

Cinaedus Galbinatus: Cultural Perception of the Color “Green” and its Gender Association with *Pathici* in Rome

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It is common practice for modern and ancient societies alike to align gender and color because they both are highly-significant culturally constructed elements which deeply inform personal identities¹. This paper explores the gender implications of the Roman color *galbinus*, a tint which is more easily named than defined or, for that matter, identified. The adjective *galbinus* is referenced almost exclusively by satirists, and utilized to describe and deride *cinaedi*². Though the ancient authors’ foregrounding of this hue, as yet one additional expressive detail helping

1 — Paoletti (2013) 15-19. According to Aristotle *Sens.* 439a6-440b25 color corresponds to the visible surface of an item. In fact, the terms χρώμα, χροιά, χρώς may all refer to one’s skin, as the exterior indication of both bodily constitution and moral character, cf. Bradley (2013) 1675.

2 — For the meanings of the afore-mentioned Latin terms, cf. *OLD*, which proposes the translations “yellow-greenish” for *galbinus*, and “catamite” for *cinaedus*. Both translations are highly problematic, and a better assessment of what these two words signify is, in part, the object of the present contribution.

to lampoon gender-deviant characters, has been underscored by the great majority of commentators³, there remain two aspects of this topic that are systematically accorded short shrift. First, it is almost always taken for granted that *galbinus* corresponds to “green”, and in some cases it is suggested that *viridis* and *galbinus* ought to have the same symbolic value, because they are both “greens”⁴. Secondly, to my knowledge, nobody has attempted to investigate the reason why referencing the specific color *galbinus*, especially when associated to *pathici* (“submitting to sexual intercourse”), would systematically conjure up a morally dubious setting, if not one of complete debauchery. The history of Roman fashion in the first centuries of the empire shows the emergence of green garments as whimsical, exclusive items of feminine luxury – hence the throng of moralists bewailing the increasing number of males who were including *galbinus*-dyed garments as part of their wardrobes⁵. Not much research, however, has been done to pinpoint the reasons for such gender-compartmentalization of greens, and of the color *galbinus* in particular. Uncovering the roots of such a cultural taboo may not only shed light on some otherwise inconspicuous details woven by the narrative fabric of Roman satirical writing, but also problematize in interesting ways the hermeneutic frames – usually of structuralist descent – most often utilized to investigate the history of ancient “sexuality”. In this connection, while the present study cannot provide conclusive evidence for considering ancient *cinaedi* a sexual type *ante litteram*, it nonetheless lends weight to the speculative argument that a specific pattering of correspondences between *cinaedic* self-fashioning and female physiology could significantly contribute to this hermeneutic endeavor.

A color for the Satirists

In his second satire Juvenal targets the many sexual vices shared by a large part of Roman males, all the more heinous on account of Domitian’s strenuous as much as hypocritical attempts at reinstating the bygone values of an austere, even prudish, morality⁶. Juvenal lampoons the severe

3 — See, for instance, Braund (1996) 149: “The colour is associated with women [...] and with effeminate”.

4 — Such seems to be the argument of Hopman (2003) 569: “*Viridis* is the general term for green, whether light (*galbinus*) or dark (*prasinus*), and green is a marker of bad taste and sexual deviance when worn by men”.

5 — Cf. Olson (2008) 11-14, and (2017) 138-145. Green was not only a feminine color, but often associated with bad taste.

6 — As Walters (1998) 149 points out Juvenal’s second satire hinges on the themes of secrecy and disclosure, i.e. on what should be hidden because it is reproachable, but which becomes nonetheless apparent. Domitian notably took over the office of *ensor* in 84 CE and reinstated the *Lex Julia de adulteriis* which Augustus had had approved in 18 BCE. However, the emperor’s personal conduct

poses of the many contemporary wanna-be-philosophers, for whom sporting a withered and wild look is yet another fashionable attitude, clashing with their depraved customs and perverted sexual habits.

To more vividly deliver his condemnation of passive homoeroticism, Juvenal canvasses three scenes of turpitude and entrusts Laronia with the delivery of the moralistic tirade: implying that even a woman can censor such moral filth. In the first scene (2.64-81) Creticus is scorned for his *multicia*, that is a transparent/see-through kind of toga⁷: a garment inappropriate even for the most dissolute women, and a fashion trend which is spreading in Roman society like scabies among farm-animals. The second scene hinges on the description of various effeminate men taking part in mystery rites of same-sex marriage. These debauches feature a collection of various personal embellishments, all symbols of effeminacy, among which is the object of our analysis. More to the point, after mentioning a make-up-pencil, a phallus-shaped flask and a golden hairnet, Juvenal describes an individual *indutus galbina rasa* (“dressed in green satin”)⁸. The mention of this detail is followed in the third scene by a carefully planned climax of depravity. The aristocrat Gracchus is portrayed as a gladiator/buffoon, costumed in a way that challenges traditional gender codes⁹.

The literary use of the adjective *galbinus* is not attested before the common era, and seems to be a satirists’ word of choice. Beyond the passage from Juvenal, all we have are three additional significant occurrences: two from Martial’s epigrams and one from Petronius’ *Satyricon*. While at *Sat.* 67.4 the adjective describes a woman’s outfit¹⁰, the instances

stands out for its sexual excesses emblemized by his incest with his niece Julia, later forced to abort. This fact, to which both Juvenal 29-33, and Suetonius *Dom.* 22 allude, is compared by Pliny the Younger *Pan.* 52.3 to the incest of Oedipus with his mother Jocasta.

7 — Cf. Wild (1967) 151-154: the term *multicia* (from *multi-lícia*) is a translation of the Greek πολύμιτος, lit. “woven with many threads”. Wild interprets *μίτροι* (*licia*) as “threads” with the attendant explanation of the *vestes polymitae* as “tapestry-like clothes”, that is decorated in many colors. Surprisingly, there is no mention of the see-through quality on which Juvenal insists. Actually, tapestries with their multiple layers would not be transparent, unless we consider the hypothesis of various veils made out of silk, which conservative Romans judged morally unsuitable and effeminate to the point that Tiberius legislated against the use of this type of clothing, witness Tacitus *Ann.* 2.33 and Dion 57.15.1. On silk as a morally questionable material see Parker (2008) 170, and Olson (2017) 108. See also *ThLL* VII.II, 1373, 77-80: *ratione vix satis perspicua significatur sive subtegmen sive instrumentum quoddam, quo stamina ad subtegmen inserendum separari possunt.*

8 — All translations, including the present one, are mine.

9 — On the *retiarii tunicati* (“gladiators in tunics”) see Housman (1904).

10 — The *galbinus* color of Fortunata’s belt is the very first visual detail glanced by the guests of the *cena* (and by the reader) upon her entrance into the triclinia-room: *venit ergo galbino succincta cingillo, ita ut infra cerasina appareret tunica et periscelides tortae phaeacasiaeque inauratae* (“So she came in with a yellow-green girdle on, which allowed a cherry-colored bodice to appear under it, and twisted anklets, and white shoes embroidered with gold”). The *Satyricon* is rich in scenarios where reds (especially the color *cerasinus*, “cherry-colored”) and greens (mostly the *prasinus*, “leek-green” variety) are contrasted, perhaps to reference and deride the bad taste of the nouveaux riches, cf. Smith (1975) 54, and Grant (2004) 244, n. 2.

from Martial all characterize gender-deviant males. More specifically, at Mart. 3.82.5 Zoilus is portrayed while laying on a bed, all dressed in a *galbinus*-hued garment: *iacet occupato galbinatus in lecto* (“garbed in yellow-green he lies filling up the couch”). The successive lines present a variety of material details, all whimsically morbid, and all alluding to the degeneration of the man: a red feather, a mastic toothpick, a shell-shaped golden vessel containing cheap hair cream. Even Zoilus’ personal valets, an *exoletus* (“male prostitute”) and a eunuch, symbolize a type of maimed masculinity. Perhaps the most significant hint at the man’s perversion is the very last word of the epigram: *fellat* (“he sucks cocks”). This is the reason why, Martial is here arguing, not only is Zoilus beyond any possibility of redemption, but he is also immune to potential vengeance, which is here to be imagined as a Catullan kind of *irrumatio*, *fellatio* forced by the penetrator on the penetratee¹¹. Quite conspicuously, Mart. 3.81, the rather short composition immediately preceding the piece on Zoilus, concerns a eunuch who, despite his permanent mutilation, still maintains his manly instincts for oral sex and enjoys having his mouth penetrated by cunnilingus. If only for his mouth, (and unlike Zoilus), he is still a man: *ore vir es*¹². Going back to the adjective *galbinus*, we find an additional attestation at Martial 1.96, an epigram presenting striking similarities with at least part of the argument propounded by Juvenal’s text. Very much like the false philosophers and false moralists of the second satire, an unnamed character purports to be a moralist of the old days on account of his love for grayish, gloomy-hued mantels made of Baetic wool (*amator ille tristium lacernarum et baeticatus atque leucophaeatus*, “that lover of sad-colored cloaks, clad in Baetic wool or grey”). Quite predictably, the man’s austere look does not match his actual ethos because, as we learn towards the end of the epigram, when he is at the public baths *spectat oculis devorantibus draucos/ nec otiosis mentulas videt labris* (“he watches with his devouring eyes the athletes/ and he does not glance at their cocks with his lips at rest”). Once again, the allusion to oral sex between males

11 — Cf. Richlin (1983) 135: “The rejection of Zoilus even as a candidate for rape is similar to the rejection of old crones by Priapus”.

