# (MIS)MANAGEMENT OF ROMAN GROVES

ABSTRACT

*The management and mismanagement of Roman groves was a serious matter, and intentional and unintentional violations of these spaces could be severely punished. In spite of this, groves remained loosely defined by Romans and their boundaries were commonly misunderstood, a confusion that has continued into modern scholarship, where groves are understood as either a clearing in a wood or a dark space lit by artificial lighting. This article takes up this discussion, and explores the nature of an ancient grove as a well-attested space under forest management that influences later conversations on the nature of wooded spaces in more recent periods.*

**Keywords:** trees; forest; grove; arboriculture; Rome; Romans; woodland

Roman groves are dangerous places with unclear boundaries. Punishments for violations of sacred groves ranged from non-existent to extremely severe, and violations were varied. These violations, examples of which will be examined here alongside their punishments, included entry (*CIL* I² 366, XI 4766), pruning (Plin. *HN* 16.132), felling (Ov. *Met.* 8.754–67) and burning (Ov. *Fast.* 4.749–55), all of which are activities that might be reasonably expected to occur within the confines of a grove space. As a result, understanding how a grove was conceptualized and might be safely maintained is of paramount importance, not only for a Roman but also for anyone aiming to understand activities within these sites. This article will take a simple approach to the management of Roman groves across a necessarily broad period, first by conceptualizing what Romans understood by the term 'grove', and then by taking two case studies of grove management, the first with a negative outcome and the second with a positive outcome. Through this approach, I will ask first what a grove is, and how the successful and the unsuccessful management of a grove space can help us answer the first question.

## DEFINING THE GROVE

There are two words in Latin typically used for 'grove': *nemus* and *lucus*. *nemus* usually describes spaces with an artificial element, whether this refers to the grove's origin or to a construction within it, while a *lucus* is more natural, centred around the presence of a divine spirit or spirits (either historical or current), and it is this latter type of grove that is the basis of our focus here.[1] Roman understandings of what constituted a grove were varied and often contradictory. In the first century C.E. Quintilian includes *lucus*, the

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[1] J. Scheid, '*Lucus, nemus*. Qu'est-ce qu'un bois sacré?', in O. de Casanove and J. Scheid (edd.), *Les bois sacrés: Actes du Colloque International organisé par le Centre Jean Bérard et l'École Pratique des Hauts Études (Vᵉ section), Naples, 23–25 novembre 1989* (Naples, 1993), 13–20, at 19; F. Coarelli, 'I luci del Lazio: la documentazione archeologica', in O. de Casanove and J. Scheid (edd.), *Les bois sacrés: Actes du Colloque International organisé par le Centre Jean*

typical term for grove, in his list of words with an opposite etymology, being derived from *lux* (natural light) and denoting a space devoid of *lux*: *etiamne a contrariis aliqua sinemus trahi, ut lucus, quia umbra opacus parum luceat*.[2] In the fourth century C.E. Servius, in his *Commentary on Virgil's Aeneid* (Serv. *Aen.* 1.22), also describes a *lucus* as a place 'which is not lit', and specifies that a *lucus* would not have *lumen* (artificial lights) in it, although 'some' choose to describe them thus (Serv. *Aen.* 1.441). Later, in the seventh century, Isidore comments that a *lucus* is a place of dense forest, characterized as having little light, before offering a similar clarification to that found in Servius' etymology, that they are lit by other means, bringing *lumen* rather than *lux* into the grove (Isid. *Etym.* 14.8.30, 17.6.7).[3]

