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# Wicked Women of the Roman World

Women's disability and mental illness in the  
Imperial prose

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## Abstract

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This thesis discusses various depictions of women's mental illness and disability in Roman Stoic philosophy, historiography, medical texts, and legislation. The aim of this thesis is to show how mentally ill and disabled women are portrayed in the Roman prose and how healthy women are associated with the masculine ideals. The Roman medicine based itself on a long Greek tradition and native cultural influences and traditions. This synthesis created a medical field in which women are treated as anomalies and as inferior to men. This thinking is reflected in the Roman philosophy, jurisdiction, and historiography as well; women are described as absent-minded and childlike, or uncontrollable, emotional, and even insane. Women's illness and disability are often used as moral examples in prose.

This research aims to show an aspect of illness and disability in Rome that is rarely discussed and less well-known. Male illness and disability are often referred to in Roman literature; it is important to also shed light on the female experience. Lately, disability has become a more popular topic in the research of Antiquity, and so has the focus on marginalised groups such as women, children, and the elderly. The Roman concept of virtue, *virtus*, that fundamentally defined Roman health, is associated with men and masculinity in the original texts. Thus, an essential viewpoint to women's illness and disability in this thesis is the concept of *virtus*. The research is based on the primary sources and research literature that consisted of research on women, disability, mental illness, and health in the Roman context. Methods of various fields were applied, from close reading and narrative analysis to the methods of historical research.

The main results of this research show that women existed in a grey zone legally and medically. Philosophy offers a depiction of a perfect and an ideal Roman woman. This character hardly existed in reality, but the virtuous ideal is often contrasted with the unvirtuous, even wicked women of the Roman historiography. The evidence lies in the primary sources that describe healthy and ill women in different contexts. This thesis concludes that mentally ill and disabled women existed in the Roman prose and they were recognised in multiple ways; their professions, backgrounds, treatment, and legal rights are discussed in multiple sources. This information is scattered, vague, and often influenced by the personal opinions of the authors. Mentally ill and disabled women were considered different from healthy women but neither group is considered capable of achieving virtues inherent to men and masculinity in the primary sources. Healthy women could theoretically achieve virtue but in reality, women existed outside the Roman understanding of virtuous health.

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## 1. Introduction

Even though medicine and mental health have generally been fairly popular topics of research lately, these fields have traditionally focused on male health, typically using women as examples of anomalies or exceptions. Greek and Roman medicine are fundamentally masculine; Roman philosophical conceptions of health revolve around the concept of *virtus* that, in its non-femininity, mostly excludes women. Roman medicine developed on the basis of Greek concepts of female illness, male health, and the norm of masculinity. Women's sickness was related to child-bearing and the womb, and treatment involved practices and medication that somehow affected fertility, periods, or women's mental state. This tradition continued to Rome, in which the ideal masculinity brought its own aspect to the treatment of women.

In Rome, the concept of *virtus* is traditionally associated with ideal masculinity and public valour; that is why its application on women has been rather complicated throughout Roman history, even though many authors have stated that women are capable of virtuous deeds. As Roman idea of femininity could be interpreted, so to speak, as broken masculinity, its association to mental illness and disability are also interesting starting points for research. Indeed, specifically mental health is, on one hand, strongly attached to acute physical spectrum of symptoms; on the other, it is reduced into a limited idea of Roman virtuous manhood. Thus,, health in the Roman Empire is essentially non-feminine, or, if overly simplified, femininity can be compared to sickness. Roman health was primarily physical health, even though some conditions related to mental health were described and diagnosed in fairly similar manner to modern medicine. It can be debated whether disability and neurodiversity were recognised in the same way.

### 1.1. Research questions and methods

The purpose of this thesis is to portray female mental health and disability in Roman legal, medical, historical and philosophical writings of the Imperial period. The main research questions are the following: what type of evidence is there of female mental illness and disability in Ancient Roman literature? How are disabled or mentally ill women treated in theoretical writings such as jurisdiction and philosophy? How do mentally ill or disabled women differ from healthy women in

the Roman writings? Is the concept of masculine virtue associated with women's mental and physical health, and if so, in what ways?

To further define the topic of research, only women who are Roman citizens are included in this thesis; in many primary sources women are mentioned vaguely at best, and they always refer to Roman female citizens. It would have been irrelevant to include women who do not represent the Roman definition of womanhood, such as slaves or actresses, since they are not considered women by the Roman authors. Fictional women of drama and poetry are not included, since these depictions are often symbolic, hyperbolic and unreliable. I also decided to leave out inscriptions and epigrams, with the exception of the one that Judith Evans Grubbs discusses in the context of marriage and childlessness. In some cases the only examples provided in the primary sources are of mythological women, and Thus, their cultural and social impact needs to be discussed. Otherwise I have attempted to base this thesis on examples of real women, whether they are theoretical, hypothetical or historical. Due to the lack of primary sources, I chose to approach the topic from the starting point of creating a comparison to a healthy Roman female citizen. The purpose was to find anomalies from the male narrative and the scarce references to women, and to construct a depiction of mentally ill women that does not contradict initial.

The research in this thesis is applied and problem-based; instead of describing the primary sources, I concentrated on answering the presented research questions. The primary sources have been selected according to relevance to the introduced questions and topics. My intent is to interpret the primary sources with the help of contextualisation provided by the research literature and compose a unified description of disabled or mentally ill women in Ancient Rome according to Roman authors themselves. The nature of this research is qualitative because due to the scarcity and disunity of source material it was nearly impossible to base this thesis on quantitative research. Research methods used in this thesis are close reading, narrative analysis, and methods of philological and historical research. The purpose of close reading is to focus on separate authors and find patterns, similarities, and differences in the language used of women. Narrative analysis is applied to further shed light on the narrative of ill women in the Roman non-fiction, as choices of words in the descriptions of women are often repetitive regardless of text type. More general application of other research methods such as philological research method are utilised when certain words, figures of speech or translations need specific attention. Historical research is used in the interpretation of texts in their context, and the methods of gender studies are applied where appropriate to further investigate ill and disabled women in Rome.

This thesis will concentrate on the sociocultural understanding of sickness, and health respectively as a philosophical concept. My approach in answering the aforementioned research questions lies in female health in the Roman Empire; how this concept was applied in jurisdiction and in the medical field, how it was represented in different types of literature, and how it merged to Roman notion of virtue. The research questions developed logically from the synthesis of the primary sources and research literature. I am especially intrigued to examine whether health, like *virtus*, can only be applied to certain people in certain situations. From furious empresses to women whose gender was considered an attenuating circumstance in court, this thesis seeks to articulate some features that affected particularly those who lack representation in the textual tradition of Roman medicine.

## 1.2 Background and previous research

Background of this thesis lies in the prior research literature of disability, physical illness, mental illness, and women in Antiquity, particularly in Roman literature. These themes have been discussed by Roman authors from several points of view, and they have appeared in many pragmatic texts such as jurisdiction. Previous research has often focused on these themes separately but seldom have they been analysed together; they have rarely been combined and Thus, this thesis relies on research that concentrates on illness, disability, or women separately. The descriptions of women's health in medical texts create a natural starting point for this thesis. I have based my reconstruction of women in Ancient Greek and Roman medicine mostly on research by Robin Lane Fox and utilised medical texts by Graeco-Roman doctor-authors in contextualisation of women's illness.

Another starting point was found in the research of illness and disability in the Ancient world. Researchers such as Christian Laes, Danielle Gourevitch and Bert Gevaert have studied disability in Antiquity and cultural, philosophical and social interpretations of disability and illness, and relatively health and virtue, in the Graeco-Roman world. This research, even though often focusing on the male experience, sheds light on understanding disability and illness, and the treatment of these concepts in the Graeco-Roman world. The research on Ancient disability is often research of deformity and physical disability; these have been rather easy to identify and discuss in research because these conditions are depicted in primary sources in literature and art.

Most of the research literature used in this thesis is relatively new, but since women in Antiquity have remained a popular research topic for decades, some literature is older. Researchers such as Gunhild Vidén, Jane Gardner and Judith Evans Grubbs have meritoriously depicted women in Roman jurisdiction and philosophical writings. It was necessary to determine the depiction of the virtuous, pious Roman woman in order to analyse critically the description of those without virtue, and in this, the work of Vidén was particularly useful. Graeco-Roman disability is fairly recent topic in research, oldest literature being just over decade old; however, this research often includes tones of sociology and other means of interpretation that do not serve the purposes of this thesis directly. It also seems that in some cases, male researchers have not noticed the realities of female experience, like in the case of Robert Garland, who overlooks loss of blood due to childbirth and periods as causes of female iron deficiency in Rome. All in all it is notable that literature always reflects the ideas and interpretations of the time it is written in, and as time passes, research of illness and women takes more diverse approaches. Recent research has appreciated themes, sociocultural aspects, and people who have previously lacked attention and value in the research of the Graeco-Roman world.

### 1.3 On the selection of primary sources

Most of the primary sources used in this thesis were selected according to relevance to the research questions; primary sources are presented here to emphasise meanings, to provide evidence to theories in research literature, and to serve as examples of real cases of ill and disabled women and male authors' views on these cases. Of medical writers, Graeco-Roman doctors such as Galen (129-216 CE) and Caelius Aurelianus (c.5<sup>th</sup> century CE) were obvious choices because they both have composed a thorough depiction of a wide range of illnesses and importantly, described women in their works. I concentrated especially on *De morbis acutis et chronicis* by Caelius Aurelianus and searched for medical histories of women or other references to women in his accounts.

Of Roman philosophy, I focused on Stoicism and Seneca (4BCE-65CE) because he has written diversely on women and he provides interesting insight on Roman women, virtue, and masculinity. Of historiographical writers, it felt natural to discuss Suetonius and Tacitus together because they both have depicted the same historical women; comparing these descriptions was an adequate approach. The virtuous woman of the Roman philosophy created an interesting contradiction to the

wickedness described in the historiography; the legal and medical texts land in the middle ground of these two portrayals. In Roman jurisdiction, the sources consist of collections of writings that have been edited by numerous authors; thus, I selected few bodies of laws from the Late Empire to draw an overview of women and their agency, mainly focusing on *Iustiniani digesta seu pandectae* (530-533 CE). In jurisdiction, the most relevant topics turned out to be the guardianship of women and the agency they had over their bodies and affairs.

It is worth mentioning that the application of the primary sources is two-fold in this thesis. In the first chapters, primary sources provide support and evidence to the conclusions of researchers, and that is why it is necessary to include references and direct quotes of primary sources in relevant locations. The primary sources of this thesis are limited and often extremely brief. Thus, it has been necessary to include primary sources that contextualise the narrow findings that actually concern women's mental health in Ancient Rome. The second approach to primary sources is traditional close reading and narrative analysis; this analysis aims to expand the limited understanding of the topic by relying on the contextualisation provided in the earlier chapters.

#### 1.4 On the terminology and language used

It is rather necessary to notify that the interpretation and translation of the original text requires critical analysis of the context especially to avoid anachronisms and problems that anachronistic usage of terminology in translation would raise. When using modern terminology such as neurodiversity or mental illness, it is relevant to point out that neither Greek nor Roman medicine recognised these concepts in similar way to modern interpretations. I will pay further attention to these issues in translation in discussion of the Latin and Greek terminology where it is relevant, but it is necessary to bring forth that Latin and Greek terminology are discussed and translated in their Ancient context. It is my objective to avoid anachronistic use of Graeco-Roman medical terminology; thus, even though some translational issues should rise, it is not my attempt to compare Roman medicine or jurisdiction with modern writings.

It is also important to point out that language used in research literature has often aged poorly. My attempt is to translate the primary sources by terminology that best reflects the original meanings of the Latin words, but otherwise my aim is to avoid unnecessary usage of ableist terminology of

research literature. However, there are some terms that are difficult to discuss in English since some of them are impossible to translate directly; in these cases, I have described the cases in as neutral language as possible. I wish to provide criticism of the research literature where it is relevant, and articulate the development in terminology, presenting the most accurate and descriptive terminology possible at every given opportunity. I also focus on the language used in the translations where necessary, since the publications of primary sources used in this thesis are mostly rather old and may include inaccuracies in translation due to influences of the writing time. Developments in terminology and translation are important to discuss because one of the main objectives of this thesis is to understand and interpret the Latin terminology provided by the primary sources; the vague tradition of the usage of English terminology makes this task ever so difficult.

Appendix 1 consists of a summary of the most relevant Latin terminology discussed in this thesis. It explains and clarifies the vocabulary that refers to women, disability and mental illness in Roman literary sources, as Latin terminology is often used synonymously and nuances may not be always clear in original texts. The translations and explanations in Appendix 1 are my own, as are all the translations in this thesis, unless otherwise explicitly stated. However, I did use various printed and online dictionaries in the translations.

## 2. Traditional depiction of feminine health in Greek and Roman medicine

Depictions of women's health and illness in antiquity are from a range of literary sources that vary from medical reports and historical accounts of philosophical discussions and drama. Despite the diversity of sources, some themes, attitudes, narrative styles, details, and thoughts are repeated in these texts, creating a narrative of feminine health in ancient Greece and Rome. The defining feature of understanding and treating women's illnesses in Greek and Roman medicine is the basic notion of women's illnesses being unique to women's minds and bodies. This interpretation applied to both mental and physical health since mental disorders were perceived as manifestations of physical conditions.<sup>1</sup> Thus,, doctors were mostly interested in women's physiology in relation to different illnesses and the cases regarding women's mental disorders are particularly poorly documented; sources that have survived have most likely been passed on in oral tradition.<sup>2</sup> Written

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<sup>1</sup> Adair 1995, 153-163.

<sup>2</sup> Lefkowitz - Fant 1997, 85.

medical reports of women are case studies similar in style to the ones written about men, but they primarily focus on reproductive health; pregnancies and childbirth, to be precise.<sup>3</sup>

As Greek medicine merged strongly with philosophy that emphasised connection of mind and body, physiological symptoms of women were often described as related to mental disorders and vice versa.<sup>4</sup> In fact, mental and physiological conditions and symptoms were seldom separated. In Graeco-Roman medical tradition, three different mental disorders were recognised as occurring in women: wandering uterus, hysteria, and amenorrhea<sup>5</sup>. Faraone describes how wandering uterus was assumed to be causing a wide range of symptoms in women, and how it was treated as a mental disorder even though it was considered a physiological illness.<sup>6</sup> Absence of menstruation and other physiological phenomena were regarded as consequences of wandering uterus, and even hysteria was thought to be a result of this condition.<sup>7</sup> According to Platonic tradition, wandering uterus was the cause of women's spiritual and sexual instability.<sup>8</sup> According to Graeco-Roman medicine, sexuality and fertility were at the very core of women's health, and that is why some treatments prescribed to women even involved sexual practices.<sup>9</sup>

## 2.1. Basic concepts of women's health and illness in ancient Greece

The medical revolution that began in Greece during the 5<sup>th</sup> century BCE was above all a conceptual revolution that created a new tradition of medicine and healing. This invention of medicine was created in the writings of male doctors and healers who applied a new narrative to diagnosing and treating illnesses; this new thinking addressed both female and male human bodies as natural entities that could be affected positively or negatively by, for example, environment and lifestyle.<sup>10</sup> Nevertheless, in addition to natural causes the author-doctors could regard divine intervention as a reason for illness, both mental and physical; in some cases, gods punished people with conditions that affected their gender and sexuality.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Fox 2020, 202-203.

<sup>4</sup> Drabkin 1955, 223-224.

<sup>5</sup> absence of menstrual period in a woman of reproductive age.

<sup>6</sup> Faraone 2011, 9-10.

<sup>7</sup> Adair 1995, 153; Lefkowitz - Fant 1997, 94.

<sup>8</sup> Adair 1995, 157.

<sup>9</sup> Fox 2020, 72.

<sup>10</sup> Fox 2020, 4-5.

<sup>11</sup> Fox 2020, 271-272.

The post-Homeric medical field that Hippocrates and other doctors of the era ended up reflecting in their writings consists of elements that remained somewhat unchanged throughout Antiquity. In addition to divine healing that occurred in temples, travelling doctors treated people with various methods, diagnosed illnesses, and recorded patient histories. Many of these written records are case studies and pedantic descriptions of the progression of an illness. Main evidence of pre-classical doctoring in practice is archaeological; this evidence indicates practices of bandaging, cupping, and trepanning, but also implementation of plant-based remedies. In the beginning of the classical period, it was widely recognised that nature had an impact on human bodies as great as divine action. In addition, the late 6<sup>th</sup> century and early 5<sup>th</sup> century marked a development in artistic interpretation of human body that emphasised (male) bodies as natural entities. In pre-Hippocratic medicine the importance of exercise and food in relation to health was also well established.<sup>12</sup>

At this point it is vital to determine the narrative that depicts women before analysing the female characters and their illnesses in the patient histories any further. When the case studies of the Epidemic Books of the Hippocratic Corpus<sup>13</sup> are considered, it seems that most women who got medical treatment and doctors' attention were of reproductive age; girls are referred to as having their periods and mentions of older women as patients are a rarity.<sup>14</sup> Fox points out that women are mostly referred to indirectly, as wives, slaves or daughters; only prostitutes have been named, but these names are not necessarily real. Doctors seem to have mainly stayed in the population centres, but they were not specialised in treating upper social classes, meaning they treated ordinary townsfolk as well.<sup>15</sup> Thus, it could be deduced that as a Greek woman, the most probable encounter with a doctor occurred if the person lived in an urban area, she had a male relative acquiring medical care, and her medical condition was interpreted to somehow interfere with her reproductive health.

Hippocratic medicine is based on the concept of four humors of the body and the idea of disposal of excess liquids; Thus, in the case of women, bleeding was most of the time considered a positive sign or a sign of improvement of conditions most of the time.<sup>16</sup> This included menstruation and nose bleeds. The Epidemic Doctor<sup>17</sup>, like his contemporary philosophers such as Empedocles,

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<sup>12</sup> Fox 2020, 36-43.

<sup>13</sup> Epidemic Books are of the Hippocratic Corpus, a collection of nearly 60 texts associated with Hippocrates from the late 5<sup>th</sup> century and early 4<sup>th</sup> century BCE.

<sup>14</sup> Fox 2020, 200-201.

<sup>15</sup> Fox 2020, 202-203.

<sup>16</sup> Fox 2020, 154, 228.

<sup>17</sup> Fox refers to the writer of the Epidemic Books as Epidemic Doctor because there is no evidence that these texts are written by Hippocrates.

endorsed the idea that food became blood and excess blood turned into milk in mother's breasts.<sup>18</sup> Breastfeeding also becomes a part of the theory of women's bodies holding excess liquids that ought to be disposed by different means; double-bleeding was always regarded as a good sign and milk was considered transformed blood.<sup>19</sup> Thus, doctors often regard liquid disposal as a valid treatment of women's medical conditions, and if a woman survived a severe illness, for example spiking fever, the survival could be attributed to menstruation, breastfeeding or other bodily function that involved liquids.

## 2.2. Development and applications of Greek principles in Roman medicine

Roman medicine is essentially Greek medicine in a new context. Ever since Rome adopted medical traditions from Greece during the Hellenistic period, Greek customs remained rather immutable. It is worth noting that according to a legend, it was the Roman senate that dispatched an official embassy to summon Asclepius of Epidaurus, Thus, bringing medicine to Rome. This led to the foundation of temple of Asclepius on Tiber island; the position of the temple corresponds to Greek temples that were surrounded by water and were not located within a city. However, archaeological evidence suggests that similar healing sanctuaries had existed earlier in central Italy, and Thus, this temple was not unique to the area nor did it represent a completely foreign custom.<sup>20</sup>

Throughout Roman Antiquity, medicine remained exclusively Greek; even though the surviving literary sources have mostly been Latin translations, the original texts by Galen, Asclepiades and other significant Roman doctors and researchers of medicine were in Greek. According to epigraphic survey by Vivian Nutton, during the first century CE up to 90% of doctors were of Greek origin. Of 2<sup>nd</sup> century doctors, 75% were Greek, and of 3<sup>rd</sup> century doctors, 66%. The same survey also shows that during the first century CE, only 20% of practicing doctors had a Roman citizenship; this changed drastically in the next two hundred years, since of 3<sup>rd</sup> century doctors, up to 75% were Roman citizens.<sup>21</sup> It also seems that a notable number of Roman doctors were freedmen.<sup>22</sup> As Nutton reminds, in the first century BCE it had become a convention to hire Greek

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<sup>18</sup> Fox 2020, 256.

<sup>19</sup> Fox 2020, 154.

<sup>20</sup> Nutton 2012, 162-164.

<sup>21</sup> Prioreschi 1991, 586; Nutton 1992, 15-58.

<sup>22</sup> Prioreschi 1991, 586.

doctors privately as well as in public health concerns. Many of these doctors had arrived in Rome during military campaigns and they were granted various benefits; for example, Julius Caesar granted a citizenship on every practicing doctor in the city of Rome, and later an immunity of conscription in the entire Empire. Emperor Augustus is said to have granted tax immunity on doctors.<sup>23</sup> During this time, the study and commentary of Hippocratic texts continued to thrive. Asclepiades wrote a commentary on Epidemics I and filled in treatments he assumed had been left out of the original.<sup>24</sup> This indicates that doctor's role developed from a passive observer to an active healer during the Hellenistic period.

A certain type of culmination in the study of Greek medical tradition during the Roman period is Galen (129-216 CE) writing his commentary on Epidemics I-III and VI in the 170s CE. He used other Hippocratic texts to evaluate their meaning and tended to interpret them in the light of his contemporary interests.<sup>25</sup> Galen's view of medicine was dominated by his idea of the supreme role of anatomy, and he mainly focused on understanding the physiology behind bodily functions such as pulse or breathing.<sup>26</sup> He opposed stoics and their idea of single controlling organ with his tripartite physiological system, but based his theory on four humors accepting nine mixtures that defined Aristotelian primary qualities and other traits in a person.<sup>27</sup> Thus,, it is reasonable to assume that Galen's takes on women reflect both his Greek background and contemporary influences.

Galen suggested that women should be treated according to their physical make-up. He stated that there are women's diseases that are either related to the female reproductive organs and functions, or to the natural imperfection of the female body compared with a male. This predisposition to ill health differentiated female from male and influenced the remedies that should be used. According to Galen, women should be treated more gently than men because they are as soft as children, eunuchs and men who are 'passionately addicted to the baths'. He also assumed that women's bodies are colder than men's because they have adapted to childbearing. There is no need for beards, because women usually stay indoors, hence no need for protection against cold. However, Galen did believe that women were capable of acquiring knowledge and they were rational beings, presenting similarities to views of Seneca the Younger.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Nutton 2012, 167-168.

<sup>24</sup> Fox 2020, 292.

<sup>25</sup> Fox 2020, 292.

<sup>26</sup> Nutton 2012, 236-238.

<sup>27</sup> Nutton 2012, 240.

<sup>28</sup> Nutton 2012, 241.

Approximately 150 years earlier than Galen, Aulus Cornelius Celsus (circa 25 BCE-50 CE) in his *De Medicina* described cases in which venesection should not be performed; he mentions bloodletting as a common practice for women of young age who are not pregnant, but warns against it when children and elderly women are in question.<sup>29</sup> Celsus reflects the theories of excessive fluidity of women in his writings, as he describes that in the case of women, the cure for vomiting blood is menstruation. If menstruation does not provide the aid, nose bleed should remove all danger.<sup>30</sup> Here Celsus associates nose bleeds, vomiting blood and menstruation with positive effects of blood loss, regardless of the origin or type of haemorrhage. According to Celsus, it is Thus, good for women to lose blood, since many of their conditions were interpreted to originate in accumulation of excess blood in the body. Celsus also presents similar ideas with Galen, who considered female body colder and softer than the male body.

These descriptions portray the implementation of cupping as well as the theory of four humors and excess fluids; they also reflect Greek attitudes towards women, emphasising the reproductive age and pregnancy as factors that are immediately specified, and that determine treatments. Both Galen and Celsus carried on the tradition of Hippocratic texts; they wrote patient histories that served as primary instruments of doctors, they reproduced Greek narratives and theories in medicine, and their ideas of women and women's health was greatly influenced by traditional Greek medicine. On the other hand, during the Roman period, doctor-author's role developed and transformed from observing to healing, as can be seen from the additions Asclepiades made to Epidemics I; the focus shifted from merely observing the illness to treating patients with remedies and other means.

### 3. Mental illness and disability in the Roman tradition

There are three types of disability that were generally recognised in children in Graeco-Roman medical tradition; deafness, blindness, and insanity. The last one included conditions that can be interpreted as physical disability and epilepsy.<sup>31</sup> Hippocrates (460-377 BCE), applying the legacy of Egyptian medicine, attempted to treat these conditions and showed the way to later methods of treatment to disabilities in Greece and Rome. In Roman society, attitudes towards mental disorders

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<sup>29</sup> Celsus, *De Medicina* II. x. 1-4.

<sup>30</sup> Celsus *De Medicina* II.8.16. *Mulier sanguinem vomens profusis menstruis liberatur. Quae menstruis non purgatur, si sanguinem ex naribus fudit, omni periculo vacat. Quae locis laborat aut difficulter partum edit, sternumento levatur.*

<sup>31</sup> Winzer 1993, 15.

and their treatment were greatly influenced by traditional Greek customs and medicine, and old Roman endemic laws that ruled mentally ill people as unfit for Roman society and its traditions, such as marriage. These brutal archaic practices did improve, however, and in the early imperial times *pater familias* was no longer holding such power that he could have murdered or abandoned his own children on account of disability. Roman conventions were in large part affected by the emphasised meaning of the family unit; in Rome, an individual was primarily a member of *familia*, even though on societal level views were influenced by, for example, personal opinions of emperors.<sup>32</sup> It is also worth noting that Greek tradition, despite its pragmatic appearance, relied heavily on religion and myth; the idea of divine madness that required divine healing transferred from Homeric poems to Roman society, and it greatly influenced ideas of who was able to treat such conditions and where these conditions should be treated.<sup>33</sup>

Other physical disabilities that had a connection to mental disorders were also recognised in Rome, and these were dealt in a negative tenor. Gevaert describes Stoic standpoint by stating that diseases of the body are dangerous because they are associated with weakness of the mind. This kind of weakness is not even included in ethics since it leads to involuntary actions that prevent a person from ever achieving *virtus*.<sup>34</sup> On the other hand, Graver points out that the Stoic principle of all fools being mad is a paradox since in Stoicism, wisdom is practically impossible to reach.<sup>35</sup> This idea provides a radical contradiction to traditional Greek stance of mental disorders being a result of instability of the body, and being treatable with diets and remedies.<sup>36</sup> When mental illness, mental disability, and neurodiversity are examined in Roman context, it is relevant to consider the effects of jurisdictional practices, philosophical ideals and Greek medicine. It is also crucial to recognise the sociocultural and political context in which some descriptions of mentally ill or disabled individuals have been written and published; for instance, the political context in the descriptions of Emperor Claudius (10-54 CE) is utterly explicit.<sup>37</sup>

Even though the study of disability has a relatively long tradition, it is fairly new and little researched topic, in regards to Antiquity.<sup>38</sup> Hence it is necessary to remark that terms like mental

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<sup>32</sup> Winzer 1993, 14-15.

<sup>33</sup> Fox 2020, 27-28.

<sup>34</sup> Gevaert 2017, 214.

<sup>35</sup> Graver 2007, 110-111.

<sup>36</sup> Graver 2007, 110-111.

<sup>37</sup> Eden 1984, 8-11,13. For example, *Apocolocyntosis*, satire by Seneca the Younger, has multiple explicitly political functions; the target audience of the satire was the new emperor Nero and his inner circle, and the main purposes of the satire were verifying Nero's ascendancy and mocking the apotheosis of Claudius.

<sup>38</sup> Laes – Goodey – Rose 2013, 4-6.

illness, mental disorder, mental disability, intellectual disability and neurodiversity<sup>39</sup> are all anachronistic in nature and serve here only as explanatory terminology, to differentiate between conditions that could in modern language be diagnosed separately. My intent is not to search for parallels in Latin and this terminology or translate them as such. Goodey and Rose point out the problematic nature of anachronisms in a historical research of disability; modern two-fold language regarding disability leads easily to drastic interpretations and wrong assumptions of the philosophies and attitudes towards disabled individuals in Graeco-Roman world.<sup>40</sup> Goodey and Rose use autism spectrum disorder<sup>41</sup> as an example, bringing justifiably forward an issue that has originated in the tradition of representing physical disability being considerably older than other traditions. As can be noticed from the research of Laes, Goodey, and Rose, a certain problem is created by the literature itself; terminology that includes *disability*, *condition*, and *mental disorder* have been applied interchangeably so that it is at times challenging to interpret the meanings these terms are meant to actually convey.<sup>42</sup>

### 3.1. Mental illness as a medical condition

In Ancient Rome, mental illnesses were considered conditions that primarily affected adults; mental illness was seldom recognised in children or the elderly. Like Celsus explains, usually mental illnesses were assumed to break out after puberty.<sup>43</sup> It is possible to determine and classify mental illnesses familiar to Ancient Romans by referring to surviving source material; one of these is a translation of research of doctor Soranus of Ephesus (1<sup>st</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> century CE)<sup>44</sup>, by Caelius Aurelianus (c.400-500 CE). Danielle Gourevitch does mention, however, that the classifications by Soranus are

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<sup>39</sup> Comment: The term ‘neurodiversity’ is separated from other terms here, in an effort to use precise and neutral language. For example, Laes prefers ‘intellectual disability’ which clearly refers to a condition of being disabled. On the other hand, Goodey and Rose seem to prefer a rather nonspecific term ‘disparity’ to pinpoint differences that could be referred to as ‘neurodiversity’ rather than disability or illness. Many sources also seem to use these terms interchangeably, which complicates precise and accurate interpretation in relation to ancient Greece and Rome.

<sup>40</sup> Goodey – Rose 2013, 19-23.

<sup>41</sup> Goodey – Rose 2013, 19-20. ‘This applies particularly to what is now called intellectual disability. To ask, as popular science columns do ad nauseam, ‘Was Mozart/Spinoza/Newton (et al.) autistic?’ is not useful. We must not exhume dead people and diagnose them with a condition that was invented long after they died. The interdisciplinary field of disability studies offers an important element to social history by recognising that disability is not merely an overlooked category of human history, but also a shifting category whose parameters vary over space and time’.

<sup>42</sup> Laes – Goodey – Rose 2013, 2-3.

<sup>43</sup> Cels.2.1.21. *Adulescentia morbis acutis item comitialibus tabique maxime obiecta est; fereque iuvenes sunt, qui sanguinem expuunt. Post hanc aetatem laterum et pulmonis dolores, lethargus, cholera, insania, sanguinis per quaedam velut ora venarum (αἰμορροῦθιας Graeci appellant) profusio.*

<sup>44</sup> Greek physician, born in 98 CE in Ephesus. Practiced in Alexandria and in Rome.

erroneous, since he divides illnesses into chronic and acute by the presence or absence of fever. According to Caelius, the most severe of these conditions is an acute fever with delirium. Gourevitch also brings forth that terminology used by Caelius is neither coherent nor clear consistently.<sup>45</sup>

Gourevitch categorises ten conditions from the translation that were recognised and classified during Antiquity; these include *alienatio* (*alienatio mentis*), *catalepsis* (*lethargia*), *deliratio*, *dementia*, *furor*, *hydrophobia*, *insania*, *mania*, *melancholia* and *phrenitis*.<sup>46</sup> Out of these, Caelius addresses *alienatio*<sup>47</sup>, which refers to *phrenitis*, *catalepsis*<sup>48</sup>, *phrenitis*<sup>49</sup>, *deliratio*<sup>50</sup> and *hydrophobia* as acute conditions.<sup>51</sup> Others he considers chronic. Rarer term *insania* is to a great extent similar to *furor* which refers to insanity without fever, but according to Gourevitch, Caelius does not use this term systematically. *Furor* and terminology derived from the term seem, however, to be some sort of common names for different mental disorders or conditions that involved mental symptoms. Of the chronic conditions, *mania*<sup>52</sup> and *melancholia* are the easiest for a modern reader to comprehend. Caelius specifies that these are more common among men than others including women, children, and the elderly. According to Caelius, *mania* is a chronic disorder of the mind that is at times difficult to distinguish from *phrenitis*. If the description of *melancholia* is to be trusted it becomes rather close to modern interpretations of depression, even though the language Caelius prefers is often rather blunt, using words modern medicine would try to avoid. Symptoms include, quietness, muttering to oneself, paranoia, hostility towards family members, crying without a reason and even death wish. *Dementia* in this context refers to partial or full loss of ability to think. On the other hand, Caelius points out that conditions that cause *insania* due to extreme pain are to be excluded from *phrenitis*; hence they are not mental conditions *per se*.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Gourevitch 2017, 283,285. In modern medicine, English term *phrenitis* refers to an outdated name for brain infection, *encephalitis*.

<sup>46</sup> Gourevitch 2017, 285-286.

<sup>47</sup> Cael.Ac. 1.21. -- *phrenitim esse alienationem mentis*—

<sup>48</sup> Cael.Ac. 2.10. 57-8. *Catalepsis* refers to a sudden, unexpected seizure or fit, such as in epilepsy.

<sup>49</sup> Cael.Ac. 1.21. --*dicentes phrenitim esse alienationem mentis celerem cum febris acuta atque manuum vano errore, ut aliquid suis digitis attrahere videantur, quod Graeci crocydismon sive carphologian vocant, et parvo pulsu ac denso.*

<sup>50</sup> Cael.Ac. 1.80. Similar to *alienatio*.

<sup>51</sup> Cael.Ac. 3.125.; Ac. 3.98.; Ac. 101. Caelius recognises hydrophobia (rabies) as an acute condition that is a result of a dog bite. Caelius is not entirely sure whether this illness should be defined as an illness of the body or that of the mind, but he nevertheless remarks that the condition is not new. According to him, the disease has been named after its most well-known symptom, fear of water.

<sup>52</sup> Cael.Ac. 1.15. Also referred to as *furor* and *insania*.

<sup>53</sup> Cael.Ac. 1.43. *item ut pleuritis et peripneumonia et omnes passiones quae ex dolore accessionis tempore alienationem faciunt, internoscuntur hoc modo, primo quod cum Dolores asperantur, extenditur atque consurgit alienatio, et eorum indulgentia minuitur, quippe levis atque solubilis deliratio.*

The precision of the definitions by Caelius indicates that many mental illnesses were recognised in Rome and considered medical conditions that were observed, diagnosed and treated by doctors. Physicians like Caelius pursued some sort of consistency in their categorisations and assessments, and attempted to provide their audiences with more in depth information than just catalogues of conditions. A considerable number of disease names originate from Greek, and that is why Caelius offers an etymology or is forced to explain why one is missing; for example, name *phrenitis* was not familiar to Romans.<sup>54</sup> Thus,, the differentiation offered by Caelius provides a useful basis for discussing mental disorders and conditions in Graeco-Roman context. It is relevant to notice that this source is rather young but, on the other hand, it is worth remembering that it provides continuation to Greek tradition and reflects the older sources.

Winzer describes Hippocrates' approach to treatment of disability and mental illness as twofold; on the other hand, Hippocrates believed the illnesses he understood had a physiological foundation that could be treated with appropriate medication and diet, but on the other, interpretations of Hippocrates were heavily influenced by his belief in supernatural.<sup>55</sup> Gourevitch points out how mythology was still relevant to Caelius who exploited mythological examples when describing different conditions hundreds of years later.<sup>56</sup> When Hippocratic theory of four humors was applied to mental health, doctors tended to conclude that the imbalance of blood, lymph, black bile and yellow bile lead to different mental disorders just like it lead to different physical illnesses. Black bile was considered particularly powerful, and it was believed to be causing *melancholia*.<sup>57</sup> One example of such case has been recorded by Rufus of Ephesus<sup>58</sup> in the early 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD; all in all he described six cases of *melancholia*. In this particular case, a young man had provoked an increase in his black bile by brooding on geometry. This poor math student became melancholic and suffered from fever.<sup>59</sup>

One significant figure in the treatment and recording of mental disorders during the Augustan period was Cornelius Celsus (25 BCE-50 CE).<sup>60</sup> He recommended black hellebore for *melancholia* and, if a patient was overjoyed, white hellebore respectively. If these remedies did not help, he accepted correction by blows, stripes and chains. These means of treatment differ drastically from

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<sup>54</sup> Cael.Ac. 1.4. *nomen igitur sumpsit a difficultate mentis, sicuti et dysenteria et dysuria quod urinam vel ventrem impediunt: phrenas enim graece mentes vocaverunt, quarum ut supra diximus impedimentum phrenitica ingerit passio.*

<sup>55</sup> Winzer 1993, 16.

<sup>56</sup> Gourevitch 2017, 287.

<sup>57</sup> Winzer 1993, 16-17.

<sup>58</sup> Greek physician and author, born in 70 CE in Ephesus. He focused primarily on dietetics, pathology, anatomy, gynaecology and patient care.

<sup>59</sup> Fox 2020, 293.

<sup>60</sup> Not to be confused with Greek philosopher Celsus, Gr. Κέλσος.

Hippocrates, who recommends rest and meaningful activities as cures to mental disorders. This also indicates that by the time of Augustus and Tiberius, treatments had medicalised to some extent; hellebore seems to have been extremely common in both medical and non-medical use and due to its violently purgative effect, it was considered a standard treatment of mental disorders.<sup>61</sup> However, in addition to medication, Celsus explains that madness is relieved by either formation of varicose veins, effusion of blood or dysentery.<sup>62</sup> He does not directly recommend cupping, but strongly indicates that blood loss relieves mental illness by disposal of the excess blood. This indicates that the Greek tradition remained strong in Roman medicine even though by the imperial period, Roman doctors had adopted their own conventions somewhat separately from the original Greek texts.

According to Gourevitch, Caelius described distinctly the environment in which a patient should be located, forms of therapy, and their caretakers. For example, Caelius recommends light and music, warns against unwanted guests, and notifies that people treating the patient must be strong enough to restrain them in case the remedies are not of help. Caelius gives special attention to details and gives several practical advices, like the position of windows; should the patient remain unguarded, they should not be able to jump out of the window, hence windows in the patient rooms must always be located high. He also warns that colourful paintings may agitate the patient and an ill person might not be able to tell painting from reality, and recommends a quiet room far away from people and traffic, preferably quite bright or rather dim but not too dark.<sup>63</sup> All in all it is justified to conclude that understanding and treating of mental disorders and conditions was profound and versatile in Rome, even though conventions may have varied greatly within the Empire, from doctor to doctor.

### 3.2. Physical disability in relation to ideal bodies

When mental illness in Ancient Rome is discussed, it is worth mentioning that Romans closely associated mental disorders with physical disabilities in addition to chronic diseases. In Rome, physical disability was defined and categorised by multiple factors, and philosophical as well as medical approaches to disability were numerous. Roman ideal bodies, especially those portrayed in

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<sup>61</sup> Winzer 1993, 17.

<sup>62</sup> Celsus *De Medicina* II.8.15. *At varis ortus vel per ora venarum subita profusio sanguinis vel tormina insaniam tollunt.* *Tormina* refers to an infection of the intestines that causes diarrhoea containing blood.

<sup>63</sup> Gourevitch 2017, 290-292.

art and sculpture, can be considered as representations of symbolic virtues; similarly, physical disability was often associated with inability to achieve virtue.<sup>64</sup> These ideals, however, rarely if ever represented real life; in reality, most women were malnourished and suffered from various nutrient deficiencies that lead to disability and illness.<sup>65</sup>

Postnatally acquired disabilities were extremely common in Rome, and typical causes for men's and women's disabilities respectively were violence and poor diet. Robert Garland points out that, even though women in general had a much lower life expectancy, men were far more likely to suffer an injury. For example, among the inhabitants of Herculaneum, the incidence of injury is three times higher in males than in females.<sup>66</sup> In the study conducted by Sarah Bisel, the incidence of injury in males is 32 per cent and in females 11.4 per cent.<sup>67</sup> According to Estelle Lazer, Luigi Capasso's findings support Bisel's conclusions; he found that majority of injuries involved males, with ratio of 4.7:1.<sup>68</sup> In Garland's interpretation, the osteological evidence from Herculaneum indicates that women's diet was far less nutritious than that of men. Porotic hyperostosis<sup>69</sup>, caused by iron deficiency, occurs in 41 per cent of the women but only in 28 per cent of the men.<sup>70</sup> Women regularly lost more blood than men due to menstruation and childbirth, and it could explain some differences in conditions caused by iron deficiency. Even though men suffered more injuries, women were generally more exposed to blood loss that could have aggravated chronic anaemia. Ian Morris notes that protein-poor diets, haemorrhages, parasites, and especially malaria caused anaemia in Ancient Mediterranean populations.<sup>71</sup> Therefore, porotic hyperostosis does not directly indicate less nutritious diet of women and girls, or causal connection between poor diet and women's disabilities.

Another approach to disability in the Roman world is deformity, both as a physical trait and an aesthetic concept. There are indications of somewhat sympathetic attitudes towards deformed infants, and poor parents were entitled to childbearing benefits even if their child was disabled.<sup>72</sup> Even though malnutrition cannot be emphasised as a single most definitive factor in women's injuries, it nevertheless is one of the most important factors in childhood disability and deformity in

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<sup>64</sup> Gevaert 2017, 214.

<sup>65</sup> Garland 1995, 21.

<sup>66</sup> Garland 1995, 18-19.

<sup>67</sup> Bisel 1987, 124-125.

<sup>68</sup> Lazer 2017, 145.

<sup>69</sup> Walker 2009, 109-125. Even though this condition is widely used in anthropology to determine iron deficiency in populations, some evidence suggests that accelerated loss and compensatory over-production of red blood cells seen in hemolytic and megaloblastic anaemia are the most likely causes of porotic hyperostosis.

<sup>70</sup> Garland 1995, 19.

<sup>71</sup> Morris 1992, 94.

<sup>72</sup> D.50.16.135.

Ancient Rome. It was, for example, incorrectly assumed that deformities in children's feet are caused by encouraging them to walk too early, rather than malnutrition.<sup>73</sup> In the Roman Empire, child-support was provided for poor parents from Emperor Trajan onwards but the amount was substantially less in the case of girls. According to Garland, it is Thus, likely that girls suffered from malnutrition and vitamin deficiencies more often than boys, and continued to be malnourished in their adulthoods.<sup>74</sup> Garland also refers to vitamin D deficiency which could indicate in exposure to sunlight in addition to poor diet, meaning that girls spent most of their time indoors. Altogether, women suffered from conditions that predisposed them to injuries and chronic diseases that could lead to disability and deformity more often than men. For example, chronic malnutrition leads to 'famine amenorrhea' that was more recently present in many occasions during the Second World War.<sup>75</sup> Medical texts regularly describe amenorrhea in Graeco-Roman world suggesting that it was a common health issue in Antiquity. Thus,, infertility in women may have been at least partially caused by inadequate diet.

Seneca the Younger (c.4 BCE-65 CE) writes in his *Epistulae Morales* that he believes disabled body does not have an impact on mental capabilities but Stoic preoccupation with physically healthy or perfect bodies nevertheless means that he considers embodiment indistinct from mental well-being. Stoic philosophers should not neglect their bodies; illness of the body can sometimes be interpreted as weakness of the mind.<sup>76</sup> According to Stoic philosophers like Seneca and Epictetus (50-135 CE)<sup>77</sup>, who himself was disabled, physical injuries that lead to disability should be accepted calmly and rationally, and a good Stoic would ultimately not miss his abled body nor prefer the disabled one.<sup>78</sup> Even though Cicero encourages mocking physical impairments as a strategy in juridical speeches, it is not customary or traditional for philosophers to ridicule disability.<sup>79</sup> To achieve virtue is the ultimate purpose for Stoic philosophers, and one can achieve this despite disability, but only if disability is external or caused by injury. Acceptable disabilities suffered by men are described as injuries from violence, but conditions that have an impact on person's appearance or are congenital, are treated more harshly in philosophical writings.<sup>80</sup> This could be due to the incredible prevalence of physical disabilities and injuries among men; they had to be accepted because they could not be ignored or condemned completely.

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<sup>73</sup> Garland 1995, 21.

<sup>74</sup> Garland 1995, 21.

<sup>75</sup> Van De Walle – Renne 2001, 115.

<sup>76</sup> Sen. *Ep.* 66.3-4. Gevaert 2017, 214.

<sup>77</sup> Greek Stoic philosopher, born into slavery in Phrygia. He lived later in Rome and Nicopolis.

<sup>78</sup> Sen. *Ep.* 9.4.

<sup>79</sup> Cic. *de Orat.* 2.239,245,246,249. Gevaert 2017, 216.

<sup>80</sup> Gevaert 2017, 214-217.

A perfect male body, according to Stoicism, is defined by its usefulness in achieving *virtus*; both spiritually, and physically. Perfect female body on the other hand, is culturally and socially constructed from a different basis. In Graeco-Roman sculpture, female portraits lacked the variety of their male counterparts, and beauty remained their primary signifier. For a great period of time, women in sculpture were generalised, idealised and youthful until the late Hellenistic period, when signs of age and individuality began to emerge under the influence of the Roman veristic style.<sup>81</sup> Barrow also suggests that old age, especially old women, can be associated with the ‘grotesque’, and she points out that one of the most common types of grotesque statuette is in fact, a caricature of an older woman.<sup>82</sup> So, even though the depiction of women in art becomes gradually more diverse, the portraits only emphasise a young, decent and fertile woman as ideal. Other female bodies are considered free to mockery and laughter, and even old age is included in the concept of ‘disabled woman’. Disability is also often associated with deformity and ugliness; ideal female bodies represented beauty and fertility, and deviations are dissociated from femininity. For example, Seneca mocks women for becoming bald and suffering from gout due to excessive drinking; essentially, they become non-women for behaving like men, and Thus, suffer conditions associated with men.<sup>83</sup>

Thus,, it can be concluded that female disability was closely linked with inability to bear children, as well as external features that were not considered beautiful. Old women were associated with conditions that could be art-historically described as ‘grotesque’. While perfect male bodies were appreciated as representations of masculine virtue, perfect female bodies portrayed youthful, goddess-like beauty and fertility respectively. Disability or illness can also be determined as unfeminine, deviating women further from ideal female bodies. In reality, most women suffered from conditions that exposed them to injuries that lead to inability to bear children and other disabilities, and childbirth itself caused majority of women’s injuries.<sup>84</sup> The old woman depicted in art has probably been to some extent a production of fantasy as well, critiquing and mocking a character or a stereotype rather than any real person, emphasising the beauty ideals. Garland notes that women’s average life-expectancy was probably never more than thirty-seven years in Rome, and Thus, it is also likely that old women were considered curiosities and anomalies.<sup>85</sup> Nevertheless, the Roman woman represented in art and text remains a strong ideal, presumably because real women deviated

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<sup>81</sup> Barrow 2018, 66.

<sup>82</sup> Barrow 2018, 72.

<sup>83</sup> Sen. *Ep.* 95.20-23.

<sup>84</sup> Garland 1995, 21.

<sup>85</sup> Garland 1995, 26. Note: the low life-expectancy is, most likely a result of dangerous childbirth.

so much from this fancy. Grotesque old women were firstly literary and artistic archetypes that represented female vices, just like the beautiful, youthful women represented fertility and virtue.

### 3.3. Mental disability and neurodiversity

Intellectual disability and neurodiversity are concepts recognised in Roman medicine, philosophy and literature; philosophically, mentally disabled are considered as incapable of achieving *virtus*.<sup>86</sup> Mental illness and disability are interpreted as an imbalance of the four humors that leads to involuntary actions; if a person is not in control of their actions, they cannot be valued or assessed as capable of virtue, because virtue itself is something one can only achieve by conscious actions and choices.<sup>87</sup> Neurodiversity<sup>88</sup>, though very scarcely applied term in this context, is important to include here, since the conditions Caelius and Galen discuss are rather easily classified as mental disorders, infections or chronic conditions. Mental disability and neurodiversity should Thus, be analysed separately, because it is reasonable to try and recognise different types of intellectual disability that appear in Roman writings, and that clearly cannot be grouped with acute mental illnesses. Toohey brings forward the manifoldness of terminology used of mental disorders; many of these have synonymous applications even though most have specific meanings related to disability. *Debilis* is used of both congenitally disabled and those who had become disabled through injury, and mentally disabled could be described as *qui suae mentis non sunt*.<sup>89</sup>

Toohey refers to compilation of Roman law *Digesta seu Pandectae* (530-533CE) in his text, which becomes rather problematic due to its late writing date. Nevertheless, it is sensible to assume that Roman tradition of law regarding disability, mental disorders and other similar conditions remained immutable for a long period of time because *Digesta* reflects Stoic ideas of *virtus* in its expressions. Toohey especially highlights the inability to express oneself through speech; in Roman law, it is paralleled with lack of reason.<sup>90</sup> On the other hand, this comparison gave some freedoms in criminal justice, but on the other, it forced people under guardianship, since legally these people could not

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<sup>86</sup> Gevaert 2017, 214.

<sup>87</sup> Graver 2007, 110.

<sup>88</sup> According to Merriam-Webster, individual differences in brain functioning regarded as normal variations within the human population.

<sup>89</sup> Toohey 2017, 298-300., *D.1.16.9.5.*, *D.1.16.1.1.*

<sup>90</sup> Toohey 2017, 302.

represent themselves in court or other public circumstances.<sup>91</sup> In this context, *furiosus* refers to an absent person whose errands are run by another person; they are not capable of taking care of their own matters due to disability, illness or other cause.<sup>92</sup> However, Laes points out that speech impairment is only considered a disability in public speaking, and only fourteen cases are mentioned in primary sources.<sup>93</sup> Therefore, , inability to speak indicates lack of reason or coherent thought rather than actual difficulty speaking, as stuttering and other speech impairments were only recognised in rhetoric.

Due to incoherent usage of language and multitude of attitudes towards different conditions, it is quite difficult to determine whether a particular description of a disorder would be defined as neurodiversity, cognitive disability or something else in modern language. It is, however, possible to notice patterns in portrayals that refer to people by language that is not associated with mental illness or disability. Such portrayals of people are present especially in historical and belletrist writings. Neurodiversity could be separated from terms such as *furiosus* by described person's active role; for example, Seneca mocks accomplishments of Emperor Claudius as an author in his satire *Apocolocyntosis*. He clearly considers Claudius disabled, but does recognise his abilities as researcher and historian. Seneca probably would not have paid attention to these qualities of Claudius if he had considered the Emperor *furiosus*.<sup>94</sup> Thus,, it can be deduced that Romans understood that there were different qualities to mental disability and they had a multidimensional understanding of conditions that would indicate either neurodiversity or cognitive disability in modern medicine. The problem rises from relatively small amount of accounts of this style and a need for heavy interpretation of text that easily becomes anachronistic.

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<sup>91</sup> *D.29.7.2.3-4. --tamen ad fideicommissarias eundum est. Furiosus non intellegitur codicillos facere, quia nec aliud quicquam agere intellegitur, cum per omnia et in omnibus absentis vel quiescentis loco habetur.*

<sup>92</sup> Toohey 2017, 302, 304.

<sup>93</sup> Laes 2013, 148-149.

<sup>94</sup> *Sen. Apoc. 5. Claudius gaudet esse illic philologos homines, sperat futurum aliquem historiis suis locum. Itaque et ipse Homericu versu Caesarem se esse significant ait:--*

#### 4. Virtuous and vicious women in Stoic philosophy

Roman philosophy reacts in multiple ways to women having agency and achieving virtue. Even though Roman authors describe women as lacking *virtus*, the virtuosity sometimes associated with women is different in nature than masculine virtue of Roman men. The major philosophical school of Ancient Rome was Stoicism; even though Epicureanism was extremely popular, it was heavily criticised because its teachings of pleasure created confrontation to Stoic ideas of virtuous Roman citizen. For example, Cicero and Seneca criticised Epicureanism and its doctrines, complaining that its ideas of pleasure, *voluptas*, conflicted with Roman *virtus*.<sup>95</sup> Nevertheless, unlike Seneca, Cicero uses words like *voluptas* in his letter without remorse and treats the juxtaposition of masculine *virtus* and unvirtuous *voluptas* as a theoretical dilemma instead of a tangible issue.<sup>96</sup>

The Roman virtue, *virtus*, is public, acquired in war, and asexual by character.<sup>97</sup> In the Roman society, it was technically impossible for women to achieve this type of virtue because a woman was never a public figure and her deeds were neither public nor valiant.<sup>98</sup> On the other hand, the virtue women could achieve is precisely of sexuality, chastity and family, since in these cases, *virtus* is connected to concepts of *pudicitia*, *verecundia*, and *pietas*.<sup>99</sup> One frequently used example of womanly virtue is Livy's description of Lucretia, a woman who was raped because of her exemplary virtue, and who committed suicide in an effort to retain her honour.<sup>100</sup> Lucretia became a model of Roman virtuous woman, and for instance Seneca uses her as an example in his *De Consolatione Ad Marciam* (c.40CE).<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> Gordon 2012, 2-4,112.

<sup>96</sup> Gordon 2012 136-137.

<sup>97</sup> McDonnell 2006, 165-167.

<sup>98</sup> Fejfer 2008, 17. *Publicus*, referred to the public role of the Roman *pater familias* especially during the Republic. Thus,, a woman was always *privata*, private, and remained within the family circle. During the Empire, only the Emperor was *publicus*, and other Roman citizens, even the heir to the throne, were *privati*.

<sup>99</sup> Cic. *Catil.*2.25. devotion, sense of duty.

<sup>100</sup> Liv. 1.57-58. *quo cum primis se intendentibus tenebris peruenissent, pergunt inde Collatiam, ubi Lucretiam haudquaquam ut regias nurus, quas in conuiuio luxuque cum aequalibus uiderant tempus terentes sed nocte sera deditam lanae inter lucubrantes ancillas in medio aedium sedentem inueniunt. muliebris certaminis laus penes Lucretiam fuit. adueniens uir Tarquiniique excepti benigne; uictor maritus comiter inuitat regios iuuenes. ibi Sextum Tarquinium mala libido Lucretiae per uim stuprandae capit; cum forma tum spectata castitas incitat. et tum quidem ab nocturno iuuenali ludo in castra redeunt.-- 'minime' inquit; 'quid enim salui est mulieri amissa pudicitia? uestigia uiri alieni, Collatine, in lecto sunt tuo; ceterum corpus est tantum uiolatum, animus insons; mors testis erit. sed date dexteram fidemque haud impune adultero fore. -- 'uos' inquit 'uideritis quid illi debeatur: ego me etsi peccato absoluo, supplicio non libero; nec ulla deinde impudica Lucretiae exemplo uiuet.' cultrum, quem sub ueste abditum habebat, eum in corde defigit, prolapsaque in uolnus moribunda cecidit.*

<sup>101</sup> Vidén 1993, 114.

#### 4.1. Femininity and *virtus*

Seneca writes in his consolation to Marcia the daughter of Aulus Cremutius Cordus, *De Consolatione Ad Marciam*, that women are capable of achieving virtue just like men because they are equal in strength, *vigor*, and they endure pain like men, if they are used to it.<sup>102</sup>

*Scio quid dicas: oblitus es feminam te consolari, virorum refers exempla. Quis autem dixit naturam maligne cum mulierum ingeniis egisse et virtutes illarum in artum retraxisse? Par illis, mihi crede, vigor, par ad honesta, libeat, facultas est ; dolorem laboremque ex aequo, si consuevere, patiuntur.* (Sen. Cons. Marc. 6.16.1.)

“I know what you are talking about: you forgot to console your womanly self; you refer to the examples of men. But who has said that nature acted so badly in the minds of women and drew back those virtues into adversity? Trust me, their vigour and their courage are of equal strength; and they have an equal chance at honourable things. They can suffer pain and hardships equally to men, if they are accustomed to them. “

In this passage, Seneca directly compares men’s and women’s abilities and strengths and concludes that women are capable of similar endurance and honour. However, Seneca adds a condition, stating that women need to be specifically accustomed to pain in contrast to male pain endurance. Earlier in his letter, he confirms these ideas referring to Marcia’s strong mind and *virtus* that have endured great hardships.<sup>103</sup> This was, however, not a universal interpretation; Cicero in his *Tusculanae Disputationes*, refers to the avoidance of pain as a feminine trait and mocks those who he thinks would scream like women with even a lesser pain.<sup>104</sup> Pamela Gordon asserts that for Cicero, the ability to endure pain is a key masculine trait.<sup>105</sup> Thus, in special circumstances, a woman is capable of similar virtue than a man, even though women’s virtue differs from public masculine valour. In this case too, Marcia’s capability of virtue is associated with her overcoming the mourning of her son’s death, not heroic valour or public deeds. It is also possible that Seneca means the pain endurance metaphorically, and in reality his views have probably reflected more those of Cicero.

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<sup>102</sup> Sen. Cons. Marc. 6.16.1. *Scio quid dicas: oblitus es feminam te consolari, virorum refers exempla. Quis autem dixit naturam maligne cum mulierum ingeniis egisse et virtutes illarum in artum retraxisse? Par illis, mihi crede, vigor, par ad honesta, libeat, facultas est ; dolorem laboremque ex aequo, si consuevere, patiuntur.*

<sup>103</sup> Sen. Cons. Marc. 6.1.1. *Fiduciam mihi dedit exploratum iam robur animi et magno experimento approbata virtus tua.*

<sup>104</sup> Cic. *Tusc.* 2.15. --*hanc enervatam muliebremque sententiam--*, Cic. *Tusc.* 2.46. -- *exclamabis ut mulier--*

<sup>105</sup> Gordon 2012, 111.

In Seneca's writing, the masculine nature of *virtus* is brought up when he demands Helvia not to appeal to her womanhood in her sorrow because virtue separates her from womanhood.<sup>106</sup> According to this thought, virtue is not predominantly to be associated with women, and women who are capable of virtuous deeds are not to be categorised as women; they should be considered separately from other, non-virtuous women. In his letter to Marcia, Seneca states that he would not dare to face her sorrow, unless he knew that Marcia has abandoned the faults of woman's mind.<sup>107</sup>

*Nisi te, Marcia, scirem tam longe ab infirmitate muliebris animi quam a ceteris vitiis recessisse et mores tuos velut aliquod antiquum exemplar aspici, non auderem obviam ire dolori tuo, (Sen. Cons. Marc. 6.1.1.)*

“ Marcia, unless I knew you had departed from the infirmity of the woman's mind and their other vices, and your manners were looked upon as if they were some ancient examples, I would not have dared to confront your sorrow.”

The woman who achieves *virtus* is special and peculiar as she can be contrasted with man; Vidén does point out that in the rhetoric of Seneca, the examples are about an extraordinary woman, Lucretia, to two extraordinary women Marcia and Helvia. Thus,, these examples cannot provide conclusive evidence of women being capable of virtue equally with men in Roman Stoic philosophy.<sup>108</sup>

In contrast with *virtus*, Seneca describes women's unvirtuous behaviour and vices typical to women in detail in many of his works. Seneca also assesses features commonly associated with women such as weakness and softness. Since *virtus* achieved by women and women's virtuosity are generally linked with chastity and sexual morality, one of the antonyms of *virtus* is *impudicitia*, promiscuity or unchastity.<sup>109</sup> In his letter to Helvia, Seneca points out how *impudicitia* is one of the greatest vices of his time. He also emphasised that the most glorious embellishment of Helvia is her chastity, something age cannot corrupt.

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<sup>106</sup> Sen. Cons. Helv. 16.5. *Non potes itaque ad obtinendum dolorem muliebre nomen praetendere, ex quo te virtutes tuae seduxerunt; tantum debes a feminarum lacrimis abesse, quantum vitiis.*

<sup>107</sup> Sen. Cons. Marc. 6.1.1. *Nisi te, Marcia, scirem tam longe ab infirmitate muliebris animi quam a ceteris vitiis recessisse et mores tuos velut aliquod antiquum exemplar aspici, non auderem obviam ire dolori tuo,*

<sup>108</sup> Vidén 1993, 114.

<sup>109</sup> Sen. Cons. Helv. 12.16.3. *Non te maximum saeculi malum, impudicitia, in numerum plurium adduxit; non gemmae te, non margaritae flexerunt; non tibi divitiae velut maximum generis humani bonum refulserunt; non te, bene in antiqua et severa institutam domo, periculosa etiam probis peiorum detorsit imitatio; numquam te fecunditatis tuae, quasi exprobraret aetatem, puduit, numquam more aliarum, quibus omnis commendatio ex forma petitur, tumescentem uterum abscondisti quasi indecens onus, nec intra viscera tua conceptas spes liberorum elisisti; non faciem coloribus ac lenociniis polluisti; numquam tibi placuit vestis, quae nihil amplius nudaret, cum poneretur. Unicum tibi ornamentum, pulcherrima et nulli obnoxia aetati forma, maximum decus visa est pudicitia.*

In addition to *impudicitia*, women are unvirtuous due to the quality of their personality and gender; most of these remarks lie heavily on stereotypes that are similar to the conventions of portrayal of women in legal texts. One of these features typical to women separating them normally from virtue is *muliebre vitium*, weakness that, per se, is a defect of character. Women who got rid of this feature were highly regarded.<sup>110</sup> Another example is softness, *mollitia*, that is a result of joyful and comfortable life. Seneca refers to especially harshly as it is also present in lazy, feminine men.<sup>111</sup> If a person, regardless of gender, lives softly, *molliter*, their mind becomes feminine; yet this does not directly refer to ‘womanlike’ but more to ‘deviant from men’.<sup>112</sup> However, Seneca mentions multiple times weaknesses associated with women as he discusses men, for example as he addresses themes of anger. He compares angry men to women and children, and finds that anger is essentially feminine and childlike feature.<sup>113</sup> This echoes the legal texts that associate women and children by inability and unsophistication. This idea also underlines that the stoic view of a wise virtuous person refers expressly to a wise man.

In his letter to Helvia, Seneca indicates that he believes in the philosophical education of women, even though this emerges in a special context and Thus, it is not necessarily his general opinion.<sup>114</sup> Elsewhere, Seneca remarks that it does not matter whether a woman is rich; she still is a mindless beast and a victim of her passions unless she gains education and acquires knowledge.<sup>115</sup>

*Tanta quosdam dementia tenet, ut sibi contumeliam fieri putent posse a muliere. Quid refert quam habeant, quot lexicarios habentem, quam oneratas aures, quam laxam sellam? Aequae imprudens animal est et, nisi scientia accessit ac multa eruditio, ferum, cupiditatum incontinens.* (Sen. Const.2.14.1.)

“The madness is so great that some men think women can insult them. What difference do their riches make? How many litter-bearers she has, how full her ears,

<sup>110</sup> Vidén 1993, 120.

<sup>111</sup> Sen. Ep. 82.1-2. *I, qua ire coepisti et in isto te vitae habitu conpone placide, non molliter. Male mihi esse malo quam molliter; male I nunc sic excipe, quemadmodum a populo solet dici: dure, aspere, laboriose. Audire solemus sic quorundam vitam laudari, quibus invidetur: 'molliter vivit'; hoc dicunt: 'mollis est.' Paulatim enim effeminatur animus atque in similitudinem otii sui et pigritiae, in qua iacet, solvitur.*

<sup>112</sup> Vidén 1993, 119.

<sup>113</sup> Sen. Ira. 1.20.3. *Multum, inquam, interest inter sublimem animum et superbum. Iracundia nihil amplum decorumque molitur; contra mihi videtur veterinosi et infelicis animi, imbecillitatis sibi conscii, saepe indolescere, ut exulcerata et aegra corpora, quae ad tactus levissimos gemunt. Ita ira muliebre maxime ac puerile vitium est. 'At incidit et in viros.' Nam viris quoque puerilia ac muliebria ingenia sunt.*

<sup>114</sup> Sen. Cons. Helv. 17.4.

<sup>115</sup> Sen. Const. 2.14.1. *Tanta quosdam dementia tenet, ut sibi contumeliam fieri putent posse a muliere. Quid refert quam habeant, quot lexicarios habentem, quam oneratas aures, quam laxam sellam? Aequae imprudens animal est et, nisi scientia accessit ac multa eruditio, ferum, cupiditatum incontinens.*

how comfortable her chair? She is equal to an unintelligent animal, and unless she gains knowledge and education she remains a beast, incontinent in her desires.”

In this passage, Seneca associates women with children, stating that they both lack philosophical training and thus, they cannot be wise or virtuous. Thus, the relationship of womanhood to virtue and wisdom is rather complex, even though a concept of womanhood does not belong to the Roman understanding of *virtus*. Yet, there are exceptional situations in which a woman can bring herself to virtuous deeds, and Roman historical narrative includes characters like Lucretia who achieves *virtus*. However, this achievement requires the woman to give up her feminine features and rising above other women in wisdom, essentially abandoning womanhood. Therefore, *virtus* was not achievable for women in the real world; Roman virtues and vices were strongly gendered concepts and to disturb these structures was, even in theory, practically impossible without male approval and detaching oneself from female gender.

The Roman philosophical dispute was strongly characterised by the juxtaposition of Roman Stoicism and foreign Epicureanism; *virtus* and *voluptas* were more or less treated as antonyms. Stoic philosophers and other philosophic writers in Rome assessed virtue as a masculine good, and even though women could be granted an ability to achieve *virtus*, it was not appropriate for Roman male citizens to act in ways that prevented them from achieving it. However, it is necessary to remind that Stoic concepts of virtues were more or less theoretical and non-applicable in real life. Even though Seneca is capable of appreciating women and their actions, femininity is constantly associated with inferiority and weakness; Cicero openly mocks features he considers feminine in a Roman man. Thus, philosophically it is rather hard to estimate whether women could deviate from the Stoic norm and be considered ill or insane since the norm itself does not include femininity. Women had to be symbolically deprived of their sex in order to achieve masculinity that formed the norms of ideal Roman citizen; they could not deviate from the norm and simultaneously avoid their sex, as symbolic masculinity came as perk with virtuous nature.

## 4.2. The ideal Roman woman

*Matrona*, or *mater familias* as they are synonymous<sup>116</sup>, refers to Roman wife and mother of a family, who maintained the household. *Matrona* remains as an archetype and the most highly esteemed role for a Roman woman, and roles for women who deviate from this are limited. The most important part of citizenship for female citizens was legal marriage and birthing legal male heirs to her husband's family. *Matrona* could have a lot of social and financial influence and silent power, even though women were not directly able to take part in political decision making or public life. Roman literature is packed with stories of powerful *matronas* whose influence extended to emperors and whose authority was hidden but brutally effective. If priestesses held symbolic power, the power of the *matrona* was real, even though often it is not established in official documents.

The virtues of a Roman woman, such as *pietas*, *verecundia* and *pudicitia* are essentially associated with the role of *matrona*; a virtuous *matrona* dedicated herself to her family and showed humility and modesty at all times. Seneca praises these features in both Helvia and Marcia, as well as in Helvia's sister.<sup>117</sup> He advises Helvia to control her devotion and to keep it in moderation. As he describes Helvia's virtues, Seneca notes that she received a good traditional Roman education, and he regards *pudicitia*, chastity, as the most important virtue of all. He also emphasises fecundity, as ability to birth children was considered as one of the female virtues and a fundamental part of Roman femininity.<sup>118</sup>

*Optimum inter pietatem et rationem temperamentum est et sentire desiderium et opprimere. -- bene in antiqua et severa institutam domo, --, numquam te fecunditatis tuae puduit, --, Unicum tibi ornamentum, pulcherrima et nulli obnoxia aetati forma, maximum decus visa est pudicitia.* (Sen.Cons.Helv.16.)

“The best balance between piety and reason is both to feel desire and oppress it, -- well in history and a serious custom of families,-- that you never were ashamed of your fecundity,-- your unique and most beautiful ornament, and beauty touched by no age, chastity has been seen as your greatest glory.”

In his letter to Marcia, Seneca appreciates her modesty, *verecundia*, and instructs that in the current situation, she should maintain her virtuous manner and modesty as she has complied with them for

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<sup>116</sup> McGinn 2003, 150. In legal texts, both terms are used of a woman who is criminally liable of adultery.

<sup>117</sup> Wilcox 2006, 78. However, like Wilcox points out, generally Seneca associated motherhood with feminine softness.

<sup>118</sup> Sen. Cons. Helv. 16. *Optimum inter pietatem et rationem temperamentum est et sentire desiderium et opprimere. -- bene in antiqua et severa institutam domo, --, numquam te fecunditatis tuae puduit, --, Unicum tibi ornamentum, pulcherrima et nulli obnoxia aetati forma, maximum decus visa est pudicitia.*

her entire life.<sup>119</sup> He clearly points out the meaning of virtuous modesty as he notifies Marcia that there is also modesty in grief. As an exemplary Roman woman Marcia has remained modest for her entire life; even in grief it is not appropriate to give up this virtue and Seneca advises Marcia to bring her grief forward virtuously. On the other hand, this is inspired by the general style of the text and the object of consolation; Seneca's approach on his mother and aunt might not tell how he reacts to women's braveries in other contexts.

Seneca thinks highly of Helvia's sister as well, owing his recovery of long illness to her loving and motherly care.<sup>120</sup> He also respects her heroic nature at the moment of her husband's death, commenting that many virtuous deeds of women are left unnoticed.<sup>121</sup>

*O quam multarum egregia opera in obscuro iacent! Si huic illa simplex admirandis virtutibus contigisset antiquitas, quanto ingeniorum certamine celebraretur uxor, quae, oblita imbecillitatis, oblita metuendi etiam firmissimis maris, caput suum periculis pro sepultura obiecit et, dum cogitat de viri funere, nihil de suo timuit!*  
(Sen.Cons.Helv.19.5.)

“Oh, how many great deeds lie in obscurity! If that simple antiquity took hold of him with admirable virtues, how great a contest of genius would the wife be frequented, who, forgetting her infirmity and fear even in the swirling sea, threw her head to the grave with danger. And when she thought about her husband's funeral, she feared nothing!”

Seneca describes Helvia's sister as *sanctitatis exemplum*, an example of purity; she is not only respectable as a valiant wife, but also chaste, immaculate woman.<sup>122</sup> According to these letters, an ideal Roman woman is married, dedicated to family, modest, chaste, and able to have children; however it is difficult to estimate to what extent Seneca associates virtue with women outside this context. The philosophical world of Seneca is strongly gendered into men's and women's spheres, and this is reflected in his depiction of women, even if he wrote to women theoretically capable of *virtus*. Everything that could be described with feminine terms, he found less in worth and

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<sup>119</sup> Sen. Cons. Marc. 3.4. *Quam in omni vita servasti morum probitatem et verecundiam, in hac quoque re praestabis; est enim quaedam et dolendi modestia.*

<sup>120</sup> Sen. Cons. Helv. 19.2. *--illius pio maternoque nutricio per longum tempus aeger convalui; --*

<sup>121</sup> Sen. Cons. Helv. 19.5. *O quam multarum egregia opera in obscuro iacent! Si huic illa simplex admirandis virtutibus contigisset antiquitas, quanto ingeniorum certamine celebraretur uxor, quae, oblita imbecillitatis, oblita metuendi etiam firmissimis maris, caput suum periculis pro sepultura obiecit et, dum cogitat de viri funere, nihil de suo timuit!*

<sup>122</sup> Sen. Cons. Helv. 19.6. *sanctitatis exemplum*

negative<sup>123</sup>; the reason for this, as he presented it, is that man is born to rule and woman to obey.<sup>124</sup> On the other hand, even though features such as *mollitia* were intrinsically associated with women, when Seneca addresses women directly and personally, he ensures that they are capable of *virtus*. According to Vidén, Seneca means that women were no longer regarded as women but as men or sexless; unchastity has led to an interpretation that Stoic philosophy praised the equality of the sexes, but Vidén states that this interpretation is not sustainable. A more modern example of this type of symbolic abandoning of one's gender could be Lady Macbeth's soliloquy *The raven himself is hoarse*<sup>125</sup> but this does not imply an actual abolishing of sex. Seneca has a habit of describing women as less gifted and less mentally capable than men but he probably refuses to do so when he is writing to women in his immediate family.<sup>126</sup>

## 5. Historical women in the works of Tacitus and Suetonius

Assessing historical women shows that it is easiest to focus on the *feminae clarissimae*, the most distinguished women of imperial court and immediate family of emperors. These women were often either loved or hated by the public, and the hatred is especially reflected in later historical writings such as the ones by Tacitus and Suetonius. Comparing the texts of these two is sensible, as they both represent similar literary genres and styles, and they lived roughly in the same time period, influencing the early 2<sup>nd</sup> century. However, it is essential to note that historiography and biography did not represent objective historical analysis by any means and these texts should be used with care in the interpretation of the personalities of these women. However, Tacitus and Suetonius both provide an idea of how these kinds of vicious, dangerous women may have been portrayed in general. Of course, nowhere can be read a direct statement of these women being insane; it is left for the reader to interpret that these women in their masculine cruelty and sadism did not represent the ideal of modest *matrona* and thus, they were nefarious, dangerous and even ill.

When historical women are discussed, it is impossible to ignore Cornelius Tacitus (56-120 CE) and his way of portraying the women of imperial court. Tacitus mentions vices such as *impudicitia*,

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<sup>123</sup> Vidén 1993, 137-138.

<sup>124</sup> Sen. *Const.* 2.1.1. *Tantum inter Stoicos, Serene, et ceteros sapientiam professos interesse quantum inter feminas et mares non immerito dixerim, cum utraque turba ad vitae societatem tantundem conferat, sed altera pars ad obsequendum, altera imperio nata sit.*

<sup>125</sup> Craig 1993, 849.

<sup>126</sup> Vidén 1993, 138.

immodesty, multiple times, and refers to women with *impotentia*, inability or weakness, or *saevitia*, cruelty. He criticises women of similar issues as men; for example, he accuses Agrippina the Elder (14 BCE-13CE) of being greedy for power and arrogant, *dominandi avida* and *aequi impatiens*. He points out how Agrippina acts manly and finds her lacking any womanly vices, *feminarum vitia*.<sup>127</sup> Tacitus brings forwards Agrippina's other side elsewhere, describing her virtues; according to him, she was protected by her guards and her decency, *pudicitia*<sup>128</sup>. Tacitus does not blame Agrippina's arrogance on her female weakness but describes and notices her virtues along the presented criticism.

Another significant historian who portrayed imperial families is Suetonius (69-122 CE) who composed *The Lives of Twelve Caesars*. The way Suetonius portrays women differs drastically from Tacitus, and his own portrayal of male characters. Vidén estimates that Suetonius portrays women firstly as objects: mothers, sisters, daughters, and wives of his male main characters, or objects of men's actions.<sup>129</sup> Another typical feature in Suetonius' narrative of women is to describe historically significant and influential women as mere names or spouses in marriage; strangely, Suetonius does not bring forward his own opinions on women's vices and virtues, even when he portrays extramarital affairs in the imperial family. For example, as he recites the partners of Julius Caesar, Suetonius settles for mentioning women's names and spouses, leaving the description to that.<sup>130</sup> The most typical portrayal of women by Suetonius is extremely non-observational, impersonal and passive. On the other hand, there are exceptions and for example, the portrayal of Livia, the wife of Augustus, reflects the same attitudes as Tacitus at times; Suetonius explains, for instance, how Livia had lust for power and how she meddled with duties that did not concern women. In this case too, Suetonius refuses to condemn Livia's actions himself, but instead describes how Tiberius ordered her to not intervene in weighty affairs that do not suit women, *maioribus nec feminae convenientibus negotiis abstineret*.<sup>131</sup>

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<sup>127</sup> Tac. Ann. 6.25. *Enimvero Tiberius foedissimis criminationibus exarsit, impudicitiam arguens et Asinium Gallum adulterum, eiusque morte ad taedium vitae compulsam. sed Agrippina aequi impatiens, dominandi avida, virilibus curis feminarum vitia exuerat.*

<sup>128</sup> Tac. Ann. 4.12.2. *Neque spargi venenum in tres poterat, egregia custodum fide et pudicitia Agrippinae impenetrabili.*

<sup>129</sup> Vidén 1993, 67.

<sup>130</sup> Suet. Iul. 50.1. *plurimasque et illustres feminas corrupisse, in quibus Postumiam Servi Ulpici, Lolliam Auli Gabini, Tertullam Marci Crassi--*

<sup>131</sup> Suet. Tib. 50.3. *Quare non "parentem patriae" appellari, non ullum insignem honorem recipere publice passus est; sed et frequenter admonuit, maioribus nec feminae convenientibus negotiis abstineret, praecipue ut animadvertit incendio iuxta aedem Vestae et ipsam intervenisse populumque et milites, quo enixius opem ferrent, adhortatam, sicut sub marito solita esset.*

Occasionally, Tacitus portrays other women of the imperial family in very negative manner, among others Messalina (23-48CE), the wife of Claudius, Poppaea Sabina (30-65 CE), the wife of Nero, and the daughter of Augustus, Julia (39 BCE-14 CE). He applies strong negative words while describing Messalina<sup>132</sup>; according to him, she was cruel and out of control. Tacitus uses the term *saevitia* of cruelty, and to describe her being uncontrollable or even insane, he uses *furor*<sup>133</sup> and *infesta*. He also uses *commotior* to describe her increasing excitement and finally depicts her madness as *furori proximo amore*, almost insane passion or love. This type of description is very powerful and not only brings to light Tacitus' own hatred for Messalina, but also represents the public loath of her character; the tone of the text reflects the portrayals of unpopular Emperors. On the other hand, it is relevant to remember that Messalina is presented here as an archetype of vicious and ill woman; even though the description of Messalina would not be completely historically accurate, it still provides the reader with references to how negative features of women, like uncontrollable emotions, have been portrayed and how male authors have written about them. In this case, Tacitus describes Messalina's emotions like he would portray a man, and loathes her unvirtuous inability to control her temper.

Other woman of imperial court who Tacitus criticises eagerly is Poppaea Sabina, the second wife of Emperor Nero.<sup>134</sup> As he introduces Poppaea, he plays with conventions; the reader expects a summary of her virtues but Tacitus presents a list of vices. However, the description emphasises the hypocrisy of Poppaea, as Tacitus focuses on these traits in her. Tacitus uses *superbia*, arrogance, as the defining feature, and notes that she is everything but a good, virtuous spirit; *o cuncta alia praeter honestum animum*. On the other, Tacitus points out how her mother had been extraordinarily beautiful and how she had inherited this beauty; her wealth was adequate to the nobility of her descent, and her conversation was pleasant and witty. To then contradict his own

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<sup>132</sup> Tac. Ann. 11.12.1. *Verum inclinatio populi supererat ex memoria Germanici, cuius illa reliqua suboles virilis; et matri Agrippinae miseratio augebatur ob saevitiam Messalinae, quae semper infesta et tunc commotior quo minus strueret crimina et accusatores novo et furori proximo amore distinebatur.*

<sup>133</sup> D.29.7.2.3. --*furiosus non intellegitur codicillos facere, quia nec aliud quicquam agere intellegitur, cum per omnia et in omnibus absentis vel quiescentis loco habetur.* In the context of law, *furor* refers to a person who is incapable of taking care of their own legal matters and needs an assistant or a guardian. The choice of words by Tacitus is Thus, rather strong.

<sup>134</sup> Tac. Ann. 13.45. *Non minus insignis eo anno impudicitia magnorum rei publicae malorum initium fecit. erat in civitate Sabina Poppaea, T. Ollio patre genita, sed nomen avi materni sumpserat, inlustri memoria Poppaei Sabini, consulari et triumphali decore praefulgentis; nam Ollium honoribus nondum functum amicitia Seiani pervertit. huic mulieri cuncta alia fuere praeter honestum animum. quippe mater eius, aetatis suae feminas pulchritudine supergressa, gloriam pariter et formam dederat; opes claritudini generis sufficebant. sermo comis nec absurdum ingenium: modestiam praeferre et lascivia uti. rarus in publicum egressus, idque velata parte oris, ne satiaret aspectum, vel quia sic decebat. famae numquam pepercit, maritos et adulteros non distinguens; neque adfectui suo aut alieno obnoxia, unde utilitas ostenderetur, illuc libidinem transferebat.*

depiction, he adds *modestiam praeferre et lascivia uti*, she asserted she was modest while she practiced recklessness.

*Non minus insignis eo anno impudicitia magnorum rei publicae malorum initium fecit. erat in civitate Sabina Poppaea, T. Ollio patre genita, sed nomen avi materni sumpserat, inlustri memoria Poppaei Sabini, consulari et triumphali decore praeifulgentis; nam Ollium honoribus nondum functum amicitia Seiani pervertit. huic mulieri cuncta alia fuere praeter honestum animum. quippe mater eius, aetatis suae feminas pulchritudine supergressa, gloriam pariter et formam dederat; opes claritudini generis sufficiebant. sermo comis nec absurdum ingenium: modestiam praeferre et lascivia uti. rarus in publicum egressus, idque velata parte oris, ne satiaret aspectum, vel quia sic decebat. famae numquam pepercit, maritos et adulteros non distinguens; neque adfectui suo aut alieno obnoxia, unde utilitas ostenderetur, illuc libidinem transferebat. (Tac. Ann. 13.45.)*

“The shamelessness just as terrible in that same year marked the beginning of the great misfortunes for Rome. There was one Poppaea Sabina, daughter of Titus Ollius, but she went by the name of her maternal grandfather Poppaeus Sabinus, a man of illustrious memory and unparalleled in honours of consulship and triumph. For, before he attained his promotion, the friendship of Seianus was his downfall. This woman has everything but a righteous mind. Her mother, who surpassed all the women of her time in beauty, had given her similar glory and form. Her wealth matched her noble descent. Her conversing was lovely and she was greatly intelligent. She professed virtue as she lived lavishly. Rarely did she spend time in public, always covering a part of her face with a veil, to disappoint gazes or hide her beauty. She never protected her reputation; she made no difference between husbands and lovers, and she never became a slave of her own passion or that of her lover’s. Whence the profit might be shown, she transferred the favours there.”

Later, as he depicts her death, Tacitus returns to two features he mentioned in the very beginning, unchastity and cruelty, *impudicitia* and *saevitia*. Tacitus also uses *impudicitia* when he describes the marriage of Julia and Tiberius.<sup>135</sup> He points out that the position of Tiberius turned out to be difficult after marriage, as he had to tolerate *impudicitia*, the promiscuity of his wife. While

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<sup>135</sup> Tac. Ann. 6.51.2. *sed maxime in lubrico egit accepta in matrimonium Iulia, impudicitiam uxoris tolerans aut declinans.*

portraying Poppaea Sabina, he goes even as far as to describing her *impudicitia* as the start of the series of misfortunes for the entire Empire, describing unchaste women as a corrupting force to the Roman state itself.<sup>136</sup> The writings of Tacitus certainly echo the public opinion of the time, and even fortify and confirm the earlier degrading narratives created of these women. Whether any of their unchastity or cruelty is true is irrelevant; in that sense, the narrative resembles that of canonised mythological women and less actual historical figures whose actions are objectively evaluated.

In *De vita Caesarum*, Suetonius too depicts Poppaea Sabina and Julia, the daughter of Augustus. As he describes a scene in which Otho falls in love with Poppaea and refuses to return her to Nero, Suetonius refers to Poppaea rather harshly and blatantly as *depositum*. In the annals of Tacitus, Poppaea has agency and an active role despite the negative tone, but in his narrative, Suetonius turns Poppaea into an item, an impersonal object.<sup>137</sup>

*–, creditur certe non modo missos ad arcessendam non recepisse, sed ipsum etiam exclusisse quondam pro foribus astantem miscentemque frustra minas et preces ac depositum reposcentem. (Suet. Otho 3.2.)*

“It is certainly believed that he [Otho] did not only refuse admittance to those who had been sent by Nero to get her back, but he also shut him out once, leaving him standing before the door, uselessly mixing curses and prayers, and demanding back the deposit [Poppaea] that had been trusted to his possession.”

Vidén points out that the style of Suetonius should not be interpreted anachronistically as purposefully degrading women, but this ignorance of minor characters regardless of gender is rather an element of biographies as a genre. Suetonius tones down the description of every figure but the main character in order to maintain the narrative focus on the Emperors; at the same time, he colourfully exaggerates the personality traits of his main characters.<sup>138</sup> Suetonius does portray Julia, but does not use *impudicitia* in his description; Vidén interprets the *impudicitia* of Julia manifesting in the reluctance of Tiberius to marry her because Julia had grown fond of him during her previous marriage. Suetonius notes that this had been a common assumption; he does not question the origin

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<sup>136</sup> Tac. Ann. 13.45. *Non minus insignis eo anno impudicitia magnorum rei publicae malorum initium fecit.*

<sup>137</sup> Suet. Otho 3.2. *creditur certe non modo missos ad arcessendam non recepisse, sed ipsum etiam exclusisse quondam pro foribus astantem miscentemque frustra minas et preces ac depositum reposcentem.*

<sup>138</sup> Vidén 1993, 82.

of this claim, but on the other hand, he does not give moral commentary on Julia's adulterous behaviour.<sup>139</sup>

--, *et Iuliae mores improbare, ut quam sensisset sui quoque sub priore marito appetentem, quod sane etiam vulgo existimabatur. sed Agrippinam et abegisse post divortium doluit et semel omnino ex occursum adeo contentis et tumentibus oculis prosecutus est, ut custoditum sit ne umquam in conspectum ei posthac veniret. Cum Iulia primo concorditer et amore mutuo vixit, mox dissedit et aliquanto gravius, ut etiam perpetuo secubaret, intercepto communis filii pignore, qui Aquileiae natus infans exstinctus est.* (Suet.Tib.7.2.)

“--, and he despised Julia's behaviour, as she had made inappropriate advances on him while her previous husband still lived, and the general opinion was that she was a frivolous woman. He deeply regretted divorcing Agrippina, and while meeting her later, he looked at her with such eyes so full of affection and warmth that it was taken care of that she should never again be in his sight. First he lived happily and lovingly with Julia, but a rift occurred soon. It became so violent that after the loss of their son, who was born in Aquileia and died in infancy, they would sleep separately.”

He merely describes Tiberius disapproving of Julia's habits because she had made advances on him while still married. He points out how the public took notice of all this, *vulgo existimabatur*, and how Tiberius longed for his previous wife so much and it was ensured that he did not have to see her after their divorce. Suetonius indicates that the marriage with Julia collapsed definitively after the death of their son in infancy, and states that they slept separately after this, *ut etiam perpetuo secubaret*. In this way, Suetonius indicates that Julia, being the new wife, was less appropriate partner for Tiberius than Agrippina, and even though he refuses to bring forth his own sentiments as the narrator, he creates a narrative in which the relationship of Tiberius and Agrippina is the ultimate victim and Julia is presented as the vicious antagonist.

Both Tacitus and Suetonius portray upper class women, with special focus on the imperial family, and both of them only have a handful of depictions of lower class women.<sup>140</sup> This makes the

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<sup>139</sup> Vidén 1993, 85; Suet. Tib. 7.2. --*et Iuliae mores improbare, ut quam sensisset sui quoque sub priore marito appetentem, quod sane etiam vulgo existimabatur. sed Agrippinam et abegisse post divortium doluit et semel omnino ex occursum adeo contentis et tumentibus oculis prosecutus est, ut custoditum sit ne umquam in conspectum ei posthac veniret. Cum Iulia primo concorditer et amore mutuo vixit, mox dissedit et aliquanto gravius, ut etiam perpetuo secubaret, intercepto communis filii pignore, qui Aquileiae natus infans exstinctus est.*

interpretation of their female characters more one-sided and limits their assessment in the wider context. Even though Tacitus generally uses more composed language than Suetonius, his depictions cannot be assumed as neutral. In the portrayals of women, Tacitus highlights virtues and vices, more diligently the latter, going so far that he uses *furor*.<sup>141</sup> The female characters of Tacitus bring forth *superbia*, arrogance, *impotentia*, lack of self-control, and *impudicitia*, unchastity. All of these are typical weaknesses of a Roman woman, far from virtuous *matrona*. Suetonius, for his part, remains extremely neutral but refuses to provide his female characters with agency. He does not comment on women's vices, even in the obvious cases; this can be interpreted so that Suetonius does not appreciate women's agency even when they act against Roman morals. Thus, as a biographer, Suetonius takes his main characters' agency and personality traits to the extremities but frankly ignores women in his works completely, mentioning them as names and objects. The women of Tacitus have more meat on their bones and some agency, even if his style is generally more subtle than that of Suetonius.

The differences in portrayal of women and men are mostly influenced by the style and genre of literature, which stands out especially in Suetonius' works as well as the status and role of the depicted woman and the origins of the author.<sup>142</sup> Women's behaviour and customs are criticised by different standards than men's actions; even if feminine features in men are disparaged, women's masculine behaviour is also attacked. In literature, the conventions of portrayal of men and women differ drastically; in historiography, the differences are highlighted in multidimensionality and agency of the characters. Often women's role is more limited and narrow than men's and the author tells less about female characters than their male counterparts.

The depiction of women happens often through negative and positive stereotypes; on the other hand, it begins to resemble depiction of men when there is something special or dramatic to be told about the character. For example, the gossiping manner in which Suetonius writes about Emperor Claudius<sup>143</sup> can be compared with the extravagant description of Poppaea Tacitus provides. The basis for literary portrayal of women is in *matrona*, the ideal Roman mother, and the female characters' behaviour is a reflection of that. The opposite of *matrona* in historical writing are women who are associated with *impudicitia*. The term *noverca*, which refers to the stereotypical

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<sup>140</sup> Vidén 1993, 59.

<sup>141</sup> Vidén 1993, 60-65.

<sup>142</sup> Vidén 1993, 80-81.

<sup>143</sup> Suet. *Cl.* 34-35.

evil stepmother, and which Tacitus uses of Livia in a very negative tone provides also an antonym to *matrona*.<sup>144</sup>

*Lucium Caesarem euntem ad Hispaniensem exercitum, Gaium remeantem Armenia et vulnere invalidum mors fato propra vel novercae Liviae dolus abstulit--*  
(Tac. Ann. 1.3.3.)

“As Lucius Caesar was on his way to troops in Hispania, and Caius, while returning from Armenia disabled by a wound, they were both prematurely taken away, either by fate or their stepmother Livia’s treachery--.”

Seneca too refers to *noverca* in his letter to Helvia, as he describes how Helvia had forced her stepmother to the role of a real mother.<sup>145</sup> *Noverca* has its roots in the traditional Roman fear of remarriage and its consequences to rightful heirs. The meaning of *noverca* is therefore to warn against remarriage and having children in several marriages; it is as much a moral warning as a literary device.

In Roman literature, the depiction of men is based on virtuosity or lack of it; for example, the depictions of Emperors usually focus hyperbolically on their vices. In historiography and biographies, men are clearly the main characters and women bystanders; this affects the way men’s vices and virtues are described. Similar language is used of both men and women and for instance, *furiosus* could be used to describe both. The descriptions of vicious men are nevertheless fundamentally distinct from the portrayal of women. If a man was *vir furiosus*, he was presented through sadism, anger, brutality, barbaric behaviour and violence. A good example of this is the depiction of Claudius by Suetonius, in which Suetonius presents the Emperor as an erratic, blood-thirsty sadist. Mental disorders of men are also portrayed through actions that are directed to other people. One example of this is how Claudius reacts to the death of Messalina in the satire *Apocolocyntosis*<sup>146</sup> and in historiography.<sup>147</sup> The hyperbolic descriptions of violence intended to emphasise the difference between vicious and virtuous men, and to conform to conventions of these traditional portrayals.

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<sup>144</sup> Tac. Ann. 1.3.3. *Lucium Caesarem euntem ad Hispaniensem exercitum, Gaium remeantem Armenia et vulnere invalidum mors fato propra vel novercae Liviae dolus abstulit--*

<sup>145</sup> Sen. Cons. Helv. 2.4. *Crevisti sub noverca, quam tu quidem omni obsequio et pietate, quanta vel in filia conspici potest, matrem fieri coegisti*

<sup>146</sup> Sen. Apoc. 11. *tu Messalinam, cuius aequae auunculus maior eram quam tuus, occidisti. 'nescio' inquis? di tibi malefaciant: adeo istuc turpius est quod nescisti quam quod occidisti.*

<sup>147</sup> Tac. Ann. 11.38. *nuntiatumque Claudio epulanti perisse Messalinam, non distincto sua an aliena manu. nec ille quaesivit, poposcitque poculum et solita convivio celebravit. ne secutis quidem diebus odii gaudii, irae tristitiae, ullius denique humani adfectus signa dedit, non cum laetantis accusatores aspiceret, non cum filios maerentis.*

The most depiction of violent women can even describe murders and killings, like in the description by Tacitus of Agrippina the Younger (15-59 CE) and the death of Claudius.<sup>148</sup> On the other hand, here the woman is not an active agent, even though Tacitus notes she had planned this murder for a long time. The description of the murder and especially of choosing the poison indicates that the method was particularly cruel on purpose and that sadism could be associated with certain women in extreme cases. On the other hand, women are separated from their cruel deeds because real women acting brutally and violently were a taboo and violent women were often symbolically presented to emphasise a moral standpoint.

## 6. Mentally ill and disabled women in medical texts

Direct descriptions of mentally ill women are very unusual in the Roman context. Gourevitch notes that Caelius, as he gives examples of mental disorders, uses Medea as the only example of a woman.<sup>149</sup> In the chapter on *mania*, he explores loving a supernatural creature as a treatment option for madness. He compares Medea to a man who fell in love with Proserpina and a man who longed for the nymph Amphitrite and threw himself into the sea.<sup>150</sup> Caelius makes it clear that love, especially the divine kind that drives people mad, does not cure anyone from insanity and he uses the mythical examples to convey the message. The parallel that can be observed here is that the highest form love for a man is that for a goddess or a nymph, but the highest form of love for a woman is that for her children. Caelius compares these two types of love in his warning; men kill themselves for love, women kill their children, and thus, divine love is dangerous.

Caelius states that *mania* occurs more frequently in young and middle-aged men and most infrequently in children and women.<sup>151</sup> He similarly describes *melancholia*, establishing that it is

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<sup>148</sup> Tac. Ann. 12.66. *tum Agrippina, sceleris olim certa et oblatae occasionis propera nec ministrorum egens, de genere veneni consultavit, ne repentino et praecipiti facinus proderetur; si lentum et tabidum delegisset, ne admotus supremis Claudius et dolo intellecto ad amorem filii rediret. exquisitum aliquid placebat, quod turbaret mentem et mortem differret.*

<sup>149</sup> Gourevitch 2017, 287-288.

<sup>150</sup> Cael. Chron. 1.176-177. *Sic denique alius amore Proserpinae petit inferna, et sibi licitas alienae ac divae coniugis credidit nuptias. alius nymphae ob desiderium Amphitritis sese deditum mari proiecit. ferunt Graecorum commenta loquacia aetheriae prolis feminam humanis exercitatum fatis et saevo poenitudinis dolore commotam sua manu suos extinxisse successus.*

<sup>151</sup> Cael. Chron. 1.146. *Generatur autem in iuventibus ac mediis aetatibus, difficile in senibus, atque difficilium in pueris vel mulieribus,--*

most common among men in the middle ages, and it rarely occurs in women or other ages.<sup>152</sup> In the case of men, he generally attributes these diseases to an unhealthy lifestyle, consumption of drugs, alcohol or excessive amounts of food, or straining the mind by emotion or work. He separately points out, however, that in the case of women *mania* can be caused by suppression of menstruation.<sup>153</sup> This idea clearly derives from the tradition of treating women's diseases as essentially diseases of the uterus, even though in reality, the symptoms of the uterus may have been indications of underlying conditions that by modern standards would require treatment. Malnutrition and nutrient deficiencies have likely caused women conditions that have had an impact on their reproductive health. According to the interpretation of Caelius, absence of menstruation can lead to *mania*; thus, he establishes mental disorders of women originating in the uterus rather than environmental factors that cause men's disorders. Whether environmental factors had an impact on women's mental health too is not specified but the way Caelius presents the menstruation indicates that *mania* in women may not be caused by the factors that cause men to fall ill.

Caelius brings forth some examples of women falling ill with other conditions such as rabies; one case introduces a poor needlewoman who repaired garments torn by a rabid animal. According to Caelius, two days later she fell ill with rabies.<sup>154</sup>

*sartrix etiam quaedam cum chlamidem scissam rabidis morsibus sarciendam sumeret, atque orae stamina componeret lingua et artuum iuncturas lamberet assuendo, quo transitum acus faceret faciliorem, tertia die in rabiem venisse memoratur.*  
(Cael.Ac.3.100.)

“A seamstress also, when she was taking a garment torn by rabid bites, and composing the threads of the edges with her tongue, she licked the joints in order to make the passage for the needle easier. On the third day she was reported to have succumbed to madness.”

He also describes a woman who got rabies after a small puppy had scratched her face.<sup>155</sup> However, Gourevitch notes that these two anecdotes are probably not genuinely Caelian as the usage of the

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<sup>152</sup> Cael.Chron.1.181. *frequentat autem in masculis magis et mediis aetatibus, difficile vero in feminis vel aliis aetatibus.*

<sup>153</sup> Cael. Chron. 1.147. – *aut abstinentia in feminis solitae purgationis.*

<sup>154</sup> Cael.Ac.3.ac.100. *sartrix etiam quaedam cum chlamidem scissam rabidis morsibus sarciendam sumeret, atque orae stamina componeret lingua et artuum iuncturas lamberet assuendo, quo transitum acus faceret faciliorem, tertia die in rabiem venisse memoratur.*

<sup>155</sup> Cael.Ac.3.99. *memoratur denique sic mulierem in hydrophobicam passionem venisse cui facies fuerit leviter a parvulo catulo lacessita.*

word *memoratur* does not really fit into the style of Caelius.<sup>156</sup> These two accounts are brief but nonetheless indicate that women suffered from the same conditions as men; their cases just were not as frequently recorded or published. The example of the seamstress also emphasises that even though women may not have been generally exposed to injuries and incidents as often as men, there were women's professions could contain the element of danger as well.

One disorder that Caelius recognises in women is epilepsy. He explains that the disorder is most common in children, especially infants, but it may easily be gotten rid of during puberty or, in the case of girls, at the beginning of menstruation or at the first childbirth. Caelius regards this as a result of bodily changes.<sup>157</sup> However, this again emphasises the connection of reproductive health and other conditions in the case of women. When Caelius addresses the treatment of infants with epilepsy, he points out that if the wet nurse suffers from the same condition, they should not be permitted to nurse the baby.<sup>158</sup> This indicates that there had been occasions of wet nurses with epilepsy; otherwise this would not have to be explicitly mentioned. This also shows that not all women were cured by menstruation or by childbirth, and adult women had epilepsy too.

Another indication that this condition was rather common in women is that Caelius differentiates epilepsy from a condition that Drabkin calls 'hysterical suffocation' in his translation, *a matrice praefocatae*.<sup>159</sup> This shows that there were multiple disorders with similar symptoms that affected women. Caelius does not elaborate on 'hysterical suffocation' but it can be assumed that it included seizures or episodic losses of consciousness that could be confused with epilepsy. The name implies that the main symptom of this disease was either shortness of breath or actual suffocation, but 'hysteria' implies that it was not a physical condition like anaphylaxis. In the original text, *matrix* points to a condition of women specifically, and Thus, 'hysteria' seems to be a rather unnecessary addition by Drabkin. Nevertheless, the original text refers to a condition primarily of women who have epilepsy-like attacks characterised by breathing problems and loss of senses.

Another condition that Caelius associates with women is paralysis. Even though Caelius explains that paralysis occurs most frequently in old men and very rarely in young people, not even

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<sup>156</sup> Gourevitch 2017, 288-289.

<sup>157</sup> Cael.Chron.1.70-71. *communiter autem haec passio frequens est in pueris, et magis tempore quo dentium nativitates habentur.--solet denique haec passio pubertatis tempore sive novae purgationis in feminis aut primi partus quadam naturali novitate facile detergeri corporis mutatione suffecta.*

<sup>158</sup> Cael.Chron.1.79. *ac si forte ipsam quoque hac passione vexari viderimus, erit ab officio removenda,--*

<sup>159</sup> Drabkin 1950, 485., Cael. Chron.1.71-72. *frequenter simile pati epilepticis et a matrice praefocatae mulieres inveniuntur, siquidem non aliter sensibus privantur,--*

mentioning women, he still gives an example of treatment of paralysed woman.<sup>160</sup> This female-specific treatment again shows that even though paralysis was not considered common among women, paralysed women were acknowledged and treated with specific methods. Here, Caelius advises that in the case of paralysis that affects the head, women's hair must be vigorously combed instead since women often oppose shaving their hair off. He also permits the patient herself to comb the hair. This one example shows that women and their circumstances were taken into account, but most importantly, that paralysed women did exist in Roman medical literature. This could also indicate that common conditions, such as pneumonia, affected both men and women alike, but the means of treatment are only specified in the text when they differ. If both sexes and all age-groups suffer from an illness and are treated with the same methods, it is unnecessary to emphasise women and children. However, if the treatment of women and children differs from men's, it is relevant for Caelius to note that women and children had the condition too. For example, as he describes epilepsy in girls and points out epileptic seizures become rarer after the first childbirth, he only mentions women because their symptoms differ from those of men.

These examples by Caelius indicate that women did fall ill just like men but the descriptions of their conditions were often left out; this is a hindrance to the discussion of female mental illness and disability in the Roman context. Chronically ill and disabled women existed but they are only accounted for when they can add something to the patient histories of men, and in these occasions they are presented as anomalies and curiosities. Women's symptoms are described only when they are observed specifically in women; otherwise disorders are depicted as concerning a male patient. A crude interpretation would assume this means that men are primarily treated, but a more likely interpretation is that in a medical text, a male patient is used as a literary device similar to *pueri* which refers to all children despite its originally masculine form. It is also worth mentioning that the translation by Drabkin, while helpful and thorough, did take some liberties that may not have entirely served the purpose of his work. Drabkin consistently adds 'male patient' and the pronoun 'he' even though they are not mentioned in the original text, undoubtedly to make his translation more legible. Drabkin's translation tends to emphasise gender in contexts in which Caelius does not find it relevant, therefore significantly altering the tone and lacking some aspects of the original Latin text.

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<sup>160</sup> Cael.Chron.2.1,36. *In senibus atque hiemis tempore frequentat haec passio, difficile autem in calidis aetatibus.--in mulieribus vero quae id fieri non facile permittunt, denso pectine exerceri capillos imperamus, supradicta scilicet diversitate et cum vehementi conatu, atque primo aliorum manu et raro pectine, tunc magis denso et aegrotantis manu.*

The direct descriptions of women's mental illness are limited to myths like Medea. This may indicate that women's mental disorders were either not noticed until they were so serious that they imposed a threat to family and children, or that women's mental disorders were a taboo and mythological figures like Medea are used symbolically. Gourevitch shares some light on two cases in which a man has killed his wife and he has been diagnosed with mental disorder. Assuming that Caelius has been aware of cases where women have committed as violent crimes as these, it is possible that he has wanted to describe extreme violence by women delicately by using an example of Medea.<sup>161</sup> It is also possible that the example of Medea is a notion on women's morality, as it is compared to mad love men possess towards mythical creatures. Caelius does not necessarily assume that women are capable of such horrific violence, but rather reminds that the most immoral thing a woman can theoretically do is harm her own children.

## 7. Unvirtuous women in legal texts

To ensure that the study of women's disability and illness should remain meaningful, one must take into consideration the virtues that surface in legislative texts; they often reflect the ideal woman of the Roman society. In Roman law, a woman is treated as a member of household and family and they were more or less subordinate to their male relatives' power and control. These legislative texts, *Digesta* and *Codex Theodosianus*, also bring forward the presentation of women as childlike and unwise, and thus, sometimes even not criminally responsible. However, when legal texts are analysed, it is to be noticed that no perspective or point in the law is universal in enforcement or interpretation, nor are Romans faithful to uniform execution. Furthermore, case-by-case evaluation indicates that some edicts are ostensible and individual women have relatively great amount of influence and authority.

According to legal texts, Roman woman is portrayed as ideal when she is a passive but educated member of the family. These texts tend to express virtue of women more accurately than philosophical writings because they are more universal, less theoretical and they rest on long tradition and consensus. However, they often depict popular ideas of the writing date and they usually depend on newer interpretations of older original scripts.<sup>162</sup> Legislation for women

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<sup>161</sup> Gourevitch 2017, 289.

<sup>162</sup> Grubbs 2002, 44.

concentrated on chastity; in the legal texts of the imperial period, *pudor*, *pudicitia*, and *verecundia* occur often in laws that were imposed in order to limit the public lives of women and protect them from dishonour.<sup>163</sup> Of these terms, *pudor* indicates modesty, *pudicitia* chastity and *verecundia* shame, even though these words have overlapping meanings.<sup>164</sup> Judith Grubbs estimates that during the late Antiquity, the obsession over women's chastity grew stronger and culminated in the laws prescribed by Justinian; these laws prevented women from bringing lawsuits to court in behalf of others, appealing the ideal of decency.<sup>165</sup> On the other hand, *pudicitia* included a noticeable amount of other meanings than legal chastity; *pudicitia* was a virtue available for both women and men, even though it was by nature always related to sexuality and chastity.<sup>166</sup>

## 7.1. Healthy women in the Roman legislation

One example of subordinate legal status of healthy women in Rome is the guardianship *tutela mulierum* according to which a woman who has lost her father needs a male guardian.<sup>167</sup> *Tutela mulierum* indicates that in Rome, woman was first and foremost a member of *familia*, and most often in legal texts women are referred to as daughters, wives and mothers of men.<sup>168</sup> Originally this custom is speculated to have protected the rights of woman's paternal relatives in the case of distribution of inheritance after the woman died.<sup>169</sup> In the late Republic and early Empire, this tradition had already loosened and expired, and *tutores* who had no legal authority did not actively intervene in women's affairs. Jurist Gaius explains the tradition for *tutela mulierum* imputing women's lightmindedness, but questions the need for a guardian later, since he assumes *tutor* could

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<sup>163</sup> Grubbs 2002, 48.

<sup>164</sup> Streng, s.v. 'verecundia' and 'pudicitia'. There is some overlap with the terms; Streng has translated *verecundia* to Finnish as modesty, shyness or tenderness, or even as deference. It could also refer to fear, detestation, shame or abashment. He has translated *pudicitia* as modesty, chastity or coyness, and *pudor* as shame, shyness, honourability, or even innocence. All of these have undertones that indicate shame and disgrace. *Pudicitia* refers rather pronouncedly to chastity.

<sup>165</sup> *D.3.1.1.5. – qui certis ex causis vel ambitione adversarii vel metu patronum non invenit. Secundo loco edictum proponitur in eos, qui pro aliis ne postulent: in quo edicto except praetor sexum et casum; dum feminas prohibet pro aliis postulare. Et ratio quidem prohibendi, ne contra pudicitiam sexui congruentem alienis causis se immisceant, ne virilibus officiis fungantur mulieres: origo vero introducta est a Carfania improbissima femina, quae inverecunde edicto.*

<sup>166</sup> Langlands 2006, 2.

<sup>167</sup> Grubbs 2002, 23-24. Vestal virgins exceptionally did not require a guardian.

<sup>168</sup> Grubbs 2002, 80.

<sup>169</sup> Grubbs 2002, 24.

mislead his protégé.<sup>170</sup> Even though *tutela mulierum* does not disappear from legal text until the 4<sup>th</sup> century CE, its importance lessened gradually; for example Emperor Augustus granted women who had three children an acquittal of guardianship.<sup>171</sup>

A girl was under the guardianship of her father until she married and moved to her husband's household. Marriage was one of the key elements of Roman society since having legal heirs required a legal marriage.<sup>172</sup> However, as the time passed, instead of shared household and having children, the most important criterion of legal marriage developed to be the legal consent of both parties.<sup>173</sup> Legal marriage also did not require other ceremonies than *deductio in domum*, carrying the woman to her husband's home.<sup>174</sup> The power of women in the financial matters of the *familia* depended on the two types of Roman marriage; *cum manu* or *sine manu*. In the first, woman moved from the guardianship of her father to the guardianship of her husband. In the beginning of the imperial times, these types of marriages were already rare and usually marriage was *sine manu*, in which women remained under the guardianship of their *pater familias*, even in the case of marriage. This had an impact on women's status and acquired power in their marriages; if marriage was *sine manu*, women could manage their own funds and property of their families, such as inheritance from their father.<sup>175</sup> However, in *sine manu* marriage, the woman belonged to her father's family and thus could not inherit her husband unless he left his wife a legacy on purpose. A mother could not inherit her children or a child their mother, since the inheritance transferred to *pater familias*.<sup>176</sup>

When the Augustan period is examined, of laws that had an impact on women the marriage legislation stands out as the most influential. This legislation consisted of three laws and he decreed them during a twenty-seven-year period between 18 BCE and 9 CE. This legislation was aimed at the upper classes and its purpose was to reduce adultery and unchastity and to increase marriages and birth-rate.<sup>177</sup> These objectives were accomplished by ordering every citizen to marry and widow to remarry, and by decreeing benefits for those who had children and financial penalties for the childless. For example, Cassius Dio describes Augustus setting up prizes for marriage and child-bearing, and implementing heavy penalties on women without husbands and unmarried men.<sup>178</sup>

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<sup>170</sup> Gaius. *Inst.* 1.144; 1.190.

<sup>171</sup> Grubbs 2002, 24.

<sup>172</sup> Grubbs 2002, 81.

<sup>173</sup> *D.50.17.30. Nuptias non concubitus, sed consensus facit.*

<sup>174</sup> Grubbs 2002, 82.

<sup>175</sup> Grubbs 2002, 101.

<sup>176</sup> Grubbs 2002, 219.

<sup>177</sup> McGinn, 1998, 147. *Adulterium* or *stuprum*; completely defined through the female party.

<sup>178</sup> Cassius Dio, *Historiae Romanae*. 54.16.1-2. ὁ δ' οὖν Αὐγουστος ἄλλα τε ἐνομοθέτησε, καὶ τοὺς δεκάσαντας τινὰς ἐπὶ ταῖς ἀρχαῖς ἐς πέντε ἔτη αὐτῶν εἴρξε, τοῖς τε ἀγάμοις καὶ ταῖς ἀνάδροις βαρύτερα τὰ ἐπιτίμια ἐπέταξε, καὶ ἔμπαλιν τοῦ τε γάμου καὶ τῆς παιδοποιίας ἄθλα ἔθηκεν. ἐπειδὴ τε πολὺ πλεῖον τὸ ἄρρεν τοῦ θήλεος τοῦ εὐγενοῦς ἦν,

However, this was a Roman custom *per se*, and not popular across the Empire; for example, evidence from *census* indicates that in the province of Egypt, over thirty-year-old widows never married again.<sup>179</sup>

The legislation introduced a new tradition of adultery treated as crime that was publicly addressed in standing court. Conviction led to relegation to an island and confiscation of property; for women this meant half of dowry and a third of their other property. Earlier, the adulterous parties, namely women, had been under judicial power of *pater familias* and this was the first time sexual offenses had been punished as public crimes. This indicates Augustus' intent to make procreation of Roman citizens a public action rather than a private affair. As adultery was essentially seen as a crime committed by women, this new legislation had primarily an impact on them.<sup>180</sup> In 438 CE, Codex Theodosianus partially repealed the Augustan marriage legislation with decrees that originated in early Christian emperors' edicts from early 4<sup>th</sup> century; This codex permitted both men and women to remain childless if they so choose.

*qui iure veteri caelibes habebantur, imminentibus legum terroribus liberentur adque ita vivant, ac si numero maritorum matrimonii foedere fulcirentur, sitque omnibus aequa condicio capessendi quod quisque mereatur. nec vero quisquam orbis habeatur: proposita huic nomini damna non noceant. Quam rem et circa feminas aestimamus earumque cervicibus imposita iuris imperia velut quaedam iuga solvimus promiscue omnibus. (Cod. Theod.8.16.1.)*

“Who by the old law were considered celibate, let them be freed from the terrors of the laws. And let them live as if they were supported by the treaty of marriage by the number of their husbands. And everyone has an equal right to lay hold of that agreement, because everyone is entitled to this. Nor should anyone be considered childless. Damages will not harm the purposes of this name. How do we think about women and the laws that were imposed on their necks? We solve certain cases indiscriminately for all.”

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ἐπέτρεψε καὶ ἐξελευθέρας τοῖς ἐθέλουσι, πλὴν τῶν βουλευόντων, ἄγεσθαι, ἔννομον τὴν τεκνοποιίαν αὐτῶν εἶναι κελεύσας.

<sup>179</sup> Grubbs 2002, 219-220.

<sup>180</sup> Grubbs 2002, 84-85. Note: adultery meant a relationship of a married woman to an unmarried man *per se*, or a relationship of a married man to an unmarried woman of respectable position. For this reason, during the Republican times *pater familias* had the authority to condemn the adulterous woman discreetly, thus keeping the matter in the family. Husbands were required to initiate divorce if their wives had sexual relations outside of marriage; otherwise they could be accused of pandering.

Even though the importance of childbearing diminished as the centuries passed, other restrictions did take place that affected women's relationships, bodily autonomy and sexuality. Marriage became more restricted and new laws were decreed that defined the acknowledged parties in marriage more specifically than before; for example, in 365 and 366 CE, Emperors Valentinian and Valens state on more than one occasion that a freeborn woman, upon marrying a slave, becomes a slave herself and her children shall be slaves in the future.<sup>181</sup> Valentinian I prohibited marriages between provincials and barbarians, and Theodosius I banned marriage between Christians and Jews.<sup>182</sup> This all indicates a trend of redefining Roman marriage even more profoundly as an institution that separated religious and ethnic groups from each other, and lower social classes from upper-class Roman citizens.

Thus, it is possible to conclude that the interpretation of legal degrees that affected women was on occasion and not universal; in the beginning of imperial times women could travel, take care of *domus*, govern their own funds, and possess property relatively freely. By the late Western Empire, marriage had developed into an ideal that reinforced one life-time marriage of two spouses from similar sociocultural backgrounds, even though from the legal point, having children was removed from the core of Roman marriage. Marriage defined women more firmly than before, as women inherited their husband's sociocultural status; even citizenship could be lost. The marriage itself, however, was defined strictly by the parties that were concerned; Christian, Jewish and Roman marriages were separated from each other, provincial marriages were separated from barbaric ones. Edict that assigned women to lose their social status in case of marrying a man from lower social class indicates the need to control the marriages and sexual relations of upper-class women. Therefore, the identities of healthy women in the late Western Empire were mutable and dependent on their bodily autonomy.

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<sup>181</sup> Grubbs 2002, 177. *Cod Theod.* 4.12,6. *Consultatio Vet. Cuius D. Iurisc.* IX.7.

<sup>182</sup> Grubbs 2002, 184.

## 7.2. Women's mental illness and disability in legal texts

As women's role in Roman legislation is examined, it is rather easy to notice a repetitive narrative pattern in which women are contrasted with children.<sup>183</sup> They are seen as unable to take care of their own legal matters; this associates women with those 'unable to speak' or who are not in right mind.<sup>184</sup> Therefore, the attitudes towards women in Roman society are reflected strongly as stereotypes of women's abilities and behaviour in legislation and other legal documents.<sup>185</sup> Roman jurists widely believed that women and fatherless underage children, *pupilli*, need an assistant in legal matters just like they need *tutela*, and their ignorance of law is forgivable because women, like children, are careless with such grave matters.<sup>186</sup> Some scholars like Paulus, however, are uncertain of the necessity of juridical assistance for women; he describes that in some cases, women have been permitted by the law to be uninformed like minors but he does not support this custom.<sup>187</sup> Nevertheless, the dominant tone in descriptions of women's role in court seems to have been undervaluing; Ulpianus, among others, compares women to weak people or those who are not in full understanding, indicating that womanhood is a type of disability in itself, comparable to other debilitating conditions and to be differentiated from men.<sup>188</sup> This creates a picture of women as virtuous in the context of law when they are passive, but paradoxically from modern standpoint gives legists space to underestimate women's talents and limit their eligibility in court by relying on stereotyping.

In legal texts, women are often described as light-minded and this was used as defence for *tutela* or juridical assistance.<sup>189</sup> *Animi levitas* is not particularly negative, and rather implies ignorance and certain type of absent-mindedness compared to other harsher expressions. *Animi levitas* does not indicate that a woman is suffering from a condition that makes her unable to take care of her own

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<sup>183</sup> D.2.13.1.5. *Eis, qui ob aetatem vel rusticitatem vel ob sexum lapsi non ediderunt vel ex alia iusta causa, subvenietur.*

<sup>184</sup> D.2.8.8.2-3. *--in rem suam fideiussuram mulierem. Si servus inveniatur, qui antequam iudicium accipiatur fideiussit iudicatum solvi: succurrendum est actori, ut ex integro caveatur. minori quoque viginti quinque annis succurrendum est, fortasse et mulieri propter imperitiam.--*

<sup>185</sup> Grubbs 2002, 46.

<sup>186</sup> Grubbs 2002, 47. Some researchers have assumed such references in classical jurists to be Justinianic interpolations, but Grubbs thinks this is unlikely. She points out that late Roman law may even have been less inclined to grant women the benefit of ignorance of the law.

<sup>187</sup> D. 22.6.9. *Regula est iuris quidem ignorantiam cuique nocere, facti vero ignorantiam non nocere. videamus igitur, in quibus speciebus locum habere possit, ante praemisso quod minoribus viginti quinque annis ius ignorare permrsum est. quod et in feminis in quibusdam causis propter sexum infirmitatem dicitur: et ideo sicubi non est delictum, sed iuris ignorantia, non laeduntur. hac ratione si miuor viginti quinque annis filio familias crediderit, subvenietur ei, ut non videatur filio familias credidisse.*

<sup>188</sup> D. 1.16.9.5. *Advocatos quoque petentibus debet indulgere plerumque: feminis vel pupillis vel alias debilibus vel his, qui suae mentis non sunt, si quis eis petat: vel si nemo sit qui petat, ultro eis dare debet.* Note that *debilis* can be translated as depiction of disability. *Qui suae mentis non sunt* refers more directly to mental illness.

<sup>189</sup> Gaius, *Inst.* 1.144. *animi levitas*

affairs; instead, it shows that compared to men, women are by nature different and uninterested in law and other masculine, public affairs. It is also worth remarking that as Paulus (130-180CE)<sup>190</sup> discusses who could be appointed as judges he makes a clear distinction between the disabled, the ill, the minor, the slaves and the women. He states that the deaf-mute and the mentally ill could not serve as judges because of their lack of judgement, comparing them to minors. However, he notes that women and slaves are deprived of this office by custom and not by nature, because it had been agreed that they do not perform civic duties.<sup>191</sup> Therefore, , even though women are differentiated from men by *animi levitas*, their inability to fill a role in public offices is more due to tradition than actual *furor* or *feminarum vitia*, womanly weakness or vice. However, the notion of the deaf-mute implies a heavy association with inability to speak and lack of judgement. Here, disability and illness are compared to each other and they are seen as conditions similar to youth and inexperience.

*Sine manu* and *cum manu* marriages demonstrate how in theory women's possessions, funds and property had to be under the name of their closest male relative, even though in practice many wealthier women had financial obligations in their communities.<sup>192</sup> Thus, this wealth-based female authority was always founded on a prestigious family inheritance, and so women's public role and civic action was confined to serve the benefits of their families.<sup>193</sup> In a way, the stereotype of not criminally responsible, absent-minded woman does not exist in reality but rather in the literary narrative in which women are traditionally portrayed as incapable. In real life, women often had responsibilities and obligations similar to men. Ulpianus, on the other hand, points out how women's bodies prevent them from performing physical duties, *munera*.<sup>194</sup> The avoidance of physical labour has most likely been possible only for women of upper classes but nevertheless, this reflects Galen's ideas of women's soft bodies that must be treated with gentleness. It can be deduced that general stereotypes regarding women in Roman society were associated with physical and mental weakness and incapability, childlike ignorance that could be excused, and inability to understand complex concepts. Women are compared and contrasted with minors and those who are unwell. On the other hand, this does not include naivety because the protection of women's chastity is always of high priority.

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<sup>190</sup> A Roman jurist, whose writings became popular in the late Roman Empire; very little is known of his life.

<sup>191</sup> *D.5.1.12.2.--Non autem omnes iudices dari possunt ab his qui iudicis dandi ius habent: quidam enim lege impediuntur ne iudices sint, quidam natura, quidam moribus. natura, ut surdus mutus: et perpetuo furiosus et impubes, quia iudiciocarent. lege impeditur, qui seiatu motus est. moribus feminae et servi, nou quia non habent iudicium, sed quia receptum est, ut civilibus officiis non fungantur.*

<sup>192</sup> Grubbs 2002, 75-76.

<sup>193</sup> Grubbs 2002, 71.

<sup>194</sup> *D.50.4.3.3. Corporalia munera feminis ipse sexus denegat.*

Even though marriage, like *tutela mulierum*, have limited women's autonomy and agency in drastic ways, the law determined qualifications for those to be married and these included mental health in various ways. Firstly, insanity, again referred to as *furor*, could prevent a valid betrothal, but *furor* did not annul marriage or *sponsalia* concluded while sane.<sup>195</sup> It is relevant to observe that the original text refers to *furor* itself and not the person with the illness; this is explained in such manner that consent to marriage is necessary and *furor* prohibits consent.<sup>196</sup> Thus, *furor* prevents rightful marriage.

It is also discussed in *Digesta* whether a person with *furor* can repudiate an existing marriage. According to Julianus, a marriage with a mentally ill person could be rejected, *furiosam repudiari posse*, because *furiosus* is considered similar to *ignorantus*, a person too ignorant for marriage. Even though *furor* did not annul marriage directly, it could still have an impact as a factor in divorce.<sup>197</sup>

*et [Iulianus] scribit furiosam repudiari posse, quia ignorantis loco habetur: repudiare autem non posse neque ipsam propter dementiae neque curatorem eius, patrem tamen eius nuntium mittere posse. quod non tractaret de repudio, nisi constaret retineri matrimonium. (D.24.2.4.)*

“And Iulianus writes that an insane woman can be divorced, because she is ignorant: and she cannot repudiate the marriage by referring to her insanity or on the account of her curator, but she can send a messenger to her father. Because the divorce is not discussed, unless the marriage is agreed to be held back.”

Here, *repudio* can be interpreted as a divorce, as *repudiare* can be translated as repudiate or reject. *Furiosa* refers to a woman; according to this passage, she cannot repudiate her marriage on account of *dementia* or her *curator*, guardian, but she can send a messenger to her father. This is because her husband will not discuss the divorce, unless it has been agreed that the marriage is to be postponed or detained. *Tractaret* refers to husband discussing or debating the marriage and its conditions with his wife's father, and thus according to this, the marriage could be annulled if husband and father agreed on it but a woman could not request a divorce on her own. This passage also states that

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<sup>195</sup> D.23.1.8. *Furor quin sponsalibus impedimento sit, plus quam manifestum est: sed postea interveniens sponsalia non infirmat.*

<sup>196</sup> D.23.2.16.1-2. *--neptis vero si nubat, voluntas et auctoritas avi sufficient. Furor contrahi matrimonium non sinit, quia consensus opus est, sed recte contractum non impedit.*

<sup>197</sup> D.24.2.4. *Iulianus libro octavo decimo digestorum quaerit, an furiosa repudium mittere vel repudiari possit. et scribit furiosam repudiari posse, quia ignorantis loco habetur: repudiare autem non posse neque ipsam propter dementiae neque curatorem eius, patrem tamen eius nuntium mittere posse. quod non tractaret de repudio, nisi constaret retineri matrimonium: quae sententia mihi videtur vera.*

*dementia* is not a legitimate reason for a repudiation of marriage. However, this does not specify whether men could invoke their wives' *furor* or *dementia* in divorce cases, or if women could account their husbands' *insania* for a divorce. Most likely, a man could divorce his wife or repudiate the marriage if he agreed with the woman's father that the woman was unsuitable for marriage.

The approach to mental illness in marriage is further explored in a passage from the following chapter of the same book in *Digesta*. This passage discusses different cases of mental illness in an existing marriage and acceptable reasons for divorce.

*si maritus vel uxor constante matrimonio furere coeperint, quid faciendum sit, tractamus. et illud quidem dubio procul observatur eam personam, quae furore detenta est, quia sensum non habet, nuntium mittere non posse. an autem illa repudianda est, considerandum est. et si quidem intervallum furor habeat vel perpetuus quidem morbus est, tamen ferendus his qui circa eam sunt, tunc nullo modo oportet dirimi matrimonium, sciente ea persona, quae, cum compos mentis esset ita furenti quemadmodum diximus nuntium miserit, culpa sua nuptias esse diremptas: quid enim tam humanum est, quam ut fortuitis casibus muneris maritum vel uxorem viri participem esse? (D. 24.3.22.7.)*

"If the husband or wife has begun to become mad at the constant marriage, I will discuss what needs to be done. It is without doubt to be observed that the female person, who is detained by *furor* because [her husband] has no sense, cannot send a message [to her father]. But it must be considered whether she can be divorced. And if indeed the person has *furor* in intervals or it is a permanent ailment, still endured by those who are around her, then in no way should the marriage be broken off. This person who knew [him] when he was in his right mind, in such a furious manner sent the messenger, as we told, that it is her fault that the marriage has been broken off. Because what is so humane, as for a husband or a wife to participate in duties of by chance cases?"

This passage shows that on the other hand, *furor* is recognised as violent or confining behaviour in law; in the example, the wife is unable to send a messenger to her father, indicating that legally, mental illnesses were associated with domestic violence. However, it is stated in the passage that because of humane reasons spouses should remain married even in an unexpected situation. Thus,

regardless of sex it was expected that marriage was not to be repudiated if one's partner fell ill. It is also described how if the symptoms of mental illness appear in intervals and are tolerated by immediate family, then marriage should not be broken off. The passage also demonstrates that one should not break off a marriage in a furious manner or hastily because in that case, mental illness is no longer considered reason for the divorce. In another passage, it is further specified how *furor* acts as a legitimate reason for divorce in extremely violent or otherwise serious cases:

*sin autem tantus furor est, itaferox, ita perniciosus, ut sanitatis nulla spes supersit, circa ministros terribilis, et forsitan altera persona vel propter saevitiam furoris vel, quia liberos non habet, procreandae subolis cupidine tenta est: licentia erit compoti mentis personae furenti nuntium mittere, ut nulhus culpa videatur esse matrimonium dissolutum-- (D.24.3.22.7.)*

” But if the insanity is so great and so fierce that there remains no hope for health, terrible around the ministers and perhaps the other person, or on the account of cruelty of the madness, or because she has no children and she is tempted by procreating offspring. It will be the freedom of the person of sound mind to send a messenger to the raving person, so that there is no fault in dismantling the marriage--”

Here, the valid reasons for divorce are discussed. The legal text suggests that divorce is approved of if *furor* cannot be cured and the symptoms cannot be relieved. *Sanitatis* can be translated as health, and like the previous passage indicates, mental illnesses were seen as recurring conditions that came and went; milder symptoms were interpreted as a recovery. However, when there was no hope for recovery, and the symptoms were severe in the presence of other people, divorce was an acceptable solution. This passage shows that violence and cruelty are also factors in a divorce; *furor*, here presumably suffered by a man, justifies a divorce in case of cruelty. It is also mentioned that in a situation where the wife wants children but the husband is either unable or unwilling to have children, it is lawful for the wife to divorce the man. In these scenarios it is the custom that the person of sound mind sends a message to the other one, stating their intent of repudiation.

Already during the early imperial time, divorce was largely accepted part of Roman life, and before 4<sup>th</sup> century CE, there were very few restrictions to it.<sup>198</sup> According to Gaius, valid reasons for a

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<sup>198</sup> Grubbs 2002, 187.

divorce are separation of the minds and the married couple wandering to different direction. Therefore it is possible to assume that divorced women were not treated any different from divorced men. The official formulas for the divorce agreement do not include any references to the spouses' sexes either.<sup>199</sup>

*Divortium autem vel a diversitate mentium dictum est vel quia in diversas partes eunt, qui distrahunt matrimonium. In repudiis autem, id est renuntiatione comprobata sunt haec verba: 'tuas res tibi habeto', item haec: 'tuas res tibi agito'. (D.24.2.2.)*

“Divorce, however, has been said to be caused by the separation of the minds, or those who distract the marriage by wandering into different paths. But in divorce, that is, by reputation these words are allowed: ‘take your matters to yourself’ and respectively these: ‘treat yourself with your property’.”

Roman ideal of harmonic and life-long marriage is very strong which can be observed in the epitaph *Laudatio Turiae*, praise from a man to his wife. In this inscription, the man explains he rather stayed with his childless wife than divorced her.<sup>200</sup> This indicates that infertility, one of the most universally recognised disabilities of a Roman woman, was considered a legitimate reason for a divorce but in reality marriages and divorces took place for personal reasons as well as according to tradition.

Percy Ellwood Corbett speculates that the abnormality of the sufferer and ‘his resulting unfitness for matrimonial relations would constitute sufficient reason for the rule’.<sup>201</sup> However, he fails to recognise that not all mental illnesses, since *furor* can refer to most of them, present with severe symptoms, and these conditions are very much mentioned in *Digesta*. Only permanent, incurable, and violent cases of *furor* were considered eligible reasons for divorce, but mental illness or disability did not prevent marriage or having children in many cases. Corbett does not define ‘abnormal’ any further, and he seems to assume that *furor* is a condition that was only legally recognised in men, although both men and women could suffer from the condition and legal texts about *furor* and divorce concerned both spouses, not only husbands or wives.

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<sup>199</sup> D.24.2.2. -- *Divortium autem vel a diversitate mentium dictum est vel quia in diversas partes eunt, qui distrahunt matrimonium. In repudiis autem, id est renuntiatione comprobata sunt haec verba: 'tuas res tibi habeto', item haec: 'tuas res tibi agito'. In sponsalibus quoque discutiendis placuit renuntiationem intervenire oportere: in qua re haec verba probata sunt: 'condicione tua non utor'. Sive autem ipsi praesenti renuntietur sive absentem per eum, qui in potestate eius sit cuiusve is eave in potestate sit, nihil interest.*

<sup>200</sup> Grubbs 2002, 188-189; *Laudatio Turiae* II.31-47.

<sup>201</sup> Corbett 1979, 7.

Even though the law did not limit the right to marry for childless widows, the custom of remarriage slowly faded out for social and religious reasons.<sup>202</sup> Some legal texts even show great hostility to remarriage by a woman with children from former marriage and from 4<sup>th</sup> century onwards, mothers could face financial punishment because of remarriage. Laws prohibiting remarriage also reflect traditional Roman fear that remarried mothers would favour their spouses over their children from the first marriage.<sup>203</sup> This shows that similar stereotypes of indecent women that can be found in historical narratives of the first century CE, continue to exist in the 4<sup>th</sup> century legal edicts. The stereotyping in legal texts indicates that these negative ideas of unvirtuous women changed remarkably slowly, and even legal texts take advantage of the distinctly Roman fear of the unvirtuous woman.

In conclusion, from the Roman legal point of view women had similar *munera* to men, which demonstrates that women had legal responsibility which the children, the elderly, the ill or the disabled did not have. On the other hand, women were associated with these groups in judicial proceedings and other instances, such as when they spoke in public, defended themselves or their family member in court, or acquired influence outside the *domus*. For example, wealthy women were expected to invest in their communities in similar ways to men, but women could be exempt from legal consequences or not be allowed to speak for themselves. Thus, healthy women are to some extent associated with ill or disabled men in Roman legal texts.

In passages concerning mental illness and marriage, both spouses are addressed as the divorcing party and as the *persona furiosa*. This shows that the Roman law recognised women as suffering from *furor* with such severity that marriage could be repudiated. On the other hand, divorce was not permitted if the conditions were not incurable or violent. It could be assumed that this was applied more often in cases of violent husbands than violent wives since for example, historiography addresses some cruel women of the imperial family only emphasising the moral failures of these women. A marriage could be broken off by the initiative of either spouse and with the approval of the bride's father. It is rather unclear whether the husband could contact his wife's father in the case of wife's illness but most likely some scenarios are not specified because they were unknown to Romans. All in all, women could cause the repudiation by being the unhealthy party unfitting for marriage but legal texts mainly discuss cases in which men are either *furiosi* or violent.

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<sup>202</sup> Grubbs 2002, 232.

<sup>203</sup> Grubbs 2002, 228-229.

## 8. Conclusions

Women's mental disorders and disabilities are rarely discussed topics in Graeco-Roman context due to the lack of source material and relatively new interest in topics such as marginalised groups in Ancient societies. Roman medicine based its interpretations of women on Greek medical tradition that had roots in even earlier societies such as Egypt. Thus, Roman medicine represents the long tradition of doctor-authors, medication, principles, and theories that had originated centuries earlier. Roman medical texts discuss women separately from men, usually as curiosities or anomalies. The prevalent medical theory of women in Graeco-Roman world consisted of ideas of four humors, wandering uterus, and fundamental female inferiority. According to Roman medical texts, women's bodies were physically softer, weaker, more fluid, and colder than men's bodies; in addition to this, uterus was usually considered a major factor in women's illnesses.

Mental illnesses and disabilities in male patients are relatively well documented and discussed in Roman literature. Medical writers such as Caelius describe different mental illnesses and disabilities in great detail and in relatively objective tone. However, women are seldom mentioned or described in these accounts and most often, notions of women are abridged to short comments. In the text of Caelius, women are presented as exceptions to the predominantly masculine conditions; women are only mentioned if their symptoms or treatment significantly differ from that of men's. This leads to a conclusion that women are for the most part treated similarly to men, and the differing methods of treatment are only mentioned where relevant; Caelius only specifies his cases when it is necessary. For example, treatment methods like dim rooms, music, and self-harm prevention are not specified as relevant only in the cases of men. However, there is evidence of adjusting medications specifically for women. Removal of excess blood was also considered a valid method of treatment, as Caelius considers lack of menstruation one possible cause for *mania*.

In legal texts, women are simultaneously described as incompetent and childlike but capable of taking part in funding of the community and other duties. Women needed *tutela* which shows that they were not considered as mentally capable as men, even though they, for example, were educated from young age like men, and could own property. Legally, healthy and able-bodied women often existed in a grey area, as in some cases they were treated similarly to men, and in some cases separated from them. Especially in situations that required public speaking, women were considered too unsophisticated or too emotional, and their skills were often underestimated.

Legal texts, philosophy and medical accounts that describe women are influenced by the tradition of Graeco-Roman medicine, the Roman concept of fundamentally masculine and stoic *virtus*, and

Roman laws originated in archaic customs and were shaped by changes in the Roman constitution. The various examples of the Roman prose show that healthy women were considered fundamentally different from men but it is difficult to estimate how the Roman narrative distinguished ill or disabled women from healthy women. The existence of ill and disabled women was acknowledged in the Roman prose; this acknowledgement, however, seems to lack depth. The primary sources do not usually concentrate on women; it seems that there are such universal conventions that some specifications on women have been emitted as irrelevant. In philosophy, it is recognised that women, like men, are theoretically capable of *virtus*, but achieving *virtus* requires them to abandon femininity and the female sex. Stoicism is associated strongly with masculinity and emotional outbursts are considered feminine; thus, emotionally unstable men are usually compared to healthy women, as women are seen as less emotionally mature than men.

Since childlessness is considered one of the most common disabilities of women in Ancient Rome, women's disability could traditionally be one of the legitimate reasons for a divorce. However, in the case of mental illness, it is much more unclear. Some accounts instruct women to stay in marriages even though their spouse is violently mad. Even though female aggression is recognised and condemned in various writings, it was not on its own legally recognised as a valid reason for a divorce. Texts that describe female *furor* in great detail, such as accounts of women of the imperial court, tend to relish in scandalous stories rather than depict these women with pedantic historical accuracy. These accounts focus on moralising the women's actions and shocking the reader by extremely brutal portrayals of violence and even murder. These descriptions, however, are not definitive or trustworthy and should not be assessed as reliable depictions of women's mental illness.

In conclusion, if healthy men are capable of *virtus* by the Roman definition, then women who are capable of achieving *virtus* are healthy as well. On the other hand, women are not capable of *virtus* by default; they have to earn it in exceptional circumstances and essentially abandon their sex in the process. Legally, women exist in the grey area, and it seems to be generally accepted by Roman authors that healthy women are to be separate from men and comparable to the elderly, sick, or disabled men. The discussion of necessity of *tutela* and some other legislative issues that restricted women show that women were believed to be capable of public speaking to some extent; they were not innately *furiosi* but not innately capable of *virtus* either. In the Roman society, women existed outside of the public masculine ideals such as virtuosity, health, and valour. Health was fundamentally masculine but posing the question whether women could be healthy, and ultimately, could women be sick, leads to the answer that women's illness and disability were recognised but

women could not be virtuously healthy. Roman philosophy does not recognise mentally ill or disabled women even though they are described in medical texts and in jurisdiction. The historical accounts of insane women usually serve as moral teachings or examples of extreme behaviour, like virtuous women do in philosophy. It can be concluded that this dichotomy reflects the idealistic expectations and scepticism of women's autonomy and capability.

This research could be extended with various approaches within the context of Roman health and illness. Osteology, anthropology, and classical archaeology can provide the researchers with more information on female disability and illness in Graeco-Roman world. This medical approach could base the research on the existing findings that describe iron and vitamin D deficiencies in Pompeian women, and continue to study reasons for amenorrhea and other disabilities of the Ancient world. This medical approach, however, could provide us with very little information on the actual female experience. One approach to more intimate experiences of mentally ill patients in Ancient Rome is space-syntax analysis. It could be enlightening to investigate the realities of treating mentally ill patients in the Roman *domus* by a very tangible method. Caelius provided the reader with specific advice for the space the patient should live in; it could be fascinating to try and determine these spaces in Roman homes.

Another approach could be expanding the research literature and exploring mental illness and disability as sociocultural phenomena in the Graeco-Roman context. This research could focus on the understandings and meanings of the Roman womanhood in the diaspora of different cultural influences in the imperial Roman provinces. This approach could further examine the differences in the status of citizens and non-citizens, as well as different social classes. Finally, third approach would include wider range of primary sources, as poetry, drama and other genres of literature would be included in the research. This would definitely increase the understanding of Roman attitudes towards mentally ill or disabled women but it would not necessarily benefit the study of female experience. On the other hand, reconstructing the Roman male experience of women's mental illness could prove to be useful.

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## Appendix

### Summary of the Latin terminology discussed in this thesis

*alienatio mentis* = literally ‘alienation of mind’. It refers to insanity or mental illness.

*catalepsis* = catalepsy, sudden attack of illness. One of the mental illnesses recognised in Roman medical texts.

*debilis* = disabled, crippled, frail. It refers to physical disability or weakness.

*deliratio* = madness, silliness. It mainly refers to a state in which an individual is unusually happy or giddy.

*dementia* = insanity, madness. From *demens*, ‘insane’ or ‘out of one’s mind’. To some extent synonymous with *furor* and *insania*.

*furor, furiosus* = rage, fury, passion, madness. They refer to particularly violent or otherwise intense mental illness or emotion.

*hydrophobia* = literally ‘dread of water’, viral encephalitis commonly known as rabies.

*impudicitia* = shamelessness, immodesty, impurity; opposite of feminine virtue ‘pudicitia’.

*impotentia* = helplessness, weakness. Literally ‘inability’ or ‘powerlessness’.

*insania* = unsoundness of mind, madness, frenzy or folly. To some extent synonymous with *dementia* and *furor*.

*lethargia* = Literally ‘lethargy’, drowsiness. It refers to an unresponsive state of an individual.

*levitas, animi levitas* = ‘lightness of mind’, light-mindedness. It refers to a person who is incapable of taking grave matters seriously; associated with children and women.

*mania* = madness characterised by exuberance.

*matrona* = married woman, the mother of the Roman *familia* and the head of the *domus*.

*melancholia* = literally 'melancholy' or 'dejection'. It can be understood as quite close to modern depression; mental illness characterised by inability to feel positive emotions.

*mollitia* = softness, pliability. In this context, it refers to women's bodies that were considered softer than men's in Roman medical writings.

*muliebre vitium, feminarum vitia* = literally 'feminine vice'. It refers to an assumption that women naturally make vicious or immoral choices and Roman writers use it to justify some laws that apply to women.

*noverca* = stepmother. In the Roman narrative, usually described as a sinister or nefarious character.

*phrenitis* = madness, especially caused by inflammation of the brain. Insanity characterised by an acute fever.

*pietas* = literally 'piety'. Dutifulness, sense of religious duty, devotion.

*pudicitia* = modesty, decency, propriety, or shame; one of the virtues of the Roman woman.

*saevitia* = literally 'harshness', 'cruelty' or 'savageness'. It has been used to describe both men and women and their extremely violent behaviour.

*superbia* = pride, arrogance. It has negative connotations and often refers to people who are unnecessarily prideful or whose arrogance is unorthodox.

*tutela* = Roman guardianship for women, underage minors, and others who were considered unable to take care of their own legal matters.

*verecundia* = shyness, shame, modesty. It has been used synonymously with *pudicitia*.

*virtus* = literally 'vigour', 'courage' or 'excellence'. It is one of the greatest of the Roman virtues.

*voluptas* = pleasure, satisfaction, delight.