

# Inverted Upsilon. Roman Portraits with Y-Motif in the Fringe

## *Ípsilon invertida. Retratos romanos con Y-motivo en el flequillo*

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**ABSTRACT:** Roman portraits with Y-Motif in the fringe have never been investigated exhaustively. Isolated comments or individual studies of some of them are all that can be found in specialised literature. The basic questions posed by the use of this iconographic detail in Roman portraiture remain unanswered: when and where it was employed, who were portrayed in that way, and why. The aim of the present paper is to fill that gap in research.

**Keywords:** Roman portrait; fork; fringe; iconography; Y-Motif.

**RESUMEN:** Los retratos romanos con Y-motivo en el flequillo no han sido nunca investigados exhaustivamente. Comentarios aislados o estudios individuales de algunos de ellos es todo lo que puede encontrarse en la literatura especializada. Las preguntas clave planteadas por el uso de este detalle iconográfico en la retratística romana continúan sin respuesta: cuándo y dónde fue empleado, quién se retrató de ese modo y por qué. El objetivo de este artículo es solventar esa carencia en la investigación.

**Palabras clave:** retrato romano; horquilla; flequillo; iconografía; Y-motivo.

To Klaus Fittschen,  
in gratitude for all that he taught me.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Some Roman portraits show a fork in the form of an inverted epsilon in the middle of their fringe.<sup>1</sup> These hairstyles with the Y-Motif were used in Roman portraiture for over 250 years.<sup>2</sup> Despite their popularity, they were not created on the initiative of the imperial house. It was a citizen trend, whose success led to it being recovered years later by members of the imperial family. As it first appeared in the Roman world with the private portraits of some youths,<sup>3</sup> it can be affirmed that the expansion of this iconographic fashion took place as a ‘bottom-up’ phenomenon (for this

matter, see Bergmann, 1982; Fittschen, 1993a, pp. 207-208; 2010a, p. 239; D’Ambra, 2013, pp. 521-522, p. 524; 2015, p. 48; Fittschen, 2015, p. 67; Maderna, 2017, p. 419).

## 2. AUGUSTAN YOUTHS AND THE Y-MOTIF

The earliest Roman portraits with Y-Motif were made in the time of Augustus. They all depict unknown young men who look very like Gaius and Lucius Caesar (for the portraits of Gaius and Lucius Caesar: Fittschen, 1977, pp. 34-40; Fittschen and Zanker, 1985, pp. 21-25; Pollini, 1987; Boschung, 1993a, pp. 52-54; Goette, 1993). Two of them are from Greece.

A funerary stele from Athens (Fig. 1) represents a young man (Datsulis-Stavridis, 1984, p. 168, fig. 14,4-6; Moock, 1998, p. 158, no. 390, fig. 53b-d; Kaltsas, 2002, p. 325, no. 682), dressed in the standard Greek civilian way: tunic and *himation*. His hair is short at the front and long at the back,<sup>4</sup> which indicates that it is the representation of a *delicium* (for this type of hairstyle, see most recently Fittschen and Zanker, 2014, pp. 42-45, no. 41). The centre of his fringe is parted in the form of an inverted epsilon.

A portrait of a young man found at Thessaloniki (Fig. 2) displays a narrow  $\lambda$  in the middle of his fringe (Kampouri, 1985, p. 92, n. 12, no. 2; Despinis, Stephanidou-Tiveriou and Voutiras, 1997, p. 122, n. 16; 2003, pp. 60-61, no. 197, figs. 551-554; Fittschen, 2005, pp. 156-157; Fittschen, 2021, p. 8, n. 61; p. 68, n. 17; p. 136, n. 22). He is wearing a *strophion*, which suggests that he carried out religious functions.<sup>5</sup> Below that hoop,

1 This iconographic motif originated in Greek Art in the mid-5<sup>th</sup> century BC. For example, for its use in Polykleitos’ statues, see Bol, 1990a, pp. 118-120, fig. 23; 1990b, pp. 199-205, fig. 60; Steuben, 1990, pp. 195-196, fig. 55. The Y-Motif can also be found in the Westmacott Ephebe and the Dresdner Knabe: Linfert, 1993, pp. 179-183, figs. 30-44 and pp. 176-178, figs. 20-29. For the survival of the  $\lambda$  in the Polykleitos’ school: Linfert, 1990, pp. 285-286. For its use in Phidias’ statues, see for example Hölscher, 1969, pp. 410-411, figs. 1-6; Voutiras, 2007, pp. 225-231, figs. 1-7. An ideal head with the  $\lambda$  in the Palazzo Altemps has also been attributed to the Phidias’ school: De Angelis, 2002, p. 62 with illustrations. For the use of the Y-Motif in Greek portraits, see for example: Richter, 1965, p. 146, no. 8, fig. 800; p. 148, no. 1, fig. 825; p. 258, fig. 1763; Pandermalis, 1969, pp. 37-43, no. 5, figs. 9-10; Hertel, 1985, p. 239, no. 7, fig. 54a; Boardmann, 1995, p. 214, fig. 223. For more examples of the use of the  $\lambda$  in Greek Art, see for example Fittschen, 1989, p. 110, fig. 26; Linfert, 1992, p. 13, no. 3, fig. 4,4-5; Breuer, 2001, p. 92, no. 67, figs. 157-158; Schröder, 2004, pp. 42-43, no. 97 with illustrations; Hüneke *et al.*, 2009, pp. 377-378, no. 238 with illustration; Hölscher, 2011, p. 16, fig. 21.

