



Playing with Gender: Girls, Dolls, and Adult Ideals in the Roman World

This study examines the socio-cultural significance of dolls as Roman girls' toys. It focuses on a sample of ivory, bone, and cloth dolls, many of which have ornate hairstyles, molded breasts and, in some cases, delineated genitalia. As the only explicitly gendered toys from the Roman world, these constitute unique bodies of evidence for exploring questions of socialization and identity formation, and assessing ancient ideals. Often treated as relatively straightforward objects that prepared girls for futures as wives and mothers, this study argues instead that they were more complex and conveyed mixed messages to their young owners. By isolating three specific features of the dolls (an emphasis on adornment, capacity for movement, and resemblance to imperial figures), situating these in their historical and ideological milieux, and linking them with expectations for girls known from literary sources, the dolls' multivalence as artifacts of gender and status is revealed.

Some time late in the second century CE, a young girl about eight years old died from a lung disease, perhaps tuberculosis, and was buried along the Via Cassia in an area of Rome known as Grottarossa. Her body had been mummified and then placed in a marble sarcophagus beneath a monument erected in her honor. Those who had seen to her last rites presumably wanted to preserve her memory for years to come, yet none could have anticipated the extent to which

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this little girl, whose name is lost, would be memorialized nearly two millennia later. Discovered in 1964, the girl dubbed the “mummy of Grottarossa” now lies on display at Palazzo Massimo alle Terme, one of Rome’s national museums. Visitors come to look at her mummified form and learn her sad fate, and then to gaze upon the rich array of grave goods found in the sarcophagus including gold earrings, a large gold ring engraved with a winged Victory, and a gold and sapphire necklace; small amber perfume or make-up pots and a tiny clam-shaped cosmetic compact; and an ivory doll with jointed limbs that bears a hairstyle reminiscent of Faustina the Younger, the wife of Marcus Aurelius.¹

Both the doll and the little girl who was probably her owner are distinct in several ways, but not unique. Throughout the Roman Empire, nearly 500 objects, the dates of which range from the second century BCE to late fourth century CE, have been identified as dolls.² Not all of these seem to have been children’s toys and some likely served ritual or decorative purposes instead, yet a significant number can reasonably be classed as children’s playthings from the combination of their size, shape, and features such as articulated limbs and accessories.³ More specifically, these toys were arguably primarily *girls’* playthings.⁴ Though literary references that associate Roman girls with dolls are sparse,⁵ the material

1. On the discovery of the sarcophagus and its contents, see Bordenache Battaglia 1983: 100–23. Dasen 2010: 138–42 discusses possible causes of death and circumstances surrounding the girl’s mummification.

2. Manson 1987: 19 reported a total of 493 documented objects identified as dolls that fall within these chronological boundaries. The number is now somewhat higher from the inclusion of more recent finds (see, e.g., Almagro-Gorbea and Sesé 1996, Degen 1997, and Shumka 1999) and perhaps also items not previously classified as dolls. Johnson’s two studies (2003/2004 and 2007, esp. 79–116) of material evidence for children at Roman Karanis discuss some of the challenges in making correct identifications of artifacts as either children’s toys or ritual objects, as she suggests may be the case for several figures earlier labeled dolls and for a number of miniature objects.

3. Manson (1987: 15–16, 1991: 54) lists criteria that distinguish a figure as a child’s doll rather than a ritual or decorative object. It must realistically resemble a human form so that the child can identify with it and to enable imitative as well as affective play; movable limbs, though not essential, facilitate these objectives. The figure needs to be of a size and weight that can be manipulated by a child. Finally, the figure must come from an archaeological context that is not exclusively religious or cultic.

4. Although boys may have played with dolls, as some have suggested (e.g., Elderkin 1930: 455, Shumka 1993: 170–71), I am not aware of any evidence that connects them with dolls of either sex and thus concentrate predominantly on girls rather than “children.” From the combination of literary evidence and datable skeletal remains of girls buried with dolls, doll owners ranged in age from five to the late teens, though girls outside that range may have played with them as well. Many of the dolls would have constituted luxury items, especially those crafted from ivory or bone, and were possibly specially commissioned as Rawson 2003: 128 suggested.

5. The only Latin sources to mention girls owning or playing with dolls (all of which use the term *pupa*) are Persius 2.69–70 (with a scholiast and the later critique of Lactantius, *Div. Inst.* 2.4.12), the commentary of [Acro] on Hor. *Sat.* 1.5.65–66, and Jerome, *Ep.* 128.1. Among Greek sources, I am only aware of John Chrysostom’s observation on $\nu\acute{\upsilon}\mu\phi\eta$ in *Hom. in Jo.* 81.3 (= Migne, *PG* 59.440) which is generally not cited in discussions of girls and play and to which I return below. For Chrysostom as a source for children and childhood, see Leyerle 1997. I leave aside an anonymous poem from the *Greek Anthology* (*AP* 6.280) sometimes adduced as evidence

record forges a stronger link in depictions of girls with dolls on sarcophagi and particularly in the dolls themselves, over a dozen of which have been found buried with girls in their tombs.⁶ The majority of such dolls were fashioned from ivory, bone, or cloth, bear the bodies of adult women, and resemble upper-class *matronae*. Beneath their ornate coiffures and accoutrements, many exhibit molded breasts, swelling hips, and delineated genitalia.⁷ As the only explicitly gendered toys from the Roman world, these dolls constitute unique bodies of evidence for exploring questions of socialization and identity formation, and for assessing ancient ideals and modern assumptions about children and gender.⁸

In recent decades, these dolls have been the subject of several valuable studies in the form of surveys of archaeological evidence and examinations of individual dolls, especially celebrated Italian examples which have been featured in exhibition catalogues of women's and girls' tomb assemblages.⁹ Among historians of the Roman family and childhood, there has been considerably less interest, with

for Roman girls dedicating their dolls prior to marriage (e.g., Manson 1978: 864n.5, Bettini 1999: 218, Martin-Kilcher 2000: 71); its date, authorship, and context, however, cannot be established with any certainty.

6. Representations of girls with dolls on funerary monuments are few. In her study of Roman children's sarcophagi, Huskinson 1996 includes only two possible depictions (nos. 1.3 and 1.46). The earlier and secure example (no. 1.46) is a *kline*-type lid of early second century CE date now in the J. Paul Getty Museum in Malibu, California (inv. no. 73.AA.II). A young girl lies on a couch resting and reaches to pet a small dog by her side; two dolls lie against the backrest at the foot of the couch and a cupid sleeps behind the girl's head. Koch 1988: 11 dates the monument to 120–140 CE by the girl's hairstyle. For additional discussion see Wrede 1990 and Bradley 1998: 539 for the combination of toys and animals on monuments such as this as indicators of the importance of pet-keeping for Roman children. The second monument, from Arezzo and now in the Museo Nazionale Archeologico there (inv. no. 112), depicts a toilette scene: several female figures carry various objects and stand on either side of a woman seated in a high-back chair whose hair is being arranged as she looks into a mirror held before her. Among the figures to the left of the seated woman is a small child who holds either a statuette or a doll according to Amedick (1991: 122, no. 9, tafel 107.1), though Koch and Sichtermann 1982: 126 identify the object as a doll and date the monument to the mid-Antonine era. The sex of the child is difficult to determine.

7. For many of the ivory and bone examples, a triangular area is carved or incised to represent the pubic region as is clearly evident on Figures 2 and 3 in this study, while one cloth doll (Figure 5) has a v-shaped pubic region denoted by bright red thread. Another cloth doll not included here appears to be even more anatomically correct as Janssen (1996: 237, with Figure 7 [left]), who has examined the doll, suggests that "a stitch and distinct hole denote the vulva and labia."

8. Two relatively intact male figurines of gladiators and one torso of a legionary have also been discovered which may have been children's toys but could equally have served other functions. The terracotta gladiatorial figures were found at the ancient site of Baelo Claudia (near modern Tarifa in southern Spain) in what seems to have been a shop (Dardaine 1983: 242), while the legionary's torso, which was carved in great detail in ivory, was buried with a ten-year-old girl in Lyon (Shumka 1993: 131). Even if these figures are included and classified as dolls, the point still remains that dolls constitute the only explicitly gendered toys from the Roman world since other common playthings such as balls, dice, and hoops were not gendered.

9. The first major study of Greek and Roman dolls in English by Elderkin 1930 surveyed archaeological evidence for dolls throughout the Mediterranean world; though seminal, it is primarily descriptive, which is similarly the case of the important work by Manson 1987, 1991, and 1992, and the most recent survey of archaeological evidence by Degen 1997. For exhibition catalogues, see Bordenache Battaglia 1983, *Creperia Tryphaena* 1983, and Bedini 1995.

two notable exceptions: Leslie Shumka's investigation of the social and historical significance of toys in the Roman world, which incorporates modern theoretical research on child development with ancient literary and archaeological evidence; and Maurizio Bettini's chapter on dolls in his anthropological study of visual representation, love, and loss.¹⁰ Building upon these studies and others, I hope to enhance our understanding of dolls as important artifacts of childhood that contributed to the socialization of Roman children in various ways. In contrast to previous socio-historical studies, I draw on a wider evidentiary base by including a number of finds that were either published after some earlier research appeared or were not treated in their examinations in any detail. More importantly, though, I aim to advance the discussion by asking different questions of the evidence, prompted in part by modern assumptions about these artifacts and the nature of Roman children's—and especially girls'—interactions with them, and by observations about contemporary girls' doll-play from recent sociological and ethnographic studies.

The Roman dolls in this study have generally been regarded as relatively straightforward objects that served as useful tools to prepare girls for future roles as wives and mothers.¹¹ Features such as elaborate hairstyles, jointed limbs in some that enabled movement, and resemblances to empresses and other imperial figures have been noted largely in passing as features that would have appealed to children in antiquity. Yet while these are perhaps the dolls' most appealing attributes, these features also complicate them and the messages they convey, thereby complicating the picture of Roman childhood they help to create. These three common features of the dolls, which have not been analyzed extensively before, comprise my focus: the emphasis on adornment; the dolls' capacity for movement; and the use of imperially inspired models. I propose that once these aspects are located within their ideological milieux—in which certain stereotypes and ideals persisted regarding the female sex—the potential meanings attached to and incorporated in the dolls multiply, and what seem on the surface to be simple playthings emerge as more complex artifacts of gender and status.

Girls from a variety of backgrounds likely played with dolls, yet many of the dolls in this study must have belonged to girls from the upper echelons of Roman society, especially those crafted from ivory. When in the company of more privileged peers, slave girls and girls from less affluent families might have had opportunities to play with dolls such as those in my sample, but since there is no evidence linking these girls to dolls, the conclusions reached about girls and doll-

10. Even in recent monographs dedicated to Roman childhood, dolls have received rather limited attention: e.g., Néraudau 1984: 296–98, Wiedemann 1989: 149–50, Rawson 2003: 128, 145. Shumka's MA thesis (University of Victoria, 1993) combines valuable analysis of the literary and material evidence for toys with short descriptive entries in an accompanying catalogue. Bettini's chapter titled "The Doll" (1999: 213–27) appears in *The Portrait of the Lover* (originally published in 1992 as *Il ritratto dell'amante*).

11. E.g., Wiedemann 1989: 149–50, Janssen 1996: 239, Rawson 2003: 128.

play must pertain predominantly to upper-class girls.¹² The years when these girls played with dolls were formative ones. Thus, I try to situate my arguments about the dolls' complicating features within the framework of what is currently known about Roman girls and girlhood—the norms, expectations, and ideals adults record regarding girls' appearances and activities. I also draw judiciously on studies by sociologists and developmental psychologists of contemporary “girl culture,” in which play with fashion dolls such as Barbie is prominent, to lend further insights into the ancient material. By exploring the varied messages these objects conveyed, I hope to enrich our understanding of the processes of socialization and self-fashioning that occurred both within and beyond children's play and helped shape the lives of Roman girls.

