



# Arma virumque: The Significance of Spoils in Roman Culture

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*Arma virumque*: The Significance of Spoils in Roman Culture

A dissertation presented

by

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to

The Department of the Classics

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

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*Arma virumque*: The Significance of Spoils in Roman Culture

Abstract

This dissertation explores the significance of spoils and the practice of spoils-taking in Roman culture. Working from the premise that spoils in the classical sense (Latin *spolia, exuviae*) are items singled out for their symbolic value and accordingly subjected to different treatment than other war booty (Latin *praeda, manubiae*), I begin by examining *arma*, one of the primary targets of despoliation, in order to show how this symbolic value is generated based on the identity of the spoils' original owners. From there I show that the value of spoils depends directly upon the *virtus* (i.e. "manliness" as demonstrated primarily through courage or prowess in combat) of the parties involved in taking and giving them, as shown by cases involving male figures who lack this quality or female figures who exhibit it. In the following two chapters I propose a model of "inheritance by conquest": that spoils are earned through successful acts of *virtus* and can thereafter be deployed as handles by which to manipulate the identity of their original owners. In order to demonstrate this model at work, I trace several case studies that highlight the role of spoils as symbolic capital in the context of aristocratic competition, as well as the transformation of two spoils traditions (the laurel-wreath and the *spolia opima*) during the transition from Republic to Empire. Finally, I look to related phenomena, including headhunting and other human trophy collecting, relic culture, and architectural *spolia*, to help illuminate the dual nature of spoils as both proofs and remembrances of victory and victim.

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D M  
*feliculis carissimis*

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## Introduction

This dissertation takes as its subject a crucial and ubiquitous aspect of Roman culture: the practice of stripping a defeated enemy of particular items esteemed for their symbolic rather than economic or practical value and treating those items accordingly in a manner markedly distinct from other loot, which was typically sold off or otherwise reused. Called in Latin *spolia* or *exuviae* (more on terminology below), these items and their treatment have attracted the attention of scholars since at least the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century,<sup>1</sup> but a dedicated analysis of them is still lacking in modern scholarship. This dissertation constitutes a first step towards filling that gap by providing a thematic treatment of these “spoils” in Roman culture. It is my hope that such an analysis will draw out the fundamental significance of spoils and thereby help illuminate and draw connections between the many areas of Roman culture in which spoils play a role.

It is worth beginning with a closer look at the terminology, which is problematic both in Latin and in English. In Latin items that fall into the specific subset mentioned above are properly called *spolia* and *exuviae*, whereas plunder, loot, or booty more generally are appropriately called *praeda* and *manubiae*. The first complication is that the Latin term *spolia* is now frequently—for some even exclusively—associated with a particular architectural practice involving reuse of building materials which, while certainly related to *spolia* in the classical

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<sup>1</sup> e.g. Boulenger 1601.

sense,<sup>2</sup> is not the focus of this dissertation. Here I will use *spolia* in its original Latin sense; the architectural sort will be clearly noted as such. The English equivalent is likewise contentious. Derivatives of *spolia* and *exuviae* certainly exist, although in both cases they have lost the proper meanings of the Latin. As “exuvials” is not only obsolete but veritably arcane, I believe “spoils” to be the most readily intelligible translation, despite the fact that the narrow sense of the word has been replaced by one more appropriate as a translation of *praeda* or *manubiae* (compare the phrase “spoils of war” or the metaphorical “spoils system”).<sup>3</sup> The terms *spolia*, *exuviae*, and “spoils” are therefore used interchangeably here to refer to the distinct subset of items singled out for special treatment.<sup>4</sup>

The very fact that these spoils received special treatment indicates that they had particular significance in the eyes of those who took them, even as that significance meant that spoils were quite commonplace. A search of extant Latin literature reveals well over 400 instances of the word *spolia* in classical antiquity (ending c. 200 A.D.); including the verb *spoliare*, the total

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<sup>2</sup> See the last section of chapter five for my comments on this relationship. For a recent overview of the state of scholarship on architectural *spolia*, see Frey 2015: 9–14.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. *OED* s.v. spoils II.5, the obsolete specific sense, as opposed to I.1, the modern general sense. For centuries before that, however, *spolia* meant something rather different; I therefore use both *exuviae* and *spolia* in their original narrow senses. The English term is arguably more controversial. Accordingly, the terms *exuviae*, *spolia*, and spoils are used interchangeably throughout, while architectural *spolia* are clearly noted as such.

<sup>4</sup> The term *exuviae* may refer to any cast-off skin or covering, whether forcibly stripped from the animal or naturally removed through ecdysis (shedding or molting). For the purposes of this dissertation, only the former sense will be discussed, with the possible exception of an instance of the related verb *exuere* in Book 11 of Apuleius’ *Metamorphoses* (for which see the first chapter): Isis’ use of this verb in instructing Lucius to “cast off” his ass’ skin has to my mind a middle or reflexive sense that may be interpreted as simultaneously a natural shedding and an intentional stripping of the skin.

surpasses 1650. By comparison, the instances of the noun *exuviae* are far fewer: just 107.<sup>5</sup> Yet these numbers are somewhat deceptive. On the one hand, in their loosest sense the nouns *spolia* and *exuviae* are occasionally used as close synonyms for the more general terms *praeda* and *manubiae*. While the latter certainly deserves scholarly attention of its own, as indeed it has increasingly begun to receive,<sup>6</sup> I intend to focus on the subset of war booty that earned special treatment. On the other hand, the numbers given above omit myriad examples of spoils that simply lack the Latin name. Such examples certainly occur in literature (including Greek texts, such as Polybius, which understandably will not appear in a Latin search) but are especially frequent in art, where verbal descriptions are scarce. In addition, certain archaeological finds (especially of arms or armor) are also identifiable as spoils on the basis of their inscriptions, which typically do not contain any form of *spolia* or *spoliare* but rather specify from whom they were taken and where. This project aims to speak to all such examples and is accordingly not meant to be a linguistic study but rather one focused on broad questions of cultural significance. (The philological significance and range of the terminology is certainly important, but it is not the point.)

My intention is to explore spoils and spoils practice as a cultural phenomenon. It would likely be the work of a lifetime to catalogue every instance known in the context of Roman

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<sup>5</sup> As mentioned in n. 4 above, not all instances of *exuviae* refer to items forcibly stripped.

<sup>6</sup> There have been several articles on *praeda*, including Bona 1959 and Shatzman 1972. More recently, the subject of art as war booty has attracted scholarly attention: see McDonnell 2006a and Yarrow 2006. For the two dedicated volumes, see Coudry and Humm 2009 and Schattner and Valdés Fernández 2009.

culture, including literary descriptions, artistic depictions, and physical examples. One way of winnowing the field is to set parameters: hence numerous articles and the occasional monograph have been dedicated to single artifacts,<sup>7</sup> episodes,<sup>8</sup> genres,<sup>9</sup> or topics, such as the trophy (Greek *τρόπαιον*, Latin *trophaeum*)<sup>10</sup> or the dedication of captured arms and armor.<sup>11</sup> In attempting to address spoils as a concept, albeit limited to Roman culture broadly defined, I have instead taken a more thematic approach, drawing on particular examples both literary and material to highlight various aspects of spoils culture. Some of these serve as exemplars of the norm, but many of them instead violate that norm in fascinating ways: for example, the ill-fated reuse of spoils in the *Aeneid*; Tydeus' refusal to despoil Atys upon killing him in the *Thebaid*; the translation of spoils practice into iconography; and the issue of the *spolia opima*, the “spoils of honor” that were the focus of the most revered—but also the most problematic—spoils tradition at Rome. By identifying the exceptional elements in each case, we can develop a better sense of typical spoils practice and how it functioned on both practical and theoretical levels.

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<sup>7</sup> The following bibliography, while not exhaustive, gives an indication of the range and scope of such works: Shear 1937; Vanderpool 1966 and 1967; Richmond 1967; Baradez 1968; Wallace 1969; Balil 1973; Camp 1978; Camp, et al., 1992; Murray 1988; Czarnecka 1994; Hansen 1994; Flower 1998; and Tagliamonte 2009.

<sup>8</sup> See, e.g., West 1969; Stagakis 1987–1988; and Dettori 1999.

<sup>9</sup> For Homeric epic in particular: Morani 1992 and Ready 2007.

<sup>10</sup> For a catalogue, see Rabe 2008. On the general topic, see Gabaldón Martínez 2002; Stroszeck 2004; and Bettalli 2009. F. Lissarrague dedicated one of his recent Sather lectures to this subject: “Time, Transmission, Trophies and Relics: the Display of Weapons” (UC Berkeley, March 6, 2014).

<sup>11</sup> Jackson 1991.

As has frequently been pointed out in passing, spoils played an important role in Roman culture, especially in the realm of aristocratic competition. Certain elements or aspects of spoils tradition at Rome have indeed attracted intense scholarly attention: an extraordinary amount of ink has been spilled on the subject of the *spolia opima*, the “spoils of honor,” and that despite the comparative lack of a broad cultural analysis of “normal” *spolia*.<sup>12</sup> Several noteworthy analyses of Roman trophies and triumphs have included substantial discussion of spoils and spoils-display both within the actual processions and as lingering reminders of victory.<sup>13</sup> There is also a modest but growing collection of articles focused on the cultural significance of spoils in the narrow sense in which I use it here, almost exclusively in the sense of despoiled arms and armor, including passing mention of *spolia* in the context of the aristocratic domus, where they shared space with ancestral *imagines* and family stemmata,<sup>14</sup> as well as Rutledge’s wide-ranging survey of spoils and representations thereof as markers of victory.<sup>15</sup> These are a start, but there is more work to be done. My purpose in constructing this project as I have is to build on these previous studies by asking two related questions: not only *what* are spoils, but what *are* spoils? That is to say, I am interested in exploring not only what kinds of objects could be taken as spoils in the

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<sup>12</sup> On the *spolia opima*, see the second half of chapter four.

<sup>13</sup> See especially Charles-Picard 1957; Hölscher 1967 and 2006; Künzl 1988; Beard 2007; and Östenberg 2009.

<sup>14</sup> Wiseman 1987: 394–398; Rawson 1990: 158–161, 166; Flower 1996: 40–42; Polito 1998: 26, 127–132; Bücher 2006: 110–118; Welch 2006: 110–112; Roller 2010: 124, 130–131. As Roller points out (2010: 131 n. 30), *spolia* often enjoyed pride of place in the “most conspicuous” places of the house (so Polyb. 6.39.10: ἐν τε ταῖς οἰκίαις κατὰ τοὺς ἐπιφανεστάτους τόπους), including on the door-posts (*postes*: Liv. 38.43.10; Virg. *Aen.* 2.504, 7.183–186; Ov. 3.1.34; cf. Manil. *Astr.* 4.180–181; *fores*: Virg. *Aen.* 8.196–197) and in the *vestibulum* (Cic. *Phil.* 2.68).

<sup>15</sup> Including Hornsby 1966, Cleary 1982, Nielson 1983, Rawson 1990, and especially Rutledge 2012.



narrow sense (i.e. as *spolia* or *exuviae*, not just *praeda* or *manubiae*) but also how the value of such items functions in terms of both generation and performance. These questions are practically impossible to address independently but rather are best considered in conjunction.

In doing so, I often read ancient spoils practice in light of the theory of symbolic capital as formulated by Pierre Bourdieu.<sup>16</sup> As will become clear in the course of the dissertation, spoils are objects singled out on account of the fact that their symbolic value is perceived to eclipse their economic or practical value. While the latter two forms of value are realized through financial transactions and practical implementation, respectively, the symbolic capital represented by spoils is leveraged primarily through display as a statement of possession. Accordingly, we find frequent examples in Roman culture of the continual acquisition and visual deployment of spoils, which were putatively attainable only as a prize for feats of *virtus*, as key elements in claims of *virtus*-based prestige. Furthermore, the Romans did not limit themselves to temporary forms of spoils-display but rather made a habit of representing their hard-won spoils in more lasting media, thereby exploiting the nature of spoils as products—and therefore symbols—of power transfer in order to make their claims on such power correspondingly permanent. Examples of spoils are therefore understandably ubiquitous in Roman culture, where they operate on many levels: individual and collective, literal and metaphorical, and intra- and inter-societal, to name

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<sup>16</sup> Initially formulated in *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste* (1979, trans. 1986) and developed further in *Practical Reason: On the Theory of Action* (1998).

but a few. Roman spoils practice thus offers a valuable opportunity to explore a pervasive and persistent element of social competition in Roman culture.

In the first chapter I consider the treatment of *arma* (i.e. arms and armor), the most common target of despoliation, in order to determine how their symbolic value is derived initially from their connection to the men who wield them. Through an examination of both literary and material evidence, I demonstrate that *arma* consistently operated as key insignia of their users, capable of specifying not only rank or status but also individual, familial, and national or ethnic identity. More than mere tokens, however, in many respects *arma* functioned in the Roman imagination very much as essential body parts both practically and symbolically, as is further confirmed by a comparison with the animal counterparts with which they shared terminology in unspoiled and despoiled forms (*arma* and *spolia/exuviae*, respectively). Just as an animal cannot keep its life without its hide, so too did men lose something critical in being despoiled, which constituted a symbolic if not literal death.

In the second chapter I look more closely at the relationship between *arma* and the *virtus* (“manliness,” or worth as a man) of their users in order to identify a system of valuation based on that particular virtue. More specifically, I investigate cases in which the “manliness” of figures who use *arma* (and who therefore take and yield *arma* as spoils) is distinctly lacking. Some of these cases involve males who fail to display *virtus*, i.e. masculinity as the behavior expected of *vir*, while others feature females who exhibit *virtus* in defiance of the gender expectations placed upon women (i.e. *viragines*). From these examples I show that the use of *arma* as a principal act

of *virtus* resulted in so intimate an association between the object and the virtue that the two were considered to be gained and lost as one. The taking of an enemy's *arma* as spoils was thus a physical representation of the stripping of his *virtus*, with the proof then prominently displayed in a form of symbolic conspicuous consumption. Whereas economic forms of conspicuous consumption are judged by financial expense, this *virtus*-based consumption was valued instead according to the amount of effort expended in defeating the enemy, and that effort in turn was measured by the blood and sweat spilled between the two parties involved—the bloodier the better, with a bloodless victory resulting in correspondingly worthless spoils.

The third chapter takes a wider view of spoils, expanding the field from *arma* narrowly defined to a broader class of objects that were targeted for appropriation because of their particular symbolic value. I propose that despoliation follows a model of appropriation, which I call “inheritance by conquest,” according to which one party lays a *virtus*-based claim to an extant form of insignia in order to incorporate the signified's identity into his own. Such a claim may be based on an adversarial relationship, e.g. battlefield despoliation of a fallen enemy, but the appropriation of enemy *arma* on the battlefield is just one example of the adoption of emblems from any person or people as a rightful inheritance, whether literal or spiritual, in which the right to inherit is dependent upon (or alternatively implies) comparable *virtus* on the part of the heir. By way of example I trace three case studies of battlefield spoils and their afterlives in Roman culture: the use of the torque by the Torquati, the elephant by the Caecilii Metelli, and Hercules' lionskin by several of the emperors. In each case the spoil in question was

first won on the battlefield but passed thereafter into a sequence of succession in which each new participant used that spoil as a handle not only on its original owner but on its appropriators as well.

In the fourth chapter I focus on two further case studies to explore the potential of spoils as tools of transformation on a cultural level. The first is the development of the laurel, particularly in the form of a wreath, from the death of Julius Caesar through the Augustan era. Ovid's particular presentation of the creation of the laurel in his *Metamorphoses* highlights its mythological origin as the spoil taken by Apollo from Daphne, and in other Augustan sources too the *princeps'* association with the plant is portrayed most frequently as a sign of his relationship with his patron god. Yet an examination of the laurel-wreath on coinage of the period from the mid-40s B.C. through the Augustan age reveals a far more complex picture, suggesting not only that Octavian first used the laurel to connect himself to his adoptive father, Julius Caesar, but also that Apollo and his signature wreath may have been spoils won from the Liberators by Octavian in avenging Caesar at Philippi. The second case study is both the most famous and the most problematic spoils tradition in Roman culture: the *spolia opima* or "spoils of honor," which were won only three times in history. Livy's treatment of this tradition indicates that Augustus himself played a role in redefining it in the early years of his principate, and a survey of the evidence, circumstantial as it is, depicts a narrative in which the *princeps* himself manipulated the entire tradition with the result that it became defunct as a viable means of

aristocratic competition. The development of both traditions examined in this chapter exemplify some of the critical cultural changes that marked the transition from Republic to Empire.

In the fifth and final chapter I contextualize the taking of spoils among related phenomena such as headhunting, relic culture, human trophy collecting, and architectural *spolia*. All of these operate on the same underlying principle, namely that identity (often including specific virtues, which are not necessarily restricted to *virtus* in its original sense) can be manipulated through the physical manipulation of symbolic objects, whether organic body parts or inorganic personal effects. In each case the appropriation and display of such artifacts in turn forms a key component of the appropriator's own identity and expression thereof. These examples push the boundaries of how we should define spoils. Furthermore, they suggest that it is imperative to see spoils-taking and -display as acts not only of possession and appropriation but also of collecting. Such collections may conceivably have been as small as a single piece of spoil kept in a home, but at their largest extent they paralleled—and indeed represented—the collection of the provinces and thus the curation of empire itself.

In the conclusion I look backwards briefly at what has been covered while acknowledging the material left uncovered here by the necessities of time and space but to which I intend to return. I also look forward to related work that I hope will continue to be done in this area.

## I: Dressed to Kill

### *Arma* and the Construction of Identity

The *Aeneid* ends as it begins: with arms and a man. On the verge of sparing Turnus' life, Aeneas catches sight of Pallas' baldric and belt on the shoulders of the man who killed his young companion. Pallas' *arma*—now Turnus' *exuviae*—provoke a reaction in Aeneas every bit as savage as the grief of which they are reminders. Seized by a sudden furious anger, the collective inheritance of both sides of his epic lineage,<sup>1</sup> Aeneas deals the critical strike in Pallas' name, and the last lines of the poem linger on Turnus' chilling fate. A fair amount of scholarly attention has been devoted to the *balteus* and *cingula*<sup>2</sup> that spark Aeneas' anger and subsequently lead to Turnus' death, the final piece of the infamously troubling conclusion to the poem. Although interpretations vary, it is generally acknowledged that this equipment has crucial significance.<sup>3</sup> But if these are the arms that end the *Aeneid*, then who is the man?

Three men are involved in the dramatic finale, two physically and another in spirit. One is the eponymous hero Aeneas. His status as the man of the *Aeneid* is hardly questionable,<sup>4</sup> and

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<sup>1</sup> Galinsky 1988, esp. 340–347.

<sup>2</sup> The term *cingulum* (pl. *cingula*) properly refers to a soldier's belt, which was worn around the waist, and *balteus* to a baldric (a strap, typically of leather, from which a sword or other weapon was suspended), which was originally slung from one shoulder to the opposite hip but later hung obliquely from one side of the *cingulum*. In the case of Pallas, as in Latin literature more generally, either term could be used to refer to both baldric and belt as a set.

<sup>3</sup> Recent bibliography on Pallas' baldric includes Conte 1980; Spence 1991; Putnam 1994; O'Higgins 1995; Bartsch 1998; Harrison 1998; Putnam 1998, esp. ch. 6; Gross 2003–2004; and Shelfer 2010–2011.

<sup>4</sup> Aeneas is defined as the leading “man” of the *Aeneid* by the second word of the poem (*virum* 1.1) just as Odysseus is the man of the *Odyssey* (ἄνδρα 1.1).

he is viscerally affected by the sight of Pallas' arms on Turnus' body,<sup>5</sup> but it is also hard to claim that he is the one to whom the fatal baldric and belt properly belong. The other two have more direct claims to them, each in his own way. They were first worn by Pallas, whose relationship to his *arma* is established only when Turnus strips them from his corpse as spoils,<sup>6</sup> an act fundamentally defined by the transfer of possession of such items from victim to victor. Nevertheless, their identification with Pallas remains so strong that at the close of the poem the arms themselves vividly evoke the memory of their original owner and inspire Aeneas to act in his name.<sup>7</sup> Aeneas literally has the last word,<sup>8</sup> and Pallas is credited with the agency of the final blow, a violent consummation of sacrifice and revenge.<sup>9</sup> But the poem could not end as it does without Turnus, whose decision to wear the despoiled arms makes possible Aeneas' striking resurrection of Pallas and ultimately renders Turnus responsible for his own death.

Throughout the *Aeneid* such use of others' armor, often in the form of spoils, is consistently characterized as taboo. With the exception of Aeneas, every character in the poem

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<sup>5</sup> *Aen.* 12.945–946: *ille, oculis postquam saevi monimenta doloris | exuviasque hausit, furiis accensus et ira | terribilis.*

<sup>6</sup> *Aen.* 10.495–500.

<sup>7</sup> *Aen.* 12.948–949: '*Pallas te hoc vulnere, Pallas | immolate et poenam scelerato ex sanguine sumit.*'

<sup>8</sup> Note the third person of the verbs *immolat* and *sumit*—Aeneas is not under the impression that he *is* Pallas but rather is crediting Pallas with the agency of his own actions.

<sup>9</sup> Sacrificial imagery surrounds Turnus in the lead-up to his death: among other things, he expresses an intention to devote himself (12.234 *se devovet aris*), he describes his soul as *sancta ad vos [Manes]* (12.648), and his sister Juturna's decision to veil her head (12.885 *caput glauco contexit amictu*) may be interpreted as preparation for a sacrifice, in this case of her brother. For more on sacrifice in the *Aeneid*, including the sacrificial elements of the death of Turnus, see Hardie 1993, esp. ch. 2, and Tarrant 2012: 336–339.

who explicitly wears another's armor, or who even wishes to do so, dies.<sup>10</sup> This strict correlation represents a sharp break from Homeric tradition, in which spoils could be reused with impunity.<sup>11</sup> The shared fate of those who wear or wish to wear alien armor in the *Aeneid* strongly implies that these characters have violated a norm. That this norm is Roman more generally rather than specific to Virgil is suggested by the extreme rarity of cases in which spoils are reused in extra-Virgilian contexts, both literary and historical. Only on a handful of occasions are Romans said to have used spoils for their original practical purpose.<sup>12</sup> With the exception of those rare cases, it seems simply not done to reuse spoils, at least spoils taken from men.

Complicating the picture is the fact that there is another kind of spoils recognized by the Romans, one to which the observations above do not apply. These other spoils are items taken from slain animals, most often in the context of hunting. Such pieces could include the skin, hide, or pelt; teeth or tusks; claws or nails; or any other part used offensively or defensively—in short, the animal form of *arma*.<sup>13</sup> As we shall see, the similarities between human spoils and their animal counterparts go beyond their common acquisition as “strippings” from defeated foes, the

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<sup>10</sup> As observed by Hornsby (1966) and Cleary (1982).

<sup>11</sup> Horsfall 1995: 175–177; 2008: 304 n. iii. The Patroclus disaster seems to be an exceptional case, but it will be shown that the problem lies in the problematic acquisition of Achilles' armor, not necessarily in his wearing of it.

<sup>12</sup> e.g. Liv. 23.14.4. On the reuse of despoiled arms dedicated in temples, see Tagliamonte 2006.

<sup>13</sup> As in *OLD*, s.v. *arma* 8c: “nature's weapons” (cf. *OED* s.v. *weapon* 1d); cf. the use of Greek ὄπλα, the equivalent of *arma*, to mean “the arms possessed by animals for self-defence,” as in Arist. *Part. an.* 687a25 (*LSJ* s.v. ὄπλον IV). Pliny (*NH* 8.7) likewise calls the elephant's tusks its *arma*.



reason for which they are both called *spolia* and *exuviae*.<sup>14</sup> In one particular respect, however, there is a striking difference in treatment between the two: Whereas the reuse of human spoils is rare in general and even taboo in the *Aeneid*, the use of animal equivalents is remarkably commonplace in a variety of contexts. In the *Aeneid* alone, for example, animal skins taken from at least ten different species are used across nine of the twelve books,<sup>15</sup> and on no occasion is there any implication that wearing or otherwise using these skins is a violation of a norm. On the contrary, such use seems to constitute a norm for many figures, especially barbaric, heroic, and divine, both in the *Aeneid* and in literary and artistic contexts more widely.<sup>16</sup>

Whence then this discrepancy? Since both human and animal spoils are products of the same process of despoliation and even share the same terminology (i.e. *spolia* and *exuviae*), it seems unlikely that their status as spoils could be responsible for the tendency not to reuse spoils taken from men; if that were the case, we would expect both kinds of spoils to be treated the same in this respect. Instead, I would argue that the tendency not to reuse spoils taken from men ought

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<sup>14</sup> The term *spolia* (found rarely in the singular, *spolium*) is related to the verb *spoliare* (“strip”). On *exuviae*: Isid. *Etym.* 18.2.8: *exuviae ab exuendo dictae*; *TLL* s.v. *exuviae* 5.2.2128.48–49 (Kornhardt).

<sup>15</sup> The skins of seven to nine different species are mentioned in the *Aeneid*: bear (5.37, 8.368); lion (2.722, 5.351, 7.666, 8.177, 8.552–553, 9.306), lynx (1.323), ox (*boves*: 5.405; *taurus*: 1.368, 9.706, 10.483; *iuvencus*: 11.679; cf. 7.690), *panthera* (a big cat, not necessarily our panther: 8.460), sheep (7.87–88), tiger (11.576–577), wolf (1.275, 7.688, 11.680–681), and three unspecified: 7.396 (possibly fawn, as these pelts are worn by faux-Maenads); 8.282 (perhaps lion, in light of the lion pelt given to Salius, eponymous founder of the Salii, at 5.351–352); 11.770–771 (possibly a spotted cat, if it is meant to recall the pelts used as saddlecloths in depictions of rulers as hunters, e.g. Alexander the Great).

<sup>16</sup> For the use of animal skins by a barbaric figure in the *Aeneid*, cf. the description of Aventinus in his father Hercules’ lionskin as *horridus* (7.669: *horridus Herculeoque umeros innexus amictu*). Cf. Tacitus’ treatment of the Germanic habit of wearing skins (*Germ.* 17.2, discussed briefly below).

to be attributed to their human origin, and that it is the personal connection between men and their arms that discourages—and in certain literary contexts even makes taboo—the practical reuse of those arms by others. The fact that in the *Aeneid* the use of alien *arma* almost universally results in death regardless of whether such items are spoils suggests that this personal connection exists before despoliation and persists even after that event. Accordingly, this chapter comprises an exploration of the connection between men and arms in order to establish the value and meaning of *arma* before they are stripped as spoils and then to examine how aspects of that original value and meaning are retained throughout the process of despoliation. Such an analysis should also help account for the differences and similarities in the ways in which human and animal spoils are treated. These constitute the first steps towards explaining the overall significance of spoils in Roman culture.

### Arms and the Fighting Man

The Latin term *arma* literally specifies things which are “fit” (root *ar-*) to a body for its protection, hence armor in general, sometimes shields in particular.<sup>17</sup> In its most common sense, which is slightly broader, *arma* is answered fairly well by the English phrase “arms and armor,” a collocation that effectively captures the dual nature of *arma* as offensive and defensive implements.<sup>18</sup> Some of the items that constitute *arma*, such as swords and shields, will be familiar

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<sup>17</sup> *TLL* s.v. *arma* 2.0.590.32–41 (Bickel); both *arma* and “arms” are cognate with Greek ἀρπίσκειν (“to fit together,” *OED* s.v. arms, *n.*).

<sup>18</sup> *TLL* s.v. *arma* 2.0.591.1 (Bickel): *instrumenta bellorum*, either α *ad tegendum* (2.0.591.43–77) or β *ad nocendum* (2.0.591.77–592.34). In the *OED* the use of “arms” in the defensive sense is called “poetic” (s.v. arm, *n.* 2, I.1).

to anyone who has even a passing acquaintance with military gear, while in its widest sense the term encompasses a vast spectrum of equipment used in a variety of contexts, not only war but also hunting and even boxing and sailing.<sup>19</sup> For the purposes of the current discussion the use of *arma* will be restricted to contexts related to combat and bloodsport, including war and the hunt, and for the moment I will leave the range of its referents within those contexts intentionally broad. It must be acknowledged that not all spoils were originally *arma*, just as not all *arma* become spoils. Nevertheless, arms and armor were the prime targets for despoliation, for reasons that will become clear in the course of this chapter; as such, they serve well as illustrative examples of items taken as spoils. The matter of defining which items outside of the sphere of *arma* were eligible to become spoils will be considered in the final chapter.

Arms and armor as functional implements are vital to societies whose members participate in violent pursuits such as warfare and hunting. On one level, the creation and use of such items is a matter of practicality. Were this the only factor involved, the history of arms and armor could be reduced to a simple narrative of developing better tools for killing while not being killed. Practical concerns, however, cannot adequately account for the many differences in shape and form found both within and between various societies, ancient and modern; for the decorations, sometimes immensely intricate, that adorn even equipment used in combat or in daily life; or for the very existence and use of ceremonial pieces, which extends far beyond ancient Roman culture both temporally and geographically. Such evidence shows that in addition

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<sup>19</sup> *TLL s.v. arma* 2.0.590.58–84 (Bickel).

to their basic necessity (and possibly because of it) arms and armor historically have possessed symbolic value that in certain contexts can match or even exceed their practical worth. This symbolic value is derived in large part from the close connection between *arma* and those to whom they belong.

From a very early time Romans had a rather idiosyncratic attitude towards arms. According to its own self-image, Rome was defined by violence: It was a society traditionally founded on fratricide between two sons of the war-god Mars and populated by a group of convicts and criminals who had to resort to the rapine of neighboring women to ensure their future as a people. Legend had it that the first temple at Rome was established as a repository for the first set of *spolia opima* in the wake of the victory that would occupy first place in the *Fasti Triumphales*.<sup>20</sup> Beginning with these foundational moments Romans recognized arms as a primary means of acquiring and maintaining their hallmark *imperium*.<sup>21</sup> One such fundamental act of violence—Romulus’ slaying of his brother—was interconnected with the literal definition of Rome by a sacred boundary, the *pomerium*, which demarcated the heart of the city as a space free of arms and war.<sup>22</sup> Martial power and military authority were regarded as external forces located both mentally and physically outside of this boundary. Weapons were forbidden to be

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<sup>20</sup> The temple is that of Jupiter Feretrius, founded as a repository for the *spolia opima* (Liv. 1.10; Prop. 4.10); the victory that of Romulus over Acron of the Caeninenses. For more on this temple and tradition, see the second half of chapter five.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Liv. 1.26, 4.10.

<sup>22</sup> Drogula 2015: 104–105.

carried within the *pomerium*, at least openly,<sup>23</sup> and both ordinary soldiers and later Praetorian guards wore the toga, the sartorial mark of the Roman citizen, or a corselet of heavy felt (*subarmalis*) in the place of metal armor and other typical military clothing.<sup>24</sup> The axes that signified the legal right of senior magistrates to order an execution were removed from their *fasces*, with the exception of the dictator's, where they remained as part of his autocratic privilege. Generals lost their military command (*imperium militiae*) upon crossing the threshold of the *pomerium*; they were permitted to enter in arms only once having been voted a triumph, and then only on the day of the parade itself.<sup>25</sup> Crossing the *pomerium* in arms in violation of this cultural taboo was synonymous with armed insurrection, political violence, or a declaration of martial law in place of the rule of law.

This distinctive concept of a civilian center in the midst of a world at war found apt expression in the formulaic collocation *domi militiaeque* (literally “at home and at war”).<sup>26</sup> This phrase can be read as simultaneously adversative and conjunctive. As a dichotomy, the phrase

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<sup>23</sup> Wallace-Hadrill 1993: 23; Rosenstein 2007: 142.

<sup>24</sup> The Praetorian guard is called *cohors togata*: Tac. *Hist.* 1.38.2, *Ann.* 16.27.1; Lintott 1999: 90; Rüpke 2007b: 182; Speidel 2012: 7–8. For images of Praetorians in the toga, see the famous Claudian relief now in the Louvre-Lens (LL.398) and a Trajanic relief from Puteoli (with discussion in Flower 2001: 640–642) whose fragments are now in Philadelphia (University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, inv. MS4916A) and in Berlin (Staatliche Museen, SK 887).

<sup>25</sup> Beard, North, and Price 1998: 176, 179–180.

<sup>26</sup> On the concept, see Rüpke 1990 and Welch 2006. The phrase *domi militiaeque* occurs 35 times in classical Latin: 19 times in Livy; eight in Sallust; three times each in Cicero (*Leg. Man.* 48, *Sen.* 82, *Tusc.* 5.19.55) and [Sall.] (*Ad Caes. sen. II* 1.3, 2.4, 13.5); and once each in Velleius Paterculus (1.13.3) and Tacitus (*Hist.* 3.75.1). The alternative *domi bellique* (“at home and in war”) appears five times: twice in Livy (2.50.11, 3.24.11) and once each in Sallust (*Hist.* 2 fr. 43.6 [*Oratio C. Cottae*]), Nepos (*Alcibiades* 7.1), and Fronto (3.3).

*domi militiaeque* specifies the two mutually exclusive spheres in which “opposite kinds of *imperia* are enforced,”<sup>27</sup> with the *pomerium* serving “to distinguish Roman civilian space as essentially removed from war.”<sup>28</sup> Since weapons were forbidden to be carried within the *pomerium*, there could be no proper military action of any kind within the city center; even the centuriate voting assembly (*comitia centuriata*) could not meet inside the boundary, as the tribal assembly did, explicitly because it had originated as a gathering of the armed soldiery.<sup>29</sup> On the other hand, *domus* and *militia* together made two halves of a whole. Like *terri marique* (“by land and by sea”), *domi militiaeque* captured the world as the Romans thought of it in a single phrase. Aristocratic competition among Romans occurred both at home and in the field in that the reputation of each family rested on the combined military and political successes of its members. *Domus* and *militia* were thus not merely opposites but complements. In both respects they were distinct from each other, with violations of the sacred boundary between the two becoming a hallmark of social perversion and political collapse.

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<sup>27</sup> Humm 2012: 78.

<sup>28</sup> Ando 2007: 443.

<sup>29</sup> Laelius Felix ap. Gell. 15.27.5: *centuriata autem comitia intra pomerium fieri nefas esse, quia exercitum extra urbem imperari ius non sit.* Fabius Pictor ap. Gell. 10.15.3: *Dialem flaminem...religio est classem procinctam extra pomerium, id est, exercitum armatum, videre; idcirco rarer flamen Dialis creatus consul est, cum bella consulibus mandabantur.* See also Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 7.59.3. On the definition of “procinctus” as “armed,” cf. Gai. *Inst.* 2.101.

The concepts of *domus* and *militia* were often evoked through their characteristic outfits, the toga and *arma*, which were considered the *insignia* of their respective spheres.<sup>30</sup> In this sense the terms *toga* and *arma*, as well as their adjectival counterparts (*armatus* and *togatus*), frequently appear together as a dichotomous pair, for example in Cicero’s explicitly metaphorical *arma togae cedant*<sup>31</sup> and the more literal *togatus et non armatus* found in its pseudo-Sallustian response.<sup>32</sup> In his *Germania* Tacitus relies on this well-established symbolism of toga and arms in order to characterize the Germani as barbaric in using the latter where the Romans used the former. This substitution is reinforced linguistically in Tacitus’ use of the phrase *sumere arma* as a barbaric conflation of *sumere togam [virilem]* (“to don the toga [of manhood],” i.e. to be a man) and *sumere saga* (“to don [military] cloaks,” i.e. to go to war) and is made explicit in his description of arms as the toga of the Germani.<sup>33</sup> Both pieces of rhetoric attest that in the eyes of the Romans arms and the toga were equivalent not just as emblems of war and peace but as vestimentary insignia capable of being imbued with the same social meaning, in this case specifically as tokens of manhood. The habit of using arms to fulfill a symbolic and cultural function proper

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<sup>30</sup> Cic. *Pis.* 73: *non dixi hanc togam qua sum amictus, nec arma scutum aut gladium unius imperatoris, sed quia pacis est insigne et otii toga, contra autem arma tumultus atque belli, poetarum more locutus hoc intellegi volui, bellum ac tumultum paci atque otio concessurum.*

<sup>31</sup> Cic. *De or.* 3.167, *Off.* 1.77; cf. *Phil.* 2.20; *Laus Pisonis* 36, 157. For further collocations of *arma(tus)* and *toga(tus)*, cf. Cic. *Caecin.* 43, *Mur.* 84, *Marcell.* 14 and 24, *Sest.* 52, *Sen.* 11, *Fam.* 6.1.6; Liv. 4.10.8, 6.18.9, 22.23.3; Val. Max. 3.2.19, 5.3.2e, 9.7.1; Luc. 9.199; Plin. *Pan.* 4.5, 56.7.

<sup>32</sup> [Sall.] *Invectiva in M. Tullium Ciceronem* 3.6. This piece has a terminus ante quem of the late 1<sup>st</sup> c. A.D. on the basis of Quintilian, who believed it to be genuinely Sallustian; it might instead be Augustan (C. Pelling, *OCD* s.v. “Sallust”).

<sup>33</sup> Tac. *Germ.* 13.1. For the phrases *saga sumere*, *ad saga ire*, and *in sagis esse* as “to go to war” or “to be at war,” cf. Cic. *Ver.* 5.94, *Phil.* 5.31, 6.9, 8.32, 12.16, 14.3; Vell. Pat. 2.16.4; Speidel 2012: 9.

(at least in Roman eyes) to the toga was intended to be perceived as a transgression of the separation between *domus* and *militia*, but the conceptual possibility itself relies upon the understanding that *arma* were equipment capable of social coding on a par with their domestic counterpart.

An examination of visual and literary evidence reveals that arms and armor frequently functioned as signifiers in the Roman world, and that they did so in two general ways: 1) as symbols of status; and 2) as specific markers of individual and collective identity.<sup>34</sup> In different societies at different times, the ubiquitous bearing of arms has served variously as the sign of an adult male, a free man, or a member of the warrior elite. As a result of their unique attitude towards violence, none of these three categories carried arms with them habitually in Roman society, but each played a role in the Roman conception of the relationship between arms and men. On the field of battle, specific pieces or parts of armor designated rank, while off the field military clothing such as belts and cloaks distinguished soldier from civilian. In artistic and literary contexts especially, some types of weapons and armor were associated above all with commanders and rulers. In addition to indicating vertical status within a military structure or within society as a whole, arms and armor also characterized their owners both on an individual basis and as members of particular military units, families, or nationalities. *Arma* thereby served as insignia that located their owners laterally and vertically, and their symbolic value depended

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<sup>34</sup> *Arma* certainly fit within the category of clothing or outfit and thus in my view count among “the primary signifiers of identity and status” (Dillon 2006: 263).



accordingly upon the specific content for which they coded, i.e. the identities of the people who used them. Thus arms fit their men not only literally but also symbolically.

### Arms and Armor as Status Symbols

*Arma* may have yielded to the toga as the definitive outfit of the Roman citizen, but they were hardly inferior in terms of symbolic significance. On the contrary, *arma* were regarded as visible marks of military power (*imperium*) and authority, not only of those who used them but also of those who granted them and sanctioned their use.<sup>35</sup> While carrying weapons as the sign of a free adult male was anathema to the Romans, the state-sanctioned bearing of arms was generally restricted to that very demographic in that it was originally confined to military contexts.<sup>36</sup> The hierarchy of the army was both reflected in and reinforced by the distinctive ways in which various divisions and ranks were armed, and the various reformations of the army were mirrored by corresponding shifts in armament. Towards the end of the republic, gladiatorial combat provided a new setting for armed combat that was distinct from military service in a number of ways, most notably in the use of markedly different equipment and in the placing of weapons in the hands of previously excluded groups such as slaves and occasionally women. Throughout the course of Roman history, especially during the transition from republic to

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<sup>35</sup> Cic. *Leg. agr.* 2.101: *ego cum vestris armis armatus insignibusque amplissimis exornatus <sim>, imperio, auctoritate, non horreo in hunc locum progredi {posse} vobisque auctoribus improbitati hominis resistere, nec vereor, ne res publica tantis munita praesidiis ab istis vinci aut opprimi possit.*

<sup>36</sup> Including certain religious rituals tied to martial activity: the Salii, for example, the “leaping” priests of Mars, dressed as warriors (Liv. 1.20). Their ritual paraphernalia included the archaic *ancilia*, bronze figure-of-eight shields.

empire, the loss of control over weapons and those who used them was symptomatic of sociopolitical instability. And just as men-at-arms and gladiators were defined linguistically by their weapons (*armatus* from *arma*, *gladiator* from *gladius*),<sup>37</sup> so too those who engaged in acts of public violence—not just murder but even carrying a weapon with the intent to commit armed robbery or assault—were named *sicarii* after the dagger-like *sica*, the iconic tool of their illicit trade.<sup>38</sup>

For much of the republic, a time period during which the idea of citizenship was deeply connected with *libertas*, Rome relied on a citizen army whose members were by definition free. Slaves, and likewise even those men whose servile status was in doubt, were forbidden from enlisting as a general rule.<sup>39</sup> They were admitted only rarely, and admission to the army brought with it manumission from servitude, so that service in the armed forces still implied freedom.<sup>40</sup> The impressment of slaves occurred most frequently in the civil wars of the first century B.C.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Cf. also the identification of the leading centurion as *primus pilus* (“first spear”).

<sup>38</sup> Gaughan 2010: 73–76; compare the famous EID MAR coin of the Younger Brutus (*RRC* 508/3), the reverse of which features two daggers representing the assassination of Julius Caesar.

<sup>39</sup> *Dig.* 49.16.8, 49.16.11; cf. *Plin. Ep.* 10.29–30. Armed slaves presented a serious threat in the form of rebellion. The famous uprising led by Spartacus in the late seventies B.C. was just one of several. Diodorus Siculus vividly describes a revolt in Sicily that began c. 135 B.C. and lasted until 132, requiring three separate attempts to quell (34.2.1–23). As a result of the “contagion” of this servile war, slaves were forbidden to carry weapons there on pain of death. Accordingly, when L. Domitius Ahenobarbus was praetor in Sicily (96 B.C.) he condemned to crucifixion a shepherd who had slain a massive boar, a hunting success *par excellence*, because he had used a hunting-spear (*venabulum*) to kill it (*Cic. Verr.* 2.5.7; *Val. Max.* 6.3.5; *Quint. Inst.* 4.2.17).

<sup>40</sup> *Suet. Aug.* 25.2; Herz 2007: 306; Wesch-Klein 2007: 435.

<sup>41</sup> Compare the arming of slaves during the American Civil War, which the Confederacy initially denounced as heresy but to which it eventually resorted as an emergency measure: see Levine 2006.

According to Plutarch, Marius created a separate corps of slaves whom he had manumitted for the occasion;<sup>42</sup> later generals to admit slaves to their armies included Labienus, Brutus, Pompey the Great, and his sons Gnaeus and Sextus.<sup>43</sup> Augustus seems not to have indulged in this practice himself; he reportedly returned some of the slaves in the army of Sextus Pompey to their owners while resorting to the use of slaves in regular service only twice:<sup>44</sup>

libertino milite, praeterquam Romae incendiorum causa et si tumultus in graviore annona metueretur, bis usus est: semel ad praesidium coloniarum Illyricum contingentium, iterum ad tutelam ripae Rheni fluminis; eosque, servos adhuc viris feminisque pecuniosioribus indictos ac sine mora manumissos, sub priore vexillo habuit, neque aut commixtos cum ingenuis aut eodem modo armatos.

