The Mouth of Truth and the Forum Boarium: Oceanus, Hercules, and Hadrian

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The most famous scene in the film Roman Holiday (1953), starring Gregory Peck and Audrey Hepburn, takes place in the narthex of S. Maria in Cosmedin. Peck guides Hepburn there to visit the Bocca della Verità (Mouth of Truth) and, gesturing to the grimacing mask, explains that “the legend is that if you give it the lie, and put your hand in [its mouth], it will be bitten off.” The underlying significance of the scene is that neither character is what they seem: Peck portrays a conniving journalist pretending to be a regular Joe to get an exclusive on the young woman, who is a runaway princess incognito. This scene sums up at least five centuries of tradition in a minute and a half: what is first recorded as a chastity or fidelity test in 1450 had become a general lie detector by 1800, and droves of expectant tourists still line up to try their hands at it (Fig. 1).

Over the years the celebrity visitors have included even Sigmund Freud, who made the Bocca the touchstone of his oath to revisit the eternal city: “I not only bribed the Trevi, as everyone does, I also—and I invented this myself—dipped my hand into the Bocca della Verità at Santa Maria Cosmedin and vowed to return.” All modern tourists, Freud included, are heirs to an animitic myth that regarded this massive relic of antiquity as a terrible demon who cautioned against perjury on pain of amputation. Such perceptions had become the most famous scene in the film. Yet no candidate has won consensus, and all attempts to reconcile any of these identities with the legend of the lie detector have proven equally fruitless. In the final estimation, despite its worldwide fame, we know next to nothing about the “Mouth of Truth.”

The Bocca della Verità as Oceanus: The Origins of a Deity and the Genealogy of an Image

Oceanos I call, whose nature ever flows, from whom at first both Gods and men arose; Sire incorruptible, whose waves surround, and earth’s alternating circle bound: Hence every river, hence the spreading sea, and earth’s pure bubbling fountains spring from thee. Hear, mighty sire, for boundless bliss is thine, greatest cathartic of the powers divine: Earth’s friendly limit, fountain of the pole, whose waves wide spreading and circumfluent roll.—Orphic Hymn 82, To Oceanus (second-third century CE) 5

Archaeological literature proves to have a short memory when it comes to the Bocca’s true identity. When Giovanni Battista Giovenale finally published his meticulous monograph on S. Maria in Cosmedin in 1927, he casually identified the relief as the god Oceanus in a couple of brief lines, but, besides Cesare D’Onofrio (1990) and passing mention in the odd footnote, his lead has been unaccountably ignored. 6 Probably the most recent reference to the relief treats the path of caution by calling it “a fountainhead, with the head of a river god in low relief.” 7 However, none of these claims is strictly accurate.

For a start, while the Bocca was certainly carved in low relief, its surface is so leveled by wear that a face once immediately familiar has been blurred (Fig. 2). As Giovenale realized and as only close inspection will now reveal, the head sports the pincer horns of a crab, which are the definitive attributes of Oceanus and no other male divinity. 8 These pincers reappear in countless effigies of the god on reliefs, mosaics, gems, paintings, and, occasionally, in freestanding sculpture (Figs. 3, 4). Although the pincer horns are enough by themselves to distinguish the Bocca as Oceanus, there are other details—again, much too eroded to be noticeable without foreknowledge—that clinch the identification.

Thus, in a first- or second-century CE bronze boss not only does the god vaunt the distinctive pincers but also four smiling dolphins cavort in his flowing mane and at his temples and cheeks (Fig. 11). 9 The very same features can be seen in a whole range of portraits of the god, whether fully in the round or linear and abstracted. So do other portraits of aquatic deities that we might just as confidently call Oceanus did they not lack the telltale horns. 10 From all the examples it becomes clear that two bulblike protuberances in the beard of the badly worn Bocca are actually the heads of surfacing dolphins (Fig. 2), while a chance combination of deeply carved strands that promises to be a fish (upper left, at eleven o’clock) is instead just a red herring. The wide face, flattened nose, and splayed nostrils are again distinctive of Oceanus, but further observation reveals that the Bocca’s cheeks have scalloped edges and that zigzags crossed his brow, recalling the conglomerations of scales, gills, fins, and marine foliage (Nitophyllum gmelini) of sea hybrids commonly seen in Roman mosaic and relief, rather like a painting by Giuseppe Arcimboldo (Fig. 4). 11

So much for the iconography, but who is Oceanus? For the Greeks and the Romans he personified both a geographic entity and a life-giving force. According to Greek mythology and cartography, Oceanos encircled the inhabited earth (the oikoumene) not as the vast expanse between continents that we
now imagine but like a moat, an endless "backflowing" stream with no point of source except itself. The discovery of a spherical earth and the evidence of seafarers who ventured beyond the Strait of Gibraltar did nothing to dent this outlandish belief. Only the proportions changed. The Ocean river became a world sea, and the *oikoumene* shrank to a vast island engulfed by an even vaster Oceanus (Figs. 5, 6). "The inhabited world is washed on all sides by Oceanus, and that’s a fact," the geographer Strabo said (ca. 7–23 CE), and this remained the Roman understanding. Emperor Augustus even launched a mission in search of a "northeast passage" to the Caspian Sea via the Baltic, and when crews "turned back without having achieved their purpose," they did so not because "any continent stood in their way and hindered their further advance, inasmuch as the sea still continued open as before, but because of their destitution and loneliness." As late as the sixth century, cosmologists like Cosmas Indicopleustes championed the circumambient Oceanus.

Ancient cosmogonies went still further than ancient geography, regarding Oceanus as not only the ends of the earth but also the beginning of all things, a great primordial force. More than just the father of rivers, springs, wells, rainwater (and spray), he was the aboriginal watery mass from which the Greek world was born: Homer had written that Ôkeanos was the "genesis of all the Gods" and "genesis of all," and although the meaning of the words are now disputed, by already the fifth century the primeval role of Ôkeanos was accepted on his testimony. Virgil will, in fact, call Oceanus "the Father of Things."

The earliest incarnation of Ôkeanos may have been less global than heavenly, as a "celestial river," the Milky Way, which loops the globe overhead and is "backflowing" because its passage across the heavens appears sluggishly retrograde. And the subsequent concept of a peripteral and primordial Ocean was an import into Greek thought, as it is certain that even the name Ôkeanos has non-Indo-European roots. Although historians of comparative religion have found the idea of an engendering water that circles the earth to be virtually a global belief, the Greek conceptualization is often specifically traced to the Babylonian creation hymn, the *Enûma Eliš* (second millennium BCE), which describes both the pool of Apsû (the "Abyss") on which the earth precariously floats and the snake stream Tiamat that encircles it. This circumferential sea, the edge of the Deep, so to speak, apparently figures on both a late Babylonian map (ca. 700–500 BCE) and, as an encircling sea serpent, on Phoenician
boweds that traveled west along with the alphabet. Textiles were almost certainly another conduit, as much pictograms as patterns, for they continued to inspire literary descriptions well into late antiquity, and it hardly seems coincidental that the Ocean motif was embroidered into Near Eastern textiles up until the Arab conquest.

Whatever the means of transmission, the orbital Ocean was already archaic when Homer and his imitators imagined it as the rim of Achilles’ (or Hercules’) cosmic shield. Ocean’s circuit continued to define schematic or projected maps from antiquity to the Middle Ages and occasionally took real form in microcosmic architecture; the best classical examples are the channel that surrounded both Varro’s aviary at Cassino (before 36 BCE) and Hadrian’s “Teatro Marittimo” at Tivoli (118–21 CE, Fig. 42). Yet, besides maps and buildings, the orbital sea is conspicuously absent from ancient art, perhaps a victim of the early realization that the earth was surrounded by a sea rather than a stream. Whether this is true or not, it is no less the case that representations of the personified Ökeanos are also exceedingly rare before the Roman period. The reasons for this clamorous omission are easier to guess: Ökeanos was anterior to the generations of the gods, and although he endured through their successive reigns, he played no part in the various shenanigans of Greek mythology, thereby lending himself to few visual narratives; he enjoyed absolutely no cult, and therefore no cult images; finally (as we shall see), his image spread only with the post-Hellenistic ideology of reaching Ocean, whether that signified world conquest or apotheosis through arriving at the edge of the heavens.

The earliest, archaic images (sixth century BCE) of the personified Ökeanos show him as a bull-headed man with the tail of a sea serpent, an image that combined bestial force with winding movement. It was little different from that of other Greek river gods, all of which ultimately derived from Near Eastern deities, including, significantly, the cosmogonic Tiamat (Fig. 10). Chief among these Greek river gods, in fact, was the shape-shifting Acheloös, the longest river in Greece, who, unlike Ökeanos, did enjoy a cult and whose image was widely propagated both in Greece and abroad from the sixth century BCE (Fig. 8). Nevertheless, at some point in the same period Acheloös seems finally to have lost his struggle with Ökeanos for the role of primordial water, and while the new orthodoxy allowed him to remain the incarnation of freshwater, it demoted him to Ökeanos’s son. The archaic Acheloös, a bull-headed merman or human-headed bull, was often abbreviated to a monimental head or mask, and it was from this visage that Ökeanos/Oceanus would borrow his physiognomy and prophylactic gaze.

The outstanding example of such an Acheloös mask comes from Marathon (ca. 490–470 BCE) and, as a multitude of contemporary reliefs illustrate, most likely once adorned the cave sanctuary of a local nymph (Fig. 9). Although all waters were now the progeny of Ökeanos, by compensation Acheloös was credited with fathering the nymphs, and such masks identified him as the fount of freshwater at its visible origin, the weeping grotto. By already the early sixth century BCE the effigy of Acheloös, preponderantly just the head, had crossed over to the colonies of Magna Graecia and spread up the peninsula throughout Etruria, where his cult either re-
placed that of indigenous springs or merged with them in the guise of their progenitor. The family resemblance between Acheloōs and Oceanus is further evident from a type of Etruscan bronze roundel that was replicated again and again until the second or third century CE (Figs. 10, 11).

When we come to the Roman era, we find full-bodied versions of Oceanus, carved or depicted seated or reclining, rarely standing, but more frequently he is reduced to a disembodied mask. Oceanus has lost his bull horns in favor of the more marine dolphins and crab pincers that distinguish him from any simple river god. At the same time, this pairing respectively bracketed the parameters of beneficence and malevolence with which Ocean was credited: he was a fount of life but also of monstrous hybrids, and his waters were treacherous and his limits unknown. Yet the brooding power of the massive face, the head of a primal water world and the face of a vast and dimensionless singularity, still looks back to Acheloōs’s unblinking stare, and Oceanus’s eyes were regarded as so piercing that “jealous hearts are broken by his sparkling gaze” (Figs. 9, 3). This commanding face is the nexus of innumerable floors and the one that fills our Bocca. On the floors of villas and baths, or in their fountain basins, Oceanus is frequently accompanied by his consort Tethys and mobbed by Tritons, Hippocamps, Ichthyocen-
taurs, Centaurotritons, and Nereids, as well as sea bulls, sea
tigers, sea panthers—the hybrids that dwell only in Ocean—
and any variety of fish, to underscore his hegemony of the sea
world. The extraordinary popularity of such Oceanus mo-
saics along the North African coast and the Atlantic seaboard
of Europe, not to mention Britain, is largely explained by
their location in provinces associated with Ocean and the
furthest reaches of the oikoumene.

Oceanus had no point of source, no end or beginning, he
simply was, and the horizon constituted his farther shore. As
Aristotle had pointed out, though Oceanus had never ruled,
everything had arisen from him. Like the Judaic Abyss, he was
not an agent but the matrix. Inasmuch as he embodied the
ultimate conditions for existence, he also marked the frontier
of nonexistence, "the source and end of the gloomy world,"
to quote Hesiod. Nonetheless, as a dimension of transition
between separate domains, spatial and temporal, between
earth and heaven, he divided the historical and particular
from the primordial and universal.

In fact, because Ocean was the world's limit, to cross it
meant to leave life and reality, to arrive eventually at Elysium,
or the Isles of the Blessed (or, for early Christians, Para-
dise). Thus, a third- or fourth-century hymn to Oceanus
invokes safe passage through uncertain waters to a safe har-
bor with such ambiguity that it may indicate either a real port
or that undiscovered country from whose bourne no traveler
returns (see App. below). To cross Oceanus was to touch the rim of the heavens, and the conjunction took form in the peripteral river skirting the base of the (destroyed) fourth-century dome mosaics in S. Costanza, the mausoleum of Constantine’s daughters Constantina and Helena (Fig. 12). The springing point of a dome could not have been a more appropriate horizon for Ocean, the son of Heaven and Earth (Ouranos and Ge), because he was “the imaginable circle that binds the visible and invisible of the heavens, meaning the hemisphere above the earth and that below the earth.”

In the mosaic, the scaffolding of heaven culminates in the tent of the sky and springs from islands in the stream of Ocean populated by erotes (that is, proto-angels), with scenes of embarkation for the destination that Clement of Alexandria called “the harbor of heaven.” It is more than likely that this lost mosaic reproduced the pattern of a textile canopy in the long tradition that stretched back through Hellenistic marquees to the tents of the Persian kings. Moreover, this mask, the origin of all rivers and all things, lingered on in Christian mosaic, carved ivories, and sculpture until at least the High Middle Ages, both in representations of the rivers of Paradise and as the primeval Abyss of Original Creation.

The Practical Function of the Bocca
The next question is what function the Bocca originally fulfilled. It is often said to be a fountainhead. A few Oceanus-mask waterspouts survive, the finest a bronze one in the Römermuseum, Weissenberg (Saxony) (Fig. 4). An opus sectile panel from Kenchreai (ca. 370-75 CE) even shows a fountain house with water gushing into a basin from a huge mask of Oceanus just like the Bocca (Fig. 13). As circular as Ocean’s course, such masks were appropriate adornments for fountains because the god was the father of all rivers and his waters were therefore fresh, not salty. In the mid-fifth century, the poet Nonnos obviously had such a waterspout in mind when he imagined “Oceanus . . . gushing a watery roar from his many-streamed throat, sending forth a fountain-like stream from his ever-flowing mouth, and deluging the shores of the world with a flood of words.”

Indeed, the reclining Oceanus adorned nymphaea throughout the empire and in Rome gave his name to the monumental nymphaeum (“Throne of Oceanus”) that Alexander Severus built in 226 CE. As late as the eighteenth century, Nicola Salvi chose Oceanus, not Neptune, to personify both the vitalizing and devastating force of water at the heart of his Fontana di Trevi.

But the Bocca della Verità has too many holes to be a fountainhead. As fountain water was channeled through lead pipes, one would expect this to be conducted through the
mouth only; in the unlikely event that pipes protruded from every orifice, once the mains were opened the deity would have dribbled, wept, and run at the nose. Even had the Bocea functioned so inelegantly at the outset, it would still have had to have been detached early from its putative fountain and laid horizontal for centuries, because its surface has been worn uniformly smooth, either by pedestrian traffic or groundwater erosion, or both. More important, it is always overlooked that the disk is saucer-shaped, decreasing in thickness from about 8 inches (20 centimeters) at its perimeter to about 3 inches (8 centimeters) at the ominous mouth. The sole modern observer to have realized this, a hydraulic engineer in the 1930s, even demonstrated that the contours of the face were actually carved to ease the flow of water draining into the holes (Fig. 14). Altogether, the inescapable conclusion is that the Bocca originally functioned as a drain cover, not a fountainhead.

Another Bocca?
Antiquarians had already come to this conclusion as early as the seventeenth century, but they had an advantage: there was another Bocca in town. A well-known drawing (1532–37) by Maarten van Heemskerk records it (Fig. 15). Until now it has always been thought that this disk once adorned the still-extant courtyard of the Palazzo della Valle di Cantone, where Heemskerk seems to portray it. But no other drawing shows it there, and no descriptions of the famous della Valle collections mention such a massive sculpture (which, on the evidence of the drawing, would have been some sixteen feet across). However, eighteenth-century observers mention an antique disk “just like the Bocca” that drained the courtyard of the Palazzo Riiario (the Cancelleria) just down the road, where it had been installed perhaps as early as 1503. In other words, Heemskerk inserted one sketch within another, a stratagem he adopted in other sketchbook views; in fact, when he reproduced the same mask in his later panel of Saint Luke Painting the Madonna (ca. 1553), he set it in yet another Roman courtyard (the house of Jacopo Sassi).

Once the original, more prestigious, location of the other Bocca at the Cancelleria is recovered, one realizes that the sight probably inspired Giulio Romano to devise a silver salver (1542) in which a swirling vortex sucks in both fish and downpour, and whose material itself is implicitly transmuted into quicksilver (Fig. 16). The same installation presumably moved Baldassare Peruzzi to imagine such a mask-drain in an antique building and Sebastiano Serlio then to insert one into his design for a royal residence. By 1550, though possibly as early as the 1520s, another large, antique mask, this time of porphyry, was also being used as a drain in the Palazzo Cesi near St. Peter’s, and in 1579 the Farnese would commission a copy of the Cancelleria mask to become the hub of the great circular courtyard in their Villa at Caprarola (Fig. 17). Vincenzo Scamozzi followed suit, setting yet another mascherone drain cover, though this one with a Satyr’s face, at the heart of Andrea Palladio’s Villa Rotunda in 1591, in a domed hall below an open oculus just like the Pantheon. And in 1616 Carlo Maderno mounted still another, equally satyric, version in the courtyard of the Palazzo Mattei.

14 Diagram of the draining paths on the Bocea (drawing by Respighi, “La Bocca della Verità,” 166)

15 Maarten van Heemskerk. Courtyard in the Palazzo della Valle di Cantone, 1532–37, pen and brown ink with brown wash on white paper, 12¾ x 18½ in. (32 x 47 cm). Kupferstichkabinett, Berlin, album 79D2a, fol. 20r (artwork in the public domain; photograph from Hülsen and Egger, eds., Römischen Skizzenbücher, vol. 2, 24)
Giulio Romano, design for a silver salver, 1542, pen and brown ink with brown wash on white paper, 11¾ X 17¼ in. (29 X 43.7 cm). Chatsworth, Devonshire Collection, 104 (artwork in the public domain; photograph provided by the Duke and Duchess of Devonshire)

Drain cover, central courtyard. Villa Farnese, Caprarola, 1579 (artwork in the public domain; photograph by the author)

Di Giove, Rome. There are likely many more; the tradition persisted until at least the 1830s, when Leo Von Klenze set a drain cover of a fluvial deity in the courtyard of the Glyptothek, Munich (1816-30). Heemskerck knew the Cancelleria mask was horned, and though he depicted it flanked by what look like greyhounds, these must really have been Hippocamps too badly worn to be recognized, just like another pair we see flanking yet another Oceanus, on the mosaic floor of a triclinium at Bad Kreuznach (ca. 234 CE, Fig. 18). The Cancelleria Bocca has been destroyed and its origins are not recorded, but in the same courtyard Cardinal Riario also displayed a colossal statue of the Muse Melpomene from the porticus of the Theater of Pompey. Other fragments from the theater had made their way there even before Riario’s day. The theater’s porticus ringed lush gardens that some scholars argue represented an elaborate microcosm of the nascent empire, and Propertius records that a stream trickled out of a grotto at one end to flow between plane-tree allées before disappearing into another ocean-goer, Triton, who “swallowed the water in its mouth.” If the text matches the long-lost mask, this drain might even have been a model for the subsequent Bocca. At least one other example of such an antique drain cover was rediscovered in Como in 1904, a horned head that represents a local river god with a remarkable resemblance to Acheloös that, again, is perforated at the eyes, nostrils, and mouth (Fig. 19).

Symbolic Function and Original Location: Oceanus, Hercules, and the Forum Boarium

Understanding that the Bocca was originally a drain cover is crucial to gauging its symbolic potential. A vertical Oceanus may signify the fount of all beneficence, a symbolic identity particularly popular under the Severans, but a horizontal one must instead materialize the point of eternal return: Ocean was not only the source of all waters but their final destination as well. Indeed, a horizontal Oceanus would have made whatever enclosure it once adorned a microcosm, across which rainwater streamed back into “Ocean,” just like the waters that drained daily off the earth at large. In fact, the ancients had ample cause to think of the face of Oceanus in terms of a drain cover because they already imagined such a dynamic in nature. They saw currents entering the Mediterranean from both the Bosporus and the Strait of Gibraltar but could find no apparent outlet, concluding that the waters must return to Ocean through a gigantic sinkhole at the bottom of the Mediterranean.

For the Bocca’s cosmogonic Oceanus to fulfill its promise, then, it deserved to be the focus of a building with the celestial credentials of the Pantheon. The Pantheon’s dome resembled the vault of heaven, and the rotating spotlight shed by its oculus traversed the vault as the sun did the sky. Oceanus would have closed the circuit of such a miniature universe, especially because he regulated the rising and set-
ting of the heavenly bodies, the sun, the moon, and the stars. These he sent forth in their cycles from his watery realm at the ends of the earth, and to him they returned at the end of their labors. The whole rotation was beautifully summarized on a second-century cylinder altar that illustrated the lunar cycle with the rising evening star (Hesperus), whose torch points to the realm of the fixed stars, and the setting morning star (Phosphorus), whose flame dies in the horizon from which the head of Oceanus emerges (Fig. 20).

However stimulating it is to imagine that the Bocca performed such a pivotal role, its original location remains frustratingly elusive. The first record of the Bocca dates only to about 1450, by which point it was leaning against the facade of S. Maria in Cosmedin as we still glimpse it in Antonio Tempesta’s aerial view of the district (labeled “S. Maria de Scolla Grecha”) in 1593 (Fig. 21). It was erected in its current location, the narthex of the church, in 1631. However, a previously uncited drawing by an anonymous German artist reveals that at some point between 1603 and 1611 the Bocca was mounted on the wall at the left end of the facade (Fig. 22), and this is important because it must have been in this period that the indents were cut into its circumference that some observers presume are fixture points for a fountainhead.

Nonetheless, the Bocca must have lain very near S. Maria in Cosmedin well before the fifteenth century, in fact, at least since the church’s restoration under Pope Callixtus II (1120), when the painters who decorated its clerestory with a frieze of “vegetable masks” used the Bocca as their model (Fig. 23). The Bocca’s weight (about 2,700 to 2,900 pounds, or 1,200 to 1,300 kilograms) would not have deterred medieval man from carting it to the church from almost any quarter, but only for a purpose. Yet the Bocca was never incorporated into any medieval structure on the site, and it is, in fact, difficult to see what use it could have been put to. For centuries it was simply propped against the church facade like a huge penny, as if it were spare change that had been rolled there for safekeeping. This suggests it originated in the surrounding area, in antiquity the Forum Boarium.

The Forum Boarium was Rome’s cradle, the epicenter of her mythogenesis (Fig. 24). In myth it was the marshy inlet (the Velabrum) where first Evander, then Hercules, and after him Aeneas had all landed and where the foundlings Romu-
lus and Remus had been washed ashore. Here the adult Romulus began plowing the *pomerium*, the magic furrow around Rome that divided civic from military and order from chaos. The Forum Boarium was also swimming in water associations. Historically, it was the crossroads between the Tiber and the ancient trail from Etruria into Campania, and here passed the salt road that began at the mouth of the Tiber. Belowground the archaic Cloaca Maxima, the monumental conduit that drained these lowlands and that became Rome’s first sewer, still traverses the area to its major outlet into the Tiber. The riverbank was bracketed on the south by the first bridge across the Tiber, the Pons Sub梁us, and on the north by the earliest port, the Portus Tiberinus. Here also finished Rome’s first aqueduct, the Aqua Appia.

However, neither texts nor excavations suggest the presence of a terminal water display for the Aqua Appia in the Forum Boarium, nor, for that matter, monumental baths—nor was there room for either. A fish market, the Forum Piscarium, also thrived in the area, but the Bocca is carved from Phrygian marble, the king of luxury stones till porphyry dethroned it, and it is difficult to imagine such a costly and ornately carved relief decorating simply a drain in a piazza and squandering its symbolic capital into the bargain. Alternatively, it has been proposed that since the Forum Boarium was the lowest point in Rome, the Bocca drained off the perennial floods, but, although the idea of Father Tiber draining back into Father Ocean is attractive, the Bocca seems too puny for a storm drain. We are left with the temples and shrines that crammed the forum, and in which such a mythically charged object as the Bocca could have come into its own, given an appropriate context for mythological allusion. The various shrines to Apollo, Pudicitia, and others that once stood in the area offer no obvious connection with Oceanus, and we can eliminate the surviving Temple of Portunus (the so-called Temple of Fortuna Virilis), the harbor god who brings luck to sailors, simply because its precinct has been excavated. Far more tempting are the series of structures dedicated to Hercules that thronged the rest of the site and dominated its significance.

At a remote period, certainly far earlier than our surviving Augustan sources, the archaic cult of Hercules in the Forum Boarium (that is, the Cattle Market) had come to be explained with the story that the demigod had disembarked here with the oxen stolen from Geryon (his tenth labor), one of which he had sacrificed to Jupiter after slaying the local brigand Cacus, who had attempted to steal them for himself. Oceanus might seem completely extraneous to this story until one considers that Roman mythologers stitched the Cacus myth onto an earlier one in which Oceanus had for
Once played an active role. For Geryon was the sea god's grandson, and to reach the island on which he tended his cattle, Hercules had to cross Ocean, and he did so in the golden cup that the Sun normally sailed back every evening to his palace on the other side of the world but which he had lent Hercules under duress. In some accounts, during the crossing Hercules even cowed Oceanus into submission when the latter unsuccessfully sought to upend the hero with a swell. On the return leg, Hercules set up the famous pillars named after him (also known as the Pillars of Oceanus) that formed the portal between the inner and outer seas. Moreover, texts recount that in Hercules' next labor, his eleventh, he set out to retrieve the golden apples from the garden of the Hesperides, which tradition again located beyond Ocean. It is for the latter reason, for example, that when Emperor Commodus (r. 180–92 CE) had himself portrayed as Hercules Romanus it was not only in a lion skin and proffering the golden apples but also flanked by twin Tritons (Fig. 25). More important, a tradition of Roman sculpture conflated both labors, the cattle of Geryon and the apples of the Hesperides, in a Hercules type that both rested his club on a bull's head and grasped the golden apples with his free hand. The colossal gilt-bronze cult statue of Hercules that has miraculously survived from one of the sanctuaries in the Forum Boarium may have originally included a boar's head and, depending on the dating one assigns it, was conceivably the origin of this particular sculptural typology (Fig. 26).

Shrines to Hercules and Microcosms
There were four major shrines to Hercules in the Forum Boarium, the temples of Hercules Invictus ad Circum Maximum (Pompeianus), Hercules Victor ad portam Trigeminarum, and Hercules Victor in Foro Boario as well as a massive altar precinct, the Ara Maxima Herculis. The first two can be safely excluded as venues for the Bocca, but the latter pair are extremely enticing candidates.

The temple of Hercules Invictus (Pompeianus) can be ruled out immediately, as it was an araeostyle (that is, Tuscan) temple, and it is hard to imagine how a circular drain cover could have sensibly fitted the typology. The next pair of temples must be considered more carefully because both were circular, which in itself would make them suitable locales for the microcosmic Bocca. Indeed, Roman writers had little problem envisioning round temples, not just the Pantheon, as small worlds because this symbolism was the subject of recurrent discussion. So it is that both the poet Ovid and the antiquarian Verrius Flaccus reckoned that the founder of the Temple of Vesta, Numa Pompilius (supposedly 717–673 BCE), had given it a circular plan because he believed it mirrored the shape of the earth; Ovid even compared the tholos (round temple) with Archimedes' famous model of the heavens, which had been hung in or near the temple, presumably on purpose, to make the comparison all the more
explicit. Indeed, Plutarch would expand on the earlier interpretations with the claim that the Temple of Vesta actually represented the entire universe, and that its central cult flame matched the fiery Monad at the heart of the Pythagorean cosmos.

Feeding such speculations were both the correspondence between the heavens and temples inherent in every foundation—the ritual in which the augurs mapped the sky to situate its terrestrial reflection, the precinct or *templum*—and the lasting belief in a domical heaven that found a miniaturized counterpart in the coverings of round temples. Apart from the later and exceptional Pantheon (ca. 118–24 CE) and the “Temple of Venus” at Baalbek (third century CE), not one of these roofs survives, but many must have taken the form of suspended cupolas in cane, wood, and stucco, like that in Varro’s aviary and those one occasionally finds in the salons (*oecus*) of Pompeian homes. According to Vitruvius, in various hypaethral (that is, roofless) temples dedicated to sky gods, which he may have conceived of as circular, the vault became the actual sky because “the likenesses and manifestations of these divinities are visible to our eyes in the open and brilliant heavens.” One may add that Hercules was among the very few deities to whom circular temples were especially dedicated, possibly for his euhemeristic character. In fact, the first *tholos* built in Rome after the Temple of Vesta was that of Hercules Musarum in 179 BCE, with a lyre-strumming Hercules and nine Muses that perhaps assimilated the music of the spheres. It seems almost too good to be true, then, that the founder of the Temple of Hercules Victor in Foro Boario (Aedes Aemiliana Herculis) was the same Scipio Aemilianus (185–129 BCE) whom Cicero has ascended through the Pythagorean spheres to arrive at an astral view of the island earth surrounded by Ocean, a mere speck in the extended cosmos.

Unfortunately, there are obstacles, some serious, to regarding either of the *tholoi* in the Forum Boarium as the original site of the Bocca. The Temple of Hercules Victor ad portam Trigeminam survives (the so-called Temple of Vesta), facing the church across the modern square (Fig. 24, no. 5; Fig. 27). The earliest reference to its use as a church (S. Stefano delle Carozze) dates from 1134, so one might assume that on the occasion of its conversion (in the 1120s?) the Bocca was prised from its floor and rolled over to S. Maria in Cosmedin. The issue can no longer be resolved by archaeology, as any traces of a possible drain under the cela were lost when its substructures were dug out by treasure hunters in 1827. However, it is clear that the temple was built no later than 90 BCE, some argue as early as 140 BCE, while the Bocca can date not much earlier than the 20s BCE, when the Phrygian marble from which it was made was first introduced into
28 Pirro Ligorio after Baldassare Peruzzi, Frieze, capital, and base from the Temple of Hercules Victor in Foro Boario and reconstruction of the Temple, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris, Cod. Ital. 1129, fol. 389r (artwork in the public domain)

It could, of course, have been a later installation, perhaps during the extensive mid-first-century CE restoration, when half the temple’s columns were replaced. But it would have served no purpose in a temple that was unlikely to have had an oculus, given that two large windows pierce its cela wall.

The other round temple, Hercules Victor in Foro Boario, on the flank of S. Maria in Cosmedin, was largely demolished under Sixtus IV (1471–84), and Filippo Coarelli has convincingly identified it as the Aedes Aemiliana Herculis and therefore founded in the censorship of Scipio Aemilianus in 142 BCE. Be that as it may, detailed analysis of architectural fragments recorded in Renaissance drawings (Fig. 28) reveal that this particular incarnation almost certainly dated from the early Augustan period (possibly ca. 16 BCE), with possibly yet another restoration after that. It was the largest sacral *tholos* in Rome before Hadrian’s Pantheon and the cela was wide enough to accommodate an ample oculus, so it would have made a suitable setting for our cosmic drain cover. Once again, cognoscenti had reached the same conclusion in the eighteenth century on a fraction of the knowledge, even drawing a comparison with the Pantheon. Moreover, the temple’s Tuscan-Doric exterior was a calculated choice, a “Romanized Greek,” like Hercules Romanus, with the bucrania (ox skull) frieze fulfilling its sacred genealogy at the site of Hercules’ sacrifice of a heifer and Romulus’s starting point for the *pomerium*. It is, therefore, highly important that most scholars hold that this temple was the original site of the colossal gilt-bronze cult statue now in the Museo dei Conservatori, Rome (Fig. 26). In fact, it is all but certain.
Hercules extends the golden apples, his club may have rested on a bull's head, and a relief within the temple may even have shown him between the Hesperides (as in Fig. 36), altogether conflating the two myths whose common link, besides Hercules, was Oceanus. We might accordingly imagine, as did Giovenale on not much more than a hunch, the Bocea lying on the cela floor at Hercules' feet and rounding out the story. This combination would not have been unique. Unfortunately, were the temple the original home of the Bocea, one would have to explain how, or rather why, this disk made its way to the facade of S. Maria in Cosmedin for no apparent purpose at least a quarter of a century before the temple's demolition under Sixtus IV, if not as early as the twelfth century (when it is represented in the clerestory frescoes of S. Maria in Cosmedin). Furthermore, some critics may object that the extreme wear of the Bocca's surface exhibits rather greater exposure than one might expect in a temple cela, suggesting instead a blue-sky location. These considerations lead us to our final candidate, the complex of the Ara Maxima Herculis.

Tradition ordained that this altar stood on the site where Hercules had himself sacrificed a heifer to Jupiter, and the cult was undoubtedly of great antiquity, stretching back to the sixth century BCE, if not earlier. And the memory remained alive over the centuries, contributing to the historical awareness of the Forum Boarium as the site of so many origins. The Ara Maxima was the place where “oaths are taken and agreements made by those who wish to transact any business unalterably” so the aura of truth telling still attached to the Bocca might just be a relic of such vows. Because the altar itself was vast and open-air, the Bocca could also have punctuated its paving, but its exact form and building history are complete mysteries, and even its location is conjectural (Fig. 29). If Coarelli is right, only the lower courses of the massive podium survive, stretching under the choir of S. Maria in Cosmedin, and the ancient structure was originally so large that it took medieval workmen a year to demolish. It could have been at this point, when the church was extended back over the leveled site of the old Ara Maxima, that the disk was removed and wheeled to the front of the church, awaiting reuse.

The thesis is further promoted by the fact that somewhere on the premises of the Ara Maxima were conserved two relics of Hercules, his club and, more pertinently, his skyphos, or goblet. The skyphos was basically a large wooden tub coated in pitch, and we gain a good idea of its appearance both from two medallions of Antoninus Pius and Caracalla (Fig. 30) and from an unpublished mosaic of the Attributes of Heracles (late first to early second century CE) said to have been found on the nearby Aventine in the 1740s (Fig. 31). Servius tells us that the skyphos was used to pour libations on the dies natalis (feast day, August 12), but Macrobius also
records that it was venerated as the vessel that Hercules had borrowed from Helios to cross Ocean. A few Greek vases illustrate the episode (Fig. 32).

By way of conclusion, it remains to eliminate the monumental portico (almost 102 by 56 feet, or 31 by 17 meters) now embedded in the nave of S. Maria in Cosmedin that once abutted the putative Ara Maxima. Coarelli thought it was the precinct of the Ara Maxima, Francesco Tolotti reconstructed it as raised on a podium and open to the sky, and Mario Torelli has argued that the surviving structure is a fourth-century rebuild of an Antonine portico with a second caryatid story just like those also dedicated to Hercules and once visible at Bordeaux, Athens, Thessaloniki, and just possibly Cadiz. However, the presence of earlier spolia is hardly convincing evidence for any building on the site before the fourth century, and the structure in any case always sat at street level.

**Hercules Victor, Hercules Gaditanus, and Trajan**

Wherever the Bocca once lay within the Forum Boarium, the mythic nexus of Hercules, Geryon, and Oceanus gives rise to a quite specific hypothesis about when and why it was created and installed. As noted, some versions of the Hercules legend maintained that his expeditions against Geryon and to the Hesperides had led him to cross Ocean. His departure point was identified as Cadiz, which he also founded, near the famous "Pillars," and here, facing the Atlantic, stood the most important sanctuary of this seafaring Hercules. The sanctuary had once been a Phoenician foundation to the trader god Melqart, with whom Hercules had been identified as early as the seventh century BCE, and the temple conserved its archaic Phoenician appearance late into the Roman era.

Not surprisingly, two Spanish emperors, Trajan and Hadrian, both of them from Itálica, about 80 miles (125 kilometers) up the road from Cadiz (or, in Latin, Gades), took the local hero Hercules Gaditanus for their patron. A much later Spanish emperor, Theodosius I (from Coca, near Segovia), eventually followed suit, even building his own Forum Boarium, the Forum Tauri in Constantinople (dedicated 393 CE). Although Hercules Gaditanus was none other than a reincarnation of the Phoenician Melqart, both Trajan and Hadrian were free from any suspicion of imposing a foreign—or, worse, "Punic"—deity on Rome because Roman mytho-history was ready and waiting to equate him with the Hercules Romanus whose cult virtually monopolized the Forum Boarium. Indeed, a nonexistent "Via Herculea" supposedly traced the demigod's route from one peninsula to another. Moreover, because Hercules Romanus was also synonymous with Hercules Victor or Invictus (originally, it seems, two separate cults), Trajan had double reason to seize on this deity to favor his military ambitions. On March 25, 101 CE, on the eve of his first Dacian campaign, the propitiatory vows made on the Capitoline included—for the first time—Hercules Victor, and in thanks for his Dacian and Persian victories, sometime between 102 and 114 Trajan instituted the Ludi Herculei triumphales (triumphal games dedicated to Hercules). These gestures must have been part and parcel of a wider public orthodoxy, for Pliny the Younger both addresses Trajan as "imperator invictus" and hails him as Hercules, while Dio Chrysostom more elaborately compares Hercules to the ideal sovereign who rules the entire earth after destroying tyrants symbolized by mythical monsters. Trajan's triumph would, of course, have traversed the Forum Boarium, wending its way around the Ara Maxima and the Temple of Hercules in Foro Boario, not to mention an ancient statue of Hercules dressed up in triumphal robes for all such occasions. It becomes almost unthinkable, then, that the soldier-emperor who was also a great builder would not have left some mark on the Forum Boarium. From 100 to 115 CE, Trajan struck coins of several denominations representing a statue of Hercules Gaditanus/Invictus (Fig. 33)—it is quite certainly a statue because the figure is represented with a base—and Trajan's Roman coinage almost exclusively represents Roman monuments, so this effigy may have stood in Rome, quite likely in the Forum Boarium.

Unfortunately, next to no texts survive to record imperial activity in the Forum Boarium, let alone any specifically under Trajan. During the reign of his successor, Hadrian, however, we know that the Tiber flooded and that a fire swept the Campus Martius all the way to the Forum Holitorium, whose three temples the same emperor subsequently restored. Perhaps it was the same calamity that led Hadrian to remodel drastically the double precinct of Fortuna and Mater Matuta across the street (and within the limits of the Forum Boarium); in any case, his reign saw a global redevelopment of the warehouses and tenements along the riverbank and its hinterland from Testaccio to the Forum Boarium and be-

![Attributes of Hercules, mosaic emblemata, late 1st–early 2nd century CE, said to have been found on the Aventine Hill, Rome, in the 1740s. State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg, E.3133 (artwork in the public domain; photograph by Sergei Solovensky)](image-url)
Attributed to the Circle of Douris, Hercules crossing Ocean in the Skyphos, Attic red-figure kylix, Vulci, ca. 490–480 BCE. Vatican Museums, Vatican City, H 545, lithograph from Eduard Gerhard, ed., *Ausserlesene griechische Vasenbilder: Hauptsächlich etruskischen Fundorts*, vol. 2 (Berlin: G. Reimer, 1842), pl. 109 (artwork in the public domain)

**Hadrian**

Hadrian certainly had the opportunity to undertake restorations to the Hercules shrines in the same forum, and he also had a strong motivation.

**Why Hadrian? Hercules, Oceanus, and Tivoli**

Hadrian was Trajan's heir. His mother actually came from Cadiz, and he made his allegiance to Hercules Gaditanus more than plain on his coinage. While countless imperial emissions before and after Trajan display Hercules or simply his club, only five emperors (and one usurper) produced coinage with images of Ocean. But just one emperor—Hadrian—minted coins combining both Hercules and Ocean, and then an aureus (the coin of highest denomination in this era, of almost pure gold) in no fewer than five versions (Figs. 34–37). The simplest superimposes the standing Hercules (HERC GADITANUS) over the reclining Oceanus; the others show Hercules in a tetrastyle aedicule, either alone or between the Hesperides, but always with the reclining Oceanus at his feet. Most important for our purposes is that one version (Fig. 37) abbreviates Oceanus to the same sort of bodiless head as the Bocca della Verità.

Not only did Hercules figure on coins but he also became their recipient. For it can only have been Trajan or Hadrian who enrolled Hercules Gaditanus into the very exclusive club of deities to whom Roman citizens might legally bequeath their estates. It was also either Trajan or Hadrian who repaid the deity's sanctuary at Cadiz by representing themselves (or Hadrian, who had the divinized Trajan portrayed) in a monumental bronze statue where a head of the apotropaic Oceanus prominently substitutes for the usual gorgoneion on the cuirass (Fig. 38). Overlooking the Mediterranean from the port of Terracina stood another statue almost certainly of Trajan (or Hadrian?) with another Oceanus on its chest, this time above a Triton throttling two *ketois* (sea monsters) (Fig. 39). Altogether, this imagery communicated the emperor's dominion over more domestic seas and all their hazards, and possibly implied he was Herculean to boot.

Oceanus was as inseparable from the myth of Hercules Gaditanus as the demigod's sanctuary was from the Atlantic seaboard. Although neither emperor sought divine honors, Trajan no doubt saw himself as Herculean in his military exploits, and Hadrian in his travels. As conqueror, traveler, and civilizer, Hercules had no rival in mythology; Alexander the Great, Pompey, and probably Julius Caesar had already regarded him as the pioneer of world dominion. Hope of reaching Ocean had driven Alexander ever eastward; Pompey had sought to push Roman dominion to the Ocean, "which surrounds the world"; and Caesar was supposedly the first to cross Ocean (actually the English Channel), as only Hercules had before him. Augustus claimed to have pacified the provinces on the ocean rim from Cadiz to the mouth of the Elbe, and his court poet, Virgil, "foretold" this achievement in the *Aeneid* with Jupiter's prophecy that "the Trojan Caesar, Julius" would "circumscribe Empire with Ocean." When Augustus revamped the porticus of the Theater of Pompey, he even added a statue of Hercules-Melqart, the same porticus in which Propertius cites that other microcosmic drain cover. In the wake of later conquests overseas, especially Britain, and the growing equation of the *imperium* with the *orbis terrarum*, Roman literature renewed the imagery of Oceanus as the boundary of the earthly orb, celebrating each emperor's achievement in reaching or crossing it. After he had captured Ctesiphon (116) and reached the
Persian Gulf, Trajan, above all, could claim that the empire now stretched from Ocean to Ocean.\(^{142}\)

Hadrian, of course, abandoned Trajan’s conquests and redrew the empire’s frontiers. Yet the *limes* (fortifications) he completed along the Rhine, the ditch he dug in North Africa (*Fossatum Africae*), the palisade wall that he erected against Parthia, and the famous wall in Britain that “divided Barbarians from Romans” seem as much magical as military, as though Hadrian meant to extend the *pomerium*—which he also *reconsacrated*—to the scale of empire, *urbis et orbis*.\(^{143}\) As the rhetorician Aelius Aristeides put it in an address to the next emperor, Antoninus Pius, “what a city is to its boundaries and its territories, so this city [Rome] is to the whole inhabited world, as if it had been designated its common town.”\(^{144}\) Furthermore, like Caesar and Claudius, Hadrian could himself claim that he had gone “beyond Ocean” by crossing over to Britain, and even that by so doing he attained cosmic dominion, for “what was the end of the earth was not the limit of empire.”\(^{145}\) Reaching Britain, an island in the stream of Ocean and therefore “a parallel world,” as Servius says, could, in fact, be considered the prelude to apotheosis.\(^{146}\) A much later panegyricist (ca. 310 CE) explains the final summer campaign of Constantius Chlorus (r. 293-306 CE) beyond Hadrian’s Wall:

Even in that final expedition he did not seek British trophies, as was commonly believed, but advanced towards the very threshold of the world because the gods [i.e., the afterlife] were already beckoning him. It was not that such a man, with so many feats behind him, saw some merit in acquiring (God forbid the forests and swamps of the Celto-Donians and the other Picts) either nearby Ireland nor Farthest Thule [the Orkneys or Iceland], nor even the Isles of the Blessed, if they exist; but rather because, and this is something he chose to tell no one, when he was about to join the gods he gazed out over Oceanus, the father of the gods who refreshes the fiery stars of heaven, so that—on the brink of enjoying the eternal light of the hereafter—he could already see from that vantage an almost unending daylight. Indeed, the celestial mansions opened before him and he was admitted into the heavenly assembly where Jupiter in person offered him his hand.\(^{147}\)

In other words, when Constantius gazed across the North Sea in the half-light, to the nocturnal glow of the summer sun on the horizon, it was like looking into eternity, a glimpse of heaven, a potential leap in being from history to eternity.

The momentousness of Hadrian’s own passage to Britain speaks through the private Initiatives of his troops. In Newcastle, flanking the Pons Aelius that the emperor ordered built over the Tyne River (122 CE), we find the only known altar in the Roman Empire dedicated to Oceanus (a pendant to one dedicated to Neptune; Fig. 40),\(^{148}\) a conscious echo no doubt of the only other altar known to Oceanus, that which Alexander dedicated on an island at the mouth of the Indus and, therefore, likewise “in Ocean.”\(^{149}\) From the commandant’s baths at Chesters, the fort that guarded the wall’s route over the northern Tyne, comes a statue of a river god leaning—uniquely—on a mask, not the usual overturned pitcher, and presumably signifying that the Tyne was yet another tributary [sic] of Ocean (Fig. 41).\(^{150}\)

But Hadrian probably identified himself less with Hercules the warrior than Hercules the voyager, having made the same journey from Spain to Rome and, from there, traveling the whole empire. “Not even Hercules traversed so much of the earth,” as Virgil had said of Augustus.\(^{151}\) The microcosmic drain cover in the shape of Oceanus also resonates well with the emperor who built a villa at Tivoli the size of a small city that reconfigured the entire Mediterranean in miniature, and within sight of the enormous terraced sanctuary of Hercules Victor, Tivoli’s presidial deity.\(^{152}\) During his extended visit to Greece, Hadrian was inducted into the Eleusinian mysteries, citing Hercules as his forerunner,\(^{153}\) and he would progress to complete assimilation: a medallion from the end of his reign presents Hadrian in lion skin, and the reverse bears the legend *TELIUS STABILITÀ* (“the earth firmly established”) surrounded by children personifying the four seasons.\(^{154}\) Together, they signify a new golden age under the aegis of Hadrian-Hercules, and the medallion becomes a conceptual blueprint for the hub of Hadrian’s villa at Tivoli, the Teatro Marittimo (118–21 CE).\(^{155}\)

This imperial hideaway is again a microcosm (Fig. 42).
Quartered and roughly oriented to the compass points, it is a miniaturized house as symbol of the inhabited world (or _oikos_ as _oikoumenē_). It equals the Pantheon in diameter, but instead of a dome, it has the actual heavens for its canopy, while the man-made island is surrounded by a ring canal that can only simulate the course of Oceanus. When Aelius Aristeides delivered his famous eulogy on Rome to the imperial court in 155 CE, it is almost as though he had the Teatro Marittimo in mind:

The Red Sea [that is, the Persian Gulf or Indian Ocean], the cataracts of the Nile, and Lake Maeotis [Sea of Azov], which former men spoke of as at the ends of the earth, are for this city like “the fence of a courtyard.” As to the Ocean, which certain writers neither believed existed at all nor that it flowed around the earth and whose name they thought that the poets had invented and put in their compositions to please their audience, you have discovered this ocean so thoroughly that not even the island in it [Britain] has escaped your notice. . . . Like the enclosure of a courtyard, cleansed of every disturbance, a circle encompasses your empire.

The sculpted friezes of the Teatro, which scholars have rarely taken into account, endorse an interpretation of the canal as Oceanus. The frieze at the island’s perimeter represented a marine _thiasos_, a rolling pageant of sea animals, gods, and mythical beings (Fig. 43), and the inner frieze around the ”atrium” showed erotes driving chariots around the Circus Maximus. The _thiasos_ depicts all the sea creatures usually shown in the company of the encircling Ocean, and their propriety to place is obvious. The chariots of the erotes are drawn not by horses but by a menagerie of lions, panthers, boars, antelopes, and dromedaries, and perhaps this pluralism, by including all the wild and exotic beasts that lived on the fringes of empire, speaks again to the microcosm. The imagery, though, is more generally celestial. The winged erotes are creatures between human and divine, and the image of the circus evokes the seasonal symbolism of the four circus factions, the charioteers circling the solar obelisk like heavenly bodies. The race may also be the “race of life,” for putto chariot races feature on several sarcophagi. All in all, the dialectic between the two horizons, the marine world and heavenly charioteers, between universal conditions (Oceanus) and temporal ones (the circus as either the circuit of life’s praxis or the revolution of the seasons), created the
interval in which the historical Hadrian could situate himself, through dwelling, with respect to the cosmos. Hadrian's awareness of his personal finitude resided in the ambiguities of the emperor's potential divinity, and the Teatro Marittimo—not a bad title after all—became the hub of a contest between an intensive cosmos and an extensive oikoumene, the story of the entire villa. We may, to some extent, imagine Hadrian roaming the constructed topography as Hercules wandered the Mediterranean.

Materiality

There remains one last aspect of the Bocca della Verità to address, one whose impact on the effigy's figuration and its significance for the Oceanus identification has never been considered: its materiality, meaning both the actual material and the substance that the material is perceived to embody. The Bocca is cut from a single block of Phrygian (Synnadic, Docimian, Mygdotian) marble, or Pavonazzetto in modern Italian, and, as it happens, some roughly-out disks of similar size still litter the original quarries near Isehisar (Dokimeion) in Turkey.162

According to ancient theories of geology, in essence all marbles enjoyed watery origins. They were brews of purified earthy matter suspended in the groundwater that had percolated down through the earth's crust to vast caverns, where it had been frozen or fired solid by earthly humors.163 Moreover, literary tradition invited the association between marble and sea that was enshrined in the word marmor (marble) itself. In classical poetry marmor was used time and again as a synonym for mar (sea) to imagine the sea's hard surface and hidden weight, and the metaphor reaches fruition, and water again becomes stone, in the verses of Ovid. In wintry exile on the shores of the Black Sea, he described a chill so fierce that "the ships, shut in by the cold, will stand fast in the marble surface and no oar will be able to cleave the stiffened waters."164

Of all the marbles available to the Romans, Carystian (ci-polino) from Euboea, with its sea green hue and wavy veining, offered the strongest marine associations. Bathhouses and impluvia were regularly clad with the stuff, and so, too, the columns and paving (and revetment?) of the ambulatory encircling Hadrian's Teatro Marittimo were exclusively of Carystian. The emperor's hideaway would have seemed to float in a tranquil "sea," not an island in a pond but the world in ocean—"the ring canal that, as we have said, represented the river Oceanus himself."165

But Phrygian marble was also suited to aquatic symbolism and to "purple Ocean."166 A fine white marble streaked with violet of varying saturation, its slabs resembled the skim of ice on a frozen stream. When Emperor Julian wintered in Paris in 358–59 CE, he wrote home that winter was more rigid than usual and the river [Seine] flowed on the water like slabs of marble. You will certainly know Phrygian stone, well, the pieces of ice resembled it to an extraordinary degree for they were of the same whiteness and the enormous blocks rolled one over the other, and had already made a compact surface, almost like a bridge over the current.167

Like all river gods, Oceanus could retire to a subterranean lair of living rock, and mosaics often show Oceanus's head dripping with water as he dips below or rises from the sea, literally debouching streams on his way.168 Still more sarcophagi and reliefs have represented Oceanus as a body of water that only temporarily assumes human shape, his face surfacing as an eddy pool swimming with fish and interlaced
42 Teatro Marittimo, overhead view, Hadrian’s Villa, Tivoli, ca. 118 CE (photograph by the author)

43 Frieze with marine ithyos, Teatro Marittimo (artwork in the public domain; photograph by Heather Manning)

with algae (Fig. 4). In this context, one is reminded of the words of Glaucus (“sea green”), in Ovid’s Metamorphoses, on realizing that Oceanus has transformed him into a sea god: “I found myself in body another self. . . . I saw this bronze-green beard, these flowing locks that sweep along the swell, these huge broad shoulders and my sea-blue arms.” Century earlier Homer had called Poseidon “blue-maned,” and Sophocles tells us that from Acheloös’s “bushy beard streams of spring-water came tumbling down” (Fig. 9). A great many Roman mosaics also portray Oceanus’s hair and beard materializing out of piled waves or cascading rivulets, a good example being the “blue-rinse” Oceanus in the Villa of Maternus at Carranque (near Toledo, second half of the fourth century CE; Fig. 44). Indeed, Oceanus’s streaming mane was so memorable that it inspired the representations of other natural phenomena, like the Miracle of the Rain on the Antonine Column, and other aquatic divinities, from the great (hornless) medallion in the pediment of the Temple of Sulis-Minerva at Bath to reliefs of Father Rhine (Fig. 45).

To recap, all marbles were innately watery; in the Roman poetic imagination “marble” was synonymous with “sea”; Phrygian marble particularly resembled ice floes; Ocean took shape in running water; and, in synthesis, one might add that if all waters had their origin in Ocean, then in the final estimation the water-born Bocca slab was also one of his progeny. Casting a final glance at the Bocca, we can appreciate that this is not so much a head carved on a slab as a face that wells up in a pool. Indeed, the sculptors responsible—just like the cameo cutters who prospected the veins in agates in search of latent images—chose the Bocca block so that the deity’s head would be contained within its “birthmark.” In so doing, they captured a paradox. Were this marble disk a frozen pool, the face would seal its thinnest part, where the surface showed darkest. And this darkness is where the stone becomes virtually transparent, so that when Oceanus reared his head in public he seemed not so much the tip of the iceberg as the face of the deep.

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Appendix

Hymn to Oceanus (third or fourth century CE)
Alexander Riese and Franz Bücheler, eds., Anthologia latina sive Poesis latinarum supplevmentum: Pars prior, carmina in codicibus scripta (Leipzig, 1894), 167–68, no. 718. The poem has never been
translated, nor apparently cited in any literature on Oceanus. The translation that follows is mine.

Ad Oceanum

Undarum rector, genitor maris, arbiter orbis
Oceane, o placido complectens omnia gyro
Tu legem terris moderato limine signas
Tu pelagus quodcumque facis fontesque lacusque
Flumina quin etiam te norunt omnia patrem
Te potant nubes, ut reddant frutigibus imbres
Cyaneoque sinu caeli tu diceris oras
Partibus ex cunctis inmenso cingere nexus.

Tu fessos Phoebi reficis si gurgite currus
Exhaustisque die radiis alimenta ministras
Gentibus ut darum référât lux áurea solem
Si mare, si terras, caelum mundumque gubemas
Me quoque, cunctorum partem, venerabilis, audi.

Alme parens rerum, supplicem precor. Ergo carinam
Conserves, ubicumque tuo committere ponto
Hanc animam, transire fretum, discurrere cursus
Acquris horisoni Sortis fera iussa lubebunt
Tende favens glaucum per levia dorsa profundum
Ac tantum tremulo crispentur caerula motu
Quantum vela ferant, quantum sinat otia remis
Quos numerare libens possim, quos cernere laetus
Servet inoffensam laterum par linea libram
Et, sulcante viam rostro, submurmuret unda.

Da, pater, ut tute liceat transmittere cursum
Perfer ad optatos securo in litore portus
Me comitesque meos. Quod cum permiseris esse
Reddam quas potero pleno pro munere grates.

[To Oceanus

Lord of the waves, Father of the sea, Arbiter of the globe,
Oh Ocean, who embrace all things in your placid loop,
You who regulate the lands with your confining limit
You who form every sea, spring, and lake
(every river recognizes you as their father, too)
From you drink the clouds so they may pour their showers on the fruits of the earth
And in the azure bosom of the heavens, so they say,
You bind its shores on all sides in your immense knot.

If you refresh the tired steeds of Phoebus in the sea
And nourish the exhausted rays of the day
So that the golden light restore to mankind the brilliant sun
If you govern the sea and the lands, the heavens and the universe
Hear me, too, a part of the whole, oh venerable one.

Blessed Father of things, I supplicate you in prayer.
Hence protect
The ship, wherever the savage commands of Fate Order that I entrust this soul to your sea.
Let it pass through the straits, and hasten along the roads of the clashing sea.
Spread out favorably the gray depths into stiffened sheets
And let the blue be curled to minute eddies as much
As the sails may bear, as much as allows the oars repose;
Let the waves rise strongly enough to push the speedy stern
So I may count them at leisure and watch them with pleasure
Let her unimpeded keep an even keel
And the sea murmur as the prow plows its path.

Grant me, Father, safe passage
Lead me and my companions to the chosen ports
On the safe shore. When you have brought this to pass I will offer up whatever thanks I can muster for this great gift.

Notes

My thanks to Carlos Machado, Steven Ostrow, and Nicholas Penny for comments on early drafts, to Ian Carradice for answering queries on coinage, to Adrian Kelly for correspondence about Acheloös/Okeanos, and to Peter Carl and Robert Coates-Stephens for adding sources and insights with their customary generosity. Finally, I would like to thank Lory Frankel for her help in researching and, above all, good-humored copyediting. A version of this paper was given as a public lecture at the British School at Rome (2008). Unless otherwise noted, translations are mine.

In memory of Pola Maria Boccetti, who triggered this inquiry with a postcard.


4. For identifications as Mercury and Faunus, see Spargo, Virgil the Neoromancer, 407 n. 35; for the Nile, see Rafaela Fabretti, De columnis Traianis symmatœs (Rome: N. A. Tarassini, 1683), 104; for the Tiber, Tiberio Regpghi, “La Bocca della Verità,” Roma: Rivista di Studi e di Vita Romana 9 (1951): 167 (kind reference of Anna Maria Rossetti). After it was realized that the face was horned, it was identified as Jupiter Ammon (who has ram’s horns) and Acheloös (who has bull’s horns); see Nicolas de Brallon, Les curiosités de l’âne et de l’esse Romains, 5 vols. (Paris: Edme Couterot, 1655-59), vol. 2, 200; and Giovanni Mario Crescimbini, L’istoria della basilica diacronica, collegata, e parrocchiale di S. Maria in Cosmedin di Roma (Rome: Antonio de’ Rossi, 1715), 54. Johann Joachim Winckelmann noticed that the horns were actually pincers but left the question of the mask’s identity so ambiguous that Ennio Quirino Visconti thought he had recognized the head as Oceanus while Ernst Z. Platner then used to mean Triton: Winckelmann, Monumenti antichi inediti stampati ed inediti, ed. 2 vols. (Berlin: Carlo Mordacchini, 1821), vol. 2, pt. 25; Visconti, Il Museo Pio-Clementino, 7 vols. (Milan, 1821), vol. 6, 53 n. 1; and Platner et al., Beiträge zur Geschichte der Stadt Rom, 5 vols. (Stuttgart: J. G. Cotta, 1840-43), vol. 5, pt. 1, 385. For the lion totem, see Alexander H. Krappe, “La déesse de l’âme, la déesse d’Héra, la déesse de la laitance dans ta mythologie grecque et hellénistique,” in Roger Dion, La théme de l’eau primordiale dans la mythologie grecque (Bern: Éditions Francke, 1971), 53-58; J. Gwyn Griffiths, review of Rudhardt, De nixia Plini mihi, ed. Hubert Cancik and Helmuth Schneider, vol. 8 (Stuttgart: J. B. Metzler, 2000), cols. 1152-55; Jean Rudhardt, Le thème de l’eau primordiale dans la mythologie grecque (Bern: Éditions Francke, 1971); Agnès Paulin, “Le thème horizontal de l’Océan,” Carlsbarundum 10 (1975): 53-58; J. Gwyn Griffiths, review of Rudhardt, Le thème de l’eau primordiale, Classica Review 26, no. 1 (1976): 82-84; West, The Orphic Poems, 184-89; and Rosamond Kent Sprague, ed., The Older Sophistic: A Complete Translation by Several Hands of the Fragments in “Die Fragmente der Vorschriften” (Indianapolis: Hackett Publications, 2001), index, s.v. “Okeanos.”


De redito suo 1.56; Eusebius, De Iudaeis Constantinii, 6.6; Arius, De
scriptione urbis terrae sanctae; and Cosmographicus Christiani,
3.25, 4.7. Historia adversus paganos (ca. 410–18 CE) of Oryo-
sius bases its geographic chapter (1.2) around Ocean, and Jordanes
draws on it in his Getica (ca. 551); Andrew H. Merrill, History and Ge-
ography in Late Antiquity (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,
2003). See also Michele R. Cataudella, "The Chimico Materno and
la concezione del mondo: Momenti di storia del pensiero scientifico
91.

16. Homer, Iliad 14.201, 246, 302. Dmitri Panchenko and Adrian Kelly
argue that Homer refers not to the generation of the universe but
only the fatherying river: Panchenko, "The Iiad 14.201 and 14.246
Reconsidered," Hypnerotomachia 1, no. 1 (1994–95): 183–86 and Kelly,
78. The evidence cited is the early doctrine of the cosmogonomic
"scriptio orbis terrarum" by Ancient Authors in the Sixth to Fourth
Georgica 4.382: "Pater rerum."

17. Plato, Timaeus 17. Plato. 16. Homer. 21. For the Babylonian map
in the British Museum, Lotidon. 92687. see
19. Wolfgang Fith. "Pràhellenische Flutnamen Og(cs)—Ogen((>s)—Ogy-
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Near Eastern Religions 9, no. 2 (2009): 143–56. Homer, Il. 18.599, Odys-
sey 20.65) and Hesiod (Theogony 776) called Okeanos apsooros, often
translated as "backward-running" or "flowing back into/upon itself."
Strabo (Geog. 1.17.7) saw the epithet as a reference to the tides; Lewis G.
Pocock suggested it alluded to the swift incoming current at the
Strait of Gibraltar and the more saline undercurrent flowing back
into the Atlantic: Pocock, "Note on APSORROOU OKEANOIO," Hermes 88, no. 3 (1960): 571–74. Adrian Kelly explains it as
both "a river which, apart from all its outcourses, coils around the world
... and so simply keeps on 'flowing back onto itself'" and as meaning
"continuously feeding" the rivers: Kelly, "APSORROOU OKEANOIO:
82 and idem, "The Babylonian Captivity of Homer," 277 n. 66. An-
ghelina (144) suggests the epithet suits the Milky Way without further
explanation. However, the orbital motion of the earth around the sun
creates an apparent movement of the sun with respect to the stars at a
rate of about 1 degree per day eastward (that is, against the normal
eastward daily motion of the heavens). Similarly, the Milky Way would
appear to move "backward" and, as the second, it would also appear to be tilted and to rise and de-
scend in the skies according to the seasons: the year evolves backwards with respect to the day.

19. Wolfgang Fauth, "Prähellenische Flutnamen OEs—Ogen—Oggrs—
Gos.,” Beiträge zur Urgeschichte 29 (1961), 681–694. Other suggestions
are inconclusively proposed in Martin L. West, The East Face of Helicon:
West Asiatic Elements in Greek Poetry and Myth (Oxford: Clarendon Press,
1997), 146–48. However, Gabriel Germain and West’s (146–48) puta-
tive etymology of Okeanos’s epithet apsooros (Homer, Il. 18.599, Od.
20.65; Hesiod, Theog. 776) from Apoo (that is, apo, tohnu OKEANOIO, (apof, the stream of Okeanos) is effectively demolished by Kelly: Ger-
main, Genie de l’Odyssée. Le fantastique et le sacré (Paris: Presses Universi-
taires de France, 1954), 531–52; and Kelly, "APSORROOU OKEANOIO.

20. For succinct comparisons, see Paul H. Seeley, "The Geographical
Meaning of ‘Earth’ and ‘Seas’ in Genesis 1:10,” Westminster Theological
Journal 59 (1997): 231–55, with good bibliography. The idea of a float-
ing earth is, however, unrecorded in Greek thought before Thales (ca.
585–546 BCE). See also Aristotle, Meteorology 3.14, 3.15 (Eisenbrauns,
1998), 20–42. with bibliography. Current consensus is for a transmis-
sion of this concept in the Mycenaean period (ca. 1600–1100 BCE),
before the Indo-European invasions under Hittite influence.

21. For the Babylonian map, in the British Museum, London, 92687, see
Wayne Horowitz, Mesopotamian Cosmic Geography (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1998), 20–42, with bibliography. This identification is

22. In the Heptamychos of Pherecydes of Syros (sixth century BCE), Zas
(zas-is, Zas) embroders a cloth with images of Ge and Ogenos (or
Okeanos) in which he then wraps his bride, Chthonie: Kirk et al., The
Presocratic Philosophers, 60–62. The bordering Ocean is also imagined
as the belt of the rofe of Apollo in a fragment of the Orphica in Mac-
robius (Saturnalia 1.18,22). Late antique poets still imagined Ocean as
the border of the terrestrial horizon. For the Cosmogony in the British
Musem, Lotidon. 92687, see
19. Wolfgang Fith. “Pràhellenische Flutnamen Og(cs)—Ogen((>s)—Ogy-
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23. Homer, I. 18.607–8; Pseudo-Hesiode, Scutum Herulcis 314–17; Ovid,
Met. 13.292; and Philostratus, Imagines 10.20. A bronze “ritual shield”
(stolen; formerly Giorgetti collection, San Marino) published as
Eruscan, ca. 500 BCE, has a wave motif on its border that might be
considered a representation of Okeanos; James H. Turmure, “Eruscan
Ritual Armor: Two Examples in Bronze," American Journal of Archaeol-
ogy, 69, no. 1 (1965): 39–48 (who identifies it as Styx). However, Gian-
fredo Angel, conservator of the Museo delle Antiche del Re-
pubblica di San Marino, who examined the shield in 1980s, considers it to be an eighteenth-century casting (personal commu-
nication).

24. Varto, De ve rustica 3.5.8–17 (written 36 BCE); Karl Lehmann,
Habitations et l’architecture romaine (Paris: Payot, 1984); and Gilles
Salmon, "Quo Direm? Plastique du langage des lieux religieux à Rome à
la fin de la république et au début du principe (Roma: École Française de Rome, 1994), 149. Ocean may have been repre-
sented also by the canals that once ringed the great cathedral at
Edessa, Syria (ca. 543–54 CE) and certainly became a decorative bor-
der on the floor mosaics of some Byzantine and Western medieval
churches: Barry, "Walking on Water," 645, 652 n. 59. Some examples of
maps include the Tabula Peuereriana (ca. 1265 copy of the first-
century BCE-first-century CE original) and the Hereford Mappa
Mundi (ca. 1300). See also Herrmann, "Die Okeanosmatrix, 302). For late antique and (Coptic textiles, see Henry Maguire, "The
MOUTH OF TRUTH AND THE FORUM BOARIUM
29

29
stage in the textual tradition, which therefore assigns Acheloös the role of primordial water; in the Orphic Devmi Thogony (ca. 340 BCE) redaction of a sixth-century text, Acheloös is the whole sea; in the early fifth century BCE, Panasysis of Halicarnassus still equated Acheloös with Ocean; the original primacy of Acheloös was remembered in some circles as late as the third century BCE. For Acheloös as a symbol for freshwater, see ibid., 31. Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Moellendorf had earlier argued that an Oriental Οkeanos usurped a Hellenic Acheloös; Wilamowitz-Moellendorf, Der Glaube der Hellenen (Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1931-32), vol. 1, 93, 189-90, 91.


32. In Euripides, Orestes 1378 (written 408 BCE), Oceanus is still “bull-headed Oceanus and Ocean touskou” winding through the earth in his coiling embrace.” The familiarity of horned Oceanus later attracted the poetic analogies of Apollonius Rhodius (d. after 246 BCE). who used the unusual expression “Horn of Oceanus” (Argonautica 4.282) to describe the lower Danube, and Aratus (ca. 315/310-240 BCE), who speaks of the sun rising “at either horn [of Oceanus],” the East or the West, since “the many constellations wheel about him, and from below he sends forth each rising sign” (Phaenomena 566-68). In the 6th CE Lucius Annaeus Cornutus (Theogonia geoscenic comendatam 22) noted that it was usual to depict “horn-bearing and bull-faced rivers,” and in the third century CE, Aelian (Varis historia 2.33) listed several.


42. Andreas Rumpf, Die Moroven auf den antiken Sarkophagreliefs (Berlin: G. Grote, 1939), 11–19, pls. 8, 10, 11, 13, 15. For the lunettes of the tomb of the Anicii on the Via Latina, the tomb of the Pancratii, and the tomb of Vincitius and Vibia, see Emily Laidlaw, "Stucco Ro- liefs of the First and Second Centuries CE in Athens and Rome," in Memorias del American Academy at Rome 4 (1924): pls. XXXIII–XXXV.

43. An Oxygen mask, with a Triton on either side, also appears over the door in the underground "basilica" at the Porta Maggiore; Goffredo Benedelli, "Il monumento sovranero di Porta Maggiore in Roma (con- tribuito alla storia dell'arte decorativa Augustea)," Monumenti Antichi 31 (1926): cols. 601–659, esp. col. 644, pl. X. For the catacombs of Callixtus, see Josef Wilpert, Die Malereien der Katakomben Rom, 2 vols. (Freiburg im Breisgau, 1903). Another example can be found in the catacombs of Praetextatus in the "Hypogumum of the Syncretists" in the arcosolium of Vibia.

44. Fabio Barry, "Abyssus Abyssum invocat: The Transformation of Oceanus into Abyssus in Medieval Art" (forthcoming).


46. Norman Neuerburg, Der Klee (Bonn: R. Habelt, 1992), 445–54. The late Republican linear example can be found in the catacombs of Praetextatus, in the supranumera, for the "basilica" at the Porta Maggiore; Goffredo Benedelli, "Il monumento sovranero di Porta Maggiore in Roma (con- tribuito alla storia dell'arte decorativa Augustea)," Monumenti Antichi 31 (1926): cols. 601–659, esp. col. 644, pl. X. For the catacombs of Callixtus, see Josef Wilpert, Die Malereien der Katakomben Rom, 2 vols. (Freiburg im Breisgau, 1903). Another example can be found in the catacombs of Praetextatus in the "Hypogumum of the Syncretists" in the arcosolium of Vibia.


52. Regpighi, "La Bocca della Verità," 166.

53. Fabretti, De columna Traiani, 104: "it would have served for the functioning of some sawe [Clacioe alcius operndiae insorret]." See also Crescimbeni, L’istoria della basilica, 34. Jacob Burckhardt and W. Helbig independently concluded that it was a drain cover: Burckhardt, Der Cicerone: Eine Anleitung zum Genuss der Kunstwerke italiens, 2nd ed., vol. 2, 270, and W. Helbig, Bulletin du Comité de Science Archéologique de Rome 78, 1913, no. 13, fig. 247. Giuliana Paolo Pannini’s Gallery of Views of Ancient Rome (1754–57, Staatsgalerie, Stuttgart) shows a prone Bocca in the left foreground, perhaps reflecting the common wisdom; my thanks to Kathleen Christian for pointing out this painting.

54. Ulisse Aldrovandi, "Delle statue romane antiche, che per tutta Roma, in diversi luoghi, e caso se veggono," in Le antichità della città di Roma, ed. Lucio Mauro (Venice: G. Zillettì, 1556), 122 (kind reference to "il cementare... in terra una maschera grande antica di porfo bellissimo, per ricevere l’acqua, che ivi piovàno.")." Cardinal Paolo Emilio Cesi started amassing his antiquities collection in the 1520s; Aldrovandi compiled his catalog in 1556. The mask is not shown in Hendrick van Cleef’s 1584 view of the palace, but this was painted at least thirty years after he returned from Rome; Marjon van der Meulen, "Cardinal Cesi’s Antique Sculpture Garden: Notes on a Painting by Hendrick van Cleef III," Burlington Magazine 116, no. 850 (1974): 14–24, esp. n. 26. A large porphyry gorgoneion (diameter 56 in., or 143 cm)—the only porphyry mask to receive the waters that rain down there—was a feature of the original house of the Roman family Palai- ace. The Seventeenth-Century Manuscript of Book VI in the Avery Library of Columbia University (New York: Architectural History Foundation; Cambridge, Mass.: M.I.T. Press, 1978), p. XXXII.

55. Ulisse Aldrovandi, "Delle statue romane antiche, che per tutta Roma, in diversi luoghi, e caso se veggono," in Le antichità della città di Roma, ed. Lucio Mauro (Venice: G. Zillettì, 1556), 122 (kind reference to "il cementare... in terra una maschera grande antica di porfo bellissimo, per ricevere l’acqua, che ivi piovàno.")." Cardinal Paolo Emilio Cesi started amassing his antiquities collection in the 1520s; Aldrovandi compiled his catalog in 1556. The mask is not shown in Hendrick van Cleef’s 1584 view of the palace, but this was painted at least thirty years after he returned from Rome; Marjon van der Meulen, "Cardinal Cesi’s Antique Sculpture Garden: Notes on a Painting by Hendrick van Cleef III," Burlington Magazine 116, no. 850 (1974): 14–24, esp. n. 26. A large porphyry gorgoneion (diameter 56 in., or 143 cm)—the only porphyry mask to receive the waters that rain down there—was a feature of the original house of the Roman family Palai-
collections in Como (personal communication, Dottoressa Isabella Trumetti Beretta, director of the Musei Civici di Como).

66. For Oceanus as abundant sea, see Santoro Bianchi, "Il tema figurativo di Oceanos," 191-201. For "Oceanus" as an acronym to benefactors, see Eike Peterson, "Die Bedeutung der Òkeane-Ákklaamtion," Rheinisches Museum für Philologie 78 (1929): 221-23.


68. References are legion: for example, Homer R. 5.6, 18.489, "the stars bathe in Oceanos"; Virgil, Aen. 2.250, "and night tumbled into Ocean [et ruit Oceano nox]; 4.129, "meanwhile the rising Dawn quit Ocean [Oceanum interea surgens Aurora rapellat];" Georg. 3.556-58, "the sun... bathed his pluming chariot in Ocean... [Sol... praecipitatum Oceani rubro lassit aequum cursum];" Probus on Georg. 1.244-46, "for certain men affirm that the stars rise from the ocean and set in the ocean [Autumnaut guidam ex oceano ori und set in oceano occulto];" Festus, Consilia latina, s.v. Oceanus: "Sunset: the oblivion or immersion of the sun in Oceanus [Oceanus, interius vel solo in Oceano mersi]"; and a lengthy gloss in Eustathius, Comm. on the Iliad 5.5-6 (van der Valk, ed., Eustathii archaïsops epistuloslenicorum commen- tarii, vol. 7, 8-9). Minneferro (ca. 630-600 BCE) is alone in saying that the Oceanus is a river that leads east to arrive just before dawn; Archibald Allen, vol. 2 (Frankfurt: Klostertnann, 1987), 116 (with bibliography). A very nearly identical drawing from the same viewpoint and dated April 22, 1603, does not show the Bocca in this position (Collection Curtis O. Baer, New York); Richard Kraushaper, Corpus basili- carum christianarum romae, vol. 2 (Vatican City: Pontificio Istituto di Archeologia Cristiana, 1967), fig. 215.

69. Giovenale, Basilica, 37, pl. xxxvi. The mouth, eyes, circular frame, and confused interpretation of horns and fish show that these roun- dels are based on the Bocca. Such details depart from the vegetable- like motifs that are the asp of S. Fortunata, SS. Nerio ed Achille, S. Prassed, S. Martino ai Monti, and S. Silvestro in Capite, some of which are classical spolia, others dating from the seventh to the ninth century; see Alessandra Guiglia Guidobaldi and Patrizio Pensabene, "Il recupero dell’antico in età Carolingia: La decorazione scultorea absidale delle chiese di Roma," Rendiconti della Pontificia Ac- cademia Romana di Archeologia 78 (2005-6): 3-74.


75. Frontinus, De aquae ductu urbis Romae (Milan: Ulrico Hoepli, 1895–1901; facsimile ed., Rome: Quasar, 1988), pl. 28, and that the drain cover would have been lifted to allow maintenance work by threading ropes through the holes. Were this done, the marble would, of course, have snapped. 1.453–82; Ovid, Fasti 4.83–88; Origo gentisRomanae 6.7.4. Still essential is Jean Bayet, Les origines de l'Hercule romain (Paris: É. de Boccard, 1996). The Cacus episode may date to the lost Geryoneis episode may date to the lost Geryoneis


78. Respighi ("La voce della Verità," 167) further argued for a nexus of subterranean conduits in front of S. Maria in Cosmedin, though none is archaeologically attested (cf. Rudolf Lanciani, Forma Urbis Romae [Milan: Ulrico Hoepli, 1895–1901; facsimile ed., Rome: Quasar, 1988], pl. 28), and that the drain cover would have been lifted to allow maintenance work by threading ropes through the holes. Were this done, the marble would, of course, have snapped.


80. Cioarelli, Deip. 5.56. BCE), billing the first attested text locating it in the Forum Boarium in Rome.


83. Servius, Comm. ad Aen. 1.505) reports that round buildings had domes "which, according to those who have written about the design of temples, are made thus so that they resemble the heavens, which are known to be convex [qua securum est eos qui secernunt de ratione templorum, idem sic fit, ut simulacrum caeli imaginem reddat, quod constat esse rotundum]," repeated by Habranus Maurus (De universo 14.23; Jacques Paul Migne, ed., Patrologiae cursus completus, Series Latina, 221 vols. [Paris Garnier, 1844–55, 1862–65; vol. 111, col. 405]. Athenaeus (Deip. 2.55) describes a "magnificent dish . . . that represented the celestial hemisphere" and Petronius (Satyricon 35) a zodiacal fresco (driving tray) possibly covered by a domed lid; Eugenia Salza Prinetti, "II Fenele recunto dello Zodiaco," Rendiconto della Riunione Archeologica Comunale di Roma (1988), pl. 28), and that the drain cover would have been lifted to allow maintenance work by threading ropes through the holes. Were this done, the marble would, of course, have snapped.


86. Timotheus (1979): 141–57. esp. 1.56.

formerly in the collection of the Paduan Niccolò Leoncio Tomeo (1456–1531) of "Hercules and Virtue and Pleasure" ([Enrole con la Virtù e la Volontà]), and was taken from a Temple of Hercules in Rome that was all ornamented in this way"; Michel, Der anonyme Morelliano ([Mencanton Michel's Notizia d'opere del disegno], trans. and ed. Theodor Friimel (Vienna: Carl Graeser, 1896), 16, 17. Irene Favaretto assumes it was a fake because of the rarity of the theme and she does not consider the possibility that Hercules was actually shown between the Hesperides: Favaretto, "Appunti sulla collezione rinascimentale di Niccolò Leoncio Tomeo," Bollettino del Museo Civico di Padova 68 (1979): 19–21. For representations of Hercules and the Hesperides, see Ramón Correa del Río, "Sobre la imagen de Hercules Gaiusius," Romula 3 (2004): 53–62.


111. For example, the third-century-altar found here with the dedication "Invincible Hercules, Catus as urban praetor [possibly P. Catius Sabinius, consul in 216] gladly consecrated this gift to your divinity . . . when with pious intent and in the proper fashion he had performed the rite that you entrusted to the Potii in Evander's day so that it be ministered every year here at the Ara Maxima" ([CIL, vol. 6, 313], HERCULIS INVICTE, CATIVS HOC TVO INVICTO TVO SACRavit PRATIORI TVO, SACERDOTI TVO SACRARE \(\text{BISSIO: MENS TVO RITE FIERE CENSUS} \), to a commemorative altar, dedicated on 25 January 1541 and at an unspecified later date (Servius, 8.269). A circular altar (ca. 20 BCE) in the Villa Borghese, Rome, represents the annual sacrifice of a heifer and a pig to Hercules Invictus at the Ara Maxima, but the altar is only generally represented; Paolo Moreno and Antonietta Viacava, I marmi antichi della Galleria Borghese: La collezione archeologica di Camillo e Francesco Borghese: Guida-catalogo (Rome: De Luca, 2005), 156–57, cat. no. 23.


113. For its scale, see, Servius, Comment ad Am. 8.104; and Dionysios of Halicarnassus, Antiq. Rom. 1.40. Later remodelings or reconstructions are unrecorded, but it was changed by fire (Tacitus, Ann. 3.14.15) and at an unspecified later date (Servius, 8.269). A circular altar (ca. 20 BCE) in the Villa Borghese, Rome, represents the annual sacrifice of a heifer and a pig to Hercules Invictus at the Ara Maxima, but the altar is only generally represented; Paolo Moreno and Antonietta Viacava, I marmi antichi della Galleria Borghese: La collezione archeologica di Camillo e Francesco Borghese: Guida-catalogo (Rome: De Luca, 2005), 156–57, cat. no. 23.


115. Also on an as (a low-denomination copper coin) of Caracalla; van Berchem, "Sanctuarios d'Hercule-Melqart," 336–38, pl. 16, 337, fig. 1. If the podium under the choir of S. Maria in Comedn is truly that of the Ara Maxima, then an antique cista within it (Fusiello, "La Piazza del Foro Boario," 7–8) may have been the treasure of these relics.

116. The mosaic is said to have been acquired from a Russian private collection in 1955, and the date and site of discovery given in an unpublished Russian PhD dissertation (Ilena Bonda, curator, Department of Antiquities, personal communication). A similar sphinkos is represented on a circular base dedicated to Hercules in 81 CE found near the Ara Maxima; CIL, vol. 6, 528; Henry Stuart Jones, A Catalogue of the Ancient Statues Preserved in the Municipal Collections of Rome (Oxford: Claren- don Press, 1912), 546, no. 6a, pl. 89; and Coarelli, Il Foro Boario, 73–77.
117. Servius, Comm. ad Aen. 8.278; "an enormous wooden goblet..." and the only exceptions that Torelli remarks are coins commemorating the Via Traiana. Under Trajan, no cult statue stood in the Cadiz temple; Philostratus, Vita Aprod. 5.5. Palagia ("Two Statues of Hercules," 51-70) suggests that a statue of Hercules shrine in the Forum Boarium is represented on the Philopappos monument in Athens; see D. E. E. Kleiner, The Monument of Philopappos in Athens (Rome: G. Bretschneider, 1983), 87-98, pl. 17b. A votive relief (Musei Capitolini, Rome, inv. no. 941; LIMC, vol. 5, no. 1396) may record that another aedicule; Hercules' club stands on a bull's head and his left hand is behind him, possibly holding the golden apples in the manner of the Farnese Coarelli (Il Campo Marzio, 400, fig. 81) instead suggests that the relief represents the Temple of Hercules Custinus at the Circus Flaminius.

118. For the tidal flood, see Scriptoriae Historiae Augustae (hereafter SFA), Hadrianus 21.6, for the rededication of temples after fire, see CIL, vol. 6, 40521 (no. 979).

119. Including the Horrea (Aemilliana) opposite the Temple of Portunus; Giussippina Pisani Sartorio and Paola Virill, "Area sacra di S. Omo- bono," Archeologia Lazzale 2 (1979): 44 (brick stamps of 125-24 CE); Caratius and Oceantis: Two New Roman Acquisitions at the British Museum, 228-28; and Caroli, Il Foro Boario, 45-76. The "public building" faces the carceres (starting gates) of the Circus Maximus and containing a later Mithraeum is also dated to the second century; Pietrangeli, "Il mitreo," 143-74. The Temple of Portunus was revamped with new stucco in either the late first or early second century. The niche on the side of the niche wall is of the Caracalla type; Ara Maxima is variously dated as imperial, Hadrianic, and fourth century; Krautheimer, Corpus basilicarum, vol. 2, 299; Credesi, 263-64, no. 14; and Vincenti, "L'Ara Maxima," 570.

120. For Nero, Hadrian, Septimius Severus, Maximian, and Constans, see Adelina Arnaldi, "Oceantis: Two New Roman Acquisitions at the British Museum," 228-28; and Caroli, Il Foro Boario, 45-76. The "public building" faces the carceres (starting gates) of the Circus Maximus and containing a later Mithraeum is also dated to the second century; Pietrangeli, "Il mitreo," 143-74. The Temple of Portunus was revamped with new stucco in either the late first or early second century. The niche on the side of the niche wall is of the Caracalla type; Ara Maxima is variously dated as imperial, Hadrianic, and fourth century; Krautheimer, Corpus basilicarum, vol. 2, 299; Credesi, 263-64, no. 14; and Vincenti, "L'Ara Maxima," 570.


122. By Trajan's period it is doubtful that Roman citizens would have made much distinction in any case between Hercules Gadiatus and Hercules Romanus: forty-three types of Hercules were known to Varro (Servius, Comm. ad Aen. 8.564); Cicero (De natura deorum 3.42) distinguished five; and Pliny (Hist. nat. 11.17.52) said their identities were buried in history. From the Spanish inscription, however, J. J. Thriborough and the image of the Herculean Gadiatus possibly symbolized the continuity of an élite of Punic descent and its presence in Rome; Cecilia Ames, "Moneda corrente: Dòes de mano en mano; Observaciones sobre los símbolos religiosos en las monedas romanas; Hercules Gadiatus," Argo: Revista de la Asociación Argentina de Estudios Clásicos 27 (2005): 7-23.


124. CIL, vol. 6, 530.


128. For the triumphal route, see Filippo Coarelli, "La Porta trionfale e la via dei troioni," Dialoghi di Archeologia 2 (1968): 55-103; idem, Il Foro Boario, 564-67; and R. Kanan, "Die Tempel des 'Hercules Invictus.'" 102-20. For the statue of Hercules Triumphalis, see Pliny, Hist. nat. 34.16.33.
as their heads (Trajan and Marcus Aurelius respectively) are modern additions, there is little chance of dating them; Stemmer, Untersuchungen, cat. no. 15. 6.1-2; Cornelius Celsus, "Hellenisirr Roman Cuirassed Statues," Berytus 13, no. 1 (1959): 38, no. 39, pl. 6.20. A dislocated, bronze gorgoneion-type Oceanus ornament was also found at Luxus (Morocco); Louis Chatelain, "Métallor de bronze découvrit à Luxus," Bulletin de la Société Nationale des Antiquaires de France, 1943-44, 275.


138. For Alexander, see Arrian, Anabasis 6.19,5; and Q. Curtius Rufus, 9.9. For Pompey, see Plutarch, Pompeius 38.2-3; and idem, De fortuna ro-
manorum 32.4A. In 62 BCE, Pompey dedicated an inscription in the Temple of Minerva on the Campus in the frontiers of Empire to the frontiers of the earth (Diodorus 40.4; and Pliny, Hist. nat. 7.97). Ursula Vogel-Weidemann, "The Dedicator Inscription of Pompeius Magnus in Diodorus 40.4," Acta Classica 28 (1985): 67-75. Pliny (7.26.95) states that his achievements rivalled those of Alexander and almost those of Heracles and Dionysus. For Caesar, see Plutarch, Car-


140. Pliny, Hist. nat. 36.43:9; "the Heracles, to which the Carthaginians used to sacrifice human victims every year, stands on the ground be-
fote the entrance to the Portico of the Athenaion." There is a general consensus that the porticus ad nathones was part of the complex of Pompey's gardens; Filippo Coarelli, "Porticus ad nathones," in Lexicon topographicum urbis romae (hereafter LTUR), ed. Eva Margareta Steinhby, 6 vols. (Rome: Quasar, 1993-2000), vol. 4, 138-39. For Property, see F. 64 above.


142. Again forecast in Livy (36.17), who puts this ambition into the mouth of Manius Acilius Glabrio, rahlhing the troops before defeating Antio-

143. SHA, Hadr. 12.6, 11, 12; Eric Birley, "Hadrianic Frontier Policy," in Car-


145. Anthologia Latina 419.4: "quis finis mundo est, non erat imperio"

146. Servius, Commentarius in Vergilii Bucolica 1.66: Britain is "an island set in the northern Ocean, and the poets call it another world [insula re-

147. Panegyrici latini 7.7.1 Translation mine. For the text, see C. E. V. Nixon and Barbara Saylor Rodgers, eds., In Praise of Later Roman Em-

148. CIL, vol. 15, 8811 (dedicated by the Legio VI Victoria); Clive Caplan, "Neptune and Ocean," Archaelogia 84 (1957): 20; 102; 475, 57; and E. Phillips, Corbriade, Hadrian's Wall East of the North Tyne (Ox-

149. Virgil, Aen. 1.168-90. "neque vero Alcides tantum telluris obivit."]

150. John C. Coulston and E. J. Phillips, Hadrian's Wall West of the North Tyne and Carlisle (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 35. cat. no. 94, pl. 24. I disagree that the head "is more likely to .symbolize the

151. For Alexander's dedication, see Arrian, Anab. 8.18.11; and Diodorus Siculus, 17.10.4.

152. SHA, Hadr. 26.5: "He constructed the Villa at Tivoli marvelously, in such a way that he could see on it the most celebrated names of the provinces and places such that, for instance, he could invoke the Lyceum, the Academy, the Prytaneeum, Canopus, the Pocielie, and the [Vale of] Tempe. And, so that he omit nothing, he even represented the underworld [Tiburinum sivum mire exscolitoso-


154. Mathias Uebelacker and Catia Caprino, Das Teatro Marittimo in der Villa Hadriana (Mainz: Philipp von Zabern, 1985). Uebelacker (41-42) notes the presence of the Torrione at Tivoli, but dates it not earlier than 121. The Teatro Marittimo is oriented 22.5 degrees west of due north.

155. Serrlin (Hadriam, 139) and Indra Kang Ewen have previously and


158. The sculpted friezes are cataloged but not interpreted in Ueblacker and Caprino, Das Teatro Marittimo, 61–86, esp. fig. 9.

159. The thiasos frieze was replicated in the Piazza d’Oro, where it included heads of Oceanus; see the drawings by Pirro Ligorio and Stephen Vinaud Pighius in Antonella Ranaldi, Perro Ligorio e l’interpretazione delle ville antiche (Rome: Quasar, 2001), figs. 112, 115.

160. George M. A. Hanfmann, The Season Sarcoephagus in Dumbarton Oaks (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1951), 159–68; and Penelope J. E. Davies, Death and the Emperor: Roman Imperial Funerary Monuments from Augustus to Marcus Aurelius (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 83–85. Hanfmann specifies that the "seasonal chariots" on sarcophagi were never drawn by horses but only by "seasonal animals" (rams, bulls, lions, panthers, and boars). A comparable Hellenistic example is the fourth-century BCE conical tomb at Kazanlak, Bulgaria (near ancient Seuthopolis), whose faux ocultis contains three racing chariots.


162. J. Clayton Fant calls them "column sections," which is scarcely credible, but concedes that "it is not clear what their intended use was": Fant, Caveum Antrum Physiurgiae: The Organisation and Operations of the Roman Imperial Marble Quarries in Phrygia (Oxford: B.A.R., 1989), 77–80, nos. 1–5. Their diameter is about 55 to 63 in. (139 to 160 cm), where the Bocca is about 69 in. (175 cm) in diameter; their thickness about 10 to 12 in. (26 to 30 cm), where the Bocca’s maximum thickness is about 8 in. (20 cm).

163. The relation between water and marble is discussed at length in Barry, “Walking on Water,” 630–34. For the comments and sources that follow, see also there no. 32–34, 43–45.


165. For the marbles of the Teatro Marittimo, see Ueblacker and Caprino, Das Teatro Marittimo, 50, 37–38; and Federico Guidobaldi et al., Secilia pavimenta di Villa Adriana (Rome: Istituto Poligrafico dello Stato, 1994), 112–13, no. 39, pl. LXVII.


167. Julian, Missopogon 341B.

168. For example, Aeschylus, Prometheus Bound 301–3 (on Oceanos); Ovid, Fasti 5.661–62 (on Tiber); Statius, Thebais 4.107–9 (on Acheloös).

169. Ovid, Met. 8.652–64 specifies that Acheloös’s lair was "a dark hall, built of porous pumice and rough tufa. The floor was moist with soft moss, and alternating oyster and mussel shells paneled the vault."

170. Homer, Il. 20.144; and idem, Od. 9.536 (kuanoechaito). There is no simple translation for kuanoechaito, but it references a brilliant raven blue in opposition to the duller blackish melas (as niger opposes ater in Latin). Sophocles, Trachiniae 15–14.

171. Dimas Fernández-Galiano, "The Villa of Maternus at Carranque," in Fifth International Colloquium on Ancient Mosaics: Bath, September 5–12, 1987, ed. Peter Johnson, Roger Ling, and D. J. Smith (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1994), 199–210. In the mosaic at Dueñas, the hair is made from blue and gray glass tesserae, whereas stone tesserae compose the rest of the mosaic; the sloping floor was continuously washed by a wall fountain, and the subaqueous effect was completed by blue-glass windows; de Palol, "Okeanos-Mosaik," 203. For the sarcophagi, see Rumpf, Die Meeruiesen, 11–19, pls. 8, 10, 11, 13, 15.