Before investigating what I identify as some of the dolls' complicating features, I begin with a descriptive overview of a sample of 18 articulated dolls found in Italy, Spain, Switzerland, and Egypt that date to the first four centuries CE. These include celebrated ivory dolls like the one found in Grottarossa, a number of lesser-known examples fashioned from ivory and bone, and several cloth dolls from Egypt that have not previously been treated in conjunction with ivory or bone dolls. My goal is not to provide a comprehensive survey of dolls from the Roman world, which Michel Manson has already undertaken and Rudolf Degen has recently supplemented, but rather to present a representative sample in order to pose important questions regarding these dolls' socio-historical significance. Although many doll parts and very fragmentary dolls have been recovered, I focus on fairly intact, well-preserved, and well-documented examples whose appeal as children's toys is readily apparent. I consider a relatively small number of examples, but it is worth noting that the geographical distribution of these artifacts is substantial. Dolls and doll parts similar to those examined here have been found at sites throughout Italy; the Gallic, Germanic, and Spanish provinces; and Egypt, as well as Dalmatia and Judea, which seems to reflect a rather widespread habit of playing with dolls.¹³

12. Slave children might have sometimes used these costlier toys when playing with their masters' children, as in the case of *collocatanei* (children of different statuses within a household who were nursed by the same woman: see Bradley 1991: 149–55). The Egyptian dolls are suggestive of the probable existence of cloth dolls elsewhere in the empire as well as dolls made from other perishable materials. Petronius (*Sat.* 40), for instance, refers to a girl playing with a *vavato* (straw puppet), which Shumka 1993: 49 proposes “could easily have substituted as a doll in households where little money was available for the purchase of ready-made toys.”

13. For the geographical distribution, see the surveys of Manson 1987 and Degen 1997 with current bibliography. Rahmani 1960: 146–47 discusses a fragmentary articulated bone doll found in a young woman's burial in Jerusalem that bears a hairstyle similar to one popularized by Faustina the Elder, and notes that other doll parts have been recovered from tombs in Jerusalem but were sometimes not recognized as such.

BODIES OF EVIDENCE

Of the dolls surveyed here, the ivory and bone examples fall into two broad categories: individualized figures and schematized or stylized figures.¹⁴ I begin with individualized dolls from Italy and the western provinces, all of which were carved from ivory, then turn to a group of stylized figures made of bone found in various parts of Italy. To complement the picture from the west and the more traditional approach to dolls as children's toys, I introduce several Egyptian cloth dolls into the discussion before drawing together important points of commonality from this sample.

Perhaps the most famous doll from Roman antiquity—and the finest surviving example—is a mid-second century CE ivory doll found in the sarcophagus of an adolescent girl named Crepereia Tryphaena (Figure 1).¹⁵ The doll, which is 23 cm tall, has articulated limbs with joints at the shoulders, elbows, hips, and knees. Her slim form displays small breasts, rounded hips and buttocks, and a small indented navel. Her face is delicately carved with considerable attention to rendering her features. The doll's hair resembles a style worn by Faustina the Elder (d. 141 CE), which her daughter Faustina the Younger adopted around 150 CE with slight variations. This coiffure, evident in portraits in the round and coinage, has been used to date her manufacture to the mid-second century and perhaps 150 to 160 CE more specifically.¹⁶

The ivory doll found in the sarcophagus of the so-called mummy from Grottarossa shares many similarities with Crepereia's doll, including a coiffure reminiscent of Faustina the Younger (Figure 2).¹⁷ Though smaller than Crepereia's

14. By "individualized" I do not mean these dolls were meant to be portraits or exact replicas of specific historical figures in miniature form, though they share some similarities with them, particularly hairstyles, as I discuss below. Rather, I use the term to distinguish those dolls, such as the one found in Grottarossa, that appear to have been distinctly crafted, perhaps even "specially commissioned" as Rawson 2003: 128 plausibly suggests, from ones that bear no unique features and seem to have been produced in quantity as the evidence of the Palatine East workshop indicates (see below).

15. The doll was originally thought to be oak or ebony (Elderkin 1930: 471, Sommella 1983: 29), but conservation efforts revealed it was actually ivory that had darkened. Bedini 1995: 65 lists Crepereia's age at death at 17 to 19, but Elderkin 1930: 472 and Martin-Kilcher 2000: 64 consider her younger (14 and 14 to 17 respectively). Similar to the girl buried in Grottarossa, Crepereia was inhumed with an impressive array of grave goods that included gold jewelry and a gold diadem; a small ivory and bone chest containing pairs of ivory combs and small silver mirrors; and an amber distaff and spindle. The catalogue *Crepereia Tryphaena. Le scoperte archeologiche nell'area del Palazzo di Giustizia* contains detailed descriptions of all the finds related to the discovery of Crepereia's sarcophagus, on which see also Lanciani and Castellani 1889.

16. Ferrea 1983: 57–60 examines portraits of the two Faustinas on their coinage, while for extensive discussion of Faustina the Younger's different hairstyles, see Fittschen 1982. The doll's ears appear to have holes in them for wearing earrings, and Stefanelli 1983: 65 suggests the two tiny pearls found among the grave goods might have been part of the doll's earrings. Sommella 1983: 56 isolates this decade but most scholars more cautiously date the doll simply to the mid-second century CE.

17. Bedini 1995: 77, Bordenache Battaglia 1983: 100–23. The doll has variously been attributed to the late Hadrianic period or the Antonines, but the latter seems more likely since her hairstyle

doll at 16.5 cm, this doll has a broader physique with wider hips and buttocks. She has small breasts and a clearly marked pubic region; her limbs are articulated and her feet appear shod with markings above her ankles to indicate shoes.

A late second or early third century CE ivory doll is also among the better-known Italian examples in this study (Figure 3). The doll was discovered in 1929 along the Via Valeria in Tivoli in the tomb of an elderly Vestal Virgin named Cossinia. At 30 cm, this is the tallest of known Roman dolls; her body is more slender than her predecessors' with narrower hips and less prominent buttocks. The doll has been dated to the early Severan period because she bears the *Helmsfrisur* ("helmet coiffure") characteristic of Julia Domna during Septimius Severus's reign (193–211 CE), but she is also distinguished for her accoutrements: a gold necklace, gold bangles on each arm and ankle, and the appearance of shoes carved on her feet. A small amber box was also found in the tomb and may have once held the doll's clothes and other accessories.¹⁸

Although there are few individualized dolls from the third century, a fine example was discovered in 1989 at Segóbriga in central Spain in a monumental area that may correspond with the town's forum.¹⁹

Only the head and torso remain, fashioned from a single piece of ivory and measuring 8.5 cm in length. The figure represents a young woman with well-defined breasts (whose nipples are marked by small circular incisions), an indented navel, and delineated pubis. Her extremities are missing but holes at the shoulders and hips indicate they once attached. Part of her face is poorly preserved, but her large eyes with prominent irises and eyebrows were delicately carved. As Martín Almagro-Gorbea and Gema Sesé observe, her hair is represented with precision in an elegant coiffure known as *Scheitelzopf* in which a braid is gathered into a bun and bound inside a hairnet. This style was introduced by Tranquillina, the wife of Gordian III (241–244 CE), and similarly worn by Otacilia Severa, the wife of Philip the Arab (244–249 CE), though it persisted until the Tetrarchy.²⁰

Elsewhere in Spain, from the township of Ontur in the province of Albacete, four ivory and one amber doll came to light in the early 1940s in a grave from the Las Eras necropolis.²¹ The ivory dolls, articulated female figures which range in height from 20.5 to 25.5 cm, and the amber doll which measures 16.5 cm,

clearly resembles Faustina the Younger's. Bordenache Battaglia 1983: 117 suggests that the diadem the doll wears may mean she was intended to resemble a goddess or allude to the girl's future wedding, but it could simply be in imitation of Faustina the Younger who was represented in at least one portrait type wearing a diadem: Fittschen 1982: 53n.34 nos. C2, Fittschen 1996: 48.

18. Bedini 1995: 85, Bordenache Battaglia 1983: 134 (on the doll's hair) and 124–38 generally on Cossinia's tomb and contents; Musées de Marseille's 1991 *Jouer* no. 29.

19. Almagro-Gorbea and Sesé 1996: 170.

20. Almagro-Gorbea and Sesé 1996: 171–73.

21. All five dolls were found in a grave identified as grave 2; I am not aware of whether there were skeletal remains found in the grave as well which would offer additional context for these finds. In citing the Ontur dolls in his catalogue, Degen 1997: 36 wonders if several girls were buried together. The official website of the Museo de Albacete where the dolls are displayed proposes that the

have a body type similar to the Italian dolls. Those whose heads have not been damaged display a hairstyle popularized by Helena (d. 327 CE) and Fausta (d. 326 CE), mother and wife respectively of Constantine I. None were found with jewelry or toilette articles, but three of the ivory dolls, as well as the amber figure, have low boots carved on their feet that are probably meant to represent the *calceus muliebris* or *calceolus*.²²

Roughly contemporaneous with the Ontur examples are two ivory dolls that surfaced in the early 1990s during excavations of the necropolis of Eburodunum (modern Yverdon-les-Bains, Switzerland). One was in a tomb that contained the skeletal remains of a fourteen- to fifteen-year-old of indeterminate sex, the other located nearby and possibly belonging to the same tomb. The first doll, found lying near the thorax of the body, probably had an original height of 18 to 20 cm; the 14 cm that remain include the head and torso (carved from a single block), one arm and hand, and both legs from the hips to the knees. The doll was articulated at the shoulders, elbows, hips, and knees, and has a similar body type to second- and third-century Italian and Spanish dolls with small breasts and gently rounded hips. Her facial features are finely carved and she displays a hairstyle that resembles coiffures worn by women in the family of Constantine I, particularly Helena and her daughter Constantia (d. 330 CE). The second doll, of which only the head and torso survive in a single 10-cm long piece, has a similar hairdo though less detailed. Her limbs are missing but there are traces where they once attached. She bears the same slight figure with small breasts but her hips are broader; her navel, pubic region, and buttocks are clearly distinguished.²³

Although individualized dolls are found outside Italy in the fourth century, within Italy there seems to have been a tendency toward more schematized figures, the beginnings of which Manson believes can be seen in the Severan doll from Cossinia's tomb with her flatter buttocks and leaner body type than the Antonine examples treated above. The Severan doll, however, with her highly individuated features, is still significantly different from the type that appears to be the end point of Manson's evolutionary trajectory, a type that became popular in late third- and fourth-century catacomb burials in Rome.²⁴ These small, articulated dolls, mostly carved from bone, tend to be highly stylized, their bodies "crudely shaped,

dolls must have formed a child's (girl's?) trousseau, which points toward a single rather than multiple grave: http://www.patrimoniohistoricoclm.es/museo-de-albacete/multimedia/izoom/al_9841/.

22. Balil 1962: 80–82.

23. The dolls are identified as inv. T 192–1 and inv. 6475–1 and treated in detail by Rossi 1993: 154–56. Doll torsos and limbs (but no intact dolls) dated to the fourth century have been found elsewhere in Switzerland at Martigny (*Octodurus/Forum Claudii Vallensium*), Augst (*Augusta Raurica*), and Pfyn (*Ad Fines*): see Rossi 1993: 157 and Degen 1997.

24. Manson 1987: 19 regards Cossinia's doll as evidence for a stylistic evolution from the Antonine period to the Severan that carried into the fourth century. He notes that the buttocks of this doll are quite flat and not modeled, and her hair is more carved than sculpted, which he believes reflects the beginnings of a shift from individualized figures to highly stylized ones.

with details of anatomy suggested by incised lines and circular indentations.”²⁵ Though recognizable as female figures, the dolls’ breasts are not molded but merely indicated by oblique incisions, the pubis marked by a v-shaped incision, and the navel by a circular indentation. Such dolls have been found pressed into the gypsum covers of the *loculi* in catacombs, as is the case of a 15-month-old girl named Hermofilis in the catacomb of Novatian.²⁶ In addition, a substantial number have been discovered at an ivory- and bone-carving site on the northeast slope of the Palatine Hill, the majority of which date to the mid-fourth and fifth centuries and consist of doll limbs and torsos of bone in various stages of completion. Many appear to be unfinished and some are likely discards from the carving process since all of the bodies are broken at the neck while the head and torso of these dolls seem normally to have been of one piece.²⁷

Similar stylized figures have also been found in Ostia and southern Umbria during the excavation of a late Roman infant cemetery in the town of Lignano in Teverina. The examples from Ostia, currently in the Museo Nazionale Ostiense, are fashioned from a single piece of bone and have long, flat bodies with breasts and pubis indicated by incisions. Unlike dolls of the second and third centuries whose limbs were jointed using a peg mechanism, the limbs of these figures are attached by a thread that runs through a hole at the end of the arm or leg into the doll’s torso. Facial features are clearly marked and despite their otherwise simple appearance, the dolls display high, elaborate hairstyles.²⁸ In her early study of jointed dolls from Greco-Roman antiquity, Kate Elderkin included three similar unpublished examples from the Museo Cristiano in the Vatican, and remarked of the dolls’ coiffure that it was “much stylized with sharp parallel incisions, has the appearance of a wig” and bore some resemblance to a statue of Julia Domna from the Capitoline Museum, but she was cautious regarding their date. Carlo Pavolini, however, has noted similarities with late-antique dolls made in Spain, and the specimens included in Archer St. Clair’s catalogue from the Palatine East site certainly have much in common, which point toward a later third or fourth century date.²⁹

A bone doll recovered from the infant cemetery at Poggio Gramignano in southern Umbria and recently examined by Shumka is similar to the Ostian examples.³⁰ This well-preserved figure measures 15.8 cm in height and has two small notches carved at acute angles and situated high on her chest which may be intended to represent breasts as Shumka suggests. An incised v indicates her pudendum and a tiny circle marks her navel. Her shoulders are not pierced so

25. St. Clair 2003: 49. It has been suggested to me that the medium may account for the limitations in effect since bone is harder to carve detail into than ivory and not as thick.