On two occasions did he [Augustus] use a freedman soldiery, besides for the sake of fires at Rome and if he feared riots when the price for grain was rather burdensome: once for the protection of the colonies bordering Illyricum, a second time for the safeguard of the bank of the river Rhine; and he placed them under their former standard, having been levied while still slaves from the wealthier men and women and immediately freed, and they were neither intermingled with the freeborn nor armed in the same way.

Suet. *Aug.* 25.2

Freedmen had never been the social equals of the freeborn in society at large, and it is no surprise to find that this distinction was likewise observed when they were admitted to the army. Freedmen were kept physically separate from the rest of the units and represented by their own standard, which like *arma* functioned as insignia and served to reinforce group identity, in this

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<sup>42</sup> Plut. *Sull.* 9, *Mar.* 41.

<sup>43</sup> Labienus: *Bell. Afr.* 19; Brutus: Plut. *Brut.* 45; Pompey the Great: Caes. *BC* 1.24; Gnaeus Pompey: App. *BC* 2.103; Sextus Pompey: App. *BC* 5.131.

<sup>44</sup> The first occasion cited is the Pannonian uprising of A.D. 6 (Dio 55.31); the second occurred after the fall of Varus in A.D. 9 (Dio 55.23, Tac. *Ann.* 1.31).

case of a military cohort created especially for members of a particular social class.<sup>45</sup> On the rare occasions when freedmen were granted the use of arms, otherwise the exclusive prerogative of the freeborn, those very arms served to distinguish *libertus* from *liber*: While at this point in time regular legionaries were armed with a shield and used the *gladius* and *pilum*, the freedmen cohorts would likely have been lightly armed (*levites*) like *auxilia*.

The hierarchy of the army had found outward expression in the arms of its soldiers from very early times. The use of *arma* was itself an indication of social status: all of the men who served in the army were those defined by the censors as *cives qui arma ferre possunt* (“citizens who are capable of bearing arms”), a phrase referring primarily not to physical but rather socio-economic fitness.<sup>46</sup> Those who were not wealthy enough to provide their own *arma* were considered beneath the class structure (*infra classem*) and were numbered by headcount (*capite censi*). These *proletarii* were not admitted to the army at all except in cases of emergency,<sup>47</sup> and even then they were kept separate, in both respects foreshadowing the later use of slaves and freedmen. By the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century B.C., this tactic of levying *proletarii* on an ad hoc basis had been discontinued entirely in favor of permanent reductions of the census qualification of the lowest class in order to increase the population of citizens eligible for military service.

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<sup>45</sup> Shuckburgh (1896: 55) takes *vexillum* as metonymy for *cohors* and interprets *sub priore vexillo* as specifying the *cohortes libertinorum* called *voluntariae* (Macrob. *Sat.* 1.11.33) in contrast to soldiers whose civic duty compelled them to serve in the military (Liv. 22.57).

<sup>46</sup> In Gabba’s view (1978: 8), the physical fitness of soldiers was not determined in the census but during the act of the levy.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*

The armies of the early Republic utilized an entirely timocratic order based on the same socio-economic classes established by the censors. Each class used its own set of equipment, which depended directly upon the economic capital of its members. The fifth and lowest class served as slingers (*funditores*), who carried no arms except their eponymous slings and stones. The fourth class carried only spears and shields, the bread and butter of the ancient warrior; the third had swords and helmets as well. The second class was protected by additional armor in the form of greaves, while men of the first class could afford a cuirass and, according to Livy, were further distinguished by the use of a round shield (*clipeus*) as opposed to the oblong *scutum*. Higher in status than the infantry, cavalrymen (*equites*) were traditionally members of the aristocracy and later came to form their own social order, the *ordo equester*, whose members had to satisfy the financial and moral requirements of the censors.<sup>48</sup> In early republican times *equites* were provided with horses at the expense of the state (*equites equo publico*), but starting in the 5<sup>th</sup> century B.C. the cavalry also included men who could afford their own horses (*equites equo privato*) in addition to *arma* both for themselves and their mounts.

As the divisions of the army were reformed, so too were their respective outfits. In the manipular army of the mid-republic, military units were reorganized on the basis of experience in addition to class.<sup>49</sup> Now the front line was composed of heavy infantry (*hastati*). In the 4<sup>th</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries B.C., these men carried the spear (*hasta*) for which they were named, but this was

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<sup>48</sup> Cf. Liv. 6.24.10, where cavalry fighting amongst infantry is described as “*insignis armis*.”

<sup>49</sup> Liv. 8.8.3–8.

later replaced by the *gladius* and a pair of throwing spears or javelins (*pila*). The *hastati* themselves were protected by mail armor, metal helmets, and iron-bossed wooden oblong shields (*scuta*), while the light-armed skirmishers (*levites*) who accompanied them each carried a spear (*hasta*) and javelins (*gaesa*) but had no shield.<sup>50</sup> Next came the more experienced *principes*, whom Livy claims had “the most distinguished arms of all” (*insignibus maxime armis*), reflecting their status as the “leading men” of the army. The *hastati* and *principes* were followed by companies consisting of three parts (*vexilla*, “banners”) each: the veteran *triarii* (“third-rowers”), then the younger and less accomplished *rorarii*, and finally *accensi*, supernumeraries who were considered the least dependable of all. The *triarii* used *scuta* and *hastae*, while the *accensi* may have carried only slings, like the *funditores* of the Servian army.

By the 2<sup>nd</sup> century B.C. the manipular army looked slightly different. As the financial qualification for military service was lowered again and again so that more men would be eligible for recruitment, the number of soldiers who could not afford their own arms and armor steadily increased, and in response the state began to issue standardized equipment. Consequently, by Polybius’ time the *hastati* and *principes* were no longer distinguishable by their arms, although the *triarii* carried *hastae* rather than *pila*.<sup>51</sup> The *levites* also wore wolfskins over their heads so that they could distinguish themselves under the watchful gaze of their commanding officers in battle; they may also have carried a small round shield (*parma*), as distinct from the archaic *clipeus* and

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid. 8.8.3–5.

<sup>51</sup> Polyb. 6.23.16.

the larger *scutum*.<sup>52</sup> While conspicuous, such skins offered significantly less protection than processed leather or metal armor and were correspondingly less costly, again a reflection upon the *levites*' socio-economic status.

After the Marian reforms at the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century B.C. did away with the old class system, a soldier's origin usually determined his place in the army as well as his opportunities for promotion. Auxiliary units (*auxilia*) were populated for the most part by non-Italians, while legionaries were typically Roman in origin, with the aristocracy still providing centurions and other high-ranking officers throughout the army.<sup>53</sup> When the occasion called for it, foreign allies who would normally enter the auxiliary units could be "upgraded" to citizen status in order to fill out the legions; like the manumission of slaves upon their admission to the army, this change in social status was usually permanent.<sup>54</sup> These various stations—and by extension the origins that gave rise to them—were reflected in the style of *arma* used by the soldiers. Auxiliaries became increasingly distinguished by their native equipment as the legions proper continued to grow ever more homogeneous in their gear, with the standardization of arms and armor at the hands of the state helping to create not just visual but also social solidarity.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid. 6.22.

<sup>53</sup> Rosenstein 2007: 144.

<sup>54</sup> Le Bohec 1994: 72. Auxiliaries and marines could also receive citizenship upon their discharge (Herz 2007: 307).

<sup>55</sup> Burns 2003.

Amid this general homogeneity, particular ranks within the legion stood out by virtue of their arms and other forms of insignia. Centurions carried vine rods (*vites* or *virgae*) as a badge of office and wore a single greave, likely on the vulnerable left leg.<sup>56</sup> While they used the same ring mail (*lorica hamata*) worn by most legionaries, centurions typically adorned theirs with their a harness used to display military decorations, including *phalerae* and torques.<sup>57</sup> Their helmets also had transverse rather than vertical crests, a feature likely designed to make them more readily recognizable.<sup>58</sup> Tombstone reliefs and other visual representations from at least the 1<sup>st</sup> century B.C. suggest that centurions wore their swords on the left side, whereas regular legionaries, marines, and auxiliaries typically wore them on the right.<sup>59</sup> Centurions could also be depicted wearing the *paludamentum*, the cloak of a high-ranking officer, as a symbolic garment on their

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<sup>56</sup> Polyb. 6.23.8; Cagniard 2007: 90. Compare the use of ankle protectors in baseball, which are usually worn only on the leg facing the pitcher. In the Roman army, unlike modern sports, regimental order often trumped lefthandedness (on which see Wirth 2010, esp. ch. 3).

<sup>57</sup> Cf. the gravestone of M. Caelius, a senior centurion in Legio XIIX (*CIL* XIII 8648, Figure 1.2 below).

<sup>58</sup> Veg. *Mil.* 2.16: *centuriones vero habebant catafractas et scuta et galeas ferreas, sed transversis et argentatis cristis, ut celerius agnoscerentur a suis.*

<sup>59</sup> Cf. the gravestone of M. Favonius Facilis, a centurion of Legio XX (*CIL* VII 90 = *RIB* I 200). Sometimes in place of a *gladius* an officer holds a short sword in his left hand (see discussion on the *parazonium* below): cf. the gravestone of Q. Sertorius Festus, a centurion in Legio XI (*CIL* V 3374). An officer who wore the *gladius* on the left side would presumably cross-draw (i.e. reach across his body to retrieve his weapon), while a soldier who wore the *gladius* on the right side would draw it underarm so as not to interfere with the shield that he carried in his left hand. As a matter of practicality, officers would have more space to draw across their bodies if they were not on the front lines or at least in the midst of a tightly packed formation; the substitution of the *parazonium*, a purely symbolic weapon, in place of the officer's *gladius* on visual representations may also suggest that his sword did not see as much use in the field as did those of the typical rank-and-file soldiery.



tombstones.<sup>60</sup> In addition to wolf-, bear-, or lionskins over their helmets, *signiferi* wore masks that covered their faces, perhaps in order to suppress their individual identities and thereby render them better able to represent the collective identity of the units whose standards they bore.<sup>61</sup> *Tubicines* and *cornicines*, the instrument players who gave the audible counterparts to the visual *signa*, wore similar animal-skin headdresses but without the facemasks. Like the wolfskins of the republican *levites*, these pelts were worn as much for their visual distinctiveness as for any additional protection they might have offered.



Figure 1.1: Census Frieze from the Altar of Domitius Ahenobarbus. Detail. Rome, late 2<sup>nd</sup> century B.C. Louvre acc. no. Ma 975 [LL 399].

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<sup>60</sup> Bishop and Coulston 2006: 111; M. Caelius, M. Favonius Facilis, and Q. Sertorius Festus (nn. 72 and 74 above) are all shown wearing such a cloak on their gravestones.

<sup>61</sup> Junkelmann 1986: 109.

Men of the highest rank had distinctive *arma* of their own both on and off the battlefield. Livy uses the phrase *insignis armis* (“distinguished by his arms”) in battle situations to describe superior individuals, including consuls and kings, or military units, such as cavalry in contrast to infantry, whose *arma* indicate their high rank and draw the attention of the enemy.<sup>62</sup> Artistic depictions of Roman military figures reveal a similar stratification. On the census frieze of the late 2<sup>nd</sup>-century B.C. Altar of Domitius Ahenobarbus (Figure 1.1), several men are equipped in typical legionary fashion with ring mail (*lorica hamata*), short swords or daggers, Montefortino-type helmets with flowing horsehair crests, and oblong shields (as the two men at left in the detail above). The figure at right in the detail above stands out by his arms and armor.<sup>63</sup> His helmet is of a different type than those worn by the other armed men: the lack of cheekpieces reveals his face more clearly, and the larger crest enhances his already imposing height. In place of ordinary ring mail he wears a form of anatomical (“muscle”) or heroic cuirass with two layers of flaps (*pteryges*) suspended from the lower edge and a fillet tied around his ribs.<sup>64</sup> This type of armor consists of a breastplate of metal or leather molded in the shape of a male torso, often sculpted to show

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<sup>62</sup> 2.47.6; 6.24.10; 7.26.1 (of the Gaul later despoiled by Manlius); 8.8.6; 9.40.9; 9.40.17; 2.20.8 (of the Tusculan *princeps* Mamilius); 22.6.2; 30.12.11 (of Masinissa).

<sup>63</sup> The detail shown in Figure 1.1 is taken from the left half of the relief. The tall figure dressed in elite armor is close to the center of the relief as a whole, and this central position also draws attention to him.

<sup>64</sup> This fillet, which is knotted in the center with the loose ends tucked into itself, is likely a kind of *cingulum*. It is called a *cincticulus* by Dando-Collins (2010: 46–47, 49), although the only appearance of that word in Latin literature (Plaut. *Bacch.* 432) refers to a schoolboy’s girdle. The fillet in question is worn as a sign of military command; compare the development of the typical soldier’s *cingulum* into an ornate badge of rank and dignity even among civilians in the late Roman Empire (*Justin.* 7.38, 12.8, 12.49, 12.52; cf. *Glossarium ad Cod. Theod.* s.v. “cingulum”) and the broad band encircling Mars’ cuirass on the 3<sup>rd</sup>-century A.D. altar dedicated to Victory by M. Sulpicius Genialis, now in Augsburg, Römisches Museum (Lap. 1201. 1200).

musculature and other anatomical features such as nipples and the navel, and belongs to the elite: it is worn by heroes in Etruscan art, by Alexander the Great in the famous mosaic from Pompeii as well as in earlier Greek and Macedonian art, and by martial deities (especially Mars<sup>65</sup>), emperors, and other commanding officers as depicted in Roman art. In the center of this particular cuirass is a decorative element, which appears regularly on cuirasses of this elite type but notably not on the armor of the two soldiers at left in the image above (or indeed on any other armor in the whole of the census frieze). An officer's military cloak (*paludamentum*) is thrown over the rightmost figure's left shoulder and emerges from the crook of his left elbow to drape over his forearm and the shield on which his left arm rests, which is the round *clipeus* rather than the oblong *scutum*. With his right hand he holds an upright spear or staff (the tip is not shown) and in his left hand he carries a distinctive short sword that differs from the weapons carried by the soldiers in ring mail. Whether mortal or divine, this figure is clearly superior, and he is armed to suit his status.

This same iconography extends through the imperial period, where it is applied above all to the figure of the emperor. When he appears as *imperator*, as in the Augustus of Prima Porta and many others of the same type,<sup>66</sup> the emperor is typically shown in ornate equipment, including elaborate boots, a cuirass complete with decorated *pteryges*, and a *paludamentum* draped over his shoulder and left arm. When he carries one, his weapon of choice is the spear.

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<sup>65</sup> As in the *profectio* Cancelleria relief (Figure 2.9 below) and on Genialis' altar to Victory (see previous note).

<sup>66</sup> For an image of the cuirass of the Augustus of Prima Porta, see Figure 4.1 below.

The spear itself had a long history as the definitive weapon of the warrior, especially of the warrior as ruler, in many civilizations of the ancient Mediterranean.<sup>67</sup> the warrior-poet Archilochus famously claims to have rested both metaphorically and literally upon his spear,<sup>68</sup> and in a skolion (Greek σκόλιον, a banquet song) sometimes called the “spear-song” Hybrias the Cretan presents himself as the king (βασιλεύς) of the working class thanks to his spear and shield, which provide and therefore come to symbolize his power and authority over his fellows.<sup>69</sup> The Great Kings of Persia, to whom Hybrias implicitly compares himself, had likewise associated themselves with the spear as a symbolic weapon of kingship through the visual and verbal media of coinage and inscription.<sup>70</sup> In Macedon the sarissa (from Greek σάρισα<sup>71</sup>) was the quintessential weapon of the hunt, a custom connected especially with kingship, and found widespread use in war as the iconic weapon of the Greek phalanx. The concept of the spear as the primary weapon of conquest is reflected in the term “spear-won” (Greek δορίκτητος, δοριάλωτος, δορίληπτος,

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<sup>67</sup> See van Wees 1998 for an analysis of the symbolism of the spear in archaic Greece.

<sup>68</sup> Fr. 2 West: ἐν δορὶ μὲν μοι μᾶζα μεμαγμένη, ἐν δορὶ δ' οἶνος | Ἴσμαρικός. πίνω δ' ἐν δορὶ κεκλίμενος.

<sup>69</sup> *PMG* 909 (Ath. 695f–696a).

<sup>70</sup> The spear and the bow are the two characteristic weapons of the Great Kings personally and of the Persian army in general (Hdt. 5.49.2, 7.61.1). The standard obverse of the coinage of the Achaemenid kings shows a generic figure, identified as the Great King, carrying both of these weapons (BMC Persian Empire pp. 148–162, pls. XXIV–XXVI). Both the inscription on the tomb of Darius I at Naqš-i-Rustam (DNb) and its copy in Xerxes' name north of Persepolis (XPl) include superior skill with the bow and spear as a “kingly quality” (Kuhrt 1995: 505, §2h): “As a bowman I am a good bowman, both on foot and on horseback. As a spearman I am a good spearman, both on foot and on horseback.” The three main divisions of the Persian army were the spearmen, the archers, and the cavalry (Hdt. 1.103). Cf. Hdt. 3.78, where two magi seize weapons, one a bow and the other a spear.

<sup>71</sup> Greek manuscripts favor σάρισα over σάρισσα, but in English the standard spelling is sarissa (*OED* s.v. sarissa, *n.*). The sarissa was a long spear measuring approximately 13–20 feet (4–6 meters) in length. By comparison, the spear called δόρυ (pl. δούρατα or δόρατα) was about 10 feet (3 meters) long.

and αἰχμάλωτος), used of territory and captives taken in war.<sup>72</sup> As a highly visible icon with such a pedigree, it is no surprise to find that the spear is the favored weapon of Roman commanders, at least in iconography.

The particular type of spear called the *hasta* held special significance in Roman culture more widely as well. While it saw use as a practical weapon in war, off the field it retained its association with authority, first and foremost that deriving from military victory.<sup>73</sup> In law the *hasta* was a sign of *iustum dominium*, “legal ownership.”<sup>74</sup> One was thrust into the ground as a symbol of public authority at auctions, where its use derived from the context of selling loot won in war, and also at tribunals of the centumviral court;<sup>75</sup> the term *hasta* could even refer to an

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<sup>72</sup> The term δόρυ properly specifies the shaft and αἰχμή the head, but both can refer to the whole spear by metonymy. Aside from δορίληπτος, which appears only about twenty times in classical texts and 27 times in the entire TLG corpus, there seems to be little distinction among the three Greek words for “spear-won,” as they appear with comparable frequency through about the 2<sup>nd</sup> century A.D.: δορίκτητος is attested just over a hundred times, with the epic form δουρίκτητος appearing once in Homer (*Il.* 9.343) and the later spelling δορύκτητος 64 times; δοριάλωτος is found over a hundred times as well, with alternate forms δουριάλωτος once in lyric (*Soph. Aj.* 211) and δορύλωτος just a handful of times in classical texts (but over 350 in post-classical authors); αἰχμάλωτος appears just under one hundred times through the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century A.D. For glosses, see *Diod. Sic.* 17.17.2; *Historia Alexandri Magni* 1.28: καὶ πήξας τὸ δόρυ δορύκτητον ἔφη τὴν Ἀσίαν ἔχειν; and *Suda* s.v. Δορίκτητος πλοῦτος. The hapax δοριαλωσία appears in *Appian (BC 4.7.52)*. For taking “by the spear” as a metaphor for capturing in war: *Il.* 16.57 (δορὶ...κτεάτισσα; cf. *Il.* 16.708: ὑπὸ δορὶ πόλιν πέρθαι); *Thucy.* 1.128.7 (δορὶ ἐλών); and *App. BC 4.2.8* (δορὶ λαβών). Similar senses are to be found in words such as δορίπνοος (“toiling with the spear” or “bearing the brunt of war”), δοριστέφανος (“crowned for bravery [in war]”), δορίτολμος (“bold in war”), and δορίγαμβρος (“causing war by marriage” or “wooed by battle,” of Helen at *Aesch. Ag.* 686).

<sup>73</sup> Cf. *Gell.* 10.27.3 for the *hasta* as an icon of war.

<sup>74</sup> *Gai. Inst.* 4.16.

<sup>75</sup> For the phrase *sub hasta [venire]* (“[to sell] at public auction”), cf. *Liv.* 4.29.4, 4.53.10, 5.16.7, 6.4.2, 23.32.15, 23.37.13, 23.38.7; *Val. Max.* 6.5.1; *Flor.* 2.9.104; *Juv.* 3.33. In Greek it is translated as ὑπὸ δόρυ [πωλεῖσθαι or πωλεῖν] (*Dion. Hal.* 4.24; *Strab.* 4.6.7).

auction or the centumviral court by metonymy.<sup>76</sup> The *hasta* had other symbolic uses as well: a variation called the *hasta pura*, referring to the spear without its iron tip, was given as a military decoration.<sup>77</sup> The shaft of such a spear served as the literal backbone of military standards,<sup>78</sup> which received cult worship on the part of the army.<sup>79</sup> As an object with ritual significance, the spear also played a role in the formalities of war: Cincius Alimentus and Livy, echoed by Servius, describe a “spear-rite” in which a fetial priest (*fetialis*) would hurl a *hasta* into enemy territory as part of the ritual declaration of war in republican times.<sup>80</sup> The spear continued to symbolize imperial authority into the imperial period as well: in 32 B.C., Octavian reportedly revived the legendary fetial spear-rite by throwing a *hasta* before the temple of Bellona in the Circus Flaminius to mark the formal commencement of hostilities against Antony and Cleopatra, and Marcus Aurelius re-enacted it again in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century A.D.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Cic. *Off.* 2.27; Nep. *Att.* 6; Festus s.v. *hasta*; Tertull. *Apol.* 13.

<sup>77</sup> Varro ap. Serv. *ad Aen.* 6.760 and Festus s.v. *hasta*; Plin. *NH* 7.102; Suet. *Claud.* 28; Tac. *Ann.* 3.21.

<sup>78</sup> As they seem to have done in the Greek world as well: cf. Xen. *Cyr.* 7.1.4.

<sup>79</sup> Tac. *Ann.* 2.17.2; Plin. *NH* 13.23.

<sup>80</sup> For the fetial spear-rite: L. Cincius ap. Aulus Gellius 16.4.1 (= Cincius fr. 12 Huschke); Liv. 1.32.12–14; and Serv. *ad Aen.* 9.52 and 10.14. Laocoon’s throwing of a spear into the side of the Trojan Horse in the *Aeneid* (2.50–53) displays some similarity with this rite. In his epitome of Pompeius Trogus, Justin attests that Alexander the Great cast a spear into Asia to mark it as “spear-won” territory in this manner as well, but the word for the spear is *iaculum* (11.5.10), whereas *hasta* is consistently preferred in the Roman sources for the weapon used by Octavian in his revival of the fetial ritual in 32 B.C.

<sup>81</sup> On Augustus’ version of the rite: Ov. *Fast.* 6.205–208; Festus 30L. On contemporary coinage the *princeps* is twice shown holding a spear that should be read as a *hasta* specifically in light of the marked preference for that term in the literary sources (see Figures 4.12 and 4.13 below). For Marcus Aurelius’ re-enactment in A.D. 178 on the eve of his campaign against the Marcomanni: Dio 50.4.4–5; 72.33.3.

Just like the central armed figure on the Altar of Domitius Ahenobarbus, emperors and other high-ranking officers are often shown carrying not just the spear but also a distinctive dagger or short sword. This weapon is always shown sheathed and usually attached to a belt; the belt in turn is worn over the shoulder or around the waist, or it appears as a loop hanging loose from the weapon when carried in the hand. In modern numismatic catalogues, this weapon is labeled a *parazonium*,<sup>82</sup> and throughout imperial iconography it is typically carried in one arm either by the emperor or by a divinity associated with military power (e.g. Mars, Virtus, and Roma).<sup>83</sup> The *parazonium* also represented imperial authority when it was granted to officers as a badge of their office: Martial glosses it as a “mark of military distinction” and “*arma* worthy of girding a tribunician flank.”<sup>84</sup> According to Statius, a side thus girded allowed for the *numina* of the emperor to be present; in other words, the weapon so strongly symbolized the man on whose authority it had been given that it was felt to be a literal manifestation of that authority and even of the man himself.<sup>85</sup> This phenomenon of “presencing” underlies the Romans’ worship of *signa*

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<sup>82</sup> Feugère (2002: 125) credits Couissin (1926: 308–309) with applying the term *parazonium* (Mart. *Ep.* 14.32) to artistic and archaeological examples of this weapon.

<sup>83</sup> **Mars** (usually with epithet *Ultor* or, more rarely, *Victor*): *RIC I*<sup>2</sup> Augustus 146–153, 351–353, 356; *RIC I*<sup>2</sup> Civil Wars 29, 43–44, 53–54, 67; *RIC I*<sup>2</sup> Vitellius 115–116. **Virtus**: *RIC I*<sup>2</sup> Nero 25–26, 31–32, 36–37, 40–41; *RIC I*<sup>2</sup> Civil Wars 13–14; *RIC I*<sup>2</sup> Galba 12, 30–32, 63–64, 102–103, 176–179, 474–478, 521; *RIC I*<sup>2</sup> Vitellius 113. **Roma**: *RIC I*<sup>2</sup> Nero 54–55, 70, 88–90, 221–227, 272–276, 292–294, 296–298, 329–331, 344–345, 398, 424–426, 442–443, 479–485, 515–517, 549–558, 590–594; *RIC I*<sup>2</sup> Galba 130, 141, 446–447, 485; *RIC I*<sup>2</sup> Vitellius 130; cf. the depiction of Roma on a late Augustan altar from Carthage (*ILAfr* 353 = *AE* 1914, 87; see Beard, North, and Price 1998: 333–335, fig. 7.3a), upon which the restoration of the Roma panel on the Ara Pacis is largely based.

<sup>84</sup> Mart. *Ep.* 14.32: *militiae decus hoc gratique erit omen honoris, | arma tribunicium cingere digna latus.*

<sup>85</sup> Stat. *Silv.* 5.2.154–155: *ipse latus (sic numina principis adsint) | cinctus.*

as the manifestation of the *numina* of the army and, as we shall see, applies to other forms of *arma* more broadly as well. In all of these contexts, the *parazonium*—like the spear with which it often appears—serves as an attribute of those who carry it, a visual mark of their rank and attendant authority.

The authority of leading men was marked not just by their own *arma* but also by the company of armed men. According to ancient stereotype, a personal armed bodyguard was the prerogative of kings and tyrants.<sup>86</sup> In keeping with the Republican conception of *libertas*, which included freedom from the threat of public violence, such a display of force was as anathema as bringing weapons to a business meeting and would have sorely stood out as a violation of the sacred boundary separating home from war. But senior Roman magistrates were accompanied by armed men of a sort: lictors carrying *fasces*. The *fasces* themselves were composed of two practical weapons bound together (an axe for beheading bundled in rods for beating), and the sight of them must have brought to mind the very real possibility of violence. Therefore *fasces* cannot be considered strictly ceremonial in the same way that the term is typically used of purely symbolic weapons in modern history.<sup>87</sup> Nevertheless, the *fasces* were powerful symbols in Roman culture, and their significance only grew with time. Moreover, their symbolic value was fundamentally different from the message conveyed by bodyguards because they were not hired weapons carried for the physical defense of an entitled individual but rather tools used in the

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<sup>86</sup> e.g. Romulus (Dion. Hal. *Rom. Ant.* 2.13).

<sup>87</sup> Fuhrmann 2011: 63–64.



execution of lawfully sanctioned violence: they were employed at the command of magistrates who had been voted that very command by the Roman public. While any weapon can symbolize practical power over life and death, especially those carried by personal bodyguards, *fasces* became the primary insignia of publicly granted *imperium*, and as a sign that they—like the magistrates whose *imperium* they represented—were subject to the authority of the *res publica*, they were defanged within the *pomerium* by the removal of their axes.<sup>88</sup> After the collapse of the Republic together with its particular brand of *libertas*, Roman emperors began to carry a sword on their person as a manifestation of their personal authority to order executions (*ius gladii*, “right of the sword”).<sup>89</sup> Beginning with Augustus they also asserted the privilege of an armed bodyguard (as Dionysius claims that Romulus had done) in the form of the Praetorian guard, who often acted as kingmakers in imperial Rome, with their loyalty in particular making and unmaking imperial contenders.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Cic. *Rep.* 2.31, Val. Max. 4.1.1; Dionys. 5.19, Liv. 24.9 and 28.27; cf. Liv. 3.36, where members of the second decemvirate act tyrannically in having *fasces* with the axe still in carried before each member, a marked change from the first decemvirate, whose members were preceded by the *fasces* each in turn on his appointed day (Liv. 3.33).

<sup>89</sup> During the Republic, commanders with *imperium* had the power of life or death over *socii* through this right (Polyb. 6.37–38; cf. Sall. *Iug.* 69.4), but it was quite another matter for an individual to have that authority over Roman citizens at Rome. The carrying of the *parazonium* by the emperor on coinage (e.g. Octavian(?) atop a rostral column on the reverse of RIC I<sup>2</sup> Augustus 271, Galba on the reverse of RIC I<sup>2</sup> Galba 469–473, and Vitellius on the reverse of RIC I<sup>2</sup> Vitellius 131) may be a visual representation of this right.

<sup>90</sup> Cf. Dio 53.11.5 for the view that the Praetorians symbolized imperial autocracy. Tacitus highlights their role in the accession of Nero and Galba (*Ann.* 12.69; *Hist.* 1.36). Despite numerous mutinies and assassinations (e.g. that of Pertinax), they were only disbanded permanently in the wake of Constantine’s victory over Maxentius at the Milvian Bridge in A.D. 312 (Zos. 2.17.2). See also Keppie 1996 (= Keppie 2000: 99–122).

After the professionalization of the army, the presence and style of *arma* performed a similar function in distinguishing soldier from civilian both in life and in death. The right to carry weapons “beyond the narrow bounds allowed to civilians” was a critical part of a soldier’s identity,<sup>91</sup> as is made especially clear by the ubiquitous presence of *arma* and other military equipment on tombstones of Roman soldiers. Often the deceased is shown dressed in all of his armor, including a helmet, and carrying a full complement of weapons. An alternative style of imperial gravestone iconography, one that eventually grew more popular than the first, shows the deceased in civilian dress. Even in these less martial depictions, the deceased are marked as former soldiers by their belt (*balteus* or *cingulum militare*) and cloak (*sagum*), the primary “insignia of their profession and their power.”<sup>92</sup> Like the soldiers depicted in full gear, many of the men shown in civilian dress often included items typical of their office, such as the centurion’s rod, the *optio*’s staff (*hastile*), and the *signifer*’s standard (Figure 1.2). In other cases the *arma* and military decorations of the deceased are shown without the soldier himself but nevertheless permanently associated with him in death as they had been in life (Figure 1.3). Whether the deceased was shown in military gear, in civilian dress, or not at all, the *arma* depicted on his tombstone were the iconographic equivalent of those buried with warriors as grave goods in many ancient societies, including the heroic past of the Roman cultural

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<sup>91</sup> Bishop and Coulston 2006: 253.

<sup>92</sup> Speidel 2009: 239.

imagination, and they operated similarly as markers of the deceased's status in life, both as a military man and within the military hierarchy.



Figure 1.2 (above)



Figure 1.3 (at right)

Figure 1.2: Cenotaph of M. Caelius T.f. Colonia Ulpia Traiana (Xanten), Germania Inferior, A.D. 9 (or slightly later). *CIL* XIII 8648.

Figure 1.3: Funerary monument of T. Calidius P.f. Severus. Carnuntum, Pannonia Superior, 1<sup>st</sup> century A.D. *CIL* III 11213.

## Arms and Armor as Markers of Identity

In addition to serving as status symbols, *arma* were eminently suitable for use as markers of identity, whether specific to the individual or related more broadly to family lineage or national origin. On a broad cultural level, the most iconic arms were those associated with certain gods: Jupiter had his thunderbolt; Neptune his trident; Cupid his arrows of iron and fire; and Apollo and Diana the bow, their shared choice of weapon echoing their relationship as twins.<sup>93</sup> While less common, armor also fulfilled this function, most famously in the form of the Aegis, which is typically carried by Minerva as a proxy for her father. Literary, artistic, and archaeological evidence shows that mortals were similarly identified with—and therefore recognizable by—their arms in numerous ways both on generic and specific levels as individuals and as members of particular military units, family lineages, and nationalities.

The written word allowed authors both of history and of other forms of literature to make this connection explicit. While Livy uses it almost exclusively of leaders whose high rank is betrayed by the sight of their arms, the phrase *insignis armis* (and the close variant *insignis in armis*) appears more often both in poetry and in prose as a method of characterizing individuals either by their physical arms or by their skill in using them. Aeneas is described this way twice in the Aeneid (6.403 *pietate insignis et armis*; 11.291 *ambo* [Hector and Aeneas] *animis, ambo insignes praestantibus armis*); in both cases the complement of the term *arma* (*pietas* and *animi*,

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<sup>93</sup> Cf. their epithets Phoebus and Phoebe, which are the masculine and feminine forms, respectively, of Greek φοῖβος (“shining,” “bright,” or “pure”; cf. the name Diana, from *dius*, “light as day” [Scheid, *NP* s.v. Diana]).

respectively) suggests that it should be taken metaphorically as skill in arms. Similarly, the description of Ufens in the catalogue of Italian allies (7.745 *insignem fama et felicibus armis*) indicates his general success in war. On the other hand, *arma* must be taken literally in the description of the priest Chloreus as shining from afar in Phrygian arms (11.769 *insignis longe Phrygiis fulgebat in armis*), a descriptor that conforms with and reiterates Chloreus' ethnic origin. The literal meaning of the phrase also predominates when Livy uses it to introduce the massive Gaul who will be slain in single combat by Titus Manlius (soon to be Torquatus); even if a metaphorical dimension can be read into *insignis armis* here, the literal reading foreshadows the fact that Manlius will strip this Gaul of his torque, a status symbol among his people, and turn it into his own personal and familial insignia.<sup>94</sup> Post-Augustan authors echoed the phrase, using *arma* in conjunction with *animi* or simply accompanied by an adjective or descriptive phrase.<sup>95</sup> In all such cases, regardless of whether the term *arma* is meant literally or metaphorically, the phrase as a whole characterizes *arma* as a distinctive form of identification within the martial sphere.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> Even if *insignis armis* has a metaphorical aspect in this specific context as well, the literal sense of *arma* foreshadows the fact that Manlius will strip the Gaul of his torque and make it his own insignia.

<sup>95</sup> In conjunction with *animi*: *Ilias Latina* 201 and 602–3; accompanied by an adjective or descriptive clause: Val. Flac. *Arg.* 3.430; Sil. Ital. *Pun.* 1.319, 14.606; Stat. *Ach.* 2.6–7. Curtius Rufus uses the synonym *conspiciuus* in place of *insignis* (4.4.10–11) in his description of Alexander: *in altissimam turrem ascendit ingenti animo, periculo maiore: quippe regio insigni et armis fulgentibus conspicuus unus praecipue telis petebatur* (cf. Arr. *Anab.* 6.9.5: δῆλος μὲν ἦν Ἀλέξανδρος ὦν τῶν τε ὀπλῶν τῆ λαμπρότητι καὶ τῷ ἀτόπῳ τῆς τόλμης).

<sup>96</sup> In some contexts *arma* and *insignia* are mentioned together, sometimes simply in collocations (cf. Caes. *BG* 1.22.2, Tac. *Ann.* 15.16.4, *Hist.* 4.46.2; Frontin. *Strat.* 4.7.12), elsewhere as the distinctive features of soldiers and magistrates respectively (cf. Cic. *Leg. agr.* 2.101; Sall. *Cat.* 51.38; Val. Max. 5.2.1; Tac. *Ann.* 3.4.1; cf. Curt. Ruf. 4.4.10–11, where

In literary contexts the connection between man and arms is further reinforced in several ways. The *Aeneid* alone supplies a wide variety of examples. On a generic level, men and their arms frequently appear together in collocations, the opening words of the poem being just the first and most iconic example.<sup>97</sup> Elsewhere, *arma* in general, individual pieces thereof, or even the shine of the material itself stands in for their owners or signals their approach.<sup>98</sup> On other occasions specific descriptors are applied to *arma* that illuminate aspects of their users' identity. Some of these denote ethnic origins, such as Evander's Tyrrhenian sandals and Tegaeon sword, as well as the Dardanian weapon with which Dido kills herself.<sup>99</sup> There are also familial connections, like Cupavo's swan crest, recalling the transformation of his father Cycnus, and Aventinus' own *insigne paternum*, the hydra defeated by his father Hercules.<sup>100</sup> Still other adjectives focus on personal characteristics: the spear thrown by Laocoon is described as *scelerata* for piercing the sacred wood of the Trojan Horse, though the priest himself was the author of the crime;<sup>101</sup> Latinus likewise calls his *arma impia* (12.31) out of regret that he took up those very

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the *insigne* is royal), but that does not preclude the identification of *arma* as a form of *insignia* in their own right, as the phrase *insignis armis* attests they could.

<sup>97</sup> e.g. *Aen.* 1.542: *genus humanum et mortalia...arma*; 3.306–307: *ut me conspexit venientem et Troia circum | arma amens vidit...*

<sup>98</sup> *Aen.* 2.617–618; 2.734.

<sup>99</sup> Evander's *arma*: 8.458–459; Dido using a Trojan (Aeneas') sword to kill herself (4.646–647): *ensem...Dardanium*; cf. Stat. *Theb.* 9.332.

<sup>100</sup> Cupavo: 10.187–188; Aventinus: 7.655–658; cf. Romulus, discussed below; cf. Sil. Ital. *Pun.* 1.319; Q. Smyrn. 7.484–508.

<sup>101</sup> *Aen.* 2.231.

arms against Aeneas. Aeneas' own sword is called *fulmineus* (4.580), a marked word that evokes Jupiter's iconic thunderbolt and foreshadows the "starry shield" and "celestial arms" (12.167 *sidereo...clipeo et caelestibus armis*) that the hero will receive later in the poem. The arms with which Mezentius rules are said to be *saeva* (8.482), much like their sacrilegious master will prove to be. In the case of Pyrrhus the same term, *coruscus*, is applied to the man shining in the bronze light of his armor and to his weapon itself less than a hundred lines later, turning the symbolic match into a literal one.<sup>102</sup> Swords in particular are sometimes granted an agency ordinarily reserved for men:<sup>103</sup> Deiphobus' "faithful sword" (6.524 *fidum...ensem*) echoes the trust and hope that warriors put in their weapons and stands in pointed contrast to Helen's treachery in stealing it from under his head,<sup>104</sup> while the imagery of a sword drinking blood appears three times throughout the poem, echoing the gory ways in which Virgilian heroes dispatch their foes.<sup>105</sup>

In the case of heroes especially, descriptions of *arma* contribute significantly to the construction of their characters. As individuals of the highest status (save the gods themselves), heroes typically possess unique arms and armor. Through arming scenes and catalogues, these pieces are described with special attention to detail, including material elements such as

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<sup>102</sup> *Aen.* 2.470; 2.552–3.

<sup>103</sup> Cf. the description of despoiled Macedonian shields at Dodona as "once the sackers of Asia rich in gold" and "the bestowers of slavery on the Hellenes" (Lane Fox 2011: 504).

<sup>104</sup> Cf. *Aen.* 11.114: *Turni potius se credidit armis*; Stat. *Theb.* 2.495: *macte animi, tantis dinguis qui crederis armis!*; and *Ilias Latina* 949: *nam dum Deiphobi tutum se credidit armis*. Hope in arms (*spes in armis*) is a more frequent theme: Sall. *Iug.* 14.10, 74.1; Virg. *Aen.* 2.673, 11.308, 11.411; Liv. 2.39.8, 3.53.3, 4.10.4, 9.1.10, 32.23.5, 37.5.5, 39.1.7; Gratt. *Cyn.* 2–3: *prius omnis in armis spes fuit*.

<sup>105</sup> *Aen.* 2.600.

composition and construction. Sometimes the name of the craftsman or a lengthier backstory is given. All of these elements speak to the value of the piece and by extension to the status of the hero who uses it. On the other hand, specific imagery speaks more to aspects of the hero's personality or his role within the story. Even more so than other elements, this method of characterization relies on the identification of *arma* and their imagery as *insignia* ("emblems")<sup>106</sup> of their owners. Thus Turnus' armor has been interpreted as a visual symbol of his *furor*, represented by the fire-spitting Chimaera on his helmet, balanced by his fate as sympathetic victim, signified by the metamorphosis of his ancestor Io on his shield.<sup>107</sup> Aeneas' divine armor accomplishes a similar end on a grander scale: its Olympian origin complements Aeneas' own, and the imagery on his shield is vital in establishing him as a critical figure upon whom Rome's fate rests. By making Rome's future history his shield device, Virgil implies that Aeneas is fit to carry Rome's destiny as his personal emblem by virtue of the central role he is seen to play in her development as a people and nation.

Virgil's Aeneas is not the only Roman to bear *arma* featuring imagery of national significance. The cuirass of the Augustus of Prima Porta is rich in symbolic iconography of a similar sort. Figures such as Caelus, Sol, Aurora, Tellus, and the twins Apollo and Artemis suggest that Augustus is divinely favored. Personifications of Hispania and Gallia, respectively

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<sup>106</sup> Esp. 12.944, where the baldric of Pallas when worn by Turnus is called *inimicum insigne* (see Tarrant 2012: 336 on the double meaning of *inimicum* as "belonging to the enemy" and "harmful [to its wearer]"). Lissarrague recently spoke on the significance of shield devices in the Greek world as part of his Sather lectures ("The Image in the Image: Looking at Shield Devices," UC Berkeley, February 27, 2014).

<sup>107</sup> *Aen.* 7.783–792 with Gale 1997.



armed and disarmed, illustrate the aftermath of Roman dominance and may also be read as examples of the two-fold imperial attitude ascribed to Rome by Virgil: *parcere subiectis et debellare superbos* (*Aen.* 6.853). The central scene focuses on the return of the Roman standards by the Parthians in 19 B.C., one of Augustus' greatest and most publicized accomplishments. While in practice the victory had been primarily political, commemorative imagery more often gives it a military flavor: the Roman figure, probably Roma or Mars, is very much an *imperator* in a cuirass and cloak very similar to that worn by the commanding figure on the Altar of Domitius Ahenobarbus (see Figure 1.1).<sup>108</sup> The cuirass and cloak of the figure receiving the standard also closely resemble those worn by Augustus himself (save the fillet, which would interfere with the illustrations), and for good reason: both are being portrayed as supreme military commanders. The similarity in outfits gives the impression that the figure *on* the cuirass is a proxy for the one *in* it and helps connect the reception scene to Augustus personally, an effect already suggested by the very appearance of the scene on his cuirass. It is altogether appropriate that an event in which Augustus was seen to have played a vital role should take center stage on his most important piece of armor. Another personal connection can be found on the straps at his shoulders, each of which features a Greek sphinx facing its counterpart. Augustus had chosen the sphinx as a personal symbol and used it on his seal;<sup>109</sup> as the image on his signet ring, it was a visual icon

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<sup>108</sup> The figure representing Rome on the cuirass of the Augustus of Prima Porta has been interpreted as Augustus himself, Tiberius, Mars Ultor, and Roma (Rose 2005: 24–28).

