Tertullian's *De pallio* and Life in Roman Carthage

The *De pallio* is an enigma. It stands right apart from the rest of Tertullian's *oeuvre*. This is evident in the variety of dates that have been suggested for its composition. Bear in mind that T.D. Barnes dates all Tertullian's extant work between 196 and 212: the guesses for the *De pallio* over the years have swung between 193 and 223. The earlier date would place it before Tertullian's conversion to Christianity and regard it as a non-Christian work. Shosaku Toki went further than this and suggested that the writer was Jewish, because all the Bible references in the *De pallio* are from the Old Testament, but he later withdrew this rather problematic hypothesis (I wonder how many Latin-speaking Jewish sophists there were in Carthage about AD 200). His more recent suggestion is that the author was a newly converted Christian, of equestrian status, who belonged to 'a sect that is unknown to us'. By contrast Paul Monceaux, in his *Histoire littéraire de l'Afrique chrétienne*, concludes that the sect involved is a perfectly well-known one: he takes the *De pallio* as a pro-Montanist tract aimed at a Catholic readership.

Monceaux's argument for this point of view goes to the heart of the controversy about the work. He reads the tract as an esoteric work: 'le jeu d'esprit, où les païens ne trouvaient qu'à rire, cachait pour les initiés une justification du nouveau sectaire, un avertissement aux catholiques, une profession de foi montaniste.' I don't think the idea of the *De pallio*
as a book whose real (Montanist) import could only be understood by Christians is a very persuasive one, but Monceaux’s adoption of it illustrates the real difficulties the work presents. Is it intended for a Christian audience, or non-Christian? Is the stance Montanist or Catholic? Is the author’s outlook anti-Roman or not? The only really strong point of agreement among scholars who have studied the *De pallio* is with Eduard Norden’s description of it in *Kunstprosa* as the hardest thing in Latin he’d ever read.\(^5\) A few pages earlier, Norden had also described Tertullian himself as, generally speaking, the hardest author in Latin.\(^6\)

The reason behind all this controversy is the way Tertullian in the *De pallio* assumes a persona quite different from the one that is more or less consistently on show in his other works. Normally, in his apologetic as well as in works explicitly aimed at a Christian audience, Tertullian speaks quite directly as a Christian. The *Ad nationes*, for instance, goes to the point right at the beginning:

> Testimonium ignorantiae vestrae, quae iniquitatem dum defendit, revincit, in promptu est (*Ad nationes*, I, i. 1):

Evidence of your ignorance, which refutes your wickedness even while supposedly defending it, is at hand.

And at the beginning of the *De testimonio animae* he comments openly on the difference between Christian literature and secular literature, saying that people who were respected authors in the secular tradition before their conversion are not taken seriously by readers when they turn to proving Christianity:

> sed suis quidem magistris alias probatissimis atque lectissimis fidem inclinavit humana de incredulitate duritia, sicubi in argumenta Christianae defensionis impingunt (*De testimonio animae*, I, 3):


Human stubbornness in disbelieving has denied credence even to their own teachers, who in other places are very well approved and much read, if they ever turn to the proofs of Christian apologetics.

This quote, naturally, is a captatio benevolentiae: that’s to say that the writer is aiming to neutralize the reader’s negative feelings about Christian literature; he’s not acknowledging that there’s no point in taking up a Christian stance.

In the De pallio, however, there’s no direct characterization of the author as a Christian. The work’s sympathy towards Christianity comes out more indirectly. Not that it’s ambiguous; but the tone is far more detached than the tone Tertullian adopts in the De testimonio animae, or the Ad nationes, or the Apologeticum. The author in the De pallio is aiming at locating himself in the main stream of Greco-Roman rhetoric. It is, if you like, an attempt to sidestep an audience’s automatic reaction to Christian apologetic, as outlined in the De testimonio animae. And by locating himself in that rhetorical main stream, Tertullian is arguably acting contrary to the line of thought that led him in the De idololatria to argue that while it was permissible for a Christian to receive a Classical pagan literary education, it was not lawful for a Christian to be a teacher of literature (because that must imply too close an identification with the pagan content of Classical literature).

By drawing this distinction in relation to the persona assumed by the author in the De pallio and in Tertullian’s other work, I’m not intending to imply any doubt on my part about his authorship. Scholars are on the whole too quick to claim that an author ‘could not’ have written this or that text, on the grounds of its content or differences from the general corpus of the author’s work. The characteristic weakness of such claims is that they’re apt to neglect the rhetorical considerations that lead authors to adopt particular poses. The aim of this paper is to argue first that Tertullian, as a flexible and accomplished author of the epoch of the Second Sophistic, was capable of adopting the pose or self-characterization that’s evident in the De pallio, and second, that he had important rhetorical reasons for choosing this pose. I shall also argue that the speech is an epideictic oration of the sophistic type, and that the satirical passages that

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7 Tertullian, De idololatria, x. 1-4. On Tertullian and rhetoric, see Barnes, Tertullian, pp. 187-210.
are worked into the later part of it are very important for the speech’s impact and effectiveness.

