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MODERN PREJUDICE AND ANCIENT PRAXIS: FEMALE WORSHIP OF HERCULES
AT ROME

aus: Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik 133 (2000) 291–297

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Discussion of the religious activities of Roman women is usually limited to two types of cults: those that addressed traditionally feminine matters,¹ for example, the cult of Juno Lucina whose temple was thought to have been founded by the matrons of Rome as a thanks offering for safe childbirth, and those that required virginal chastity of their officials or worshippers – the most famous of these being the cult of Vesta. This rather limited picture of female religious activity in Rome is drawn largely from the evidence of ancient literature. A great deal of material evidence, however, suggests that women enjoyed a much wider range of religious experience. There is, above all, inscriptional evidence for female worshippers of Juppiter, Apollo, Mars, and Mercury – none of whom was particularly concerned with fertility or chastity.²

Hercules is another god whose interests would appear to be outside the realm of female religious experience. Indeed, many scholars assert that women were prohibited from participation in his cult at Rome.³ Other scholars, however, maintain that women were interdicted only from rites observed at one particular cult site in the city, the Ara Maxima.⁴ This division of scholarly opinion arises from an apparent contradiction between literary evidence that clearly indicates some kind of restriction on female participation in the cult and several of what appear to be genuine ancient dedications to the god set up by both individual women, and by men and women together. This study aims to reconcile these two categories of evidence by demonstrating that it is possible to draw a picture of female participation in the cult of Hercules that can accommodate both the literature and inscriptions. While the literary sources can be read as indicating a universal ban on female participation, such a reading is not necessitated by the language of the ancient authors. In addition, the existence of many female-authored inscriptions set up in Hercules' honor further undermines the likelihood of a complete interdiction of women worshippers in the god's cult.

¹ See, for example, the treatments of female religious activity at Rome in J. P. V. D. Balsdon, *Roman Women: Their History and Habits*, London 1962; S. B. Pomeroy, *Goddesses, Whores, Wives, and Slaves: Women in Classical Antiquity*, New York 1975; R. S. Kraemer, *Her Share of the Blessings: Women's Religions Among Pagans, Jews, and Christians in the Greco-Roman World*, New York 1992; N. Boëls-Janssen, *La Vie Religieuse des Matrones dans la Rome Archaique*, Rome 1993; E. Fantham et al., *Women in the Classical World: Image and Text*, New York 1994; A. Staples, *From Good Goddess to Vestal Virgins: Sex and Category in Roman Religion*, London 1998.

² Selected republican dedications: Juppiter: *CIL* I² 2171b = V 1073 = *ILS* 2992 = *ILLRP* 195 (from Aquileia); possibly also *CIL* I² 1816 (from Alba Fucens). Apollo: *CIL* I² 1928 = IX 5803 = *ILS* 3213 = *ILLRP* 49 (from Morrovalle). Selected dedications of imperial or uncertain date: Juppiter VI 424 (from Rome), X 928 = *ILS* 3180 (from Pompeii). Mars: X 5046 (man and woman together; from Atina). Mercury: VI 84 (from Rome; offered by a man and woman together). Liber Pater: *CIL* X 6510 = *ILS* 3367 (from Cora).

³ Mommsen, commentary on *CIL* VI 337. G. Wissowa, *Religion und Kultus der Römer*, Munich 1912², 279. K. Latte, *Römische Religionsgeschichte*, Munich 1960, 382. R. E. A. Palmer, The Deconstruction of Mommsen on Festus 462/464L., or the Hazards of Restoration, in *Imperium sine fine: T. Robert S. Broughton and the Roman Republic*, edited by J. Linderski, Stuttgart 1996, 93. M. A. Levi, *Ercole e Roma*, Rome 1997, 38 and 123. The comments of these scholars, as well as those in n. 4 and my own, are restricted to the worship of Hercules in the city of Rome and should not be applied to the god's cult in the provinces.

⁴ W. W. Fowler, *The Roman Festivals of the Period of the Republic*, London 1899, 142 and 194. Also W. W. Fowler, *The Religious Experience of the Roman People*, London 1911, 29. Haug, *RE* VIII.566–567, s.v. "Hercules". J. Bayet, *Herclé: Etude Critique des Principaux Monuments Relatifs à l'Hercule Étrusque*, Paris 1926, 444–450. Balsdon 1962, 243. Staples 1998, 24–30. Although he does not address the issue specifically, G. K. Galinsky only discusses the exclusion of women as it pertains to the Ara Maxima (*The Herakles Theme*, Oxford 1972, 155). The Ara Maxima was just one of the many cult sites of Hercules in Rome. Hercules was worshipped in various manifestations at several different places in the city, including the temples of Hercules Magnus Custos and Hercules Musarum in the Circus Flaminius, as well as several temples (including the temple of Hercules Olivarius, discussed below) and the Ara Maxima of Hercules Invictus in the Forum Boarium.