26. Martin-Kilcher 2000: 72, Manson 1987: 22. Pictured in Borda 1947: 72, Figure 25.

27. St. Clair 2003: 108 with catalogue entries 550–76 (108–110) and plates 51 and 52.

28. Pavolini 1992: 163–64, Figure 201.

29. Elderkin 1930: 472–73, Figure 24. Pavolini 1992: 163.

30. Shumka 1999: 615–16.

it is not clear how her arms were fixed to her body; her legs, now missing, may have been attached to the pierced flange of her torso with a wire or string. Her hair resembles that of both the Ostian dolls examined by Pavolini and the dolls from the Vatican cited by Elderkin. Stylistically, she shares features with dolls that may date to the third or fourth centuries, and she may be contemporaneous for though the cemetery where she was found dates to the mid-fifth century CE, excavators propose it might have seen limited use during the third century.³¹

Bone and especially ivory dolls, such as the ones treated above, have been the main focus of earlier studies of children's dolls and play, but to broaden our understanding of Roman childhood and gender ideologies, I introduce several cloth dolls from Egypt and concentrate on three in particular.³² Rosalind Janssen has recently examined five complete dolls and one torso, all dated to the first four centuries CE, along with finds of doll accessories which, though not associated with any of these dolls, nevertheless add to the overall picture of children's play. All of the dolls in her study are fashioned from cloth stuffed with rags, rushes, or papyrus. Four of the complete dolls can be identified unambiguously as adult female figures by virtue of breasts and demarcated pubic regions, in addition to features such as feminine hairstyles and jewelry.³³ The sex of the fifth doll is not obvious, but the presence of a blue glass bead, attached to the left side of the face where one might expect an ear, may represent an earring or an ear itself, and suggest that this was a female figure too.³⁴ The doll torso cannot be sexed, but certainly represents a human figure as it once featured a head (now missing) and each arm terminates in five linen threads Janssen plausibly interprets

31. The site has a much longer history since the cemetery was built in rooms of a collapsed villa that had been occupied from the late first century BCE to the late second or early third century CE. See Shumka 1999: 618 on dating and Soren 1999: 43–44 for chronology of the site.

32. The present discussion of cloth dolls is indebted to Janssen 1996, who has studied the dolls included here. Her study, which draws considerably on previously unpublished materials, post-dates some of the important work by earlier scholars on children's toys. Several, however, very briefly mention cloth or rag dolls nonetheless: Manson 1987: 18, Wiedemann 1989: 150, Shumka 1993 (no. 26), and D'Ambra 2007: 61. Surprisingly, Rawson 2003: 128, 145 does not treat cloth dolls when she addresses evidence for dolls as girls' toys, and there are no entries in Musées de Marseille's 1991 *Jouer* catalogue which includes female figurines from Thebes (though their function is not clear) and Coptic bone dolls.

33. Of the four adult female figures, I do not treat one that is now in the Victoria and Albert Museum (inv. no. 1937–1897). It was excavated from Behnasa (Oxyrhynchus) in 1897 and dates to the third to fourth century CE. This doll is unique for its anatomical detail which includes demarcation of the vulva and labia specifically, not merely a genital region (see above in n.8 and the description of Janssen 1996: 237). The doll is pictured in Janssen 1996 as Figure 7 (left), and previously in Kendrick 1921: plate XXXII.611 who also notes (91, no. 611) that there are traces of hair on the doll's head which, though less convincing than the attention to anatomy, further suggest it is meant to be an adult figure.

34. Mann 1975: 42 believes the blue bead represents the ear itself. This doll, now in the British Museum (GR 1905.10–12.13), was found at Oxyrhynchus in 1905. Stuffed with both rags and papyrus, it measures 18.5 cm. See Mann 1975: 41, Figure 7 and Janssen 1996: 235, Figures 5 and 6. Janssen 1996: 236 notes that there are red woolen traces on the face, torso, legs, and feet, but does not indicate the doll's visible bellybutton.

as “fingers.”³⁵ It is worth noting that with the possible exception of this latter doll of uncertain sex, none of these published cloth dolls represent babies.

My earliest example, drawn from Janssen’s study and which is now in the Manchester University Museum, dates from the first century and was found in Hawara during excavations in 1888 (Figure 4). Made from linen stuffed with rags and papyrus, the doll is 25.5 cm tall—about 10 cm taller than other cloth dolls. In comparison with later figures, she is of “rougher workmanship” according to Janssen, yet possesses many notable features nonetheless.³⁶ She is clearly an adult female figure with molded breasts on which the nipples have been highlighted with red paint. Her arms, which are formed by a long, separate “sausage roll” attached within the torso at shoulder height, appear to be movable; her legs do not seem to have been delineated although the bottom of the figure has split open and the stuffing is falling out so it is not clear what form her lower half once took. Strands of thread denote hair; her nose is modeled and her facial features painted in black. In addition, a necklace of alternating red and black dots is painted on her chest.

Two other dolls from the same season at Hawara share similarities with this doll and the better-known ivory and bone dolls treated above. The first (Figure 5), in the Petrie Museum in London, was found along with her own wardrobe of linen and woolen garments in a child’s grave of Constantinian date.³⁷ Made of linen stuffed with rushes, the doll measures 13 cm in height and has arms jointed at the shoulders with a wooden peg mechanism (the right arm is now detached). Her legs have been cut off at the thighs and it is not clear if there is any significance to this. She has small molded breasts upon which the nipples have been marked in red thread; her pubic area and navel have been indicated in similar fashion. Red thread also denotes her lips while her eyes and eyebrows are painted black. Perhaps her most interesting feature is her considerable brown human hair dressed in an ornate coiffure that terminates in a French braid, a style Janssen notes is typical of contemporary mummified heads, marble busts, and terracottas from Memphis.

A second cloth doll from a mid-fourth century CE girl’s tomb in the same cemetery and now in the Ashmolean Museum (Figure 6) is a 15.5 cm tall figure made from purple linen that appears to be a piece of discarded ornamental

35. The torso measures 7.9 cm in height. Currently in the Victoria and Albert Museum (inv. no. 1938–1897; pictured in Janssen 1996: 236, Figure 7), it is from the same season at Behnasa that yielded the doll previously mentioned, as well as a doll’s hat and ball (inv. nos. 1937–1897 and 1939A–1897). From excavations in 1904, a doll’s multi-colored hairnet surfaced (inv. no. 1288–1904) which is discussed below.

36. Janssen 1996: 234.

37. The doll’s wardrobe is registered as UC 28030. Janssen 1996: 231–32. The grave also contained a variety of other objects including several small glass bottles, a toy copper mirror in a wooden case, a tiny basket with lid, a model copper cymbal, and a glass spindle whorl.

clothing.³⁸ Her head and body are fashioned from linen and her skirt hides the fact that she has no legs. What is striking about this doll, particularly in contrast to others, are her large breasts which are accentuated by her construction: red yarn is wrapped crosswise around her upper torso, which delineates her breasts, and around her waist to secure her skirt and attach her arms (made from a linen roll) to her body. She has no facial features but bears a hairdo of auburn human hair over which multiple bands of un-dyed orange, blue, and red linen have been placed to form a headband.

FORM AND FUNCTION

The dolls treated here hail from different parts of the Roman empire, range in date over approximately four centuries, and are made from a variety of materials, yet they share some common features. By virtue of their secondary sex characteristics, particularly defined breasts and in some cases wide hips, in addition to delineated genitalia apparent on certain dolls, these artifacts represent adult women, not babies or even young girls.³⁹ Thomas Wiedemann called them “models of young women of marriageable age,” and contended that through play with dolls “the girl was not being prepared for her role as a childminder so much as expected to identify with the ideal of an (attractive) wife.”⁴⁰ Janssen, however, regarding the cloth dolls specifically, proposes they afforded girls opportunities to prepare for their “future destiny in marriage and motherhood,” which suggests that manufacturers and purchasers had both the roles of childminder and wife (attractive or otherwise) in mind. Shumka speculates that girls may have played at being both wife and mother and emphasizes the importance of dolls in socializing girls to “their sexual identity and the concomitant social assignment.”⁴¹

38. A bronze coin ca. 350–360 CE was found inside a small wooden box in the tomb enabling the doll to be dated (Janssen 1996: 232–33). The tomb also contained a number of the girl’s possessions including footwear and items of clothing (e.g., a pair of rush sandals and fragments of two or more ornamented woolen tunics), several reed needles or spools; a wooden comb; a hair net; and a small incised bone pin.

39. “Baby dolls” seem to have been rare. Manson 1987: 19 discusses a small group of articulated terracotta figures from southwest Gaul modeled as babies and regards these as children’s toys.

40. Wiedemann 1989: 149. While it is true that the dolls overall resemble younger women, it is worth noting that in the cases of those bearing imperially inspired coiffures there is somewhat of a disjuncture between their approximate age if determined on the basis of their bodies and their hair. For instance, if Crepereia’s doll (Figure 1) is meant to resemble Faustina the Elder (married in 110 CE, died in 140 CE) rather than her daughter, then the doll bears the body of a woman much younger than her hairstyle: the doll’s hair imitates the style worn by Faustina in her later years, so presumably when she was in her early 40s. Cossinia’s doll (Figure 3), on the other hand, could fall into a considerable age range if dated by her hairstyle which Julia Domna (born 170–174 CE) is known to have worn during her husband’s reign (193–211 CE).

41. Janssen 1996: 239; Shumka 1993: 168–69. Contrast Bettini 1999: 216 who is insistent that because these were not baby dolls, what was played with them “could not have been a game of simulated maternity.”

The few literary vignettes we have of girls at play with their toys present them engaged in imitative and imaginative activities through which they mimicked the roles and activities of some of the adult women they encountered in elite households. Plutarch (*Consol.* 2.608d), for instance, in a touching recollection of his daughter Timoxena who died at the age of two, recalls how she “would ask her nurse to feed not only other babies but the objects and toys that she liked playing with, and would generously invite them, as it were, to her table, offering the good things she had and sharing her greatest pleasures with those who delighted her.”⁴² At a much later date, John Chrysostom (*De virg.* 73.1 = Migne, *PG* 48.586), writing in Antioch toward the end of the fourth century, observes how a girl will mirror her mother’s behavior as household manager by depositing her own little chest in the household’s storeroom then retaining both the key and the authority associated with it. Elsewhere (*Hom. in Jo.* 81.3 = Migne, *PG* 59.440), he comments that girls like to dress up their dolls made from terracotta as brides.⁴³

That dolls provided scope for role-playing, as several scholars have suggested, hardly seems debatable.⁴⁴ Yet focusing primarily on whether the dolls encouraged girls to think about being wives more than mothers, or to contemplate both prospects equally, seems to overlook much of the complexity of these artifacts and their possible influence on the girls who played with them. Dolls adorned with jewelry and ornate hairstyles, especially those in the fashion of leading imperial figures, were more than mere playthings; they were incarnations of certain ideals regarding gender and status that girls and young women, particularly of the upper classes, were subjected to as they prepared to assume their prescribed adult roles.