In the first place I suggest, contrary to a number of authors, that the De pallio is a speech that was composed for oral delivery, and that its being meant for a live audience is an important factor to take into account in attempting to understand it. Tertullian, like many writers, was capable of making the idea of a speech into the formal motivation for a purely written treatise. The Apologeticum, for instance, is cast in the defence-speech mould and addressed to the ‘governors of the Roman Empire, seated on a lofty and conspicuous tribunal’ (Apologeticum i.1); but right after the opening address to these (vaguely identified) ‘governors of the Roman Empire’, Tertullian says that people accused of being Christians don’t get to make their defence in court like people accused of other things — and hopes that the truth will come to the rulers’ ears by the ‘secret road of silent letters’ (ibid.). But though there was no necessity for an oration (literary) to be a written version of a speech (actually given), there were always speeches that were given. Apuleius, to take an African example, gave his Apology in the theatre at Sabratha in A.D. 158.9 His Florida are excerpts of speeches whose general outlines, Norden argues, should be understood on the analogy of the De pallio.10 This sort of entertainment was appreciated as much in live performance as on the written page. So there’s no a priori reason for assuming that the De pallio was composed only as a book for reading.

There is however the possibility of an objection to this argument along the lines that Christians were not allowed to speak in public. Christianity was illegal. It could be argued that anyone who stood up and

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8 S. Costanza in his edition (Naples, 1968) takes the De pallio as ‘a fictional apologia’, inspired jointly by the traditions of diatribe, satire and declamation: on this see Frédouille Tertullien, p. 447. Frédouille himself comments, ‘le De pallio n’est pas une œuvre “engagée”. Il est, au sens propre, “inactuel”’. D. van Berchem, ‘Le “De pallio” de Tertullien et le conflit du christianisme et de l’empire’, Mll 1 (1944): 100-114, at 112, describes the De pallio as ‘un plaidoyer fictif, un pamphlet’ — but he doesn’t offer argument to support his assumption (109) that it would be impossible for Tertullian to state his opinions openly.

9 Barnes, Tertullian, p. 271.

10 Norden, Antike Kunstprosa, p. 615.
addressed an audience — in public — advocating Christianity would be arrested; any such meeting would be suppressed. I don’t think this argument is satisfactory. Christianity did spread: indeed, by Tertullian’s time it was of some importance. J.B. Rives says that ‘by the beginning of the third century AD Christianity had become a significant part of African society’. 11 I think the size of the Church allows a presumption that someone sometimes must have stood up and given speeches about Christianity in public. In a world where public speaking was the lifeblood not only of politics but of culture, it’s hard to think that Christianity was running on a sort of secret-society principle and only making converts via hole-and-corner or one-to-one contacts. I’d go further, and guess that speaking in public in favour of Christianity would only seldom result in getting arrested. Martyrdoms were made from time to time, for a range of reasons, but even going to a provincial governor’s tribunal, saying ‘I am a Christian’ and virtually challenging the governor to do something, couldn’t always guarantee a reaction from government. 12

So if someone was going to give a speech, official approval wasn’t always indispensable. But there was a danger of hostility from the audience. Christians were generally hated everywhere, but in this instance we can be more specific. Tertullian was speaking to a Carthaginian audience, as we know from the opening line of the speech: principes semper Africæ, viri Carthaginienses (i. 1). And there’s evidence of controversy about Christianity from Carthage itself at a time not much earlier than the date of the De pallio. In 203 it seems the Carthaginian Church was aiming to follow the example of the Roman Church and acquire its own burial-grounds. The legal situation in this respect is a matter of debate, but here there’s no need to examine who was the de iure owner of the early catacombs of Rome, or who would have owned Carthage’s Christian cemetery. In any case there were riots against the


12 Tertullian at Ad Scapulam, v. 1-2, after telling the story of Arrius Antoninus being faced with a crowd of Christians coming to his tribunal, asks Scapula what he’d do if the same thing happened in Carthage. At a certain point, as Arrius Antoninus had found, it became impossible to arrest everyone.
Christians, with the pagans shouting in the streets ‘no graveyards! [areae non sint]’.

This would give Tertullian a reason for speaking rather cagily. Barnes puts the composition of the De pallio in 205, and if he’s right, then the graveyard riots would have been receding into fairly distant memory by the time the speech was given. But still a speaker would only be acceptable to a public audience if he could demonstrate that he wasn’t going to make a violent attack on normally accepted ideas and values. In front of a live audience you couldn’t risk the kind of switch-off effect the De testimonio animae refers to in connection with written apologetic. Use of mythology would help — and Classical mythology is used more or less straight in the De pallio, and not subjected to the attack Tertullian mounts elsewhere. Bible stories are contrasted with Classical myths, but as Toki observed, the Bible stories are all taken from the Old Testament — the effect they produce is not militantly Christian. The tone of the speech, then, is calculated to reassure the listeners that the entertainment they expected wasn’t going to degenerate into a sales pitch for Christianity.

Granted that a Christian could give a speech to a pagan audience in a public place in Carthage in 205, and allowing that some indirection would be needed if the final purpose of the speech was to be to commend Christianity, what reason is there to think that the prospect of hearing Tertullian speak would interest anyone? I’ll be going on to show that he was a witty and highly erudite speaker; just the type that was most admired in that sort of Indian summer of the Antonine Age, in the days of the Second Sophistic. An expert in early Latin poets, a player with words, a man who could still find something piquant in the standard selection of Greek philosophers’ ideas and characters. This was a virtuoso performer — and remember that the prospective audience wouldn’t be coming along because of an impression of him that they’d gained from his extant apologetic works. Reading was a minority pursuit, reading

13 Tertullian, Ad Scapulam, iii. 1.

14 Barnes, Tertullian, pp. 35-37.


16 Quoting Laberius on the ram (De pallio, i. 3) and Pacuvius on the tortoise (iii. 3).
Christian apologetic doubly so, but listening to virtuoso speakers was a popular recreation. Crowds of people used to go to the Roman forum to hear Cicero and the other great orators perform.