Ultimately, the difficulty in this matter proves to be a modern one. Rather than arising from direct contradictions in the ancient sources, the problem stems from an erroneous methodological practice common in studies of Roman religion, that is, the assumption that restrictions on an individual rite must extend to the general cult. A prime example of this is the popular perception of the cult of the Bona Dea. Extrapolating from accounts of the goddess's December ritual, which was in fact restricted to *matronae*, many scholars discuss the broader cult as if it, too, catered to an exclusively female audience. There is, however, ample literary and epigraphic evidence that the goddess was popular among male worshippers as well.⁵

The idea that Roman women did not worship Hercules is based primarily on a reading of certain ancient texts. Beginning with the text most familiar to many readers, we turn to Macrobius who, in the first book of his *Saturnalia*, paraphrases Varro's aetiology of the exclusion of women from the worship of Hercules:

Unde et mulieres in Italia sacro Herculis non licet interesse, quod Herculi, cum boves Geryonis per agros Italiae duceret, sitienti respondit mulier aquam se non posse praestare quod feminarum deae celebraretur dies, nec ex eo apparatu viris gustare fas esset. Propter quod Hercules facturus sacrum detestatus est praesentiam feminarum, et Potitio ac Pinario sacrorum custodibus iussit ne mulierem interesse permetterent. (1.12.28)

And here too [meaning, in Varro] is the reason why in Italy women may not take part in the rite of Hercules. For, when Hercules was bringing the cattle of Geryon through Italy, a woman replied to the thirsty hero that she could not give him water because the day was the festival of the Goddess of Women [the Bona Dea] and it was unlawful for a man to taste what had been prepared for her. Hercules, therefore, when he was about to offer sacrifice, forbade the presence of women and ordered Potitius and Pinarius, who had charge of his rites (cult), not to allow any woman to take part.

That there was a restriction of female participation in the Hercules cult is clear, but Macrobius' language does not reveal the precise nature of the stricture. He tells us that women did not participate in a *sacrum* – a very general term used to refer to a consecrated item, a temple, a sanctuary, an individual rite, a festival or a cult.⁶ Macrobius himself tells us elsewhere in the *Saturnalia* that anything which is thought to belong to the gods is called *sacrum* (3.3.2).⁷ In the passage with which we are concerned here, he refers to Potitius and Pinarius as the *custodes sacrorum*. Members of these two patrician families maintained control over the cult of Hercules Victor from the time the cult was established in Rome until they were replaced with public slaves by Appius Claudius Caecus during his censorship in 312 BCE.⁸

Because of the general nature of *sacrum*, we cannot judge the extent of the prohibition from Macrobius alone. Further elucidation is offered by Aulus Gellius in a passage on the ways Romans swore oaths: *In veteribus scriptis neque mulieres Romanae per Herculem deiurant neque viri per Castorem. Sed cur illae non iuraverint Herculem non obscurum est, nam Herculaneo sacrificio abstinent* (In old writings, Roman women do not swear by Hercules nor do men swear by Castor. Yet it is no mystery why those women did not swear by Hercules, for women refrain from sacrificing to Hercules [11.6.1–2]).⁹ The *sacrum* in which Roman women did not participate was a sacrifice (*sacri-*

⁵ *Infra*, n. 25.

⁶ A. Forcellini, *Lexicon Totius Latinitatis*, Bononia [Felsina] 1965, 5.287, s.v. "sacer". OLD, s.v. "sacrum".

⁷ See also Festus, 424L.

⁸ Verg., *A.* 8.268–272. Livy 1.7.12. Macr., *Sat.* 3.6.12–13. Festus 270L. Aurelius Victor, *de vir. ill.* 34.2. *Origo* 8.1.