2 In the Roman age, the inverted epsilon was used in ideal heads that do not seem to be copies of Greek originals. See for example Inan, 1975, p. 116, no. 50, fig. 55,2-3; Comstock and Vermeule, 1976, p. 131, no. 203 with illustration; Hanfmann and Ramage, 1978, p. 165, no. 247, fig. 428; Hertel, 1993, pp. 63-67, no. 5, fig. 19; Sapelli, 1999, pp. 53-54 with illustrations and p. 69 with illustration.

3 The term ‘private portrait’ refers to all those portraits that do not represent members of the imperial family: Fittschen, 2010a, pp. 235-236; 2015, pp. 52-53. See also Fejfer, 2008, pp. 16-17. It is difficult to draw a line between child and youth in the Roman age. In girls, the boundary would be at 12 years of age, when they attained sexual maturity; in boys at 15 to 17 years, when they changed from the *toga praetexta* to the *toga virilis*. For more information, see Fittschen, 2010b, p. 1086.

4 The original long hair at the back of the head can only be seen on the right. The hair on the left was reworked at a later time and only its trace can be seen in the background, just above his shoulder. The head must originally have had a hairstyle similar to the one of a Severan portrait in a private collection in Seville (León, 2010, pp. 20-25, figs. 8-11; most recently, Fittschen and Zanker, 2014, p. 43) and of a Flavian-Trajanic portrait in the Metropolitan Museum in New York (Zanker, 2016, pp. 147-148, no. 49 with illustrations).

5 The *strophion* was one of the attributes of Roman priests: Studniczka, 1923, p. 66. Its use in the head of a young *minister* in one of the reliefs of the Villa Medici and in the



Figure 1. Portrait of a young man. Athens, National Archaeological Museum. Inv. © 243. Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Sports/Archaeological Receipts Fund (1a: photographer's name is not registered in Athens, National Archaeological Museum. 1b: photo David Ojeda).

a groove runs round his head from the back to the area of his temples. This formed a surface prepared for an applique to be attached, either another *strophion* or some kind of crown (see for example Romualdi, 1987, pp. 47-48, no. 1, figs. 25-28; Johansen, 1995, pp. 84-85, no. 32 with illustrations; Fittschen, 2021, pp. 20-22, no. 6, figs. 4-5. For a similar working technique: Harrison, 1953, p. 41, no. 29, fig. 18; Kovacs, 2014, p. 66, A16, figs. 15,2 and 16,2; Hanslmayr, 2016, pp. 51-54, pp. 154-155, A23, fig. 27; Fittschen, 2021, pp. 67-68, no. 38a, fig. 40). The addition of this second adornment must have been a later update-

ting of the portrait. The boy may have achieved another honorary position and that implied the inclusion of the new attribute (for similar cases: Fittschen, 2021, pp. 34-35, no. 16, figs. 14-15; pp. 50-54, no. 26, fig. 28; pp. 67-68, no. 38, fig. 40).

The Y-Motif also appears on the portraits of three young men from Écija (Fig. 3), Italica (Fig. 4) and Osuna (Fig. 5) (for the head from Écija: Hernández, Sancho and Collantes, 1951, pp. 205-206, figs. 660-661; p. 326, n. 818; Sichtermann, 1954, pp. 388-389, figs. 59-60; Fabbrini, 1966-1967, p. 144; Boschung, 1989, p. 121, no. 60; León, 1995, p. 76; 2001, pp. 264-265, no. 80 with illustrations; Fittschen, 2005, p. 157, n. 15; Beltrán, 2008, pp. 526-527; León, 2009, pp. 208-209, figs. 276-277; López, 2017, p. 79; Ojeda, 2019, p. 326; Fittschen, 2020-2021, p. 41; López and Ontiveros, 2021, p. 71; Beltrán *et al.*, 2022, p. 356, n. 17. For the head from Italica: León, 1995, pp. 76-77, no. 20 with illustrations; 2001,

portraits of T. Flavius Damianos is a further guarantee of a link with religious functions: Fless, 1995, p. 52, fig. 16,2; Fittschen, 2021, pp. 50-54, no. 26, fig. 28. For some religious functions that young men might have taken part in during the Roman age: Fless, 1995, pp. 46-47; Fittschen, 2010b, p. 1088. For the *strophion*, see most recently Fittschen, 2021, pp. 7-8.