Tertullian may have been well enough known to be a draw for a potential audience. Barnes denies that the author Tertullian is the same person as the jurist Tertullian who is quoted in the Digest and the Codex Justinianus, but he has no really persuasive reason for avoiding the identification. It seems to be more a matter of minimalist principle. Admittedly he is persuasive in arguing that Tertullian’s works aren’t imbued with legal thinking in the way some writers have suggested they are. He also shows that Tertullian’s name is not so uncommon that it couldn’t have been shared by two very considerable scholars. But all he’s proved is that the two don’t have to be the same. The point Barnes produces as the clincher in his argument against the identification is that Tertullian nowhere says that there is no decree or law banning Christianity: Barnes’ story is that this shows that Tertullian was not an expert on Roman law.17 It doesn’t show this. Criminal proceedings in front of provincial governors didn’t require reference to laws, decrees or senatusconsulta — precedent was sufficient authority. De Ste Croix discusses this in his article ‘Why were the Early Christians Persecuted?’.18 A lawyer would know that the strict legality of proceedings against Christians was not open to question.

The reply to Barnes is that the two Tertullians don’t have to be different. The question is rather like the question of the two Origens, which arises because Porphyry in his Life of Plotinus refers to a pupil of Ammonius Saccas called Origen — who doesn’t seem, in Porphyry’s account, to have any Christian characteristics.19 I think in both cases we’re faced with authors who made their impact (as far as their extant work

17 Barnes, Tertullian, pp. 23-28, at p. 28.


is concerned) as Christian apologists, and that this fact has tended to make modern scholars hesitate to identify them with figures whom the literary tradition places in a pagan context. In fact it would be surprising if men as learned as Tertullian and Origen didn’t have a very strong pedigree in the main stream of literary culture. That’s where education came from in A.D. 200. I think it’s preferable to view both the ‘pagan’ Origen and the ‘pagan’ Tertullian as phantoms.

So what I’m arguing for is the theory that when Tertullian gave the De pallio, in Carthage in A.D. 205, as a speech, his audience turned out to hear him because he was well known. As a jurist he may perhaps have taught law and never appeared in court, but even so he could have had a high level of public recognition. His being a Christian wouldn’t necessarily have put hearers off, because as a lawyer it wouldn’t have been what he was primarily known for: even if there was only one Tertullian, I think it’s still true (if paradoxical) that the audience would have come to hear the ‘pagan’ Tertullian. That context explains the persona adopted in the speech — Tertullian is giving the audience a speech whose assumptions and atmosphere are drawn from the main stream of literary tradition.

Still, the idea that Tertullian the Christian was also Tertullian the lawyer, though it fits very well, isn’t indispensable to the basic contention that the De pallio is a real epideictic speech, not just a pamphlet, and that it was given to a real audience of Carthaginians. The strongest arguments for that arise from the text itself. The rest of this paper will be concerned with examining passages from it to show that it is full of local reference and colour, which would lose a good part of its force if offered to a wider audience. I shall also suggest how the presentation of the speech is well adapted to stringing along the listeners in an oral performance.

Let’s turn first to the opening of the speech.

*Principes semper Africæ, viri Carthaginenses, vetustate nobiles, novitate felices, gaudeo vos tam prosperous temporum, cum ita vacat ac iuvat habitus deniare. pacis haec et annuae otia. ab imperio et a caelo bene est. tamen et vobis habitus aliter olim tunicae fuere, et quidem in fama de subteminis studio et luminis concilio et mensurae temperamento, quod neque trans crura prodigae nec intra genua inverecundae nec brachiis parcae nec manibus artae, sed (nec cingulo sinus dividere expeditum) beatae quadrata*
iusititia in viris stabant. pallii extrinsecus habitus et ipse quadrangulus ab utroque laterum regestus et cervicibus circumstrictus in fibulae morsu, humeris acquiescebat. [2] instar eius hodie Aesculapio iam vestro sacerdotium est (i. 1-2):

Men of Carthage, leaders of Africa for ever, famed from antiquity, happy in modern days — I’m glad that you’re so well off for times when you have leisure like this, and the chance to take notice of costume. This is an age of peace and prosperity. All is propitious from the Empire and from Heaven. And yet there was a time when your costumes were different — they were tunics — and it’s rumoured, on the subject of quality of weave and shimmering texture and the style of the cut, that they weren’t baggy across your legs or up above your knees where you can’t keep yourself covered up. They weren’t short on your arms or tight across your hands, but they were exactly right (and it wasn’t necessary to divide their folds with a belt), and they fitted on a man straight and true. And the outer costume of the *pallium* was itself four-cornered, folded in from each side and held round your neck in the clasp of a pin, and it rested on your shoulders. The proof of this today is your priesthood of Aesculapius.

The contrast between the first sentence and the vaguely defined *Romani imperii antistites* of the *Apologeticum* is clear, and is all the more important because of the relationship which Barnes notes between the two works: he places the *De pallio* after the *Apologeticum* because of ideas in the *Apologeticum* that get reused in the *De pallio*. Here, the address is specifically to the men of Carthage, and at once the speaker plays the Carthaginian heritage card very deliberately. *Principes semper Africae*: the *semper* itself half implies appealing to the glories of the pre-Roman period, but *vetustate nobiles* makes the intention even clearer. The speaker goes on to talk about how Carthaginians haven’t always worn the toga — and that is to some extent the point of the reference to history right at the beginning. Even if you’re sceptical about the idea of this speech being written for actual delivery, you’ll have to admit that this introduction shows that it’s aimed at a local audience. *Principes semper Africae* wouldn’t touch much of a chord with a general Roman reading public.
Local references go on coming in. Tertullian early on uses the fact that the priest of Aesculapius at Carthage wears a *pallium* as evidence for the antiquity of *pallium*-wearing at Carthage. Then he deals rather obliquely with the fall of Carthage — the *iniuriae beneficium* (i. 2) ['being cruel to be kind'] — and its refoundation:

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\text{vobis vero post iniuriae beneficium, ut senium non fastigium exemptis, post Gracchi obscena omenia et Lepidi violenta ludibria, post trinas Pompei aras et longas Caesaris moras, ubi moenia Statilius Taurus imposuit, sollemnia Seniius Saturninus enarravit, cum concordia iuvat, toga oblata est. pro, quantum circummeavit, a Pelasgis ad Lydios, a Lydis ad Romanos, ut ab humeris sublimioris populi Carthaginienses complecteretur! (i. 2):}
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With you, they had to be cruel to be kind; you were banished in point of age but not of distinction. After Gracchus' revolting omens and Lepidus' violent jokes — after Pompey's three altars and Caesar's long delays, when Statilius Taurus built the walls, when Sentius Saturninus read the solemn rites, when concord was auspicious, the toga was offered. Well, didn't it have a trip around! From the Pelasgians to the Lydians, from the Lydians to the Romans, in order to come from the shoulders of a more sublime nation and embrace the Carthaginians.

At this point, among these rather oblique allusions to the exact circumstances of Carthage's refoundation, notice the phrases *cum concordia iuvat* and *toga oblata est*. The full name of Roman Carthage was *Colonia Concordia Iulia Karthago*.\(^\text{20}\) The toga that was offered was both the garment itself and citizenship — the people of a Roman colony were Roman citizens. The reference to *concordia* wouldn't have a point except to a Carthaginian audience: to them CCIK meant what SPQR meant to the people of Rome itself. But the echo of civic titulature would have no particular resonance for a general readership.

Because Tertullian's appeal to local patriotism draws on the audience's pride in the Punic inheritance, scholars have often thought the

\(^{20}\) Rives, *Religion and Authority*, p. 28.
whole speech anti-Roman.\footnote{For instance van Berchem, ‘Le “De Pallio” de Tertullien’ at 109-114, and G. Saeflund, \textit{De pallio und die stilistische Entwicklung Tertullians} (Lund, 1955).} In a basic way it’s tempting to think that a speech advocating wearing the \textit{pallium} instead of the toga must be anti-Roman, and the satirical pictures of Roman life that Tertullian paints later on make this temptation all the stronger. But note how Tertullian hedges his pro-Carthaginian comments about with references implying happy acceptance of Rome’s overlordship. I’ve already mentioned \textit{iniuriae beneficium} (a little paradox that exemplifies some of a sophist’s cleverness in picking the right way of saying things), but the picture of the toga ‘coming from the shoulders of a more sublime nation to embrace the Carthaginians’ does even more to show that the speech isn’t anti-Roman. It’s not just a matter of \textit{sublimioris populi}, although it’s true that \textit{sublimis} does for the Romans what another word for ‘greater’ or ‘stronger’ could well fail to do; there’s also \textit{complecteteretur}. Inclusion in the Roman system, for Carthage, is shown as an embrace: loving, protective, fatherly.

Next Tertullian produces an example to prove that knowledge of important things can be forgotten. He discusses the battering-ram, a Carthaginian invention, and the consternation it produced when the Romans used it at the siege of Carthage (i. 3). Talking about this, he twice quotes Virgil.\footnote{\textit{Aen.} i. 14 on Carthage: \textit{studiis asperrima belli}; then the second quote on the changes time can bring.} Both Virgil and the siege of Carthage could well be sensitive areas in front of a Carthaginian audience, one would expect. But after \textit{tantum aevi longinqua valet mutare vetustas} (i. 3; \textit{Aen.} iii. 415) he backs off, and changes the subject: \textit{sit nunc aliunde res, ne Poenicum inter Romanos aut erubescat aut doleat} (ii. 1): ‘Let’s turn to another line of argument, to avoid embarrassment or unhappiness for the Punic element among Romans’. This piece of rather heavy-handed tactfulness lets him move out of the preliminaries into a bit of \textit{tractatio},\footnote{Frédouille, \textit{Tertullien}, p. 459, analyzes the speech as follows: i. 1-2, \textit{exordium}; i. 3, \textit{narratio} — history of costume at Carthage; \textit{digressio} — the ram; ii. 1ff, \textit{tractatio}: ii. 1 - iv. 10, on change; v. 1 - vi. 2, an \textit{elogium} of the \textit{pallium}. No \textit{peroratio}.} and it also points in the direction of a live audience. \textit{Poenicum inter Romanos} is unnecessary for a reader, but it’s exactly what the composition of a live audience at Carthage would have amounted to. Punic was spoken in Roman Africa
down to the time of Augustine, and even used in inscriptions, and there would be sure to be an ethnic mix in the crowd.