BODY IMAGE AND ADORNMENT: THE DOMINANT DISCURSIVE PARADIGM

With few exceptions, the bodies of the dolls conform to an idealized feminine shape described by male authors and depicted in various artistic media. From her study of literary and visual evidence, Kelly Olson has determined that “the modern erotic ideal of full breasts, small waist, and rounded hips has not in fact

42. Trans. Russell 1999. Plutarch’s text does not support the statement by Néraudau 1984: 296 that the toddler used to ask her nurse to breastfeed her doll specifically, as *παίγνια* is a general term for “toys” or “playthings.” On this image and its relation to material evidence for children’s toys, see Bradley 1999: 185. Boys also played games in which they emulated members of the household. Plutarch (*Rules for Politicians* 17.814a), for instance, describes how boys play dress up by putting on their father’s shoes and wearing his garlands.

43. *καὶ νύμφας πάλιν ἀπὸ μὲν τῆς αὐτῆς ὕλης λαβόντες πεποιημένας, καλλωπίζουσι· τὰς δὲ ὄντως ἀληθεῖς καὶ λαμπούσας, οὐδὲ ἴσασι* (“They [children] also adorn as brides dolls made from the same material [i.e., terracotta], but they do not notice true brides though they are conspicuous”). On this passage, see Leyerle 1997: 252. Chrysostom is arguing that just as children playing with toy chariots and horses sometimes do not even realize when the real things are present, so too do men admire worldly possessions yet overlook heavenly ones.

44. See also Rawson 2003: 128 and D’Ambra 2007: 62.

been a cultural constant. An alluring Roman woman possessed small breasts and wide hips.”⁴⁵ Jerome (*Ep.* 117.7) offers one such illustration when he writes to a twenty-five year old woman he describes as “a healthy girl, dainty, plump, and rosy” whose breasts, bound by a linen breast-band and cinched in by a girdle, were presumably modest in size.⁴⁶ The dolls mostly reflect this corporeal ideal. Yet it is more than a particular body type that makes them idealized figures of femininity, for all exhibit some external marker of gender (and status) as well in the form of jewelry, a wardrobe of dyed garments, an elaborate hairstyle, or a combination. These dolls are shaped like adult women and styled like them as well, which merits further attention.

Although John Chrysostom is the only source to indicate that girls adorned their dolls, the existence of items of clothing, markings for shoes, and tiny hair accessories suggests that dressing dolls and their hair were activities in which many girls participated. For dolls that could be either nude or dressed, clothing them may have helped teach girls about their own bodies and sexuality, as well as practicalities of dressing, including the importance of covering nudity as a way of maintaining modesty. Focusing on Crepereia’s doll, Bettini observes that she possesses “a body that can be hidden and also adorned, a body that makes her a ‘person’ able to change her external appearance according to the conventions or necessities imposed by the rules of the culture.” He notes that she can be dressed, put on jewelry, and have her hair styled, but does not comment on the significance of these forms of adornment beyond making the doll seem “increasingly alive.”⁴⁷ These activities and their associations are worth exploring more.

According to Livy (34.7.9), the markers of femininity—or at least outward femininity—consisted of a triad of interrelated concepts and states of being: *munditiae* (elegance or neatness), *ornatus* (adornment), and *cultus* (bodily care or refinement).⁴⁸ Collectively and individually, the dolls reflect this emphasis and set of expectations regarding women’s appearance. Through their jewelry, clothes, and elaborate hairstyles, the dolls display the *feminarum insignia* to which Livy refers. The ivory doll buried with Crepereia, for example, wore a tiny gold ring on her left hand and was found with two other small gold rings that may have

45. Olson 2008b: 69. For the general Roman preference for small breasts and criticism of large breasts, see e.g., Lucr. 4.1168, Ov. *Rem.* 337–38, Martial 14.66, 134, 149, [Lucian] *Am.* 41, and CE 1988.20. One exception is Juvenal; regarding his attention to women’s breasts, Gold 1998: 373 notes “[w]omen are defined by their breasts: on a breast continuum, large is best and dry is worst.” For the desirability of wide hips, see Hor. *Sat.* 1.2.92–93, Ov. *Am.* 1.5.22 and *Ars* 3.780.

46. *puella sani corporis, delicata, pinguis, rubens. . . papillae fasciolis comprimuntur et crispanti cingulo angustius pectus artatur.* On *pinguis*, compare Petronius’s description of Melissa as *pulcherrimum bacciballum* (*Sat.* 61.6), a term that does not appear elsewhere but seems to refer very positively to her voluptuous shape, perhaps akin to “dumpling” as one commentator suggests (Sage 1969: 178), or as Heseltine 1987: 135n.2 translates, “a pretty round thing” or “a round little peach.”

47. Bettini 1999: 219.

48. *munditiae et ornatus et cultus, haec feminarum insignia sunt, his gaudent et gloriantur, hunc mundum muliebrem appellarunt maiores nostri.*

been arm bands or bracelets, as well as loose pearls, small pieces of green *pasta vitrea*, and gold spirals that may have been part of other pieces of jewelry.⁴⁹ Cossinia's ivory doll had an array of gold bangles and a gold necklace, while a red and black beaded necklace was painted directly on the body of one cloth doll. Only the two mid-fourth century dolls from Hawara were found clothed or with a wardrobe of garments, yet it seems reasonable to assume many of the dolls were once attired and the markings for shoes on dolls' feet further supports this conclusion. Finally, there is a consistent focus on the dolls' hair, whether in lavish coiffures reminiscent of women from the Antonine, Severan, and Constantinian eras, the abundant human hair on two of the cloth dolls in this study, or the tiny doll's hairnet discovered at Oxyrhynchus.⁵⁰

The dolls reflect adult desires to produce and promote to children a particular image of femininity, more accurately an ideal: a highly polished state that could only be achieved through considerable devotion to one's outward appearance. Such a state, however, was not unproblematic in the eyes of many Roman men. Among pagan and Christian authors alike, there is a long and predominantly negative tradition concerning women's adornment. Achilles Tatius (2.38), for instance, warned that if a woman looked beautiful, it was because of the "fussy trickery" of paints and perfumes. Clement of Alexandria (*Paed.* 2.104, 3.5, 3.11, 3.62) condemned dyed garments, jewels, cosmetics, elaborate hairstyles, and gold as "deceptions" and markers of "artificial beauty" he associated with prostitution.

Women's use of cosmetics and fondness for clothing, jewelry, and complicated hairdos were regarded not simply as deceptive, but degenerate and potentially dangerous. The adorned female body was linked to vices such as extravagance, vanity, unchastity, and frivolity, all of which threatened the welfare of the family and the state.⁵¹ Thus the elder Seneca (*Contr.* 2.5.7) decried his age in which "luxury spreads from bad to worse, and the ambitions of women, competing with each other, bring madness to private households and harm to the state." Decades later, his son echoed these sentiments, complaining about women who wore earrings so large it was as though two or three family fortunes

49. Stefanelli 1983: 65, Figures 11 and 12.

50. The body of the hairnet is 6.3 x 4.0 cm and created of knitted orange, green, and black wool; it has two 5.0 cm-long brown wool drawstrings and an orange and green tassel measuring 2.2 cm at one of the top corners (see Janssen 1996: 237, Figure 8; Victoria and Albert Museum inv. no. 1288–1904). It is also worth mentioning the small brown wool hat (3.7 x 5.5 cm), found in the 1897 excavations at Behnasa, that offers another form of capillary adornment.

51. For the perceived dangers of women's adornment, see especially the seminal work of Wyke 1994, as well as Edwards 1993: 78–82 on women, luxury, and *incontinentia*. Both concentrate on pagan authors though there is also much to be gained from patristic authors as Olson's (2008b: 80–95) references to Tertullian and Shumka's (2008: 174–78) valuable discussion of Clement of Alexandria's *Paedagogus* show. To these one could add, among others, Cyprian's *De habitu virginum*, which rehearses many of Tertullian's arguments, and the remarks of Jerome especially in his letters addressed to girls and young women (e.g., *Ep.* 107.5, 107.10, 117.4, 128.2). Since the dolls do not seem to show signs of the use of cosmetics (i.e., make-up), I leave aside issues regarding this form of adornment which Richlin 1995 examines.

dangled from their lobes (*non satis muliebris insania viros superiecerant, nisi bina ac terna patrimonia auribus singulis pependissent, De Ben. 7.9.2–5*).⁵² In contrast, he praised (*Ad Helv. 16.3–5*) his mother Helvia for lacking the flaws he considered typical of her sex—wearing make-up, jewelry, and sheer dresses, concealing or terminating a pregnancy for beauty’s sake—and commended her for adorning herself simply with modesty. Maria Wyke comments of the younger Seneca’s remarks that “[t]he cosmetic arts are thus expressly associated with aberrant sexual behavior and with the rejection of the role of wife and mother.”⁵³

Against this strong anti-cosmetic tradition, there are some voices of opposition, most notably Ovid who advocates a novel approach to women’s *cultus* in Book 3 of the *Ars Amatoria*. Ovid introduces what Roy Gibson calls “the principle of ‘individual decorum’” by which each *puella* is encouraged to adopt the hairstyle and colors of clothing that best suit her face and complexion.⁵⁴ Yet despite Ovid’s apparent interest in individuality and moderation, ultimately the rhetoric surrounding women’s appearance was deeply enmeshed in issues of male control and he proves to be no exception. Since one common feature of the dolls is the considerable attention paid to their hair and specifically its neat and orderly appearance achieved through braids, buns, and hair accessories, it is worth considering these emphases in light of male attitudes to women’s hair—Ovid’s and others’—for what they can tell us about the messages perfectly coiffed dolls could convey to their young owners.

For Ovid, women’s heads—and especially what was on rather than inside them—were objects requiring discipline and control. In Book 3 of the *Ars* (133–166), he begins his section on women’s hairstyles by insisting that hair should not be “lawless” or “untamed,” for men are attracted by neatness (*munditiis capimur: non sint sine lege capilli, 3.133*). Hair itself, and by extension the woman who wears/owns it, ought to be under control: arranged (*ornatis . . . comis, 138*), tied back (*religetur, 143*), bound and tied tightly (*illa est astrictis impedienda comis, 146*). Even a hairdo meant to look messy will actually be a careful construction (*et neglecta decet multas coma; saepe iacere / hesternam credas; illa repexa modo est. / ars casum simulet, 153–155*). Elsewhere, Ovid communicates the importance of women properly managing their manes when he relates the story of Daphne, a nymph with lawless locks (*sine lege capillos, Met. 1.477*) whom Apollo pursued as his wife (*cupit conubia, 1.490*). When the god looked upon Daphne’s hair in disarray, he wondered how it would look if

52. Cf. Tert. *de cultu fem.* 1.9.3: *de brevissimis loculis patrimonium grande profertur. . . saltus et insulas tenera cervix circumfert; graciles aurium cutes kalendarium expendunt.* (“From the smallest caskets is produced an ample patrimony. . . One delicate neck carries about it forests and islands. The slender lobes of the ears exhaust a fortune,” trans. Thelwall 1979).

53. Wyke 1994: 137.

54. Gibson 2003: 22n.57. The argument concerning Ovid’s moderation in *Ars* 3 and interest in aesthetics rather than ethics (contrary to those who oppose the cosmetic arts) is developed more fully in Gibson 2006. Quotations from *Ars* 3 follow the text of Gibson 2003.

it were neat (*spectat inornatos collo pendere capillos / et 'quid, si comantur?'* ait, 1.497–98). His wish was granted once she was transformed into a laurel tree whose leaves then decorated Apollo's crown.⁵⁵ Daphne's free flowing hair was appropriate for her unmarried state, which she sought to retain, yet it was ultimately the source of attraction that forever altered her fate. Her lack of *cultus* brought about her downfall as Apollo sought to bring her undisciplined nature (both in her actions and untamed locks) under control.⁵⁶ Of the many morals one can derive from this tale, Molly Myerowitz Levine draws attention to the central role hair plays in the transition to marriage and asserts that among ancient Greeks, Romans, and Jews, "the universal sign of the transformation of virgin to wife . . . becomes hair—bound, tamed, braided, or covered, the token of matronly modesty and chastity."⁵⁷

Acceptable hairstyles such as these, which reflected concerns over discipline and control, adorned the heads of girls' dolls and were also present beyond the realm of play on portrait statues of women and toilette scenes that embellished women's cosmetic items, funerary monuments, and wall décor, thereby reinforcing expectations about feminine appearance and the value afforded to *cultus*.⁵⁸ Upper-class girls also might have regularly watched their mothers and other relatives in the household as they sat for countless hours having their hair done, instilling in them further the need to achieve a polished look that began with a perfect hairdo. Dressing their hair allegedly consumed more of women's ef-

55. For further on the significance of Daphne's hair in this tale, see Levine 1995: 82–85.

56. Levine's remarks (1995: 88) on the relationship of hair vis-à-vis nature and culture are useful: "Hair is, first and foremost, eminently natural: it grows of itself and is part of our physical selves. Yet hair can exist independently of the body as a cultural product: wigs, toupees, fur coats, lionskins. Furthermore, unlike other parts of the body, hair is often more serviceable when pruned, trimmed, or tied up in some way so as (at a minimum) to allow for comfortable vision. That is to say that even in its most natural state, hair seems especially to demand the attentions of culture."