Figure 2. Portrait of a young man. Thessaloniki, Archaeological Museum. Inv. 880. Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Museum of Casts Archive. ΑΓΜΕ 347 Α-Δ (photo Ηλίας Ηλιάδης).

pp. 266-269, no. 81 with illustrations; Rodríguez, 2004, p. 537; Fittschen, 2005, p. 157, n. 15; Beltrán, 2008, pp. 526-527; León, 2009, p. 210, figs. 278-279; López, 2017, p. 79; Ojeda, 2019, p. 326; Fittschen, 2020-2021, p. 41; León, 2021, pp. 137-138, fig. 52; López and Ontiveros, 2021, p. 71; Beltrán *et al.*, 2022, p. 356, fig. 44,1. For the head from Osuna: Engel and Paris, 1906, p. 375; Paris, 1908, p. 5; 1910, p. 152; Beltrán, 2008, pp. 524-528, fig. 14; López, 2017, pp. 78-80, no. 73, fig. 32,1-4; López and Beltrán, 2018, pp. 599-600, figs. 1-5; Ojeda, 2019, p. 326; López and Ontiveros, 2021, p. 71, fig. 4; Beltrán *et al.*, 2022, p. 356, n. 18). They have traditionally been interpreted as copies of the image of a Julio-Claudian prince. I do not agree with that. The three Y-Motifs differ in their shape and in the locks of hair that form them. The comparison of the profiles of the three portraits makes clear the great differences between them, which impedes a typological link. The absence of exact copies of the three heads among the known portraits of the young Julio-Claudian princes, and the fact that they are not replicas of each other, means that they are better identified as unknown young men (León, 2009, p. 209; Ojeda, 2019, p. 326).

A fourth portrait from Baetica with inverted epsilon was found in the Regina forum (Fig. 6) (Griñó, 2009, pp. 70-71, no. 31 with illustration; Nogales and Nobre, 2010, pp. 182-189, fig. 5a-b). It has a veil and one of the usual haircuts for young men in the Roman age. Long loose locks of hair are combed forward and practically reach to below his temples. Similar hairstyles can be seen in a veiled portrait in the Boston Fine Arts



Figure 3. Portrait of a young man. Écija, private collection. Inv. n. a. D-DAI-MAD-WIT-PLF-2558-2559 (photo Peter Witte).

Museum (Comstock and Vermeule, 1976, p. 216, no. 342 with illustrations), in the portraits of the Chersonnesos-Herakleion type (Fittschen, 2021, p. 119, no. 71, fig. 74) and in a portrait of an unknown young man in the Vatican Museums (Kaschnitz-Weinberg, 1937, p. 292, no. 713, fig. 107).<sup>6</sup>

A portrait now in Bochum, from an unknown provenance, also displays the Y-Motif (Fig. 7) (Imdahl and Kunisch, 1979, pp. 36-45 with illustrations; Giebel, 1984, p. 119 with illustration; Bol, 1990c, p. 171, p. 176, fig. 33; Lahusen, 1990, pp. 650-651, no. 181 with illustration; Meyer, 1995, p. 115; León, 2001, pp. 264-265; Hölscher, 2011, p. 44, fig. 3). In its lower part it

<sup>6</sup> It is not possible to know whether this portrait displayed the Y-Motif because the whole right side of the head is missing.

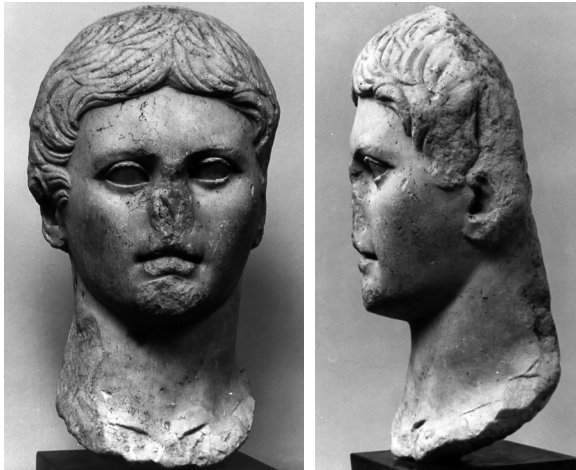


Figure 4. Portrait of a young man. Seville, Archaeological Museum. Inv. 134. Archaeological Museum of Seville (photo Pilar León).



Figure 5. Portrait of a young man. Murcia, private collection. Inv. n. a. University of Murcia (photo José Inchaurrendieta).

was prepared to be fitted to a body. The edge at the back of the neck shows that the body must have been dressed.<sup>7</sup> Considering the documented cases of Augustan portraits with the  $\lambda$ , a statue

<sup>7</sup> As a general rule, heads with an insertion tenon under the neck usually belong to statues with toga or military statues.

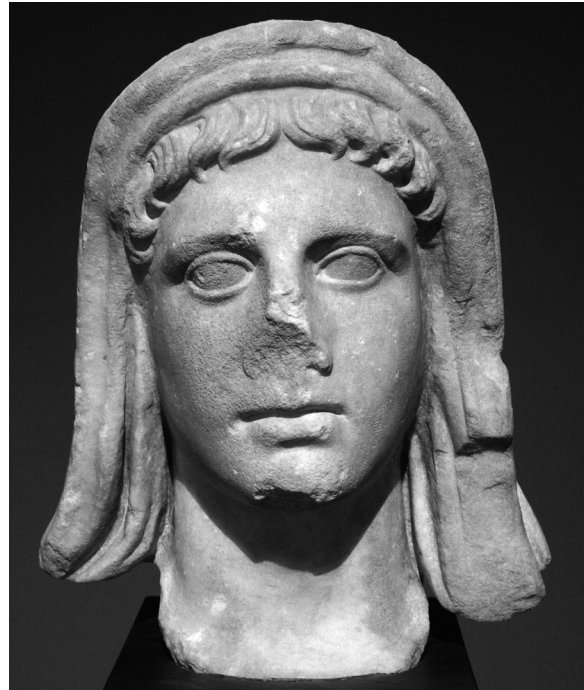


Figure 6. Portrait of a young man. Badajoz, Archaeological Museum. Inv. 7990. Archaeological Museum of Badajoz (photo Antonio Peña).

dressed with a tunic and *himation* or a toga are the most likely options.