In attempting to define a grove, none of the authors identified above distinguishes between cults using sacred groves, or between the various forest trees that would make up a grove, despite the obvious consequence on the interplay between light and dark that various plantings would have. Shade was one of the key uses of a tree, although Pliny the Elder does regard it as a luxurious one, especially in the case of the plane tree (Plin. *HN* 12.6, 16.78).[4] There is a significant degree of difference in the shade that trees offer, and the extent to which trees filter light or block it completely. The shade of a deciduous tree, like the beech under which Tityrus rests at the start of the *Eclogues* (Verg. *Ecl.* 1.1–2), is pleasant and dappled, with sunlight filtering through thin leaves providing only a light cover. Meanwhile, Pliny tells us that the shade of several trees, including the fir and the walnut, is poisonous (*HN* 17.91), and Varro relates that the walnut makes the ground beneath its shade infertile (*Rust.* 1.16.6). In Virgil's *Aeneid*, a *nemus* is described as 'black' in the shade of fir trees (8.599), while in Silius Italicus' *Punica* the pitch pine casts melancholic shade in Dido's temple (1.83). Meanwhile, the extent of the elm's shade is praised by Pliny for its expanse, and criticized by Atticus for being oppressive (Plin. *HN* 17.90), two aspects that are reflected in the *Einsiedeln Eclogues* (2.13) and the *Aeneid* respectively (6.283). The elm is not the only deciduous tree identified as having dark and gloomy shade: in Seneca's *Thyestes*, the *nemus* at the centre of Atreus' palace is composed of cypresses, yews and dark ilex, all overshadowed by the ominous shade of a great oak (650—6).[5] The variety of tree, then, does not necessarily impact Roman perceptions of its shade, although there is some allowance to be made for the different types of shade available, and the distinction between light and dark at play in the ancient confusion surrounding groves, which is not a binary between pitch black and brightly lit.

Modern discourse is as confused as ancient discourse, and a grove is simultaneously treated as a place devoid of light and filled with it. Broise and Scheid suggest that *lucus* is etymologically linked to *lux*, and that to prune a *lucus* was to allow the *lucus* to fulfil its predestined etymological purpose.[6] However, as Dumézil acknowledges in his

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*Bérard et l'École Pratique des Hauts Études (V<sup>e</sup> section), Naples, 23–25 novembre 1989* (Naples, 1993), 45–52, at 52.

[2] Quint. *Inst.* 1.6.34.

[3] This artificial form of light has been understood as candles: A. Hunt, *Reviving Roman Religion: Sacred Trees in the Roman World* (Cambridge, 2016), 150.

[4] For more on the hierarchy of uses in Pliny the Elder's *Natural History*, see A. Fox, *Trees in Ancient Rome: Growing an Empire in the Late Republic and Early Principate* (London, 2023), 55.

[5] See V. Austen, *Analysing the Boundaries of the Ancient Roman Garden: (Re)Framing the Hortus* (London, 2023), 148–50.

[6] H. Broise and J. Scheid, 'Étude d'un cas: le *lucus deae Diae* à Rome', in O. de Casanove and J. Scheid (edd.), *Les bois sacrés: Actes du Colloque International organisé par le Centre Jean*

similar etymological discussion, *lucus* is used in Latin to refer to both a clearing and a wood.[7] Hunt, following Quintilian's far earlier example, describes the ancient etymology from the absence of *lux* as 'absurd', but cautions against the 'light-centric' reading of *lucus* proposed by Broise and Scheid, given the artificiality of the light that ancient grammarians use to justify a positive association between light and the *lucus*.[8]

For a Roman, not understanding what constituted a grove could have dire consequences, and this is apparent in the penalties imposed for trespassing or damaging one. In Festus' second-century epitome of an Augustan lexicon by Verrius Flaccus, we are told that the penalty for violating a particular type of grove is beheading:

A pre-eminent grove (*capitalis lucus*), where, if anyone violates it, it is cleansed by the head of the violator.[9]

A more measured approach is found in a pair of legal inscriptions, found in Spoleto and Trevi, and dating to *c*.240 B.C.E.:

Let no one violate this grove, nor take it away, nor carry off this grove's contents, nor enter/cut except on the day left for annual rite. On that day, what is done for the sake of the goddess' festival, may it be permitted to enter/cut without penalty … Whoever might violate it must give an appeasing sacrifice to Jupiter of an ox, should he violate it knowingly and with malice, let him give an offering of a cow and be fined 300 asses. The chief magistrate is responsible for the exaction of this fine and offering.