57. Levine 1995: 102.

58. For a broad selection of portrait busts displaying ornate hairstyles, see Virgili 1989: 3–62 and the recent studies of D'Ambra 2000 and Bartman 2001 which focus on issues concerning hair and adornment. Wyke 1994: 141–44 treats some evidence for toilette articles and funerary monuments; on the latter, see Shumka 2008: 172–91 for more extensive discussion and Sensi 1992 for an overview of *mundus muliebris* articles. The catalogue from the *Bellezza e seduzione nella Roma imperiale* exhibit at the Palazzo dei Conservatori collects numerous objects and images associated with women's toilette. Of particular interest regarding household décor is a first century CE wall painting from Herculaneum (Museo Nazionale di Napoli inv. 9022; *Bellezza* fig. 10, no. 43) that depicts a girl, probably in her early teens, standing next to a seated, well-dressed and coiffed *matrona*; both look on as another girl has her hair arranged by a maid. Other notable domestic scenes of women's adornment include a painting from Room G of the Villa of the Mysteries in Pompeii that presents a young woman (seemingly a bride) having her hair dressed by a female attendant while an *eros* stands before them holding a mirror to capture the young woman's reflection (see Sensi 1992: 177, fig. 223); and a fourth-style wall painting from the *triclinium* of the Villa Ariana in Stabiae (Museo Nazionale di Napoli inv. 9088; *Bellezza* no. 44) portraying a semi-nude seated young woman who holds a mirror in her right hand and twirls strands of her hair in her left. Taylor 2008: 38 remarks of this girl, "[n]ot overly engaged in her toilette, she seems to be involved in the timeless ritual of adolescent self-contemplation with all its attendant anxieties."

forts than other parts of their beauty routines ([Luc.], *Am.* 40), which is not surprising given the impact hair was thought to have on one's overall appearance. As Apuleius has Lucius argue in the *Metamorphoses* (2.8–9), hair was paramount:

Why should I mention anything else [about my beloved's appearance], since my exclusive concern has always been with a person's head and hair...? The reasoning behind this preference of mine is deliberate and well-considered: namely, as the dominant part of the body openly located for clear visibility, it is the first thing to meet our eyes. Secondly, what the cheerful colour of flowery clothing does for the rest of the body, its own natural lustre does for the head... In short, the significance of a woman's coiffure is so great that, no matter how finely attired she may be when she steps out in her gold, robes, jewels, and all her other finery, unless she has embellished her hair she cannot be called well-dressed.⁵⁹

To realize stylish and secure arrangements, women employed skilled *ornatrices* (slave hairdressers) who used pins, hairnets, and snoods to keep hair firmly in place with the result that women's hairstyles lacked movement in comparison to men's. Elizabeth Bartman suggests this was intended to connote women's passivity while the inclusion of gold and ivory ornaments signaled luxury and wealth.⁶⁰ Focusing on the "laborious process" involved in creating the elaborate styles seen in portraits, which some dolls emulate, Eve D'Ambra proposes of early second century CE styles in particular that they "may represent the regulation of wayward, undisciplined locks, that is, of rampant nature into concoctions that speak the language of culture: order, status, hierarchy."⁶¹

In descriptions and representations of women's hair, we have seen the emphasis on order but still need to consider the importance of status and hierarchy. Only women of certain juridical and economic standing had the resources and leisure to devote to cultivating their appearance while those lower on the social hierarchy remained instrumental in effecting their daily transformations from plain to polished. When social status is factored into the equation, therefore, feminine *cultus* takes on a somewhat more positive valuation. Yet male attitudes to women's appearance were often inconsistent. The same women who had the

59. *vel quid ego de ceteris aio, cum semper mihi unica cura fuerit caput capillumque . . . sitque iudicii huius apud me certa et statuta ratio: vel quod praecipua pars ista corporis in aperto et perspicio posita prima nostris luminibus occurrit, et quod in ceteris membris floridae vestis hilaris color, hoc in capite nitor natus operatur. . . . tanta denique est capillamenti dignitas ut quamvis auro veste gemmis omnique cetero mundo exornata mulier incedat, tamen, nisi capillum distinxerit, ornata non possit audire* (trans. Hanson 1996). It is worth noting that since all the dolls had their hair styled and those carved of bone or ivory perpetually so, they were never truly naked nor could they be accused of ever being "undressed" by Apuleius's standards.

60. Bartman 2001: 3.

61. D'Ambra 2000: 105.

time and money to achieve the level of adornment they desired might be criticized not only for being extravagant and indulgent, but also for neglecting their duties as wives, mothers, and household managers as they devoted attentions to primping and preening instead of the domestic domain.⁶²

There were, however, other positive associations of feminine *cultus*, particularly in the context of religious ritual, which can be juxtaposed with the criticism that seems to have dominated.⁶³ Adornment was central to several religious ceremonies of which the Veneralia is perhaps the best example. Observed on April 1, the month sacred to Venus, goddess of mortal and divine beauty, this ritual involved bathing the goddess's cult statue and adorning it with a golden necklace and floral garlands (Ov. *F.* 4.133–64). Women of all ranks attended, including brides who, until very recently, would have been among the girls playing with dolls they were soon to dedicate to Venus or the Lares prior to marriage.⁶⁴ Girls and young women presumably would have also witnessed the dramatic processions for Isis, detailed by Apuleius (*Met.* 11.9–10), in which female worshippers, their hair swathed in perfume and covered in transparent veils, carried mirrors, waved ivory hair combs, and pantomimed the combing and styling of the goddess's hair to show their devotion.⁶⁵ Since not all women could actually bathe and adorn Venus's cult statue or carry mirrors and combs for Isis, participating in these particular rituals may have constituted significant honors from which women derived additional status and self-worth. Similarly, as Shumka and Olson have argued recently, *cultus* played a critical, positive role in women's self-fashioning by enabling them to communicate influence and rank, and express a sense of power and individuality simply through their outward appearance.⁶⁶

In their daily activities, including play with their dolls, girls were thus confronted with conflicting messages about adornment. Clearly *cultus* was essential for a woman of social standing, but devotion to one's appearance could easily

62. Seneca's comments cited above (*Ad Helv.* 16.3–5) largely correlate attention to feminine *cultus* with actions that threatened the family and compromised women's roles as wives and mothers (namely unchastity and abortion). To these, one can add the remarks of Clement (*Paed.* 3.5–6) who claims that women who devote themselves to their appearance jeopardize household finances and ignore household duties as they sit around acting like objects of art to be gazed upon rather than working. [Lucian] (*Am.* 42) suggests that adornment also has implications for the religious welfare of the household for after women have fixed their hair and make-up, they attend secret initiations and all-female mysteries, as well as visit the shrines of some less traditional deities including Cybele and Attis.

63. Cf. Shumka 2008: 184–85 and D'Ambra 2000: 110.

64. Pers. 2.69–70, with the critique of Lact. *Div. Inst.* 2.4.12 (dedication to Venus); [Acro] on Hor. *Sat.* 1.5.65–66 (dedication to the Lares). Ovid specifies that mothers and brides, and women of different social statuses, participate in the rites: *rite deam colitis, Latiae matresque nurusque / et vos, quis vittae longaue vestis abest* (4.133–34). For Ovid's treatment of the rites, see Fantham 1998 ad loc.

65. Cf. the rites for Juno and Minerva reported by Augustine (*De civ. D.* 6.10), who preserves Seneca's lost *De superstitione*, in which women imitated the dressing of these goddesses' hair.

66. Shumka 2008: 183–87; Olson 2008b: 96–99, 106–12.

be deemed problematic. Presumably girls were not immune to these concerns either, for their interest in *cultus* was not entirely prospective, especially among those approaching marriageable age. From the evidence of grave goods such as ivory combs, small mirrors, and tiny cosmetic compacts, it seems girls were encouraged to cultivate toilette habits of their own which means they too were likely implicated in the rhetoric and expectations regarding women's adornment.⁶⁷ For instance, although girls' hairstyles varied considerably even within a specific period, and young girls tend to be portrayed wearing relatively simple styles, some nevertheless appear in portraits, wall paintings, and funerary reliefs wearing rather complicated coiffures.⁶⁸ An ornate hairstyle, like the use of ceremonial attire for girls and boys such as the *toga praetexta*, was one means of conveying a sense of formality.⁶⁹ Yet even in less formal settings such as scenes at play, girls' hair is carefully arranged, even if not in elaborate styles, signaling the emphasis on discipline and control we have already seen.⁷⁰ Images of girls with neat and orderly appearances even in the midst of play or repose can be understood to have a prescriptive quality that is sometimes reinforced with an inscription that focuses on external beauty, as is the case for a *kline*-monument from the Getty Museum noted above. It shows a young girl reclining on a couch with her dolls and small dog and bears an inscription that begins "Here lies a beautiful form" (*hic species et forma iacet*), thereby drawing immediate attention to her physical attributes.⁷¹

It is impossible to know to what extent girls internalized ideals about appearance put forth by various media, including their dolls, yet the remarks of Epictetus suggest some adult apprehension concerning society's obsession with appearance and its effects on upper-class girls. Writing early in the second century CE, he includes this advice in his *Encheiridion* (40), a handbook of Stoic philosophy:

As soon as they reach the age of fourteen, women are called "lady" [*kyria*; in Latin *domina*, "lady" or "mistress"] by men. So, seeing that the only thing they have got is to sleep with men, they begin to beautify themselves and put all their hopes in this. We ought to take pains, then, to make them understand that what they are really respected for is showing themselves well behaved and chaste.⁷²

67. As noted above, the "mummy of Grottarossa" was buried with an amber clamshell compact and small amber pots perhaps for make-up or perfume, while Crepereia Tryphaena's tomb contained a small bone and ivory box with two small combs and silver mirrors. For Crepereia's grave goods, see nos. 14–17 in the exhibit catalogue *Crepereia Tryphaena* (1983: 66–71). Olson 2008a: 147–48 discusses the limited literary evidence for girls' use of cosmetics and links the interest in adornment for upper-class girls with their parents' and their own desire to attract suitors.

68. Olson 2008a: 146.

69. George 2001: 184.

70. E.g., Amedick 1991 nos. 116 and 274 (= Huskinson nos. 1.20 and 1.36).

71. Koch 1988: 11.

72. Trans. Treggiari 2007: 43.

Epictetus' arguments are not entirely novel as authors such as Plautus and Seneca had expressed similar sentiments about the value of character and conduct over external beauty, as did Clement and Tertullian after him, but he seems to be unique in his concern for girls of this age.⁷³ Susan Treggiari maintains that Epictetus "felt an obligation on himself and male members of [upper-class] families to wean girls away from worldly frivolity and concentration on their sexual attractiveness [H]is observation fits what we should expect to be the natural development of girls who were reared to expect marriage to be their career."⁷⁴

ARTICULATION, MOBILITY, AND CHILDREN'S AGENCY

A second factor that renders the dolls more complex objects than they might initially seem is their capacity for movement. To create joints in the arms and legs, a variety of mechanisms were used with the result that some dolls seem to have enjoyed a considerable range of motion.⁷⁵ Bettini remarks that endowing a doll with articulated limbs "offers her the possibility of movement," yet the activities he envisions consist of her "being dressed or wearing earrings, of having her hair combed, or taking a few steps (perhaps halting, perhaps bold and confident) guided by a little girl's hands"—largely activities that require little to no movement of the doll's limbs.⁷⁶ As an inanimate object, a jointed doll had to be manipulated by the one playing with it, but surely part of what made it appealing was that articulation could engender motion, giving it the capacity to undertake various pursuits, including more active ones than being dressed and groomed. The discovery of a doll's ball at Behnasa, fashioned from wool and stuffed with papyrus, is certainly suggestive in this regard.⁷⁷ Since Roman women were routinely characterized by weakness and passivity, and expected to engage predominantly in sedentary activities, it is worthwhile to consider possible implications of the dolls' *potential* to be active figures.