⁹ This phenomenon can be seen in any play of Plautus; cf. G. Lodge, *Lexicon Plautinum*, Hildesheim 1962, s.v. "castor", "hercle", "ecastor", "mecastor", "mehercle".

ficium). A further clue to the nature of the restriction is provided by Plutarch, who hints that the restriction pertained only to the *sacrificia* offered at one cult site when he asks why women did not partake of, nor taste the items sacrificed on the larger of two altars of Hercules in Rome: Διὰ τί, δοῦν βωμῶν Ἡρακλέους ὄντων, οὐ μεταλαμβάνουσι γυναῖκες οὐδὲ γεύονται τῶν ἐπὶ τοῦ μείζονος θυομένων (Mor. 278E–F = RQ 60). The Greek indicates that women were prohibited from the entire rite of sacrifice at one altar: they neither participated in the offering of the sacrifice (οὐ μεταλαμβάνουσι), nor did they join in the feast afterwards (οὐδὲ γεύονται).¹⁰

The altar in question is identified in two sources. The *Origo Gentis Romanae*, a fourth century CE history of Rome from the arrival of Saturn and Janus in Italy through the time of Romulus and Remus, explicitly identifies the altar from which women could not eat as the Ara Maxima (6.7). Unfortunately, immediately following this, the *Origo* obscures the nature of the interdiction by saying that women were completely banned from *ea re divina* (this sacred thing). It is not at all clear whether the author of the *Origo* intends his reader to understand *res divina* to refer to a rite at the Ara Maxima specifically or to the cult of Hercules in general.

Fortunately, there is no confusion about the nature of the restriction on female participation as it is described by Propertius. In poem 4.9, Propertius offers the same story as Macrobius to explain the restriction on women worshippers, thus indicating that he, too, has Varro as his source.¹¹ There is, however, an added detail in the Propertius passage, which makes clear the exact nature of the limitation on female activity in the cult. After Hercules has been turned away by the priestess of the Bona Dea, the hero breaks down the door of the goddess's sanctuary and commands:

*Maxima quae gregibus devota est Ara repertis,
ara per has” inquit “maxima facta manus
haec nullis umquam pateat, veneranda puellis
Herculis aeternum ne sit inulta sitis.* (lines 67–70; ed. Fedeli)

May the Greatest Altar (Ara Maxima), which I have vowed on account of my herds being recovered, the altar made greatest by my own hands, may it never lie open to worship by any women, lest the thirst of Hercules go unavenged forever.

Hercules' injunction is specific: women are not permitted to worship at the Ara Maxima, the center of the public cult of Hercules and, according to legend, the oldest cult site of Hercules in Rome. The rites celebrated at the Ara Maxima were unusual within the cult of Hercules. For instance, only these were conducted *ritu graeco* (that is, with unveiled heads at sacrifice).¹² Given the unique nature of the celebrations at the altar, it is reasonable that if women were excluded from any one particular site, it was the Ara Maxima. Furthermore, such a circumstance is consistent with Plutarch's statement that women did not participate in the sacrifices offered at the larger of the altars of Hercules.

In the end, there is no concrete evidence of a universal ban on female participation. Admittedly, the ancient texts do not completely preclude the possibility that women were forbidden to take part in any and all rites celebrated in Hercules' honor, but neither do they *necessitate* such a conclusion. Our

¹⁰ The exclusion of women from a ritual feast of Hercules is not unique to Rome. Tertullian (*ad Nat.* 2.7.17 [ed. Borleffs]) tells us the women of Lanuvium were subject to the same restriction.

¹¹ Galinsky errs in his assertion (1972, 153) that this account originates with Propertius.

¹² Macr., *Sat.* 3.6.17. Serv., *ad Aen.* 8.276 = G. Thilo and H. Hagen, *Servii Grammatici qui feruntur in Vergilii Carmina Commentarii*, Leipzig 1878–1902, 2.236. Livy 1.7.3. Strabo 5.3.3. D.H. 1.40.3. On exclusion of women as a possible element of the *ritus Graecus*, see Latte 1960, 214. The exact location of the Ara Maxima is uncertain: no conclusive remains of it have been found. See F. Coarelli, *Il Foro Boario dalle Origini alla Fine della Repubblica*, Rome 1992², 61–77 and *LTUR* 3.15–16, s.v. “Hercules Invictus, Ara Maxima”. Also L. Richardson, Jr., *A New Topographical Dictionary of Ancient Rome*, Baltimore 1992, 186–187, s.v. “Herculis Invicti Ara Maxima”. For a review of Coarelli 1992, see R. E. A. Palmer, *Cults of Hercules, Apollo Caelispex and Fortuna in and around the Roman Cattle Market*, *JRA* 3, 1990, 234–244.

sources are explicit only about a ban on women from some sacrifices. The idea of a universal prohibition rests in large part on the assumption that the interdiction known to have operated with regard to rites at the Ara Maxima must have extended to all aspects of the worship of Hercules.