The seven young men with the Y-Motif dated in the Augustan period may have sought a direct link with the works of Polykleitos. Therefore, they did not only exhibit the  $\lambda$  in the centre of their fringe, as was usual in the master's sculptures (see supra n. 1). The imitation extended to two other aspects. First, in some of the portraits (Figs. 5 and 7), the rest of the hair was also represented in accordance with Polykleitos' model. Second, to a greater or lesser extent, they all display a physiognomy that depended on the work of the sculptor from Argos.<sup>8</sup>

Polykleitos' influence in the Augustan portraits of young men with the  $\lambda$  may be explained within the iconographic programme of the *aurea aetas* (Zanker, 2003, pp. 171-196). Classical Greek art was a model for this political-cultural movement in the time of Augustus (Zanker, 1988, pp. 629-

This technique is not usual in hip-mantle or nude statues: Pittschen, 2005, p. 155.

<sup>8</sup> For Polykleitos' works, see most recently Kansteiner, 2021.



Figure 7. Portrait of a young man. Bochum, Ancient Art Collection at Ruhr University. Inv. S 1092. Ruhr University Bochum (photo Michael Benecke).

631; 2003, pp. 248-252; see also La Rocca, 1988, pp. 17-21). The Prima Porta type of portraits of the Princeps are a good example of how that iconographic policy was applied.<sup>9</sup> By means of a polykleitisation of the form, Augustus was represented in them as the ideal model of society in his time (Zanker, 1974, p. 43; 2003, pp. 103-104; for the Polykleitan influence in Augustus' portraits: Zanker, 1973, pp. 45-46; Fittschen, 1991, pp. 176-178; Boschung, 1993b, p. 64; Smith, 1996, pp. 41-45; Zanker, 2003, pp. 103-105; Hölscher, 2011, p. 13, pp. 43-44; Borbein, 2012, pp. 142-147; Boschung, 2015, pp. 90-91). The message was tremendously effective. The youths of the *saeculum aureum* hastened to follow the example of the Princeps and also included Polykleitan notes in their portraits. In this way, through the Y-Motif and the polykleitisation of physiognomy, these young men demonstrated their adhesion to the new regime publically.

The portrait from Italica (Fig. 4) poses another argument to support this hypothesis. It was found in the theatre and it is likely that it belonged to the Augustan phase of the building.<sup>10</sup> Although

no inscription has been found as proof, it might portray a relative (the son?) of one of the local euergetists who paid for the construction of the theatre: Lucius Herius, Lucius Blattius Traianus Pollio and Caius T(itius?) Pollio.<sup>11</sup> They were all *pontifices primi creati Augusto* (see the summary in Caballos, 1994, pp. 74-75). A public building funded by priests for the cult of Augustus seems the perfect place to exhibit a portrait whose iconography clearly displayed the commitment of the youth to pro-Augustan policies.<sup>12</sup>

11 The names of these euergetists were recorded in an inscription in the floor of the *orchestra* and in another inscription now in Seville Archaeological Museum: León, 2021, pp. 134-137, figs. 50-51. For the parts of the theatre that each one sponsored: Ventura, 2009, p. 193.

12 Some of the Augustan portraits of young men with the Y-Motif display iconographic attributes linked to the Roman religious world: strophia (fig. 2) and veils (fig. 6). This circumstance is probably not due to chance. The interest of these young men in exhibiting their *pietas* may be associated with the fundamental role played by religious renewal in the time of Augustus. See Zanker, 2003, pp. 108-140. The portrait from Italica (fig. 4) was made to be inserted in a veiled statue as well. This is seen in the way that the back of it was sculpted. A crescent-shaped cut extends from the top of the head to the lower part of the neck. Similar heads are known and they all belonged to veiled statues. See for example Karanastasi, 2019, pp. 595-597, fig. 10 (body) and 11a-b (head). For this working technique in another two male statues with togas: Goette, 1990, p. 129, BaGr.2, fig. 13.2; Johansen, 1994, pp. 252-253, no. 114. See also Johansen, 1994, pp. 282-283, no. 124; Schade, 2003, p. 186, no. I 25, fig. 39; Romano, 2006, pp. 84-87, no. 44; Gercke and

9 For the portraits of Augustus of the Prima Porta type: Boschung, 1993b, pp. 38-50.

10 For a summary of the current state of our knowledge about the Roman theatre at Italica: Ventura, 2009, pp. 192-202; León, 2021, pp. 131-140.