In his work on mirrors and representation in Roman art, Rabun Taylor has argued that "[t]he ideal Roman woman was reflected *being*; the ideal Roman man

73. E.g., Plaut. *Most.* 157–294, esp. 168–69; Sen. *Ad Helv.* 16.3–5; Clem. *Paed.* 3.4; Tert. *De cult.* 2.1.1, 2.3.1. Plutarch, in his *Advice to the Bride and Groom* (25–26), addressed to newlyweds Eurydice and Pollianus, expresses similar sentiments and even encourages Eurydice (48) to read and memorize a treatise apparently by Plutarch's wife on the love of ornament in an effort to avoid the perils of extravagance. Eurydice's age is not given, but Pomeroy (1999: 35, with n.13) surmises she would have been in her late teens, thus somewhat older than the girls Epictetus observed but perhaps not by much.

74. Treggiari 2007: 43.

75. Manson 1987: 17 illustrates the different mechanisms used to create jointed limbs for several Roman dolls. For Crepereia's construction and range of motion, see Sommella 1983: 49–50 with Figures 1 and 2, which Rossi 1993: 155 also discusses.

76. Bettini 1999: 218–19.

77. Janssen 1996: 238, pictured on 237, Figure 8 (Victoria and Albert Museum, inv. no. 1937–1897).

... was reflected *doing*.”⁷⁸ Though girls were given some latitude with respect to this dichotomy, the ideal of female passivity seems to have begun to be cultivated at an early age. For instance, when depicted at play in ball games or with nuts, young girls are presented as relatively sedate figures, especially in comparison with their male counterparts who sometimes push and shove one another. In contrast, the girls maintain a sense of order in their interactions and decorum about their bodies; moreover, their clothes remain neat and their hair carefully arranged in buns and braids—the outward signs of inward control.⁷⁹

As girls approached puberty, they were encouraged to replace some childhood games with forms of exercise intended to put them in prime physical condition for childbearing after marriage. In his *Regimen for Girls*, written in the second half of the first century CE, Rufus of Ephesus (*ap. Orib. Coll. Med. lib. inc.* 18.11–15) prescribes long walks, running, singing and dancing in a chorus, and ball games; he insists that nearly any form of exercise is suitable so long as it retains a feminine appearance and does not become manly. Rufus is clearly concerned with the performative quality of gender; thus girls’ pursuits, if active, must remain feminine. But he also demonstrates concerns over discipline and control that are similar to what we have seen regarding aspects of women’s appearance, especially their hair. Rebecca Flemming asserts that “[t]he intrinsic instability of the female body, its innate tendency to excess which is exacerbated at certain points in the life cycle and by certain aspects of lifestyle, is the starting point for this narrative The process of stabilization . . . is an external imposition, achieved initially by something perhaps better described as regimentation than as regimen, then marriage and procreation.”⁸⁰ Once girls matured into women, Rufus pushed them towards more passive pursuits, optimally walking and riding in carriages, as he recommends in his *Regimen for Women*. Other medical writers, however, such as Soranus (1.25), encouraged this tendency earlier and advised girls from the age of twelve to walk and do passive exercises to stimulate menarche.

The medical writers’ interest in controlling the inside of female bodies finds parallel in various authors’ concerns for their exteriors as well, not only in their physical appearance, but in their carriage and comportment. D’Ambra has recently suggested that articulated dolls such as the ones examined here

78. Taylor 2008: 20.

79. Two examples illustrate well the contrast in behavior: a mid-second century CE sarcophagus now in Paris (Louvre Ma 99; see also Huskinson 1996: no. 1.20 and Amedick 1991: no. 116) shows a group of boys standing and crouching down at play with nuts (left) and three girls in a line tossing a ball against the wall (right); an early third century CE sarcophagus in the Vatican Museums (Museo Chiaramonti inv. no. 1304; see also Huskinson 1996: no. 1.37 and Amedick 1991: no. 274) depicts a group of five girls seated and standing at play with nuts (left) while the boys who occupy two-thirds of the panel pull one another’s hair and cloaks and gesture strongly in the middle of their game (center and right). For other examples of sedate female figures at play with balls or knucklebones, see *Jouer* nos. 82, 87, 89, and 92.

80. Flemming 2000: 222–23.

could be instrumental in teaching girls expectations for deportment. Referring to Crepereia's ivory doll, D'Ambra posits:

This doll was guided into moving and seated poses in imitation of a matron's various postures and, once decently clothed, could have provided its owner valuable practice in getting through the day's routine with the proper comportment and poise [A] matron not only had to look her part but she had to carry herself with modesty and dignity at all times. This required practice early on with the miniature adult bodies of their dolls.⁸¹

While this suggestion is certainly plausible, like Bettini's list of play activities it also reflects modern assumptions about these artifacts and the nature of children's—and especially girls'—play. The fact that the dolls' limbs could move means they could have been manipulated into seemly poses, but it also gave them the potential to be engaged in less seemly, more active pursuits like running and dancing, which challenged male stereotypes and expectations for the female sex.⁸² Articulation gave dolls the potential to be active in the hands of Roman girls, and they too had the potential to be active as historical agents rather than passive recipients of ideas and ideals while at play.

Historians and archaeologists of more recent historical periods have argued that children's agency is difficult, but not impossible, to recover from the past.⁸³ For our Roman context, the limited sample of evidence and absence of testimonies from children themselves or adults reflecting on their own childhood activities pose significant challenges for recovering children's agency. Modern children, on the other hand, can be observed and adults interviewed about childhood experiences to lend insights into attitudes and behavior that might have existed in much earlier periods as well. Naturally observations about contemporary western children cannot reveal the complex realities of Roman childhood, but they can help guide our thinking about aspects of childhood experience that are irretrievable from ancient evidence alone. Indeed, they can be suggestive of what could have been the case in antiquity and help us look beyond the materials of play themselves to envision how the actors of play engaged with them as well. In what follows, I draw upon recent research predominantly by sociologists and developmental psychologists on children's play, especially with the fashion doll Barbie, to probe questions of children's agency, the importance of imagination in play, and the relationship between ideologies and reception among children, particularly girls,

81. D'Ambra 2007: 62.

82. E.g., Sall. *Cat.* 25, Muson. 4, Plut. *Advice* 48. 145c, Ulp. 11.1.

83. For preliminary remarks on children's agency in the material record, see Derevenski 1997. Wilkie (2000: 100), in her study of toys from the early twentieth century (especially dolls) and their relationship to issues of race, gender, and social status, argues strongly for considering children as historical actors rather than simply "users and disposers of certain artefacts."

in contemporary western culture.⁸⁴ Extrapolating from these modern insights and observations, I then present some possibilities for Roman girls' interactions with their dolls.

The contemporary scholarly debate surrounding fashion dolls, specifically Barbie, has largely been negative. Simply put, she is seen as a bad influence on girls, re-inscribing "oppressive" feminine values that prevent girls and women from moving beyond their bodies and sexuality as a source of power. Anita Brill, a feminist author and social critic who has commented positively on her own childhood play with Barbie, lamented the doll's fate in 1995 stating, "Barbie is now a criminal . . . found guilty by the politically correct police; she is an inappropriate toy for young girls . . . accused of contributing to the increasing numbers of young girls suffering from anorexia and other eating disorders."⁸⁵ More recently, however, experts on girls and girl culture have moved away from reading Barbie as either wholly "good" or "bad" and instead have insisted upon her multiplicity and the need to investigate the tensions and contradictions she embodies and the diverse, even oppositional messages, she conveys.⁸⁶ From observation of girls' play with their dolls and ethnographic research involving former Barbie players, the doll's complexity and the importance of children's agency in play become clear, both of which are useful for thinking further about Roman dolls and the girls who played with them.

Under the influence of children's imaginations, Barbie dolls often assume a host of *personae* as former Barbie players attest. One participant in a sociological study recalls how she and her brother, at ages eight and six, "would play teacher, race car driver, [and] punk rocker" with their dolls—some roles Mattel, the dolls' manufacturer, might not have originally intended.⁸⁷ This is likewise the case for Wendy Singer Jones' six-year-old daughter who repeatedly re-created an elaborate scenario in which her two dolls lived together raising horses (one was initially a veterinarian who then retired to care for the horses full-time) and eventually married one another. In addition to the "sheer subversiveness of this narrative" with respect to the manufacturer's intentions, Jones comments that it reveals "a tremendous exercise of choice and will in her [daughter's] response to cultural

84. Shumka 1993, the most comprehensive English study of toys and play in the Roman world, draws considerably on the work of contemporary theorists, particularly developmental psychologist Jean Piaget, and one of the foremost scholars of play in the twentieth century, Brian Sutton-Smith. Her study predates the recent scholarly interest in Barbie play among modern girls, but I am not aware of the incorporation of Barbie scholarship in any later studies of Roman dolls either prior to the present investigation.

85. Brill 1995: 21.

86. See, for example, Reid-Walsh and Mitchell 2000 and Driscoll 2005, 2008.

87. Rogers 1999: 34. As Driscoll 2008: 42 demonstrates, over the decades Barbie has had numerous careers including a stint as a NASCAR driver and a rock star with her own band, yet a punk rocker seems less compatible with the images of the dolls that are usually marketed; furthermore, some of these are more recent incarnations that may well post-date the childhood play of participants in the studies Rogers cites.

signals.”⁸⁸ Jones’s attention to the combination of subversiveness and agency is significant as the latter is sometimes subsumed by the former. Judy Attfield, for example, in her essay on gender, Barbie, and Action Man (G.I. Joe), notes how children sometimes “subvert the ready-made meanings inserted into toys by manufacturers” and turn Barbie from “good” glamour girl into “bad girl.”⁸⁹ Subversion, however, has a negative valence and implies a consciousness to undermine established norms. This shifts the focus away from children’s agency which can be regarded in neutral, if not positive terms. Indeed when women recollect their Barbie-play in non-Mattel-sanctioned ways, they tend to frame it in terms of creativity (perhaps spurred by parental limitations on purchasing authentic Barbie accessories), as a product of familiar routines, or as an outlet for girlhood aspirations. Among the participants in Jacqueline Reid-Walsh and Claudia Mitchell’s ethnographic study, a professor of architecture describes how her early interest in design led to building her own Barbie “dream house” as a pre-teen, while another woman, now a teacher, recalls how years before “Teacher Barbie” appeared, she and her sister play-acted school-related scenarios in which their dolls assumed the roles of teachers and students, as well as the mothers students came home to at the end of the school day.⁹⁰

Rather than seeing Barbie as a tool of oppression for girls, some scholars and former Barbie players have come to associate her with opportunities, an idea her manufacturer recently sought to promote by incarnating Barbie as an astronaut, firefighter, political candidate, even president, and by claiming Barbie can be and do everything she wants. Yet as Catherine Driscoll notes, “[l]ong before the ‘everythinggirl’ slogan of the Barbie Web site, Barbie participated in a discourse on the ongoing expansion of girls’ possibilities”—a statement illustrated well by Brill’s memories of playing dolls with her best friend in 1959, the year Barbie was introduced in North America:

Sitting on Kathy’s upper bunk bed, we invented lives and situations for our Barbies. We did not focus on her glamorous body shape. What we cared about was that Barbie could get dressed up and go some place Safely alone with the dolls, we were in charge of the fantasy, and our fantasies did not match our Ozzie and Harriet surroundings. With our Barbies we could dream about something other than getting married and having children; through our Barbies, we took on opportunities of a wider realm. In the town where practically every mom stayed home, and where all the women were moms, Barbie’s initial pre-feminist appearance signaled for us the universe of other possibilities.⁹¹

88. Jones 1999: 106.

89. Attfield 1996: 86.

90. Reid-Walsh and Mitchell 2000: 180–82.

91. Driscoll 2008: 42; Brill 1995: 21.

For Brill and others, their girlhood interactions with Barbie were shaped within an intimate and secure fantasy world they created. In this way we can see how the doll, as Susan Stewart suggests in her study of miniatures, can be “a device for fantasy, a point of beginning for narrative . . . [that] opens an interior world, lending itself to fantasy and privacy in a way that the abstract space, the playground, of social play does not.”⁹²