This assumption is proved erroneous by the existence of several inscriptions recording female involvement in the god's cult. The following is a representative sample of dedications from Rome set up by women alone or by men and women together:

- 1) *Numisia Afrodilte pro salute fili | maei et meorum | donum Herculi | posui* (CIL VI 286)
I, Numisia Aphrodite, gave this gift to Hercules on behalf of the health of my son and my family.

- 2) *Herculi | Invicto | Primus Aug(usti) libertus | cum Aelia | Felice sua | d(onum) d(edit)*
(CIL VI 327)¹³
Primus, freedman of Augustus, along with his wife, Aelia Felix, gave this gift to Hercules the Undefeated.

- 3) (on left side and front of marble base):
Pomponia | Buteonis | H(erculi) V(ictori) D(efensori) arg(enti) p(ondera) X | testamento | d(edit)
(on right side of base):
H(erculi) V(ictori) D(efensori) | arg(enti) p(ondera) X | Pomponia Zmyrn(a) | testamento d(edit)
(CIL VI 333)

Pomponia, wife of Buteo, gave to Hercules the Conqueror and Defender, from her will ten weights of silver. To Hercules the Conqueror and Defender, Pomponia Zmyrna gave from her will ten weights of silver.

Dedications such as these are usually passed over in silence, or receive only the slightest commentary. The sole comment of the editor *CIL* VI 286, listed above, instructs the reader *nota titulum Herculi dedicatum a muliere*.¹⁴

Other relevant inscriptions have received more attention, but the focus of editorial effort remains explaining away their problematic existence. Take for example the recent treatment of an inscription recording a woman's sponsorship of the refurbishment of one of Hercules' cult sites in Rome :

Publicia L(ucii) f(ilia) | Cn(aei) Corneli A(uli) f(ili) ux(ori) | Hercule aedem | valvasque fecit eademque | expolivit aramque | sacram Hercule restituit | Haec omnia de suo et virei <fecit> | faciundum curavit. (CIL I² 981 = VI 30899 = ILS 3423 = ILLRP 126; from Rome)

Publicia, daughter of Lucius Publicius, wife of Gnaeus Cornelius, son of Aulus, built this temple of Hercules and the doors, and she polished them. And she restored the altar sacred to Hercules. All these things she did with her own and with her husband's money. She oversaw that it was done.

In a recent article, Palmer maintains that Publicia participated in the god's cult as a kind of default, that is, that her refurbishment of Hercules' temple was the result of some unknown sacral incapacity on the part of her husband.¹⁵ As it cannot be proved, however, this hypothesis must remain learned speculation. A more probable explanation, especially in light of the existence of many female-authored dedications to the god, is that Publicia was involved in Hercules' cult, independently of her husband. It is possible that Publicia's attachment to the cult came through her own family. There is some slender evidence to suggest that the *gens Publicia* had a particular attachment to Hercules: the reverse of a

¹³ ILS 3446, identified as *CIL* VI 327, corresponds not to this inscription, but to *CIL* VI 327 bis, p. 61. *CIL* VI 327 does not appear in Dessau's collection.

¹⁴ "Note that this inscription was dedicated to Hercules by a woman."

¹⁵ Palmer 1996, 93 n. 87.

denarius of the otherwise unknown *monetalis* C. Publicius, dated to approximately 80 BCE, shows Hercules strangling the Nemean lion.¹⁶

Publicia's inscription enjoys the rare circumstance of undisputed legitimate antiquity, and therefore has received attention, if only as an apparent anomaly. Many other female-authored dedications to Hercules, however, have been dismissed as late forgeries, as exemplified by Mommsen's commentary on the following dedication:

Herculi pugili | Marcia Irene | d(onum) d(edit) (CIL VI 337; from Rome)
 Marcia Irene gave this gift to Hercules the Boxer.