honce loucom | nequ[i]s uiolatod | neque exuehito neque | exferto quod louci | siet neque cedito | nesei quo die res deina | anua fiet; eod die | quod rei dinai cau[s]a | [f]iat, sine dolo cedre | [l]icetod. seiquis ‖ uiolasit, Ioue bouid | piaclum datod; | seiquis scies | uiolasit dolo malo, | Iouei bouid piaclum | datod et a. CCC | moltai suntod; | eius piacli | moltaique dicator[ei] | exactio est[od].[10]

However, even this punishment of a fine is problematic: the word used to describe the forbidden action, *cedito* and *cedre*, could be translated as 'enter' (*cedere*) or 'cut' (*caedere*) dependent upon the dialects at the time. It is apparent that the etymological confusions around *lucus* extended into legal understandings of how a grove could be trespassed upon, and what the punishment for said trespass would be. And so, it should hardly be surprising that instances of ancient grove mismanagement are frequent, or that Ovid advised shepherds in the first century C.E. to make a catch-all prayer for forgiveness as he prepares for the Parilia festival (*Fast.* 4.749–55):

> 'If I have grazed my flocks in a sacred place, or rested under a sacred tree,
> And my flocks have taken food from groves in ignorance;

If I have entered a forbidden grove,
Or the nymphs and half-goat god were put to flight from my eyes;
If my pruning knife has ransacked a grove for a shady bough,
From which a basket was filled with leaves for a sick sheep,
Forgive my fault.'

siue sacro paui sediue sub arbore sacra,
pabulaque e bustis inscia carpsit ouis;
si nemus intraui uetitum, nostrisue fugatae
sunt oculis nymphae semicaperque deus;
si mea falx ramo lucum spoliauit opaco,
unde data est aegrae fiscina frondis oui,
da ueniam culpae.

The nature of a fault against a sacred arboreal feature is multiple, and can either be resting against a tree, entering a *nemus*, or pruning a branch from a *lucus*. Traditionally, the pruning of a grove is considered 'sacrilege', and Ovid's reference to the flocks here directs us to a typical action of a shepherd in response to a sick or injured sheep, to cut a nearby branch, strip the leaves and offer them to the animal.[11] The difficulty of using trees as monuments, especially when their ideal state is an unviolated one, is apparent—there is no clear distinction between non-monumental and monumental nature, and Ovid's shepherd, although familiar with the landscape and the practice of the religious festivals of the city of Rome, is unaware of which trees are sacred.

The question, then, remains: what is a *lucus*? Is it a space devoid of light, or is it one that is lit by *lumen*? From both the Spoleto–Trevi inscriptions and Ovid's prayer, it seems to have had a defined edge, although Ovid suggests that the edge is unclear: how else could a shepherd have accidentally entered it? It seems obvious that the grove should include the trees: Ovid's shepherd may have lopped a shady bough off one, although this could have been part of the usual practice to introduce light into a *lucus*.[12] Evidently, there were challenges in navigating the natural world around Rome, even for a native Roman.[13]

## MISMANAGING A *LVCVS*

It is perhaps in mismanaging a grove that we might find some further insight into what constitutes a grove to an ancient Roman. Several examples of grove violation exist in ancient literature, and analyses of many of these can be found throughout Hunt's *Reviving Roman Religion: Sacred Trees in the Roman World*. However, deliberately aggressive acts taken against groves, such as that of Caesar in Lucan's description of him felling a grove outside of Massilia (modern-day Marseilles) and of his soldiers' concern that the axes would rebound against them (Luc. 3.394–452), or of Clodius' reported destruction of groves in Cicero's invective against him, do not constitute mismanagement (Cic. *Mil.* 85), nor do the allegations that Turullius had felled trees in a sacred grove to Asclepius (Dio Cass. 51.8.3), since there is no positive intent behind

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[11] E. Fantham, *Ovid Fasti Book IV* (Cambridge, 1998), 215, 234.

[12] Hunt refers to a practice of 'piacular pruning' in the Arval grove, translating *coinquere*, only found in the Arval inscriptions and in Festus, as 'to prune' (Hunt [n. 3], 137–40).