### 3. AGRIPPINA THE YOUNGER AND THE Y-MOTIF

In the reign of Claudius, the Y-Motif is first documented in the portraits of a member of the imperial house. Curiously, it appears in connection with a woman. In the four extant portraits of the Parma-Neapel type of Agrippina the Younger, the  $\lambda$  is clearly shown in the centre of her forehead (Figs. 8-11) (the two fundamental studies of the Parma-Neapel type are Trillmich, 1982; 2007a, pp. 51-52; see also the summary in Boschung, 1993a, p. 73 and the brief comment in Sande, 1985, p. 195). The adoption of this iconographic motif by the empress must have been motivated by the dynastic struggles between Julians and Claudians. The former supported the succession of Nero; the latter that of Britannicus. To justify her son's candidature, Agrippina argued that Nero was a direct descendant of Augustus by the maternal line (for the problems of the succession in the time of Claudius: Kraft, 1966; Levick, 1975; Andreae, 1994, p. 241; Griffin, 1994; Koster, 1994; Trillmich, 2007b, pp. 436-440; Bergmann, 2013, p. 334 and 343). In this historical context, the Y-Motif probably acted as an Augustan symbol, which was re-used by the empress to display publically her blood ties to Augustus and thus legitimise the succession of her son Nero.<sup>13</sup> The memory of those youths, who by means of their Polykleitan portraits with inverted epsilon declared their loyalty to the policies of the Augustan period, must still have endured in the Rome of the decade of the 50s AD.

Zimmermann-Elseify, 2007, pp. 224-226, no. 71. For the veil as a symbol of *pietas* towards the gods: Freier, 1963, pp. 174-177; Fittschen, 1970, p. 544; Fittschen and Zanker, 1985, p. 54; Goette, 1990, pp. 52-53, n. 271; Fittschen, 1992, p. 116. For portraits of unknown people with a veiled head: Fittschen, 1992, p. 116, n. 9. For images of children with veiled head in liturgical ceremonies, see for example Fless, 1995, pp. 48-50, fig. 16,1; pp. 51-53, fig. 17,1; p. 49, fig. 37,1. For the *strophion* as a religious symbol: see supra n. 5.

- 13 The Parma-Neapel type must have been in use from AD 49 to 54 (Trillmich, 1982, p. 114; 2007a, p. 52 and p. 54). It was only in vogue while it was necessary to legitimise the Augustan blood of Nero. Once he came to power in October 54, the Y-Motif and the link to Augustus were no longer necessary. For this reason, Agrippina changed her image with a new type of portrait in which she stressed her kinship with Nero by means of a physiognomic resemblance: Trillmich, 2007a, pp. 52-54.

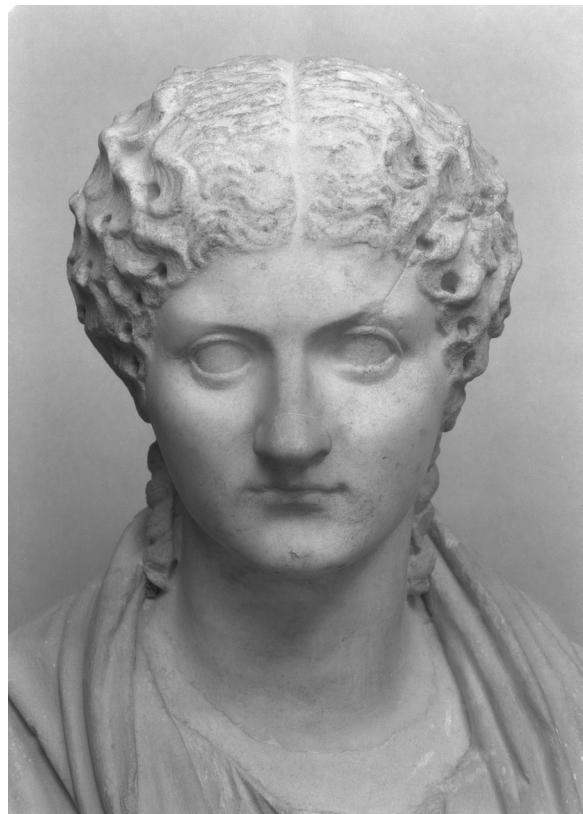


Figure 8. Portrait of Agrippina the Younger. Naples, National Archaeological Museum. Inv. 6242. D-DAI-ROM-36.907 (photo Johannes Felbermeyer).

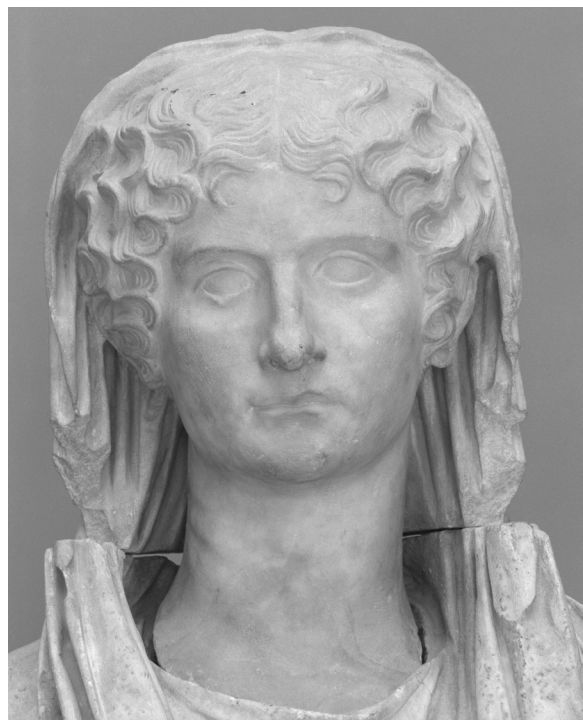


Figure 9. Portrait of Agrippina the Younger. Parma, National Archaeological Museum. Inv. 830. D-DAI-ROM-67.1591 (photo Gerhard Singer).



