximorum/ Fl(avius) Creper[e]ius Madalianus v(ir) c(larissimus)/ praef(ectus) ann(onae) cum iure glad(ii)." All references to inscribed dedications will refer to the relevant volume of *CIL* as well as to the *Last Statues of Antiquity* database (henceforth *LSA*), accessible at <http://laststatues.classics.ox.ac.uk>.
17. Eus. *vita Const.* 4.69.
18. CHASTAGNOL 1988 remains the most complete study of these titles.
19. WEISWEILER 2016.
20. *CIL* X, 1656=*LSA*-331: "Felicitati perpetui (sic) tempo/ris d(omini) n(ostri) Valentiniani, / victoris ac trium/fatoris, semper Aug(usti), / Avianius Valentinus, / v(ir) c(larissimus), cons(ul) Camp(aniae), / devotus numini / maiestatique eius."
21. As recorded in Aur. Vict. *Caes.* 39.4; Amm. 15.5.18; see Stern 1954 for discussion; these rituals were recently studied in LINDHOLMER 2021.
22. See, for different perspectives, RONDOT 2013 and MATTHEWS 2016.
23. Eus. *HE* 7.18; Soz. 5.21 says that the statue was destroyed by the emperor Julian.
24. BISCONTI 2017 (discussing this statue on pp. 10-11); JENSEN 2004, 23-34.
25. BORDI 2006 discusses the series of portraits as part of Leo the Great's programme; CARMELENGHI 2018, 53-72 suggests an earlier date.
26. See the important discussion of LIVERANI 2019.
27. As argued in CAMERON 2011, 132-141.
28. CAMERON 2011, 132.
29. MACHADO 2019, 219-224.
30. *CIL* VI, 1778=*LSA*-1473. The inscription is laid-out in two columns after the name: "Agorii. / Vettio Agorio Praetextato, v(iro) c(larissimo), // (first column) pontifici Vestae, / pontifici Soli(s), / quindecimviro, / auguri, / tauroboliato, / curiali, / neocoro, / hierofantae, / patri sacrorum, // (second column) quaestori / candidato, / praetori urbano, / correctori Tus/ciae et Umbriae, / consulari / Lusitaniae, / proconsuli / Achaiae, / praefecto urbi, / praee(ecto) (sic, for 'praefecto') praet(orio) II (sic) / Italiae et Illyrici, / consuli / designato. // (on the side) Dedicata Kal(endis) Febr(uariis) / d(omino) n(ostro) Fl(avio) Valentiniano Aug(usto) III / et Eutropio cons(ulibus)."
 31. As demonstrated in MACHADO 2019, 165-176; for the religious role of senators in traditional Roman religion, see SCHEID 2005.
 32. *CIL* VI, 2145=*LSA*-1510: "Coeliae Concordiae, virgini / Vestali maximae. Fabia Pau/lina, c(larissima) f(emina), statuam facien/dam conlocandamque / curavit, cum propter / egregiam eius pudici/tiam insignemque / circa cultum divinum / sanctitatem tum quod / haec prior eius viro / Vettio Agorio Praetexta/to, v(iro) c(larissimo), omnia singulari / dignoque etiam ab huius / modi virginibus et sa/cerdotibus coli statu/am conlocarat."
 33. As we know from a letter of Symmachus himself: Symm., *epist.* 2.36.
 34. See, for the location, NESTORI 193, 109 n. 44.
 35. See BRACONI 2016, 41-42 and also the interesting observations of BORG 2013, 268-269.
 36. BISCONTI 2019.
 37. See discussion in FEVRIER 1996, 34.

38. Paul. Nol. *Ep.* 13.

39. Paul. Nol. *Ep.* 13.12 (transl. Walsh): “Nam in te et ipse dominus erat, sicut est, quia nemo Christi opera sine Christo agit, cuius munere et benedictione copiosos tibi panes ut accepisti in nomine eius, sicut discipuli ab ipso benedictos acceperant dividendos, per innumera pauperum ora dimensus es; (...) Recumbes enim iure cum patribus Abraham Isaac et Iacob convivio Christi veste praeditus nuptiali, quia tecum istic in pauperibus suis Christus recumbit, et habet in te filius hominis ubi reclinet caput suum.”

40. Most notably BISCONTI 2013; also BRACONI 2016.

41. BISCONTI 2013, 64. See also BISCONTI 2004, for discussion of the biographical elements of this cycle.

42. Something that can also be seen in other media, such as glass: GRIG 2004, 225-227.

43. GIULIANI 1994.

44. BISCONTI 2002, 129.

45. BROWN 1981; YASIN 209.

ABSTRACTS

This article analyses the ways in which portraits were associated with religious and sacred ideas and concepts in late antique Rome. Rather than straightforward, the identification of a visual representation of an individual as sacred was subject to discussion and controversy, as the definition of these categories shifted and different agents became involved in the process. Portraits show that rather than immanent to an image, categories such as sacred or religious could be appropriated through portraits, influencing the standing of the person commemorated as well as the relationship between sacred and profane.

Questo articolo analizza le diverse modalità con cui i ritratti erano associati a idee e concetti religiosi nella Roma tardoantica. Assolutamente non scontata, la qualifica di sacro per la rappresentazione iconografica di un individuo, era al contrario oggetto di continui dibattiti e controversie, poiché la definizione di queste categorie cambiava e diversi erano gli agenti coinvolti in questo scambio. I ritratti mostrano che categorie come il sacro o il religioso, lungi dall'essere intrinseche a un'immagine, potevano piuttosto divenire proprio attraverso di essi oggetto di un processo di appropriazione, che coinvolgeva tanto la posizione della persona rappresentata, quanto la natura stessa della relazione tra sacro e profano.

INDEX

Keywords: Portraits, Secular, Sacred, Rome, Late antiquity

Parole chiave: ritratti, secolare, sacro, Roma, Tarda antichità

AUTHOR

CARLOS MACHADO

School of Classics,
University of St Andrews
Swallowgate, Butts Wynd
Saint Andrews – UK
KY16 9AL
carm3(at)st-andrews.ac.uk