So the speaker is actually in front of a crowd of Romans and Phoenicians in Carthage, and he’s wearing a pallium (i. 1). This is enough to explain the choice of theme for the speech. Some scholars have had to insist that Tertullian had caused a scandal by going round the town in a pallium instead of a toga, and so was moved to publish the De pallio as an answer to critics who were angry at him for not wearing his toga like an honest Roman. The text of the speech doesn’t call for this. All that would be necessary would be for the speaker to get up on the platform wearing a pallium when the audience expected to see him in a toga. The rest follows. I think it’s fair to assume that the toga was the normal outfit of citizens in Carthage, at least for anything like formal purposes: Frédouille quotes Juvenal saying that there’s a large part of Italy in which no one wears the toga unless he’s already dead, but the point of that is rustic simplicity — not the toga going out of fashion (aediles, no less, sitting in the front seat at the grassy theatre, in their white tunics — Juv. Sat. iii. 171-179). The contrast is with people in Rome dressing better than they can really afford (Juv. Sat. iii. 180-183). The description of laying out the toga the night before, and needing an assistant to put it on, and the relieved wearer taking it off the moment he gets in his own front door again (De pallio, v. 1-2), may perhaps suggest that togas weren’t for everyday wear — but the piece about people wearing the toga who are not entitled to wear it shows that it hadn’t become an item of fancy dress.

What does the audience get from Tertullian in the next part of the speech, after he’s caught its attention by wearing the wrong outfit and enlisted some benevolentia by calling on his fellow-citizens’ sense of local patriotism? A sophistic demonstration that change is a function of nature.


26 Frédouille, Tertullien, p. 448 — also quoting Romanos rerum dominos gentemque togatam (Virgil, Aen. i. 282).
Sophistic credentials are established with the reference to Plato's Form of the world: the argument is that Plato's world, which this world is an image of, must change — to be a world. In terms of Platonist philosophy this is nonsense — and yet it's an amusing paradox, and it's quite enough to give evidence of the acquaintance with philosophical themes that gave a speaker a claim to be a sophist (in this Second Sophistic period, not all orators could call themselves sophists). Then a dose of solid learning — nature, history, ethnography (ii. 2-6) — that leads up to a passage praising the Roman Empire (ii. 7). This is the bit that yields the dating point which places the De pallio in 205:

quantum reformavit orbis saeculum istud! quantum urbium aut produxit aut auxit aut reddidit praesentis imperii triplex virtus! Deo tot Augustis in unum favente, quot census transcripti, quot populi repurgati, quot ordines illustrati, quot barbari exclusi! revera orbis cultissimum huius imperii rus est, eradicato omni aconito hostilitatis et cacto et rubo subdolae familiaritatis convulso, et amoenus super Alcinoi pometum et Midae rosetum. (ii. 7):

How much of the world this age of ours has changed! How much the triple strength of the present empire has produced of cities, or made to grow, or restored. Under God's consistent favour to so many Augusti how many censuses have been recorded! How many peoples have been cleansed! How many classes of society brought to honour! How many barbarians shut out! In fact the most cultivated part of the world is the rural part of this empire, and the whole wolf's-bane of enmity has been rooted out, and the prickly briar of treacherous friendship has been torn out, and it's more pleasant than Alcinous' orchard and Midas' rose-garden.

The three Augusti are Septimius Severus, Caracalla and Geta. Geta first appears on coins as Augustus in 209, but there are inscriptions as early as 198 that refer to both of Septimius Severus' sons as Augusti. The

27 G.W. Bowersock, Greek Sophists in the Roman Empire (Oxford, 1969), pp. 12-15. This sort of distinction mattered at the time, as Bowersock notes (p. 14): 'pride in petty titles looms large in the second century'.

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rooting out of the ‘prickly briar of treacherous friendship’, Barnes argues, is a reference to the fall of Plautianus on 22 January 205.29 In the context of the speech, it’s more important that the positive view of Rome put forward earlier has been reaffirmed at this point.

From ii. 1 to iii. 6 Tertullian’s argument is constructed round general and theoretical considerations: change, nature, society; animals, man, clothing. But when this inductive argumentation has led him back to the pallium, he starts to take every opportunity of relating his theme to Roman life, and particularly Carthaginian life. So his prime example in iii. 7, illustrating the superiority of the pallium for purposes of decency plus ornament, is Cato himself. The old chap putting on a pallium for his Greek lessons. In view of Cato, the insinuation goes, why not admit how pro-Greek you yourselves really are?

It’s from this point onward that Tertullian starts casting things in a satirical mould. Cato himself is viewed with a certain wryness: ipse qui Graecos praeter urbe censebat: ‘the very man who argued that Greeks should be banned from the city of Rome’, is the phrase which introduces the man who became the great symbol of Roman ideals, and he’s cut down to size a bit with senex iam eruditus: ‘he was already an old man when he learnt’. Somehow the idea of him wearing the pallium takes the thought of Cato learning Greek away from its familiar positive associations (the patriot who isn’t too narrow to understand a foreign culture) and towards something more like Theophrastus’ mildly ridiculous late-learner.30

The next paragraph is about the popularity of the palaestra and certain related fashions: short haircuts, and two equally painful-sounding techniques for depilation — depilation in men, of course:

quid nunc, si est Romanitas omni salus, nec honestis tamen modis ad Graios estis? aut, ni ita est, unde gentium in provinciis melius exercitis, quas natura agro potius eluctando commodavit, studia palaestrae, male senescentia et cassum laborantia et lutea unctio et pulverea volutatio, arida

28 Barnes, Tertullian, p. 36 and n. 3, quoting CIL VIII, 2551; IRT 913ff; AE 1948. 214.

29 Barnes, Tertullian, p. 36 and n. 8.

30 Theophrastus, Char. 27.
saginatio? unde apud alios Numidas etiam equis caesariatos iuxta culum tonsor et cultri vertex solus immunis? unde apud hirtos et hirsutos tam rapax a culo resina, iam furax a mento volsella? prodigium est haec sine pallio fieri. illus est haec tota res Asiae. quid tibi Libya, et Europa, cum xysticis munditiis, quas vestire non nosti? revera enim quale est graecatim depilari magis quam amiciri? (iv. 1):