<sup>109</sup> Plin. *NH* 37.10; cf. the reverses of *RIC* I<sup>2</sup> Augustus 487 (= *RPC* I 2207) and 492 (cistophori struck at Pergamum), 511–513 (aurei struck at Pergamum), and 527 (a cistophorus of an uncertain mint in Asia). Pliny notes that

equivalent to his name and it would have served the same function as a written signature. On the cuirass of the Augustus of Prima Porta, the sphinx is the figure most closely associated with Augustus himself and further reinforces the link between Augustus and the rest of the imagery on the cuirass. It is as good as his name and would have ensured identification of the person portrayed even had the head of the statue been lost.

The sphinx of Augustus is unusual in that written sources allow us to identify the animal with the man, whether it appears on his armor or elsewhere. Without the information necessary to establish a personal connection, such as the label *Cycnus* next to a warrior bearing a shield with a swan (κύκνος) device,<sup>110</sup> it can be difficult to identify personal imagery on *arma* as such with any confidence. On the other hand, ethnicity or nationality is far easier to recognize and corroborate: thus the figure returning the Roman standard on Augustus' cuirass and on Augustan coin types commemorating the surrender is indisputably Parthian, while his personal identity (if he is meant to have one) is open to debate. Such ethnic or national connections were vitally important to the success of visual representations of war, especially during the Republic, when such representations often focused on battle scenes and military equipment was the sole distinguishing feature between Roman and non-Roman.<sup>111</sup> In the language of Roman art, each

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Augustus, to avoid the ridicule eventually incurred by his use of the sphinx, later changed his seal to an image of Alexander the Great.

<sup>110</sup> There are two vases to my knowledge with such a figure: a red-figure kylix attributed to the Nikosthenos Painter and signed by the potter Pamphaios now in the Museo Nazionale in Tarquinia (Beazley *ARV*<sup>2</sup> p. 126, no. 23; Chase 1902: 90, no. CCLI, 4; Ritti 1973–1974: 645), and a black-figure amphora now in the Louvre (F 385).

<sup>111</sup> Dillon and Welch 2006: 11.

foreign people had to have its own iconic equipment, and this iconographic collection grew in accordance with Roman expansion. A few further examples will suffice: Gauls were famous for using the boar as an emblem on their military standards;<sup>112</sup> they are also typically associated with the distinctive war-horn called the *carnyx* and an oval shield of particular design, both of which appear on Roman coins, e.g. several types of Julius Caesar from 49–48 B.C.<sup>113</sup> Another issue of L. Hostilius Sasernus has a typical Gallic shield as an obverse symbol and has for its reverse type two Gauls in a *biga*,<sup>114</sup> one of whom faces to the rear and brandishes a shield and a heavy throwing javelin (Latin *gaesum*), which lent its name to the Raetian auxiliaries who wielded it (*gaesati*) and perhaps also to the homonymous Gallic tribe.<sup>115</sup> Meanwhile, foreign cataphracts are typically shown in scale armor, as on Trajan’s Column, a stylistic choice consistent with archaeological finds from Dacian, Sarmatian, and Scythian territories. Likewise, Roman depictions of Macedonian helmets and shields are also strikingly similar to archaeological finds and to corresponding representations on Macedonian coinage.<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> Cf. the standard resting next to the personification on the cuirass of the Augustus of Prima Porta; the personification is identified as Gallia on the basis of the boar standard as well as her *carnyx*.

<sup>113</sup> *RRC* 452/1–5 (see Figures 5.3–4 below).

<sup>114</sup> *RRC* 448/2.

<sup>115</sup> For the *gaesum*, see Caes. *BG* 3.4, Liv. 8.8.5. For the auxiliary troops from Raetia: *CIL* XIII 1081; *ILS* 2531; *ILS* 2623; *ILS* 5795. The Gaesati were a Gallic tribe who lived in the Alps and by the Rhône. Polybius gives an alternative translation of their name as “mercenaries,” the occupation for which they were known (2.22.1), but cf. Old Irish *gaiscedach* (“champion, armed person”) from *gaisced* (“weapons”), in turn from *gáe* (“spear, javelin”).

<sup>116</sup> For horned helmets: *RRC* 259/1, 293/1; Macedonian: Moushmov 5817. For the Macedonian shield: *RRC* 263/1–5, 267/1, 369/1, 437/1a–b, 536/2–4; Macedonian: BMC Macedonia 1; Moushmov 5817–5818, 5821–5822, 5823–5825; cf. Houghton 1983, nos. 200–203, 254–263, 818–819, *SNG Cop.* 300.

For the Romans especially, geographical expansion invited not just the development of visual and literary cues to identify foreign peoples within the cultural imagination but also the adoption and adaptation of foreign equipment in order to improve the military on a practical level. According to Diodorus, this practice had first been forced upon the Romans by the Etruscans, who were then defeated as a result.<sup>117</sup> Among the arms adopted by the Romans from the Etruscans were both wide-bladed swords and falcate blades based on the Greek κοπίς. The sword most closely associated with the Romans in modern popular culture, commonly called the *gladius*, was not adopted until the late 3<sup>rd</sup> century B.C. as part of the conquest of the Iberian peninsula, and its origin was remembered in its full name, the *gladius Hispaniense*. By the 1<sup>st</sup> century A.D. the Romans had introduced several modifications, culminating in the famous Pompeii-type *gladius*. This was in turn largely replaced in the late Empire by the *spatha*, which itself had been introduced by Germanic auxiliaries. The Romans used the same tactic of adopting the enemy's weapons on the imperial frontiers as well. The names of auxiliary units indicate that units of lancers (*contarii*, from *contus*, a transliteration of Greek κοντός)<sup>118</sup> and archers (*sagittarii*) were created in response to enemy forces, especially the Parthian cataphracts and mounted archers who had been responsible for such disasters as Carrhae in 53 B.C. By late antiquity the Romans themselves had cataphracts of their own (e.g. ala I Gallorum et Pannoniorum

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<sup>117</sup> Diod. Sic. 23.2, where the Romans mention their Etruscan lesson in warning the Carthaginians not to compel them to learn to sail, lest the Carthaginians find themselves in the position of the master surpassed by the student. Cf. Polybius' comment on the Romans learning to copy Greek arms (6.25.11): ἂ συνιδόντες ἐμίμησαντο ταχέως· ἀγαθοὶ γάρ, εἰ καὶ τινες ἕτεροι, μεταλαβεῖν ἔθη καὶ ζηλώσαι τὸ βέλτιον καὶ Ῥωμαῖοι.

<sup>118</sup> Pannonia: ala I Ulpia contariorum.

cataphractaria). At least one auxiliary unit even preferred camels to horses in order to cope better with the environment in which they were stationed.<sup>119</sup> Between this tactic of adopting enemy equipment and the constant influx of native equipment brought by foreign auxiliaries, the visual collage of the Roman army grew more variegated as the Romans added new territories to their control and secured the cooperation of allied troops. Thus the composition of the army was itself just as much a testament to imperial conquest as Pompey's garden or the floor of the Pantheon, although this particular microcosm of empire played a far more practical role in propagating it.

### Lions and Tigers and Bears

This same essential connection between *arma* and their original owners is at least equally clear in the case of animals. Skins especially were used in a wide variety of contexts, most often as clothing or even *arma* specifically. Other forms of animal spoils included parts equally vital to the animal's survival, such as the skull, teeth, horns, or claws. Such parts were generally those which were most durable and recognizable and which could therefore be used as lasting symbols. That is not to deny that such spoils could have practical value; indeed, many cultures in world history have used animal pelts and other products for primarily practical purposes, e.g. as clothing to keep warm. But in Roman culture of the historical period the use of animal parts as spoils was marked and quite distinct from their use in commercial manufacturing. Due to their essential connection with the creatures to which they had been literally attached in life, spoils

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<sup>119</sup> Syria: ala I Ulpia dromedariorum.

taken from animals retained an intimate association with their original owners in much the same way as their inorganic counterparts. As a result, when such spoils were used as clothing or *arma*, often straddling the blurry line between the two,<sup>120</sup> they conferred on those who used them characteristic attributes of the animals to which they had originally belonged.

A passage from Tacitus' *Germania* sheds light on the Roman perception of the custom of wearing animal skins in daily life:

gerunt et ferarum pelles, proximi ripae neglegenter, ultiores exquisitius, ut quibus nullus per commercia cultus. eligunt feras et detracta velamina spargunt maculis pellibusque beluarum, quas exterior Oceanus atque ignotum mare gignit.

They also wear the skins of wild animals, those closest to the bank (i.e. of the Danube) indifferently, those farther away more selectively, as they have no access to refinement through commerce. They choose wild animals and dapple their skinned hides with the spotted pelts of beasts which outer Ocean and the unknown sea bear.

Tac. *Germ.* 17.2

Like the habitual carrying of weapons, the Germani's custom of wearing skins is meant to be indicative of their nature as exotic barbarians. By implication, Romans of Tacitus' day wore more civilized clothing. To Tacitus' readers the Germani's animal skins must have come across as crude and backward, a typical example of the barbarian lack of refinement and cultural development. At the same time, however, there was a noble element to Tacitus' savages: their rustic clothing resembled relics of the Roman past, at least as portrayed in literature and art, and accorded well with the sartorial fashion of mythical heroes such as Romulus and Aeneas. Those who wear animal skins in Roman culture generally fall into one or occasionally both of these two

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<sup>120</sup> Cf. *Dig.* 49.15.2.2, a regulation stating that lost *arma* cannot be recovered by *postliminium*, is followed by 49.15.3, which reads simply *item vestis*.

broad categories, the noble hero and the uncivilized rustic, with the particular choice of animal evoking its own specific cultural associations which were then imposed upon the person clad in the skin.

As with *arma* more generally, the personal connection between man and the animal he wears is often made explicit in literature, especially epic poetry. In two Augustan works in particular, Romulus is described as wearing the skin (*Aeneid* 1.275) or a helmet (Propertius 4.10) made from a wolf.<sup>121</sup> In both cases the use of animal spoils is a feature of heroic culture; in Propertius especially, Romulus' wolfskin helmet, like his rough leather baldric, represents the pristine past in direct contrast to deceptively bright and shiny arms.<sup>122</sup> The wolf itself held special significance for Romulus, being associated especially with his father Mars,<sup>123</sup> and any mention of a *lupa* in the same context as the founder of Rome would naturally have recalled the she-wolf that had nursed Romulus and Remus according to legend.<sup>124</sup> In the *Aeneid* Virgil makes this connection explicit: Romulus is said to wear the skin of his nurse-wolf.<sup>125</sup> In these contexts the

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<sup>121</sup> *Aen.* 1.275–277: *inde lupae fulvo nutricis tegmine laetus | Romulus excipiet gentem, et Mavortia condet | moenia, Romanosque suo de nomine dicet.*

<sup>122</sup> 4.10.20–22 with the commentary of Clarke 2003: 88. Cf. Pallas' baldric, which is both shiny and ill-omened (*Aen.* 10.941–943): *infelix umero cum apparuit alto | balteus et notis fulserunt cingula bullis | Pallantis pueri...*

<sup>123</sup> Cf. Prop. 4.1.55: *Lupa Martia*; Hor. *Carm.* 1.17.9; Virg. *Aen.* 8.630, 9.566.

<sup>124</sup> The story was canonical from at least the early 3<sup>rd</sup> century B.C., by which time a statue of the *lupa* had been placed near the *figus Ruminalis* and the Lupercal (Liv. 10.23.12). Cf. the reverse of RRC 287/1 and 388/1a–b (with commentary in Crawford 1974: 403).

<sup>125</sup> 1.275: *lupae fulvo nutricis tegmine*. By *lupa nutrix* (“nurse-wolf”) Virgil might simply mean to recall the connection, but see Conway (1935: 64) for the opinion that “*nutricis*, *pace* some humane commentators, forbids us to refer *lupa* to any other wolf.” Conway suggests that the skin may have been a peaceful bequest, and indeed there

wolf, in particular the female of the species, was the most symbolically appropriate choice for Romulus as the son of Mars and the nursling of the legendary *lupa* who had adopted Romulus and who had in turn been adopted by his people as a kind of totem. Wearing his paternal crest and his father's and his nation's totem animal, Romulus lives up to his name as the martial founder of Rome.

Romulus' lupine *arma* were not the only example of their kind. In *Iliad* 10, Dolon appears dressed in the pelt of a wolf and a marten-skin cap. Both animals were associated in the Greek world with deception and trickery and therefore perfectly suit Dolon, whose name (evocative of Greek δόλος, "cunning" or "treachery") speaks for his character.<sup>126</sup> When Odysseus and Diomedes discover and dispatch this thief-in-the-night, they strip his body of his wolfskin and marten-cap and use the spoils to construct the first and only *tropaeum* in the *Iliad*.<sup>127</sup> It has been suggested that Odysseus actually puts on Dolon's wolfskin, which would be consistent with his own character as the prototypical trickster, a man whose twists and turns (*Od.* 1.1 πολύτροπος) are eerily reminiscent of the eponymous crooked "wolf-walking" of Pindar's Lycambes and belie

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are many examples of *insignia* being passed down within families (for discussion of certain case studies, see the third chapter).

<sup>126</sup> Cf. Hector's greeting at [Eur.] *Rh.* 158–159 (ἐπώνυμος... Δόλων!) and Dolon's own plans to become a wolf as explicitly expressed at *Rh.* 208–215. See Lissarrague 1980 for the iconography of Dolon the Wolf.

<sup>127</sup> For Dolon's arming scene, see *Il.* 10.333–336. The only epithet used of Odysseus during his interaction with Dolon is πολύμητις ("of many wiles," 10.382, 400, 423). The despoliation of Dolon's body and the creation of the makeshift trophy occur at *Il.* 10.458–468.



Odysseus' own descent from Autolycus, the Wolf Himself.<sup>128</sup> The same fundamental process is at work in this case as in that of Romulus: both Romulus and Dolon (as well as Odysseus, if he does in fact put on the skin) are intimately associated with the wolf and are ascribed certain lupine characteristics through the wearing of a wolfskin. On the other hand, the specific characteristics associated with the same object differ between the two cultures because the wolf had a distinct cultural meaning for the Romans as opposed to the Greeks. In other words, the mechanism of transfer is the same, while the content, varies with the respective cultural perceptions of the particular animal whose spoils are used.

Another illustrative example of the connection between man and his animal *arma* appears in Statius' *Thebaid*, where the hero Tydeus is frequently identified with a boar.<sup>129</sup> On two separate occasions he is said to wear a boarskin. In the first case, the skin is described simply as "the honor of Calydon" (1.490 *Calydonis honos*), an allusion that relies upon the audience's knowledge of the myth of the Calydonian boar hunt. By evoking the image of the Calydonian boar, a heroic-sized example of hunting success *par excellence* (compare the boar-tusk helmet as a status symbol in Mycenaean culture and the world of the Homeric heroes), Statius implicitly

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<sup>128</sup> For Pindar's description of wolf-walking as "stepping now here, now there in crooked ways" (*Pyth.* 2.85: ἄλλ' ἄλλοτε πατέων ὁδοῖς σκολιαῖς) and related discussion of the connection between Odysseus and Autolycus, see Miller 1994: 29–33. Autolycus was often portrayed as the son of Hermes, the trickster god, and inheritor of much of his father's character (*Od.* 19.394–396; *Ov. Met.* 11.311–315; Hyginus *Fab.* 201). According to Ovid, Autolycus was married to a similarly slippery character in Mestra, daughter of Erysichthon, who could change her shape at will (*Met.* 8.738–739).

<sup>129</sup> For an analysis of Tydeus' role in the *Thebaid*, especially with respect to the myth of the Calydonian boar hunt, see Lohmar 2008.

ascribes to Tydeus the prowess required to take down such an animal and live to take its spoils; we may even infer that Tydeus himself slew and stripped the very boar whose skin he wears, but at the very least he hails from the area famed for slaying the most terrifying swine in myth. The second mention of Tydeus' boarskin similarly describes the animal as the "national boar" (8.705 *gentilis aper*), which suggests that the Calydonians had adopted that animal as a badge or totem, similar to the she-wolf of Rome. Shortly before this second mention of the boarskin, Tydeus is explicitly compared to this same animal as part of an epic simile (8.532–535). Like simile, the boarskin becomes a device that confers qualities of the boar on the hero: indeed, in dressing in the skin of a *saetiger sus*, Tydeus takes on exactly that form himself, bristling *saetis ac dente recurvo*.<sup>130</sup> The nature of the skin as spoil further suggests that Tydeus is not just *like* a boar but even *superior* to one—otherwise the boar would have been wearing him. Thus Tydeus must be an exceptional boar, and Statius' references to Calydon invite us to compare the man to the behemoth of myth: his attack on Atys, for example, whom he thoroughly gores in the groin with his shaft (8.585–586: *latebras...inguinis...| missile...hausit*), may be a practical consequence of Tydeus' stocky stature—but that is yet another swinish attribute.<sup>131</sup> Moreover, Statius' description of the blow is reminiscent of the way in which the Calydonian boar thrusts his tusks into

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<sup>130</sup> 1.488. The term *saetiger* is only ever used of animals, most often the *sus* or *aper*, in Latin literature: cf. Lucr. 5.969; Virg. *Aen.* 7.17, 12.170; Ov. *Met.* 8.376, 10.549; Mart. 13.93.1.

<sup>131</sup> Cf. *Theb.* 1.415–417, recalling *Il.* 5.800–801. The effect brings to mind something like one of Tolkien's dwarves.

Ancaeus *summa...ad inguina* in Ovid's version of events.<sup>132</sup> Indeed, Tydeus' dominance on the battlefield in the *Thebaid* may produce a humorous effect similar to the burlesque antics of Ovid's überboar.<sup>133</sup>

While the symbolism behind animals and their spoils can be made explicit in the constructed context of literature, it is by no means restricted to that setting. Animals had totemic significance in broader cultural contexts as well. Certain gods had long established associations with particular animals: Jupiter his eagle, Juno her peacock, Venus a dove, Minerva an owl, Mars a wolf, Neptune a horse, Dionysus a panther, Cybele a lion, Apollo a gryphon. The huntress Diana was affiliated with a menagerie of game, from deer (especially stags) to bears and boars. In several ancient rituals, participants wore skins of animals sacred to their object of worship: young girls played bears by shedding their robes for pelts during the Arkteia festival held at Brauron in honor of Artemis, and the Italic Hirpi Sorani ("wolves of Soranus") wore wolfskins during their sacred rites. In Roman culture specifically animals were often used as emblems: Augustus used a sphinx as his personal badge, Maecenas a toad.<sup>134</sup> The Caecilii Metelli made a family icon of the elephant.<sup>135</sup> Rome as a nation had her she-wolf, a connection which the Italian allies astutely

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<sup>132</sup> *Met.* 8.400. There is similar gender play involved in these two episodes: for further discussion of the Tydeus-Atys scene in the *Thebaid*, see the second chapter; for a brief commentary on gender in Ovid's Boar Hunt, see Horsfall 1979: 327–329.

<sup>133</sup> On the "burlesque": Horsfall 1979.

<sup>134</sup> Plin. *NH* 37.10.

<sup>135</sup> See the third chapter.

exploited by showing the *lupa* being gored by a bull (*vitulus*), a natural choice to represent Italy (Oscan *Viteliú*), as an allegorical type on a denarius of the Social War:



Figure 1.4: Denarius of the Marsic Confederation. Uncertain mint in Italy, 90–89 B.C. Obv.: Ivy-wreathed head of Bacchus r.; laurel-wreath border. Rev.: Bull r. trampling and goring she-wolf; above, control-mark (Oscan A); in exergue, VITELLIÚ (retrograde Oscan). *HN Italy* 420. This example British Museum no. 1867, 0101.1110.

As objects that were considered the *numina* of the army and therefore lent themselves to cult worship,<sup>136</sup> the legionary standards were an ideal place to display animals as insignia. Five animals in particular (the boar, eagle, wolf, horse, and minotaur) were used as legionary standards in the Roman army before the eagle was chosen as the universal standard during the Marian reforms of the late 2<sup>nd</sup> century B.C.<sup>137</sup> From then on the eagle was inextricably connected with the Roman army, to the point where Virgil’s image of an “eagle among Chaonian doves”

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<sup>136</sup> Tac. *Ann.* 1.39, 2.17.2; Plin. *NH* 13.23; Joseph. *BJ* 6.316; Veg. *Mil.* 2.6; Tertull. *Apol.* 16; cf. *CIL* II 6183; *CIL* III 7591. On the cult of the *signa*, see von Domaszewski 1885; 1895: 9–45; Renel 1903; Rüpke 1990: 184–188; and Töpfer 2011.

<sup>137</sup> Plin. *NH* 10.5; cf. Keppie 1984: 67–68; Matthew 2010: 51–61.

easily resonates with connotations of Roman military might.<sup>138</sup> After the Marian reforms, legions had their own animal emblems in addition to the eagle:<sup>139</sup> the boar continued to be used as a legionary emblem,<sup>140</sup> while several Caesarian legions adopted the bull.<sup>141</sup> The Legio V Alaudae used an elephant following their heroics against that animal at Thapsus in 46 B.C.;<sup>142</sup> a similar reason may lie behind the choice of the elephant as a representation of Caesarian forces on coinage celebrating his Gallic conquests.<sup>143</sup> Certain Augustan legions took a Capricorn in honor of Augustus' zodiac sign, and the Praetorian guard may have taken the scorpion in reference to Scorpio as the sun-sign of Tiberius, under whom they were first created.<sup>144</sup> Meanwhile, legions that had distinguished themselves in action near the sea took a dolphin, a galley, or even Neptune himself.<sup>145</sup>

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<sup>138</sup> *Ecl.* 9.11–13: *sed carmina tantum | nostra valent, Lycida, tela inter Martia, quantum | Chaonias dicunt aquila veniente columbas.*

<sup>139</sup> A summary chart can be found in Le Bohec 1998: 262–263.

<sup>140</sup> I Italica, II Adiutrix, X Fretensis, XX Valeria Victrix.

<sup>141</sup> III Gallica, IIII Macedonica, VII and VIII Augusta, X Gemina.

<sup>142</sup> E. Ritterling, *RE* XII (1925) s.v. *legio*: 1564–1566.

<sup>143</sup> The reverse type of *RRC* 443/1 shows an elephant trampling a snake, which is perhaps meant to resemble the Gallic *carnyx*. The type is still debated; for a brief overview and critique of past interpretations, see Linderski 1996: 173–174 with nn. 102–103.

<sup>144</sup> II Augusta, IIII Macedonica, IIII Scythica, XIV Gemina, XXI Rapax. On the complicated role of Capricorn in the horoscope of Augustus, see Barton 1995. Von Domaszewski (1909: 14–15) and Durry (1938: 205, 213–214) were among the first to suggest that the scorpion was the emblem of the Praetorians; see Flower 2001: 636 for a brief overview of the evidence, including examples not cited by Durry.

<sup>145</sup> The Legio X Fretensis, for example, used a trireme and a dolphin as emblems. Mommsen (1883: 69) believed this legion was named for the Fretum Siculum (Strait of Messina), where he thought it had fought under Octavian against Sextus Pompey in the Battles of Mylae and Naulochus in 36 B.C.; Keppie (1984: 126, 140) thinks the X

While the animal standards were made of metal or painted on banners, certain members of the Roman army wore actual animal skins or other parts as part of their *arma*. Many ancient helmets were fit for horsehair or feather crests in order to exaggerate the height of the soldiers. The Legio V Alaudae earned its name from the particular arrangement of its members' feather crests, which gave them the appearance of crested larks.<sup>146</sup> To the bearskins, wolfskins, and lionskins worn by *signiferi*, *vexillarii*, *aquiliferi*, and sometimes *tibicines* and *cornicines*, Goldsworthy attributes an “ancient, totemic significance,” which seems consistent with the use of animal skins in ritual.<sup>147</sup> On the other hand, Vegetius claims that *antesignani* and *signiferi* wore bearskin helmets explicitly to terrify the enemy.<sup>148</sup> Plutarch attributes a similar motivation to the Cimbrian cavalry, who are said to wear helmets made to resemble “the heads of peculiarly shaped animals and the maws of terrifying beasts,” fitted with feathered crests that made them appear taller.<sup>149</sup> The psychological effect of wearing animal *arma* would have been a valuable advantage

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Fretensis fought onboard ships as *legio classica* both at Naulochus and later at Actium in 31, perhaps the reason for its adoption of the trireme as a legionary emblem (Dabrowa 1993: 11–12). Cf. *RRC* 544/10, one of Antony's legion series, whose reverse legend reads LEGIONIS XVII CLASSICAE; presumably this refers to a connection with the navy, perhaps a role similar to the one played by Legio X Fretensis in the view of Mommsen and Keppie. The *rostra* on the legionary *signa* on the reverse of 544/12 likewise suggests some naval connection. On the *legiones classicae* levied from the marines in the 1<sup>st</sup> century A.D. (Legiones I and II Adiutrix), see Reddé 1986: 510, 515, and 596; and Pitassi 2009: 238–256.

<sup>146</sup> Bishop and Coulston 2006: 66.

<sup>147</sup> Goldsworthy 2003: 54.

<sup>148</sup> Veg. *Mil.* 2.16: *omnes antesignani vel signiferi, quamvis pedites, loricas minores accipiebant et galeas ad terrorem hostium ursinis pellibus tectas*; cf. Junkelmann 1986: 109.

<sup>149</sup> Plut. *Mar.* 25.7: οἱ δὲ ἰππεῖς μύριοι καὶ πεντακισχίλιοι τὸ πλῆθος ὄντες ἐξήλασαν λαμπροί, κράνη μὲν εἰκασμένα θηρίων φοβερῶν χάσμασι καὶ προτομαῖς ἰδιомόρφοις ἔχοντες, ἃς ἐπαιρόμενοι λόφοις πτερωτοῖς εἰς ὕψος ἐφαίνοντο μείζους, θώραξι δὲ κεκοσμημένοι σιδηροῖς, θυρεοῖς δὲ λευκοῖς στίλβοντες.

in battle and is particularly evident in the case of the *berserkir* (sing. *berserkr*, “bear-shirt”) and *úlfheðnar* (sing. *úlfheðinn*, “wolfskin-clad” man) of Norse Saga culture, who are said to fight as ferociously as the animals after which they are named.<sup>150</sup>

Taken to the extreme, the act of dressing in an animal skin confers on the wearer not just particular characteristics but the entire identity of that animal. Like Dolon in the pseudo-Euripidean *Rhesus*, who wears a wolfskin explicitly so that he will be mistaken for the animal itself,<sup>151</sup> and the girls of the Arctea who considered themselves actual bears once they were dressed in their pelts,<sup>152</sup> the robber Thrasyleon in Apuleius’ *Metamorphoses* is sewn into a bearskin in order to become a bear: he explicitly intends to fool his would-be victims into thinking they have a live animal on their hands.<sup>153</sup> Once enveloped in the hide, Thrasyleon has been “made every inch a beast” (4.15 *prorsus bestiam factum*), and only then is his form described as *immanis*, a term reserved for beasts in the *Metamorphoses*.<sup>154</sup> In his impersonation of a bear, Thrasyleon’s human identity is subsumed by that of the animal whose skin he has taken

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<sup>150</sup> See Breen 1999 for the etymology and origin of the terms *berserkr* and *úlfheðinn* (6–21) and on the relationship between these warriors and their animal counterparts (33–51). The meaning of the *ber-* element of *berserkr* is contested, but Breen notes the parallel construction of animal and garment: \**ber-/úlf-* and *-serkr/-heðinn* (18).

<sup>151</sup> [Eur.] *Rh.* 208–215.

<sup>152</sup> Ar. *Lys.* 641–647.

<sup>153</sup> 4.84.13–4.91.8. Compare the similar transformation of Sigmundr and Sinfjötli into wolves in the *Völsunga saga* (ch. 8), a metamorphosis likewise enacted through the donning of appropriate skins. As part of their lives as wolves, Sigmundr and Sinfjötli hunt men, and their wolfskins can only be removed every tenth day (cf. Paus. 8.2.6 and Plin. *NH* 8.80–81). Germanic Männerbünde, bands of youths, were also thought to go through a werewolf-like initiation ritual as part of entering manhood (Kershaw 2000, esp. 59–62).

<sup>154</sup> 4.18.

as his own, to the point that he is slain as a bear after he turns down the opportunity to remove the skin and reclaim his human form. Thrasyleon's inner human is revealed again only after the local butcher strips the hide from the thief's corpse (4.21 *magnificum despoliavit latronem*) as if he were skinning an actual bear—because, of course, he thinks he is doing exactly that. Thrasyleon's refusal to cast off the bearskin and thereby revert to his original form stands in pointed contrast to Tlepolemus, the master of disguise who adopts various identities as marked above all by his changes of clothing,<sup>155</sup> and especially to the narrator Lucius, who successfully sheds his asinine skin at the instruction of Isis in order to regain his human shape and thereby reclaim his human self.<sup>156</sup>

There is one curious figure in Roman literature whose very name exemplifies this idea that skin and identity change as one: the *versipellis*, or skin-changer. Petronius and Pliny the Elder both use this word to mean a werewolf or lycanthrope.<sup>157</sup> Apuleius later uses it of Thessalian witches, who are said to be able to transform into any sort of creature they wish.<sup>158</sup> But these three authors' use of *versipellis* to refer to supernatural humans capable of shapeshifting into animals differs from the meaning of the same word in the only other pre-Christian authors

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<sup>155</sup> 4.156.19–4.162.14; Frangoulidis 1994. For a brief overview of Tlepolemus' roles, see Winkler 1985: 87–89.

<sup>156</sup> Isis' instructions (11.6): *'pessimae mihi que detestabilis iam dudum beluae istius corio te protinus exue.'* Lucius' loss of his asinine skin (11.14): *nam me cum primum nefasto tegmine despoliaverat asinus...*

<sup>157</sup> Petron. *Sat.* 62; Plin. *NH* 8.80. Interestingly, whereas the English terms derived from German and Greek verbally fuse the two halves of the creature, man and wolf, the Latin word focuses on the transition between them, specifically the means by which that transformation is accomplished.

<sup>158</sup> *Met.* 2.22.



who use the term in extant Latin literature. These instances occur much earlier, twice in Plautus and once in a fragment of Lucilius.<sup>159</sup> In all three of these cases the word *versipellis* has nothing to do with any animal but man (or, in the case of Plautus' *Amphytruo*, of a god impersonating a man); instead, it emphasizes the deceit inherent in the shifting of identities more than the change in physical form, much like the English term "turncoat" for a man of shifting principles or loyalties.<sup>160</sup> This connotation of deceit, which reappears in post-classical uses of the term, is consistent with the idea that shapeshifting is a primary characteristic of the trickster archetype.<sup>161</sup> The name and nature of the *versipellis* thus underscore the function of skin as a definitive marker of identity and characterize the shifting of identity, especially in cases where one man takes on that of another, as fundamentally deceptive. The same shifting of identity is outwardly expressed in the changing outfits of the chameleon Tlepolemus in Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*. *Arma* too function much like both skin and clothing in this essential quality of representing and constructing identity.

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<sup>159</sup> Plaut. *Amph.* 123, *Bacch.* 657; Lucil. fr. 669–670 Marx: *at libertinus, tricornius, Syrus ipse, at mastigias, | quicum versipellis fio et quicum conmuto omnia*. The "skin" element of *versipellis* may be emphasized in the fragment of Lucilius by the appearance of *tricornius*, "triple-skinned," in the previous line.

<sup>160</sup> In its first citation in the *OED*, "turncoat" appears in conjunction with the word "changeling," a figure associated with the switching of identities in folklore (like the werewolf) and in politics (like the turncoat).

<sup>161</sup> Hynes 1993, esp. 36–37.

## Dressing Down

In many societies of the classical world, *arma* were considered very much a second skin, as essential to the fighting man's identity as they were protective of his life. In Roman society arms and armor belonged to soldiers personally and represented a careful balancing act between individual and national identity: armor (especially pieces such as helmets and *lorica*) had to fit each soldier well and was often personalized in terms of decoration, while other decorative elements and the style of *arma* reflected state influence.<sup>162</sup> As much as the type and style of his arms both reflected and helped construct status and identity on multiple levels, the loss of arms signified a corresponding removal of that status and identity. Therefore, such a loss was universally dishonorable, and voluntary disposal amounted to desertion, one of the worst offenses a soldier could commit. And as such desertion often did in historical reality, the separation of a man from his arms in literary situations frequently leads to a fatal end.

The Roman attitude towards the loss of arms and armor is particularly revealing. As part of his *castrense peculium*, a soldier's military equipment properly belonged to him personally rather than to his father or guardian.<sup>163</sup> While he could therefore bequeath it in his will however he wished, there were harsh penalties for disposing of it intentionally or even losing it in any way so long as he had duties to fulfill as a soldier. Polybius notes that the loss of any military

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<sup>162</sup> Bishop and Coulston 2006: 267.

<sup>163</sup> *Ibid.*: 263.

equipment on the field of battle was unacceptable for a soldier.<sup>164</sup> The *Digest* of Justinian specifies that *arma* were not recoverable by the right of *postliminium* because their loss was inherently shameful.<sup>165</sup> Instead, *arma* had to be recovered by force, just as Plutarch claims the son of Cato the Elder recovered his sword in the middle of battle.<sup>166</sup> Soldiers who had lost their *arma* in battle or who sold it faced severe consequences: a flogging was in store for the man who sold a greave (*tibiale*) or shoulder-piece (*umerale*), but selling his torso armor (*lorica*), shield (*scutum*), helmet (*galea*), sword (*gladius*), or all of his kit made him equivalent to a deserter and liable to face capital punishment, although he could be let off lightly with a transfer to another unit. If he escaped with his head, a deserter still ran the risk of dishonorable discharge, the first item on the list of offenses that incurred *infamia*.<sup>167</sup> Thus even a purely military offense, i.e. one committed by a soldier in his capacity as a soldier, could have a profound effect upon his status as a citizen, provided he lived long enough to suffer the ignominy. Voluntarily handing over one's *arma* to the enemy had consequences of its own: as punishment for surrendering his weapons after being surrounded, the equestrian prefect C. Titius was stripped of his rank by the consul L. Calpurnius

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<sup>164</sup> Polybius includes the throwing away of arms in the midst of battle in his list of “unmanly acts” (6.37.11); consequently, he reports, men who lost any piece of their *arma* in battle often went after it, either to recover it or to escape in dying the shame that would otherwise follow (6.37.13).

<sup>165</sup> 49.15.2.2: *non idem in armis iuris est, quipped nec sine flagitio amittuntur: arma enim postliminio reverti negatur, quod turpiter amittantur.*

<sup>166</sup> Plut. *Cat. Mai.* 20.7–8.

<sup>167</sup> *Dig.* 3.2.1.

Piso, and his men were demoted to the lowest class in the army, where they served as slingers.<sup>168</sup> Thus losing one's *arma* in any way typically incurred one of the three worst punishments possible in the Roman army: demotion, dishonorable discharge, or death.

In many ways these legal prescriptions were formal codification of a cultural conception that pervaded the ancient Mediterranean world. The so-called “warrior ethos” required that fighting men never be separated from their arms. In Laconic fashion this idea was pithily expressed by Leonidas’ famous response to Xerxes’ demand that the Spartans surrender their weapons: μολὼν λαβέ! (“come and take [them]!”).<sup>169</sup> His dare suggests that his men would never willingly give up their arms and in sense it resembles our phrase “over my dead body.” But for the Spartans even death was not considered an excuse: Spartan mothers allegedly sent their sons off to war with the instruction to return “with their shields or on them”—in other words, carrying their shields alive or lying dead upon them, but always together with them.<sup>170</sup>

Homeric heroes such as Hector and Achilles are likewise loath to give up their arms. Bershadsky’s analysis of shields in the *Iliad* helps illuminate how vital arms and armor are within this warrior ethos: she shows that the three terms used in the Homeric epics for “shield” (σάκος, ἀσπίς πάντοσ’ ἔῃση, and ἀσπίς) can be differentiated on the basis of their effectiveness, with the

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<sup>168</sup> Val. Max. 2.7.9.

<sup>169</sup> Plut. *Apophthegmata Laconica* 225D. The phrase has recently been co-opted by certain groups of guns rights advocates in the U.S., who consider possession of firearms integral to their identity as free citizens and any perceived attempts to interfere with that possession a danger to their liberty as well as their lives.

<sup>170</sup> Plut. *Lacaenarum Apophthegmata* 241F.

σάκος being the most protective and virtually guaranteeing the life of its bearer.<sup>171</sup> In the Homeric world, the shield is simultaneously the primary protector of a warrior’s life and the most conspicuous place for the device that represents the warrior. (Ajax, for example, is explicitly recognized by his shield at *Il.* 11.526–527.) As such, the shield is the piece of equipment most important to its bearer’s existence both physically and symbolically.

It is no coincidence that the most protective form of shield in Homer is based on a term for skin, and that the most protective shield of all—the Aegis—is itself a skin.<sup>172</sup> The word σάκος (properly a hide shield) is cognate with Sanskrit *tvac-* (“hide”) and Hittite *tweka-* (used according to Nagy with the first-person possessive to mean “my self, myself, I”).<sup>173</sup> While animal hides are extremely common as material for shields (cf. Latin *scutum*, “shield,” which is related to the Greek word σκῦτος,<sup>174</sup> “skin” or “hide”), the skolion of Hybrias the Cretan explicitly expresses the notion that such a shield could be seen not just as an echo but as a literal extension of the hide of the man carrying it: the phrase τὸ καλὸν λαισήϊον, πρόβλημα χρωτός (“the fair hide-

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<sup>171</sup> Bershsky 2010.

<sup>172</sup> The word Aegis (αἰγίς) means “goatskin” and is used elsewhere of goatskins worn as clothing (*Hdt.* 4.189, *Eur. Cyclops* 360). While the Aegis is implied in the *Iliad* to be a product of Hephaestus’ craftsmanship (15.308–310), it still retains aspects of its animal origin: for example, the word used of its tassels (θύσανοι, e.g. 2.448, 14.181) is also used by Pindar of a tuft of the Golden Fleece (*Pythian* 4.231). The “well-plaited” (2.449 ἐϋπλεκέες) tassels of the Aegis might therefore be interpreted as woven strands of the goat hair attached to the skin.

<sup>173</sup> Nagy 2004: 42.

<sup>174</sup> Not to be confused with σκύλος, which has a similar meaning to σκῦτος, or σκύλον (pl. σκύλα), a Greek equivalent of *exuviae* or *spolia*.

shield, an extension of [my] skin”) appears twice in the ten-line poem.<sup>175</sup> According to the warrior ethos, then, a lost shield represented “the detachment of the warrior’s ego from the weapon that conventionally identifies the warrior.”<sup>176</sup> The detachment is fundamentally fatal to the warrior, representing the destruction of his ability to defend himself and therefore to be a warrior.

This conception of the shield as a second skin essential to the man who carries it is consciously challenged in later poetry.<sup>177</sup> In one such poem, Archilochus imagines that one of the Saïoi must be glorying in his shield,<sup>178</sup> which he lost against his will.<sup>179</sup> He deliberately rejects the notion that he has lost a critical part of his self: “I saved myself” (αὐτὸν δ’ ἐξεσάωσα, line 3), he says, and he announces his intention to procure a new one no worse than the first.<sup>180</sup> Alcaeus

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<sup>175</sup> Lines 2 and 7. The term λαισήϊον specifies a shield made of raw animal hide that still has the hair attached (cf. *Il.* 5.453, 12.426; Hdt. 7.91).

<sup>176</sup> Nagy *loc. cit.*

<sup>177</sup> The Anacreon fragment (*PMG* 36b = 381b Campbell = 85 Gentili) often included in this “literary tradition” of *rhapsaspia* is problematic on two counts: 1) Archilochus, Alcaeus, and Horace describe shields that have been lost, but not thrown away; and 2) in the Anacreon fragment it is impossible to establish much beyond the idea that a shield has been thrown away—there is no way to know whether the action is part of an autobiographical account or not. The text reads: ἀσπίδα ῥίψας ποταμοῦ καλλιρόου παρ’ ὄχθα.

<sup>178</sup> Fr. 5 West. The theme of victors exulting in the spoils of their victims is very common but frequently ill-fated: cf. Hector glorying in the armor of Achilles (*Il.* 17.472–473; 18.131–132); and Turnus in the baldric of Pallas (*Aen.* 10.500).

<sup>179</sup> As Gerber (1970: 15) notes: “Archilochus merely says he ‘left it beside a bush,’ and this implies he was not in possession of it when he was presumably surprised by the enemy. He might be accused of carelessness, but not cowardice.”

<sup>180</sup> It is worth noting that his shield is an ἀσπίς, not a σάκος, and so the linguistic connection between the hide of the shield and the hide of the man does not interfere with Archilochus’ separation of his shield from his self; on the other hand, his description of his lost shield as “flawless” (ἀμώμητον) recalls both the weapons of Homeric heroes (e.g. the bow of Teucer at *Il.* 15.463) and the heroes themselves (e.g. Polydamas at *Il.* 12.109).

presents a similar separation of man and arms in a poem of his own, likewise prioritizing his own safety (Ἄλκαος σάος, line 1) above the weapons that he has lost to the enemy (line 2).<sup>181</sup> Horace follows Archilochus and Alcaeus in describing his own *parmula* as *relicta non bene* (*Carm.* 2.7.10). Despite efforts to connect Horace's description to his actual military service, his claim surely is purely poetic: like his Greek models, he intends to challenge the concept that the soldier should go down with his shield and that a "good death" in battle should be preferred to living to fight another day.<sup>182</sup>

These literary challenges, whether mocking or not, are striking precisely because they run directly counter to the well-entrenched conception of *arma*, particularly shields, as integral to martial identity. The preeminence of the shield in particular continues from the *Iliad* into Latin epic, where shields provide the best opportunity for ecphrases that illuminate the characters of heroes. In Roman statuary, on the other hand, it was the cuirass that came to predominate as the piece of armor that featured the most elaborate decoration; especially in the imperial era, few military commanders are shown with shields. Shields do appear as carriers of symbolic imagery (e.g. *imagines clipeatae* and the *clipeus virtutis*); in such contexts, however, they are shown not as practical instruments in the hands of soldiers but rather in isolation, carried by Victoria, or

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<sup>181</sup> Fr. 184 Page = 401B Voigt = 428 LP; Strabo 13.1.38; Hdt. 5.95.