[13] Hunt examines this complexity in a religious context, and refers to the navigation of sacrality and the destruction of potentially sacred trees as a 'live and ambiguous issue' (Hunt [n. 3], 132).

the perpetrators' actions: they are simply destructive. At Nocera in the late first century B.C.E., however, where Pliny reports that an elm branch in a grove of Juno was removed after it grew onto the altar, we might sensibly assume some level of arboricultural intent (*HN* 16.132):

> This portent revealed itself to the Roman people during the Cimbrian Wars by way of an elm in the grove of Juno at Nocera, even after its head had been removed (*amputatum erat*), since it was resting on the altar, the elm restored itself of its own accord (*sponte*) to the point that it immediately flowered, from which time the majesty of the Roman people was resurrected, which had been previously devastated by defeats.

> factum hoc populi Romani Quiritibus ostentum Cimbricis bellis Nuceriae in luco Iunonis ulmo, postquam etiam cacumen amputatum erat, quoniam in aram ipsam procumbebat, restituta sponte ita ut protinus floreret, a quo deinde tempore maiestas p. R. resurrexit, quae ante uastata cladibus fuerat.

The elm is a part of the grove, although it is clearly expected to keep itself to the edge of a central, tree-free space. The intrusion of the tree into this space suggests that this is a 'light-centric' understanding of *lucus*, as opposed to the 'darkness-centric' ones which ancient grammarians use. When the tree exceeds its boundaries within the grove, it is cut back, and Pliny uses extremely decisive language in naming this action: *amputare*. While referring to a cutting back as an amputation may be unusual in a modern context, it does fit with the general language of arboriculture in the ancient world, which refers to standard arboricultural practices as 'wounding' the tree.[14] However, this elm tree was removed from the altar not by a gentle act of restraint or by a considered pruning but by a violent removal of its head, and subsequently the fortunes of the Roman people suffered. As a result, we can assume that whatever proper processes the pruners should have followed were not followed, unlike the case of a similar fig tree which was in danger of uprooting a statue of Silvanus in the Forum—the removal of this tree had to be sanctified by a sacrifice, and there were no subsequent adverse effects (Plin. *HN* 15.77).

 Following the spontaneous regrowth of the elm tree, which was perceived as miraculous by the Romans affected by it, there is no indication that the tree was ever pruned again, and comparable examples of miraculous regrowth lead us to wonder if it was integrated into the shrine and maintained as part of it. The palm which grew on the altar of Jupiter Capitolinus, before it was brought down by storms and spontaneously replaced (*enata est*) by a fig tree, is a similar example, although these trees may not have been part of a larger grove and may have functioned instead as individually important trees.[15] The period between the demise of the palm and the appearance of the fig is unclear, although the lack of an intervening clause between the palm tree being brought down by storms and the fig tree growing in Pliny's account indicates a similar speed to Juno's elm at Nocera. The agency of these trees, like that of the elm, is impersonal, not linked to any particular deity except by provenance. Similarly to the elm, the palm tree's miraculous growth occurs in times of war (with Perseus of Macedonia in 171–168

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[14] An example of this can be found in Columella, *Rust*. 4.22.3, among numerous other examples throughout arboricultural works in Latin. This can lead into an easy comparison of the trees that are generally maintained by humans and those which are violated by human hands, such as Erysichthon's oak (Ov. *Met*. 8.761–2) and Atalanta's oak (Stat. *Theb*. 9.595).