Figure 10. Portrait of Agrippina the Younger. Mérida, National Museum of Roman Art. Inv. 10726. D-DAI-MAD-WIT-R-104-78-17 (photo Peter Witte).



Figure 11. Portrait of Agrippina the Younger. Conimbriga, National Museum. Inv. 67379. D-DAI-MAD-WIT-R-81-81-10 (photo Peter Witte).

The popularity of Agrippina the Younger must have been the reason for the presence of the  $\lambda$  in the case of a veiled female portrait from Cordoba (Fig. 12) (Poulsen, 1933, pp. 12-13,

figs. 7-9; Santos, 1950, p. 58, fig. 13b; Vicent, 1965, p. 25; 1989, p. 24, no. 3 with illustrations in p. 25; León, 2001, pp. 192-193, no. 52 with illustrations; Beltrán, 2008, p. 526, n. 49). The resemblance to the empress demonstrates the Claudian chronology of this portrait. The young woman may have included the Y-Motif as a way of emulating the empress. Whether or not it also involved the support of a pro-Neronian policy is a question without an answer.

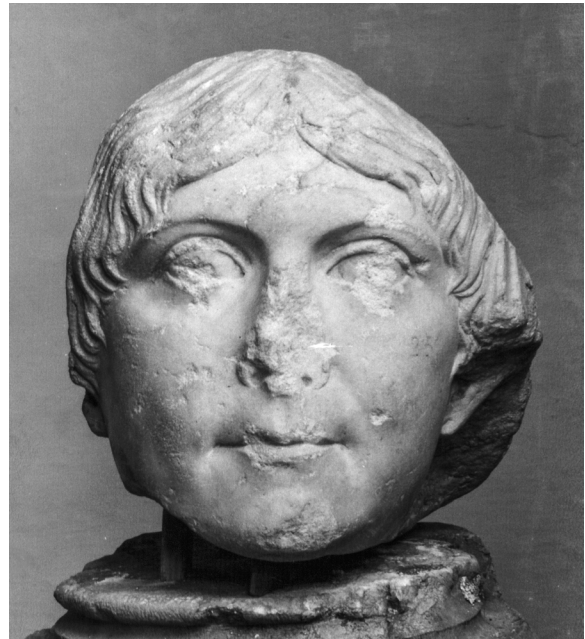


Figure 12. Portrait of a young woman. Cordoba, Archaeological Museum. Inv. 25. D-DAI-MAD-WAG-7867 (photo Hermann Wagner).

#### 4. THE RETROSPECTIVE TENDENCY IN ROMAN PORTRAITURE AND THE Y-MOTIF

The retrospective tendency was an iconographic fashion that affected some Roman portraits from the time of Hadrian onwards. It consisted of the intentional search for highbrow references to the Greek past by means of imitating models from the Classical period or the start of the Hellenistic age (for the retrospective tendency in Roman portraiture: Fittschen, 1989; 1992; Danguillier, 2001, pp. 129-130; Krumeich, 2004; 2008, pp. 161-165; Fittschen, 2010a, pp. 238-239; 2013, p. 151, n. 32; Horster and Schröder, 2014, p. 236; Fittschen, 2021, p. 45, p. 106;

Ojeda, 2021, pp. 83-85; Kovacs, 2023, pp. 187-188). Four retrospective portraits are known with the Y-Motif. They all emulate Greek models in the 5<sup>th</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> centuries BC.

An Antonine portrait of a man found in Thessaloniki shows a parting in the shape of an inverted upsilon in the centre of his fringe (Fig. 13) (Despinis, Stephanidou-Tiveriou and Voutiras, 2003, pp. 158-160, no. 270, figs. 818-821).<sup>14</sup> His physiognomy and long hair brings to mind Phidias' works. Very similar forms can be seen in the heads of the Milles-Neapel type (see supra n. 1) and on some figures in the Parthenon frieze (Berger and Gisler-Huwiler, 1996, p. 165, fig. 137,46).



Figure 13. Portrait of a man. Thessaloniki, Archaeological Museum. Inv. 11518. Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Museum of Casts Archive. ΑΓΜΕ 197 Α-Δ (photo Ηλίας Ηλιάδης).

14 The assimilation of the portrait with the iconography of Antoninus Pius (see for example Fittschen and Zanker, 1985, pp. 63-66, no. 59, fig. 68) ensures its date in the mid-second century AD.

The Antonine portrait of a young man with the Y-Motif found in Veria (Fig. 14) (Fittschen, 1999, p. 89, no. 70; Saatsoglou-Paliadeli, 2001, pp. 266-272, figs. 5-8)<sup>15</sup> seems to coincide with the previous example from Thessaloniki in its references to classical models. This is suggested by its resemblance to the Apollo in the eastern Parthenon frieze (Berger and Gisler-Huwiler, 1996, p. 163, fig. 136,39) and the images of boys in Attic funerary reliefs (Bergemann, 1997, p. 161, no. 123, fig. 48,4 and pp. 164-165, no. 271, fig. 50,3).