Why at this time, if Romanness is salvation for everything, are you still not taking honourable attitudes towards the Greeks? Or, if that’s not so, where in the world do the pastimes of the palaestra come from in the better-exercised provinces (which nature suited better for working on the land)? Those pastimes that put the pain into growing old and make people labour for nothing — anointing with yellow-dust and rolling in the dust: an unproductive way of getting fed. Why is it that among certain long-haired Numidians even for the horses there’s a barber who cuts right to the skin? The only thing that doesn’t get shaved is the edge of the razor-blade. Why is it that there’s such a rapacious resin on the buttocks for men who are hairy and shaggy, and such a hungry plucking-pincer on the chin? It’s unnatural for this to happen without the pallium. This whole situation is characteristic of Asia. Libya and Europe — what have you got to do with those sophisticated colonnades, which you don’t know how to dress for? Indeed, what kind of a thing is it to be depilated in the Greek way but not to be cloaked like a Greek?

The satirical flavour here is distinct, though not bitter, and the reference to fashions in Carthage is quite definite. Since Salmasius’ editio princeps in 1622 editors have noted that the Numidians referred to are the Carthaginians.\footnote{Tertullianus, ii, Opera Montanistica, ed. A. Gerlo, p. 741, app. crit. CC, ser. lat., 2. Tournhout: Brepols, 19.} Carthage, though a Latin-speaking city, had a distinct pro-Greek pedigree. Septimius Severus had held a Greek athletic festival there back in 203,\footnote{Barnes, Tertullian, pp. 188-189.} and the Latin-speaking crowds in the arena used to
shout εἰς αἰῶνας ἀν’ αἰῶνος, 'for ever and ever!', at their favourite gladiators.33

After the depilation scene Tertullian develops the hint dropped there in *prodigium est haec sine pallio fieri*: 'it's unnatural for this to happen without the *pallium*'. In accepting change you have to follow nature, so change that's contrary to nature is dishonourable. *Exempla* come from the more esoteric parts of mythology. Achilles among the women (Tertullian builds that up into a paradoxical double affront to nature — first changing from man to woman, then back from woman to man), then Hercules and Omphale. The nicest humorous touch in the speech comes at the point where Tertullian speculates on the indignities the skin of the Nemean lion must have suffered at the hands of a woman wearer: perfumed to take away its smell, combed, a parting put in its hair.

*Nemea certe, si quis loci genius, ingemebat: tunc enim se circumspexit leonem perdidisse* (iv. 3):

Nemea, of course, groaned aloud (if there’s such a thing as the *genius loci*) — for that’s when it looked round and realized it had really lost its lion.

Then it’s on to Cleomachus the boxer and his sex-change (iv. 4); Physcon, Sardanapallus (kings whose only claim on posterity’s attention is their scandalous sex lives); and a Caesar worse than both these two. Commodus is adequately scandalous to be the Caesar referred to, though G. Saeflund wanted to date the speech late to fit Elagabalus in here.34 Notice through all this that mythology is deployed very carefully in the speech as a whole. That *si quis loci genius* is a very tactful form of distancing — a pagan could have said it with no intention other than to express a conventional agnosticism. But the deployment of mythology is more intricate than just that: for instance, it’s not long after the mention of Plato (ii. 1) that Tertullian throws in a little reference to the destruction of Atlantis (ii. 3). That’s a neat piece of appropriateness.


34 Saeflund, De *pallio*, p. 39.
In the earlier part of the speech Classical myths get paired carefully with Bible stories (the Flood with Atlantis, Sodom and Gomorrah with Old Volsinii and Pompeii, the creation of the world with the invention of kingship), and the choice of mythological themes is both straightforward, in terms of picking familiar items out of the repertoire, and morally conservative. But in chapter four the 'feel' changes. The speaker displays his mastery of the morally questionable areas of mythology — and the tour de force consists in getting full entertainment value out of a shady story while still making a moral point with the seriousness and measured moderation that was expected from the educated class in the cities of the High Empire.35

In this case Tertullian finds his way to the moral point by broadening out the idea of unnatural clothing from heroes of myth dressed as the wrong sex to Alexander the Great in Persian dress, then on to people who wear the toga and have no right to: *vespillo, leno, lanista tecum vestiuntur* (iv. 8): 'the corpse-carrier, the pimp, the gladiator-trainer — they’re all dressed like you.’ This adds to the picture given in the depilation scene: Carthage’s Roman citizens like to hang out at the palaestra like Greeks, while every kind of low-life rushes to get a toga.

As if it weren’t enough that the toga was being worn in Carthage by all those dubious characters, when the satirical eye turns to women it spots *matronae* — respectable married women — out in public without a *stola*. Female clothing was a subject Tertullian was already an expert on, having written a book about it some years before, and if Barnes has got the order of his books right he was to return to the subject of how women ought to dress soon after he had composed the *De pallio*.36

convert et ad feminas. habes spectare, quod Caecina Severus graviter senatui impressit, matronas sine stola in publico. denique, Lentuli auguris consultis, quae ita sese exauctorasset, pro stupro erat poena; quoniam quidem indices custodesque dignitatis habitus, ut lenocinii factitandi impedimenta, sedulo quaedam desuefecerant, at nunc in semetipsas lenocinando, quo planius adeantur, et stolam et


supparum et crepidulum et caliendrum, ipsas quoque iam lecticas et sellas, quis in publico quoque domestice ac secrete habebantur, eieravere. sed alius extinguit sua lumina, alius non sua accendit. aspice lupas, popularium libidinum nundinas, ipsas quoque frictrices, et si praestat oculos abducere ab eiusmodi propudiis occisae in publico castitatis, aspice tamen vel sublimis, iam matronas videbis (iv. 9):