[15] Plin. *HN* 17.244 *nec non et Romae in Capitolio in ara Iouis bello Persei enata palma uictoriam triumphos portendit. hac tempestatibus prostrata eodem loco ficus enata est M. Messalae C. Casii censorum lustro* [154 B.C.E.], *a quo tempore pudicitiam subuersam Piso grauis auctor prodidit.*

B.C.E.), and portends triumphal processions, highlighting the palm tree's triumphal connotations.[16] As in the example of the elm, there is no evidence that the fig tree was subsequently removed, and the palm tree was removed by storms as opposed to human interference. A similar tree is found in Tarraco, when a palm grows on the altar of Augustus, and Quintilian refers to a joke made by Augustus on hearing about the tree's growth—'it is apparent how often you light fires on the altar'.[17] As in the case of the fig on Jupiter's altar, the participle *enata* is used, and this palm can be judged to have been considered similarly portentous, although the only quasi-divine figure it is connected to is Augustus (who had not yet been deified, since he was still alive then). While Quintilian's Augustus is clearly dismissive of the omen, the tree remained in Tarraco after his death, and is found depicted on coinage in Tiberius' reign, with the earliest attestation of the type being in 15 C.E.[18] Clearly, once nature had intervened, and a tree was produced, it was subsequently integrated into the religious sphere, and became a part of the complex despite early attempts at separation between the natural and the human, as shown with the elm at Nocera.

The removal of the tree at Nocera portended badly for the whole Roman people, and the mismanagement of this grove shows the potential for unsanctioned pruning to have far-reaching consequences. Before this example, we have seen grove mismanagement and deliberate violation affect individuals, whether the imagined potential consequences against Ovid's shepherd, the beheading or fine threatened in law, or the threat of the axe rebounding on the soldiers in Lucan's *Civil War*.[19] The potential broader consequences of actions against a grove might explain the diligent process outlined elsewhere in taking arboricultural actions within a *lucus*.

## THE ARVAL GROVE AND PROPER MANAGEMENT

Appropriate Roman arboricultural action is evident in the Arval Grove, preserved in the formalized inscriptions that maintain a record of ritual activity at the site, a complex which was situated outside of the *pomerium*, only part of which was occupied by the grove.[20] The grove itself, sacred to Dea Dia, is referenced in the inscriptions 27 times,[21] and consists of a largely indistinct mass of unknown trees, although an

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[16] The palm is treated by Julius Caesar as a symbol of victory in Suet. *Aug*. 94.11, used as a synonym for glory in Cic. *Sen*. 19, and can be found in fifteen other instances in similar circumstances: A. Fox, *The Roman Trees Database* (2018), available online at <http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/Roman_Trees> [accessed 8 September 2022]).

[17] Quint. *Inst*. 6.3.77 *et Augustus, nuntiantibus Terraconensibus palmam in ara eius enatam, 'apparet' inquit 'quam saepe accendatis'*.

[18] *RPC* 1 225/10.

[19] Typical of the ambiguity we can expect of Lucan's poetry, the lines where Caesar takes an axe to the grove clouds whether the grove had already been violated by the human sacrifice or was now violated by Caesar's axe: *ausus et aeriam ferro proscindere | effatur merso uiolata in robora ferro* (Luc. 3.434–5).

[20] J. Scheid, *Commentarii Fratrum Arvalium qui supersunt: Les copies épigraphiques des protocoles annuels de la confrérie Arvale (21 av. – 304 ap. J.-C.)* (Rome, 1998), vi questions the authenticity of these inscriptions as a true and complete record of the Arval's activity, a question reiterated by Hunt (n. 3), 137.

[21] These inscriptions have been catalogued by Hunt, and are found appended to her monograph (Hunt [n. 3], 295–300), taking the text from Scheid's (n. 20) earlier edition of the inscriptions, the numbering for which will be followed here.

*ilex*, some *laurus* and a *ficus* are evidenced in the inscriptions.[22] These trees are common in Latin literature, and are collectively found over two hundred times in the in-progress *Roman Trees Database*, so the fact of their inclusion within the grove should come as little surprise—they were not foreign trees, but are naturally suited to the Mediterranean climate and are all still flourishing in Rome today. Each variety of tree would have necessitated different management techniques, a factor across all Roman groves, and we might anticipate that groves for different deities would have been managed on a case-by-case basis, to suit the needs of religious practice in the space, as opposed to a broad-brush approach.