Figure 14. Portrait of a young man. Veria, Archaeological Museum. Inv. 407. D-DAI-ATH 1971/727-728-729-730 (photo Gösta Hellner).

The same iconographic tendency can be found in a portrait of an adult male with the λ from Cyrene, made in the time of Marcus Aurelius (Fig. 15).<sup>16</sup> If his right profile is compared

15 Its similarity to portraits of Lucius Verus of Type II and III (see for example Fittschen, 1999, p. 39, D1, fig. 64a-c; p. 42, E1, fig. 67a-d) guarantees its chronology in the mid-second century AD.

16 Two copies of the portrait of this unknown person have been documented: most recently Fittschen, 2021, pp. 46-47, no. 23, fig. 24. The resemblance to portraits of Marcus Aurelius

with Figure no. 45 in the eastern Parthenon frieze (Berger and Gisler-Huwiler, 1996, p. 165, fig. 137,45) or with the funerary relief of Tynnias (Bergemann, 1997, p. 161, no. 107, fig. 95,4), the connection with classical Greece is evident.



Figure 15. Portrait of a man. Cyrene, Museum. Inv. J.68.32 (reproduced after White, 1976, figs. 54-55).

An adult man of the Severan period, whose portrait displays the Y-Motif and classical reminiscences, may come from North Africa (Fig. 16).<sup>17</sup> It suffices to compare his physiognomic scheme with the so-called Phocion (Pandermalis, 1969, pp. 59-65, figs. 17-19)<sup>18</sup> or with an unknown person in a funerary stela in Athens National Museum (Bergemann, 1997, p. 161, no. 126, fig. 84,1) to see the influence of classical Greek sculpture. The large central fork in his fringe directly recalls the one that can be seen in Herodotus' portraits (see for example Richter, 1965, p. 146, no. 8, fig. 800).

It is not difficult to imagine the reason why these four men added the Y-Motif to their hairstyles. By means of that typically classicist detail

they efficiently completed the classical notes of their physiognomies. The aim may have been to show, through their portraits and as clearly as possible, their sympathy with the Greek past in the Classical period.



Figure 16. Portrait of a man. Boston, Museum of Fine Arts. Inv. 88349. [Arachne.dainst.org/entity/1063171](https://arachne.dainst.org/entity/1063171) (photo Gisela Fittschen-Badura).

## 5. THE GALLIENIC RENAISSANCE AND THE Y-MOTIF

Gallienus was depicted with Y-Motif in his portraits of Type Louvre (Figs. 17-19) (for the portraits of Gallienus of Type Louvre: Fittschen, 1993b, p. 214 and pp. 221-222). The use of this iconographic detail by the Princeps can easily be explained within the context of the Gallienic Renaissance (for the phenomenon of the Gallienic Renaissance: Alföldi, 1929; Rodenwaldt, 1931, pp. 318-327; Mathew, 1943; Himmelmann, 1962; Fittschen, 1975a, pp. 22-25; 1978, p. 23; Rössler, 1997; Ismaelli, 2012, pp. 263-266. For the origin of the term Gallienic Renaissance: Fittschen, 1993b, p. 225, n. 91). This cultural movement involved a search for past stylistic or iconographic points of reference as a way to achieve social renovation.<sup>19</sup> Gallienus and his

(see for example Fittschen, 1999, p. 26, B37, fig. 53) ensures its date in the mid-second century AD.

17 For the two known copies of the Boston-Budapest type and the possible North African origin of the person depicted, see most recently Fittschen, 2021, pp. 77-78, no. 43, fig. 46,1-2 and 4-6. To corroborate its Severan date, it is only necessary to compare the profiles of the Boston-Budapest type with some childhood portraits of Caracalla. See for example Fittschen, 1971, p. 236, figs. 45-46.

18 The comparison with the copy in the Chiaramonti Museum seems especially clear to me: Andreae, 1995, p. 33 with illustrations.

19 It is shown in Gallienic art in several ways. For example, some of the portraits of the Princeps cite fashions and details from the start of the imperial age. See for example the way the problem is addressed in Himmelmann, 1962, pp. 110-111; Fittschen, 1975a, p. 25; 1975b, pp. 140-142; 1993b, p. 224.

court may have been the centre of this romantic current, conceived to alleviate the systemic crisis of Rome in the middle of the 3rd century AD. The Gallienic rebirth of the  $\Lambda$  fits well into this trend. It would have enabled Gallienus to establish a link with the Polykleitan Augustan youths.<sup>20</sup> Like them, with his portraits displaying the inverted upsilon he declared his enthusiasm for the possibility of reliving a new *saeculum aureum*.<sup>21</sup>



Figure 17. Portrait of Gallienus. Munich, Museum of Casts of Classical Statues. Inv. DFG 155. Museum of Casts of Classical Statues (photo Heide Glöckler).