For many reasons, modern insights and observations such as these cannot be mapped directly onto the ancient evidence and we must be cautious in trying too readily to locate similarities between markedly different cultures. Yet the range of attitudes and experiences recorded for contemporary girls’ play, including evidence for their agency within a world of play characterized by interiority, can at least be taken as suggestive of what might have occurred in earlier times. It seems reasonable to posit, therefore, that articulated dolls of ivory, bone, or cloth afforded Roman girls opportunities or possibilities, as Driscoll and Brill propose for contemporary girls, to conjure a wide range of scenarios within the safe confines of the world of doll-play. Some may have created scenarios that figuratively took them beyond their immediate environment, imagining their dolls as athletes and stage actresses, roles their creators likely never envisioned, in addition to, or perhaps instead of, wives and mothers, thereby providing girls momentary escape from the stereotypes and strictures of the real world. Yet other girls may have celebrated the dolls’ associations with domesticity while adding to them dimensions of their own to make them more individualized models to emulate.⁹³ Eurydice’s situation, the young addressee of Plutarch’s *Advice to the Bride and Groom*, lends itself to such speculation, though the text contains no evidence for her childhood activities and aspirations. According to Plutarch, from her studies of philosophy as a girl, Eurydice was well acquainted with several female sages – women like Cornelia, famous for her cultivation, learning, and interest in Greek philosophy, *and* for being the daughter, wife, and mother of leading political figures. Eurydice’s familiarity with the notion of women of a certain standing being wives and mothers, but also poets and philosophers, means that at least in theory her play with dolls may have entailed creating characters who enjoyed intellectual as well as domestic pursuits.⁹⁴ Presumably girls’ interactions with their dolls were generally conditioned by a host of factors including age, juridical status, socio-economic circumstances, ethnicity, as well as where they played and with whom (with slave playmates or social equals, in same-sex groups or mixed). For as Attfield reminds us, it is the actors rather than the artifacts of play that are ultimately important: “[t]oys cannot fully determine actions or

92. Stewart 1993: 56.

93. In terms of traditional roles and domesticity, it is also possible that some girls may have treated these dolls as “babies” despite their adult appearance, as one sometimes sees young children of both sexes do with Barbies and other fashion dolls today.

94. For Eurydice’s knowledge of women philosophers and poets, see *Advice* 48. 145c. with Pomeroy 1999: 56–57.

thoughts, they are themselves the focus of play—a dynamic activity used to rehearse, interpret and try out new meanings as well as products of complex social relations.”⁹⁵

PLAYING WITH POWER: IMPERIAL MODELS AND IDEOLOGIES

One final consideration that resonates with Attfield’s remarks is the dolls’ resemblance to leading imperial women and the ways in which imperial ideologies further inform their possible meanings. The dolls found with the little girl buried along the Via Cassia and with Crepereia Tryphaena, which both recall the Faustinas, provide a good case study for exploring relationships between the adult world and that of children’s play, ideologies and their reception. I concentrate on these for illustration, though other dolls could likewise be examined to yield similar conclusions, such as the Vestal Cossinia’s doll whose hairstyle is reminiscent of Julia Domna’s, or several dolls from Spain and Switzerland that have coiffures associated with women in the family of Constantine. Before considering the dolls’ political dimension, however, their resemblance to imperial figures needs to be examined further.

These dolls have traditionally been dated by their hairstyles which scholars maintain were popularized primarily by empresses. As products of specific historical periods, they were presumably fashioned to reflect the styles current at the time of their manufacture. This raises a number of questions: should the dolls be identified with particular imperial figures simply because of the appearance of their hair, or instead should they be considered modeled on, and thus associated with, generic noble women of the same era? Is a precise identification with an imperial figure critical to appreciating the dolls’ complexity or does greater significance lie in the fact that their elaborate hairstyles clearly reflect those of elite women and are thus suggestive of participation in elite culture?

Recent studies of imperial and private portraits contend that little was done to distinguish the empress from her elite contemporaries in public representations. Most attributes worn by the empress were worn by private women as well, and both are represented in a wide range of statuary types; in contrast, there was greater standardization in portraits of the emperor since only a small number of statuary formats, body types, and attributes were used, some of which were rarely adopted by private individuals in public settings.⁹⁶ According to R. R. R. Smith, even when details of hairstyles are carefully examined, the difference between portraits of empresses and elite women “was often visually insignificant,” leading him to conclude that the empress achieved less “recognizability” than her husband.⁹⁷ Complications arise, however, when we take into account where

95. Attfield 1996: 88; cf. Jones 1999: 104–105.

96. Fejfer 2008: 338–39.

97. Smith 1985: 214.

trends in fashion seem to have originated, as this seems to have bearing on the issue of recognizability. Smith indicates that in portraits, “female hairstyles in the capital do seem for the most part to stay close to the court.”⁹⁸ Jane Fejfer, moreover, though she challenges the notion that the empress set fashion trends, nevertheless plainly states “the portraiture of the empress made certain hairstyles more popular. Her hairstyles were copied all over the Empire and percolated down into society,” with few exceptions such as Plotina and Faustina the Elder whose coiffures were rarely worn by other women.⁹⁹ It would seem, then, that even if some empresses’ hairstyles did not earn them greater recognizability in the realm of public portraiture, a strong association between particular hairstyles and particular empresses existed nonetheless. This association was no doubt fostered by circulation of empresses’ images on coins, a mode of iconographic propagation not available to their elite peers, and reinforced during public appearances when they likely would have been seen by most at such great distance that facial features proved difficult to discern but hairstyles and clothing registered more easily. Additional reinforcement may have then taken place in a very immediate way as elite women strove to replicate these styles at home through the use of skilled slave hairdressers.¹⁰⁰

The significance of all this is that by virtue of having hair in a fashion worn and possibly even introduced by an empress, a doll would have been readily associated with that empress in people’s minds – including *girls’* minds—even if other elite women shared this aspect of her appearance in portraits or in person. Thus while a doll’s face may not have likened her to a specific empress as, for instance, is the case for Crepereia’s doll which bears little resemblance facially either to Faustina the Elder or Younger, a common coiffure was plausibly sufficient on its own to establish a visual connection with an imperial model. For the girl playing with such a doll, whether she had an image of one of the empresses in mind or instead of her mother wearing an imperially inspired hairdo, what is important is that an association with Faustina nevertheless remained.

Faustina the Elder, the wife of Antoninus Pius, and her daughter Faustina the Younger, the wife of Marcus Aurelius, were both celebrated in imperial imagery as wives and mothers. This is especially true of Faustina the Younger whose numerous births reinforced the themes of *fecunditas* (“fruitfulness”) and *felicitas temporum* (“happiness of the times”) that marked both her father’s and husband’s reigns.¹⁰¹ Dolls crafted after these women can, therefore, be understood to promote

98. Smith 1985: 212.

99. Fejfer 2008: 357 and 495n.76 on Plotina’s and Faustina the Elder’s coiffures.

100. As noted above (n.58), visual evidence suggests that in upper-class households, girls would have spent some time watching female relatives getting their hair dressed and thus may have become familiar to some extent with the figures who popularized particular hairstyles.

101. Much recent research has focused on themes of fecundity and maternity in the coinage produced for the two empresses (Faustina the Elder following her death and Faustina the Younger at different stages in her childbearing “career”). See, for example, *I, Claudia* nos. 31–40, Keltanen

marriage and motherhood and encourage traditional familial roles for women. The two Faustinas, however, were far from ordinary women for many reasons, including their associations with programs of imperial benefaction through which their influence extended beyond the domestic sphere. Both were complicated, multi-faceted individuals, as were the dolls modeled after them.¹⁰²

Both Faustinas were prominently associated with state alimentary programs for children that had been developed by Trajan and expanded by Hadrian.¹⁰³ These programs provided public loans to Italian farmers, the interest on which was used to fund foundations to support needy boys and girls. Though no longer innovative by the mid-second century, these programs received considerable attention nonetheless. One such initiative was the *puellae Faustinianae* or Faustinian girls' foundation, established by Antoninus Pius after his wife's death in 141. This foundation, which benefited lower-class girls, was continued in Faustina the Elder's name by Marcus Aurelius who also began a new program that included boys as well as girls to honor the marriage of his daughter Lucilla to his co-emperor, Lucius Verus, in 164, and his own wife's death in 175. In the imagery that commemorates the *puellae Faustinianae*, both Faustinas are associated with imperial generosity and, in a sense, styled as mothers of Italy.¹⁰⁴ The dolls that emulate them are thus not only embodiments of idealized femininity and maternity, but also promoters of an imperial ideology that boasted official concern for children's welfare and generous benefaction.

2002: 125–45, and Baharal 2000. Fittschen 1982 instead concentrates mainly on the portraiture of Faustina the Younger whom he believes (1996: 44n.25) bore at least fourteen and possibly fifteen children, though others set the number slightly lower, on which see the scholarship included by Baharal 2000: 335n.11. Faustina the Elder bore two sons and two daughters.

102. I use the term “empress” here in reference to an emperor's wife, as is conventional, but given the arguments that follow, draw attention to the fact that an empress could be an *augusta* but not an *imperatrix*. That is, though she may have had influence socially and culturally as a trendsetter (and perhaps not an inconsiderable amount), patronized specific projects and programs, and derived a sense of power from her close association with the emperor, there was no constitutional position that gave her any formal authority nor did her actions have official sanction either. In many regards, a Roman empress has much in common with the figure of the American First Lady. Presidential historian Robert G. Watson's recent discussion (2000: 71) of her official duties is useful in this regard: “With no legal or constitutional guidance, it is hard to identify the formal or official roles of the president's spouse. The roles often change from one first lady to another, and between each presidential administration. Yet today all spouses are expected to perform at least a minimal level of campaigning, hosting, social activism, advocacy of pet projects, and public appearances.” Watson (2000: 72) lists the following as the eleven “fundamental duties” of the modern office of the First Lady: wife and mother; public figure and celebrity; nation's social hostess; symbol of the American woman; White House manager and preservationist; campaigner; social advocate and champion of social causes; presidential spokesperson; presidential and political party booster; diplomat; political and presidential partner. One can readily see a certain amount of overlap between the duties or expectations of a modern First Lady and a Roman empress. For similar assessments of the roles and responsibilities of the First Lady, see also Caroli 1987 and Gutin 1989.

103. For an introduction to these programs, see Rawson 2001, especially 36–37 on the roles of the two Faustinas and associated imagery.

104. Rawson 2003: 63–66, Uzzi 2005: 45–47.

There is, however, another thread in the web of ideologies that bears upon discussion of the two Faustinas and the dolls created after them. The very girls who benefited from the *puellae Faustinianae* and other foundations associated with and supported by the empresses probably never could have owned these dolls themselves. Although girls of various social strata may have played with them when in the company of more affluent peers, these were luxury items crafted from ivory and of highly skilled workmanship.¹⁰⁵ The dolls' owners, the children to whom these messages about imperial benefaction were being directed, likely were predominantly from the upper classes. Through their play, these children helped—though perhaps completely inadvertently—to solidify the social order in which the emperor and his wife were at the top, the girls of the *puellae Faustinianae* near the bottom, and they themselves somewhere in between.

But regardless of the precise status of the girls who played with “Faustina” dolls or ones fashioned after Julia Domna or Constantia, they all were trying their hands at being empresses or other members of the imperial family and, quite literally, playing with power.¹⁰⁶ One of the key features of Roman boys' games was status differentiation.¹⁰⁷ Social and political leadership roles held particular appeal for boys, and literary sources record stories of them acting as kings, judges, civic officials, soldiers, and generals, and of Christian boys playing at “bishops” as well.¹⁰⁸ Surely many boys could have looked forward to assuming some of these roles in adult life and the influence and authority that accompanied them. For the vast majority of girls, on the other hand, even the daughters of the senatorial elite,

105. Shumka 1993: 70–71 speculates that toys may have been shared within households (for instance, among *collocatanei*). She also (1999: 617) reasonably proposes that ivory and ebony toys were too expensive for parents of lower-class children whose toys, including dolls, would have been made of rag, straw, terracotta, or bone instead. For the possibility that costlier and more elaborate dolls carved from ivory were specially commissioned from ivory craftsmen, see Rawson 2003: 128. Her contention that there is no explicit evidence for either a doll-making or toy-making industry seems to be questioned now by the discovery of the Palatine East workshop in which many partially completed ivory and bone dolls have been found (see above and more fully in St. Clair 2003).

