

COLEMAN-HILTON SCHOLARSHIP

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Poisoning in Roman society and literature

During my residency at the British School at Rome, I conducted research related to my PhD project, which explores poisoning and poisoning allegations in Roman society and literature. I utilized the extensive collection of the BSR library and visited sites in Italy and Greece to inform the final stages of my work.

Scholarship on poisoning in ancient Rome is scant and generally limited to the stereotype of the female poisoner, which pervades Roman literature. The Romans believed that women were more likely to commit poisoning because it was a surreptitious and cowardly weapon suited to the 'weaker sex'. Adulteresses and stepmothers were typical poisoners, and in cases of suspicious and unexpected deaths at a time before advanced toxicology, wives often faced blame and punishment. However, there are many stories about male poisoners in Ancient Rome. The conception of poison as a female-coded weapon and a symbol of moral decay made the accusation of poison's use a convenient way to discredit a personal or political opponent. It also created the opportunity for Roman authors and historians such as Cicero, Livy and Tacitus to utilize poisoning stories in ways that suited their unique purposes. My work reveals the existence of a complex sociopolitical discourse surrounding *venenum* (poison) and *veneficium* (poisoning) in Ancient Rome. The aim of my time at the BSR was to consult existing scholarship on poisoning and poisoners in Roman history and to broaden my approach by engaging with the multidisciplinary research environment of the BSR.

During my research residency, I read extensively in Cicero, Livy and Tacitus, alongside numerous scholarly works which I had previously been unable to access. My chapters on Cicero and Tacitus underwent considerable transformation thanks to the ability to consult legal texts and copies of the *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* (CIL). Moreover, I gained a deep topographical knowledge of Ancient Rome and its environs through living in the city, exploring major archaeological sites and museums. I travelled to the Bay of Naples region twice to view and photograph important examples of Pompeian wall-painting which depict poison-making and poisoning, as well as supposed 'pharmacies' at Pompeii. I partnered with the Abbey Scholar in Painting, Tura Oliveira, to travel to Athens to view relevant sites and artefacts, including the prison of the Athenian agora where Socrates was imprisoned, the Areopagus and cups believed to have been used for hemlock. I met with scholars at the Australian Archaeological Institute at Athens, who contributed crucial advice to my chapter on Cicero, resulting in a re-interpretation of a critical passage pertaining to poisoning charges. I wrote and produced a play entitled 'A Womanly Treachery? The Poisoners of 331 BCE', which was acted by award-holders for the staff and residents of the BSR, an exciting collaborative opportunity which allowed me to explore the difficulties of writing and reconstructing history in a creative way. Finally, I presented the paper 'The Effeminacy of Sejanus the Poisoner in Tacitus' *Annals*' at the Classical Association Conference 2024.

I would like to offer my sincere thanks to Ms Suzanne Coleman and Mr Jeffrey Hilton for sponsoring this award. I had an incredible and enriching experience. My work has been profoundly shaped by my time at the BSR. I am also deeply grateful to

the award-holders with whom I shared my time, for their companionship, inspiration and support.

CAITLIN McMENAMIN
(University of Sydney)
Caitlin.McMenamin@sydney.edu.au

GILES WORSLEY FELLOWSHIP

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Architectural authorship: the Mosque of Rome and Islamic Cultural Centre

Inaugurated in 1995 to accommodate Rome's growing Muslim population, the Mosque of Rome, designed by Paolo Portoghesi, Sami Mousawi and Vittorio Gigliotti, serves as the largest mosque in the Western world. The complex also bears the title of 'Islamic Cultural Centre' – a name befitting the Mosque's duality as both mentor (for the Islamic community) and mediator (for the wider non-Islamic community).

Despite Mousawi's pivotal role in the shaping of the Mosque, his influence has been eclipsed by Portoghesi's prominence. The aim of my project was to rectify this historical oversight by highlighting Mousawi's significance and advocating for recognition within architectural discourse. Through archival research, community engagement and documentation of the Mosque's architecture, the project sought to challenge biases favouring established figures over lesser-known contributors.

The course of my research underwent a significant shift during my tenure at the British School at Rome. Though initially focused on the architectural significance of the Mosque, the project evolved to prioritize addressing the historical marginalization of Mousawi. This transformation was prompted by engagement with archival materials and the local community, revealing the passive erasure of Mousawi's name in architectural history. This shift reflects a broader commitment to advocating for overlooked voices in the field.

The research involved extensive documentation of the Mosque's architecture, including photographic surveys and interviews with the local community. Notably, efforts to highlight Mousawi's contributions sparked renewed interest in his work among locals and challenged prevailing narratives in architectural history. Participation in the BSR's Open Studios further diversified the project's outputs, fostering a deeper understanding of visual expression alongside traditional research methods.

Beyond its immediate findings, the research contributes to broader discussions on architectural authorship and the recognition of marginalized figures within the profession. By interrogating biases in architectural history, the project offers insights into credit attribution dynamics and the impact of established narratives on lesser-known architects. I am committed to continue advocating for overlooked voices while exploring new avenues for research and collaboration.

The Giles Worsley Fellowship facilitated collaborations with fellow scholars and artists, enriching the research experience. Interactions within the interdisciplinary community inspired creative outputs such as poetry and encouraged exploration beyond academic confines. The Fellowship also provided invaluable opportunities for academic and personal growth. Immersion in Rome's cultural landscape and access to resources at the BSR significantly enhanced the research experience.