<sup>182</sup> Davis (1991: 92) adduces as evidence the diminutive *parmula*, which has the effect of reducing the importance of the shield. While Horace agrees with his Greek predecessors in distancing the "warrior-self" from the shield and in treating the shield as replaceable rather than integral to the shield-bearer, care must be taken in treating his poem as part of a "tradition" of *rhipasopia* (Smith 2015). Among other things, it is important to note that Horace's poem is set in the problematic context of civil war.

alongside other “floating” symbols such as Augustus’ laurels, wreaths, or Roman standards. Beyond this preference in purely symbolic contexts, the shield was not typically privileged above other *arma* in Roman society in the same way as, e.g., at Athens, where the throwing away of one’s shield, *rhipsaspia* (Greek ῥιψασπία, from ῥίπτω, “I throw,” and ἄσπις, “shield”), was tantamount to desertion and resulted in the loss of citizen rights. The act was so morally offensive that under Athenian law even accusations of *rhipsaspia* were powerful insults and false allegations were themselves illegal.<sup>183</sup> Rather than focusing on the shield as the easiest piece of *arma* to leave behind, and therefore the first sign of desertion, the regulations cited in the Digest divide *arma* into two tiers of importance, defining the torso armor, shield, helmet, and sword as equally vital to a soldier’s identity and—given the penalty for losing them—to his life.

As Roman representations of war began to focus more on the aftermath of battle, the deprivation of arms as opposed to the retention of them became a crucial indication of the sharp divide between victory and defeat. Such imagery is emphasized in Valerius Maximus’ description of the Campanians’ treatment of the Romans in the aftermath of the Caudine Forks.<sup>184</sup> Having been stripped of *arma* (*inermes*) and even of clothing (*nudi*) by the Samnites, the Romans enter

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<sup>183</sup> The shield was one of the heaviest pieces of *arma* and was in purely practical terms the part most easily left behind. On the loss of citizen rights: Andoc. *Myst.* 74; Lys. 10.1. On ῥιψασπις as slander: Lys. 10.9.

<sup>184</sup> 5.1.5: *Campani autem exercitum nostrum cum consulibus apud Caudinas furcas sub iugum a Samnitibus missum nec inermem tantum, sed etiam nudum urbem suam intransentem perinde ac victorem et spolia hostium prae se ferentem venerabiliter exceperunt protinusque consulibus insignia honoris, militibus vestem, arma, equos, commeatum benignissime praestando et inopiam et deformitatem Romanae cladis mutarunt.*



the Campanians' city in disgrace.<sup>185</sup> The Campanians explicitly undo the disgrace incurred by the disaster by undoing the deprivation, namely restoring the insignia of office to the consuls and supplying the soldiers with clothing, *arma*, horses and food. The Romans are thereby made to resemble the victorious force that the Campanians envision them as. The same striking contrast appears in Tacitus' description of Mucianus' men drawn up as victors "with their insignia and arms," whereas the Vitellians who had surrendered at Bovillae and other soldiers who had fought on the losing side were brought out with their bodies "nearly uncovered" (*propre intecto corpore*, hence unarmed and almost unclothed).<sup>186</sup> Being uncovered meant being defenseless, and therefore powerless in the face of those who were armed. For men whose identity revolved in large part around the ability to defend themselves and to impose their will on others by force, the removal of the objects that conferred that ability was utterly ruinous.

The juxtaposition between armed victor and disarmed victim plays a prominent role in triumphal iconography. While *tropaea* constructed of *arma* despoiled from the enemy could certainly stand on their own as symbols of victory, when captives appear beneath or alongside trophies they are universally shown without their *arma*, which has implicitly been used to construct the trophies at whose feet they sit. Such imagery emphasizes the disgrace and dishonor

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<sup>185</sup> Cf. Venus' image of Ascanius as "inglorious" in the absence of arms when she asks Jupiter for permission to spare the child if Juno is allowed to have Carthage crush Italy and deny the Trojans a home (*Aen.* 10.52: *positis inglorius armis*). Cf. also *discingo*, literally "deprive of the *cingulum*" or "ungird," as a military punishment (*Liv.* 27.13; *Suet. Aug.* 24, 100; *Juv.* 8.120).

<sup>186</sup> *Tac. Hist.* 4.46.2: *ingressus castra Mucianus, quo rectius stipendia singulorum spectaret, suis cum insignibus armisque victores constituit, modicis inter se spatiis discretos. tum Vitellani, quos apud Bovillas in deditonem acceptos memoravimus, ceterique per urbem et urbi vicina conquisiti producuntur propre intecto corpore.*

that accompanied the stripping of *arma*. The captives depicted might be living in the strict sense of the word, but their ability to protect themselves and to pose a threat to the Romans has been thoroughly destroyed. They no longer exist as fighting men, and legally they no longer exist as men at all: Those that survive become slaves, and even should they eventually become freedmen they will never again return to their former status completely free of the ignominious stain of defeat. It is all too fitting that Roman soldiers who lose their own *arma*, whether deliberately or against their will, are subject to the same fate.

### Dressing Up

The removal of *arma* may have resulted in the symbolic death of the despoiled, but despoliation did not erase the symbolic content of the *arma* themselves. *Arma* removed from their original owners, like the skins and other spoils of animals, still retained essential elements of their owners' identities even after they had ceased to exist as fighting men. As a result, *arma* could be used like clothing more generally to construct and reconstruct identity through a process of dressing up. If *arma* were indeed a second skin, then that skin—and the identity that came with it—theoretically could be changed to suit the wearer's own choosing. When done properly, this game of dress up contributed positively to the status and identity of its players. On the other hand, those who broke the rules were portrayed as violators of a cultural norm.

Gladiators are perhaps the best historical example of men who habitually used *arma* as constructors of identity. For those who fought in the arena, *arma* were simultaneously all alien and not alien at all. Unlike soldiers, gladiators did not own their own equipment. What

equipment they did use was markedly different from what belonged to the military and so marked them as gladiators rather than soldiers. Since they had no personal gear, they were constantly using *arma* that had been used by others before them;<sup>187</sup> it was therefore typically ill-fitting.<sup>188</sup> On the other hand, the fact that their equipment typically did not fit them physically did not extend to the symbolic level, as the “warrior ethos” demanded: On a very basic level, gladiators had no personal identity of their own that their *arma*, insofar as it was theirs, had to fit. Indeed, their very names were often not their own. Instead, the equipment that they put on—like the names that they were given—granted them an identity to the outside world, an identity largely defined by spectators’ perception of them, including their equipment du jour. Thus a gladiator who wore Thracian armor was for all intents and purposes Thracian so long as he wore it. This ability to change identity with *arma* allowed for the “fatal charades,” historical reenactments, and other spectacles of death that were staged in the arena.<sup>189</sup> After all, gladiators were not proper fighting men but entertainers, and their *arma* were but theatrical—albeit often deadly—costume. The gladiator’s final piece of *arma*, the wooden sword (*rudis*) awarded to him upon retiring from the stage, was in context not so much a proper weapon as a symbolic prop, and its acceptance redefined him as no longer *gladiator* but *rudarius*.

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<sup>187</sup> Attested by, among other things, the existence of *spoliaria*.

<sup>188</sup> Cf. [Quint.] *Decl. Mai.* 9.8\*: *transferuntur in illum detracta corpori meo arma, et male aptatis insignibus destinatum par producitur*. See discussion in Coleman 2010, esp. 421.

<sup>189</sup> Coleman 1990: 44–73.

For proper fighters, who had personal identities which their *arma* had to fit, the issue of handling alien armor could be a tricky business. Familial arms were one thing. Sons could use their fathers' *arma*—or at least paternal *insignia* on their own *arma*—by virtue of being their heirs and the rightful inheritors of critical aspects of their fathers' identities.<sup>190</sup> Thus Aventinus and Cupavo in the *Aeneid* use *arma* that represent their lineage: Aventinus wears his father's lionskin and carries a shield that bears the device of the Hydra, Hercules' second labor. On the other hand, Cupavo's helmet bears swan plumes, which—like the skin of Romulus' nurse-wolf—might as well have been taken from his father's own body. This is the same basis on which Apollo uses Zeus' Aegis in the *Iliad*.

Unrelated proxies were a point on which Greek and Roman culture did not see exactly eye to eye. Greek epic permitted greater freedom for unrelated proxies and comrades to exchange arms and for the reuse of spoils taken from the enemy. The most famous instance is Patroclus' use of Achilles' armor. While the whole episode ultimately ends poorly for Patroclus, as it does for Hector after him, in Patroclus' case there is no condemnation whatsoever for the act of putting on Achilles' armor. The very idea had been proposed by wise Nestor himself and approved by Achilles. It is Patroclus' violation of Achilles' precept not to engage Hector that leads to his demise, not the fact that he is wearing his friend's armor. On the other hand, in an allusion to this episode in Ovid's *Heroides*, Penelope explicitly describes Achilles' *arma* as *falsa*

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<sup>190</sup> In Greek epic, Achilles is the only other man who can wield Peleus' ash spear (*Il.* 16.140–144, 19.387–391), and Telemachus is the only other man who has the right to Odysseus' bow (*Od.* 21.343–353). Quintus Smyrnaeus has Neoptolemus appropriately inherit his father's arms, including the spear (7.445–451; cf. 8.199–201).

when worn by Patroclus, before they are ever taken as spoils by Hector.<sup>191</sup> In the Roman imagination, then, or at least in Ovid's, even Patroclus and Achilles' close relationship does not permit the free exchange of *arma*.

Even in the *Iliad*, however, the sharing of *arma* in the case of Patroclus and Achilles binds the fate of the two men together. When Patroclus goes to battle in Achilles' armor, his deeds are credited to Achilles himself—for all intents and purposes, he *is* Achilles. After he receives news that Patroclus lies dead (18.20 κείται Πάτροκλος), Achilles too lies as if dead upon the ground in his grief (18.27 κείτο).<sup>192</sup> He is as good as dead so long as he has no arms with which to fight,<sup>193</sup> and he is not revived until Athena cloaks him in the Aegis.<sup>194</sup> The loss of his mortal second skin allows it to be replaced with divine ones: first Athena's Aegis and then Hephaestus' armor.<sup>195</sup> Each divine arming scene is in a sense an apotheosis of the hero and would not have been possible at all had not Achilles been genealogically divine himself.<sup>196</sup> For Hector, however, his

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<sup>191</sup> Ov. *Her.* 1.17: *Menoetiaden falsis cecidisse sub armis*; cf. Sen. *Ag.* 619 (*falsus Achilles*) and *Tro.* 447 (*vera ex Achille spolia simulato tulit*), both of which may recall the line of Ovid (Tarrant 1976: 290).

<sup>192</sup> Achilles repeats the same verb in envisioning his own death at 18.120–121: ὦς καὶ ἐγὼν, εἰ δὴ μοι ὁμοίη μοῖρα τέτυκται, | κείσομ' ἐπεὶ κε θάνω.

<sup>193</sup> Thetis expressly forbids her son from entering battle until she returns with his new armor from Hephaestus (*Il.* 18.130–137), and Achilles protests that he lacks arms and armor as part of his initial refusal to obey Hera's instruction, delivered by Iris, that he help the Greeks secure Patroclus' body (18.188–195).

<sup>194</sup> *Il.* 18.203–204.

<sup>195</sup> For the many similarities between the Aegis and Achilles' armor in both form and function, see Orchard 2012.

<sup>196</sup> Only three gods use the Aegis in the *Iliad*: Zeus (4.167–168, 17.593), its proper owner (cf. 15.229–230 and the frequent use of the epithet αἰγιοχος, “aegis-bearer,” e.g. at 2.375); his daughter Athena (2.445ff., 5.738ff., 21.400ff.); and his son Apollo (15.308, 15.318, 15.361). Achilles is the only living mortal protected by the Aegis. Apollo uses it to protect Hector's corpse from the effects of physical abuse at 24.20–21, but in that case it functions much more like

decision to wear the armor he has stripped from Patroclus is doubly problematic: on the one hand, he is dressing himself in the armor shared by two men who have died either literally or metaphorically. On the other hand, it is armor to which he is not entitled: Hector is only the third name on the list of Patroclus' slayers, preceded by Euphorbus and Apollo; moreover, in a vital sense the armor still belongs to Achilles, who has not been defeated properly in combat, least of all by Hector.<sup>197</sup>

Both issues reappear in the *Aeneid*. Several figures attempt to wear armor that is not suited to them. In Book 2, Priam attempts to use his old *arma*, but to no avail, for he is no longer the man—especially not the fighter—he once was. His armor is long neglected, and his sword useless. Meanwhile, when Camilla spots Ornytus in a bull's hide and wolfskin, she explicitly questions his status as a hunter and therefore his right to wear the spoils of the hunt, as she does. Ornytus pays the ultimate price for wearing such “unfamiliar *arma*.” On the other hand, Camilla dies not because her tigerskin is false but because it is true, namely as a sign that she is a huntress who belongs to Diana and her forest rather than a *bellatrix* suited for the field of war. Deception returns in the final battle at the end of Book 12, when Turnus forgets his father's sword and looks to Metiscus for a replacement. His charioteer is very much not himself at the moment, and the sword breaks almost immediately, for the false Metiscus cannot provide trustworthy *arma*. In all

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ambrosia (cf. ) than a shield, which is designed to save the life of its bearer. Collins (1998: 40–43) notes that while both Patroclus and Hector die in Achilles' original armor, neither wields the hero's Pelian ash spear; he suggests that the incompleteness of Patroclus' and Hector's borrowed panoply “emphasiz[es] their mortality” and their corresponding inability “to maintain themselves for long in a divine capacity” (40–41).

<sup>197</sup> On the problematic nature of the death of Patroclus, see Allan 2005.

of these instances, aside from the exceptional case of Camilla, the armor or weapon fails to avail the one using it, implicitly because there is a critical incompatibility between *arma* and *vir*.

In both literary and historical contexts, the use of foreign arms and armor revolves around the issue of identity. For example, when Livy relates that the Romans grew so desperate in their war against Hannibal that the dictator M. Iunius Pera armed convicts with spoils to fight for Rome, the historian explicitly mentions that those spoils had been taken from the Gauls and displayed in the triumph of Gaius Flaminius (223 B.C.).<sup>198</sup> Such behavior was clearly not the norm but rather an example of honor yielding to necessity: *honesta utilibus cedunt*. The act of using foreign arms expressly with the intent to deceive, as Cato reportedly did against the Carthaginians,<sup>199</sup> was presumably even more dishonorable and is explicitly condemned in both Livy and Frontinus.<sup>200</sup>

In the *Aeneid*, too, the use of alien *arma*, no matter the intent, is implicitly characterized as fundamentally deceptive. Even imagining it is enough to condemn the one who fantasizes it as sacrilegious. Nowhere is this clearer than in the case of Mezentius, who is frequently described as a violator of the sacred throughout the *Aeneid* (e.g. *contemptor deum*, 8.7). His irreverent behavior reaches a climax in Book 10 and eventually leads to his death and despoliation at the hands of Aeneas. The episode begins with Mezentius' prayer to his own right arm and weapon

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<sup>198</sup> Liv. 23.14.4; Beard 2007: 177.

<sup>199</sup> Frontin. *Str.* 4.7.12.

<sup>200</sup> *Aen.* 2.389; Frontin. *Str.* 3.2.3; Liv. 27.28.9.

rather than to proper gods. He further claims that he will strip Aeneas of his armor and dress up his own son Lausus in Aeneas' spoils. The image of this living trophy leads to a direct corrective at the hands of his would-be victim: Aeneas slays both Lausus and Mezentius, sparing the first corpse out of pity but despoiling the latter. In the aftermath of the battle, Aeneas offers a prayer to the gods and erects a *tropaeum* with Mezentius' armor, which he dedicates to Mars. The crests of the helmet are bloodied, the spears broken, the battered *thorax* pierced twelve times.<sup>201</sup> Each of these reflects the state of Mezentius' physical body, which must be similarly bloodied, broken, and battered. The term *thorax* in particular evokes an image of Mezentius' own chest, which of necessity bears the same twelve piercings reflected in the state of the armor that once covered it. Aeneas finishes the trophy by tying Mezentius' shield to the trophy's "left arm" (11.10 *sinistrae*) and hanging his ivory-hilted sword from its "neck" (11.11 *collo*), completing the andromorphic construction. Finally, as part of his dedication to Mars, he declares that "this is Mezentius" made with his own hands (11.16 *manibusque meis Mezentius hic est*). Aeneas has thus both destroyed and rebuilt Mezentius through the symbolic manipulation of *arma*.<sup>202</sup>

The Mezentius episode illustrates just how strongly the identity of a man persisted in his *arma* even after death and despoliation. As opposed to such human spoils, animal skins and

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<sup>201</sup> *Aen.* 11.8–10: *aptat rorantis sanguine cristas | telaque trunca viri, et bis sex thoraca petitem | perfossumque locis.*

<sup>202</sup> There are two similar episodes in Greek history that involve the invocation of a man's presence through the construction of a *tropaeum* using his *arma*: Paus. 4.32.5–6; and Plut. *Cim.* 17.4–8 with *Per.* 10.1–3. Figueira (2012) suggests that the oak trunk typically used as the "skeleton" of the trophy was not just sacred to Zeus but could be interpreted a ritual representation of Zeus, which would make it particularly fitting for the διογενής Aiakos to be the subject of such a construction.



other parts were typically imbued only with characteristics of their respective creatures, not personal identities that would come into conflict with those who wore them. In the extreme cases in which the entire identity of an animal is taken on wholesale through the wearing of its pelt, the identity of the human wearing that skin is overwritten, usually to fatal effect. Only deceptive or superhuman figures such as the *versipellis* can handle this kind of multiple personality disorder; not even the most heroic of mortals can endure it. Pallas' unique arming scene sets the stage for a similarly fatal misfit. On his fateful baldric there is chased an image of the Danaids murdering their newlywed husbands. Had Pallas had a more usual arming scene, the allusion to the men's untimely death would have foreshadowed Pallas' own. As it happens, this foreshadowing occurs in retrospect and is reversed into an echo, because Pallas' arming scene occurs immediately between his death and Turnus' stripping of the baldric from Pallas' corpse. Moreover, this inauspicious introduction of the baldric is not just a postmortem arming scene for Pallas but simultaneously a second arming scene for Turnus, who dons Pallas' fate along with his baldric. And just as Aeneas proclaimed Mezentius' despoiled arms to be Mezentius himself, it is the baldric itself—once and forever Pallas'—that allows Pallas to be resurrected and indeed signifies that he has never truly been gone, because in wearing the baldric Turnus has prevented Pallas from being fully put to rest. In the *Aeneid*, therefore, as to a certain extent in Roman society at large, arms don't just *make* the man—they *are* the man.

## II: *Virtus* Unmanned

### Warmaidens, Boy Soldiers, and the Engendering of Value

The martial epics are full of great men slaughtering each other with correspondingly great arms. At key moments we see successful heroes pressing their advantage in the hopes of stripping such arms as spoils, the only permanent pieces of their victims that victors habitually claim—if they can. Would-be despoilers typically face a further challenge in the form of their targets' comrades, who are duty-bound to defend their defeated compatriots from despoliation, mutilation, and other forms of dishonor. The struggle over the arms of the fallen can be just as fierce as the initial battle and frequently perpetuates the cycle of violence by incurring fresh deaths. The numerous accounts of attempted despoliation—sometimes successful, sometimes not—reflect the prominent role of spoils in martial narrative: whether taken in the midst or in the aftermath of battle, they are never merely an afterthought but rather the coveted product of a multi-step process, the final phase of victory. Indeed, it seems that the act of stripping a defeated foe of his arms is so commonplace that it can go without saying unless the contest for spoils ends in failure or is otherwise noteworthy.<sup>1</sup>

It is therefore exceptionally noteworthy when there is no attempt at despoliation at all. In a striking episode during his *aristeia* in the eighth book of Statius' *Thebaid*, the hero Tydeus slays

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<sup>1</sup> There is at least one passage in epic where despoliation appears to be a form of *variatio* for a thorough and heroic victory over an opponent: at *Iliad* 14.508–522, the list of the first Achaeans who take spoils after Poseidon turns the tide of battle includes the names of six Greeks, but after the initial question there is only one explicit mention of spoils (14.513 ἐξενάριξε); the other verbs specify killing alone, and the act of despoliation must be understood in each case. We may well be meant to make the same inference (i.e. that slaying an opponent includes or naturally leads to despoliation) elsewhere, too—and not just in the *Iliad*, but in later epics as well.

Atys, the young betrothed of Ismene. Rather than reach for the arms of the dying youth as his prize, Tydeus explicitly rejects them. He is not the first hero of ancient epic who willingly leaves a victim unspoiled, nor is he the last: in the *Iliad*, Andromache mentions that Achilles refrained from despoiling her father Eëtion out of reverence (6.414–420; 417 σεβάσσατο), while the Atreides show the same courtesy to the slain Penthesilea out of pity and admiration in Quintus Smyrnaeus (1.782–788; 782–783 οἰκτείραντες...ἀγασσάμενοι). Similar rationales are at work in both the Homeric epic and the *Posthomerica*: in each case the victor deliberately holds back from despoliation out of esteem for the deceased, and a respected warrior is spared the ultimate disgrace. Tydeus' motivation could not be more different. It is not reverence but a sense of shame (8.590 *pudor*) that evokes his disdain and drives him to disclaim the spoils on offer. In other words, Tydeus leaves Atys' arms untouched not to honor Atys but to prevent Atys' arms from dishonoring him. Tydeus' reaction raises a serious question: how could spoils, which are so frequently sought after and so fiercely fought over as objects of fame and glory for those who win them, be instead a source of shame?

Fortunately, the very same passage provides us a means of answering that question by allowing us to construct a framework for how spoils are valued. While spoils typically have positive value, as evidenced by the frequent attempts to take them even at the risk of death, the encounter between Atys and Tydeus in *Thebaid* 8 shows that it is possible for spoils to be absolutely worthless. The value of spoils should therefore fall along a spectrum, with a given set of spoils potentially located anywhere along that spectrum of value. Through a thorough

examination of this passage, brief though it is, we can identify what exactly causes Atys' spoils not to have any positive value whatsoever. With that established, we can infer that the converse should add to the value of spoils, and we can then test that hypothesis using other case studies.

The first step is to pinpoint the problem with Atys' arms, in other words the reason for which Tydeus decided not to take them as spoils. Let us allow Tydeus to speak for himself. The hero's rejection of Atys' arms is tripartite in structure. First, Tydeus says that he will not hang Atys' arms as a dedicatory offering to Mars or Minerva. Since it is a norm for spoils to be dedicated in temples as offerings to the gods, this disavowal suggests that Tydeus considers them useless as spoils (8.588–589). His second comment is more unusual: he indicates that shame (*pudor*) would prevent him from carrying Atys' arms himself (8.589–590). This remark implies that he finds Atys' *arma* lacking not only as spoils but even just as *arma*, and it is not unreasonable to infer that their worthlessness as *arma* would persist after despoliation, thus explaining Tydeus' first statement. The third and final part of Tydeus' short speech is by far the most remarkable: the hero asserts that had his own wife Deipyle followed him into battle, he would not even have given her Atys' *arma* as toys.<sup>2</sup> Just as Tydeus' second statement helps to explain his first, so too does this last remark contribute to his entire rationale by pointing to gender as the source of the rejected *arma*'s lack of value both as *arma* and by extension as spoils.

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<sup>2</sup> 8.590–591: '*vix, si bellum comitata relictis | Deipyle thalamis, illi inludenda tulissem.*' While *inludenda* may be interpreted as merely "to be mocked" or "to be ridiculed," the image of Deipyle following her husband into battle, together with the earlier description of Atys' weapon as a *fragile telum* ("slender shaft," 8.578) causing nothing but annoyance, strongly suggests that Tydeus envisions his wife actually playing with the weapons as toys. The notion of ridicule is certainly present in both interpretations, but the latter yields a more vivid insult.

Tydeus' claim that Atys' arms would not be suitable even as toys for his wife is a serious impugnation of Atys' *virtus* ("manliness"), in other words his worth as a man. Indeed, from the very moment of his introduction, Atys' status as a *vir* and the corresponding quality of his *virtus* are constantly called into question. Like the Caspian lion to which he is compared, Atys is more adolescent than adult. In the first place he lacks the physical characteristics of a mature male: whereas the Caspian lion has yet to grow a mane, the most iconic attribute of that species' males, Atys' chest is described as correspondingly *levis* ("smooth"), and his shoulders are still developing, both signs of physical youth.<sup>3</sup> As we will see, Atys also has no history of real bloodshed and therefore lacks the track record of a successful *vir*. It is precisely this lack of experience that leads him to engage Tydeus—his decision to do so, like his fearlessness in the face of his elder and better, is a product not of courage but of ignorance and callowness, for he fails to recognize Tydeus by his arms, the true insignia of a warrior. Instead, Atys judges Tydeus by his physical form alone (8.577 *solo corpore mensus*), and that error proves grave indeed. By all of these counts Atys is too young and inexperienced to be considered a true *vir*, a "man worthy of the name."<sup>4</sup>

Furthermore, Atys not only lacks *virtus* but even exhibits the opposite, namely effeminacy. Just as he is more boy than man, the Theban youth is likewise more *virgo* than *vir*. Before he even enters the battle, Atys is defined exclusively by the women in his life. The first

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<sup>3</sup> For *surgentes* in the sense of still-growing, compare Virgil's description of Ascanius (*Aen.* 4.274).

<sup>4</sup> *OLD* s.v. *vir*.

phrase used to describe him is “betrothed to Agenorean Ismene” (8.554–55 *pactus Agenoream...Ismenen*), and the fact that the first two nouns used to describe him (*iuvenis* and *advena*, 8.555) are common gender likewise contributes to his gender ambiguity. His anticipated marriage to Ismene has been prevented by war (8.561 *bella vetant taedes*), and so Atys does not qualify as a *vir* in the sense of husband; in other words, he has no *femina* to whom he can be the masculine counterpart.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, he is consistently characterized as the equivalent rather than the complement of Ismene, especially through his mother’s choice to fit him and his *arma* with gold and purple explicitly so that he may be dressed “no less well than his intended” (8.567 *ne coniuge vilior*).<sup>6</sup> In much the same way that Aeneas reconstructs Mezentius in the *Aeneid*, Atys’ mother fashions her son through a sort of arming scene, but she does so in the image of his betrothed, the girl with whom he is evenly matched at heart (8.559–560 *nec pectora virginis illi | diversa*).<sup>7</sup> Atys’ trust in such *arma* (8.569 *talibus heu! fidens*) proves vain when he enters the field of war, where he is bound to run into truly manly men. Even so, Atys’ *arma* are not themselves responsible for Atys’ death—rather, those arms perfectly suit their owner, who himself falls

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<sup>5</sup> It is ironic that Atys allows war, which for more manly men is the perfect opportunity for displaying their *virtus*, to prevent him from becoming a *vir* in the domestic sphere.

<sup>6</sup> Further problems are foreshadowed by the phrase *ceu spectetur* (8.564): Atys is dressed for show, not war. Nothing virtuous is ever accomplished by entertainers who perform for a fee for the purpose of spectacle. They may display technical skill, but the entertainers themselves (such as gladiators and actors) could never be real men, since they were always *infames*.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. successful instances of women arming men in Greek culture (Lissarrague 2015).

fatally short of deserving the term *vir*. It is ultimately his own failure as a man that leads to his untimely demise.

Tydeus' rejection of Atys' *arma* therefore constitutes a rejection of the *vir* who lies behind them. Indeed, Atys' lack of *virtus*, or worth as a man, corresponds exactly with his *arma*'s lack of value both as *arma* and as hypothetical spoils. This correspondence raises further questions that must be answered in order to understand the exact relationship between *virtus*, *arma*, and the value of those *arma* both before and after despoliation. In the first chapter we explored the many ways in which *arma* reflect and construct the identity of their *vir*. Now we must investigate the particular connection between *arma* and *virtus* in order to explain why the value of *arma* is perceived as a function of *virtus* in particular. This also requires a broader examination of how that value changes when *virtus* is exhibited by non-*viri*, including both female figures and other males like Atys whose status as *viri* is questionable. Finally, it remains to be seen how *virtus* itself can be measured—in other words, if *virtus* can be interpreted as a kind of worth or value, what form of currency does it use? In order to answer these questions, however, we must begin by defining the concept of *virtus* itself.

### The Proving Grounds

The history of *virtus* is long and complex. By Cicero's time it had developed an extremely wide range of meanings and was commonly used to signify a particular "excellence," "worth," or "virtue" in the modern sense. In its original sense, however, *virtus* was a very gendered term referring to "manliness" (from *vir*, "man," and the suffix *tut*) in the sense of bravery and courage,

particularly as demonstrated in war (compare Greek ἀνδρεία, which is likewise formed from ἀνήρ, “man,” and covers essentially the same semantic range). It was only under the influence of Greek philosophy that the semantic range of the term *virtus* widened and the concept itself expanded from a martial value to a moral one.<sup>8</sup> *Virtus* as a moral quality could be attributed to and possessed by not only men but also women, animals, and even inanimate objects,<sup>9</sup> but this non-gender-specific sense developed—somewhat ironically—as a result of *virtus*’ nature as the most distinctive merits of man *qua* man. It speaks to the central importance of *virtus* in the Roman mentality that it was chosen to represent not just manliness but virtue itself in the modern sense (as expressed, for example, by its taking on the duties of translating for the Greek term ἀρετή in addition to ἀνδρεία). Even so, the martial values of *virtus* continued to be strongly associated with the word in its strict, gendered sense of manliness or masculinity.

In Roman culture, as in many others both ancient and modern, manliness was not some innate quality guaranteed to adult males on the basis of their biological sex (i.e. “maleness”) but rather a gender role that prescribed social behaviors, physical characteristics, and other qualities expected of males who would be men. Only a male who fulfilled those expectations and thereby satisfied the corresponding gender role truly deserved to be called a *vir*. From the time he came of age, a Roman man was expected to exhibit the relevant elements of *virtus* in every aspect of his

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<sup>8</sup> Eisenhut 1973 (see also 1975) documents the transition of the term *virtus* from its original sense (Greek ἀνδρεία) to a less gendered “excellence” (Greek ἀρετή; as in Caesar) and finally to an ethical or moral “goodness” (as in Cicero and other authors with philosophical interests).

<sup>9</sup> McDonnell 2006b: 1–11, esp. 5–9.



life, including the domestic and military spheres. As we saw in the case of Atys, failure to do so constituted a source of extreme shame. Conversely, being a *vir* worthy of the term represented the ultimate success for a Roman male. While being biologically male certainly contributed to one's status as a *vir*, it was not by any means the only or even the most definitive element of *virtus*, as evidenced by the fact that it is also attributed in its strictest sense (i.e. "bravery" or "courage") to female figures such as Cloelia.<sup>10</sup> Moreover, the personification of Virtus is herself female; while this is primarily due to the fact that *virtus* is grammatically feminine, it would be illogical for a female to be chosen to embody *virtus* if it were not possible—at least in theory—for a woman even to exhibit it. Maleness was therefore not even a necessary aspect of *virtus*, much less the definitive one. On the other hand, *virtus* was the definitive quality of the Roman *vir*, and its role within Roman culture cannot be understated. Indeed, it is arguably the single most Roman virtue, as evidenced *inter alia* by the adoption of the iconography of Virtus as that of Roma herself, with the result that in visual representations the two are not just strikingly similar but in some cases even indistinguishable.<sup>11</sup>

As we saw in the first chapter, the Romans prided themselves on their unique mark of manhood, which was naturally tied to Roman identity more broadly. In contrast to certain other peoples, such as Tacitus' Germani, who used *arma* as the sign of a free adult male, the Romans

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<sup>10</sup> Livy (2.13.6) uses the term *virtus* in connection with Cloelia's courage. Velleius Paterculus likewise uses the term *virtus feminae* in describing Calpurnia's decision to fall on a sword after her husband was put to death (2.26.3).

<sup>11</sup> McDonnell claims that the iconography for the cult statue of Virtus was adopted directly from that of Roma (2006b: 2; cf. 146–149).

gave preference to *domus* over *militia* in using a sartorial form of insignia, specifically the *toga virilis* (“man’s toga” or “toga of manhood”).<sup>12</sup> While the Roman toga and Germanic arms were comparable in their potential for social coding, they differed significantly in that the toga was strictly a token of manhood rather than a tool of it. By identifying its wearer as an adult male Roman citizen, the *toga virilis* conferred all the expectations of Roman *virtus* on him, yet it could not confer manliness itself because it merely enabled but did not otherwise help him to fulfill those expectations. Rather, the *toga virilis* specified a maturity attendant above all upon the ability to bear arms,<sup>13</sup> which was the primary means by which a Roman who had taken up the *toga virilis* answered its demands and proved its claims as a symbol of *virtus*.

For all that the Romans adopted a purely domestic icon as their mark of manhood, in order to establish and maintain his masculinity a man had to look primarily to theaters of violence, which constituted the proving grounds for the most fundamental aspects of *virtus* in its original sense, including valor, physical strength, and martial prowess. The domestic realm certainly offered opportunities for exhibiting *virtus* and so placed corresponding demands of its own upon Roman *vir*i, especially in the form of marriage and other kinds of sexual dominance, which were both comparable and complementary to more martial forms of conquest. Nevertheless, nothing could replace violent pursuits such as warfare and hunting as the ideal setting for proving one’s mettle. By virtue of their utility and even necessity in performing

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<sup>12</sup> Also called the *toga pura* (“pure [white] toga”) or the *toga libera* (“free toga,” i.e. “toga of the free [man]”).

<sup>13</sup> McDonnell 2006b: 177 with Isid. *Etym.* 9.3.37.

definitive acts of masculinity in such a setting, *arma* came to represent the realization of *virtus* in concrete form even for the toga-loving Romans. Indeed, despite the strong connection between the toga and Roman national identity,<sup>14</sup> the standard representations of Virtus—and therefore of Roma—never show her togate but always armed.<sup>15</sup> Such iconography indicates that in the Roman imagination *arma* were the primary insignia of Virtus, as they were implements vital to demonstrating the core aspects of the quality that she embodied and therefore in large part to being a Roman *vir*. In fact, I would argue that the proper use of *arma* was the quintessential expression of Roman *virtus sensu stricto*.

The case of Atys shows that it was not enough for a man simply to take up arms—he actually had to accomplish something with them, because *virtus* (like any gender role) was a quality whose very existence depended upon performance. Since *arma* were tools used to demonstrate *virtus* in its original martial sense, a contest of arms constituted a competition of *virtus*. As in any form of competition, victory was the greatest accomplishment because it signified that the victor had outdone his competition, here specifically with respect to physical strength and skill. Isidore helpfully names the two signs of “sure victory”: killing one’s opponent;

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<sup>14</sup> *OLD* s.v. *toga* 5; cf. Hor. *Carm.* 3.5.10 for *toga* as metonymy for “Roman national culture” (Lewis & Short s.v. *toga* B1).

<sup>15</sup> As will be addressed further below, Virtus is in a complicated position, being a female meant to represent manliness. (Only in the mid-1<sup>st</sup> century A.D. did a male personification of Virtus begin to appear alongside the traditional female one, the meaning of the word apparently overriding its grammatical gender: cf. *RIC* I<sup>2</sup> Galba 12, 32, 178–179, 218, 222, and 236.) One could argue that as a female Virtus should not wear a *toga virilis*; on the other hand, as a female she should not be using *arma* either. The fact that she transcends her grammatical gender (and so, in visual imagery, her biological sex) by using *arma* suggests that she *could* have been shown wearing the *toga virilis*, had that dress played the same role in demonstrating *virtus* as did *arma*.

and taking spoils, which as we saw in the first chapter can be construed as a kind of symbolic death of the stripped victim.<sup>16</sup> Of these two signs, only the latter produces permanent proof of victory, although as we will see spoils signify far more than the general idea of victory itself.

Victory in armed conflict thus offered a way for a man to demonstrate his *virtus* and come away with a lasting testament of it. Because the existence of *virtus* lay primarily in the active exhibition of the qualities and activities that it prescribed, the concept was best captured visually through a representation of a “virtuous” act in progress. Thus McDonnell identifies the mounted warrior as the “preeminent symbol of *virtus*” in Roman iconography.<sup>17</sup> Indeed, any Roman shown on horseback—especially in arms—would evoke the aristocratic *ordo equester* and its origin as the cavalry, the highest rank of the archaic Roman army. More specifically, however, the most virtuous pose was the mounted warrior shown in action with his right arm raised, about to thrust a spear into a fallen foe. This pose is sometimes called the Reiter (“Equestrian,” “Horseman”) or “Thracian hero” motif.

The Romans adopted this motif wholeheartedly and used it literally or metaphorically as the situation demanded. A denarius of P. Crepusius (82 B.C.) features this pose on the reverse; the lack of any actual enemy here suggests that this might be a representation of an equestrian statue, and it makes sense that a renowned personage would have been immortalized in so virtuous a pose (Figure 2.1):

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<sup>16</sup> Isid. *Etym.* 18.2.1: *certa autem victoria est vel occisio hostis, vel [ex]spoliatio, vel utrumque.*

<sup>17</sup> McDonnell 2006b: 154.



Figure 2.1: Denarius of P. Crepusius. Rome, c. 82 B.C. Obv.: Laureate head (?Apollo) r.; behind, thyrsus. Rev.: Horseman r., brandishing spear; in exergue, P·CREPVS·SI; behind, control-numeral (V). *RRC* 361/1a.

Support for the interpretation of this reverse type as a depiction of an equestrian statue may be found in the following imperial sestertius, struck under Claudius, the reverse of which features a triumphal arch surmounted by a statue of Nero Claudius Drusus between two trophies (Figure 2.2):



Figure 2.2: Sestertius of Claudius. Rome, c. A.D. 50–54. Obv.: Laureate head of Claudius r. Around, clockwise from bottom, TI·CLAVDIVS·CAESAR·AVG·P·M·TR·P·IMP·P·P. Rev.: Triumphal arch surmounted by an equestrian statue r. between two trophies, the rider striking downwards with spear in r. hand. Around, clockwise from lower l., NERO·CLAVDIVS·DRVSVS·GERMAN·IMP; on either side, S C. *RIC* I<sup>2</sup> Claudius 114.

The additional context here of a triumphal arch surmounted by trophies identifies this pose with victory above all and strongly emphasizes the rider's martial *virtus* as the primary means of attaining that victory.<sup>18</sup> *Arma* may have been the tools of empire, but *virtus* was the force that moved them. Indeed, Cicero identifies *virtus* as the singular means by which the Romans took over the known world, first expanding through Italy, then conquering Carthage, and ultimately bringing the "most potent kings and most warlike peoples under the sway of [the Romans'] *imperium*."<sup>19</sup>

Equestrian statues such as the two illustrated above typically do not include any kind of victim: it is enough that the riders are striking the quintessential pose of victory. But such a victim could be shown in cases where the identity of that victim was important. For example, on the reverse of a later denarius, struck in the name of P. Fonteius P. f. Capito (55 B.C.), we find an image of a Gallic foe being crushed under the Roman soldier's horse (Figure 2.3). Such a situation may well have occurred during a battle with Gauls, and so it may be considered a kind of martial genre scene, perhaps with specific reference to the Gallic wars. Like the triumphal arch and trophies in the coin of Claudius discussed above, the head of Mars and the trophy on the

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<sup>18</sup> Certain issues of denarii and aurei struck under Claudius show slightly different equestrian statues, including the rider carrying a transverse spear (*RIC I<sup>2</sup> Claudius 69–70*) and the rider lifting his right hand with a spear or scepter couched in the crook of his left arm (*RIC I<sup>2</sup> Claudius 44–45*). These statues conform to McDonnell's identification of the mounted warrior as the "preeminent symbol of *virtus*" as well, although I would argue that neither is quite as virtuous as the Thracian hero motif, for reasons which I will discuss below.

<sup>19</sup> Cic. *Phil.* 4.13: hac [virtute] maiores vestri primum universam Italiam devicerunt, deinde Carthaginem exciderunt, Numantiam everterunt, potentissimos reges, bellicossimas gentis in dicionem huius imperi redegerunt. Cf. Cic. *Verr.* 2.4.81 and Sall. *Cat.* 53.2–5.

obverse of the Capito coin further reinforce the message that the martial skills on full display on the reverse lead to victory (as signified here by the trophy on the obverse).



Figure 2.3: Denarius of P. Fonteius P. f. Capito. Rome, c. 55 B.C. Obverse: Helmeted and draped bust of Mars right, trophy over shoulder. Around, clockwise from top r., P-FONTEIVS·P·F·CAPITO·III·VIR. Reverse: Horseman galloping right, thrusting spear at armed enemy about to slay unarmed combatant; in right field, helmet and oval shield; around, clockwise from lower l., MN·FONT·TR·MIL. *RRC* 429/1.

While there is no way to ascertain an individual identity for the figure, it is conceivable that the reverse scene may be meant to illustrate the accomplishments of a particular Roman, perhaps an ancestor or relative of the moneyer. This is certainly the case with the many cavalry tombstones that likewise depict the deceased on horseback spearing an enemy, presumably of the sort whom he had fought in life, in order to illustrate the horseman at his most virtuous (Figures 2.4 and 2.5).<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> The majority of these tombstones are provincial due to the fact that much of the Roman cavalry was comprised of foreign auxiliaries, at least from the time of the late Republic.



Figure 2.4



Figure 2.5

Figure 2.4: Funerary monument of Sex. Valerius Genialis, found at Watermore near Cirencester (now in the Corinium Museum), late 1<sup>st</sup>–early 2<sup>nd</sup> c. A.D. Detail. *CIL* VII 68 (& add. p. 306) = *RIB* I 109.

Figure 2.5: Funerary monument of T. Flavius Bassus, *equus* of the *ala Noricorum*. Cologne, Germany. Detail. *CIL* XIII 8308 = *ILS* 2512.

The majority of such tombstones honor provincial men, due to the fact that much of the Roman cavalry from the late republic onwards comprised foreign auxiliaries. At the same time that these auxiliaries and their *virtus* were being commemorated on their tombstones, the Roman emperors were frequently depicted in the same pose for much the same purpose on imperial coinage (Figure 2.6).





Figure 2.6: Sestertius of Trajan, Rome, A.D. 104/5–107. Obv.: Laureate bust of Trajan r., *paludamentum* draped over l. shoulder. Around, clockwise from bottom, IMP CAES NERVAE TRAIANO AVG GER DAC P M TR P COS V P P. Rev.: Trajan galloping right, spearing Dacian falling r. below horse. Around, clockwise from lower l., SPQR OPTIMO PRINCIPI; in exergue, S C. Woytek 203b. *RIC* II Trajan 534.

Unlike the cavalry tombstones, however, such imperial iconography does not necessarily imply that the emperor himself rode into battle and actually skewered a foe from horseback. Rather, they offer a visual metaphor for Roman victory over foreign peoples in much the same vein—if opposite in outcome—as the Italy-bull goring the Rome-wolf on denarii of the Social War (Figure 1.4 above). No matter the emperor’s personal role on the battlefield, every Roman victory reflected upon his personal *virtus* by virtue of his role as the nominal *imperator* of the Roman army.<sup>21</sup> It was therefore quite appropriate to illustrate the emperor’s personal *virtus* in the same way as military leaders before him, such as Alexander the Great,<sup>22</sup> through this heroic motif.

<sup>21</sup> As on this coin, IMP(erator) was featured as the first element of imperial titulature in inscriptions, and it was that particular role which allowed an emperor to add every Roman victory to his name—quite literally, as the coin above shows: Trajan took the agnomina Germanicus (GER) and Dacicus (DAC) after victories in Germania and Dacia, respectively. Those titles, found on the obverse, are the verbal counterpart to the iconography of victory shown on the reverse. I will discuss victory agnomina as a kind of spoil in a later chapter.

