

Two facets concerning Roman women, dining, and the out-of-doors context of the garden have been noted by scholars. Some have studied the cultural act of open-air dining through literary and archaeological evidence (Jashemski 1979; Salza Prina Ricotti 1987; Dunbabin 1991, 2003; Purcell 1996). From modest garden *triclinia* to the grand dining constructions at Sperlonga and Hadrian's villa at Tivoli, evidence such as masonry couches and wall paintings reveal eating and drinking in gardens as popular and more than just an elite activity. Literary descriptions, such as Lucullus' *triclinium* within his aviary (Varro *De Re Rust.* 3.4.3), Pliny the Younger's detailed ekphrasis of his garden's *stibadium* (*Ep.* 5.6), and Martial's embarrassment over unfurnished garden couches (5.62) also point to this cultural obtainment.

The subject of Roman women in gardens has also recently been explored, primarily through the lens of power and imperial intrigue embedded within the historical sources (Boatwright 1998, Von Stackelberg 2010). Messalina and Agrippina serve as key actors in the analysis of garden transgressions (*Tac. An.* 11 and 12), particularly in their 'masculine' acquisitions of large urban estates of first-century CE Rome. Messalina hosts a Bacchic drinking party within her newly acquired grounds, whereas Clodia uses her *horti* along the Tiber to attract swimming youths (*Cic. Pro Cael.* 36). Yet the confluence of these ideas, namely literary and material constructions of women and open-air dining, remains vague. Although these imperial exploits reveal certain conceptions of decadent female behavior, they serve as narrow windows onto much more complex constructions of gendered interaction and dining that are often shaped by their surrounding contexts.

While Roller (2006) has shown that bodily contextualization can expose Roman conceptions of proper dining etiquette, in this paper I argue that physical settings were also essential to the creation of dining culture, since places are multivalent and afford different possibilities for identification and interaction. This sort of approach can provide a useful framework for exploring certain spaces of consumption that helped to shape Roman attitudes on gender relations. The Roman garden, protected by Venus but often dressed in Dionysiac excess, was a dynamic 'heterotopia' (Foucault 1986) charged with several valences that often separated garden dining in literature, art, and material culture from indoor settings. In this paper I will explore three of these valences as they relate to gendered interaction: first, ideas of the rustic and virtuous Roman past as exemplified in the modest *matrona* cultivating the garden for the self-sufficient household; second, connection to foreign exotica through Nilotic motifs of dining, in the case of Julia Felix's garden at Pompeii; and third, the performative liminality of outdoor spaces connected to Dionysiac revelry and erotic scenes of women drinking. Using literary and archaeological evidence as well as theoretical models of space, I argue that the highly charged atmosphere of the Roman garden, as a marked and significant set of spaces, played an active role in constructions of gender, consumption, and their interrelationship.