Mommsen writes: *Mihi titulus suspectus est, cum propter pugilis cognomen, quod deum facit non solum gladiatorum patronum, sed gladiatorem ipsum, tum quoniam mulieres Herculem non colunt.*¹⁷

Mommsen's objection on the basis of the god's cognomen – that it makes Hercules a boxer rather than the god of boxers – is without merit. First, although Hercules is most often represented as a wrestler, there is literary evidence of his prowess as a pugilist.¹⁸ Second, there is evidence of at least one parallel cognomen for Hercules: an entry in the regionary catalog records that he was also worshipped in the form of *Hercules Olivarius* (the olive merchant). The catalog entry is confirmed by the discovery of a statue base in the immediate vicinity of the round temple of Hercules in the Forum Boarium, which bears part of an inscription: *[---]o Olivarius opus Scopae minoris.*¹⁹ Coarelli proposes that the cognomen is a popular epithet, recalling the trade organization that donated the statue to the temple of Hercules Victor.²⁰ He offers the following restoration of the fragmentary inscription, which can be accommodated by the length of the stone: *[Hercules Victor cognominatus vulg]o Olivarius opus Scopae minoris.*²¹ Although it cannot be proved, the reconstruction is plausible, as the inscription dates to a much later period (third century CE) than the statue (late second or early first BCE, based on the identity of the sculptor), and therefore might well record both official and well-established popular names of the god. Similarly, Hercules Pugilis may have received a popular cognomen because of the attentions directed to his cult site by members of a particular profession. There is no reason to doubt the validity of Marcia's dedication on the basis of the god's epithet. Nor, as has been argued above, is there any conclusive evidence to support Mommsen's other objection: that women did not worship Hercules.

While it is possible that individual dedications are forgeries, it remains unlikely that female-authored dedications to Hercules, as a group, are false. Forged inscriptions, like those in *CIL* VI, part 5, usually purport to have been set up by famous persons – consuls or emperors, or by their slaves or freedmen – or refer to well-known historical events. The inscriptions with which we are concerned here were all offered by otherwise unknown folk and do not refer to any events of public importance. Furthermore, the editors of *CIL* themselves can find no physical indications of fabrication on any of these inscriptions, as is openly admitted in the commentary on this inscription:

¹⁶ While Hercules commonly appears on Roman coins in the republican period, Publicius' coin is unique in its portrayal of the hero and the Nemean lion. M. H. Crawford (*Roman Republican Coinage*, Cambridge 1974, 82 and 396 [380/1]) implies a connection between the family of the *monetalis* and Hercules by citing as comparanda for the coin only Publicia's inscription. H. A. Grueber, in *A Catalogue of Roman Coins in the British Museum* (London 1910, 1.365–366 [#2896–2915]), is either unaware of the inscription or dismisses any possible link. In fact, he writes "since it is not possible to associate the design in any way with the personal history of the moneyer's family, it may refer to the recent victory of Sulla over the Marian party (p. 365 n. 3)." Grueber goes on, however, to say that references to recent events on coinage in this period are rare. E. A. Sydenham (*The Coinage of the Roman Republic*, London 1952², 125 [#3768]) offers nothing further.

¹⁷ "This inscription appears suspect to me on account of the epithet 'boxer' which makes the god not only the patron of boxers, but a boxer himself, and because women do not worship Hercules."

¹⁸ Verg., *A.* 5.410–414. Cf. *FGrH* 690.2 and 76.93. Also *LIMC* 4.796, s.v. "Herakles".

¹⁹ *CIL* VI 33936. Coarelli, *LTUR* 3.19–20, s.v. "Hercules Olivarius".

²⁰ Coarelli 1992, 201–204.

²¹ "Hercules the Conqueror, popularly called the Olive Merchant; a work of the younger Scopas."

Herculi Iuliano | Iovi Caelio | Genio Caeli montis | Anna sacrum (CIL VI 334; from Rome)
 Anna consecrated this to Hercules Julianus, Caelian Juppiter, and the Genius of the Mons Caelius

The editor grudgingly admits: *Titulum exstitisse cum certum sit nec quicquam in eo contineatur quod sit contra sermonis proprietatem vel antiquitatis certa indicia, a dubitatione abstinendum esse iudico.*²²