<sup>22</sup> The particular image of Trajan on the reverse of the sestertius above is in fact strikingly similar to the statue of Alexander on Bucephalus now in the Naples museum; the spotted pelt used as a saddle-cloth also appears in the



Figure 2.7

Figure 2.7: Tondo from the south side of the Arch of Constantine: Hadrian (recarved as Constantine) hunting a bear. Rome, originally c. A.D. 123–138.



Figure 2.8

Figure 2.8: Tondo from the north side of the Arch of Constantine: Hadrian (recarved as Constantine) hunting a boar. Rome, originally c. A.D. 123–138.

Many such scenes in Roman art feature human victims, which is not unexpected of a people who acquired and maintained their empire primarily through force of arms. However, the motif itself originated in art of the eastern Mediterranean, where it is most often found in hunting scenes. The great predominance of human victims as opposed to animal prey in Roman contexts is due in part to the Romans' constantly being at war but also to the fact that Roman hunting was mainly conducted on foot, especially in the Republican age. It was only in the Imperial era that hunting on horseback became widespread, but when it finally did the so-called

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Alexander mosaic from the House of the Faun as well as on a depiction of a Macedonian king on the reverse of a denarius of Q. Marcius Philippus (*RRC* 259/1, c. 129 B.C.; the king is identified as Philip, presumably II or V, on the basis of the moneyer's cognomen, to which the image likely alludes).

Reiter or Thracian hero motif began to occur in the context of hunting as well, where it performed the same function of expressing visually the *virtus* of the victor. For example, Hadrian is shown in this pose hunting a bear and a boar on two 2<sup>nd</sup>-century tondi later incorporated into the Arch of Constantine (Figures 2.7 and 2.8 above). As opposed to the emperor-spearing-human imagery discussed above, there is corroborating evidence that Hadrian had killed both bear and boar himself;<sup>23</sup> thus these images may be read as testaments to his *virtus* literally as well as metaphorically. Similar examples date back to Asiatic monarchies such as Assyria and Persia, and especially to Macedonia, where hunting on horseback exemplified not just aristocratic but royal *virtus*.<sup>24</sup> Two early imperial Roman examples of this same pose in the context of an animal hunt show distinctively Greek or Macedonian figures,<sup>25</sup> suggesting that that culture was the primary conduit through which the Reiter or Thracian hero motif passed into the Roman world. Hadrian's own predilection for mounted hunting may likewise be seen as an emulation of this eastern monarchical tradition.<sup>26</sup> Hunting from horseback was by no means restricted to the

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<sup>23</sup> SHA *Hadr.* 20.13; Anderson 1985: 103.

<sup>24</sup> For Persia: cylinder seal of Cyrus I (Kuhrt 1995: 54, fig. 3.2). Young men in Macedon were not allowed to recline at the symposium until they had killed a boar without the aid of a hunting net (Hegesander ap. Athen. 1.18A; see Petropoulos 2011: ch. 5 for the boar-hunt as a coming-of-age rite in Greek culture).

<sup>25</sup> Anderson (1985: 96–97) cites a mold of the Augustan period from the factory of M. Perennius Tigranus in Arretium (modern Arezzo), where the animal is lost (Anderson suggests a lion), and a handle of a silver pan found in the House of Menander at Pompeii (*terminus ante quem* A.D. 79) featuring a “heroic lion hunt.”

<sup>26</sup> Anderson 1985: 102–3; Hess 2011. Note especially the Greek outfits of the emperor and his companions in the hunting scenes now on the Arch of Constantine. Compare also the depiction of Trajan on the sestertius above with that of the Macedonian king Philip on denarii of Q. Marcius Philippus (*RRC* 259/1), not only in the general attitude of the horseman but even in specific details, such as the animal-skin saddle-cloth.

emperor or his family in the Roman Empire, but it may well have been a way for members of the elite to associate themselves with this new imperial expression of *virtus* as compared to the ways in which it had been demonstrated by the republican aristocracy, who were never associated with mounted hunting quite as strongly as the emperor and the imperial elite grew to be.

The Romans' use of the Thracian hero motif in contexts of warfare and hunting alike suggests that man and animal were comparable as viable opponents in a contest of *virtus*.<sup>27</sup> (This equivalence has continued into the modern era as well.<sup>28</sup>) In literary contexts too the Romans considered man and animal quite translatable, as evidenced both by narratives of physical transformation (such as Circe turning men to beasts and Apuleius' eponymous ass) and through the use of epic similes and the wearing of animal skins to confer the characteristics of those animals on particular heroes (as discussed in the previous chapter). Such comparability is brought to the fore particularly in violent situations: the epic poems are littered with similes

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<sup>27</sup> Cf. Diodorus' comment that the Gauls beheaded their enemies and hung the heads on the walls of their houses, just as men did (and still do) with beasts (5.29.4). Compare also the so-called Alexander Sarcophagus, which features high-ranking figures (identified as Hephaestion, Perdikkas, Abdalonymus, and Alexander himself) striking the "Thracian hero" pose in battle against Persians and in a lion and stag hunt. Alexander the Great is identifiable by his lionskin helmet, which he is shown wearing on coinage struck by his successors. (The figure shown in a lionskin on his own lifetime coinage should be identified as Hercules, but nevertheless the decision to depict Hercules in his lionskin strongly associated that unique headgear with Alexander himself.) The other two in the long panel (Battle of Issus) are identifiable as elite Macedonian commanders by their horses and other equipment, including helmets and cloaks. They are identified by the Istanbul Museum as Hephaestion and Perdikkas. Both Alexander and Hephaestion reappear at the lion and stag hunt, but the central figure is clearly Persian and is therefore identified as Abdalonymus, whom Alexander made king of Sidon at Hephaestion's request.

<sup>28</sup> For a more modern comparison, see the numerous works of art depicting dead game as trophies of the hunt (e.g. Richard LaBarre Goodwin's *Theodore Roosevelt's Cabin Door*, 1905, now in the Harvard Art Museums, acc. no. 2013.40). Hunting became a substitute for warfare as a quintessential performance of masculinity once most accessible human enemies (e.g. Native Americans on the frontier) had been defeated: see Frankenstein 1969; Ames 1992: ch. 2, esp. 67–77; and Herman 2001: 223. Sports often serve the same function: see Bellows 2015 and Thrasher 2015.

comparing man to animal in combat, some juxtaposing the human-human conflicts of war with animal-animal conflicts in nature, others offering mixed human-animal comparisons. All such similes rely upon the understanding that man and animal were fundamentally comparable not merely in the fact that they frequently participated in conflict but even in terms of the particular behaviors and characteristics that they displayed while doing so. In other words, if men such as Tydeus and Turnus could be likened in a fight to lions and tigers and boars, then victory over those heroes must have been comparable to victory over their bestial *comparanda*. Likewise, if we press the notion of, say, the Tydeus-boar as a literary amalgam of man and animal fused together via similes and his wearing of a boarskin,<sup>29</sup> then there is indeed not much difference at all between slaying Tydeus the man and slaying the animal with which he is identified. It should therefore come as no surprise that the Thracian hero motif could make an equally powerful statement of heroic *virtus*—and the victory that it brought—whether the victim involved was human, animal (including the monstrous, as in the case of Bellerophon triumphing over the Chimera and later of Saint George conquering the dragon), or even not present at all (as in the case of the equestrian statues discussed above).

We should not forget, however, that Atys too had victories to his name before he challenged Tydeus. The youth had even returned from those victories with *arma* taken from his defeated enemies (8.571 *arma refert sociis*), an act labeled by Polybius as an example of

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<sup>29</sup> Lohmar 2008.

ἀνδραγαθία (“manly virtue”), the Greek equivalent of *virtus* in the sense of bravery.<sup>30</sup> How, then, could Atys be considered lacking in *virtus* if he had achieved sure victory? A hint may be found in the story of the son of Titus Manlius Imperiosus, who reportedly brought back the spoils of the enemy to his father as proof of his *virtus* (Liv. 8.7.18 *specimen...virtutis*). The younger Manlius was foiled—and ultimately condemned to death—because he had acted explicitly against orders, having been forbidden to engage the enemy; he failed to realize that in military matters the Romans esteemed discipline even more than *virtus*.<sup>31</sup> The spoils he retrieved may have been evidence of his victory, but they were simultaneously proof that he had contravened the orders of his father and commander. In light of those circumstances, his act of despoliation turned from a true to a misleading show of *virtus* (the *specimen virtutis* is immediately described as *deceptum vana imagine decoris*, “betrayed by the false likeness of glory”). Manlius Junior’s failure suggests that victory *per se* was not proof of *virtus* but instead a mechanism for proving *virtus*, one that—while usually reliable—could be circumvented by circumstance.

Circumstances play a major role in the case of Atys as well. The completeness of his previous victories cannot be in doubt, as they involved both killing and despoliation (8.571–572 *arma refert...peracta | caede*). Yet the story of the younger Manlius shows that even the most complete victory can backfire spectacularly if it is not over a proper opponent. While Atys had not been ordered to refrain from engaging the enemy, as Manlius had, we are told that the youth

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<sup>30</sup> Polyb. 6.39.2.

<sup>31</sup> Cic. *Tusc.* 1.1.2.

set upon only “easy squads” (8.570 *faciles turmae*). Moreover, the verb *grassor* (8.570 *grassatus*) implies that Atys actively sought out such prey of his own volition, and while it can be used in a neutral sense of “advance (upon)” or “attack,” *grassor* is not infrequently used of unscrupulous characters on the prowl, including thieves, pirates, charlatans, and even once a brothel-keeper.<sup>32</sup> In fact, a *grassator* is much more of a bandit rather than a proper warrior,<sup>33</sup> and his takings would not be honorable spoils but ill-gotten gains. It may therefore be quite significant that the *arma* that Atys brings back are never called *spolia* or *exuviae*.

The simile in which Atys is compared to a Caspian lion reflects his habit of pursuing the weakest prey. When the shepherd is gone (8.575 *custode remoto*), the lion raids the “sluggish flock” (8.576 *segne pecus*) and sates his hunger on a “tender ewe-lamb” (8.576 *tenera...agna*). There is nothing challenging in the least about this scenario: the human guard is absent, the flock is too slow to flee, and the lion chooses the tenderest of targets. Even the strongest of sheep would make poor prey for a lion who had realized his full potential; the lamb was actually the proverbial victim of the wolf, a much smaller and sneakier predator.<sup>34</sup> Just as the underdeveloped Caspian lion is behaving like a wolf in the simile, so too is the youthful Atys acting like a thief in taking the easy pickings. No matter how many lambs the lion eats, or how many sets of *arma* Atys takes from easy marks, both Atys and his lion counterpart will still be considered unblooded (8.574

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<sup>32</sup> Plaut. *Rud.* 3.3.22 for the brothel-keeper.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. the juxtaposition of *grassatores et sicarii*, Suet. *Iul.* 72.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. Plaut. *Poen.* 3.5.31; *Il.* 22.263.

*sanguinis insons*) so long as they have not proved themselves by defeating truly worthy prey, for victory can speak to the victor's *virtus* only in comparison to that of his victim. The term *facilis* as applied to Atys' victims suggests that they had no *virtus* of their own and consequently required none to defeat; therefore, victory over them cannot imply anything more than negligible *virtus* on the part of Atys as victor.

Again, Tydeus serves as the measuring stick of manliness. In his answering simile, the Tydeus-lion is described as "having scored nearly countless kills" (8.593–594 *innumeris...forte potitus | caedibus*),<sup>35</sup> a much more impressive résumé of *res gestae* (or, rather, *hostes victi*) than Atys' *faciles turmae*. While the adverb *forte* is derived from *fors* ("chance"),<sup>36</sup> it evokes by homophony the adjective *fortis* ("brave"), which answers to the Greek ἀνδρείος ("manly") and is particularly associated with true *vir*.<sup>37</sup> The Tydeus-lion's bravery is reflected in his choice of prey: he seeks bigger animals than sheep, namely cattle; moreover, he ignores the young calves and soft heifers, the cattle equivalents of a tender sheepling, and refuses to settle for anything less

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<sup>35</sup> If *forte*, which is often left untranslated here, does not qualify *innumeris* as "nearly" (like *fere* or *circiter*; *TLL* s.v. *fors* 6.1.1132.41–50 [Hey]), then it probably has the sense of "as it happens" (*TLL* s.v. *fors* 6.1.1130.67–1131.70). It should not be taken to mean that the lion defeated his victims purely by accident, as that would defeat the point of the simile. Surely the lion's own qualities (e.g. strength) played a role in his kill-count.

<sup>36</sup> *TLL* s.v. *fors* 6.1.1130.17–21 (Hey).

<sup>37</sup> *TLL* s.v. *fortitudo* 6.1.1166.76–77 (Hey): Gloss. ἀνδρεία; *TLL* s.v. *fortis* 6.1.1146.1–11.52.55 (Hey): *de masculis viribus*. The adjective *fortis* appears in apposition to *vir* more than 600 times in classical Latin, with the comparative and superlative degrees accounting for just over a third of that total. Cf. *OLD* s.v. *fortis* 1g: "having or requiring a man's strength" and *TLL* s.v. *fortis* 6.1.1149.67–72 for the phrase *vir fortis*.



than the leading bull himself (8.596 *nec nisi regnantis...tauri*).<sup>38</sup> This is a far more respectable matchup and accords with the frequent epic similes involving bulls as victims of lions.<sup>39</sup> The artistic motif of a lion dominating a bull, which dates back to the second half of the 4<sup>th</sup> millennium B.C., became widespread especially through Achaemenid culture as a preeminent metaphor in which the lion-king dominates a challenging enemy.<sup>40</sup> In both visual and literary contexts, the figure of the bull offers a way to characterize a formidable opponent as a doomed victim in the face of the lion,<sup>41</sup> which represents an equally formidable warrior typically destined for victory. In order for such imagery to reflect well upon the lion, the bull must have been recognized as a challenging foe, even if it could not escape its fate as prey. Moreover, this expectation that the bull would lose to the lion was far more an artistic and literary contrivance rather than a realistic guarantee,<sup>42</sup> and the bull was a powerful symbol used both by the Roman

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<sup>38</sup> Pace Hoppe, who claims that Tydeus anticipates the slaughter of *imbelles vituli* and *molles iuvencae* (TLL s.v. *caedes* 3.0.51.2–4), Tydeus' previous victims are unlikely to have been *vituli* and *iuvencae* in light of the phrase *nec nisi regnantis...tauri* (8.596). The verb *transmittit* must then mean “passes over” in the sense of “leaves unconquered,” the definition under which this line is cited in Lewis and Short (s.v. *transmitto* I.B.3; cf. *OLD* s.v. *transmitto* 8). The same imagery of a lion attacking a heifer or a cow is used of the Homeric Diomedes, son of Tydeus, slaying and despoiling Priam's sons Echemmon and Chromius (*Il.* 5.159–165).

<sup>39</sup> Cf. the lion-bull similes in the *Iliad*: 16.487–489; 17.542; also 12.293 (of generic cattle, βόες).

<sup>40</sup> Typical images can be seen on the staircase at the palace at Persepolis and on coins from at least the 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C.

<sup>41</sup> Compare the heifer Io on Turnus' shield as an indication that he will ultimately be a victim as she was (Gale 1997).

<sup>42</sup> In reality, full-grown bulls often chase lions (both male and female) that attempt to attack them and are quite capable of mauling them or launching them into the air with their horns. Moreover, it is not the male lion alone but the lionesses in his pride that do most of the hunting, and—unlike ancient warriors, who have pride to consider—they will take a weak member of the herd if it lags behind. Several modern sports teams and companies use the bull as a mascot due to its reputation for strength, speed, and ferocity: e.g. the Chicago Bulls, Lamborghini, and Red Bull.

army as a military standard and by the allies in the Social War as a national icon of Italy (Figure 1.4 above). Virgil explicitly acknowledges the staggering strength (*robur viresque*) of a charging bull by comparing it to an overpowering wave (*Georg.* 3.237–241), and bulls were emblematic of male strength and virility throughout the ancient world more widely as well.<sup>43</sup> The trope of the lion as victor and bull as victim notwithstanding, the two animals are evenly matched as powerful, sexually mature males who typically assume positions of supreme leadership within their social groups, vying with others of their kind to acquire and maintain those positions.

The encounter between Atys and Tydeus, taken in conjunction with their corresponding lion similes, provides a framework for valuation in the sphere of combat. A man's worth as a man lay in his *virtus*, especially his bravery, strength, and skill; far from an all-or-nothing proposition, *virtus* was a measurable quality, and it could only be measured when it was demonstrated through the performance of acts that required it. In the field of war, victory over an opponent typically provided a reliable mechanism for proving *virtus* because the victor's *virtus* had to equal or exceed that of his victim, whose own *virtus* set the bar for the level of bravery, strength, and skill required to defeat him.<sup>44</sup> As a result of this equation (or, more properly, inequality), the

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<sup>43</sup> Bulls are associated with virility or fertility in myth: Zeus transforms into a bull in order to seduce Europa, and the Minotaur is the product of Phaedra's desire for a bull. For a bull as sexual metaphor for the virile man, see Hor. *Ep.* 12.14–17. Horns in particular, perhaps the most distinctive feature of the bull, had sexual significance as well: see Petron. 134.11 and Plin. *NH* 11.261 (cf. κέρας as the *membrum virile* at Archil. fr. 247 West; Meleager, *AP* 12.95.6; Adams 1982: 21–22).

<sup>44</sup> Victories through deception and deceit circumvent this mechanism; the value of such victories was therefore questionable and could not speak accurately to the *virtus* of the victors.

quality of a man's *virtus* was judged primarily on the basis of the opponents whom he had defeated, specifically the level of challenge that they had presented.

This holds true for both Atys and Tydeus. The ability and corresponding value of each fighter are not just indicated but actually determined by the challenge presented by his choice of victim. In choosing weak targets, Atys and his Caspian lion effectively lower themselves to that status. Indeed, Atys is weak in precisely the same ways as the Caspian lion's *tenera agna*: both are youthful and effeminate. Moreover, Atys ultimately proves to be just as easy to defeat as those whom he had killed before running into Tydeus. In fact, the adverb used to describe Tydeus' tossing of the *iaculum* that kills Atys (8.584 *leviter*, "lightly") suggests a play on words with Atys' *levia pectora* (8.565–566). This earlier phrase should be taken as "smooth chest" (from *lēvis*) by analogy to the Caspian lion's lack of mane, but in hindsight it takes on new meaning through homophony with *lēvis* ("light"), the adjective from which the adverb *leviter* derives. This term *lēvis* may recall the lightly-armed members of the Roman army (*levites*), who were of lesser rank and standing than their more fortified superiors, as we saw in the previous chapter; by extension of its meaning as "without weight," *lēvis* may also be applied to anything insignificant or trivial, in which sense Horace described Pergamum as "rather *lēvis*" for the Greeks to defeat.<sup>45</sup> Through the lens of this wordplay, Atys' *levia pectora* are answered and overcome by Tydeus' "lightly" thrown *iaculum* (8.584), itself a lighter weapon than the *hasta* that Tydeus feels Atys does not deserve (8.583–584 *non ense nec hasta | dignatus*), for a *lēvis* opponent requires only *lēvis* force

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<sup>45</sup> Hor. *Carm.* 2.4.11: *fessis leviora tolli Pergama Grais*.

and a *lēvis* weapon to conquer. The youth thus proves as easy a victim as the *faciles turmae* on whom he had previously preyed, and his *virtus* correspondingly proves as negligible in defeat as in victory.

Conversely, Tydeus is a warrior in his prime with a long history of brave victories seeking to prey upon similarly powerful men, in other words real competition. Even a commanding victory over anyone less than the best could not accurately prove the full measure of Tydeus' *virtus*, i.e. his ability and therefore worth as a *vir*, for such an opponent would not adequately test his full potential. As Tydeus' usual fare shows, in order to *be* the best one must *defeat* the best, for overcoming the greatest challenge requires a correspondingly superlative degree of *virtus*. As a mechanism for proving *virtus*, victory in battle produced an amount of prestige directly proportional to the *virtus* demonstrated. By virtue of their nature as physical products of victory, spoils were indisputable proof of victory and by extension came to symbolize both victory itself and the prestige accruing to the victor as a result. To a certain extent this was true of anything taken in war, not just spoils proper but any loot more broadly defined. However, due to the personal connection between *arma* and their owners, despoiled arms represented their original owners (even after those owners became victims) far more directly than most other war loot. Furthermore, as the implements with which a man proved his *virtus* in the field of war, *arma* served not just as tokens of that man's identity as a fighter but as proof of his *virtus* in particular. Consequentially, despoiled *arma* made the ideal prizes of war, for they were not just proof of victory but were a testament to the specific identity of the victim and above all to the quality of

his *virtus*, which in turn helped to define the *virtus* of the victor. Thus spoils functioned as the physical medium through which a victim's *virtus* and attendant prestige contributed to those of the victor who had stripped them.

Returning to the passage from Statius' *Thebaid*, we can see this translation of value at work. In the first chapter I claimed that Tydeus' wearing of a boarskin, echoing his people's adoption of that animal as their national emblem in remembrance of their defeat of the Calydonian boar, both reflects his own boarish character and strongly suggests that he is capable of defeating such a dangerous beast. In addition, while it is not explicitly stated, it is logical to infer that Tydeus' countless brave victories have yielded spoils that, like his boarskin, presumably reflect the quality of their original owners and so testify to Tydeus' ability as a warrior capable of overcoming the most challenging opponents. On the other hand, the *arma* taken by Atys represent his victories over mere sheeple,<sup>46</sup> and sheeple-spoils can do no credit to Atys—or to any victor at all, for that matter—because sheeple have no *virtus* and thus present no challenge. Unlike Atys, Tydeus understands that the value of spoils is directly proportional to the challenge presented by their original owners because their primary value derives from their nature as a manifestation of the *virtus* of those owners. Based on the ease of his victory over Atys, the hero finds the youth completely lacking in *virtus* and consequentially deems his arms worthless both as *arma* and as spoils.

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<sup>46</sup> A portmanteau of “sheep” and “people” (*OED* s.v. sheeple, *n.*: “People likened to sheep in being docile, foolish, or impressionable”). The term fits Atys as a generic herd animal rather than the strong male leader (e.g. lion, bull, stag).

Despite the frequency with which spoils are taken in battle narratives, then, in this particular case it is not Tydeus' refusal to take spoils but Atys' decision to do so that turns out to be irrational. Indeed, the youth's choice to take the *arma* of his own easy victims belies his complete ignorance of the way in which *arma*, and in turn spoils, are valued. Atys' failure concerning *arma* is threefold: first, he trusts in the arms that he himself wears, which have been adorned by his mother to match his betrothed; second, there is no indication that he realizes the true value (or, rather, the valuelessness) of the arms that he has taken from weak victims; finally, he is unable to recognize Tydeus' arms and so foolishly attacks an enemy to whom he cannot possibly compare and with whom he cannot compete. All of these together imply a greater ignorance on the part of the youth concerning the significance of *arma* more broadly, for Atys is the quintessential tyro when it comes to war.<sup>47</sup> Ever Atys' opposite, Tydeus is far more familiar with *arma*, both their practical use and their symbolic significance, due to his greater experience in war.<sup>48</sup> Of all the many ways in which Tydeus outmans Atys, I would argue that this is the most

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<sup>47</sup> The description of Atys as *Tyrīi iuvenis non advena belli* (8.555) should not be taken to imply that Atys is "no stranger to...war" (*pace* Augoustakis 2016: 43) and therefore experienced in battle. If Peyraredus' conjecture of *nunc* for *non* is rejected, and *non* retained (*ibid.* 266–267), then *advena* cannot mean "stranger" to battle but rather must mean "foreigner" in terms of nationality (here with respect to the Tyrian army, as Atys is a Theban prince). Compare Atys' identification as a *hospes* at 8.603 and Augoustakis' comments on the paradox of Atys' ambiguous status as both "an outsider and at the same time an insider because of kinship ties with the house of Oedipus" (266, 289).

<sup>48</sup> As an experienced warrior, Tydeus is able to recognize the most suitable opponents. On the other hand, Atys' callowness and concomitant inability to evaluate Tydeus properly results in a gross mismatch, one that Tydeus tries his best to avoid by pursuing more challenging targets even while under attack by the youth. Ultimately, Atys becomes such a bother that he must be addressed, but he is never more than an annoyance, as far beneath Tydeus as his easy victims had been to Atys himself. Indeed, it seems that Atys has gone straight from one extreme to the other, from far too easy to far too hard, without any of the parity evident in the Tydeus-lion's matchup with the reigning bull.

critical, given that an inexperienced soldier was seen as a woman in the Roman imagination (or at least in Cicero's).<sup>49</sup> But what exactly is this relationship between *arma* and *virtus*?

### *Arma virtusque*

The Romans considered the world of arms to belong exclusively to men. Isidore claims that women were forbidden from the military camp, as if it were sacrosanct as a realm of maleness and masculinity.<sup>50</sup> In this respect it compares well to the Greek ἀνδρῶν (literally the “men’s” apartment) as the traditional location of the symposium, where the only females admitted were slaves and courtesans; likewise, the only women associated with the military camp in the Roman world were prostitutes. This characterization of war as a man’s world was naturally reflected in epic as well. Tydeus’ words as he spurns Atys’ arms, which gravely impugn the youth’s masculinity, echo similarly insulting implications of effeminacy delivered to the Trojans in the *Aeneid*: Turnus declares that it falls to real men to make war and peace (7.444 *bella viri pacemque gerent quis bella gerenda*), while Numanus explicitly warns his enemies to “leave arms to men and give up the sword” (9.620 *sinite arma viris et cedite ferro*), which Servius glosses as an instruction to “abandon the role of men” (*abscidite partem virorum*).<sup>51</sup> Within the world of war a

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<sup>49</sup> Cic. *Tusc.* 2.37.

<sup>50</sup> Isid. *Etym.* 9.3.44: castra sunt ubi miles steterit. dicta autem castra quasi casta, vel quod illic castraretur libido. nam numquam his intererat mulier.

<sup>51</sup> The phrase *cedite ferro* has another possible interpretation: “yield to the sword.” Servius clearly understood *cedo* as “withdraw” and took *ferro* to be an ablative, but translating *cedite* as “submit” or “yield” and taking *ferro* as a dative produces an interesting polyvalence.

man lived, died, and proved his worth by arms; a man inexperienced in arms was therefore not a man worthy of the name. This is precisely the situation in which we find Atys, whose utter ignorance of *arma* is the primary cause of his fatal ignorance of *virtus* itself.<sup>52</sup>

By the end of Atys' brief encounter with Tydeus it becomes clear that the youth fundamentally fails to understand even the relationship between *arma* and *virtus*, which was as intimate as that between *arma* and *vir*. In the field of battle, acts of *virtus*—in other words, feats marked by bravery, strength, and other characteristically masculine qualities—were the definitive means by which a man proved his martial worth, and *arma* were typically required to perform them. Due to their nature as implements essential to the performance of masculinity, *arma* became associated more strongly with *virtus* than with any other aspect of their owner's identity. Therefore *arma* both constructed and reflected their owner's masculinity more than any other quality, in fact so much so that they came to be seen as manifestations of manhood itself. In the first chapter I showed that *arma* were so closely identified with their owners—and vice-versa—that they were seen as a literal part of him. This conception of embodiment allows Aeneas to construct an armorial Mezentius and call it Mezentius himself. Along much the same lines, Cicero glosses *arma* as *membra militis*, veritable "limbs of the soldier" who carried them.<sup>53</sup> The loss of *arma* therefore constituted the loss of an essential part of the man to whom they belonged, and the intimate connection between *arma* and *virtus* in particular points to an identification of

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<sup>52</sup> Cf. the (admittedly later) description of *sueta virtus bello et armis* in Prudentius (*Perist.* 1.33).

<sup>53</sup> Cic. *loc. cit.*



that essential part as precisely the part of a man that makes him a man. Indeed, an analysis of visual and literary evidence shows that *arma* functioned in many respects as the *membrum virile* of the martial sphere.

*Arma* functioned as constructors of masculinity in a number of ways. The most explicit example of physical construction was the muscle or heroic cuirass. As we saw in the first chapter, this particular type of torso armor was associated with men of elite or divine status, being worn in Roman art only by high-ranking officers, emperors, and the god of war; it was also one of the most explicitly gendered pieces of military equipment. Whether it was made of leather or metal, this cuirass was characteristically molded in the shape of a man's torso, including anatomically correct features such as the navel and nipples. Its true hallmark, however, was the idealized musculature of the chest, which was indisputably male.<sup>54</sup> No matter the actual shape of the person within, the molded cuirass forced the flesh beneath its breastplate to conform to the structure that it imposed. In some cases (e.g. Mars, presumably), the musculature on the breastplate would reflect accurately the body of its wearer, perhaps just perfecting already well-formed muscles. On the other hand, for a man who was out of military shape or otherwise failed to conform to the masculine ideal (like Atys' still-growing shoulders and youthful chest), such armor would force him to conform to that ideal—at the very least from the perspective of those around him.

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<sup>54</sup> The muscle or heroic cuirass is often called *lorica anatomica* or *lorica musculata* by modern re-enactors, but neither term is attested in antiquity. Nevertheless, musculature was particularly associated with males and manly strength.

The muscle cuirass effectively made the corporeal form of the man who wore it conform to his superior status. Both rank and physical strength played a role in defining the quality of *virtus*, and it was important that a *vir*'s masculinity was consistent across the spectrum of ways in which *virtus* could be demonstrated. As we saw in the first chapter, social status, military rank, and the quality of *arma* varied in step with each other. *Virtus* functioned this way too, with men of superior status, rank, and *arma* being considered correspondingly superior *viri* and so possessing a superior masculinity. A muscle cuirass identified its wearer as a man of high rank and status, and the expectation of corresponding physical strength was fulfilled by the plastic form of the cuirass itself, if not by the actual muscles of the man who wore it. Indeed, the anatomical cuirass may be seen as effecting a kind of heroic nudity.<sup>55</sup>

While the molded cuirass best fit men of high rank, it would fit any man who wore it at least in the basic sense that they both possessed the same anatomical features. The same would not be true of a woman who put on such a cuirass. In the first place, either the breastplate would forcibly flatten her chest or she would have to bind her chest to fit.<sup>56</sup> Both alternatives would produce the same result: her naturally female features would be suppressed, only to be replaced

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<sup>55</sup> For more on the relationship between *arma* and the physical body, albeit in the context of the Greek world, see Lissarrague 2008.

<sup>56</sup> Because *arma* and the spheres in which they were used were considered by the Romans to be exclusive to men, at least in the real world, they did not make cuirasses or breastplates to accommodate female breasts. Instead, the (unreal) women who used *arma* typically dressed in a particular style, now dubbed "Amazonian," which will be discussed below. The one notable exception is Minerva, whose iconography is essentially identical with Athena's; she is always shown fully clothed and armed, usually wearing the Aegis as a breastplate. (For a visual juxtaposition, see Roma/Virtus and Minerva as depicted on the Cancelleria *profectio* relief, Figure 2.9.) This breastplate, as I have suggested, served to repress the female features of her chest, especially her breasts.

by the male features of the breastplate. Thus this kind of cuirass would effectively overwrite her natural femininity with an artificial masculinity created by the plastic form of its musculature and the implication of (manly) physical strength and vigor.<sup>57</sup> The Romans' view of *arma* as fundamentally masculine is especially clear in the anatomical features of the muscle or heroic cuirass, but it is also evidenced by the fact that the Romans seem never to have conceived of such a cuirass designed to fit a female torso. In fact, those female figures who use *arma* in the Roman imagination, with the major exception of Minerva, do not actually wear body armor at all.<sup>58</sup>

Offensive *arma* are perhaps easier to imagine as the martial equivalent of the *membrum virile*. In a sense it is natural to speak euphemistically of the equipment that defines a person as male using terminology for the equipment that defines a person as masculine. In the ancient world terms for weapons, especially spears and swords, lent themselves easily to use as metaphors for the male sexual organ, as they still do today.<sup>59</sup> As a result, martial narratives, especially the

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<sup>57</sup> Cf. the figurative sense of *musculi* in Plin. *Ep.* 5.8.10; similar uses in English and French date back to the 17<sup>th</sup> century (*OED* s.v. muscle).

<sup>58</sup> I will return to this point later in the chapter.

<sup>59</sup> Adams describes “weapons” as the single largest category of Latin metaphors for the male member, with the frequency of such metaphors, often as jokes, “show[ing] that the sexual symbolism of weapons was instantly recognizable in ancient society” (1982: 19–22). These terms included the generic *arma* (*Ov. Am.* 1.9.26, cf. *inermis* at 3.7.71; *Petron.* 130.4; *Mart.* 6.73.6; *Priap.* 31.3) and *telum* (*Mart.* 11.78.6; *Priap.* 9.14, 55.4; *Just.* 38.1.9), but also specific weapons or weapon-parts, including *hasta* (“spear,” *Priap.* 43.1, 4); *cuspis* (“spear-tip,” *Pompon.* 69); *machaera* (a curved sword, from Greek μάχαιρα, *Plaut. Pseud.* 1181); *gladius* (the typical Roman sword, *Plaut. Cas.* 909; *Petron.* 9.5); and *capulus* (“sword-hilt,” *Priap.* 35.7; *Plaut. Cas.* 909). Cf. the similar use of Greek ὄπλον (“tool” or “weapon,” *Nic.* 74.30; *Anth. Plan.* 4.242; *Hesych.* s.v.); ξίφος (“sword,” *Aristoph. Lys.* 632; *Hesych.* s.v. σκίφος); δόρυ (“shaft” or “spear,” *Aristoph. Lys.* 985); and λόγχη (“spear-head,” *Aristoph. fr.* 404). English “tool” (*OED* q.v. 2b), “weapon” (*OED* q.v. 3), and “shaft” (*OED* q.v. 10a) can be used this way as well; cf. the following exchange in *Romeo and Juliet*: Gregory: “Draw thy tool!” (1.1.31); Sampson: “My naked weapon is out.” (1.1.34).

detailed descriptions of personal encounters found throughout epic poetry, can often be interpreted as having a kind of sexual subtext. Such subtext can exist even without explicit reference to *arma*: for example, in the *Iliad* Achilles refers to conversation with Hector as chatting that occurs between an unmarried man and an unmarried maiden (22.127–128 ἄ τε παρθένος ἠΐθεός τε | παρθένος ἠΐθεός τ' ὀαρίζετον ἀλλήλουιν); the emphasis on the unmarried status of the participants may well suggest a sort of flirting, with the use of the dual specifying the two warriors as a matched pair. More specifically, however, the imagery of a man dominating his opponent through penetration with a weapon easily invited more direct comparisons to sexual domination. This is frequently evident in visual depictions of Achilles' defeat of Penthesilea: according to tradition he falls in love with the Amazon as he kills her, and in artistic representations his line of sight, representing his desire, very often parallels the line of his spear as it enters her body. Virgil's own virgin huntress-turned-warrior Camilla is quite Amazonian herself, owing much of her character to Amazons such as Penthesilea, and while her killer Arruns is not said to have a sexual desire for the Volscian princess, it is hard to ignore the subtext of his *hasta* piercing her and drinking her "virginal blood" (*Aen.* 11.803–804 *hasta sub exsertam donec perlata papillam | haesit virgineumque alte bibit acta cruorem*).

In fact, the subtext of this particular line was so appealing to Ausonius that he chose to use it for the consummation scene in his nuptial canto. Most of that work consists of lines cherry-picked from Virgil, disproportionately taken from the *Aeneid* more than the *Eclogues* and

*Georgics*, and arranged to form a narrative of a wedding, complete with wedding night. Consider the following passage:

intorquet summis adnixus viribus hastam.	<i>Aen.</i> 9.744
haesit virgineumque alte bibit acta cruorem.	<i>Aen.</i> 11.804
insonuere cavae gemitumque dedere cavernae.	<i>Aen.</i> 2.53
illa manu moriens telum trahit, ossa sed inter	<i>Aen.</i> 11.816–
altius ad vivum persedit vulnere mucro.	11.817

Straining with all his might he thrusts his spear.  
It sticks fast and, driven deep, drinks virginal blood.  
The cavern<sup>60</sup> rang hollow and gave a groan.  
Dying, she drags out the shaft with her hand, but among her bones  
The point has sunk too deeply in the wound—to the quick.

Auson. *Cent. nup.* I.117–121

While the Virgilian lines are divorced from their original contexts, Ausonius had no need to modify them to suit their new context, which suggests that the potential for these lines to be read in a sexual instead of (or at least in addition to) a martial sense existed even in the original works, because their metaphorical meaning must have come naturally to the reader in order for such a collage to achieve Ausonius' desired effect.

The sexual subtext in our passage from the *Thebaid* is even more explicit than in the *Aeneid*. After being rendered effeminate at home and failing to prove himself as a *vir* on the battlefield, Atys proceeds to be thoroughly violated by Tydeus. The description of the killing blow practically invites the reader to understand a double entendre: “[Tydeus’] shaft sticks deeply in the hidden places of [Atys’] groin, as if thrust with all [Tydeus’] strength” (8.585–586 *latebras*

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<sup>60</sup> I take plural for singular here, as in its original context (describing the hollow inside of the Trojan horse).

*tamen inguinis alte | missile, ceu totis intortum viribus, hausit*). Thanks to Atys' gender ambiguity, the piercing of his groin by Tydeus' javelin can be read simultaneously as castration and sexual penetration.<sup>61</sup> Thus Tydeus, using his own manly strength (*vires*),<sup>62</sup> emasculates the youth by goring him in the groin (his physical manhood) and simultaneously renders him effeminate by placing him in the passive sexual position, i.e. the one on the receiving end of penetration. Pushing the notion of Atys as more maidenly than manly due to his intimate connection with Ismene, we may even read Tydeus' violation of Atys as a stripping of the youth's virginity, which harkens back to his status as a war-virgin.<sup>63</sup>

Martial and sexual domination are comparable, as illustrated above, especially on the basis of their shared motif of physical penetration. This is why the Reiter or Thracian hero motif in art is an even more powerful expression of *virtus* than a mounted warrior in any other pose, as it shows the rider in a position of total domination over his enemy, ready to use his weapon to transfix him. Being the object of penetration rendered a person less manly, for that was the

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<sup>61</sup> Augoustakis (2016: xliii–xliv) points out the comparable fates of Atys' namesake, Attis, who was likewise wounded in the groin, and of Atys' betrothed Ismene: in earlier renditions of the Theban saga it was Ismene whom Tydeus slew, and certain depictions emphasized the sexual element of the hypermasculine warrior threatening the girl with his weapon in a pose reminiscent of Achilles spearing Penthesilea (e.g. a Corinthian amphora from Cerveteri, Augoustakis 2016: xliv, fig. 3).

<sup>62</sup> Compare the phrase *ceu totis viribus* at *Theb.* 8.586 with *summis...viribus* at *Aen.* 9.744, which appears in Ausonius at I.117. The force of *ceu* in the *Thebaid* does not negate the word *viribus* but rather *totis*—by saying “as if with *all* his strength,” Statius is further emphasizing the divide between Tydeus and Atys.

<sup>63</sup> The term *coniunx* (8.567) does not imply that the marriage has been consummated (cf. Isid. *Etym.* 9.7.9 for *coniunx* as “intended”); indeed, in Atys' case there has explicitly been no consummation whatsoever (8.561 *bella vetant taedas*—*taedae* being nuptial torches here, as in *Ov. Her.* 4.121 and *Virg. Aen.* 4.18, and so standing for marriage by metonymy, as in *Virg. Aen.* 4.339, 7.388, 9.76; *Ov. Met.* 9.721).

woman's role in the bedroom (or other venue of choice), a role which led to the euphemistic use of the term *vagina*—properly a sword's sheath—to refer to the female counterpart of the *membrum virile*.<sup>64</sup> This exception aside, however, *arma* were functionally masculine: whereas offensive weapons were required for a man to dominate his enemies in combat, defensive armor was necessary for him to protect himself from being dominated in turn. The only exceptions to this were cases in which divine influence played a role, such as Achilles' skin becoming impenetrable—according to certain traditions—after he was dipped in the river Styx.

As a matter of course women did not possess *arma*, and so they could not prevent their own violation without help. A woman who became impenetrable lost that weakness—along with some essential aspect of her femininity or womanliness. For example, in order to escape from the sexual advances of Apollo, Daphne implored her father for help, and in response her father transformed her into a tree. Just as a tree's bark cannot be penetrated, so the Daphne-laurel could no longer be physically violated, and Apollo was thus deterred from his aim. But Daphne's new skin also changed her fundamental nature, with the result that she was no longer recognizably a woman (or nymph, as the case may be). This concept is developed further in the story of Caenis, especially as recounted by Nestor in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*.<sup>65</sup> After being raped by Neptune, Caenis is granted a wish as compensation. She requests never to be violated again, and in fulfillment of this wish Neptune transforms her into a man, although she had not specified any

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<sup>64</sup> Such use appears as early as Plautus (*Ps.* 4.7.85).

<sup>65</sup> *Ov. Met.* 12.168–209, 459–535.

sort of desire to change her gender. Now called Caeneus, he immediately begins to use *arma*, thrusting his weapon into every centaur he can find. Furthermore, since Caeneus is immune to any sort of penetration, his centaur enemies must kill him by burying him under rocks. As a result, Caeneus is never penetrated, consistent with his wish never to be penetrated again; the fact that he is never despoiled of his arms means that he is indisputably a man even in death, since his *arma*—the outward embodiment of his *virtus*—are never taken from him.

In the story of Caenis/Caeneus the use of *arma* is exactly co-extensive with masculinity: Caenis never touches weapons or armor, whereas Caeneus is inseparable from his own, even in death. Here *arma* follow upon a divinely-authored gender change from female to male, but in other cases the very use of arms by a woman itself confers on her a functional masculinity even without divine intervention. In *Thebaid* 5, for example, Statius relates the story of the Lemnian women, who decide to kill their husbands and must take up weapons in order to do so. In encouraging her fellow women to take up arms, Hypsipyle instructs them to abandon their natural gender (5.105 *pellite sexum!*, “drive out [your] sex!”). In one sense this is the converse of Numanus’ insult to the Trojans at *Aeneid* 9.620: whereas Numanus instructs the Trojans to abandon their *arma*, thereby implying that they are womanly and ill-suited to playing the man, Hypsipyle instructs her fellow Lemniades to abandon their womanly ways in favor of the manly role of wielding *arma*. The adoption of arms constitutes a gender replacement, masculine for feminine, but it is only temporary in this case: after the deed is done, the women’s natural gender is said to return to them at the very same moment that the “foreign weapons” fall from their



grasp (5.397 *arma aliena cadunt, rediit in pectora sexus*). (For precisely the opposite case, we may compare Achilles' giving himself away by taking up arms in front of Odysseus when the young hero is meant to be hiding as a girl among the royal maidens on Scyros.<sup>66</sup>) Here the direct correlation between the *arma* falling and the women's *sexus* returning allows us to identify *arma* as objects that embody masculinity. If the Caenis/Caeneus episode suggests that where *virtus* exists, *arma* naturally follow, then the case of the Lemnian women shows that where *arma* are used, there must be some *virtus*. Moreover, the term *aliena* reminds us that the women were simply borrowing these *arma* and their concomitant *virtus*, because *arma* and women—just like *virtus* and women—properly belonged to two separate spheres in the Roman mentality.