106. Despite an absence of constitutional authority for emperor's wives, daughters, and other female relations, these women still possessed power in their own right—perhaps not political power *per se*, but power to influence others and attain at least some of what they wanted based on their close connection to the emperor, wealth, and high profile. We should not underestimate the potential influence these women had in different spheres nor their association with power in the minds of many. Compare, for instance, the influence and power of various First Ladies from Jackie Kennedy's popularization of fashions such as the pillbox hat and bouffant hairdo (see Caroli 1987: 224) to the more serious achievements of Lady Bird Johnson who initiated and supported important environmental policies in the late 1960s such as the Air Quality Act (see Watson 2000: 86–88) or Rosalynn Carter's efforts on behalf of mental health policy, women's issues, and the elderly (see Caroli 1987: 267–68, Watson 2000: 96).

107. Though girls may have played these games too, their identities obscured by non-specific terms like *παῖδες* or *pueri*, I am only aware of an early fifth-century reference to girls playing “monks and demons” (Theodoret, *Historia Religiosa* 9.9.13–16 = Migne, *PG* 82.1284) and John Chrysostom's observation cited above of girls controlling the keys to their toy treasuries in emulation of their mothers' care for keys to the household storeroom.

108. Wiedemann 1989: 150 and 172nn.22–24 for sources.

opportunities in adulthood to exercise power of the sort some empresses enjoyed, and to achieve comparable notoriety, would have been limited. Therefore, playing at empress may have been an indulgence or fantasy that provided girls with a temporary escape from the future that awaited many.

CONCLUSIONS

From beyond the grave, a thirteen-year-old named Corale urges her peers to “play while [they] can since the Fates are inclined to take even pretty girls” before their time.¹⁰⁹ This brief inscription is telling for two reasons. It reflects a belief that play was a quintessential part of Roman childhood, in many ways the activity that defined that stage of life and once childhood came to an end, the materials and practices of play were to be set aside so adult responsibilities could be assumed.¹¹⁰ Corale’s inscription is also significant for highlighting the importance afforded to girls’ physical beauty rather than other attributes. For some girls, following Corale’s advice meant play with dolls crafted from ivory, bone, or cloth and resembling adult female figures with elaborate hairstyles and jewels, some inspired by leading imperial women.

Studies of Roman childhood, and toys and play in particular, have tended to consider these dolls relatively straightforward objects that were useful in preparing girls for future roles as wives and mothers. The dolls’ more appealing features such as their adornment, articulated limbs, and affinity to imperial women of the second through fourth centuries have garnered attention, but these features have generally been thought simply to enhance their allure rather than render them more complex. By concentrating on these three features and setting them within their historical and ideological contexts, I have sought to highlight the dolls’ multifaceted and often complicated nature as artifacts of Roman childhood. These toys may have encouraged girls to contemplate being wives and mothers and engage in role-playing activities to that end, as some have suggested, but they also presented girls with conflicting messages about what being an upper-class woman entailed and what was valued, which potentially had serious implications for girls at a formative stage in their development.

The most striking and consistent feature of the dolls in this study is the attention paid to adornment whether in the form of a sculpted coiffure resembling an empress’, a mane of real human hair, or an array of gold jewelry. Wiedemann suggested this emphasis promoted an ideal of an attractive wife with which girls were to identify. Women’s adornment, however, was a subject of some

109. *CLE* 1167.5–6: *ludite felices, patitur dum vita, puellae: / saepe et formosas fata sinistra ferunt.*

110. Cf. Artemidorus’ remark (3.1) that dreams of children at play with dice or knucklebones are not unfavorable since “it is customary for children always to be playing.” For Artemidorus as a valuable source for childhood, see Bradley 2001.

controversy. Those of a certain social standing were expected to devote time to cultivating their appearance in order to achieve a look that reflected their status and rank, and arguably derived a sense of power and self-worth from their outward appearance, conscious of the fact that they could communicate their place in society in a single glance. Feminine adornment also drew positive associations from its role in religious ritual such as ceremonies for Venus and Isis.

Yet the dominant tradition concerning women and *cultus* was profoundly negative. Their fondness for clothing, cosmetics, jewelry, and elaborate hairstyles was linked to extravagance, frivolity, unchastity, and immorality—vices that threatened the welfare of the household and ultimately the state. It seems unlikely that girls were wholly unaware of these criticisms since they too were implicated in Roman society's beauty culture in which upper-class members of the female sex of various ages were expected to—and did—spend substantial amounts of time and resources on outward appearances. When girls played with their dolls, they may not have consciously thought about the connotations of feminine *cultus*, yet their toys embodied the ambiguities associated with what was simultaneously a necessity for many women (and it seems girls as well) and a source of concern and critique. But the dolls also embodied a particular ideal of upper-class, adult femininity—a perfectly coiffed, highly polished exterior that reflected discipline, control, and countless hours of “cultivation”—an ideal that reinforced expectations girls were already exposed to in other media including toilette scenes that decorated their walls and the images and inscriptions that adorned peers' tombs. It is impossible to determine the extent to which they internalized these ideals and were (negatively) affected by them, but it is worth recalling the remarks of Epictetus who observed upper-class girls approaching an age for marriage and worried that they viewed themselves purely as sexual objects whose value depended on external beauty, not character or conduct.

In a different way from adornment, the dolls' articulation further reveals the complexity of these objects as well as some modern assumptions about the nature of childhood artifacts and children's play. Most scholars have only noted these features in passing with two main exceptions: Bettini, who primarily associates the dolls' mobility with passive activities such as dressing and adornment, and D'Ambra, who plausibly suggests the dolls' jointed limbs enabled girls to pose them as miniature *matronae* to learn proper posture and deportment.¹¹¹ Yet

111. Bettini's connection between the dolls' mobility and adornment is interesting when we recall that the hair on the ivory and bone dolls, one of the main focuses of feminine adornment, is completely immovable. This raises a number of questions about how the use and meaning of such dolls might have differed in the hands of girls of divergent social strata. Did an elite girl, for example, who had sat through long hairdressing sessions, relish the fact that in this regard, her doll was instantly ready for play, or did she instead lament that her doll's permanent coiffure limited her fashion options and consequent fun? Would a slave girl, perhaps being trained as an *ornatrix*, have resented that the doll's hair was already fixed and did not allow her to practice her skills, or would she have enjoyed that she could play without having to work? And what about the girl playing

fueled by imagination (a potent force as anyone who has observed children at play can attest), these dolls may at times have been transformed by virtue of their potential for active movement in ways their manufacturers never intended. The dolls' capacity for active movement allowed girls at least to question, if not challenge, long-entrenched stereotypes that associated the female sex with passivity, weakness, and predominantly sedentary activities.

Finally, in assessing the significance of using imperially inspired models, for a case study I focused on the dolls that share a resemblance with Faustina the Elder and Faustina the Younger. These empresses were not ordinary women by any means, but figures whose influence extended far beyond the domestic sphere. Furthermore, these women were both products and promoters of imperial ideologies that associated them and their husbands' reigns (and, in the case of Faustina the Younger, her father's reign as well) with idea(l)s of fertility, prosperity, and generosity through their contributions as wives and mothers, and by their involvement in *alimenta* programs (namely the *puellae Faustinianae*) to benefit lower-class girls. Thus, the "Faustina dolls" were symbols of idealized femininity, maternity, and imperial generosity, but I propose that they were actually even more complicated artifacts of play. By resembling empresses and by virtue of their status as luxury items that surely only girls of the upper orders could have owned and certainly not the girls who profited from the empresses' benefaction, these dolls also functioned to reinforce the hierarchical structure of Roman society. As not simply miniature *matronae* but miniature wives and mothers of current and future heads of state, these dolls reflected something unattainable for the vast majority of girls—even the elite—which may have enhanced their appeal as girls seized the opportunity literally to play with power and question established gender roles.

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with the daughter of her father's patron: how might she have related to this luxury item displaying an ornate hairstyle, neither of which her family could likely afford? Our evidence is too limited to offer more than speculative answers, which reminds us once again of the complicated nature of these objects and the world of children's play, and how much yet remains to be learned about Roman childhood.

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Fig. 1: Ivory doll from the tomb of Crepereia Tryphaena (Antiquarium Comunale 469).
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Fig. 2: Ivory doll found in a girl's tomb on Via Cassia (Palazzo Massimo alle Terme 168191). Reproduced with permission of the Soprintendenza Speciale per i Beni Archeologici di Roma.



Fig. 3: Ivory doll from the Vestal Virgin Cossinia's tomb in Tivoli (Palazzo Massimo alle Terme 262725). Reproduced with permission of the Soprintendenza Speciale per i Beni Archeologici di Roma.

Fig. 4: First-century CE cloth doll recovered at Hawara (Manchester University Museum 2094). Reproduced with permission of The Manchester Museum, University of Manchester.



Fig. 5: Mid-fourth century CE cloth doll from Hawara (copyright Petrie Museum of Egyptian Archaeology, University College London, UC 28024). Reproduced with permission of the Petrie Museum of Egyptian Archaeology.

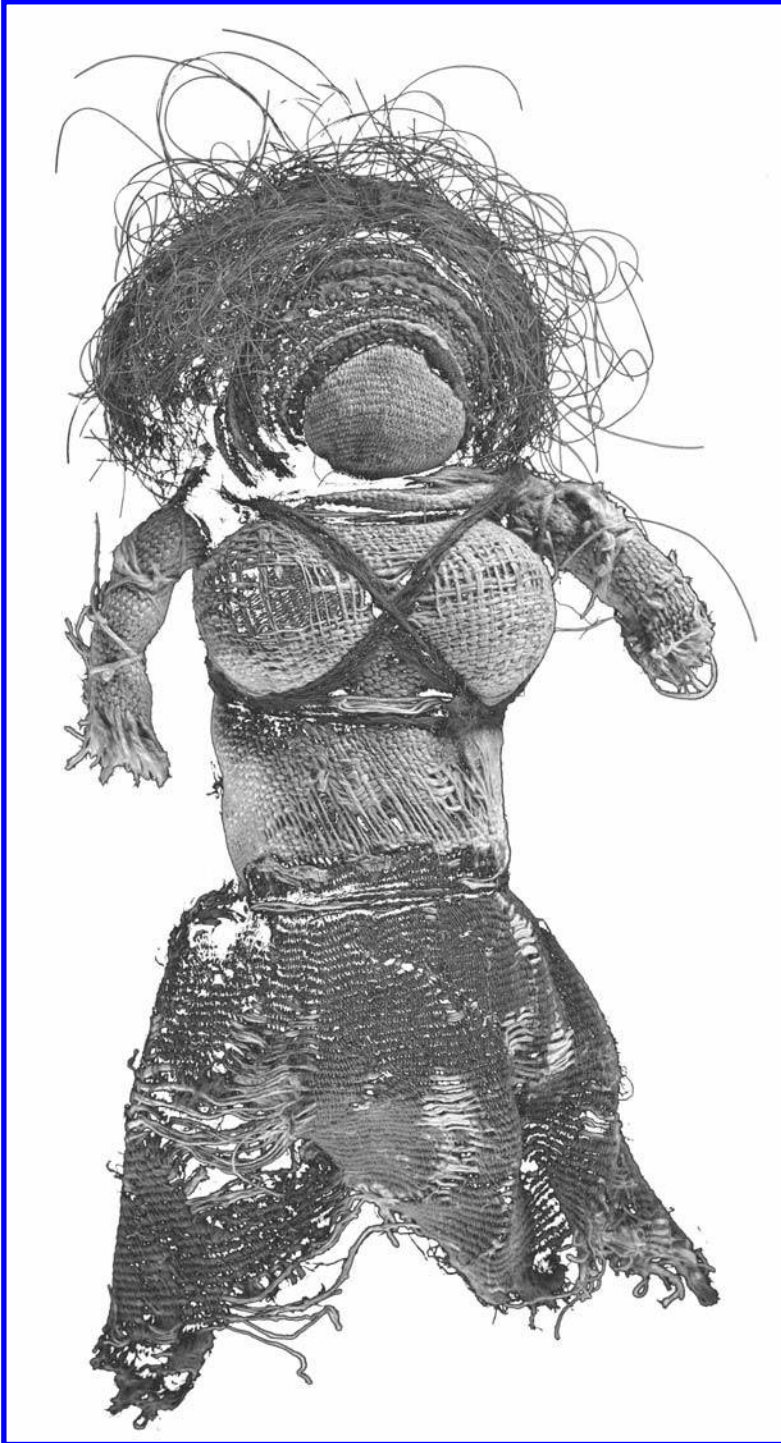


Fig. 6: Mid-fourth century CE cloth doll from Hawara (Ashmolean Museum 1888.818). Reproduced with permission of the Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford.