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In the Greek and Roman world acclamations consisted of short oral texts delivered by an individual or group to an audience from which verbal approval was expected or elicited. They could be pronounced only once or repeated several times (Chaniotis, 2008, pp. 201 and 204) and consisted of single words or stereotypical formulas and, as indicated in literary and epigraphic sources, could also be subjected to variations and stylistic elaborations aimed at enhancing their impact. The Latin word *acclamatio* generally indicated an exclamation, a cry that could manifest disapproval or approval (OLD, s.v. *Acclamatio*; ThLL, s.v. *acclamatio*). Similarly, the verb *acclamare* meant to utter a cry towards someone, to exclaim aloud, both in a friendly or hostile way (OLD, s.v. *acclamare*; ThLL, s.v. *acclamare*). The terms used in Latin-language sources in reference to the practice of acclamation are not only those just mentioned, but multiple: *conclamare* – *concrepare* – *consonare* – *clamitare* – *consentire* – *personare* – *adsurgere* – *consurgere* – *appellare* – *salutare* – *precari* – *vox* – *conclamatio*. Those used in Greek-language sources are mainly *phoné* [φωνή] – *ekbóesis* [ἐκβόησις] – *euphemía* [εὐφημία] – *boáo* [βοάω] – *ekboáo* [ἐκβοάω] – *sumboáo* [συμβοάω] – *légo* [λέγω] – *epainéo* [ἐπαινέω] – *epikaléo* [ἐπικαλέω] – *krázo* [κράζω].

The functions of acclamations in the ancient world were varied and manifested in various public contexts: they were sung in honor of the divinities and had an important role in religious rituals and ceremonies, widely used in the various civic body meetings to indicate consent of people in the assembly, municipal council members, and the senate, and to honor individuals by attributing particular epithets to them. In many cases these functions were closely related to each other (Chaniotis 2007, pp. 48–66; Stavrianopoulou 2006, pp. 198–201, 302–11; Wiemer 2004, pp. 55–73; Aldrete 1999, pp. 101–64; Parker 1990, pp. 163–69). Public performances were privileged occasions for expressions and repetition of cheering. In the theatre, amphitheatre and circus, where large numbers of citizens usually met, crowds cheered their favorites who performed, the *editores* of the performance, the magistrates, the emperor, and members of his family.

Crowds also showed their appreciation for the works of various authors through applause and acclamation. Tacitus chronicles the following anecdote about the poet Virgil: while he was in the theatre, all the people, having listened to his verses, stood up and praised him (with cheers of approval), almost as they normally did with Augustus (Tacitus, *Dialogus de oratoribus*, 13.2). Actors were acclaimed for their skill and, in some cases, their choice of certain verses or specific works performed on stage, made with reference to the contemporary political situation, as Cicero clearly attests in *Pro Sestio*. Here he recalls that the famous actor Aesop, on hearing the news of the decree, voted in the temple of Virtue, in favor of Cicero's return to Rome from exile, defended his cause before the Roman people with words much more effective than those Cicero himself could have used and for which the people demanded an encore: «in danger / he did not hesitate to offer his life or spare his head». Countless cheers from the crowd accompanied the recitation of these verses, taken from the works of Ennius, Pacuvius and Afranius, and Cicero highlights how, by now, the audience in the theatre no longer paid attention only to the actor's scenic behavior, but also to poet's words, the passion of the interpreter, and the expectation of his return (Cicero, *Pro Sestio*, 120–21). In one of his fables, Phaedrus (5.5), speaks of a challenge on stage between a buffoon and a farmer to reproduce a pig's grunt, and mentions the gifts and countless applauses showered upon the buffoon (*multis onerant lancibus / hominemque plausu prosequuntur maximo*), the applauses and cheers directed at the farmer after the performance (*movetque plausus et clamores provocitat*), and the final judgment of the crowd gathered in the theatre expressed through shouts of acclamation: the buffoon had imitated the pig's verse much more realistically than the farmer (*acclamat populus scurram molto similis imitatum*). The excessive demonstrations of favor or disapproval for actors in the theatre by their fans (*factiones* – *fautores*) could also degenerate into serious episodes of violence (Slater

1994, pp. 120–44). Several ancient authors tell of the various riots that occurred because of the mime actors and, reading their accounts, it can be assumed that through cheers the crowd expressed excessive acclaim for their idol, or caused offense to magistrates, or requested authorities to revoke certain measures. Suetonius reports that emperor Tiberius, in the wake of a fight among theatre spectators, sentenced the leaders of the factions, as well as the actors who had been the cause of the accident, to confinement and that he was not persuaded by the people's pleas to revoke his decision (Suetonius, *Tiberius*, 37.2). Tacitus also, underlining the *lascivia fautorum*, the wild behavior of the actors' accomplices, writes that under Tiberius, in 15 AD, serious riots broke out in the theatre causing several deaths, even among the soldiers trying to prevent assaults against the magistrates (Tacitus, *Annales*, 1.77.2).

In the Republican age in Rome, buildings used for performances, including theatres, were the venues people preferred to display consensus or dissent, which were expressed through applauding and cheering. At the theatre there was a second performance within the scenic context of the representation itself, when the elite members entered to take place at the seats that they were assigned, an event which also led to various kinds of reactions from those already present. According to the usual practice, the crowd could welcome incumbent magistrates and other prominent politicians with cheers which could be either expressions of approval or denigration. The positive acclamations were generally accompanied by long-lasting applause and standing ovations. Therefore, when sources mention unanimous applause and standing ovations, this often implies an expression of acclaim. In *Pro Sestio* Cicero focuses on the use of acclamations in the theatre, first by formulating some general considerations and then with the narration of what happened in the *ludi Apollinares* of 57 BC, immediately before his return from exile. Speaking of the political function of the theatre and the importance attributed to positive acclamations during the shows, he writes eloquently: «Let us now come to the shows: for your attention, gentlemen, and the manner in which you direct your eyes to me, make me believe that I may now speak in a lighter vein. Expressions of public opinion at assemblies and at meetings are sometimes the voice of truth, but sometimes they are falsified and corrupt: at theatrical and gladiatorial shows it is said to be common for some feeble and scanty applause to be started by a hired and unprincipled claque, and yet, when that happens, it is easy to see how and by whom it is started and what the honest part of the audience does. Why should I tell you today what men or what class of citizens is chiefly applauded? Not one of you fails to understand. Suppose applause to be a trivial matter, which it is not, since it is given to all the best citizens; but if it is trivial, it is so only to a man of character, but to those who depend upon the merest trifles, who are controlled and governed by rumour and, as they themselves put it, by the favour of the people, applause must seem immortality, and hissing death» (Cicero, *Pro Sestio*, 115, translation by R. Gardner). He then recalls how the unanimous applause broke out among the spectators when it was announced in the theatre that the senate had decreed his return and how every senator who had voted in his favor was acclaimed at the entrance to the building (Cicero, *Pro Sestio*, 117); he also reports that on the entry of consul Lentulus, who was in charge of the games and had supported Cicero's return, the cheering people thanked him with outstretched hands for his benevolence and mercy towards Cicero (*stantes et manibus passis gratias agentes et lacrimantes gaudio suam erga me benivolentiam ac misericordiam declararunt*). It is also interesting to note what the Arpinas records immediately after regarding the acclamations of reproach levelled at his enemy Clodius: at the entrance to the building of that madman, the people, barely managing to curb their hatred and cause him physical violence, manifested their complete condemnation with unanimous shouts, raised fists and cursing acclamations (*vix homines odium suum a corpore eius impuro atque infando represserunt; voces quidem et palmarum intentus et maledictorum clamorem omnes profuderunt*).

The political life of many protagonists of Roman history was marked by acclamations in the theatre. On the last day of his life Pompeius had a deceptive dream: in his theatre a vast crowd of people competed to make the loudest applause throughout the cavea, joyfully

calling out his name to heaven (*attollique suum laetis ad sidera nomen uocibus et plausu cuneos certare sonantes*); the spectacle and the clamor of the crowd (*populi facies clamorque fauentis*) being the same as when he celebrated his first triumph as a young man (Lucanus, 7.7-12; cf. Plutarch, *Pompeius*, 68.2). And then there was Q. Fabius Maximus who, after being designated as *consul suffectus* for 46 BC, was greeted with shouts of «he is not consul» on entering the theatre (*ab universis conclamatum est non esse eum consulem*, Suetonius, *Caesar*, 80). Various studies have highlighted the importance of acclamations since songs and cheers mediated relations between the rulers and the governed and mirrored the symbolic relationship between the game organizers and the public. Indeed, recourse to acclamations by the people gathered in the theatre was a favored instrument to express specific requests (Flaig 2003, pp. 232-60; Edmondson 1996, pp. 69-112; Bollinger 1969, pp. 50-71). Appian recalls that in 44 BC, during the preparations for the *ludi Apollinares*, which included both *ludi scaenici* and *circenses*, a part of the ruling class hoped that the people during the shows would request the return of the Caesarcides. However, the planned program was modified and the representation of Accius' *Brutus* was replaced by that of *Tereus* of the same author; thus the desired propaganda function broke down. Therefore, while the performances were taking place, some people, who were paid to do so, began to shout for the recall of Brutus and Cassius, managing to reconcile the entire audience and fill it with compassion; for this reason, the show was suspended until the requests had ceased. At that point, Brutus and Cassius saw the expectations they had placed in the crowd's demonstrations frustrated (Appian, *Bellum civile*, 3.23.87; 3.24.90-91; Cicero also highlights demonstrations (*plausus*) in support of Brutus in the *ludi Apollinares* (Cicero, *Philippicae*, 1.36). Another episode can be mentioned. In 40 BC, after Octavian and Marcus Antonius had made the Treaty of Brundisium, the people in Rome, afflicted with hunger and taxes, rejoiced at the agreement between the two, but expressed anger at the conflict with Sextus Pompeius, thereby aggravating the crisis. Therefore, when they were reunited for the public shows, they asked Octavian and Marcus Antonius to make peace with Sextus Pompeius, loudly expressing their acclamations (Cassius Dio, 48.31.4-5).

This practice was an integral part of the forms of political communication in Rome, which were implemented in different ways and different places (forum, theatre, circus, amphitheatre, streets, temples). Acclamations of approval or blame were so important in the construction of the public image of those actively involved in Roman political life that they became the subject of detailed reports in letters, orations, literary works of various kinds, and even espionage by foreign kings (Parker 1999, pp. 163-67). For the people they represented a means to express their thoughts and consent freely and without concern, as well as an instrument of participation in political life. For the elite, acclamation at the theatre in front of everyone was a remarkable indicator of power and status. During both the Republican age, when all the various spaces assigned to politics were available to the *cives Romani*, and the imperial age, when the forms of participation in politics changed for the people, the *ludi scaenici* and *circenses* represented an important moment of encounter with political power (Fraschetti 1989, pp. 614-15). During the Empire, acclamations marked the emperor and his family's entry into the theatre, as well as the simultaneous standing ovation of all the spectators. At various passages of his biographies Suetonius points out that applause can be taken as a form of acclamation – the grandchildren of Augustus, Gaius and Lucius Caesars, were given acclamations and applause in the theatre (*assurrectum ab universis in theatro et a stantibus plausum gravissima questus est*, Suetonius, *Augustus*, 56). Similar demonstrations of favor and approval were given to the nephew, Marcellus, who had died prematurely (*I nunc, tolle animos et tecum finge triumphos; / stantiaque in plausum tota theatra iuvent*, Propertius, 3.18.17-18). The people tried to confer the title of *Pater patriae* to Augustus himself, first with an embassy in Antium, then in the theatre in Rome when the *princeps* entered there. This was necessarily done through the repetition of the simple title or a more complex acclamatory formula connecting it to an auspicious expression (Suetonius, *Augustus*, 58.1). Even before Claudius was emperor, the people addressed him, when he presided over the games in place of Caligula, with acclamations wishing him happiness,

remembering his position as uncle of the emperor, and linking him to his brother Germanicus, much beloved by Roman citizens (*adclamante populo: «feliciter» partim «patruo imperatoris» partim «Germanici fratri!»*, Suetonius, *Claudius*, 7). During his principate Claudius recommended his child Britannicus to the soldiers and the people gathered for the shows and was greeted with propitious cheers (Suetonius, *Claudius*, 27.3).

Acclamations could be spontaneous or organized and led by specific people for specific purposes. Crowds were educated in the practice of acclamation and the use of the related formulas in the theatre, the amphitheatre and the circus since the first century BC, when the existence of supporters, hired to applaud, and *claque* is recorded. Cicero in *Pro Sestio* referred to this, as has already been mentioned (Cicero, *Pro Sestio*, 115). But previously Plautus in the *Amphitruo* refers to the habit of guided applause and cheering towards both actors and politicians. In fact, in the prologue Mercury calls for inspectors to be located at the steps of the entire theatron, who can check for the presence of acclaimers in charge of expressing consensus towards certain politicians. He hopes that there will be inspectors who check also that the actors do not send their own delegates to applaud them or disparage their rivals, obviously through acclaim of praise or disapproval (Plautus, *Amphitruo*, 65-85). Tacitus, in the *Annals*, when he is writing about the rebellion in Pannonia, which broke out under Tiberius, speaks of a soldier named Percennius who had once been head of the professional hired applauders, *dux olim theatralium operarum*, and expert in stirring up the crowd with his passion for theatrics (Tacitus, *Annales*, 1.16.4).

Thanks to the introduction of the Augustians, Nero's principate turned out to be a fundamental moment in the development of the practice and technique of acclamation. For his performances Nero had organized a group of leaders of the *claque*, the Augustians, made up of young people of equestrian rank, to which five thousand young plebeians were subsequently added. They had their own distinctive clothes and, since their leaders received a salary of 400,000 sesterces, some importance as well. Cassius Dio gives us a very precise picture: «As a fitting climax to these performances, Nero himself made his appearance in the theatre, being announced under his own name by Gallio. So there stood this Caesar on the stage wearing the garb of a lyre-player. This emperor uttered the words: "My lords, of your kindness give me ear", and this Augustus sang to the lyre some piece called "Attis" or "the Baccanthes", while many soldiers stood by and all the people that the seats would hold sat watching. Yet he had, according to report, but a slight and indistinct voice, so that he moved his whole audience to laughter and tears at once. Beside him stood Burrus and Seneca, like teachers, prompting him; and they would wave their arms and togas at every utterance of his and lead others to do the same. Indeed, Nero had got ready a special corps of about five thousand soldiers, called Augustans; these would lead the applause, and all the rest, however loath, were obliged to shout with them. Thræsea was the single exception, since he would never help Nero in these matters; but all the rest, and especially the prominent men, assembled with alacrity, grieved though they were, and joined in all the shouts of the Augustans, as if they were delighted. And one might have heard them exclaiming: "Glorious Caesar! Our Apollo, our Augustus, another Pythian! By thyself we swear, O Caesar non surpasses thee". After this performance, he entertained the people at a feast on boats on the site of the naval battle given by Augustus; thence at midnight he sailed through a canal into the Tiber» (61.20.1-5, translation by E. Cary). The Augustians were specialized in ways of welcoming the emperor and showing appreciation for his abilities as an actor and charioteer in theatres and other venues used for entertainment. The specific function of this group was to initiate and coordinate applause, followed by cheering at the appearance of the emperor and when he performed on stage in such a way that the public would join in, showing its appreciation, as it slavishly imitated the Augustians. This means that the public gradually learned and knew how to reproduce the various types of applause and complex acclamations used by the Neronian *claque*. In fact, with reference to Nero and his performances in the theatre, Tacitus writes in the *Annales* (16.4.4-5.1) that while Nero was waiting for the judges' ruling after a performance, the Roman plebs would encourage the theatrics of the *claque* by making the whole theatre resound (*personabat*) with elaborate

applause and measured modulations (*certis modis plausuque compositae*). Derived from a Hellenistic model, the acclamations pronounced by this body represented the first organic appearance in Rome of complex *laudationes*, composed of the listing of Nero's imperial titles to which other particular attributes, linked to individual contexts, such as his victory in Greece, praise for his voice and appearance and comparison to Apollo and Heracles, were added. All sources insist that the primary task of these *iuvenes* was to proclaim *laudationes* to Nero (Suetonius, *Nero*, 20; Tacitus, *Annales*, 14.15.4). This body was created in 59 AD. on the occasion of the *Ludi Iuvenales*, but it is probable that it had been used before this date, during the private performances of the emperor in chariot races in the Circus Vaticanus (Cassius Dio, 61.20.3-5; Tacitus, *Annales*, 14.14.4; Suetonius, *Nero*, 53.3; see Morgues 1990, pp. 196-210; Morgues 1988, pp. 156-81). By now a technique of total acclaim had been reached, both gestural and rhythmic, which combined applause of various types with a *laudatio*, pronounced by alternating choirs (*factiones*), responding to each other from either side of the spectacle building. The very positioning of seats and the consequent spatial distribution of the *claque's* members facilitated acclamation. Pliny the Younger, in his Panegyric (54.1-2), contrasts a truly spontaneous and favorable form of welcome, such as that reserved for Trajan in *theatris*, with the more artificial and programmed forms preferred by some emperors, such as Nero.

This complex technique of acclamation, not attested to for the time preceding the Neronian principate, had such a significant impact on the people that it was never abandoned; the citizens continued cheering the living emperor in this way, both in structures dedicated to spectacles and various ceremonial contexts. Cassius Dio recalls how, at the performances in which Commodus took part in 192, the senators, and probably the crowd, were invited to sing acclamatory formulas and that the spectators were also told what to sing, noting that the people habitually sang rhythmic phrases in praise of Commodus in theatres and amphitheatres (Cassius Dio, 72 [73].20.2 and 73 [74].2.3). In both Late Antiquity and the Byzantine Era the cheers of the crowd were pronounced in all kinds of contexts, but especially in theatres and hippodromes where they were organized by professional *clagues*. The acclamations were recorded in writing and referred to emperors in case their absence, when elevated for them. They also became an essential component of the ceremony of ascent to the throne (Fagan 2011, pp. 139-40; Arena 2007, pp. 327-36; Roueché 1984, pp. 116-32; Cameron 1976).

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[PATRIZIA ARENA]