### Arms and the Woman

For all that arms and women were supposedly *res dissociabiles*, the Romans not only were capable of conceiving of armed women but actually seemed to have had quite a striking obsession with them. While the Greek world had its armed females as well, namely the goddesses Athena and Artemis and the mythical Amazons, Roman culture had many more. In addition to the adoption of the aforementioned figures, the former under the names Minerva and Diana, the Romans conceived of many female personifications as armed women, including not only Virtus and Roma but also Victoria and several of the provinces.<sup>67</sup> Moreover, the idea of the armed

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<sup>66</sup> Cf. Stat. *Ach.* 1.841–884. There is also a fresco from the House of the Dioscuri in Pompeii depicting the moment that Achilles grasps a sword and shield and is accosted by Diomedes and Odysseus.

<sup>67</sup> Smith 1988, with his remarks about the “provinces” series in Hadrianic coinage on p. 76.

woman played a much more central role for the Romans than for the Greeks, not only in the form of uniquely Roman figures such as Roma and Virtus but even in the distinctly Roman treatment of the Amazons, which gave them a more prominent role than simply examples of the Other who existed primarily to be defeated. As figures in whom are combined both woman and arms, all of them offer insight into how arms can embody masculinity and confer it upon non-males. Thus, while they differ in specifics, each can shed light on the particular connection between *arma* and *virtus*. Moreover, each can also speak to the roles played by *virtus* and *arma* in the process of despoliation and to spoils themselves as the end product of that process.

Just as in the case of men, the proper use of *arma* was the quintessential act of *virtus* even when that masculinity was demonstrated by a woman. While there were other ways for women to perform masculine roles, such as Dido's avenging her husband and founding a city, bearing arms was by far the most prevalent manner of doing so. The Romans' fascination—even obsession—with the apparently contradictory notion of the arms-bearing female as the iconic example of the *virtuous* woman is evident from the fact that they had not only a specific term for such a woman but also a particular iconography. For the Romans, then, despite the fact that the armed woman was fundamentally unreal, as we shall see, she was not simply a peculiar instance of gender transgression but in fact a distinct cultural conception with her own name and her own face (or at least appearance)—and in that respect a figure unparalleled in the classical world.

The Latin term for such a woman was *virago*. Isidore explains the term as describing a woman who acts like a man (from *vir*, “man,” and *agere*, “to act, do”), and this interpretation is

confirmed at least sense-wise by Servius auctor's gloss of *virago* as "she who does something manly" (*ad Aen.* 4.36: *quae virile aliquid fecit*). The linguistic origin, however, is actually *vir* with the feminine suffix *-ago*, which has no discrete meaning of its own but rather serves to re-gender the word. So in colloquial English we might conceive of *virago* as "She-Man," in the sense of a genderbending of the classic comics hero He-Man.<sup>68</sup> And indeed, unlike its modern sense of termagant or shrew, in Latin *virago* is never used pejoratively but always as a positive term, which suggests that a woman who possesses manly qualities or demonstrates masculine behaviors is only to be praised on that account, while (as we have seen) a man who exhibits femininity is to be disparaged.<sup>69</sup> In other words, *virtus* even in its strictest, most gendered sense is a universally positive quality, a fact which allows it to develop the additional moral sense of both non-gendered and even feminine "virtue". What appears to be a double standard between the sexes is caused by the fact that *virtus* (in the sense of the masculine gender role) is expected of men, who in displaying femininity correspondingly fail to display masculinity, but not at all of women, in whom any *virtus* of the manly sort is—despite being *prima facie* a violation of gender norms—all the more laudable precisely because of its unexpectedness. In other words, the *virago* does not so much violate gender roles as transcend the limitations expected of her according to societal

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<sup>68</sup> Something similar is at work in Ovid's use of the term *heroides*, which is more of a female version of "hero" than "heroine" in our modern sense, since "hero" is quite gendered as male in the ancient world, whereas the term encompasses both men and women (roughly) equally today.

<sup>69</sup> Cf. Plaut. *Merc.* 414 for an example of *virago* used simply to mean a woman of manly strength or ability without involving the use of *arma*. There is a nice sense of irony in Plautus' use of the term to describe a woman this way to mean she is highly efficient at women's work, but it does not detract from the positive quality of her *virtus*.

norms. Accordingly, women who perform masculine acts are only ever praised for doing so and never disparaged, even when the term *virago* (remarkably rare in Latin texts, appearing only 13 times in literature and twice in inscriptions) is not explicitly used.

This figure of the *virago*, above all in the sense of a woman who displays *virtus* through the use of arms, has a very distinct appearance in Roman iconography. Unlike armed men, armed women in the Roman imagination (with the exception of Minerva) do not wear torso armor, which would suppress their natural gender, and especially not the kind of anatomical or heroic cuirass that would overwrite their female features with male musculature. Instead, they are typically associated with a particular style of dress in which one breast is left bare (as in Figure 2.9 below). This style of clothing is often called Amazonian, as if it had been borrowed directly from the Amazons.<sup>70</sup> That term is also attractive because of the folk etymology of the Greek term Ἀμαζών as “without a breast,” from the alpha privative with μαζός/μαστός;<sup>71</sup> while the Amazons are never physically missing a breast in artistic depictions, their typical clothing in Roman art matches this description quite well. Recently the motif has also come to be known as the “virtuous breast” on the grounds that revealing one breast in this manner is a sign of virtue.<sup>72</sup> For those women who use *arma* this is *virtus* in its manly martial sense, but the adjective “virtuous”

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<sup>70</sup> Cf. Virgil’s description of Camilla as “an Amazon, one breast bared for the fight” (*Aen.* 11.648–649: *Amazon | unum exserta latus pugnae; 11.803 sub exsertam...papillam.*)

<sup>71</sup> [Apollo.] 2.5.8; Strabo 11.5.1; cf. Just. 2.4: *inustis infantum dexterioribus mammis, ne sagittarum iactus impediatur; unde dictae Amazones.*

<sup>72</sup> Wiseman 1997; see also the work of L.B. Joyce on the bare-breast motif as indicative of *virtus* in women.

allows room for more traditional (i.e. non-arms-wielding) women to bare their breasts as a sign of female virtue, in other words fertility and sex appeal.<sup>73</sup> No matter the particular type of virtue on display, the primary result of this style of dress is that the body beneath is revealed as undeniably female. This style of dress may therefore be considered the viraginous version both of the anatomical cuirass, revealing female features rather than imposing male ones, and of the *toga virilis*, especially as it is the iconic outfit of Virtus herself.



Figure 2.9: Cancelleria Relief B (*profectio*). Detail. Rome, second half of the 1<sup>st</sup> century A.D. (Domitianic, recarved under Nerva). Foreground, l. to r.: Mars, Minerva, the emperor, and Roma or Virtus.

The striking imagery effects a kind of cognitive dissonance between the female nature of the physical form and the functional masculinity of the implements that she wields. For most

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<sup>73</sup> Cf. Maritz' observation (2002: 66) that warfare and fertility were the two main qualities associated in the Roman imagination with Africa, whose personification in Roman art frequently has one breast bared "Amazon-style" (e.g. on Hadrian's provincial series).

armed women, and for *viragines* more generally, this particular discordance was merely the most visually apparent aspect of a more complicated gender identity. For example, consider the two goddess most closely identified with *arma*, Minerva and Diana, who governed warfare and hunting, respectively. Like her Greek counterpart Athena, Minerva is (atypically for an armed woman) consistently shown in a full-length dress, her torso covered either by her clothing or by the Aegis that she carries on behalf of her father (as in Figure 2.9 above). Indeed, she is so much her father's proxy that she is practically the son he never had, at least not by Metis, and she is generally considered to have only one parent, i.e. her father, because he swallowed her mother before she could give birth. Her male sympathy is on full display in the climax of Aeschylus' *Eumenides*, where Athena breaks the tie in Orestes' favor explicitly because she has no mother in the conventional sense and identifies with her own father so closely that she will always side with the male in a battle of the sexes.<sup>74</sup> Moreover, she refuses to marry and to bear children, and while she does adopt Erichthonius as her own, her decision to raise him may be seen in much the same vein as her serving as patron to male heroes (e.g. Odysseus, Telemachus, and Diomedes) almost exclusively.<sup>75</sup> Her style of dress, adopted directly from Greek art into Roman iconography, may be interpreted as yet another way of suppressing her natural gender. Ironically, in a dichotomy

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<sup>74</sup> Aesch. *Eum.* 736–738: μήτηρ γὰρ οὐτις ἐστὶν ἢ μ' ἐγένεατο, | τὸ δ' ἄρσεν αἰνῶ πάντα, πλὴν γάμου τυχεῖν, | ἅπαντι θυμῷ, κάρτα δ' εἰμι τοῦ πατρός ("For there is no mother who bore me, and I am all for the male, except for joining in marriage, with all my heart: I am indeed my father's [child]). While Athena was usually considered the result of relations between Zeus and Metis, she physically emerged from her father: after Zeus swallowed Metis, Athena sprung fully-formed from his head (Hes. *Theog.* 887, 924; Pind. *Olymp.* 7.35; [Apollod.] 1.20). In the Homeric epics, Athena is only ever called the daughter of Zeus (e.g. *Il.* 5.880).

<sup>75</sup> Cf. *Hymn. Hom.* 5.7–15; *Ov. Met.* 5.375–376.

mirroring that of a woman who bears arms, Minerva also governs handicrafts and other skills associated with women.

Minerva's counterpart in hunting, Diana, has an equally complicated relationship with gender. Rather than suppressing her natural gender she revels in it, being the patron goddess of female transitions such as coming-of-age and childbirth, and she wants nothing to do with men whatsoever, at least not as they relate to women.<sup>76</sup> She requests of her father her own territory, a group of female companions, and the right never to be married.<sup>77</sup> In certain respects she steps into roles traditionally filled by men in being the leader of her group and by hunting, which like warfare was exclusively a masculine pursuit. Minerva comes as close as she can to being male herself, but Diana seems to take on masculine roles without being in any way less than female. In this respect she is more similar to other armed females in Greek and Roman culture, while Minerva is an exceptional figure even among armed women. And indeed Diana's style of dress much more closely matches that of other armed women: thus she is sometimes depicted with one breast bared, and even when her chest is fully covered, as it typically is in Greek art,<sup>78</sup> her chiton

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<sup>76</sup> C. Sourvinou-Inwood, *OCD* s.v. Artemis. This goddess' patronage of hunting may be seen as part of her dominion over masculine coming-of-age traditions as well as feminine ones.

<sup>77</sup> Callim. *Hymn* 3.6–27 (of Artemis).

<sup>78</sup> In Greek art, Artemis is very frequently shown in a chiton that covers her entire torso. For an example of a Roman-era depiction of Diana on the hunt with one breast bared, cf. a cameo/glyptic ring now in the Kunsthistorisches Museum Wien (Inv. Nr. ANSA\_IXb\_328, 1<sup>st</sup> c. B.C.–1<sup>st</sup> c. A.D.), and a bronze statuette now in Paris (Bibliothèque nationale de France, inv. no. bronze.128, cited in *LIMC* II s.v. Artemis/Diana, no. 81, pp. 813–814). There is an intriguing Gallo-Roman statuette of Diana, also now in Paris (Bibliothèque nationale de France, inv. no. bronze.130, called the “Trésor de Chalons: Diana chasserresse,” second half of the 1<sup>st</sup> century A.D.; cited in *LIMC* II s.v. Artemis/Diana, no. 95, p. 814), in which there seems to be an attempt to combine the two styles of dress:

is the same type of garment as that worn by Amazons and by personifications such as Virtus and Roma in Roman art.

In addition to this iconic style of clothing, both Diana and the Amazons, who are linked to the goddess of the hunt as early as the epic cycle but even more so in Roman culture, use equally iconic weapons.<sup>79</sup> Diana is properly associated with her bow and quiver, weapons of the hunt, while the Amazons—originally more warriors than hunters<sup>80</sup>—typically carry a crescent-shaped shield (*pelta*) and wield a double-headed axe (Greek λάβρυς or πέλεκυς, Latin *bipennis* or *securis*), both of which were linked to Thrace and the other exotic places where the Amazons were said to dwell.<sup>81</sup> The goddess and the people are conflated by Virgil in the figure of Camilla, very much a mortal doublet of Diana, to whom she is literally devoted. A huntress trying her hand at war, Camilla is described as wearing clothing with one breast laid bare in the very same context in which she is called a de facto Amazon (11.648–649 *Amazon* | *unum exserta latus pugnae*); she is also said to carry both the Amazonian *bipennis* and the “bow and weapons” of her

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her chiton is reinforced with a double layer on the left half of her torso, whereas her undertunic clearly reveals the contour of her right breast.

<sup>79</sup> On the connection between Artemis and the Amazons: Pind. fr. 174 Snell-Maehler; Callim. *Hymn* 3; Paus. 7.2.6; Ael. 12.9; [Hyg.] *Fab.* 223, 225.

<sup>80</sup> At least two Amazon queens were said to be the daughters of Ares or Mars, usually by the Amazon queen Otrera: Penthesilea (*Aethiopsis* frs. 1 and 2; Diod. Sic. 2.45.5; [Apollod.] *Epit.* 5.1; Hyg. *Fab.* 112) and Hippolyta or Antiope (Hyg. *Fab.* 30, 241). The Amazons as a group are also called the daughters of Ares and Harmonia (Apoll. Rhod. *Arg.* 2.985–995). Compare the similar footwear and helmets worn by Mars and Roma/Virtus in “Amazonian” garb in the *profectio* Cancellaria relief (Figure 2.9 above).

<sup>81</sup> Cf. Ov. *Met.* 12.611: *Thermodontiaca...bipenni*; Pont. 3.1.95: *Amazonia...securis*; Plin. *NH* 7.201: *Penthesileam Amazonem [invenisse dicunt] securim*.



patron goddess (11.652 *aureus ex umero sonat arcus et arma Dianae*). Camilla's Amazonian character is further confirmed by direct references to Amazons, particularly the queens Hippolyta and Penthesilea, in the lines following the description of her arms.<sup>82</sup>

In other contexts, however, even the mere mention either of women wielding *arma* or of the particular *arma* named above (i.e. the *pelta* and the *bipennis* or *securis*) was itself enough to evoke the Amazons. In Seneca's *Medea*, for example, the eponymous princess is characterized by a detailed description of her place of origin. Part of that description is an allusion to the Amazons, who are never mentioned by name but are nevertheless clearly identifiable by the descriptor "husbandless cohort armed with *peltae*" (214–215 *armata peltis...cohors | ...vidua*). While Medea herself never uses a *pelta*, for she is not properly an Amazon, she is very much *like* an Amazon in that she will exert power in a fundamentally masculine way. Not only is she more than a match for the regent Creon in verbal argumentation, as evidenced by her being paired with him in several bouts of stichomythia, but she also finds herself attempting to undo the evidence of her femininity—namely her marriage to Jason and her offspring by him—by committing armed violence against those very children. Thus she is very much a viraginous figure along the lines of the Amazons from whose lands she hails and once ruled, and which she desires to return to rule once more after turning back the clock to a time before she was tamed and civilized by Jason. As part of her grand reclamation of her past she imagines recovering even her stolen virginity (984 *rapta virginitas redit*), a hope which may seem completely vain to the

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<sup>82</sup> For more on warrior women in Roman epic, see Sharrock 2015.

practical-minded reader but which comprises a vital part of her character, one which she shares with the Amazons to whom Seneca alludes earlier in the play.

As it is both for Medea and her Amazons, virginity—or at least husbandlessness—is an essential quality of the *virago* more broadly in Roman culture. It is no coincidence, and it is due to far more than a simple penchant for punning on the tempting homophony (and indeed the linguistic connection) between *virgo* and *virago*. Despite the fact that *viragines* are undoubtedly female, their functional masculinity (typically conferred by the use of *arma*) prevents “virtuous” women from relating to men in the same way as more traditional women. This is especially evident in the context of the Amazons, who as a mortal race must reproduce in order to continue their existence. They could have been, like the women among Tacitus’ Germani, merely uncivilized Others capable of setting aside arms in order to marry and have children. According to myth, however, the Amazons lived only with each other, much like Diana with her all-female retinue; ancient sources differ on how they went about reproducing (a practice that Diana and her companions characteristically shunned), but all methods are extraordinary: Diodorus Siculus’ Libyan Amazons perform military service and then return to their house-husbands; in the *Alexander Romance* they keep men across the river as a kind of breeding herd.<sup>83</sup> Certainly their use of *arma* did not *cause* them to do this; in fact, in this respect their behavior is quite unique even among armed women, who as individuals (whether mortal, personification, or divinity) typically do not face the issue of having to continue their line to the next generation.

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<sup>83</sup> Diod. Sic. 3.53–54 (cf. 2.45); [Callisth.] *Alex.* 2.25; cf. Hdt. 4.115–116.

Nevertheless, all *viragines* in Roman culture have a problematic relationships with men, whether they are simply virgins (e.g. Minerva and Diana) or have somehow lost their husbands (e.g. Medea and Dido). Thus, despite being female, they have not truly fulfilled the gender role associated with women (*femina* in the sense of the female counterpart of *vir*, in other words woman to man), being neither wives nor mothers. For example, while Dido has relations with Aeneas, they neither marry nor produce children; consequentially, their relationship is merely temporary, and Dido remains both widowed and childless, just as if she had never married the husband whom she lost or given in to amorous desire with Aeneas in the cave. Both Dido and *viragines* in general—being female in sex but masculine in gender—cannot fulfill a feminine gender role without giving up their *virtus*, which in the case of armed females involves giving up their arms, the objects that render them functionally masculine.

Just as cases in which women bearing *arma* prove that *arma* confer *virtus* regardless of the biological sex of the wielder, so too do cases in which armed women are stripped of their arms confirm that such a stripping constitutes a despoliation not just of the physical arms but of the *virtus* that they embody. This is particularly evident in the case of armed women as opposed to armed men because the masculine *virtus* of armed women is conflated—quite naturally—with their female virtue. For example, consider the labor of Hercules in which the hero is tasked with securing the girdle of the Amazon queen Hippolyta.<sup>84</sup> There are two major variants of the story: according to one, Hercules defeats Hippolyta in battle and retrieves the girdle from her corpse;

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<sup>84</sup> [Apollod.] 4.16.

according to the other, he seduces her, removing her girdle (or letting her remove it herself) in the process. Both stories involve Hercules acquiring the girdle through red-blooded manliness—the former in a martial sense, the latter in a sexual one. Correspondingly, Hippolyta’s girdle functions either as a piece of *arma* or as a kind of chastity belt preventing her physical or symbolic death, respectively, because its removal constitutes a stripping either of her martial *virtus* or of her womanly virtue. It is as easy to conflate the martial and sexual senses of despoliation here as it was for Ausonius to use unaltered Virgilian battle narrative to describe a wedding night. Indeed, in order for Hippolyta to go on to marry Theseus and produce Hippolytus, her girdle must first have been removed in both senses, for she could not be bedded—much less wived—if she still possessed the *virtus* conferred on her by her *arma*.

Now Hippolyta’s girdle was a very desirable object, capable of being attained only by so manly a hero as Hercules himself, and not just because a man’s possession of it would imply that he had taken Hippolyta’s womanly virtue. In fact, it was primarily a martial object, identified as a mark of authority given to Hippolyta by her father Ares; this accords with the function of the Amazons in Greek culture as figures who existed above all for the purpose of being defeated on the battlefield to the glory of the Greeks as victors.<sup>85</sup> The sexual analogy was quite easy to make (we may compare the varying stories that Alexander the Great, upon meeting an Amazon queen,

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<sup>85</sup> K. Dowden, *OCD* s.v. Amazons. Hippolyta’s girdle is typically called a ζωστήρ in Greek (Pind. fr. 172 Maehler, line 5), which is the type of belt worn by warriors (*Il.* 4.132, 135, 186; 7.305; Hdt. 9.74; Soph. *Aj.* 1030; Callim. *Hymn to Apollo*, 2.85); the girdle worn by (non-Amazon) women is the ζώνη (cf. *Od.* 11.245; Eur. *IT* 204; Plut. *Lyc.* 15). On girdles in Homeric epic, see Bennett 1997 (esp. 169–172 for Hippolyta).

alternatively threatened or pleased her<sup>86</sup>) precisely because the Amazons represented an exact inversion of gender roles and therefore offered the perfect opportunity for men to dominate their opponent simultaneously martially and sexually. The polyvalence of Hippolyta's girdle as both martial and sexual spoil underscores the fundamental comparability of martial and sexual domination as expressions of *virtus*. (Interestingly, Medea's claim to have recovered her virginity is accompanied by an imagined reclamation of the Golden Fleece, the pride of her people, which was both the *spolium* of the ram Chrysomallus and an emblem of the power of the Colchians, once despoiled by Jason and now returned to its original state together with Medea's own virtue.<sup>87</sup>) Indeed, the girdle itself was the perfect prize of this peculiar coincidence, being both armorial insignia of her lineage and rank and a piece of clothing intimately associated with female chastity.

At the same time, however, it is Hippolyta's unusual status as an armed woman that turns bedding her into a conquest equivalent to martial victory. Under normal circumstances, only martial conflict constituted a true contest of *virtus*, each contestant vying to outdo his opponent. The goal was to outdo the other in *virtus*—that is, to outman him—and then, in order to cement the victory, to *unman* him by removing the embodiment of his *virtus*, namely his *arma*. Without his arms, a man simply could not be a man. Thus, while despoliation represented a kind of

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<sup>86</sup> For threatening: Arr. *Anab.* 7.13 and Plut. *Alex.* 46; for pleasuring: Diod. Sic. 17.77.

<sup>87</sup> Sen. *Med.* 982–984: *iam recepi sceptrum germanum patrem, | spoliisque Colchi pecudis auratae tenent; | rediere regna, rapta virginitas redit.*

symbolic death in general, it was specifically a form of emasculation, a forcible separation of *virtus* from *vir* (or *virago*, as the case may be). In the case of *viragines* this resulted in an armed woman disarmed, in other words a female now capable of taking on (or being forced to take on) a feminine role. Since *virtus* was always a positive quality in a woman, the *arma* stripped from an armed woman as spoils were likewise—and proportionally—positive. The same held true of a man worthy of the term *vir*, whose reputable *virtus* was contained in his *arma* as the foremost instruments of that quality. For those who failed to live up to the expectations of manliness and masculinity, however, their *arma*—and therefore spoils—declined in value in proportion to their failure. Moreover, just as virtuous spoils reflected well upon the victors, virtueless spoils did not merely fail to reflect positively but in fact reflected negatively upon those who stripped them.

### Blood, Sweat, and Jeers

Returning at long last to our passage from Statius' *Thebaid*, let me recall Tydeus' self-avowed motivation in spurning Atys' *arma* contrary to custom. While shame (*pudor*) is mentioned explicitly only in the second element of Tydeus' tripartite reasoning, where it is said to prevent him from carrying Atys' arms himself, it nevertheless pervades the entirety of his short speech. Accordingly, his words are not those of a man merely refusing to waste any more time and effort on so worthless a foe; rather, they imply an anxiety on Tydeus' part that the youth's arms are somehow contagious in their worthlessness. In other words, Atys' arms are treated as objects not just completely lacking in value but somehow capable of passing on that worthlessness to the one who takes them as spoils. We have seen how Atys' *arma*, as

embodiments of his insignificant *virtus*, are themselves worthless in terms of symbolic value. Yet the question remains why Tydeus would fear being shamed by them—in other words, how their *lack* of value could potentially translate into *negative* value.

If victory were simply a mathematical inequality by which one could calculate the *virtus* of the victor as a function of that of his victim, then Tydeus simply would have nothing to gain—but likewise nothing to lose—from defeating and despoiling even a weakling such as Atys. Instead, the complete effeminization of Atys at home and the utter violation of the youth on the battlefield, capped by Tydeus' damning remark implying that his own wife Deipyle is more *virtuous* than Atys himself, reinforce the idea that a lack of *virtus* in a person of whom it is expected is not merely a lack but in fact a serious failing. In other words, to continue the mathematical analogy, a man who had no *virtus* simply could not rate a neutral zero on the *virtus* spectrum, as a woman might; instead, he would be considered a failure with respect to *virtus*, and that failure was equated with effeminacy as a source of shame caused by failing to fulfill the expectations of the relevant gender role. Indeed, even Atys' physical immaturity can be linked to effeminacy because it means he lacks experience in war, which in turn puts him in the position of a woman; so too might his unmaned Caspian lion alter ego easily be mistaken for a lioness.

Both failure with respect to *virtus* and its concomitant implications of effeminacy were extremely shameful. More significantly for our purposes, they constitute exactly the sort of problematic circumstances that undermine the function of victory as a mechanism for proving *virtus*. The mechanism functions properly only so long as both parties involved in an armed

conflict are proper opponents. Even *viragines* satisfy this requirement, which is precisely how the Amazons could serve as viable—and even desirable—enemies. For all that the martial maintext seems to outweigh the sexual subtext in Statius’ description of Tydeus’ domination of Atys, if only barely, the youth’s utter lack of masculinity and correspondingly extreme effeminacy render him unviable as an opponent in a contest of *virtus*. Everything about Atys—more boy than man, more girl than boy—suggests that he simply cannot compete with real men. Tydeus’ victory over him therefore means nothing, for it has been subverted as the outcome of a true *certamen virtutis*.

Whereas Atys takes the *arma* of the weaklings whom he has defeated almost as a slavish reflex or Pavlovian response, as if he were under the impression that all spoils reflect positively upon the despoiler, the more experienced Tydeus recognizes that his defeat of Atys is as invalid as their contest in arms. In fact, Tydeus never set his sights on Atys in the first place, never thinking Atys worth the effort, just as when the hero finally moves to dispatch the pest he deems the youth unworthy of dying by his sword and spear. Had Tydeus considered Atys a viable opponent and pursued him as such, his slaying of Atys might well have been imputed to him as a shameful act. Indeed, Hippomedon is chastised by the river god Ismenus precisely for being “swollen with the spoils and exulting in the blood of the innocent youth” Crenaeus, Ismenus’ grandson, in the very next book of the *Thebaid* (9.441–442 *tumidus spoliis et sanguine gaudes | insontis pueri*). At first glance this may seem like an apt parallel for Tydeus’ situation. However,



two critical elements of Ismenus' accusation of Hippomedon are missing from the Atys-Tydeus encounter: spoils and blood.

Unlike Hippomedon, Tydeus never actually sheds the blood of an innocent boy. There is in fact a striking—indeed, unbelievable—absence of bloodshed within the limits of our passage. The animal similes reflect this as well: Tydeus' lion counterpart longs to drown in blood, implying that he is currently starved of it, while Atys' Caspian lion is sated on a startlingly bloodless meal of lamb. We have seen how the description of that same lion as “innocent of bloodshed” (8.574 *sanguinis insons*; compare the close—but not exact<sup>88</sup>—verbal parallel at 9.442, *insons puer*, cited above) contributes to Atys' character as a martial virgin, for it means that he has not been “blooded” (compare the Latin verb *imbuere*, with or without *sanguis*),<sup>89</sup> in the double sense that he has not drawn blood from his enemies nor has he lost any himself. Indeed, he sheds not a drop of blood on the field of battle after being violently gored, despite the fact that he is nearly exsanguinated the next time he appears, lying moribund in the arms of his betrothed.<sup>90</sup>

As contrived as it is, the idea that Atys loses no blood on the battlefield itself is highly significant, not least because it means that Tydeus faces the prospect of taking bloodless spoils.

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<sup>88</sup> The phrase *insons puer* at 9.442 is missing the crucial term *sanguinis*; Ismenus' words confirm that, while Crenaeus can be said to be innocent of spilling others' blood, the boy did in fact give up his own.

<sup>89</sup> *OED* s.v. blood, *v.*, 5a–b, derived from 4a–b (cf. sense 3).

<sup>90</sup> Blood and gender (as well as identity more broadly) share a significant connection in the cultural imagination: see, e.g., King 2008.

Likewise, since Atys is never said to have spilled blood himself (again a contrivance to preserve the dual active and passive meanings of *sanguinis insons*), the *arma* that he took from his own victims must therefore have been bloodless as well. Whether it is evoked intentionally or not, there is a perfect intertext here in the form of an alliterative line of Ennius quoted by Cicero: *Salmacida spolia sine sudore et sanguine* (“Salmacid spoils [taken] without sweat and blood”).<sup>91</sup> Its original Ennian context is unfortunately lost, but its Ciceronian context is quite informative: it is included in a discussion of insults regarding manliness. More specifically, it immediately follows the phrase: *vos enim iuvenes animum geritis muliebrem, illa virgo viri* (“for you youths have a womanish spirit, while that maiden has the spirit of a man”). Here we see the figure of the *virago*—a virgin, as usual—used as a point of contrast in order to impugn the manliness of the *iuvenes* addressed. The phrase regarding Salmacid spoils ought to be interpreted as a similarly powerful impugnation of *virtus*.

The concept of Salmacid spoils helps answer the very question that we face in our passage from the *Thebaid*, namely: how can spoils be a source of shame? Despite the loss of its original context, the Ennian line allows us to define “Salmacid spoils” with reasonable certainty as those taken “without sweat and blood.” While the exact sense of the phrase *Salmacida spolia* is unclear (does it refer to a specific historical or mythical anecdote? might it be vocative, referring to the youths being insulted?), Cicero’s quotation of the line in the context of insults concerning manliness suggests that such spoils were considered unmanly. Furthermore, for Festus the

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<sup>91</sup> Ennius (fr. 347 Jocelyn) *ap.* Cic. *Off.* 1.61.

adjective *Salmacida* evoked the myth of the nymph Salmacis, whose spring was said to effeminize those who drank from it.<sup>92</sup> Salmacid spoils therefore not only failed to enhance masculinity but were thought to confer femininity, which is perfectly consistent with the preceding insult in Cicero's text, in which young men are accused of possessing an *animus muliebris* ("womanish spirit"). In light of this, we should consider the putatively bloodless *arma* that Atys took from his victims as a kind of *Salmacida spolia*, and the same may be said of Atys' own *arma* in turn when Tydeus is presented with the opportunity to strip them. If the adjective *Salmacida* can be read as implying an effeminizing effect, as seems fair based on Festus' reference to the myth of Salmacis and the Ciceronian context of the line,<sup>93</sup> then the negative potential of the spoils in both cases becomes clear: not only does their owner's lack of *virtus* translate directly into effeminacy, but the spoils themselves become capable of conferring that effeminacy onto the one who strips them. Thus Atys' *arma* are indeed as dangerous as Tydeus seems to fear, since they have the power to contaminate his own *virtus* with effeminacy and thereby bring shame upon him.

If a lack of bloodshed signifies a lack of *virtus*, as the definition of Salmacid spoils suggests, then the presence of it should conversely indicate *virtus*.<sup>94</sup> Whether or not Tydeus has read his Cicero, we may be certain that this master of all things martial is intimately familiar with

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<sup>92</sup> Festus 439L. Ovid gives an origin story for the spring at *Met.* 4.285–316 (cf. 15.319); Vitruvius (2.8.12) decries the superstition, which was widespread.

<sup>93</sup> See Bremmer 2009: 300.

<sup>94</sup> Compare Tacitus' claim that among the Chatti, those new to battle refrained from cutting their hair or shaving their beards until their first kill: *super sanguinem et spolia revelant frontem* ("over blood and spoils they bare the face," *Germ.* 31.1).

the symbolism of bloodshed in battle as much as he is with its practice. It is no coincidence that Tydeus' lion is imputed with a virtual lust to drown in the blood of his prey and that the man himself ends up literally drowning in his own blood by the end of this very book. Indeed, Tydeus' bloody rampages and his own gory death correspond quite well with the tremendous amount of *virtus* that he displays, not least in the act of thoroughly dominating Atys in a most violent manner.

*Arma* were the most natural vehicle for this bloodshed, as they both draw and receive the blood taken and spilled by the *virī* who employ them. The vital role of *arma* in the process of bloodshed (in both active and passive senses) further emphasizes the connection between blood and *virtus*: if *virtus* is the spiritual animator of *arma*, then blood is its physical fuel, in its own way as much an organic marker of a man's identity (and especially his manliness) as his *arma* are his inorganic insignia. (An apt comparison may be found in the English term "red-blooded," which is practically synonymous with "virile" in terms of specifying both bellicose and sexual prowess and appetites.) And if *virtus* is the value of a man, then blood is its currency: the more blood that a man draws, and the more that he has to give, the greater his *virtus*. (Compare again Ausonius' nuptial canto, in which not only is the blood of the bride spilled but the groom is himself described as utterly *exsanguis*, 1.130 = *Aen.* 11.818.) Indeed, if we take a broader view of blood and spoils, we see the two associated again and again—hundreds of times, in fact—in the extant corpus of Latin literature. Thus, if despoliation can be seen as a statement made by the victor, as I will argue below, then it is one written above all in blood.

While Tydeus avoids any shame as a result of killing Atys in part because he did not kill the boy truly *sua sponte*,<sup>95</sup> it is his decision not to despoil Atys that saves him from earning the scorn directed at Hippomedon. In refusing Atys' arms Tydeus reveals a keen awareness both that Atys was not a worthwhile opponent and that any spoils taken from the fallen youth would bear witness to that fact.<sup>96</sup> To take such bloodless spoils, as Atys had earlier, would be to betray an ignorance of the way war works as a proving ground for *virtus*, since the distinct lack of bloodshed would indicate that no *virtus* had been demonstrated by either party involved. Moreover, the spoils themselves would serve as proof of such ignorance due to their very nature: they not only reflect the despoiler and the despoiled as separate individuals but also define them in relation to each other as victor and victim, respectively. While the mere fact of victory—when it is not undermined by circumstance—can itself be interpreted as a statement of inequality in which the *virtus* of the victor is proved to be superior to that of his victim, that statement cannot necessarily be attributed to a particular *actor* (or *auctor*). Despoliation, on the other hand, is a purely deliberate act performed quite intentionally by the victor—there is no such thing as accidental despoliation. It therefore reflects an active desire on the part of the victor to turn his

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<sup>95</sup> Some fault implicitly lies with Atys for misguidedly pursuing Tydeus, thinking that he had found another tender sheepling when in fact he had stumbled unknowingly upon the leader of the herd.

<sup>96</sup> Perhaps comparable here is the single combat between Achilles and Hector, at least as seen from Achilles' perspective: he refuses Hector's offer to parley, characterizing their relationship as that between lions and men or wolves and lambs (*Il.* 22.262–263), which suggests that he never sees Hector as an honorable competitor, merely as prey; similarly, he ends up taking no spoils from Hector, who fights in Achilles' old set of armor.

victory, an objective and impersonal reflection of his *virtus*, into a highly personalized claim regarding that quality.

In order to make such a claim as personal as possible, the victor would naturally seek to use the objects most closely tied to the individual identity of his victim. Enter *arma*, the physical items that come the closest to serving as martial limbs without being actual flesh and blood. More than any other piece of equipment or physical possession, *arma* could speak best to the specific identity of the victim, especially with respect to his *virtus*. While spoils retained this essential ability of *arma* to represent and even embody their owner's identity in this highly specific way, the act of despoliation fundamentally transformed those *arma* from representations of "living" men into (symbolically, if not literally) "dead" men. More specifically, the creation of *spolia* out of *arma*—marked above all by the transfer of possession from victim to victor—signified that the *vir* behind those *arma* had been conquered and his *virtus* neutralized (or, perhaps more aptly, neutered) by the despoiler. That is not to say that this *virtus* simply disappeared or was destroyed. What *was* destroyed was the bond between the defeated man and his power—and therefore worth—as a man. Having been stripped from him, his *virtus* was no longer his own to use, but it remained contained in the physical form of his *arma*, now the property of the despoiler to do with as he pleased.

### Blades of Glory

Despoiled arms thus represented all the symbolic value of their original owner's *virtus* overwritten with a statement on the part of the despoiler of his own superiority over the victim.

Often this message took the form of an actual inscription specifying at the very least the identity of the person or people from whom the spoils had been stripped, sometimes accompanied by further information regarding the site of the battle or other particulars. Such an inscription could help to clarify—or even define—the origin of the spoils, but it was in a sense simply a more explicit version of the claims already made by the act of despoliation itself. The power of despoliation as an act that defines the despoiler in relation to the despoiled is especially evident in another fragment of Ennius, wherein the Sabine women are made to ask their fathers: “When you take spoils from your sons-in-law, what inscription will you give them?” (*cum spolia generis dextraxeritis | quam inscriptionem dabitis?*)<sup>97</sup> The question is rhetorical: the content of the physical inscription itself is not the real issue in this hypothetical situation, as both victory and despoliation are far more transformative acts than the mere addition of inscribed text to the spoils produced by those acts. Rather, the Sabine women question the hypothetical content of an explicit inscription in order to force their fathers to confront the implicit statement that they would be making should they attack, conquer, and ultimately despoil the Romans, now their relatives by marriage. In this sense the inscription is something of a formality, although it cannot be denied that the act of inscribing spoils has a certain power as the physical expression of an otherwise implicit statement.

Even when it is left implicit, the statement made by the act of despoliation remains extremely potent as a narrative of power transfer from victim to victor. Based on the connections

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<sup>97</sup> See Dench 2005: 15.

between *arma* and *virtus* explored in the course of this chapter, the power manifested in the physical form of spoils is identifiable as *virtus* in particular. But their value was not restricted to that quality: as a corollary of representing and even embodying their *vir*'s *virtus*, *arma* also contained by extension the prestige that their *vir* had won through the (necessarily *virtuous*) use of those arms. Thus arms themselves could quite aptly be called “famous,” even when it was truly their owners who had earned that fame, because they were indispensable tools of demonstrating martial *virtus* and therefore of acquiring the prestige attendant upon success in the martial sphere.

The role of *arma* as instruments of *fama* or *gloria* is particularly evident in the conflict between Camilla and Arruns in *Aeneid* 11.<sup>98</sup> Foreseeing Camilla's death, Diana has promised that Camilla will be avenged and that the goddess herself will return her body to her homeland with her *arma* unspoiled even in death (11.590–594); Camilla's killer will therefore not be allowed to take her *arma*, which Diana calls her own (11.536 *nostris... armis*; 11.844: *nostras...pharetras*). The one seeking to kill Camilla must therefore give up all hope of earning spoils, as Arruns does when he prays to Apollo to grant him victory over Camilla:

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<sup>98</sup> The successful use of *arma* can produce a literal name: the victory cognomen or agnomen (e.g. Africanus, Creticus, Dacicus, Germanicus, Macedonicus, and even Magnus). Cf. also Velleius Paterculus' comments of the death of Calpurnia, who won *gloria* and *fama* for herself and her husband when she committed suicide by running herself through with a sword following his death: *non perdat nobilissimi facti gloriam Calpurnia, Bestiae filia, uxor Antistii, quae iugulato, ut praediximus, viro gladio se ipsa transfixit. quantum huius gloriae famaеque accessit! nunc virtute <feminae> eminet, <nec> propria latet* (2.26.3).



‘non exuvias pulsaeve tropaeum  
virginis aut spolia ulla peto, mihi cetera laudem  
facta ferent; haec dira meo dum vulnere pestis  
pulsa cadat, patrias remeabo inglorius urbes.’

“I do not seek *exuviae* or a *tropaeum*  
from the defeated girl, nor any *spolia*; other deeds  
will bring me praise. As long as this dire plague falls  
struck by my wound, I’ll return to my native land without fame.”

Virg. *Aen.* 11.790–793

The tricolon of words for spoils (*exuviae*, *tropaeum*, and *spolia*) emphasizes their significance in this unique situation. Arruns identifies them as an important (albeit not irreplaceable) source of fame when he says that other deeds will bring him praise (*laus*). (We may compare the attitude of Archilochus, who shrugs off the loss of his shield with a resolution simply to find another.<sup>99</sup>) Arruns therefore accepts the fate of returning to his homeland “inglorious” as long as Camilla is removed, but only half of his wish is granted: Arruns succeeds in slaying Camilla, but he does not survive her long. Seeing Camilla fall, Diana’s sentinel Opis reiterates the goddess’ promise not to leave Camilla *indecoris*, “without glory,” vowing that her death will not be “without a name” and that Camilla herself will not suffer the infamy of going unavenged.<sup>100</sup> Promising Arruns “a reward worthy of Camilla,” Opis strikes him with the very *arma* used by Camilla: the *tela* of Diana (11.857). Arruns is left to die forgotten on unknown soil (11.865–866 *illum exspirantem*

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<sup>99</sup> See the discussion of *rhipspasia* in the first chapter.

<sup>100</sup> 11.845–847 (Opis): ‘non tamen indecorum tua te regina reliquit | extrema iam in morte, neque hoc sine nomine letum | per gentis erit aut famam patieris inultae.’ The adjective *indecoris* is nearly a synonym for *inglorious* (11.793) here, another way in which Camilla’s posthumous fate is the direct opposite of Arruns’. Cf. Venus’ hypothetical image of Ascanius as “inglorious” in the absence of arms (*Aen.* 10.52 *positis inglorius armis*).

*socii atque extrema gementem | obliti ignoto camporum in pulvere linquunt*), a far cry from the future fame that he had hoped to acquire back home. His *arma* are not mentioned at all in his death-scene; they are of no note or consequence, least of all to the divine forces that killed him. The narrative instead returns to Camilla, whose body is borne away as Diana promised, her *fama* as intact as her *arma*. Indeed, Camilla's death is as notable as Arruns' is ignored, the reaction to her fall rippling across the battlefield all the way to the walls of Veii (11.868–895).

The fact that the value of *arma* is closely connected to prestige is evident even as early as the Homeric epics, especially the encounter between Diomedes and Glaucus in the *Iliad* (6.119–211). When the two warriors first meet, they exchange stories and decide that they should not engage each other in combat, as they had first intended, because of ancient ties of *xenia* (Greek ξενία, hospitality).<sup>101</sup> Before parting, they exchange armor, with Diomedes coming off the better based on the economic value of the armor exchanged. Now the value of the armor involved is given in exclusively economic terms: the bronze set that Diomedes gives to Glaucus is described as being worth nine cattle, whereas the gold set that Glaucus gives to Diomedes is worth one hundred. As Traill has observed, Diomedes' "victory" in this unequal economic exchange reflects the τιμή that he implicitly would have won had the two warriors actually engaged in combat.<sup>102</sup> It is important to note that the *arma* exchanged by Diomedes and Glaucus in this episode are

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<sup>101</sup> Konstan 1997: 37.

<sup>102</sup> Traill 1989. The Greek word τιμή can indicate both social or symbolic value (honor, dignity, or prestige) and economic or commercial value (price).

explicitly *not* spoils, which is consistent with the fact that their value, while easily translated to prestige, is expressed in purely economic terms.

By contrast, the value of spoils was not at all economic but rather purely symbolic. That is not to say that spoils were in any way less capable than unspoiled *arma* of manifesting prestige in terms of Pierre Bourdieu's model of symbolic capital. Indeed, spoils were the objects that best served as such capital in the Roman world (at least with respect to prestige derived from the expression of good old Roman, martial *virtus*), because as spoils they not only reflected the prestige of their original owner but also effectively added that prestige to the reputation of the despoiler as the reward and indisputable proof of his victory. Due to their close personal connection with the despoiled, as I argued earlier, spoils were the objects that could be used to make the most accurate statement involving the people from whom they had been stripped. They were therefore extremely powerful as statements of victory, *virtus*, and prestige when put on display, as they typically were, whether temporarily, as in a triumphal procession, or more permanently, for example in temples or in the atria of the men who had won them.