Some contemporaries of the emperor must have shared his utopian dream. A male portrait found in Same seems to display a similar physiognomic scheme and a fork in his fringe resem-

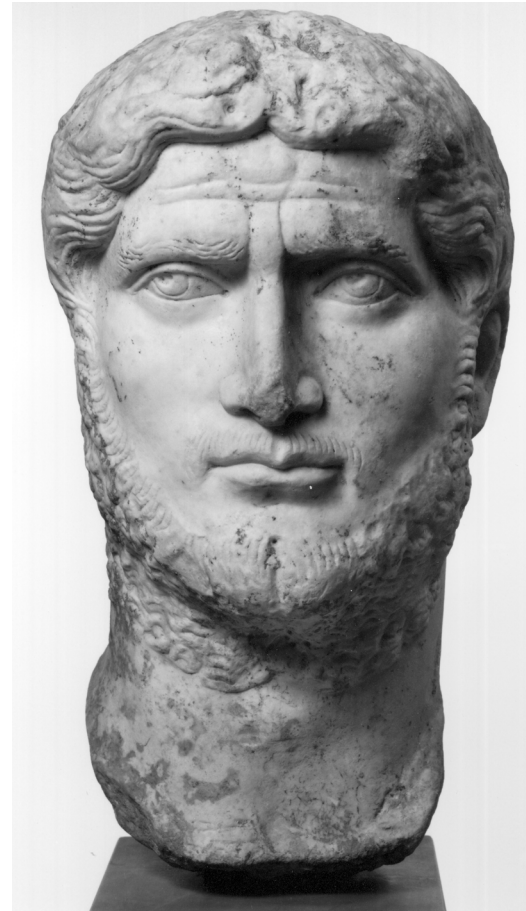


Figure 18. Portrait of Gallienus. Copenhagen, Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek. Inv. 832. Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek (photo Jo Selsing).



Figure 19. Portrait of Gallienus. Rome, Corsini Palace. Inv. n. a. D-DAI-ROM-74.722 (photo Christoph Rossa).

20 A second aspect could reinforce this link with the *aurea aetas*: Fittschen, 1993b, pp. 221-222 and p. 224 has suggested a link between the portraits of Gallienus of Type Louvre and the iconography of Mercury/Augustus.

21 For the proclamation of the *novum saeculum aureum* during the reign of Gallienus, see the summary in De Blois, 1976, pp. 128-129.

bling an inverted epsilon (Fig. 20) (Hood, 1958, p. 12, fig. 14; Daux, 1959, p. 659, fig. 1; Kallipolitis, 1960, pp. 141-154, figs. 1 and 4, pl. 7-11; 1965, pp. 117-130, figs. 1-2, pl. 7-8; Massner, 1969-1970, p. 317; Pandermalis, 1972, p. 134, n. 14; Wegner, 1979, p. 112 and p. 162; McCann, 1981, p. 636, figs. 19 and 21; Meischner, 1982, p. 402, no. 2, fig. 4; Lahusen and Formigli, 2001, pp. 306-307, no. 190 with illustrations; Meischner, 2001, p. 18, fig. 18; Varner, 2004, p. 211). Unfortunately, Gallienus' murder in AD 268 put an end to any hope of returning to those prosperous years of Augustus' reign.



Figure 20. Portrait of a man. Kephallenia, Archaeological Museum of Argostoli. Inv. n. a. D-DAI-ATH Korfu 609/612/614/615 (photo Eva-Maria Czako).

## 6. CONCLUSION

The main questions posed by Roman portraits with the Y-Motif can be answered quite precisely. When? This motif appears in portraits from the

time of Augustus to Gallienus' reign. No evidence has been found dated later than the third quarter of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century. Where? They have been found in different regions of the Empire, from Hispania and Italy to North Africa and Greece. Who? Some members of the imperial family and also unknown individuals were portrayed with the  $\lambda$ . Why? The inverted epsilon was a polysemous iconographic motif. It carried four different connotations in Roman portraiture: a) a Polykeitan quirk indicating affiliation to Augustus' political programme; b) an Augustan icon intended to legitimise the succession of Nero; c) a classicist detail to express a liking of classical Greek culture; and d) a nostalgic reminiscence of the *aurea aetas* of the early imperial age. The number of portraits with the Y-Motif may increase in the future.<sup>22</sup> It remains to be seen whether this will allow a fifth meaning to be added to this list.

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<sup>22</sup> Roman portraits with a similar motif to the inverted epsilon but which has become more abstract should not be included in future lists of portraits with a Y-Motif. In those cases, it is not possible to be certain that the central parting in the fringe is an intentional  $\lambda$ . See for example Pollini, 1982, pp. 1-2, figs. 1-5; Scholl, 2016, pp. 287-288, no. 190 with illustrations; pp. 373-374, no. 279 with illustration. Heads that cannot be definitely identified as portraits should not be taken into account either. See for example Amedick, 1991, pp. 373-378, figs. 95-97; 1997, pp. 24-28, figs. 4-5 and the doubts raised by Boschung, 1993a, p. 75, n. 194.

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The author of this article declares that he has no financial, professional or personal conflicts of interest that could have inappropriately influenced this work.

## AUTHORSHIP CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

David Ojeda: conceptualization, methodology, investigation, writing – original draft, writing – review & editing, funding acquisition.

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