Thus far, we have seen that the literary sources leave open the possibility that women worshipped Hercules – at least in some circumstances – and even imply as much: there would be no point in Plutarch’s question about the interdiction of women from the larger of the two altars of Hercules in Rome if women did not take part in rites at the smaller one. Suggestions of female participation found in literary sources are enhanced by the significant number of female-authored dedications to Hercules that are preserved on stone. Furthermore, there is one additional literary reference, generally left out of the debate, that further strengthens the case for the inclusion of women in the god’s cult. In a digression on the rites observed at the Ara Maxima, the *Origo Gentis Romanae* says that in addition to bribing the Potitii and the Pinarii to relinquish their control of the cult of Hercules to public slaves, Appius Claudius Caecus also bribed them to allow women to take part.²³ Although it is unlikely that Claudius used bribery to persuade the overseers of Hercules’ rites, or that he was personally responsible for admitting women into the worship of Hercules, this passage has historical value. The tale is probably woven together out of three threads: first, Claudius was responsible for at least one major change in the administration of the cult (the transfer of control of the rites from private families to public slaves); second, there was some sort of restriction on women worshippers of Hercules; thirdly, despite a restriction at some time or place, women could worship the god. If women had never taken part in any rites to honor Hercules, the statement in the *Origo* would be meaningless.

In the end, the persistence of the idea that women were excluded from Hercules’ cult can be attributed partly to a widespread assumption about the interests of Roman women: that their concerns were limited to marriage, childbirth, and raising their offspring, and that their religious concerns were restricted to the same issues. The same conflict between that assumption and ancient evidence for the activities of Roman women is not limited to the cult of Hercules: it has been demonstrated for several other cults as well. Dorcey’s study of the cult of Silvanus, another deity thought to have appealed only to male worshippers, shows through an analysis of epigraphic evidence that the god’s attention was often sought by women.²⁴ The converse of this circumstance is also true. Brouwer has noted that there is much evidence that the Bona Dea, the “women’s goddess”, was also worshipped by men, and Bouma has demonstrated extensive involvement of male worshippers in the cult of Mater Matuta at Satricum.²⁵

As to the cult of Hercules, close inspection of the literary sources reveals that they do not really support the conclusion that women were excluded from all worship of the god. That conclusion is further undermined by consideration of epigraphic evidence. Despite all this, the strength of modern scholarly prejudice persuaded several prominent historians to dismiss, against their own better judgment, a large amount of epigraphic evidence which disproved their ideas. Finally, archeological evidence (terracotta breasts and uteri) from an unpublished votive deposit from Praeneste, positively identified through epigraphic material as belonging to Hercules, necessitates such.²⁶ All this suggests

²² “Since it is certain that this inscription existed, and that there is nothing contained in it which is contrary to proper wording or to certain indications of antiquity, I conclude that it must be withheld from doubt.”

²³ *Origo* 8.5. Macrobius (*Sat.* 3.6.5) and Aurelius Victor (*de vir. ill.* 34.2) also claim that Claudius used bribery to achieve his aims, but only the *Origo Gentis Romanae* attributes to him responsibility for the admission of women to the cult.

²⁴ P. F. Dorcey, *The Role of Women in the Cult of Silvanus*, *Numen* 36, 1989. P. F. Dorcey, *The Cult of Silvanus: a Study in Roman Folk Religion*, Leiden 1992, 124–134.

²⁵ H. H. J. Brouwer, *Bona Dea: The Sources and a Description of the Cult*, Leiden 1989, 254–296. J. W. Bouma, *Religio Votiva: The Archaeology of Latial Votive Religion*, Drachten 1996, 1.284–290.

²⁶ CIL I² 61 and 62 = XIV 2891 and 2892 = ILS 3420 and 2892 = *ILLRP* 131 and 132. Both stones appear to have been statue bases. Thanks to the generosity of A. M. Reggiani and S. Gatti of the Soprintendenza Archeologica per il Lazio, I was

that as scholars continue to integrate epigraphic and archaeological evidence into the study of individual cults, the number thought to cater to worshippers of only one gender or another will continue to dwindle. It is becoming clear that, despite being excluded from celebrations at the Ara Maxima, Roman women worshipped Hercules.

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able to examine a portion of the Praenestine deposit in the spring of 1998. The typological make-up of Hercules' deposit is no different, in terms of anatomical votives, from other deposits from west-central Italy identified as belonging to more "feminine" deities, for example, the deposit of Ceres at Lavinium (B. M. Thomasson, *Deposito Votivo dell' Antica Città di Lavinio [Pratica di Mare]*, *OpRom* 3, 1961, 136–138). This typological similarity is also shared by deposits belonging to other gods, such as that of Aesculapius at Fregellae (F. Coarelli, ed., *Fregellae II: Il Santuario di Esculapio*, Perugia 1986, 89–144) and of Minerva Medica at Rome (C. Martini, *Il Deposito Votivo del Tempio di Minerva Medica*, Rome 1990, 13–20).