Unlike less personal forms of loot or booty, with which they shared the stage in triumphs,<sup>103</sup> spoils were not sold. In other words, their symbolic value could not be converted into economic value, one of the primary differences between *spolia/exuviae* and *praeda/manubiae*. Moreover, whereas generic loot was typically sold at auction, the

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<sup>103</sup> Beard 2007 and Östenberg 2009 both discuss spoils-display in the context of triumphs.

quintessential Roman method of negotiating value,<sup>104</sup> Plutarch reports that spoils were not supposed to be removed or altered at all after they had been set up for display, even to be repaired.<sup>105</sup> Such repair would effectively renew them, as Plutarch notes, in diametric opposition to the nature of spoils as fossilized products of a one-time process consisting of victory capped by despoliation. Indeed, each act of despoliation produced a separate and discrete set of spoils, whether on the scale of an individual or an army. As a result, no two sets of spoils were exactly alike; instead, each had its own distinct identity as expressed through its appearance, condition, inscription (if any), and resultant value. Any physical alteration would in turn alter that value, with cleaning or restoration potentially implying that the spoils so treated were taken more recently than they had been in truth. In addition to erasing the authority arising from their antiquity, such restoration would also undermine the function of spoils-display as a kind of *res gestae* composed with relics of those acts rather than simply with words. Ideally, Roman men of each generation were expected to make their own contributions to the collection of spoils won by their predecessors, both on the gentile and on the national levels, and each set within that collection would have to reflect its origins accurately in order for the entire collection to succeed as a progressive historical narrative.

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<sup>104</sup> Spoils were not as easy to modify or intentionally misconstrue as generic booty, whereas slaves on the auction block, for example, might be given new names, clothes, or other features to make them more desirable—and therefore more valuable.

<sup>105</sup> *Quaest. Rom.* 37. Flower (1996: 40–42 with n. 52) notes that the particular ancestral *imagines* attached to spoils were likewise not to be removed; it is tempting to think that it is the nature of spoils as sacrosanct that renders the attached *imagines* untouchable.

For all that the symbolic value of spoils was both non-negotiable and immutable, especially in terms of economic capital, spoils themselves were products of a process of transformation, as they were not newly created objects but already extant objects given new meaning via the act of despoliation. As such, they lent themselves quite well to related narratives of transformation. For example, spoils were frequently awarded as prizes for valor in war and athletic competitions, a fitting fate for items originally won as prizes of war in the first place. Spoils were also easily adopted as insignia: thus the Flaminii seem to have used a Macedonian shield as an emblem, while Titus Manlius Imperiosus won not just a visual icon but also a cognomen for himself and his family line in stripping the famous torque from a Gaul whom he had defeated in single combat. Moreover, the very tradition of the most illustrious spoils in Roman history, the *spolia opima*, was itself fundamentally transformed in the transition from republic to empire. All these examples and more will be explored in the next chapter.

### III. Victor | Victoria

#### Inheritance by Conquest

In the basement of the Princeton University Art Museum stands a dismembered, decapitated torso.<sup>1</sup> Like the body lying lifeless on Virgil's Sigeon shore, this *ingens truncus* has lost both head and name. Yet unlike Priam's forgotten remains the Princeton torso retains a key element of its identity in the form of its armor, an example of the elite cuirass discussed in the first chapter. On the basis of this style of cuirass, with which we may compare many similar examples from Roman portraiture,<sup>2</sup> the Princeton torso can be identified as that of an *imperator*. For those seeking to restore a name, that of Domitian has proved most appealing on the basis of the iconography as well as the observation that certain elements of the Princeton torso seem to have been mutilated as part of an act of *damnatio memoriae*, which would be consistent with damage done to other artistic representations of the much-maligned Flavian.<sup>3</sup> These arguments may well be persuasive, but in the effort to ascertain a personal identity we should not lose sight of the opportunity presented by this torso and others like it to ask questions and to draw claims of generic significance as well.

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<sup>1</sup> PUAM y1984-2 ("Torso of an emperor in armor, second half of 1st century A.D.") The Art Museum, inv. 84-82, h. 1.2 m.; Sotheby's, London, *Catalogue of Antiquities* (15 July 1980) lot no. 207; *Record of the Art Museum, Princeton University* 44.1 (1985) 45-46; Gergel 1986; Gergel 1994, fig. 12.11; Varner 2000: 162-163, no. 36; Varner 2001: 49, fig. 1; Meyer 2001: 27-33, no. 7.

<sup>2</sup> Vermeule 1959 (with supplements: 1964, 1966, 1974, 1978) and 1980; Stemmer 1978.

<sup>3</sup> Varner cites this as one of the "Domitianic monuments...intentionally mutilated" as a result of the *damnatio* placed on his memory (2004: 114). Varner follows Gergel (1986: 3-15) in interpreting the scene as a reference to Domitian's victory over the Chatti, with the two Victories being mutilated with chisels (cf. Gergel 1988: 7) as a "way of posthumously disparaging Domitian's military triumphs."



Figure 3.1: Torso of an emperor in armor, second half of 1<sup>st</sup> century A.D. Princeton University Art Museum, acc. no. y1984-2.

The statue's current state (Figure 3.1) dictates that we look to the subject's armor, his sole remaining feature, as the lone iconographic evidence upon which to base claims of identity. Fortunately, as we have seen, even a single piece of armor can reveal much about the identity of

its wearer. That is doubly helpful in this particular case, since we have a representation of one set of armor that bears upon it a representation of a different set. Thus, just as we can posit from the style of the cuirass that the subject of the statue was a member of the Roman elite, likely an emperor, being shown as *imperator*, so too can we learn much from the armor depicted as part of the central scene on the cuirass. Here we find two personifications of Victory constructing a trophy (*tropaeum*), presumably out of spoils claimed from a defeated enemy (Figure 3.2).



Figure 3.2: Torso of an emperor in armor, second half of 1<sup>st</sup> century A.D. Detail. Princeton University Art Museum, acc. no. y1984-2.

It is an identification of the trophy's armor as Germanic that has suggested the Roman triumph over the Chatti (A.D. 83) as the specific victory being commemorated, which in turn has helped corroborate an identification of Domitian as the specific *imperator* being portrayed. But this



scene prompts questions of broader significance as well. There is much to be made, for example, of the appearance of a pair of Victories and their trophy on a cuirass in the first place.

As we have seen, *arma* operated as insignia on many levels and in many ways. For example, they could reflect their owner's rank—and his corresponding social standing—through their size, shape, composition, ornateness, or even mere presence. But many pieces of *arma*, both as physical objects and as artistic representations,<sup>4</sup> also bear identifying marks or designs. In many ancient Mediterranean societies the most common piece of equipment that bore these designs was the shield, which offered a convenient and practical surface to display images. These designs are typically called devices and were often considered to be emblematic of the identity of their bearers.<sup>5</sup> This tradition later developed into heraldry proper, where coats of arms are based on such shield devices.

The Romans certainly recognized and participated in this proto-heraldic practice: we may recall, for example, perhaps the most famous shield device in Roman culture, that of Aeneas, which comprises a pictorial microcosm of Roman *virtus* itself. The use of a shield as the field of choice for such devices, whether on practical examples or in literary or visual depictions, seems to owe much to non-Roman precedent—the most direct in Virgil's case being the description of

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<sup>4</sup> That is, both actual *arma* and representations of *arma*.

<sup>5</sup> *OED* s.v. device 9a. In medieval (and even modern) heraldry, for example, coats of arms typically use a shield shape as a base, due to the fact that such imagery was originally displayed on actual shields for identification both during and outside of battle.

the shield of Achilles in the *Iliad* (18.478–609).<sup>6</sup> But in Roman statuary the imperatorial cuirass came to dominate as the preferred field for armorial emblems, especially “narrative” scenes of the sort found on the Princeton statue as opposed to the more limited icons (e.g. the *gorgoneion*) and anatomical enhancements found on Greek and Etruscan cuirasses. The appearance of such narrative imagery on armor—most often the cuirass but sometimes the helmet or other pieces as well—seems to have been introduced only in the 1<sup>st</sup> century B.C., at the tail end of the Hellenistic era, and the vast majority of extant examples are either Roman themselves or exhibit a marked Roman influence.<sup>7</sup> Accordingly, the practice of depicting narrative imagery on *arma* has been dubbed the product of an “emblematic climate...probably Roman in inspiration, even if not exclusively Roman in practice.”<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> There is also the description of the shield of Heracles in the early 6<sup>th</sup>-century B.C. work of the same name attributed, probably falsely, to Hesiod (Cook 1937; M.L. West, *OCD* s.v. Hesiod).

<sup>7</sup> A gold medallion of Alexander the Great now in the Walters Art Museum in Baltimore (acc. no. 59.1, dated by the museum c. 215–243 A.D.) exemplifies this Roman influence: an image of Athena appears on his shoulder strap in the same pose that she adopts on Hellenistic coinage bearing the name of Alexander (e.g. *SNG Cop.* 30), representing in both cases her patronage of the Macedonian conqueror, just as Jupiter’s thunderbolt does on the shoulder straps of Roman emperors. Another figure appears on Alexander’s cuirass between the shoulder strap and the edge of his shield. (I cannot make it out, but it is clearly not the *gorgoneion* that appears on Hellenistic versions of his armor, e.g. from the mosaic of the House of the Faun, now in Naples.) Like the standing Athena, this seems to be a full figure of the sort not found on cuirasses before the era of Roman influence. To the best of my knowledge, no such full figures appear anywhere on Alexander’s armor in Greek art.

<sup>8</sup> See Ridgway 2002: 80, for a discussion of two early examples of relief cuirasses. The first is a marble trophy from a Rhodian necropolis (Ridgway 2002, pls. 30a–b, now in the Archaeological Museum of Rhodes, Inv. 1244). Its breastplate is decorated with two lions attacking a bull across the pectoral layer and a male Arimasp (a mythical Eastern barbarian associated with Scythia) fighting griffins across the abdomen; the shoulder straps feature thunderbolts. (Both the Arimasp-griffin group and the thunderbolts on the shoulder strap appear frequently on cuirassed statues of Roman emperors, e.g. the Harvard Trajan [HAM 1954.71]). Ridgway considers both this cuirass and its attached helmet, which bears similarly narrative imagery, part of the “typical parade panoply of a Rhodian officer, perhaps connected with the Mithridatic Wars,” and discusses as a comparandum a cuirassed statue of Marc Antony found on Naxos, which is decorated with a relief depicting the punishment of Dirce. Ridgway connects the

In no other ancient Mediterranean culture do we find evidence for a tradition of complex, narrative scenes worked onto the cuirass as we do in late Republican and especially Imperial statuary. The spread of narrative imagery to armor other than the shield, at least in the context of cuirassed statues, may be related to the fact that most extant examples of such statues do not feature shields at all, and when they do (e.g. in the case of the cult statue of Mars Ultor<sup>9</sup>) the shield is not the main feature. Instead, it is typically seen in profile or three-quarters view, and so any device on the shield is obscured in comparison to the fully frontal cuirass. In such cases the cuirass provides a natural substitute for the shield, being similar in size and centrally positioned—the better to draw the viewer’s gaze. Moreover, the cuirass not only matches the shield in offering a sizeable, relatively flat plane for an eye-catching and potentially complex image but also provides space for supplementary symbols on the lappets (*pteryges*) and shoulder straps. Thus the cuirass parallels the shield functionally and symbolically, and so we can (and should) read images on a cuirass as armorial emblems in essentially the same way as if they had appeared on a shield—or any other piece of arms or armor, for that matter. It is the fact that this imagery is displayed on *arma* that makes it emblematic and therefore just as much a reflection of the identity of the person bearing those arms as the size, shape, or style of the arms themselves.

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narrative nature of these scenes to a parallel development in Hellenistic sculpture, particularly of the later period (c. 1<sup>st</sup> c. B.C.).

<sup>9</sup> Both the colossal copy now in the Capitoline Museums (Inv. 58) and the “Algiers relief” from Carthage suggest that in the original cult statue Mars had a shield resting against his left leg. It faces outward in both cases, directly to Mars’ left in the Capitoline statue and closer to three-quarters view in the Algiers relief. This does not preclude the shield from being decorated, but the cuirass draws more attention and its details are easier to ascertain, whether it is simply anatomical, as on the Algiers relief, or bears more complex imagery in relief, as on the Capitoline Mars Ultor.

Returning to the Princeton cuirass, we can now see that the central image (two Victories constructing a trophy) ought to be read—just as if it had appeared on a shield—as an emblem of the armored figure. His individual identity aside, his generic identity as *imperator* (i.e. victorious general) is perfectly echoed by the imagery of victory presented on his armor, including the trophy full of spoils and of course the personifications of Victory themselves. As we saw in the first chapter, the trophy (*tropaeum*) was only created with spoils won from a defeated enemy;<sup>10</sup> in actuality such a construct would be made by the victor, whether individually (as described in *Aeneid* 11) or collectively, but in Roman art the trophy is most often portrayed metaphorically as the handiwork of Victory personified. Indeed, whether she is shown creating it or simply carrying it, Victory treats the trophy as her own personal symbol or attribute, much like Hercules does his lionskin. As a result, the trophy may be read as a visual byword for victory itself in much the same way that the lionskin evokes Hercules—even when Victory or Hercules is absent.

A comparison between Victory's trophy and Hercules' lionskin is further appropriate because these items consist not just of *arma* but specifically of spoils. Indeed, both attributes exemplify how the physical appropriation of *arma* from a defeated victim allowed a victor not only to deprive his victim of objects essential to the latter's identity but also to subsume those things into the victor's own identity in a very visible way. Indeed, it is this visual aspect that allows the symbolic capital represented by spoils to function. Consequently, representations of

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<sup>10</sup> I am deliberately discounting the two episodes of “friendly trophies” from the Greek world (Pausanias 4.32.5–6; Plut. *Cimon* 17.4–8 with *Pericles* 10.1–3), as these examples are highly atypical of trophy-constructing even among the Greeks and have no apparent parallel in the Roman world.

spoils maintained much of the same symbolic power as the physical spoils themselves—at least so long as the party attempting to leverage those representations had earned the right to use them. That right in turn seems to have been predicated on one of two complementary forms of inheritance: first figurative, in which one man (or party) despoiled another of an iconic piece of his equipment and took it for his own; and then literal, in which descendants of a famous victor adopted the most famous of his spoils as a kind of familial emblem, much as they would a nomen or cognomen. As might be expected, many examples of the first kind occurred during conflict with foreign peoples, while many of the second played out largely within the context of Roman elite society. But that was not always the case—as we will see, the breakdown of the Republic and its strict division between *domi militiaeque*, especially in the 1<sup>st</sup> century B.C., gave rise to Romans despoiling fellow Romans not only of their physical armaments but also of the emblems that had come to represent them, including several famous examples based on spoils. Thus the treatment of representations of spoils, on top of that of the physical items themselves, played a crucial role in aristocratic competition both within Roman society and abroad. This chapter comprises an exploration of the interplay of these complementary notions of inheritance via three iconic examples: the torque of the Torquati, the elephant of the Metelli, and the lionskin of Hercules. While they range in time from the middle of the Republic to the end of the Tetrarchy, they each demonstrate various ways in which spoils and representations thereof could be adopted and adapted to symbolize claims of identity.

## The *Torquis* and the Heir

It was 367 (or 361 or 358 or 357) B.C. The year is a matter of debate, and the details vary with the telling, but the essentials of the story remain the same. In the midst of a conflict between the Romans and the Gauls, one of the latter—exceptionally large, by all accounts—stepped forward and challenged the Romans to produce a man to fight him in single combat. After a lengthy silence, and perhaps some subsequent taunting on the part of the Gaul, a certain Titus Manlius rose to the challenge and played David to the Gallic Goliath. The two main sources for this story, Claudius Quadrigarius and Livy,<sup>11</sup> disagree on how exactly the Gaul was equipped, with one crucial exception: in both accounts the warrior is said to be wearing at least one torque, a metal neck-ring used as a status symbol by various foreign peoples, including the Gauls. After slaying his enemy, the victorious Manlius took only a single bloodied torque from his victim's throat as spoil. This he placed around his own neck and thereafter was called Torquatus (“The Betorqued”). By the time of his monomachy with the unnamed Gaul, Manlius had already served as an exemplar of piety by saving his father from accusations of abusing him. In subsequent years he would come to exemplify Roman discipline by depriving his own son of his life for disobeying orders. All told, he held the consulship thrice in the space of a decade (347, 344, and 340) and

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<sup>11</sup> Claudius Quadr. fr. 10b HRR = Gell. *NA* 9.13; Liv. 7.9.8–10, 14; for these and other sources, including *Vir. ill.* 28.3, see *MRR* 1.119.

perhaps served as dictator as many times.<sup>12</sup> Consequently, some three hundred years later it was this man whom Cicero, addressing one of Manlius' descendants, called the “most illustrious of your line and name” (*Sull.* 32 *clarissimum virum generis vestri ac nominis*). But that name by which his line would be known was not the *nomen* of his *gens* (Manlius) or even the *cognomen* (Imperiosus) inherited from his father. Rather, it was the victory *agnomen* that he had earned in defeating and despoiling his Gaul.

According to tradition, Torquatus was not the first Roman in history to have taken spoils from a victim whom he had defeated in single combat or even to have been granted a victory title for an outstanding act of valor. (Those honors belonged to Romulus himself<sup>13</sup> and perhaps to Coriolanus,<sup>14</sup> respectively.) But his simultaneous adoption of both the torque itself and the name Torquatus is nevertheless noteworthy. Like Coriolanus, or any other victory title, the name Torquatus encapsulates identity in one word: whereas Coriolanus, based on the toponym Corioli, literally describes a man of that town, the term Torquatus is a fitting allusion to the towering Gaul faced down by Manlius. Indeed, the Gaul is not named in any of the extant versions; rather, his defining feature is that he is “torquate” or wearing a torque (Lat. *torquatus*). Thus, like Coriolanus, Torquatus properly specifies the identity of the *defeated*—at least initially. The

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<sup>12</sup> Müller (*NP* s.v. Manlius Imperiosus Torquatus, T. [I 12]) notes that the first two of Imperiosus' three reported dictatorships (353, 349, and 320 B.C.) are “questioned with good reason,” while Drummond (*OCD* s.v. Manlius [RE 57] Imperiosus Torquatus, Titus) claims that all three have been doubted.

<sup>13</sup> See the fourth chapter for a discussion on the *spolia opima*.

<sup>14</sup> Liv. 2.33.5 (493 B.C.).

transfer of this epithet to the victor operates on the same principle as the despoliation of *arma*. Nowhere is this more clear than in the case of Torquatus, where that name is bestowed upon Manlius as a verbal affirmation of his victory, being a literal description of him in his victorious state (*exuvio plenus*, to borrow Propertius' description of Romulus laden with the first spoils in Roman history, 4.10.6). His new title thus permanently adds his newly won achievement to his name, just as the spoils do to his person. Contrary to the context of epic, where wearing the spoils of the deceased causes a kind of identity crisis, in the Torquatus episode the simultaneous transfer of spoils and epithet emphasizes the notion that Manlius has deprived his victim of more than just his life—he has taken his single most identifying attribute in the form of the torque, thereby despoiling him both physically and onomastically. This new identity, as symbolized both by his new torque and by his new name, does not replace but rather adds to Manlius' original identity, just as the glory of slaying the Gaul does not replace the reputation that Manlius enjoyed previously but rather enhances it.

Torquatus' descendants seem to have preferred this new name over the cognomen that Manlius had inherited from his father (Imperiosus). Moreover, far from forgetting the occasion on which he had won the name Torquatus, just as much spoil as the torque that had inspired it,<sup>15</sup> his descendants continued to emphasize their descent from their famous ancestor by highlighting

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<sup>15</sup> Cic. *Fin.* 2.22.73: *si voluptatis causa cum Gallo apud Anienem depugnavit provocatus et ex eius spoliis sibi et torquem et cognomen induit ullam aliam ob causam, nisi quod ei talia facta digna viro videbantur, fortem non puto.* Cf. Plin. *NH* 7.96 and 7.114, where the victory epithets Magnus (for Pompey's success in Asia) and Africanus (for the success of the Elder Scipio), respectively, are each called *spolium*. See also McCormick 1986: 21–22; Linderski 1990; and Dench 2005: 77.



the relationship between object and name. On Republican coinage, one of the premier venues for self-advertisement—and therefore social competition—among the Roman elite, the torque appears as a family emblem of the Torquati at least three times (including both attested issues struck in the name of a Torquatus) and possibly a fourth. This last case is actually the earliest, an anonymous victoriatu struck c. 211–208 B.C. (RRC 91/1a, Figure 3.3). The obverse and reverse types are standard: the laureate head of Jupiter and the eponymous Victory crowning a trophy, respectively. The only unique piece of iconography is a symbol on the reverse, placed between the personification of Victory and her trophy, of a torque. At a time when barely two or three letters were used as a moneyer’s signature, much less a full *nomen* or the complete *tria nomina*, the torque could well have served as an elegantly compact *symbole parlant*, for which there are many comparable examples throughout the course of Republican coinage, including a *scipio* that may have been used by the family of the same name.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> For issues with such a *scipio*, see RRC 106 (with discussion, Crawford 1974: 196); RRC 112; and RRC 130–131. Crawford claims that it would be “overbold to assert that [these issues] must have been struck by a Scipio,” but a *scipio* appears as a *symbole parlant* on a Delian decree honoring Scipio Africanus (SIG 617), so the possibility should not be discounted. The re-use of the torque by later moneyers (including both attested Torquati) likewise suggests the possibility that RRC 91/1a belongs to a Torquatus.



Figure 3.3: Anonymous victoriatus. Rome, c. 211–208 B.C. Obv.: Laureate head of Jupiter r. Rev.: Victory stg. r., crowning trophy with r. hand, holding palm-branch in l. hand.; between, torque; in exergue, ROMA. *RRC* 91/1a. This example British Museum no. 2002,0102.391.



Figure 3.4: Denarius of L. Manlius Torquatus (q.). Rome, 113/112 B.C. Obv.: Helmeted head of Roma r.; behind, ROMA (MA in ligature); before, mark of value (X); all within torque border. Rev.: Warrior galloping l., holding spear in r. hand and shield in l. hand; in field above, Q; below, L·TORQVA; in exergue, EX·S·C. *RRC* 295/1. This example British Museum no. 1853,0105.6.

Much more certain is the use of a torque as a border on three later Republican issues. The first of these chronologically is a denarius issue struck at Rome in 113 or 112 B.C. (*RRC* 295/1, Figure 3.4). While the obverse features the standard type of the helmeted head of Roma, a mark of value (X), and the legend ROMA, the border—typically made up of dots, as on the reverse, or a solid line—is an ornate torque. The reverse type depicts a mounted warrior, armed with helmet,

shield, and spear, galloping left; the legend identifies the moneyer as a Lucius Torquatus (L·TORQVA)<sup>17</sup> who as quaestor (Q) oversaw the production of this issue, which was struck specially at the order of the senate (*EX·Senatus·Consulto*). Crawford rejects attempts to connect the reverse type to the single combat between the first Torquatus and his Gaul on the grounds that no extant sources describe it as being fought on horseback. Moreover, had it been intended to show that fight, we might have expected the Gaul to appear as well, given the emphasis placed on his hulking form in the literary sources. Whoever this mounted figure is, and whatever particular event (if any) the type was intended to commemorate, it is worth recalling that the mounted warrior was the pre-eminent symbol of *virtus* in Roman iconography. As such, it is a natural complement to the torque on the front and the legendary act of valor that it represents. In other words, both the torque border and the reverse type are designed to emphasize the virtuous feats of the moneyer's family and the subsequent fame that they enjoyed, right down to the moneyer himself.

Such connections were stretched even beyond strictly onomastic bounds. Two decades later, another denarius issue featured a torque as the obverse border, despite the fact that the moneyer, as indicated by his signature, was a member of the *gens Iunia*: D. Junius L.f. Silanus (*RRC* 337, 91 B.C., Figure 3.5). The obverse types of his denarii vary between a mask of the bearded Silenus (an allusion to his cognomen), the head of Salus, and the more traditional head of Roma; the torque appears as a border on the first two (*RRC* 337/1a–b and 2a–f), but not the

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<sup>17</sup> For the family *stemma*, see Mitchell 1966: 31.

third (RRC 337/3). While the torque differs in style from that on the denarius of L. Torquatus (RRC 295/1), its identical position suggests that it should be interpreted as a reference to the Torquati, and in fact this particular Silanus did have Torquatus blood in his veins: his grandfather, D. Junius Silanus (pr. 141), had been born a Manlius Torquatus and later adopted into the Silani.<sup>18</sup> Amidst a glut of more direct familial references—in addition to the Silenus mask, the plough symbol has been interpreted as an allusion to the Iunii Bubulci (“Ploughmen”), while the *carnyx* likely symbolizes a relative’s victory over Gauls—the torque on this issue stands out as an attempt on the moneyer’s part to add the “ancient *insigne*”<sup>19</sup>—and with it the reputation—of this most noble family to those of his own.



Figure 3.5: Denarius of D. Junius Silanus L.f. Rome, 91 B.C. Obv.: Mask of bearded Silenus r., wearing ivy-wreath; below, plough; all within torque border. Rev.: Victory in *biga* r., holding palm-branch and reins in l. hand and whip in r. hand; below, *carnyx*; in exergue, D-SILANVS-L-F. RRC 337/1a.

<sup>18</sup> Cic. *Fin.* 1.24; see also the *stemma* under RRC 220 (Crawford 1974: 259). The adoption of D. Junius Silanus (pr. 141), natural son of T. Manlius Torquatus (cos. 165), by D. Junius Silanus (leader of a commission tasked with translating the agricultural treatises composed by Mago of Carthage, Plin. *NH* 18.22) is “one of the earliest documented instances of the change of a patrician into a plebeian family” (P.C. Nadig, *NP* s.v. Iunius [I 29]).

<sup>19</sup> Suet. *Cal.* 35.1.



Figure 3.6: Denarius of L. Manlius Torquatus (pr. 49). Rome, 58 B.C. Obv.: Head of Sibyl r., wearing ivy-wreath; below, SIBYLLA; all within laurel-wreath border. Rev.: Tripod on which stands amphora; to either side of amphora, star; on l., downwards, L-TORQVAT; on r., upwards, III-VIR; all within torque border. *RRC* 411/1a.

The torque reappears one final time on the reverse of a denarius issue now dated to 58 B.C. (*RRC* 411/1a–b, Figure 3.6).<sup>20</sup> The moneyer is another Lucius Manlius Torquatus, although this Lucius is identified as a regular mint magistrate by the legend III-VIR (sc. *monetalis*).<sup>21</sup> The torque border has been moved to the reverse, perhaps to make room for the laurel-wreath that serves as an obverse border on the *a* variant, where it complements the type of the head of a Sibyl (identified by the legend SIBYLLA below).<sup>22</sup> The appearance of the torque on the reverse, surrounding the moneyer’s signature, draws further attention to the correspondence between the

<sup>20</sup> Crawford originally assigned this issue to 65 B.C. See Hersh and Walker (1984) Table 2 for a revised chronology for 75–51 B.C.

<sup>21</sup> Crawford (1974: 439) identifies this moneyer with the praetor of 49.

<sup>22</sup> The middle vowel in the obverse legend varies in form from Y to V. The reverse type is similarly Apolline: a tripod surmounted by a cauldron, to either side of which is placed a star. Crawford (1974: 439) suggests that both types refer to the office of *XVvir sacris faciundis*, one of the board of fifteen tasked with consulting and interpreting the Sibylline Books, which he thinks may also have been held by the moneyer (cf. Borghesi 1862: 360–361; Wissowa 1902: 500, n. 6).

moneyer's name as written and as represented visually by the border: like the other examples discussed above, this coin too is a *nummus Torquatus*.

Each of the torques on the issues discussed above bears a unique design, although that discrepancy does not impede their central function as a *symbole parlant* for the name Torquatus. Like the details that vary in the literary sources, the style of decoration differs between each issue. On the victoriatius, if it is rightly included as part of the group of *nummi Torquati*, the torque shows no decoration other than the enlarged but otherwise plain circular terminals. Both the torque of L. Manlius Torquatus (*RRC 295/1*) and that of D. Junius L.f. Silanus (*RRC 337/1-2*) retain the enlarged terminals, but the former bears a zig-zag pattern with dots placed in the empty spaces, while the latter is decorated with elongated S shapes separated by double bands. The final torque (*RRC 411/1a-b*) consists of two symmetrical arms that increase in thickness from top to bottom; the detail on this particular torque rather resembles knots on wood, as on Hercules' club. The discrepancy in design suggests either that there was no consensus (nor did there need to be) about the design of the torque originally taken by the first Torquatus or that these torques are not meant to represent the original torque at all. All three designs are comparable to archaeological finds, and the particular design in each case may have been simply the one best known to or favored by the respective moneyer or engraver.<sup>23</sup> In no case does the variation in style interfere with the torque's role as the eponymic emblem of the Torquati.

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<sup>23</sup> It is not inconceivable that each torque was meant to recall a specific victory attributable to a Torquatus, but unlike in the case of *arma* more generally it does not seem possible to associate a particular torque design with a specific people.

The Torquatus who first won that name may have been the first—or at least the most famous—Roman to win a torque as a prize for his valor, but he was by no means the last. While the opportunity for single combat had declined throughout the course of the Republic and had become nearly eclipsed by the Augustan period, consequently diminishing the opportunity for Roman soldiers to take spoils directly from their victims in the midst of combat, those same soldiers nevertheless still received spoils after the battle as prizes of valor. Chief among these decorations was the torque, a prize awarded (normally in pairs) to individual soldiers or to whole units who had distinguished themselves in battle. Roman soldiers did not always wear their torques, but when they did, the torques were attached like *phalerae* to the *lorica* or chest harness by loops of leather or fabric.<sup>24</sup> They were often included among the other military decorations and insignia depicted on tombstones of deceased soldiers, and the number of torques won could be indicated visually or verbally as a way of quantifying the deceased's valor. While we hear of no other man who took the name Torquatus for earning a torque, several military units that had collectively been awarded torques are attested as having added the term *torquata* to their names as a mark of honor and may also have displayed the torques on their standards “as a visual indication of the distinction they had won.”<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Linderski 2001: 3.

<sup>25</sup> Maxfield 1981: 88, citing in particular the *turma Salluitana*. Compare the use of the term *armillata*, indicating that the unit so named had won *armillae*. Maxfield's discussion of torques and *armillae* (1981: 86–91, 127–128, 278) is critiqued by Linderski (2001 *passim*).

The Manlii Torquati declined right along with the tradition of single combat that had made their ancestor so famous. By Imperial times this patrician family had essentially died out, but the name Torquatus resurfaced towards the end of Augustus' life among the Junii Silani, the very family that had adopted a Torquatus in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century B.C. and two generations later had (at least temporarily) adopted their torque (cf. *RRC* 337). By A.D. 13 M. Junius Silanus Torquatus (cos. A.D. 19), apparently the first of that family to use the name, married Aemilia Lepida, daughter of Julia Minor and thus a great-granddaughter of Augustus. Over the course of the following decades their male descendants, including three sons (Marcus, Decimus, and Lucius Junius Silanus Torquatus) and a grandson (also Lucius Junius Silanus Torquatus), were systematically snuffed out by more powerful Julio-Claudians looking to take care of potential threats. It may have been these Silani Torquati, or perhaps the tail end of the Manlian branch, from whom Caligula reportedly stripped the torque, their ancient *insignes*, when he likewise took the eponymous curls from a Cincinnatus and the cognomen Magnus from a descendant of Pompey.<sup>26</sup> According to Suetonius, then, the Torquati lost the right to their namesake under Caligula, while the name itself survived barely a quarter of a century more. Thus the Torquati were stripped of name and badge as effectively as had been the original *Gallus torquatus* himself, perpetuating the narrative of transfer and transformation that lies at the heart of despoliation. Unfortunately for the Torquati, their name and *insigne* were taken from them not by a foreign

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<sup>26</sup> Suet. *Cal.* 35.1: *vetera familiarum insignia nobilissimo cuique ademit, Torquato torquem, Cincinnato crinem, Cn. Pompeio stirpis antiquae Magni cognomen.*



enemy but by their own emperor as part of the widespread co-option of aristocratic power by imperial privilege. A similar narrative plays out in the next episode, the story of the elephant of the Caecilii Metelli.

### The Elephant Men

In the mid-260s B.C., the mercenary Mamertines living in Sicily caused an international incident by evicting the Carthaginian garrison installed for their protection against Hieron II of Syracuse in favor of the Romans. The situation snowballed, and the Romans soon found themselves clashing with Carthaginian forces both on Sicily and off it, where within a few short years they were forced to field their first naval force in order to fend off their enemies, a traditional sea power. The theater of war ranged widely as the years dragged on, but the action returned again and again to Sicily. Ten years after the start of hostilities, the Romans struck a major blow with the capture of Panormus (Palermo), a superbly positioned port city which had served as a strategic staging point for Carthaginian forces. A few years later, in 251, the Carthaginians attempted to reinforce their position on the island. Their field marshal Hasdrubal arrived in Sicily with a veritable army of war elephants<sup>27</sup> and proceeded to Panormus, where he suffered a crushing defeat at the hands of the Roman troops stationed there under the command of L. Caecilius Metellus. The victorious general took the war elephants off Hasdrubal's hands, leaving the man himself to return to Carthage to be executed for his failure.

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<sup>27</sup> Polybius and Diodorus Siculus put the number at 140: Polyb. 1.32.9, 1.38.40, 1.40.6–16 with commentary by Walbank; Diod. Sic. 23.21; Hasdrubal executed for failure in Carthage: Zon. 8.14.12.

The luster of the elephant as a new, exotic, and dangerous beast in Roman eyes was still fresh. By 250 the Hellenistic world had known of the animal's use in war for the better part of a century,<sup>28</sup> but the Romans first saw and suffered them firsthand only during Pyrrhus' invasion of Italy in 280, as he had brought with him some 20 elephants and received more as reinforcements throughout his campaign.<sup>29</sup> The Romans had further encounters with the beasts when they launched offensives into the African mainland in the early years of the First Punic War; even had they not had a long memory for such things, they would still have been smarting from the recent defeat of their expeditionary force under M. Atilius Regulus in 255 B.C. at the hands of the Spartan mercenary commander Xanthippus, who had used his Carthaginian employers' elephants to particularly devastating effect in the battle.<sup>30</sup> It was therefore a massive coup that Metellus not only defeated well over a hundred of these fearsome animals, who could cause immense damage indiscriminately in battle (it was a truism that the side with the most elephants

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<sup>28</sup> Alexander had encountered Indian war-elephants at Gaugamela in 331 and in several later battles as he made his way east. The elephants used by Porus, whom Alexander defeated at the Battle of the Hydaspes in 326, later featured on coins and medallions commemorating Alexander's victory.

<sup>29</sup> Plin. *NH* 8.16: elephantos Italia primum vidit Pyrrhi regis bello et boves lucas appellavit in Lucania visos anno urbis CCCCLXXII; Just. 18.1. Plutarch (*Pyrrhus*) makes it clear that Pyrrhus' elephants were decisive on many occasions: cf. 15.1; 17.3 for the description of the terrified reaction; 21.7 for the elephants' "furious strength" (ἀλκή καὶ βία) overcoming Roman valor; 20.2 for Pyrrhus' attempt to use this tactic to terrify Fabricius; 22.3–5 for Manius' victory over elephants critical to regaining the upper hand. Toynbee (1973: 35) suggests that the Carthaginians' later encounter with Pyrrhus in Sicily might have inspired them to adopt the practice. The earliest attested use of war-elephants by the Carthaginians was under Hanno against the Romans in 262 outside Agrigentum (Polyb. 1.19.2).

<sup>30</sup> Regulus faced them when he was defeated by the Spartan general Xanthippus—working for the Carthaginians—in 255. Xanthippus supposedly "made brilliant use of the Carthaginian elephants" in the victory (J. Briscoe, *OCD* s.v. Xanthippus (2) (RE 9)).

would lose<sup>31</sup>), but actually succeeded in capturing a huge number of them. These he brought back to Rome—no small task either, according to Frontinus, who has Metellus ferry them over the strait on rafts made with *dolia*—and paraded in his triumph.<sup>32</sup> The city had previously seen elephants in M'. Curius Dentatus' triumph over Pyrrhus in 275,<sup>33</sup> but Dentatus' four must have been significantly overshadowed by the number in Metellus' display: the numbers given in the sources vary from 60 to 142.<sup>34</sup>

For centuries thereafter the elephant was apparently regarded as an emblem of the Caecilii Metelli. The association, first created by the consul of 251 through the act of displaying the elephants that he had captured from Hasdrubal in his triumph in 250, appears again and again on Republican coins which bear the family name—or, alternatively, use an image of the elephant in its place. It took over a century for the Metellan elephant to make its first appearance on a Roman coin, although it may well have been represented in other contexts in the intervening period. In fact, the coins of the first three moneyers identifiable as Metelli are distinctly lacking in pachyderms, but this should not be taken as evidence that the elephant was

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<sup>31</sup> Cf. Liv. 27.48.10, 27.49.1. Ober quotes this truism in connection with Hannibal's army at Zama: "the side with the most elephants loses" ("Hannibal" in Cowley and Parker 1996).

<sup>32</sup> Polyb. 1.39–40; Plin. *NH* 7.139; *MRR* 1.213. On the transportation of the elephants, see Front. *Strat.* 1.7.1: L. Caecilius Metellus, quia usu navium, quibus elephantos transportaret, deficiebatur, iunxit dolia constravitque tabulatis ac super ea positos per Siculum fretum transmisit.

<sup>33</sup> Sen. *Brev. vit.* 13.3: primus Curius Dentatus in triumpho duxit elephantos; Eutr. 2.14: [Curius] primus Romam elephantos quattuor duxit.

<sup>34</sup> Polybius, the closest source chronologically, does not report the number (1.40.15). Pliny gives 140 or 142 (*NH* 8.16), Seneca 120 (*Brev. vit.* 13.8), and Diodorus Siculus 60 (23.21).

not considered an emblem of the Metelli at the time. Rather, it may well be the result of the strong sense of conservatism attested in the types and legends of the earliest Metellan moneyers: *RRC* 132, c. 194–190 B.C. (signed ME, possibly an older relation of Q. Caecilius Metellus Macedonicus, cos. 143); *RRC* 211, c. 155–149 B.C. (signed Q·ME, identified by Crawford with Macedonicus himself); and *RRC* 256, c. 130 B.C. (signed Q·METE, likely Q. Caecilius Metellus Balearicus, cos. 123, the eldest of Macedonicus' four sons). Evidently these three moneyers were as conservative in their iconographic taste as their family was in politics: the imagery on their coins adheres fairly strictly to the standard set of types for each denomination, and their signatures consistently err on the shorter side in length as compared to those of contemporary moneyers. Accordingly, even while the third moneyer bearing the name Metellus (*RRC* 256, evidently a Quintus, probably cos. 123) seems to have held the mint magistracy some fifteen years after a few daring souls began a trend of personalized reverse types,<sup>35</sup> he still chose a comparatively conservative image, Jupiter in a quadriga (*RRC* 256/1), which he shared with one of his colleagues at the mint (M. Vargunteius, *RRC* 257/1).

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<sup>35</sup> Minor changes appear at a nearly consistent rate of once per year from about 144 B.C.: Jupiter reverse (T. Annius Rufus, *RRC* 221/1, 144 B.C.), Diana in biga of stags (anonymous, *RRC* 222/1, 143 B.C.), Juno (C. Curiatius Trigeminus, *RRC* 223/1, 142 B.C.), Jupiter again (M. Aufidius Rusticus, *RRC* 227/1, 140 B.C.), Hercules in biga of centaurs (*RRC* 229/1a–b, M. Aurelius Cotta, 139 B.C.), Juno Caprotina in biga of goats (C. Renius, *RRC* 231/1, 138 B.C.), a historical scene of warrior in chariot with weapons and captive, obverse wreath border (Cn?. Gellius, *RRC* 232/1, 138 B.C.). 137 B.C. marked the first year that none of the reverse types were standard: an oath-taking scene (Ti. Veturius, *RRC* 234/1, 137 B.C.), Fostulus the shepherd (Sex. Pompeius Fostlus, *RRC* 235/1a–b, 137 B.C.), and Apollo in a *quadriga* (M. Baebius Tampilus, *RRC* 236/1a–f, 137 B.C.).

The Metellan elephant emerged onto the scene a short time later, appearing on the coinage of three more mint magistrates in the space of less than a decade (the mid-120s B.C.).<sup>36</sup> Crawford identifies these three men, along with *RRC* 256 (discussed above), as the four sons of Q. Caecilius Metellus Macedonicus (cos. 143), all of whom famously held the consulship.<sup>37</sup> In chronological order of both their mint magistracies and their consulships, these four Metellan brothers would be Quintus (*RRC* 256),<sup>38</sup> Lucius (*RRC* 262),<sup>39</sup> Marcus (*RRC* 263),<sup>40</sup> and Gaius (*RRC* 269).<sup>41</sup> Lucius' identity must be supplied from other sources, for of all the coins included under *RRC* 262, namely a denarius (262/1) and four bronze denominations (semis, 262/2; triens, 262/3; quadrans, 262/4; and sextans, 262/5), none is inscribed with a personal name.<sup>42</sup> In fact, there is no indication of the moneyer's identity at all other than the symbol of an elephant's head

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<sup>36</sup> Crawford's chronology for the 130s and 120s B.C. must be updated in light of Hersh (1977) and Hersh and Walker (1984). See Flower 1996: 333 for a revised order. All three Metelli of the 120s (*RRC* 262, 263, and 269) remain in the same order, but their specific years vary slightly.

<sup>37</sup> The *stemma* in *NP* s.v. Caecilius (also Flower 1996: 354–355) is helpful.

<sup>38</sup> Q. Caecilius Metellus Balearicus, cos. 123.

<sup>39</sup> In order to be the brother of the other three and the son of Macedonicus, this Lucius must be L. Caecilius Metellus Diadematus (cos. 117). Crawford's other suggestion, that this is L. Caecilius Metellus Delmaticus (cos. 119), would make him the son of L. Metellus Calvus (cos. 142) and therefore a nephew of Macedonicus and cousin to the rest of the Metelli who were moneyers in this decade.

<sup>40</sup> M. Caecilius Metellus, cos. 115.

<sup>41</sup> C. Caecilius Metellus Caprarius, cos. 113.

<sup>42</sup> The legend is consistently ROMA on the reverse. Each denomination also includes a mark of value: XVI in a monogram for the denarius; S for the semis; four dots for the triens (worth four unciae, or one third of an as); three dots for the quadrans (worth three unciae, or one fourth of an as); and two dots for the sextans (two unciae, or one sixth of an as).

with a bell attached.<sup>43</sup> On every denomination this elephant's head occupies the space on the reverse where a verbal signature would normally be placed: on the denarius it is shoehorned into the opening beneath the hooves of the horses drawing the goddess' chariot (Figure 3.7), while on the bronzes it is placed above the galley prow. Despite the absence of a more traditional signature, the issuer of these coins has been identified consistently as a Caecilius Metellus,<sup>44</sup> and his identity must have been even more readily discerned by the Romans who handled these coins "in the wild" without the benefit of the context offered by modern numismatic catalogues. Evidently, then, an elephant's head did just as well at conveying the moneyer's name as the written word itself.