And consider the women too. You can see what Caecina Severus gave the Senate a serious warning about — women in public without a stola. Eventually, by the recommendation of Lentulus the augur, the punishment in a case like that, where a woman had discharged herself from service, was the same as for infidelity. Because indeed their clothing is the sign and the guard of their position in society, in that it’s something that gets in the way of carrying out immoral activities. That’s why some women have got out of the habit of dressing properly. But now, because the more openly they go, the better they can act as their own pimps, they have forsworn the stola and the supparum [= Oscan lady’s gown] and the sandal and the high hairdo — and even the litters and sedan-chairs, in which they used to be kept in a homely and discreet way even in public. But ‘one blows out his light, another doesn’t light his’: look at the prostitutes (the marketplaces of everyone’s lust) — even the hand-job girls — and, if it’s better to avert the eyes from those shameful persons whose chastity is being put to the sword in public, then look at the ones that are carried past up there, and you’ll see that now they’re the matronae.

That’s quite an appealingly humorous picture of city life. The theme reflects the treatment on the men’s side — citizen women not interested in maintaining their proper dignity (like the citizen men at the palaestra having their buttocks depilated). The idea of the prostitutes getting carried past in sedan chairs corresponds to the idea of the corpse-carriers and the rest wearing togas. In not wearing the stola, Tertullian says, the women are trying to get away from obstacles to immoral behaviour (lenocinii factitandi impedimenta: notice the frequentative factitandi, which hits just that much harder than faciendi). And the prostitutes are aping the stately public behaviour married women should keep up. They are the matronae now. J.N. Adams agrees with Lewis and
Short's dictionary in making Tertullian the only user of the term *frictrix*, which Lewis and Short define frigidly as ‘she who rubs’, and Adams rightly dismisses Lewis and Short’s suggested parallel with *tribas*, a lesbian. He says ‘Tertullian uses the word as if it was familiar to his readers’, but doesn’t go as far as saying what he thinks it means.\(^{37}\) *Frictrices* follows on from the ordinary tarts, who are *popularium libidinum nundinae*, and I think the way to understand the word is as referring to providers of the cheapest and most perfunctory sexual excitement for paying customers.

To complete the evocation of the Carthaginian *demi-monde*, we have the brothel-madam who wears the *mulleus calceus*.

\[\text{et cum latrinarum antistes sericem ventilat et immundiorem loco cervicem monilibus consolatur et armillas, quas ex virorum fortium donis ipsae quoque matronae temere usurpassent, omnium pudendorum conscias manus inserit, impuro cruri purum aut mulleolum inducit calceum (iv. 10):}\]

And the madam of a brothel flaunts her silk clothing and consoles her neck for its being grubby by reason of its place with necklaces, and puts bracelets, which married ladies themselves would hesitate to take from the gifts of their brave husbands, on to hands which are her accomplices in all kinds of deeds of shame (or ‘hands which know about everyone’s private parts’), and she puts on to her unclean leg a white, or a reddish, slipper.

This is, I think, a piece of writing that’s got to be referring to a particular person known to the listeners. The choice of word for her establishment — *latrina* — is deliberately contemptuous. There are other politer words that could have been used. As with the mention of the *frictrices*, Tertullian is trying to strip away the air of romance that might surround the idea of a bordello. The distasteful surroundings come through in the silk, the necklaces, the grubby neck (that comparative *immundiorem* is nice), and the bracelets so grand that even *matronae* would think they were getting a bit above themselves if they accepted them from their own husbands.

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Mulleolum, diminutive of mulleus, is given as a hapax in Lewis and Short — the diminutive used to point out the presumptuousness of the madam in wearing a shoe that ought to be on the foot of a curule magistrate. The detail loses its point if you interpret it as a general picture of what you could expect to see in any brothel. And the attack on immorality is all the stronger for being satirical — the element of satire allows Tertullian to trade on the sordidness of what’s now sometimes called the ‘sex industry’, and make it unappealing.

The brothel-madam is the final step in a series of examples of inappropriately clothed people, and the speaker uses her to lead into an attack on the inconsistency between religious dress and the character of its wearers. It’s a well-calculated move. What’s the value of clothes that are evocative of tradition and antiquity, when there’s the brothel-madam at the latrina wearing the mulleus calceus?

The satiric impulse is still to the fore at the beginning of chapter five, where we reach the description of putting on a toga.

Well, in the first place, just for putting it [the pallium] on, there’s no need for tiresome procedures. And you don’t have to have an expert to form the folds from scratch the day before and draw it down into ‘bark-bands’ and set up with imprisoning forceps the whole shaping of the billowing part of the toga — then at daybreak, when the tunic has been held in with a belt (it would have been better to have woven it a smaller size) to set up the billowing part again and if it’s just a bit much, to re-form it — to hand a part of it over your left arm (the curve leading up to where the fold starts), then to drag it back from your collarbones if the folds aren’t just right, to get your right hand clear and gather up the rest
in your left when the remainder's folded and hangs down your back — and so to dress a man up like a parcel.

The use of the technical terms here gives a recondite atmosphere — *tiliae*, the 'bark-bands'; *totum contracti umbonis figmentum*: 'the whole shaping of the billowing part'. The idea of the assistant, grandly called *artifex*, working on the toga the day before with his forceps establishes the feel of the occasion as something ritualistic and recherché; then we hear of him making all the intricate arrangements: left, right, *ambitus, sinus, tabulae*. Obscure and difficult to follow. The wearer becomes a cipher, at the mercy of the expert — in fact, all you hear of the wearer is parts of the body: left hand, right hand, shoulder-blades, back. The insinuation is that the luckless citizen, who ought, as a Roman, to be a master of the world, isn’t in the least in control of what’s going on. It reminds you of bumbling Lord Sepulchrevre being put through his ancestral rituals by the unspeakable Barquentine. 38

Though he’s brought in a number of standard satirical themes (such as the attack on women), Tertullian hasn’t made much use of stories from history until close to the end. There is the little bit on Cato, but really that only qualifies as a wry aside — and although Tertullian doesn’t resist the temptation to make gentle fun of the great Censor, he does on the whole want to define him as a positive role-model for the audience: after all, Cato wore the *pallium* (if only when he took to the Classics in old age).

However, from v. 4 the *pallium* itself speaks. It says it rejects public obligations but accepts philosophical precepts. It points out the values implicit in *pallium*-wearing; particularly, rejection of extravagance. The *exempla* are drawn from the dinner-tables of the great men of the Republic:

*adigo cautere ambarioni, qua M. Tullius quingenti milibus numnum orbem cirui emit, qua bis tantium Asinius Gallus pro mensa eiusdem Mauritaniae numerat — hem, quantis facultatibus aestimavere ligneas maculas! — item qua lances centenarii ponderis Sulla moliur! vereor sane, ne parva sit ista trutina, cum Drusillanus, equidem servus Claudii, quingenariam promulsidem aedificat, suprascriptis*

fortassean mensis necessarium, cui si officina exstructa est, debuit et triclinium (v. 5):

I apply the cauterizing-iron to the ambition that drove Marcus Tullius to buy a circular citron-wood table for 500,000 HS, and which drove Asinius Gallus to count out twice that much for a table from that same Mauretania (oh dear! What great abilities they brought to judging those wooden eyesores!) — similarly, that ambition drove Sulla to buy dishes weighing a hundred pounds. I'm afraid that that weight would be too small [to count what he paid] when Drusillanus (that's Claudius' slave, of course) built that 500-pound hors d'oeuvre trolley. And if a space was set aside for it, a whole new dining-room would be needed.

The crowning example, neatly, is taken from the court of Claudius. Claudius was notoriously over-indulgent to freedmen and, as in this case, even slaves. To turn up the emotional temperature a bit, the pallium moves on to speak of Vedius Pollio, who threw his slaves in to be eaten by muraena-fish. The paradox that follows about turning fish into wild beasts I find rather forced, but perhaps since Jaws this lacks the impact it would once have had. Then the shock line — his aim was later to eat the fish, 'so that he could himself taste something of his slaves' bodies' (v. 6).

After this cannibalistic moment the remaining examples of the savagery of the toga-wearers are disappointingly tame, all dealing with food and general grossness rather than any vile instances of man's inhumanity to man. The satire against the toga-wearers is hardly biting, except in the case of the muraena-fish.

When some really obnoxious characters do come in, in v. 7, they are rushed across the stage with the device of prclcrilion:

taceo Nerones et Apicios, Rufos. dabo catharticum impuritati Scauri et aleae Curii et vinolentiae Antonii. et memento istos interim ex multis togatos fuisse; quales apud pallium haud facile (v. 7):

I say nothing of the Neros and Apiciuses and Rufuses. I shall give a purifying draught to Scaurus' impurity and Curius' gambling and to Antony's wine-intoxication. Remember that these are just a few toga-wearers out of many. It's not easy to find people like that who wear the pallium.
This should really lay to rest once and for all the idea that the *De pallio* is an attack on Rome. The satirical parts of it are satirical in a characteristic way — *exempla* from history were vital to what satire was. They were what an audience expected. It was all part of a congenial sort of rhetorical show. It's a misunderstanding to think that laughing at Cicero's citron-wood dinner-table was anti-Roman: it was just Roman. Tertullian uses these satirical features, which are worked in to the second half of the *De pallio*, to give spice and variety to the entertainment. I suppose there could be such a thing as going too far, but the restraint (to the point of woodenness) that Tertullian shows on the 'Neros and Apiciuses and Rufuses' is enough to prove that he had no wish to go too far.

At the end of the speech Tertullian gives a list of the people who do wear the *pallium*. Writing-teachers, mathematics-teachers, grammar-teachers, rhetors, sophists, doctors, poets, musicians, astrologers, diviners (vi. 2). Admirable elements in society, Tertullian implies: *omnis liberalitas studiorum quattuor meis angulis tegitur* (vi. 2): 'the whole of liberal studies is encompassed by my four corners'. Then he rounds off the speech by adding Christians to the list — he suggests that the *pallium* has every reason to be pleased about being worn by them: *gaude pallium et exsulta! melior iam te philosophia dignata est ex quo Christianum vestire coepisti*. (vi. 2): 'Be glad, O *pallium*, and exult! Now a better philosophy has considered you worthy, since you began to clothe the Christian'. That's the only completely overt reference to Christianity, and it's a good ending (pace Frédouille, who thinks the speech is incomplete and lacks a proper peroration) because it brings the audience's attention back from Carthaginian life, and Roman life, to the point the speech began with — observing and commenting on the man on the platform in front of them, wearing a *pallium* instead of a toga.

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39 Dr. W.R. Barnes points out to me that the list of *pallium*-wearers recalls the list of accomplishments of the hungry Greek at Juv. *Sat.* iii. 75-78. But in this case there's no barb.

40 Frédouille, *Tertullien*, p. 476 — arguing that the piece remained unpublished as well as unfinished.

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