As stated, this grove was a part of a ritual complex, and a *piaculum* was required before the customary pruning of the grove, dated in inscriptions as occurring in May, a bad time for pruning according to both ancient and modern sources. The pruning practices in this grove are so unusual that they could be criticized as harmful, as Pliny regards the practice of annual pruning.[23] Hunt comments that the pruning of the Arval grove was a choice of the Arval Brethren themselves and, as an unnecessary arboricultural action, should be regarded as of 'deep religious significance to the Arvals … not prompted by a concern for the trees' inviolability'.[24] The trees of Rome, then, were not treated as aloof and inviolable, a widely held assertion in the comparativist tradition thoroughly explored by Hunt. Instead, interaction with religious trees is integrated into the routine of Roman life, although perhaps not an everyday process.

However, the exact nature of this interaction, which I have previously called pruning, following Hunt, is uncertain, as the verb used in the inscriptions, *coinquere*, is found elsewhere only once, in Paul the Deacon's eighth-century epitome of Festus' *On the Meaning of Words*, itself a second-century epitome of an Augustan work by Verrius Flaccus.[25] Here, Paul equates *coinquere* with *coercere*, meaning 'to restrain'. Obviously, this causes difficulties when the verb is used in the context of a grove, and Hunt suggests a link between the Arval Brethren's formula for reporting the pruning and Cato's prayer for pruning, found in the *On Agriculture*.

This is the Roman style for the *conlucare* of a grove: a pig should be sacrificed as a *piaculum*, and these words spoken: 'If this grove is sacred to any god or goddess, since it is right to give to you this sacrifice of a pig for the sake of forcing back this sacred grove, and thus by this, whether I or one I have ordered, may this action be performed correctly. By this sacrifice, I ask that you will lay blessings down on me, my home, my family and my children: to this intent, please accept this pig I offer.' If you wish to till the earth, offer a second sacrifice like this, and add these words: 'for the sake of doing the work'.

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[22] *ilex*: Scheid 55 col. II line 55; *laurus*: Scheid 64 col. I line 38; *ficus*: Scheid 94 col. I line 22.

[23] In addition to those sources cited by Hunt ([n. 3], 150 n. 95), see also Columella (*Rust.* 11.2.19) for the pruning time of the poplar in early February, Pliny (*HN* 18.240) for the willow, between winter and spring, and Cato (*Agr.* 17.2) for the elm in autumn. Pliny criticizes the practice of annual pruning at *HN* 17.257.

[24] Hunt (n. 3), 152.

[25] Festus, *Gloss. Lat.* 57 Lindsay *coinquere coercere*. Hunt also points to 'Festus' in another section of Paul's epitome (Paul. Fest. *Gloss. Lat.* 56 Lindsay) as providing an answer to the question of the meaning of *coinquere* (Hunt [n. 3], 139). Here, Paul glosses *coinquere* as meaning *deputare*, widely translated as 'to prune', and Hunt assumes that the use of *coinquere* here is a 'variant or textual error'. However, this is the only occurrence of the word in Paul or Festus, and one has to ask why Paul would define the same term twice with two different words, and why Festus, on whom Paul was basing his comments, would have done the same, if the two words had identical meanings.

lucum conlucare Romano more sic oportet: porco piaculo facito, sic uerba concipito: 'si deus, si dea es, quoiium illud sacrum est, uti tibi ius est porco piaculo facere illiusce sacri coercendi ergo harumque rerum ergo, siue ego siue quis iussu meo fecerit, uti id recte factum siet, eius rei ergo hoc porco piaculo immolando bonas preces precor, uti sies uolens propitius mihi domo familiaeque meae liberisque meis: harumce rerum ergo macte hoc porco piaculo immolando esto'. si fodere uoles, altero piaculo eodem modo facito, hoc amplius dicito: 'operis faciundi causa'.[26]

Hunt sees a compelling similarity between the Arval's formula of *ad aram immolauit porcas piaculares duas luci coinquendi et operis faciundi* ('he sacrificed at the altar two expiatory pigs so as to *coinquere*/restrain the grove and perform the works') and two of the clauses used by Cato—*illiusce sacri coercendi ergo* ('therefore, for the *coercendi* of this sacred grove') and *operis faciundi causa* ('for the sake of doing this work').[27]

The act of a *piaculum* is to excuse 'past or imminent action',[28] and Cato's prayer is designed for anyone aiming to *conlucare* a grove, a verb which is helpfully defined by Paul as 'when branches blocking the light from a *profana* wood were cut off',[29] and by Festus as 'to fill a place (*locus*) with light by cutting trees'.[30] Hunt goes on to link *coinquere* to *conlucare* via Cato's use of *coercere*, discerning that the appropriate meaning of the word is 'to prune', asking 'what other arboricultural action both restrains and lets in light at the same time'.[31] As a response to the question posed, the answer must surely be 'to tie branches back', particularly in the context of a sacred grove. As Hunt acknowledges, Paul's reference to a profane wood is problematic for her, since Cato's prayer is clearly religious, while Paul specifies a non-religious setting through the use of this word.[32] Similarly, when Festus defines *conlucare*, he is equally secular, referring to a *locus*, not to any specific sacred place.[33] This could indicate that the original reading of engagement with religious groves as being on a primarily inviolable basis may stand up to examination, and causes us to question if translating *coinquere* as 'to prune' on the basis of its synonym, *coercere*, which is used in a different non-religious context, is not the easy step that Hunt takes it to be. Instead, it shows that the religious engagement with trees is not a simple one, that comparing the actions taken within a sacred grove to those in a secular context is problematic, and that, perhaps, trees were able to be manipulated into a religious context, for example, by restraining a tree, by forcing it to grow to a particular pattern in order to create a *lucus* which was dependent upon the presence of *lux*, regarded by ancient etymologists as central to the origin of the word, and by the inviolability of the grove itself.

Groves are flexible places in the ancient world, albeit ones with defined boundaries when they were created. It is unclear exactly how permanent these sites were, and the concern of Ovid's shepherd suggests that they could be at least temporarily obscured

[26] Cato, *Agr*. 139–40. For the discussion on the verb *coinquere*, see Hunt (n. 3), 137–9.

[27] Hunt (n. 3), 138; the Arval inscription is found throughout Hunt's Appendix; Cato, *Agr.* 139, 140.

[28] J. Scheid, 'Sacrifice, Roman', in S. Hornblower, A. Spawforth, E. Eidinow (edd.), *OCD*[4] (Oxford, 1996), 1308.

[29] Paul. Fest. *Gloss. Lat.* 33 Lindsay *conlucare dicebant, cum profanae siluae rami deciderentur officientes lumini.*

[30] Festus, *Gloss. Lat.* 474 Lindsay *conlucare autem, succisis arboribus locum inplere luce.*

[31] Hunt (n. 3), 139.

[32] Hunt (n. 3), 139 n. 54. This is further complicated by the use of *conlucare* by Columella (*Rust.* 2.21.3 *sed non permittitur ... arborem conlucare*), which is again used in an entirely non-religious context.

[33] Festus, *Gloss. Lat.* 474 Lindsay (for the Latin text, see n. 30 above).

from local knowledge. This much is echoed in the etymology of the term, which is similarly challenging even for Romans, who debate whether the site is light or dark and, if dark, whether it is lit by *lumen*. Understanding such places and their boundaries is crucial, since the punishments for violations were so severe. However, this opens up a whole new category of complications, since the nature of a violation was unclear, and whatever action the Arvals took in their grove could be excused by a sacrifice. This sacrifice was presumably not required in every instance, or it would have been performed prior to the amputation at Nocera. From the management and the mismanagement of Roman groves, it is clear that a grove is a wooded area with light within it. That light must, following the Arval inscriptions, be one that is excused for entry, whether through the introduction of *lux* by pruning or by the less harmful practice of tying any interfering branches back and of peacefully directing the growth of trees and creating the defined grove fresh every time. If we understand the grove as not just a flexible space but also a temporary one, Roman confusion surrounding groves and their edges becomes clear: a grove outside of the times of its implementation would not be as easily recognizable to Ovid's shepherd, and it would be more susceptible to unintentional mismanagement.

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