12 — The practice of cunnilingus is far from unproblematic because it forces the *vir* (“the male”) into a passive performance, cf. Parker (1997) 51-53 and Williams (2010²) 218-224. However, in this specific example from Martial’s epigram, it could be argued that, given the eunuch’s genital mutilation, cunnilingus is indeed “the next best thing” in terms of gender-appropriateness, in fact, his only available option. The image remains nonetheless unsettling on account of the eunuch’s traditional representation as a sexual object (never a subject) completely subservient to the pleasures of both males and females. In particular women, because of the eunuchs’ infertility, could use them as “safe” erotic companions, or to say with Cordier (2002) 70 “amant[s] anticonceptionnel[s]”. Guyot (1980) 22-23 further distinguishes between “Frühkastraten” and “Spätkastraten”. The former were castrated before puberty and were completely sterile, the latter were eviscerated during or after puberty, and could still reproduce.

is patent. The hypocrisy of this character is emphasized by his rebuke of those whom he judges too effeminate; allegedly so on account of their outfits. He scorns the *coccinatos* (“the ones dressed in scarlet clothes”), and those who wear *amethystinas vestes* (“purple colored garments”), but his censorious pitch cannot alter his true perverted nature, as Martial *Ep.* 1.96.9 comments, *galbinos habet mores* (“he sports green(ish) morals”)¹³.

These are all the extant attestations of the adjective *galbinus*¹⁴. Its use appears to be confined to the satirical repertoire, and presents at least two layers of signification: the most obvious one refers to a specific color, while the other betokens a negative moral judgment (prompted by the color itself). This moral orientation clearly emerges from Martial 1.96.9 where the adjective is utilized as a modifier of *mores*. Inescapable though this conclusion might be, the reason that the *galbinus* color was looked upon with such disdain escapes us. To solve the conundrum, one must try to address three fundamental issues. Firstly, one needs to get a better sense of the specific color designated by the adjective *galbinus*. Secondly, it is necessary to investigate why this color was considered appropriate only for females and gender-deviant males (to the point of becoming tantamount to a moral statement). Finally, since colors and clothing styles were items that betokened social identities, the attribution of a specifically colored outfit to an equally specific erotic experience greatly problematizes the Foucauldian/structuralist paradigm. In fact, the idea of a color of choice introduces the notion that other attributes bestow performative identity upon the ancient erotic experience, which is often described as hinging entirely on the active/passive dyad¹⁵. Conversely, the association of eroticism and identity pertains to the modern notion of sexuality¹⁶. Thence, what to do with, or even simply how to name the ancient erotic behaviors seemingly involving some elements linked with identity, such as colors? Even more crucially, what to do with the willful selection¹⁷ of a color, that

13 — Here the metaphorical value of the adjective *galbinus* clearly betokens its function as signifier of moral values.

14 — Admittedly there are two additional, albeit late, attestations respectively in *Hist. Aug., Aur.* 34.2, where, as part of Aurelianus’ triumphal procession, Tetricus dons a humiliating *tunica galbina* (“yellow-green tunic”) together with some Gallic ornaments, and in Vegetius, *Mulom.* 1.17.14 who describes the thistle flower’s color as either *aureus* (“golden”) or *galbinus*.

15 — In the words of Parker (1997) 48: “Roman sexuality was a structuralist’s dream”.

16 — For the idea that sexuality is conceptually dependent on the notion of identity, cf. Foucault (1976) 58-59: “Cette chasse nouvelle aux sexualités périphériques entraîne une incorporation des perversions et une spécification nouvelle des individus [...]. Le sodomite était un relaps, l’homosexuel est maintenant une espèce”. See also the argument of Halperin (1989) and, quite compelling, the more recent contribution by Beachy (2014).

17 — Certainly, the *cinaedi* were scorned for their *galbinus* attire (among various other attributes) by the non-*cinaedi*, but the choice of that specific item of fashion must have been a free and independent one, lest we imagine the Roman *viri* not only deriding *cinaedi*, but also providing them with *galbini* garments, which were the objects of derision.

may well be framed as a “cultural preference”, but which nonetheless, as I hope to demonstrate, purports to reference the nature and physiology of the female body?

Between Green and Yellow

The *vexata quaestio* concerning the value and functioning of color naming qua linguistic operation is beyond the scope of the present contribution¹⁸. It will here suffice to mention the fact that the spectrum roughly designated by the term *galbinus*, more precisely the correspondence between this term and the attendant chromatic spectrum, is so problematic as to amount to a textbook example of the many issues raised by scholarly investigations concerning colors and color perception in the ancient world. Pastoureau sketches a brief history of the debate on the apparent lack of a specific terminology for the color green in ancient Greek, a conundrum which raised much interest in the first half of the 20th century, and often led to rather jejune, if not patently racist interpretations¹⁹.

Green, greenish, sometimes yellow, and certainly occupying a spectral location between blue and yellow, the color *galbinus* resists a more specific identification²⁰. The difficulty of finding adequate denominations for the bewildering variety of colors is still very much present in the II century CE. According to Gellius *NA* 2.26.3, Favorinus maintained that:

“plura, [...] sunt [...] in sensibus oculorum quam in verbis vocibusque colorum discrimina. Nam, ut alias eorum inconcinnitates omittamus, simplices isti rufus et viridis colores singula quidem vocabula, multas autem species differentis habent.

18 — Two clear and recent contributions on the topic can be found in Grossmann (1998) 8-27 and Joseph (2000). As Bologna (2003) 55 points out, the linguistic analysis of colors “offre di volta in volta argomenti contrari o a favore di uno dei due poli, l’universalità e l’arbitrarietà”.

19 — Pastoureau (2013) 19-26. The debate actually began with Gladstone’s 1858 work on color terms in the Homeric poems. In this work, the future prime minister under Queen Victoria underscored the rarity of color-terms both in the *Iliad* and in the *Odyssey*. From the 1870s the Austrian ophthalmologist Magnus posited that, in accordance with the Darwinian tenets of evolution theory, the scarcity and ambiguity of ancient Greek terms indicating blue and green was but a consequence of a not yet fully evolved human ocular apparatus, presumably not entirely capable of perceiving these two colors. Lastly, in the late 1920s and early 1930s, many classicists from Nazi Germany averred that the alleged poverty of ancient Greek language, particularly so if compared to the specificity that German demonstrated in labelling colors, was the indisputable sign of a primitive spirit, and even more so if compared to the spiritual superiority of the German mind.

20 — On methodological fallacy (and modern prejudice) which is at the base of the quest for the exact chromatic correspondence between modern and ancient hues (whatever these two labels may actually signify) see Romano (2003) 45-47 and her critiques of the otherwise still fundamental work of André (1949) 148-150, who considers *galbinus* under the heading of yellow, not green.

There are more color distinctions perceived by the eye than words and terms can express. For, even if we leave out other incongruities, two simple colors, red (*rufus*) and green (*viridis*), receive a single name, while they present many different shades.

Quite tellingly, to exemplify Latin's linguistic *inopia* ("scarcity") vis-à-vis color terminology, Favorinus selects the examples of *rufus* and *viridis*. This is because Latin inherits from Greek a rather limited range of words indicating the different nuances possessed by each of these two colors²¹; in fact, for the color green, there are only three basic terms: χλωρός to express the yellow/green range; γλαυκός designating a wide palette which includes green, yellow but also blue and grey; and, from the 3rd century BCE on, πράσινος, which quite literally signifies "leek-colored". Both γλαυκός and πράσινος survive in Latin and are regularly used and duly transliterated as *glaucus*²² and *prasinus*. To these basic terms the Romans eventually added *herbeus* "grass-like green", and *vitreus* "shining green", but *viridis* is much more widely used²³. In line with the ideal of masculine strength, *viridis* shares the same root as *vis* "strength", *ver* "spring", *vir* "male", *virga* "branch" and also "penis"²⁴.

As for *galbinus*, the object of our analysis, at *Ep.* 13.68, as part of his collection of *Xenia*, the hospitable gifts for the *Saturnalia*, Martial describes a little, colorful bird:

Galbuli

21 — Much as we find with its philosophical language, Latin forges its color vocabulary on the basis of what is fundamentally a Greek inheritance.

22 — The term *glaucus* provides a significant example of both the difficulty of finding a terminology adequate to label the various nuances of green, and the dependence of Latin color terminology on Greek. At *NA* 2.26.17-19, Gellius reports Fronto's opinion of Vergil's use of the adjective in question: *Sed ne viridis quidem color pluribus a vobis vocabulis dicitur, neque non potuit Vergilius, colorem equi significare viridem volens, 'caerulum' magis dicere eum quam 'glaucum,' sed maluit verbo uti notiore Graeco quam inusitato Latino. Nostris autem veteribus 'caesia' dicta est, quae a Graecis γλαυκῶπις, ut Nigidius ait, de colore caeli, quasi caelia.* "But neither is the color green expressed by more terms in your language, and Virgil, when he wished to indicate the green color of a horse, could perfectly well have called the horse *caerulus* rather than *glaucus*, but he preferred to use a familiar Greek word, rather than one which was unusual in Latin. Moreover, our earlier writers used *caesia* as the equivalent of the Greek γλαυκῶπις, as Nigidius says, from the color of the sky, as if it were originally *caelia*".

23 — Pastoureau (2013) 27. There are two additional, but extremely rare, terms that Latin inherits from Greek. These are *callainus*, a transliteration of καλαῖνος (both adjectives mean "greenish-blue"), and of which only one instance survives, and *cumatilis*, possibly a loan-transaction from θαλασσοειδής (both adjectives mean "sea- or wave-colored"), and attested three times, cf. André (1949) 211.

24 — Cf. Varro *Ling.* 5.21.102: *Proxima animalia sunt ea quae vivere dicuntur neque habere animam, ut virgulta. Virgultum dicitur a viridi, id a vi quadam humoris; quae si exaruit, moritur.* "The next beings to be considered are those who are said "to live" (*vivere*) but, like bushes (*virgulta*) do not breathe. "Bush" (*virgultum*) is said to be derived from "green" (*viridis*), and "green" (*viridis*) from a certain "force" (*vis*) of moisture". On the etymological ramification of the color *viridis*, cf. Ernout and Meillet (1979⁴), s.v. *virere*.

*Galbina decipitur calamis et retibus ales,
turget adhuc viridi cum rudis uva mero.*

Yellow birds

The yellow bird is deceived by rods and nets when the young grape is swelling with wine still green.

What merits emphasis about this short composition is the identification of the animal here translated with the vague wording “yellow bird”. Both Capponi and Arnott propose tagging the *galbina ales* as a specimen of golden oriole (*oriolus oriolus*), a Euro-Asiatic sub-species of sparrow, which is still very much present in southern Europe and in Italy, where it is known by the popular name of “Rigogolo”, and by the dialectal variant of “Gobulo” and “Gobolo”²⁵. This bird sports both vividly yellow and green feathers, with the male having yellow as his predominant color, while the female is greener. Even if this animal does not provide a definitive interpretative solution for the nature of the color *galbinus*, (both Romance and Germanic languages lack a specific name for this “in-between-yellow-and-green” hue), it nonetheless constitutes a tangible and still visible example of what the Romans would term *galbinus*. Moreover, the anatomy, color and behavior of this animal are described by Aristotle, Pliny the Elder and Aelian, who refer to the same bird by the Greek name *χλωρίων*²⁶, while Pliny, who chooses the variant *galgulus*, labels the animal as *avis icterus*, once again stressing the abundant presence of yellow in the plumage. Several glosses also confirm the identity of *galbulus* and *χλωρίων* as names coined for the same bird²⁷. Thence, *galbinus* is here the Latin equivalent of the Greek color term *χλωρός*.

To recapitulate the argument so far, we have determined that (1) the adjective *galbinus* is rarely used in Latin, and favored by the satirists. (2) The same root of the adjective also appears in the name of a bird whose coloration is yellow/green, and (3) which corresponds to the Greek

25 — Cf. Capponi (1976) 246, Arnott (2007) 53, Watson (2002) 386. Mynott (2018) 353, proposes to identify the *galbula* with the little yellow bird perched above a strawberry bush in one of the frescos of the House of the Golden Bracelet in Pompeii. Watson also points to other plausible specimens of golden oriole that one could identify in the frescos of some of the most prominent Pompeian villas. Such is the case with a yellow male oriole painted while perching on an oleander branch on the W wall of the Casa della Venere in Bikini, or with another male specimen feeding on sorb apples in a wall painting of the House of Trebius Valens. Furthermore, a male and a female appear on the E panel of the S wall in the room off the peristyle in the House of the Fruit Orchard, and the same house also sports representations of two additional females: one perched on a lemon tree and the other on a branch of a yellow plum tree. Last but not least, a male oriole appears in the wall painting of the cubiculum of the Villa of Fanius Synistor at Boscoreale (now part of the Metropolitan Museum’s collection).

26 — Cf. Aristotle *HA* 617a28-32; Pliny *NH* 10.87, 10.203; Aelian *NA* 4.47.

27 — In this regard, cf. Watson (2002) 386 who adds that the modern Greek name of the golden oriole is *σικοφάγος* after the bird’s habit of eating figs.

χλωρίων, thus making it possible to establish a parallel between the Latin tint *galbinus* and the Greek χλωρός²⁸. Having roughly identified the color and its Greek counterpart, it remains to be seen why *galbinus* was the target of harsh moralistic attacks, and why it was associated with *cinaedi*.

Not for Males

If the chromatic identification of *galbinus* proves problematic, its social usage can be somewhat better determined: men did not wear it, nor were they (supposed to be) fond of any shade of green in general²⁹. It should first be noted that the Romans developed a form of “moral sensitivity” towards colors at an early date. By the 3rd/2nd century BCE, Cato the Elder unambiguously condemns some tinctures as shameful and contrary to the established Roman *mores*. Cicero, Seneca, and Pliny followed in his footsteps, and offered similar moralistic insights into the topic. Cicero *De Or.* 3.95 is the first text to introduce the adjective *floridus* (“bright”), which refers to the novelty of the new colors that, though able to immediately captivate attention, would soon prove tiresome, unlike the old ones, *horridi* (“grim”) and *obsoleti* (“dingy”), yet able to stand the test of time.

Pliny *NH* 35.12 further develops Cicero’s definition³⁰ and outlines a division of colors as “dignified” and “flourished”, where the use of the adjective *austerus* (“sombre”) laden with a positive moral connotation and contrasted with *floridus*, lent the latter a negative ethical connotation:

Sunt autem colores austeri aut floridi. Utrumque natura aut mixtura evenit.

Some colors are, however, austere or flourishing, the difference consisting in the nature of the components or in their mixture.

28 — The equivalence between *galbinus*/χλωρός is also endorsed at *ThLL* VI.II, 1671, 57. The yellow/green spectral position of *galbinus*/χλωρός seems to be confirmed by the fact that in Greek poetry honey is often qualified as χλωρός (cf. Homer *Il.* 11.631; *Od.* 10.234; *b. Merc.* 560; Stesichorus fr. 179(a)2 *PMG*, Xenophanes fr. 34D) and so are figs (cf. Euripides fr. 907). For a thorough analysis of these occurrences, see Irwin (1974) 56-62.

29 — There are, of course, notable exceptions. The work of Cameron (1976) is entirely devoted to the various circus *factiones* (“racing establishments”) which were canonically identified by four colors: *albata* (“the white faction”), *veneta* (“the blue faction”), *prasina* (“the green faction”), and *russata* (“the red faction”) (at least so under Augustus, after which only the *veneta* and the *prasina* continued to race.) Additionally, we have quite a collection of details attesting to Nero’s passion for the color green. According to Pliny *NH* 37.64 *Nero princeps gladiatorum pugnas spectabat in smaragdo*. “Emperor Nero would watch the gladiatorial games by looking at the combats through an emerald”.

30 — On the relation between the text of Cicero and Pliny’s observations, cf. Brécoulaki (2006): 33-35.

It should first be noticed that, in spite of the important distinction between *natura* and *mixtura*, Pliny, like all his contemporaries, lacks a sharp conceptual differentiation between chromatic color, pigment, and colorant³¹. More important for now, however, is Pliny's comment at *NH* 35.97 on Apelles' pictorial technique, which can shed some light on the distinction between *colores floridi* and *austeri*. This text bears quoting in full:

Inventa eius et ceteris profuere in arte; unum imitari nemo potuit, quod absoluta opera atramento inlinebat ita tenui, ut id ipsum, cum repercussum claritates colorum omnium excitaret custodiretque a pulvere et sordibus, ad manum intuenti demum apparet, sed et luminum ratione magna, ne claritas colorum aciem offenderet veluti per lapidem specularem intuentibus et e longinquo eadem res nimis floridis coloribus austeritatem occulte daret.

Other painters have profited from his (Apelles') inventions in the art of painting; however, there is one which nobody has been able to imitate. This consists in his method of covering his finished works with such a thin black glaze, that its very presence, while enhancing with its reflection the radiance of all colors and sheltering them from dust and dirt, would nonetheless be apparent only to one looking at it close up, but also through a great ratio of lights, in a way so that the radiance of the colors, as if observed through a muscovy-glass, would not be blinding, and so that this same expedient would, from a distance, invisibly tone down too-garish colors.

This crucial excerpt references Apelles' invention of a type of *atramentum* ("black pigment") obtained through the calcination of *elephantinum* ("ivory"), rather than carbon, the mineral more commonly used³². Both Lepik-Kopaczyńska and Rouveret suggest that Apelles' *atramentum* consisted of a glazing varnish that, due to its high refractive power, would enhance the radiance of the colors treated with it³³.

Later, at *NH* 35.50, Pliny establishes a relation between the *austeri*, more traditional colors, and the tetrachromatic painters:

31 — The modern notion of pigment refers to an insoluble element suspended in medium that it itself colors, while a colorant is a soluble dye dispersed in the medium. I take these observations from Halm-Tisserant (2013) 307 according to whom: "Dans l'*Histoire Naturelle* le terme *color* peut indifféremment désigner un ton de l'espace colorimétrique, différents types de couleurs artificielles acquérant les propriétés d'un ton, voire des tons, obtenus pas des procédés picturaux, tels que le glacis et les vélatures".

32 — Cf. Rouveret (1989) 256.

33 — Cf. Lepik-Kopaczyńska (1985) and Rouveret (1989) 256-257. In particular Lepik-Kopaczyńska maintains that the ancient distinction between *colores austeri* and *floridi* may correspond to the modern subdivision in opaque and transparent.

Quattuor coloribus solis immortalia illa opera fecere – ex albis Melino, e silaciis Attico, ex rubris Sinopide Pontica, ex nigris atramento – Apelles, Aetion, Melanthis [...]. Omnia ergo meliora tunc fuere, cum minor copia.

Apelles, Aetion, Melanthis and Nichomachus created those immortal works in only four colors: of whites, Melinum; of ochres, Attic; of reds, Pontic Sinopis; of blacks *atramentum* [...] everything was superior in a time when resources were more scarce.

Not only does Pliny distinguish between two categories of colors on the basis of a dichotomy that is not simply chromatic, but also ethical, but he also quite tellingly stresses the moralistic value of this division by linking the austere colors to the prestige of a bygone era and its artists³⁴. The principle of tetrachromatism is not Pliny's original contribution, but has a long tradition dating back to Democritus, as attested by Theophrastus *De sensu* 73.1 (= fr. 1 Wimmer):

τῶν δὲ χρωμάτων ἀπλᾶ μὲν λέγει τέτταρα.

He maintains that there are four basic colors.

Now according to Democritus these fundamental four colors are λευκόν (“white”), μέλαν (“black”), ἐρυθρόν (“red”), and, surprisingly enough, χλωρόν, which, once again, corresponds to the Latin *galbinus*. This discrepancy between Greek and Latin classifications of the four basic colors may in the end prove less critical than it appears. Democritus' testimony, authoritative though it may be, offers but one man's stance, and may not necessarily reflect the position of other philosophers. However, the fact that Theophrastus, with his traditionally peripatetic penchant for categorization, chooses to base his text on Democritus' lore, speaks volumes about the success of this pre-Socratic “system of colors”.

Perhaps the exclusion of *galbinus* from the main canon of Roman colors as outlined by Pliny, may be accounted for by the difficulty of actually producing this hue, especially so during the Republican age³⁵.

34 — On the moralistic aspects of book 35 of Pliny's *NH*, entirely devoted to mineralogy, cf. Naas (2016) 206-211. The praise of the *colores austeri* as tightly related to the virtues of a bygone era is already present in Vitruvius *De arch.* 7, on whose text Pliny's observations depend, cf. Halm-Tisserant (2013) 306, 311. The fact that a painter through the use of *colores floridi* could achieve a quasi-blinding visual effect without the level of mastery required by the skillful processing of the *austeri* likely contributed to the moral condemnation of the former, which stood out as an expensive, tasteless, and bewildering artistic means; cf. Rouveret (1989) 259.

35 — The dye industry in Rome was very soon fully operational. Plautus *Aul.* 505-522 mentions four main *collegii* (“guilds”) named after the colors each one of them specialized in: *flammarii* (“those who dye garments flame-colored”), *carinarii* (“those who dye brown”), *molocinarii* (“those who dye mallow”), *corcotarii* (“those who dye garments saffron-colored”). The color purple (*purpura*), notably extracted from the *murex*, was by far the most diffuse tincture, and the one manufactured with the higher standard of quality. The color *coccineus*, a variety of red obtained from the egg-sacs of

The little we known about green garments, and more specifically about the colors *prasinus* and *callainus*³⁶, seems to confirm what the satirists point out also about the color *galbinus*: it was a color for females³⁷. That notwithstanding, the fact that *galbinus* was not included by Pliny (nor by Vitruvius, i.e. Pliny's main source for his sections on colors) among the group of *austeri*, does not grant it an automatic/unproblematic membership in the *floridi*. Thence the fundamental question: was *galbinus* a *floridus* color? This matter has crucial bearing on account of the moral/moralistic implications which, in Roman culture, subtend the division of colors into *floridi* and *austeri*. Halm-Tisserant's contribution singles out some general features common to the *floridi*³⁸. First, they were quite expensive, as attested by both Vitruvius and Pliny³⁹. Secondly, they were appreciated (and for the same reason criticized) as a *novicii*, i.e. a luxurious novelty which grew in popularity around the same time when the III and IV Pompeian style became prominent. Thirdly, the *floridi* were almost exclusively utilized for decorating and painting walls of luxurious *domus* and, in this connection, they were valued as a more affordable alternative to (in fact almost a double of) otherwise too costly precious materials. The *floridi* were especially admired for their ability to reflect incident light, a characteristic which modern scholars almost unanimously attribute to the use of tinctorial colorants utilized as glazing varnishes/ lacquers. At least some of these qualities of the *floridi* can be easily attributed also to the color *galbinus*, which was 1) à la mode 2) precious (or at least perceived at such) to the point of being paired by Juvenal with golden items (cf. p. 3), and 3) utilized for the dyeing of clothes: an element of importance if, as it seems, the typical "transparency" of the *floridi* was obtained through the

the insect *Kermococcus vermilio*, was also achieved with outstanding results. While still discussing part of the red spectrum, Vitruvius *De arch.* 7.7.1-5 mentions the varieties *rubrica*, *sandraca*, and *nimum*, together with *sil*, a species of yellow ochre. There exist several mentions of the *atramentum*, black hue, and its dedicated *collegium* of the *atramentarii* (CIL IV 9127); however, blues and greens are very rarely mentioned, a tangible sign of the technical difficulties to achieve high-quality and durable dyeing in these colors, cf. Sebesta (1994) 71 and Goldman (2013) 39-56. Rarity of the dye and association with female luxury seem to be qualities that blues and greens have in common, if Juvenal 2.97 purposely associates *ceruleus* and *galbinus* as signs of effeminacy: *cerulea indutus scutulata aut galbina rasa* (cf. p. 3). For the importance of dyeing techniques for the development of the Latin vocabulary concerning colors see Romano (2003).

36 — *Callainus* is etymologically related to *callais*, a stone which, according to Pliny *NH* 37.151, *sappirum imitatur, candidior et litoroso mari simili* "is similar to lapis lazuli, only that it is lighter and like the color of the sea close inshore". Martial *Ep.* 14.140(139).2 mentions a cloak which is white when first put on, and whose color has turned to *callainus* once taken off (because stained by the color of the hood wetted by rain). See also *ThLL* III, 165, 50-66 where the term is glossed as *colore pallido et viridi* ("pale green-colored").

37 — Cf. André (1949) 192-193.

38 — Cf. Halm-Tisserant (2013) 308-311.

39 — Cf. Vitruvius *De arch.* 7.14.2 and Pliny *NH* 35.44.

use of tinctorial mordants⁴⁰. Lastly, it is worth repeating that *galbinus*, like the *floridi* colors, is conspicuous for its being the object of harsh moralistic tirades. Perhaps this is not enough to conclusively assimilate the color *galbinus* to the group of *floridi*, yet one could safely argue that there exist both a significant affinity and, ultimately, a close proximity.

So far, we have concentrated mainly on the green spectral component of *galbinus*. However, the symbolic value of the various sartorial nuances of yellow, the other main component of this color's spectrum, confirms its gendered pattern and highly-symbolic allusive qualities. To begin with, yellow and in particular its orange-hued (*flammeus*) variety⁴¹, was both the color and the namesake of the *flammeum*, the mantle which was part of the Roman bridal costume. Pliny *NH* 21.22 describes this nuptial garment's color as *luteus* ("orange-yellow"), and insists on the fact that it was an exclusive appurtenance of women:

Lutei video honorem antiquissimum, in nuptialibus flammeis totum feminis concessum, et fortassis ideo non numerari inter principales, hoc est communes maribus ac feminis, quoniam societas principatum dedit.

I see that yellow was the earliest color to be highly honored, and was given exclusively to women as a privilege for their bridal veil, and perhaps it is for this reason that it is not part of the main colors, which is to say the colors that are shared by males and females because their preeminence has been granted by their joint use.

Pliny could not be more explicit in assigning colors on a gendered basis: yellow, in its bridal garment variety is off limits for males⁴². The other main tint of yellow, the *croceus* ("saffron"), is not any less problematic for males than the *luteus*⁴³. For example, Cicero *Har. resp.* 21.44 accuses Clodius of having dressed like a woman, that is with a saffron robe in order to attend (and profane) the *Bona Dea* cultic rituals:

40 — Cf. Halm-Tisserant (2013) 314-318. In particular the adjective *floridus* clearly derives from *flos* (ἄθος) which, according to various ancient sources, was the technical term commonly used to designate the *murex*' gland from which the purple dye was extracted; cf. Plato *Rep.* 4.429d, Aristotle *HA* 5.15, and Pliny *NH* 9.123.

41 — On this specific color, see André (1949) 115-116 and LaFollette (1994) 55-56.

42 — It is also worth calling attention to Pliny's description, at *NH* 32.146, of a variety of fish known as *cinaedi*, which apparently are *soli piscium lutei*, or "the only fish to be yellowish". Aside from the identification of this creature — Jones (1963) 555 translates it as "wrasse" (a generic label for various subspecies of the *labridae* family) but does not provide any grounds for the identification — it is remarkable how this animal's namesake has been systematically explained on the basis of its hindquarters' movement (cf. Williams (2010²) 193). However, I have yet to think of a single fish that does not move without "sashaying". In light of the present analysis, it is much more likely that the fish's "yellowish" color, rather than the unexceptional pinnae's movement is at the origin of the name.

43 — The *flammeus*' dye was extracted from the stamens of crocus, a flower which, throughout the ancient Mediterranean, was believed to promote regular menses and was therefore associated with female health, cf. Reeder (1995) 127, and Sebesta (1997) 540, n. 33.

P. Clodius a crocota, a mitra, a muliebribus soleis purpureisque fasceolis, a strophio, a psalterio, a flagitio, a stupro est factus repente popularis.

All of a sudden from his saffron clothes, his turban, his feminine slippers and purple hose, his breast band, his psaltery, and his crime and his sexually shameful conduct Publius Clodius was suddenly rendered a demagogue.

Lastly, Goldman underscores the many attestations depicting the priests of Cybele, the eunuchs' patroness, as wearing yellow robes, again in a ritual and religious context⁴⁴.

This cursory exploration of various literary sources recording the use and consideration of yellows and greens, the two main areas of the spectral composition associated with *galbinus*/χλωρός, demonstrates an unequivocal and negative moral characterization of this ancient color. It was perceived as an exclusive appurtenance of women, with the attendant consequence that any man's attempt of appropriating it was judged as ethically questionable, and potentially causing a loss of virility, nothing short of a moral castration. What remains to be ascertained is why the color *galbinus* was endowed with such powerful symbolic connotations. An ad hoc analysis of some ancient medical lore may provide at least some answers to the conundrum.

A Medical Color

The role played by colors in the development of ancient medicine has been the object of a number of studies⁴⁵. By the time of the Hippocratic writers of the 5th and 6th century, the observation of a patient's body's different colorations amounted to a fundamental diagnostic skill. One's external appearance and color was often the first sign to be evaluated by the doctor because it could reveal fundamental information concerning the patient's general health⁴⁶. Furthermore, a considerable component of a doctor's apprenticeship involved learning how to assess the features of the various humors, among which color played a central role. Ancient medical lore therefore offered training for the professional examination

44 — Goldman (2014) 61-62. Vergil *Aen.* 11.768-777 describes a very glamorous priest of Cybeles/warrior whose name, unsurprisingly, is Chloereus. Williams (2010²) 195-196 observes how the figure of the *gallus*, the Mother Goddess' castrated priest, and the *cinaedus* often overlap.

45 — Cf. Bradley's (2006) 128-137 specific contribution, with attendant bibliography.

46 — On the crucial role of visual inspection of the patient's appearance as a fundamental diagnostic means, cf. *DW* 1.11: Ταῦτ' οὖν ἐσιδὼν, καὶ γνώμη σκεθρῆ βασανίσας, ἐς ὄλον τὸ σῶμα ἀθρέειν, ἦν τε πολλῆς καθάρσιος δοκέη δεῖσθαι, ἦν τε μὴ, ἀποσκεψάμενος ἐς τὴν χροῖν καὶ τὴν ἡλικίην καὶ ῥώμην καὶ ἄρην καὶ οἷα διαίτη χρέονται "After observing these elements and examining them carefully, next consider the whole body to determine whether or not it seems to require a profound cleaning, taking into account her complexion, age, and strength, and the season and the regimen which is being followed".

of both one's external and internal, i.e. humoral, colors⁴⁷. Since ailments were diseases of previously unspoiled and balanced states, with health consisting of well-balanced humors, the training for proficient medical diagnosis required an ability to appreciate and assess shifting hues, which were signs of transitional conditions (either from health to illness, or vice versa, from illness to health.) As stated at Hippocrates *Epid.* 6.4.22:

χρoὶ ἐπὶ τὸ κάκιον ἢ ἄμεινον ἐπιδιδoί.

Color tends toward the worse or better.

According to Galen *Hum.* 19.495-496 Kühn, Polybius, the V century physician, had even furnished a chromatic classification of the various illnesses which were divided in πυρρόχρους (“the fire-red”), *melanokhrous* (“the black-colored”), *leukokhrous* (“the white ones”), and so on. This classification was based on the principle that the color of a given unbalanced humor also determined the color of the illness it causes. In Rome, as early as Celsus, medical texts equally insist on the diagnostic value of different bodily fluids' coloration; such is the case, for instance, with vomit, urine, or the pus of an open wound. Colors have therefore profound medical significance and amount to fundamental and constitutive traits of one's health.

The color χλωρός occupies a peculiar position within the medical history of colors, and its most conspicuous implications concern gynecology. There is actually a specific illness named after the color, χλωροσις. The genesis, theorization, and description of this illness did not occur until the mid 16th century, and it was based on the piecing together of different ancient medical observations concerning a few ailments connected with a patient's yellow/greenish complexion: from jaundice, to the insurgence of menstruation, which could be irregular, or altogether absent. In particular, in 1554 the physician Johannes Lange published a description of a condition which he did not name, but nonetheless listed under the heading *De Morbo Virgineo*. In so doing, he maintained that his observations were corroborated by the authority of the Hippocratic treatise *On the diseases of virgins*. King has devoted a fundamental monograph to the medical and intellectual history of this disease, which did not disappear from medical texts until the 1930s, and eventually became known by various names such as, just to mention a few, “hypochromic anemia”, “pale fever” and, most interestingly for our claim, “green sickness”, and “χλωροσις”⁴⁸.

47 — Cf. Barra (2009) 157: “La couleur et la consistance des humeurs expulsées permettent aux yeux de l'esprit de voir ce qu'on ne peut pas regarder”. An overview of the ancient medical expertise on colors as a diagnostic means can be found in Villard (2002) 50-58.

48 — King (2004) 1-4. See also the two chapters devoted to this issue in King (1998) 188-246.

The specific term *χλῶροσις* appears for the first time in the 1619 edition of Jean Varandal's work, which was posthumously published by his students. King has demonstrated how the association between the disease of the virgins, qua gynecological affliction, and *χλῶροσις* qua condition entailing "love sickness", is deeply indebted to the extraordinary popularity of Sappho 31.13-14, where the poetess declares to be *χλωροτέρα δὲ ποίας*, that is "greener", or "paler", or "fresher than grass"⁴⁹. The poem was notably imitated by Catullus and taken as an ideal specimen of sublime style by Pseudo Longinus, who praises Sappho's choice to use the specific line containing the adjective *χλωρός* to describe her erotic experience⁵⁰. Sappho's text was crucial for early modern doctors in crafting a pathological association between lovelornness and a set of conditions affecting the body of women. In the words of King: "Varandal's *χλῶροσις* may be a nod in the direction of Sappho and love-sickness, masked as a reference back to a Hippocratic text which does not in fact exist"⁵¹.

Admittedly there is no extant evidence for the positing of a clear association among love-sickness, gynecological conditions, and the color *χλωρός* in ancient medical lore itself⁵². However, the texts associating female conditions with the healthiness of marital life are plentiful, and are based on the description of the female body as fundamentally different from the male's, and on the attendant consequence that a female's body is subject to a different set of morbid states⁵³. Examples of this ancient medical

49 — Cf. King (2004) 35-38, who also discusses a collection of important interpretative proposals for the actual meaning of *χλωρός* in Sappho 31. Irwin (1974) 33-56 interprets the adjective as signifying the freshness of flowers and dew. Snyder (1991) 13-14 underscores the connection of the term with images of vitality and youth, which prove all the more significant if read against the backdrop of the following scene of death. Lastly, Cyrino (1995) 153 takes *χλωρός* as "pale", in the sense of "almost dead" and therefore anticipatory of the conclusive image. Irwin's interpretation is the only one to account for the association of *χλωρός* with a sense of oozy/watery vitality, which is very much part of what the adjective designates in Greek, cf. Clarke (2004) 133-137.

50 — Cf. respectively Catullus 51 and Longinus *Subl.* 10.1.3. Before Catullus, we find a literary memory of the Sapphic image at Plautus *Pseud.* 38 where the *adulescens* Calidorus bewails his broken heart: *Quasi solstitialis herba paulisper fui, repente exortus sum, repentino occidi*. "I lived for a brief moment, like midsummer grass/in a moment I sprang up, in a moment I died".

51 — King (2004) 38. King (1998) remains a fundamental study of the Hippocratic approach to women's health.

52 — It is also particularly regrettable that Celsus does not resort to the adjectives *χλωρός* or *galbinus* to describe any gynecological symptoms, or even those ailments that may equally affect males and females. *Viridis*, to describe both the color of one's feces or vomit (without any specific gender connotation) is the main color of the spectrum under consideration referenced in the *De Medicina*.

53 — In particular, the medical description of the female body as porous and humid (cf. Carson (1990) 137-145, and Hanson (1990) 314-320) is consequential for our attempt at interpreting the adjective *χλωρός*. On the one hand, if we take heed of ancient gynecology, it appears that the most accurate translation for our term in Sappho 31 would be "wet", almost as if the poetess were experiencing a physical, i.e. vaginal orgasm, as part of her overwhelming emotional turmoil. On the other hand, it should be noticed how the Plinian opposition between *austeri* and *floridi* was modeled on what is a rhetorical classification, based on the same exact terminology, and crafted by Dionysius Alicarnassensis, cf. Halm-Tisserant (2013) 318-319. For, in the field of rhetoric, *austerus*, an adjective

approach to gynecology can be found, for instance, at *DW* 1.6 where the importance of blood-flowing for the health of a woman is underscored by the statement that “menstrual blood should flow like that of a sacrificial victim”⁵⁴. Similarly, *Ep.* 6.8.32 references the case of Phaetousa of Abdera, who stopped menstruating, grew a beard, and died shortly after the insurgence of these symptoms⁵⁵.

According to the Hippocratic lore, a pubescent girl, because of the greater quantity of blood present in her body to sustain her growth, ought to release the excess of this vital liquid via menstruation. If this did not occur, blood would be forced up towards the chest, and eventually exert an unhealthy pressure over the heart, the seat of consciousness, thus causing a torturing sense of suffocation and hallucinatory states. Thus, the need of marital sexual relations to assure a woman’s balanced health. In this connection, Sissa’s seminal study on Greek virginity has shown how *παρθενεΐα* (“virginity”) is not attached so much to the integrity of the hymen, as it is connected to the need for a virgin to become a *γυνή* (“woman”), and benefit from both a regular sexual marital life and pregnancies⁵⁶. In other words, a time comes in the life of a woman when virginity ceases to be healthy, and needs to be replaced by regular intercourse.

Furthermore, starting from the 5th century BCE, numerous texts insist on the concept of *εὐχροΐα* or “good/beautiful complexion”, as both a medical and gender-denoting operator⁵⁷. In this regard, *ὤχρος*, a color comparable to ocher, and known for its instability⁵⁸, was the object of a very contentious debate. In a recent contribution, Gherchanoc thoroughly

borrowed from the technical vocabulary of viticulture, designated the style *severus*, like a good dry wine. On the contrary *floridus* was associated to *umidus* (“humid”) and *mollis* (“wet”), the latter being a gendered rhetorical operator immediately suggesting the defect of too effeminate and oriental a style. These lexical remarks on the proximity of the adjective *floridus* to the notions of “wetness” and “softness” further reinforce the hypothesis that *galbinus*, because of its medical referencing the watery/humid anatomy of the female body, may have been perceived as a *floridus* color, cf. pp. 12-13.

54 — Cf. King (1998) 99: “Like sacrificial ritual, Hippocratic gynecology is about ensuring blood is shed at the proper times and in the proper ways”.

55 — On the significance of Phaetousa’s case for the overlapping of gender and sex, see King (2013).

56 — Cf. Sissa (1987) and (1990). In particular, Sissa on the one hand insists on a lack of ancient medical theorization, or even simply a description, of the hymen as a vaginal membrane, on the other she points out how the condition of *παρθενεΐα* depends chiefly on the knowledge, observation, and identification of a virgin through means that must necessarily be other than a gynecological/digital inspection. In her words (Sissa (1987) 348): “The parthenic condition is based on sexual behavior, and hence on the body, but only when that condition has come to an end does it become perceptible”.

57 — For an in-depth analysis of *εὐχροΐα* and its ideological implications, cf. Gherchanoc (2018). It is almost always the case that *εὐχροΐα* provides valid diagnostic elements and is a sign of good health as argued by Galen *Loc. Aff.* 8.357 Kühn: οὕτω δὲ καὶ ἄλλους πολλοὺς ἴστε με σημειωσάμενον, ὡς ἐκ τῆς χροιάς ἀποφάνασθαι. “Know that I recognized the illness of many other people in such manner: from their complexion”.

58 — According to Grand-Clément (2012) 29 this color is “instable et non franche”.

analyzes a large number of ancient texts concerning the topic⁵⁹. For present purpose, it will suffice to notice how Plato contrasts the natural beauty achieved through athletic training, with makeup and all those artificial expedients that he deems unworthy of a free man (ἀνελεύθερος)⁶⁰. Similarly, Aristophanes *Nu.* 415-419, 2012, and 1017 argues that the sophists who have replaced the gym with the agora are effeminate and pale, and far from sporting the healthy complexion of virile males. Admittedly, ancient doctors struggle to draw a sharp line between two τέχναι (“skills”) supposedly belonging to two separate domains: κομμωτική (which pertain to cosmetics), and κοσμητική (which, in spite of its name, does not pertain to make up, but has to do with the restauration of the body’s natural beauty and, as such, is part of medicine)⁶¹. That being said, males with yellowish/pale complexions were both the target of moralistic lampooning, and the object of medical concern.

To summarize, although the use of the term χλώροσις to designate a gynecological condition presenting the symptom of a yellow/greenish skin coloration⁶², is an early-modern invention, this medical chimera was the result of assembling ancient sources, both medical and literary. On the one hand, Sappho’s much celebrated poem 31 legitimated the idea that a woman’s suffering could be revealed by her complexion turning χλωρός; on the other, since the emphasis of ancient medical lore on females’ health was eminently gynecological, there was ample space for creating a shortcut between females’ conditions and the color χλωρός as described by Sappho. This process eased the early-modern theorization of χλώροσις and, in this regard, it appears to be a late phenomenon. However, the association of *pallere* “to pale”, characterized by its yellow/green color in

59 — Gerchanoch (2018) 183-186.

60 — Plato *Gorg.* 465b: τῆ μὲν οὖν ἰατρικῆ, ὡσπερ λέγω, ἡ ὄψοποικὴ κολακεία ὑπόκειται· τῆ δὲ γυμναστικῆ κατὰ τὸν αὐτὸν τρόπον τοῦτον ἡ κομμωτικὴ, κακοῦργός τε οὕσα καὶ ἀπατηλὴ καὶ ἀγεννῆς καὶ ἀνελεύθερος, σχήμασι καὶ χρώμασι καὶ λειότητι καὶ ἐσθήσει ἀπατώσα, ὥστε ποιεῖν ἀλλότριον κάλλος ἐφελκομένους τοῦ οἰκείου τοῦ διὰ τῆς γυμναστικῆς ἀμελεῖν. “However, as I am arguing, the art of cooking plays the false part of medicine and same relation exists between self-adornment and gymnastics: that is malevolent, deceitful, vile, and illiberal and it deceives men with figures, colors, dainties, and clothes, so that the men intent on achieving an extraneous beauty, neglect their own, which is the one acquired through gymnastics”.

61 — Cf. Boudon-Millot (2018) 15-20, and Guardasole (2018) 31-33.

62 — Simple jaundice (without any specific gynecological relations) is nonetheless a symptom largely observed already by the medical writers of the Hippocratic corpus, and both promptly described by the use of the adjective χλωρός, and associated with an unbalance of bile, or *kole*, a term etymologically related to χλωρός, cf. Chantraine (1968) s.v. χλωρός, and Beekes (2009) s.v. χλωρός, and χολή. For the medical association of emotional stress and bile see Onians (1954²) 84-89. Crucially, Thucydides 2.49 utilizes the adjective χλωρός to denote the complexion of those affected by the plague, cf. Page (1953) 103. The most significant text for the association of bile and feminine emotional distress comes from Aeschylus *Choeph.* 183-184 where Electra reacts to the sight of Orestes’ lock of hair: κάμοι προσέστη καρδίᾳ κλυδώνιον/χολῆς, ἐπαίθην δ’ ὡς διανταίφ βέλει, “My heart too is taken by a little wave/of bile. I am stricken as if transfixed by a spear”.

Latin culture⁶³, with love-sickness demonstrates that the Sapphic literary reference overlapped with both over-the-counter medical knowledge and the Athenian cultural take on εὔχροια, all of which were fully active in Rome. In particular, Ovid *Ars. Am.* 1.729-731 addresses the significance of a lover's complexion paling:

*Palleat omnis amans: hic est color aptus amanti/Hoc decet, hoc stulti non
valuisse putant.*

Let every lover pale: such is the color that befits a lover/such color befits him, only a fool thinks that such color is not good.

The passage is of particular significance in charting the development of the connection between *pallere*, qua Sapphic literary and sentimental gesture, and female identity. In fact, Ovid is here attributing emotional paling to a male lover, and it is not by chance that he feels the need to stress, not once, but twice in the space of two verses, that this discoloration is appropriate (that it is *aptus* and *decet*). One plausible hypothesis for Ovid's energetic defense of the lover's *pallor* ("paleness") could indeed be that both the color and the emotional reaction manifested by it were notoriously proper to women, a gender-specific appurtenance which – we have argued – is extensively described already by Plato in the 5th century BCE. A man whose skin became pale would raise questions about his gender identity by showcasing a physical reaction not in accordance with masculine physiology.

This appears to be confirmed by later sources such as Seneca and Persius who treat *pallor* as a nothing short of a specific symptom revealing passive homoerotic desire, which in turn is unequivocally framed as an illness⁶⁴. Similarly Juvenal, as we have seen in his second satire, chooses to contextually reinforce his mention of the *galbinus* outfit with multiple references to receptive homosexual practices as manifestations of a medical condition. At 2.17 he says about Peribonius that *vultu morbum incessuque fateatur* "he manifests his disease by his face and gait". At 2.50 he targets Hispo who *subit iuvenes et morbo pallet utroque* "goes under young men and pales with both illnesses", where these morbi ("diseases") have been

63 — For *pallidus* as yellow/green cf. *TbIL* X.I.I, 129, 19-20, 30-35, 48-55, *OCD* s.v. *pallens*, and De Vaan (2016) 440-441, s.v. *palleo*. Evidence of this signification can be found in the outcome of the proto-Indo-European root **palwo-*, from which both the Italian "paglia" and the English "fallow" derive. In Greek poetry, and in particular in Homer, paling is attributed to warriors, not as the consequence of an erotic urge, but of fear. Crucially, the color selected to indicate this feeling is χλωρός, cf. *Il.* 10.376; 15.4. There are also numerous instances where fear itself is qualified as χλωρός, as at *Il.* 7.479; 8.77; 17.67; and *Od.* 11.43; 11.633; 12.343; 22.42; 24.450; 24.533; cf. Irwin (1974) 62.

64 — Cf. Seneca *Ir.* 3.26.4; *Vit. beat.* 7.3 and Persius 1.26.

interpreted as respectively receptive anal and oral sex⁶⁵. Lastly, at 2.78-81, Juvenal introduces the illustration of the plague's contagion which spreads from a single pig to the entire herd, or from a single grape to the entire winery⁶⁶.

In view of this programmatic medicalization of receptive homoerotic sex, the color *χλωρός* acquires a profound symbolic value and, along with being an item of fashion, especially after dyeing techniques advanced enough to create durable green garments, it becomes symbolic of both physical and emotional femininity. It was a direct reference to the feminine body via its potential morbidity, which was triggered by specific emotional states often attached to erotic experience. The association of *cinaedi* with *galbinus*-colored garments offers a valuable perspective for considering how the different conceptual layers of sex, gender, and societal representation interact. In particular, as far as societal representation is concerned, the topic of the so-called "materiality of the *cinaedus*" has long bedeviled the scholarly debate. The problem ultimately concerns the actual existence of the *cinaedus* vs his literary conceptualization, or even the mere creation of an ad hoc negative type for the purpose of casting aspersions on a chastised set of sexual practices. For present purposes, what matters is the presence of narrative texts depicting *cinaedi* as actively and overtly opting for a specific attire⁶⁷; it remains to be seen how this detail may challenge, or even partly dislodge, our hermeneutic frames.

Clothing, Color, and Identity

Essentialism and constructionism are two fundamental poles that have in the past decades dominated the debate on the study of sexuality and, in particular, of ancient sexuality. To schematize the gist of these two theoretical models, while essentialism propounds that sexual behaviors are innate attitudes, constructionism sees them as socially constructed, and therefore dependent on a specific time, place, and societal organization.

The case of *cinaedi* greatly problematizes what is a specific subfield of this investigation: "homosexuality" in the ancient world. Because

65 — Richlin (1993) 552.

66 — According to Braund (1996) 144: "The graphic picture of the plague spreading to humans via infected clothing at the end of Virg. *Georg.* 3 may have inspired Juvenal's focus on clothing immediately before and after these central lines as the symbol of the homosexuals' 'disease'".

67 — This situation is radically different from the one of prostitutes, who would wear the masculine *toga*, as if this were almost a mark of branding. White or purple were the colors of choice for the *toga virilis*, whose masculine pertinence was also underscored by a specific "wearing-mode", which is still observable in togate statues. While sculptural types for women present narrow body postures with the arms often held into the body, the male specimens are characterized by ample gestures that enhance the overall volume of the garment, cf. Davies (2005) 121-125 and Masséglià (2015) 309-311.

the word “homosexuality” itself was notoriously coined only in 1869, it has been argued that there was no such thing as “homosexuality” in the ancient world⁶⁸. The late John Boswell⁶⁹ was possibly the main advocate of the alternative approach. In several works of scholarship, he pointed to ancient behaviors that, if they cannot be called instances of homosexuality, nonetheless “look like” such⁷⁰. Roman *cinaedi* are of particular interest because they not only exhibit specific sexual preferences, but are also attributed with an unmistakable style of dress, fashion and body language. This satirical branding, almost always a form of disparagement, associates specific sexual practices to specific signs of identity.

More to the point, the matter of the *cinaedi*'s status and conceptualization has been the object of a very articulate debate. To schematically touch on some of the most representative stances, Gleason proposed that the *cinaedus* be considered a “life form” all to himself, defined not so much by his largely homoerotic proclivities, nor by a specific “psychosexual orientation”, but hinging on a type of gender inversion whereby the masculine role is forsaken for the feminine one⁷¹. Williams builds on Gleason's approach, and relies even more significantly on both Winkler's argument that the *cinaedus* represents first and foremost “a category of person”, and on Halperin's contention that what this figure embodies is a “phobic stereotype”, and an upended, disgraceful social identity⁷². Williams insists on the fact that *cinaedi* cannot be considered “homosexuals” if only for their attested erotic involvement with both sexes and concludes that the *cinaedus* is a gender-liminal figure, and that “the deviance of *cinaedi* is ultimately a matter of gender identity rather than sexual identity”⁷³.

The attested figure of the “womanizer *cinaedus*” with the resulting evidence that these individuals could/would enjoy erotic experiences with both sexes, is easily the most puzzling element of the conundrum, and the main hindrance to the conceptualization of a proto-homosexual identity of sorts⁷⁴. In this regard, Olson problematizes and discusses the relation between effeminate attire as a purposely designed strategy of seduction directed at women. In her scholarship she draws an interesting comparison between Victorian dandyism and the ancient obsession with fashion and excessive elegance. In fact, a select part of the urban Roman elite evinced this obsession beginning with the last decades of the Republican

68 — These are the positions, for instance of Padua (1979) and Halperin (1990).

69 — See Boswell (1980), (1990), and (1994).

70 — Cf. Stein (1999).

71 — Gleason (1990) 411–412.

72 — Cf. Winkler (1990) 45–56, and Halperin (2002) 33–34.

73 — Cf. Williams (2010²) 232.

74 — Cf. Gleason (1990) 406, Pollini (1999) 25, Gibson (2009) 276.

age⁷⁵ and then, with increasing frequency, in the first centuries of the Empire.

Olson contends that certain topical allegations of effeminacy, characteristically lampooned by the satirists, do not automatically correspond to the assumption of homoeroticism and of a preference for receptive sexual acts⁷⁶. Nevertheless, in this respect, Parker's stance is more accurate in framing the *cinaedus*' erotic experience as characterized by passivity, not necessarily receptivity⁷⁷, an argument in line with Williams' contention that *cinaedi* should be framed as gender-deviant individuals (i.e. un-masculine, even when having sex with women). In the specific, yet significant, case of the British public, both Sinfield and Olson have shown how it was not until after Oscar Wilde's trials (1895), and the attendant moral stigmatization of a certain kind of aesthetic upper-class sophistication, that effeminacy became associated with homosexual desire⁷⁸.

Thus began the practice of identifying *cinaedi* with *trossuli* and/or *comptuli*. Both terms designated members of the Roman elite, who were intentionally à la mode, sophisticated – and, therefore, effeminate – although their effeminacy implied nothing about their sexual preferences. According to this argumentative line, the label *cinaedus* would therefore be nothing more than a disparaging mark used to jibe at a fashionable lifestyle perceived as potentially socially corrosive, but not primarily attached to the stigmatization of passive erotic practices. In this connection, being chic and elegant could actually function as a strategy to seduce fashion-conscious and urbane women, as would appear to be the case from Lucilius' *fr.* 1058 mention of the *barbati moechocinaedi*, that is “*cinaedi* adulterers who sport a beard”. Because Roman literary sources offer multiple examples of elegant, purposely delicate men who also happen to be inveterate adulterers⁷⁹, it is safe to say that effeminacy qua aesthetic statement and homoeroticism need not be necessarily bound together. To willingly sport an item of style, which purposely bends gender boundaries, may work as a “heterosexual” seductive strategy.

However – and this is key to my main argument – if a conscious fashion-choice goes beyond a given code of urbanity, and becomes a statement

75 — Perhaps the most representative case for these decades is Julius Caesar, whose fashionable sophistication was associated by Suetonius, *Jul.* 45, Cassius Dio 43.43.1-4, and Plutarch, *Caes.* 17.2 and 4.9 with the man's supposed sexual proclivities. On this aspect of Caesar's persona cf. Corbeill (1996) 189-215 and Kraus (2005) 97-115.

76 — Olson (2014) 200-205, and (2017) 152-154.

77 — Parker (1995) 59 focuses on those sources (again from satire) attesting the existence of *cinaedi* performing oral sex on women and concludes that: “It is clear [...] that cunnilingus is viewed as a man being used by a woman and corresponds to a man being used vaginally. The passive man is “fucked” by a woman”.

78 — Cf. Sinfield (1994) 27, and Olson (2014) 201.

79 — Cf. the rich collection of examples at Olson (2014) 196-189.

of identity, then it may indeed supply us with a valuable element to flesh out a more problematic type of the *cinaedus*, otherwise conspicuous by his powerless silence and insistently canonical derision in literary texts for his hopeless erotic proclivities towards both sexes⁸⁰. If we take seriously the argument that *galbinus*-hued clothing provides an insight into a specific “cinaedic attitude”, which is revealed by the choice of items of clothing reflective of how a woman’s anatomy was constructed and linked to her emotional life, then the *cinaedi*’s outfit demands to be interpreted as an identity-position, not just as a matter of behavioral esthetics⁸¹.

In other words, *galbinus*-hued garments were associated with *cinaedi*; but because the color *galbinus* referenced the emotional and physical functioning of the female body, it also hinted at something very similar to the modern concept of sexuality, which is so solidly rooted in, in fact inseparable from, the notion of identity. Ancient *cinaedi* did not simply manifest a preference for passive erotic practices (either with *vir* or *feminae*) they – much more significantly – wanted *to be like* women, in a sense that implicates nature, not just culture. To further clarify my contention, I refer to a grid (below), however simplified, illustrating Parker’s classification of the ancient erotic experience⁸²:

NORMAL	MAN	ACTIVE	VIR
NORMAL	WOMAN	PASSIVE	FEMINA/PUELLA
ABNORMAL	MAN	PASSIVE	CINAEDUS
ABNORMAL	WOMAN	ACTIVE	TRIBAS (“lesbian”)

The above table can be read in various ways, all leading to various divisions into two equal halves. We may, for instance, select a division into “normal” and “abnormal”, which is determined by the association of the biological sex with what was deemed the naturally given sexual-role (active for males, and passive for females); such a division underscores the abnormality of both the active-female and the passive-man. Conversely, we could make “biological sex” the classifying criterion: if men or women

80 — On the difficulty of relying solely on literary sources to investigate the matter of ancient sexuality cf. Clarke (2005) 272-273.

81 — According to Williams (2010²) 202: “Women who lasciviously shimmy (*crisare*) and men who wiggle their buttocks (*cevere*) display an active delight in being penetrated”. This very thorough analysis underscores the problematic status of gender-deviant figures and brings to the fore the anomaly of “actively being passive”.

82 — This is my personal schematization of Parker (1997) 48-49.

are associated with their expected sexual roles, it will produce a normal outcome whereas the opposite scenario creates an abnormal one. The same goes for the active and passive roles, which ought to be pigeonholed as “normal” or “abnormal” depending on their being paired up, or not, with their expected biological sex. My argument is that we might complete this schematic representation by drawing an additional line uniting the *cinaedus*-row with the *feminal puella* one. This is because the evidence of the *galbinus*-attire, with the profound symbolic value represented by the color’s significance, suggests an active choice of identity on the part of *cinaedi*: again, a proactive effort to dress like women *in order to be like women*.

One could retort to this argument by underscoring the cultural significance universally attributed to dress codes. In fact, as early as Plautus, clothes function as exterior manifestations of an individual’s moral *persona*, and Ovid, in his *Ars Amatoria*, insists much on the moral and symbolic value of fashion. In the words of Bradley: “The colored surfaces it [costume] created for the body were no less evocative as expressions of identity and tapped into a comparable discourse of imitation and deception”⁸³. We can safely say that, at least since the beginning of the imperial age, garish colors utilized for new fashionable garments were looked upon with suspicion, if not disdain⁸⁴. These ancient, disparaging attitudes confirm how clothing and fashion are cultural elements germane to the construction of moral attitudes, cultural stances, and gender identities. But what to do with the *galbini* dresses which surely were à la mode paraphernalia, but also appeared to reference not so much, or not only culture, but also nature, i.e. the biology of the female body? These yellow/green items conjure up the fresh and wet complexion of every female, and its seductive quality, and problematic/potentially morbid status. In this regard, they symbolize something more than a sartorial statement: they function almost as if they were what we might call “a second, feminine skin”.

If this hypothesis is tenable, we could then venture a path, speculative thought it might be, to partly rethink the consolidated definition of the *cinaedus* solely as a gender-deviant or gender-liminal figure, which is to say as something that hinges entirely on cultural mechanisms of marginality.

83 — Cf. Bradley (2006) 178, and for an assessment of clothing and identity in Plautus’ *Epidicus* and Ovid’s *Ars amatoria* cf. pp. 178-187.

84 — For instance, at *Ars. am.* 3.169-192, a passage that does not concern *cinaedi* but women, Ovid describes a bewildering variety of dyed garments, corresponding to an equal number of exotic pigments, suggesting that this chromatic exuberance is confounding because it ultimately falsifies nature. The various colors are named after the natural phenomena whose hues they reproduce. Artificiality here is the key term, for these natural phenomena can be only suggested, and hinted at, but never truly replicated. It is not by chance that the verbs *simulare* (“to simulate”) and *imitari* (“to imitate”), both signifiers of deception, form the semantic core of this passage.

Perhaps we cannot go so far as to claim, like Richlin or Taylor⁸⁵, that *cinaedi* can be conceptualized as a minority of “passive homosexuals”, if only for their being afflicted by prejudice and stigma.

That notwithstanding, if it is problematic to establish the construction of an actual “homosexual identity”, we should – and could – at least hypothesize the presence of something that may add to and complicate the simple notion of gender-deviance; something for which some kind of stable definition awaits finding.

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85 — Cf. Richlin (1993) and Taylor (1997).

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