Figure 3.7: Denarius with elephant's head. Rome, 128 B.C. Obv.: Helmeted head of Roma r.; behind, mark of value (XVI in monogram). Rev.: Goddess (Pax?) in *biga* r., holding scepter in l. hand and branch in r. hand; below horses' hooves, elephant's head with bell around neck; in exergue, ROMA. *RRC* 262/1.

<sup>43</sup> The bell consistently appears on the coins of the Metelli save for the last (Q. Caecilius Metellius Pius Scipio, *RRC* 459/1, 47–46 B.C.). Pease (1904: 41–42) suggests that such bells, which are now particularly associated with Indian elephants and culture, either had superstitious significance or were intended to warn pedestrians of an elephant's approach. Kistler thinks that such bells may be a tool for finding the elephants after a night of foraging (2006: 77).

<sup>44</sup> e.g. Grueber 1910: 155 n. 2; Sydenham 1952: 61.

The use of such a badge was apparently reserved for those who had engineered the victory over the people from whom it had been appropriated. As a result, the display of these victory badges in public media offered an opportunity for social competition among the Roman aristocracy, an iconographic variation on the theme of competing for military glory through display of physical spoils. In the case of the Metelli, a rival symbol appeared shortly after the first occurrence of the Metellan elephant head, when the moneyer T. Quinctius Flamininus (*RRC* 267) issued a denarius featuring the head of Roma as the obverse type and the Dioscuri galloping right as a reverse type (Figure 3.8). (While only his first two initials appear, both on the reverse, the moneyer's cognomen can be supplied thanks to a visual allusion in the form of the *apex*, or *flamen's* cap, that appears as a symbol behind the head of Roma on the obverse.) The shield that appears as a symbol between the initials T and Q on the reverse can be identified as Macedonian on the basis of the central circle and the dots (tiny stars) within crescents that ring the edge.<sup>45</sup> The design of the shield could have been known either from actual Macedonian shields or from

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<sup>45</sup> The limited size of the denarius, as in Figures 3.8 and 3.9, required certain accommodations to be made on the part of the die engravers. On both denarii, the stars that ring the edge of the shield are reduced to mere dots; each "dot" (miniature star) is enclosed in a crescent whose ends touch the edge of the shield. Figure 3.8 has six of these stars-in-crescents (other examples of *RRC* 267/1 have between five and seven); Figure 3.9 has five (as do all examples of *RRC* 263/1a–b that I have seen). In Figure 3.8 the crescents that surround the "dots" (stars) on the edge of the shield are rendered with single rather than double lines; the shield in Figure 3.9 has the full double-crescents. The central boss on the shield in Figure 3.8 is simply a circle, whereas larger depictions of Macedonian shields usually bear an image within one or two concentric circles, as does Figure 3.9. For a larger example of a Macedonian shield as depicted in coinage, compare the obverse of the tetradrachm of Philip V (Figure 3.11) below: seven eight-pointed stars, each enclosed by a double-crescent, surround a central boss delineated by two concentric circles. The additional dots on Figure 3.9 between the double-crescents and the elephant's head boss appear as dots, not as stars, on some (but not all) examples of shields in Macedonian coinage. It is conceivable that the shields captured by the Metellus Macedonicus from Andriscus' forces had these dots, as they appear consistently on all examples of *RRC* 263/1a–b, but it may simply have been the engravers' choice.

Macedonian coinage, which frequently featured a portrait in the center of a shield in a kind of *imago clipeata*. (Such types are attested from the 4<sup>th</sup> century B.C. and continue through the Roman occupation; the shield also served as the Macedonian mint-mark on tetradrachms in the name of Alexander the Great, much like the rose of Rhodes.<sup>46</sup>) Thus this distinct shield design was doubly an emblem of the Macedonians, in that it appeared on their physical *arma* and was used by them as a frequent image on their coins (e.g. the obverse of Figure 3.11 below), where symbols and especially types are considered to be similarly emblematic and are therefore also sometimes called devices. On the denarius of Flamininus, the appearance of such a shield as a symbol alludes to the famous victory of the moneyer's homonymous ancestor over Philip V of Macedon at Cynoscephalae in 197 B.C., after which the elder Flamininus declared freedom for all Greeks. Just as our anonymous Metellus had done with the elephant (*RRC* 262), Flamininus the moneyer has seized upon an iconic image that was originally used as an emblem by a certain people and has transformed it into a badge of victory over the people from whom it had been stripped.<sup>47</sup> In addition to the shield symbol, Crawford also notes that the use of this Dioscuri type, formerly a standard type on Roman coins, is quite unusual at this late date and sees in the

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<sup>46</sup> Macedonian shield: Price 57; the rose of Rhodes: Price 2514, 3971.

<sup>47</sup> It was not necessary that the Macedonians actually stop using their shield as an emblem, or that the Carthaginians stop using the elephant. While the Romans did have the Carthaginians give up their tame elephants and promise not to tame others as a condition of peace after Zama (Liv. 30.37.3: *traderent elephantos quos haberent domitos neque domitarent alios*), this was likely due to the sheer danger that the elephant presented when used in war, whether it was controlled by the enemy or panicked and caused indiscriminate damage. As a practical matter the Romans could not prevent their enemies' continued use of iconography (cf. their decision not to disarm all of their enemies, as discussed by Brunt [1975]), but they could begin to use such iconography themselves as a visual statement that they had earned the right to do so through their conquest over the various peoples from whom they had taken these badges.



moneyer's decision to revive this particular image a possible reference to the offering made by his ancestor to the Dioscuri after his victory.<sup>48</sup>



Figure 3.8: Denarius of T. Quinctius Flamininus. Rome, 126 B.C. Obv.: Helmeted head of Roma r.; behind, *apex*; below chin, mark of value (XVI in monogram). Rev.: Dioscuri galloping r.; beneath horses' hooves, T Q on either side of Macedonian shield, ringed by crescents containing stars; in exergue, ROMA. *RRC* 267/1.



Figure 3.9: Denarius of M. Caecilius Metellus Q.f. Rome, 127 B.C. Obv.: Helmeted head of Roma r., star on helmet flap; behind, ROMA downwards; below chin, mark of value (XVI in monogram). Rev.: Macedonian shield, at its center an elephant's head with bell around neck, at its edge double crescents containing stars; around, counter-clockwise from bottom, M·METELLVS·Q·F; all within laurel-wreath. *RRC* 263/1b.

<sup>48</sup> Crawford 1974: 291. See Plut. *Flam.* 12 for the dedication.

Not to be outdone, shortly thereafter Marcus became the first Metellus to break out of the conservative mold, the better to celebrate his family's feats on his coinage. For his denarius issue (RRC 263/1a–b, Figure 3.9) he retained both the Roma obverse type and the elephant's head on the reverse, but he radically reimagined the reverse type. The elephant's head now appears as the central device on a shield, marked (as on Flamininus' coin) as distinctly Macedonian by the stars-in-crescents that ring the edge. This type also appears on the reverse of the dodrans (263/2), while the shield alone reappears in miniature as a symbol on the reverses of all of the bronzes (semis, 263/3a–b; triens, 263/4; and quadrans, 263/5a–b), even on the two *b* variants, which do not otherwise specify the moneyer's identity. The Macedonian shield appears on all of these coins in commemoration of the victory of the moneyer's father, Q. Caecilius Metellus Macedonicus (cos. 143 and probably the moneyer RRC 211), over the Macedonian pretender Andriscus in 148 B.C.,<sup>49</sup> the very occasion from which he took his victory *agnomen*.<sup>50</sup> The reverse type of RRC 263/1a–b fuses the emblems of two major victories—that of 250 over the Carthaginians and their

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<sup>49</sup> Diod. Sic. 15; Liv. *Per.* 50; Zon. 9.28. Although Andriscus was a pretender, in consequence of which he was called "Pseudophilippus" (Liv. *Per.* 50; App. *Pun.* 20.135), he had become a serious threat (Polyb. 36.10, 37.17.15): it was only after he cost the Romans a full legion and a praetor (P. Iuventius Thalna, pr. 149) that the future Macedonicus was given a praetorian appointment and command of two legions with orders to put him down. If the Carthaginians did indeed make contact with Andriscus (as Morgan 1969: 425 with n. 18 suggests; cf. Vanderspoel 2010: 255–256), that could easily have made the situation significantly worse for the Romans.

<sup>50</sup> "Unprecedented for a praetorian," as Badian notes (*OCD* s.v. Caecilius [RE 94] Metellus Macedonicus, Quintus). It is also worth noting that Macedonicus defeated Andriscus near Pydna, where twenty years before he had served under Aemilius Paullus during the latter's famous victory over the Macedonian king Perseus, last of the Antigonids, in June of 168 B.C. Macedonicus was part of the embassy sent back to the senate with news of the victory (K.-L. Elvers, *NP* s.v. Caecilius Metellus Macedonicus, Q. [I 27]) and used the *manubiae* to fund the construction of the Porticus Metelli (Virtr. 3.2.5; Vell. Pat. 1.11.3–7; Morgan 1971: 480). His *agnomina* and the Macedonian shield on Metellan coins may therefore have recalled two Roman victories at Pydna, although the more recent victory, during which Macedonicus was in command as praetor, would naturally have taken precedence.

elephants, and that of 148 over a Macedonian pretender—into a single hybrid Metellan badge. This type, commemorating victories significant both to Metellan and to Roman history, is the only type in Roman coinage that had the honor of being restored twice: first in the Sullan period by a Metellan relation<sup>51</sup> and again among the restored issues of Trajan (c. 107 A.D.),<sup>52</sup> where it enjoyed such august company as Marcellus’ dedication of the *spolia opima* in 222 B.C. and Aemilius Paullus’ victory at Pydna in 168.<sup>53</sup>



Figure 3.10 (a)



Figure 3.10 (b)

Figure 3.10: Denarius of C. Caecilius Metellus. Rome, 125 B.C. (a) Obv.: Helmeted head of Roma, r., with star on helmet flap; behind, ROMA downwards; below chin, mark of value (XVI in monogram). (b) Rev.: Jupiter, crowned by Victory flying r., in *biga* of elephants walking l. with bell attached, holding thunderbolt in l. hand and reins in r. hand; in exergue, C·METELLVS. *RRC* 269/1.

<sup>51</sup> *RRC* 369/1, c. 82–80 B.C. The original obverse type of the helmeted head of Roma is replaced by the head of Apollo (although the obverse legend, ROMA, is maintained), while the reverse type is kept identical in all respects, including the legend identifying the moneyer of the original issue as M. [Caecilius] Q.f. Metellus. Crawford identifies the moneyer responsible for its reproduction in the time of Sulla as the Sullan commander Q. Caecilius Metellus Pius (*RRC* 374, discussed below), the son of a cousin of *RRC* 263 (Crawford 1974: 388).

<sup>52</sup> Woytek 816 (*RIC* II Trajan 770). The reverse type is reproduced in its entirety; the only change is the addition of the legend IMP CAESAR TRAIAN AVG GER DAC P P REST, which appears on all of the restoration issues.

<sup>53</sup> Marcellus: *RRC* 439/1 (50 B.C.) restored as Woytek 834 (*RIC* II Trajan 809); Paullus: *RRC* 415/1 (62 B.C.) restored as Woytek 823 (*RIC* II Trajan 788).

Following on the heels of his relations, Gaius Metellus (*RRC* 269, censor 102), eventually surnamed Caprarius, ramped up the references to the family's dual victories. All of his bronze issues (semis, 269/2; triens, 269/3; quadrans, 269/4) continue to feature the elephant's head as a reverse symbol, but on the reverse of his denarius (*RRC* 269/1) the Metellan pachyderm has expanded from a symbol of the animal's head to two whole elephants drawing the biga of Jupiter himself, with the god holding his emblematic thunderbolt and a winged Victory flying overhead to crown him with a wreath (Figure 3.10 [b]). Meanwhile, the Macedonian allusion no longer takes the form of a shield but rather hides in plain sight on the obverse (Figure 3.10 [a]): taking a page from Flamininus in bringing back for his reverse type a formerly standard image that had fallen out of use, Caprarius revives the high-crested Phrygian helmet type for his obverse head of Roma. While the wings and the griffin-like beak had been standard features of Roma's helmet since she first appeared on Roman coins, the griffin's head was soon integrated into the plane of the helmet (as in Figures 3.4 and 3.7–9 above) and had not been drawn as a separate high crest (as it is quite consistently across the extant examples of *RRC* 269/1) since the introduction of Roman denominations in the last decade of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century. The high crest was thus the better part of a century out of date, but the anachronism of that archaizing feature served as a conspicuous yet conservative way of recalling the Metellan victory in Macedonia, where several kings (including Philip V and his son Perseus<sup>54</sup>) had struck issues in silver and bronze featuring

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<sup>54</sup> Similar tetradrachms without monogram or mint-mark were long attributed to Andriscus, largely on an analysis of recut dies by Gaebler (1902). The legend on these coins (ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ | ΦΙΛΙΠΠΟΥ) is what one would expect of a ruler trying to pass himself off as a true-born Philip of Macedon, and the fact that the hero Perseus is often given the

an obverse portrait of the hero Perseus—often given the facial features of the current ruler—in a very similar helmet (as in Figure 3.11). Thus Gaius, like Marcus before him, outdid Flamininus in upgrading his ancestral references from symbols to types and by including a reference to the Metelli’s Macedonian success on top of their original emblem in the form of the elephant.



Figure 3.11: Tetradrachm of Philip V. Pella, c. 188/187–179 B.C. Obv.: Macedonian shield ornamented with stars in double crescents; in center, head of bearded Perseus I. (with features of Philip V) in winged Phrygian helmet decorated with griffin’s head; over shoulder, *harpa*. Rev.: Club horizontal, head r.; above and below, ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ | ΦΙΛΙΠΠΟΥ; above, ΖΩ in monogram; below, ΔΙ and ΜΗ in monograms; all within oak-wreath; to l., tripod. This example Freeman & Sear, Gemini I, Session 1. Mammoth 16.

Although the Metelli were evidently willing to expand their repertoire to include references to their Macedonian victories in what could be perceived as an iconographic tête-à-tête with Flamininus, it was their elephant to which they returned again and again, and it was this particular emblem that they chose to take with them to represent themselves beyond Rome.

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ruler’s features on these issues is of comparatively little help, since Andriscus reportedly relied at least in part on his “resemblance to the Antigonid physiognomy” to legitimize his claim to royal Macedonian power as the son of the king Perseus (Gruen 1986: 431). The current prevailing opinion—based largely on the work of MacKay (1968) and Boehringer (1972: 107–110, 116–18)—is that these tetradrachms belong to the period of Philip V (Mørkholm 1991: 135–36 and Burrer 2009). See Mørkholm (*loc. cit.*) also for brief speculation on a potential relationship between the helmet on these Macedonian tetradrachms and that of Roma on the earliest Roman coins.

There were three further Metelli who oversaw the striking of coinage in the 1<sup>st</sup> century B.C. None seems to have been a mint magistrate; rather, they were all serving as military commanders when they issued coinage at mints located abroad, or at least outside of the city of Rome. Just as at home, these Metelli seem to have used their family emblem as a tool of social competition with fellow members of the Roman elite. But military commands also provided an opportunity to continue the long tradition of adding new martial glories to the family name—and then to publicize and commemorate those victories through public imagery. Here, too, the elephant served the Metelli well, at least for a time.

The first of these three Metelli was Q. Caecilius Metellus Pius (*RRC* 374), son of Q. Caecilius Metellus Numidicus. Pius had acquired his cognomen in recognition of his efforts to have his father recalled from exile,<sup>55</sup> and he alludes both to his efforts and to his name with the choice of the head of Pietas as the obverse type of his denarius of 81 B.C. (Figure 3.12), struck in northern Italy while he was conquering that area for Sulla. The reverse type of this issue consists of an elephant standing left, accompanied by the legend *Quintus·Caecilius·Metellus·Pius·Imperator* in the exergue. On the one hand the elephant recalls the same victory as it had on previous Metellan issues, namely that of L. Caecilius Metellus over Hasdrubal near Panormus in the First Punic War. But the Metelli had just recently added another elephantine victory to the family résumé: that of Q. Caecilius Metellus Numidicus over Jugurtha of Numidia in 109 B.C. Like Metellus Macedonicus, Numidicus had taken not just his enemies' iconic weapons but their

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<sup>55</sup> Badian, *OCD* s.v. Caecilius (RE 98) Metellus Pius, Quintus.

very name for himself. Thus Pius' elephant type is just as much a sign of the moneyer's piety as the head of Pietas, for it celebrates both the Metellan family in general and his father (Numidicus) in particular.<sup>56</sup>



Figure 3.12: Denarius of Q. Caecilius Metellus Pius. Uncertain mint in northern Italy, c. 81 B.C. Obv.: Head of Pietas r., diademed; before, stork. Rev.: Elephant walking l., bell hanging from neck; in exergue, Q·C·M·P·I. *RRC* 374/1.



Figure 3.13: Attic tetradrachm of Crete under Roman rule. Gortyn, c. 66 B.C. Obv.: Head of Roma in winged helmet adorned with elephant's head; behind, [PQ]MAΣ; before, KA in monogram. Rev.: Artemis of Ephesus within laurel-wreath border; in field, ΓΟΠ[ΤΥΝ]; to l., bee; to r., elephant's head. *RPC* I 901.2 (this coin, ANS 1959.119.1). Svoronos 190, pl. XVI, no. 29. Image courtesy of The American Numismatic Society, New York.

<sup>56</sup> For more on this moneyer, including the politics of his elephant type, see Linderski 1996.

Just as Pius took the family elephant with him to northern Italy, so too did Q. Caecilius Metellus Creticus (cos. 69) when he ventured to Crete as proconsul in the early 60s B.C. Creticus did not take that name until his triumph in 62, which was much delayed as a result of political infighting with Pompey, but he enjoyed great successes in Crete before that. Indeed, it was this particular Metellus who had subjugated the island and oversaw its organization as a province within a few short years of his arrival.<sup>57</sup> The new status quo was reflected in Cretan coinage, especially in a set of tetradrachms struck at Gortyn c. 66 B.C. (Figure 3.13).<sup>58</sup> The obverse type of these issues is the helmeted head of Roma,<sup>59</sup> accompanied by the legend ΡΩΜΑΣ. The reverse type is the figure of Artemis of Ephesus, with the legend ΓΟΡΤΥΝ interspersed in the field. On both obverse and reverse an elephant's head appears as a symbol: on the obverse type it serves as the adornment on Roma's helmet, while on the reverse it floats in the field to the right of the Ephesian Artemis. From a visual perspective the appearance of the elephant-head symbol on both obverse and reverse is comparable to its use on *RRC* 262/1, where it serves as a Metellan

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<sup>57</sup> K.-L. Elvers, *NP* s.v. Caecilius Metellus Creticus, Q. Consul 69 B.C. [I 23].

<sup>58</sup> *RPC* I 901–3; Svoronos 1890: 181, nos. 190–191; *BMC Crete* p. xix. See also Friedlaender 1883.

<sup>59</sup> Le Rider also entertains the thought, which he attributes to E. S. G. Robinson, that the obverse type is an idealized head of Metellus Creticus himself (1966: 300–301, n. 8). Lifetime portraits were not featured on coinage struck at Rome until that of Julius Caesar in 44 B.C. (*RRC* 480/2–20; cf. comm. on no. 296 in Crawford 1974: 310–311), but that of T. Quinctius Flamininus appeared on the obverse of a gold stater presumably struck in Greece in the wake of his victory over Philip V at Cynoscephalae in 197 B.C. (*RRC* 548/1a–b). While it is conceivable that the tetradrachm of Gortyn follows this precedent, the idealization of the features seriously hampers a secure identification of the head as that of a mortal. Also noteworthy are the two short locks at the figure's temple, which are reminiscent of the three locks emerging from the base of Roma's helmet on Roman denarii. The head as a whole is strikingly similar to that of Roma on the cuirass of the Augustus of Prima Porta (on which see Rose 2005: 25–28), which likewise has idealized features, short locks at the temple, and a short-crested helmet.



gracenote to the nationalistic type of the Dioscuri and similarly nationalistic legend ROMA. On the reverse of the Gortyn coins, however, it is the local types and legends that are countermarked with the symbol of their Metellan conqueror.<sup>60</sup> The imposition of Roma as an obverse type (albeit with Greek legend) labels the conquest of Crete as Roman in general, while the insignia on Roma's helmet shows that she came in a Metellan guise.

Not two decades later the elephant reappeared on the coins of another Roman, this time not a Metellus at all but rather Julius Caesar himself (*RRC* 443/1, Figure 3.14). Unusually, the extant specimens of this issue are not consistent in which side is the obverse and which the reverse, perhaps evidence in support of Crawford's assertion that this issue was struck on the move with Caesar during the early years of the civil war (49–48 B.C.). One side (A) features four pontifical emblems, specifically the *simpvium* or *simpulum* (sacrificial ladle), *aspergillum* (sprinkler), axe, and *apex*.<sup>61</sup> The other side (B) has as a type an elephant facing right trampling a serpent or dragon; in the exergue, the legend reads CAESAR. The choice of type and the close proximity between the elephant and Caesar's name suggests that the animal is somehow

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<sup>60</sup> This may also be the case with a bronze issue struck at Gortyn which features the laureate head of Zeus as obverse type and the labyrinth as reverse type with an elephant's head added as a symbol below (Svoronos 1890: 88, no. 179; ANS 1944.100.40398). Jackson is probably right to suggest that the elephant's head on this bronze should be considered the Metellan badge just as much as the two on the tetradrachms (1971: 292 with n. 35, followed by Pałuchowski 2011: 316). It would be fitting to find the elephant's head appearing as the signature of the triumphant Metellus on this bronze issue in the same way that it does on the tetradrachms discussed above.

<sup>61</sup> The ladle on this issue is sometimes identified as a *culullus* (as in Crawford), but that is a stout bowl with a short handle. Linderski (1996: 176) identifies the long-handled ladle on these Republican pontifical types as a *simpvium* (or *simpulum*), citing von Schaewen 1940: 35–38; see also Siebert, who identifies the four instruments on *RRC* 443/1 as follows: *simpvium*, *aspergillum*, *sacena*, *galerus* (1999: no. 13, p. 321). The axe may be a *sacena* (so Siebert) or a *dolabra* (cf. Festus 422L for the phrase *dolabra pontificalis*); these terms may be synonymous. The *apex* is a specific type of conical *galerus* (fur or skin cap) worn by priests, e.g. the *pontifices*, *flamines*, and *Salii* (cf. Juv. 8.208).

representative of Caesar in victory. Indeed, Caesar's Gallic triumph featured some forty elephants,<sup>62</sup> and the serpentine figure being trampled by the elephant on this denarius could easily be interpreted as a *carnyx*, the iconic Gallic war-horn, representing those over whom Caesar celebrated that triumph. The choice of elephant to represent Caesar as victor may have been inspired by the use of the animal in his army<sup>63</sup> or by a perceived connection between the elephant and Caesar's cognomen: according to one of the handful of folk etymologies for the name Caesar that circulated in antiquity, the first Julius to be called Caesar earned his cognomen as a kind of victory title from an elephant (supposedly called *caesai* in the language of the Mauri) that had been slain (Lat. *caesus*) by him in battle.<sup>64</sup> It would not at all have been necessary for this etymology to be linguistically or historically correct for Caesar to have been able to leverage the image of the elephant as a personal or familial emblem. On the contrary, the elephant type in combination with the legend CAESAR (which in context could be read as a kind of victory epithet) would work naturally together as a visual and verbal pairing of spoils won in combat, even if the whole story were some mythical adventure of a made-up ancestor. If indeed it was perceived to exist, no matter how invented it was, such a connection would be further reinforced

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<sup>62</sup> Suet. *Iul.* 37.2; cf. Dio 43.22.1.

<sup>63</sup> Polyaeus (*Strat.* 8.23.5) reports that Caesar had at least one elephant with him in Britain; he may therefore have had one or more in Gaul.

<sup>64</sup> SHA *Aelius* II.3 (Mauri: *linga Maurorum*); Servius, *ad Aen.* 1.286 (Carthaginians: *lingua Poenorum*); see Münzer, *RE* X (1918) s.v. Iulius: 464–465. The Mauri are Moors or Mauretians, inhabitants of Mauretania in northern Africa.

by the appearance of elephants as Caesar's personal escort in his Gallic triumph in 46, reportedly lighting his way by holding torches for him much as they had for Seleucid rulers.<sup>65</sup>



Figure 3.14: Denarius of Julius Caesar. Moving mint, 49–48 B.C. Side A: *simpvium*, *aspergillum*, axe, and *apex*. Side B: Elephant r., trampling dragon; in exergue, CAESAR. RRC 443/1.



Figure 3.15: Denarius of Q. Caecilius Metellus Pius Scipio. Africa, 47–46 B.C. Obv.: Laureate head of Jupiter r.; above, Q·METEL; below, PIVS. Rev.: Elephant walking r., trunk upraised; above, SCIPIO; in exergue, IMP. RRC 459/1. This example British Museum no. R.8926.

As if to reinforce in response the priority of the Metellan claim, the elephant reappeared for the final time on the coinage of a Metellus very shortly after Caesar's denarius (Figure 3.14,

<sup>65</sup> Suet. *Iul.* 37.2; Dio 43.22.1; Östenberg 2009: 183–184.

47–46 B.C.). The moneyer is identified by a lengthy legend spanning both obverse and reverse as Q. Caecilius Metellus Pius Scipio, styled *imperator*. Born c. 95 B.C. as P. Cornelius Scipio Nasica, he was adopted c. 64 B.C. into the Caecilii Metelli by Q. Caecilius Metellus Pius (cos. 80, *RRC* 374) as part of the latter’s will. Thus the moneyer had been a Metellus for the better part of two decades by the time he had this issue struck in 47–46 B.C., when he had command of the Pompeian forces in Africa, but the appearance of the name Scipio on the reverse of his denarius suggests that he still felt a strong connection to his natural family—or at least that he wanted to emphasize such a connection publicly. Accordingly, while the types of Jupiter and the elephant are typically Metellan, the reverse type and legend (SCIPIO appearing above the elephant’s back) may also have been meant or perceived as a reference to the success of the Scipiones Africani over the Carthaginians in the Punic Wars. (Compare Crawford’s comment that the coinage of Metellus Scipio in general is “pathetically true to its author’s belief in the *felix et invictum Scipionum nomen* [Suet. *Caes.* 59].”) The dual allusions would have been strengthened further by Metellus Scipio’s location at the time of issue, for he had returned to the home of the Carthaginian elephants that had been made to serve for centuries as the badge of the Metelli—the only Romans until Caesar known to have used this animal as such an emblem—and whose threat had only been extinguished at the hands of the moneyer’s storied Scipionic ancestors.

The strong parallel between the pose of Metellus Scipio’s elephant (Figure 3.15) and that of Caesar’s (Figure 3.14) allows for—and perhaps even encourages—a reading of the former as a direct response on the part of Metellus to his longtime political (recently turned military)

opponent. In this particular appearance of the elephant, Metellus Scipio can be perceived as combining references both to his eminent ancestry<sup>66</sup> and to his command in Africa (typically personified as a woman in an elephant-headress, as she appears on a contemporary issue of this moneyer<sup>67</sup>) into a single visual statement meant to rival Caesar's. Unfortunately for Metellus Scipio, the man himself did not live up to the ancestral success celebrated in his iconography: in April 46 B.C., soon after his elephant issue was struck, he was routed by Caesar at Thapsus in the last significant use of the African elephant as a war-animal in the West in classical antiquity.<sup>68</sup> The Pompeian commander committed suicide shortly thereafter, and the Metellan elephant died with him. In celebration and commemoration of the role that they had played in disabling the actual elephants deployed at Thapsus, Caesar's fifth legion adopted the animal as the emblem on their standard. Even if the elephant of the Legio V could be construed as a symbol of *foreign* victory over Juba of Numidia, who had brought some thirty elephants to Thapsus but ultimately

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<sup>66</sup> Cf. Cic. *Brut.* 212–213, where no fewer than three Publii Scipiones (Nasica, pr. 93; Nasica Serapio, cos. 111; and Nasica Serapio, cos. 138) and Q. Caecilius Metellus Macedonicus (cos. 143) are all mentioned by name as part of Metellus Scipio's illustrious family line.

<sup>67</sup> *RRC* 461/1, a denarius issue struck in the name of Metellus Scipio by his legate Eppius, features an obverse type of the head of Africa wearing an elephant-skin as a headdress. The elephant headdress would remain a primary attribute of the personification of Africa throughout the imperial era, including Hadrian's provincial series (*RIC* II 298–299, 315–316, 322–323, 840–842, 872–975, 940–942; cf. *RIC* II p. 332), at least into the late Tetrarchy (e.g. *RIC* VI Carthago 52–58, A.D. 306–7, bearing the titulature of Maximian Herculius, Maxentius, and Constantine). For more on this headdress as a symbol of Africa in Roman art, see Maritz 2001 and 2006. This particular piece of iconography does not appear to be native to Africa, but its origin is still disputed: the earliest example of an elephant-skin headdress in classical coinage seems to be the obverse coin type of Ptolemy I that features Alexander the Great in such a skin (Fischer-Bossert 2012: 152).

<sup>68</sup> On Metellus Scipio's suicide, cf. *MRR* 2.297. The war-elephants at Thapsus were all on the side of the Pompeians. Caesar seems to have used his elephants only for training and perhaps once to terrify enemies unused to the sight of them (Polyaen. *Strat.* 8.23.5; Toynbee 1973: 37 with n. 40).

chose to flee rather than assist his Pompeian allies, Caesar's Alaudae had nevertheless effectively appropriated the elephant as an emblem from the last of the Metelli known to use it as his "heraldic beast," whether on coinage or elsewhere.

By the time of Metellus Scipio's death, the elephant had served as the badge of the Metelli for over two hundred years. The strength of the connection between family and badge is borne out quantitatively as well as qualitatively: Flower identifies the Caecilii Metelli as the family with the greatest number of moneyers whose coins feature ancestral imagery, and of the seven Metelli who fall into this category, all but one used the elephant as a family badge.<sup>69</sup> While the elephant as a symbol was thus most closely associated with the Metelli of all Roman families during the Republic, this iconic association did not survive the transition to Empire. Already before it had died out as a Metellan device, others had attempted to connect themselves in one way or another with elephants as a symbol of power. Like Alexander before him, Pompey reportedly wanted to emulate Dionysus returning from the East by riding in a quadriga drawn by elephants at his African triumph in 81; the Roman was foiled only by their sheer size, for the gates of Rome would not physically admit them.<sup>70</sup> We have just seen how Caesar likewise used the elephant to represent himself in victory, perhaps as an allusion to his own success or that of an ancestor, and

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<sup>69</sup> The seven Metelli: *RRC* 262, 263, 269, 335, 369, 374, and 459. The one exception is L. Caecilius Metellus (*RRC* 335, ?96 B.C.).

<sup>70</sup> Plin *NH* 8.2.4; Plut. *Pomp.* 14.4. During a procession held at Alexandria under Ptolemy II Philadelphus in 279/278 B.C. representing Dionysus' triumphal return from India, a golden statue of Alexander was drawn by elephants preceded by 24 other chariots also drawn by elephants (Athen. 5.200F, 202A; Gowers and Scullard 1950: 274–275; Toynbee 1973: 39). Toynbee claims that Dionysus appeared on elephant-back during this procession.

how his fifth legion appropriated the elephant from “the last Scipio of any consequence” in the wake of Thapsus, earning it just as Metellus Scipio’s ancestors had centuries before.<sup>71</sup> It was thanks to such competing claims that the elephant faded from view as the familial emblem of the Metelli, at least in the public record.

Even as the preeminence of aristocratic families such as the Metelli and the Scipiones was likewise fading in the face of the growing power of the *princeps*, their former badge was being transformed into an imperial icon that enhanced the *princeps*’ image by evoking connotations of a divine or pseudo-divine *triumphator* à la Dionysus and Alexander the Great. Indeed, the next time the elephant appears on Roman coinage it is as the draft-animal of Augustus. One reverse type of 19/18 B.C., struck by all three mint magistrates that year, features Augustus in a biga of elephants, holding a laurel-branch in his right hand and a scepter in his left (Figure 3.16).<sup>72</sup> As with the laurel-wreath iconography examined above, it is hard to ignore the parallel between the reverse type here and that of Caesar’s denarius of 49–48 B.C. (*RRC* 443/1, Figure 3.14 above), a similarity quite literally underscored by the identical exergue legend (CAESAR). It is possible that the choice of elephant as draft-animal was inspired by Caesar’s type or by his use of

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<sup>71</sup> The quote is from Syme 1958: 187.

<sup>72</sup> The three mint magistrates (*IIIviri monetales*) of 19/18 B.C. were M. Durmius, P. Petronius Turpilianus, and L. Aquillius Florus. Each moneyer combines the same reverse type as in Fig. 3.20 with an obverse type of his own choosing. Turpilianus: the head of Liber (*RIC* I<sup>2</sup> Augustus 282–283) or the bust of Feronia (*RIC* I<sup>2</sup> Augustus 280–281, 284); Florus: the bust of Virtus, an ancestral type (*RIC* I<sup>2</sup> Augustus 301, after *RRC* 401/1, struck 71 B.C.; cf. *RIC* I<sup>2</sup> p. 63 n. 310 and *RRC* p. 412); Durmius: the head of Honos (*RIC* I<sup>2</sup> Augustus 311). Q. Rustius also struck two issues in this year (*RIC* I<sup>2</sup> 321–322), but he does not include the elephant *biga* reverse type and is never identified as a mint magistrate (*IIIvir monetalis*).

elephants in his triumph, but Caesar never rode or was portrayed riding in an elephant-drawn chariot himself; that imagery still belonged to the tradition of the eastern conqueror with its connotations of divinity. In the Greek tradition, including both Dionysus and Alexander, the elephants subjugated and consequently made to draw the triumphal chariot were Indian. Pompey had instead defeated African elephants both in war and in hunting,<sup>73</sup> and it was this variety that he had introduced to the arena at Rome and had hitched to his quadriga before he was forced to change to horses to fit through the gates.<sup>74</sup> Augustus is not said to have defeated elephants himself, either Indian or African, although he may have been aware that Cn. Octavius, putatively an ancestor, was reported to have literally hamstringed the private herd of the Seleucid kings as a symbolic attack on their royal power.<sup>75</sup> This story, like the similar tale of the elephanticide given as a possible etymology for Caesar's cognomen, may have lurked somewhere in the background in the perception of those familiar with it, but as an explanation for the choice of elephants in Augustus' case it would have paled in comparison to the *princeps*' recent triumphs over territories associated with the elephant, namely Armenia and Parthia in the east and Egypt in the west.<sup>76</sup> The elephants on these denarii of Augustus have been identified as exclusively

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<sup>73</sup> Plut. *Pomp.* 12.5.

<sup>74</sup> Plin. *NH* 8.2.4; Plut. *Pomp.* 14.4.

<sup>75</sup> Polyb. 31.2.11; Cic. *Phil.* 9.4; Plin. *NH* 34.5.24. Cf. Kosmin 2014: 21.

<sup>76</sup> While the Arsacids of Armenia and Parthia do not seem to have made much use of the elephant as a war-animal in the Augustan period (Wheeler 2007: 261), the elephant frequently features as a reverse type on many Arsacid issues struck in the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 1<sup>st</sup> centuries B.C. Augustus' successful return of the Roman standards from Parthia was the closest that the *princeps* came to matching or outdoing Pompey's (and even Alexander's) victories in the East, where the elephant had long been a symbol both of Indian and of Seleucid power (see esp. Kosmin 2014). Finally, in the



African,<sup>77</sup> a choice perhaps meant in homage to Caesar's type or as an allusion to Egypt, but it need not be so restrictive: the type as a whole bears a striking resemblance to the image of the deified Alexander in an elephant-drawn quadriga in Ptolemaic coinage (Figure 3.17), where the choice of animal can be considered an allusion not only to the Indian specimens of the Dionysio-Alexandrian tradition but also to the African species that belonged to Ptolemaic territory (and by extension to the Ptolemies themselves).<sup>78</sup> Augustus' biga can likewise be seen as representing both East and West, again not because he had defeated elephants there personally but rather because he had defeated (or at least celebrated triumphs over) peoples in territories long identified with these animals as emblems of power on an imperial scale.

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*Historia Augusta*, referring to a time after the Sassanians had reinstated the use of the war-elephant, we find an explicit statement that the Romans had come to identify the use of the elephant as the most fitting draft animal for a triumph over Persians (SHA *Gord.* 27.9: his in senatu lectis quadrigae elefantorum Gordiano decretae sunt, utpote qui Persas vicisset, ut triumpho Persico triumpharet...). The Ptolemies likewise featured elephants on their coins. Of particular note for our purposes are the types that feature Alexander posthumously in an elephant-skin headdress (e.g. Svoronos 1904, no. 169), and those that feature a reverse type of the deified Alexander in a *quadriga* of elephants (e.g. Svoronos 1904, no. 1). Both types appear in Ptolemaic coinage by 300 B.C.

<sup>77</sup> Toynbee 1973: 39. Borghesi (1864: 105) and Mommsen (1883: 133) thought that the honor of an elephant-drawn chariot, which was likely granted by the senate to Augustus upon his return to Rome in 19 B.C. (cf. Borghesi 1864: 96), was inspired by the elephants brought by Indian ambassadors in 20 B.C., but it would be strange that an honor singularly inspired by Indian elephants would be illustrated with African ones. Indian and African elephants are not often confused in numismatic iconography of this period, and presumably the die-engravers responsible for the denarius issue struck at Rome (*RIC* I<sup>2</sup> Augustus 311) would either have seen the Indian embassy's elephants in person or at least have access to living specimens.

<sup>78</sup> The Ptolemies also used the latter as a way of expressing a claim to Alexander by portraying both Alexander posthumously and later themselves in elephant-skin headdresses as a localized variant of Hercules in a lionskin, the standard obverse type of silver coins struck in the name of Alexander.



Figure 3.16: Denarius of Augustus under the moneyership of M. Durmius. Rome, 19/18 B.C. Obv.: Head of Honos r.; around, clockwise from top r., M·DVRMIVS·III·VIR·HONORI. Rev.: Augustus in *biga* of elephants l., holding laurel-branch in r. hand and scepter in l. hand; above, AVGVSTVS; in exergue, CAESAR. *RIC I<sup>2</sup>* Augustus 311.



Figure 3.17: Stater of Ptolemy I. Cyrene, c. 300–298 B.C. Obv.: Diademed bust of Ptolemy I r., wearing aegis. Rev.: Alexander in quadriga of elephants l., holding thunderbolt in r. hand and scepter in l. hand; above, ΠΤΟΛΕΜΑΙΟΥ | ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ; in exergue, silphium plant. Svoronos 1.

Augustus' *biga* reappears on the reverse of two issues of aurei struck in Spain soon after (July 18–17/16 B.C.). On one issue the chariot stands atop a viaduct (*RIC I<sup>2</sup>* Augustus 140), while on the other it appears on a square arch between two roofed porticoes (*RIC I<sup>2</sup>* Augustus 141, Figure 3.18). On both issues Augustus is accompanied by a winged Victory, who crowns the *princeps* with a laurel-wreath. The obverse legend indicates that these particular issues were

struck under the authority of the senate; unlike the denarii struck at Rome (cf. Figure 3.16), Augustus' name appears not in the nominative but in the dative, indicating that the Spanish issue was struck in his honor. The reverse legend reveals the occasion: QVOD·VIAE·MVN*itae*·SVNT (lit. "because the roads were built"). These Spanish "road-building" issues are remarkable not only for their finite reverse legend and relative frequency<sup>79</sup> but also because of the elephant-drawn chariot, an unusual image that seems to follow the precedent of the denarii struck at Rome in Augustus' name the previous year. The choice of animal is unlikely to be related to the occasion of the issue, as there is no evidence that the Romans used elephants for road-building,<sup>80</sup> and it would not explain the elephant biga on the issues struck at Rome. The context offered by the imagery on the Spanish aurei, where the chariot closely resembles that of a *triumphator* atop a triumphal arch, suggests the possibility that it was an illustration of a triumphal statue, and indeed we hear of one such statue—the first of its kind, according to Pliny—erected around this time over the Milvian bridge, with construction completed by 16 B.C.<sup>81</sup> If Borghesi is correct in suggesting that Augustus was voted the right to enter the city in an elephant-drawn car, which he dates c. 20 B.C., then the Roman issue (which notably lacks the figure of Victory) may be more directly due to the voting of that honor, with the Spanish issue illustrating the presumably related statue.

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<sup>79</sup> *RIC* I<sup>2</sup> p. 50 n. 140.

<sup>80</sup> J.F. Lazenby, *OCD* s.v. elephants.

<sup>81</sup> Plin. *NH* 34.19. Construction was completed by 16 B.C., but that would not have precluded the coins from illustrating a statue on which construction had only just begun or even been announced.



Figure 3.18: Aureus. Spain (Colonia Patricia?), July 18 B.C.–17/16 B.C. Obv.: Bare head of Augustus r.; around, counter-clockwise from top l., S·P·Q·R·IMP CAESARI. Rev.: Augustus, crowned by Victory, in elephant-*biga* on square arch between roofed porticoes; around, counter-clockwise from center l., QVOD·VIAE·MVN·SVNT·. *RIC*<sup>2</sup> Augustus 141.

While he may have been voted the honor of entering the city in an elephant-drawn chariot upon his return to Rome in 19 B.C., Augustus avoided Pompey’s memorable failure in carrying out such a plan. Thanks to the imagery immortalized on his elephant-*biga* coin types and statue, however, Augustus did not avoid the connotations of “quasi-superhuman status” implied by the use of such an exotic draft-animal.<sup>82</sup> With the notable exception of Pompey,<sup>83</sup> even the divine-for-a-day *triumphatores* were content with the horse; it was the prerogative of gods and other permanently divine figures to ride in chariots pulled by creatures such as elephants, lions, tigers, panthers, bulls, doves, deer, goats, and even griffins, dragons,

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<sup>82</sup> Toynbee 1973: 39.

<sup>83</sup> One may also mention two individuals who reportedly rode elephants (not in elephant-drawn chariots) in the Republic: Suetonius writes that Cn. Domitius, ancestor of Nero, rode one in his triumph over the Allobroges and Averni after he defeated them as consul in 122 B.C. (*Nero* 2.1); and Cassius Dio writes that Q. Cornuficius had a habit of riding an elephant to dinner when he was at Rome (49.7).

hippocamps, and centaurs.<sup>84</sup> Even Metellus Caprarius populated the elephant-drawn quadriga on the reverse of his denarii with Jupiter, a god commonly shown as the prototypical divine *triumphator* on Roman coinage (*RRC* 269/1, Figure 3.10 above), rather than a mortal relation. Augustus' draft-elephants thus afforded him an aura if not of divinity then at least of superhumanity, which elevated him above even the most famous of mortal *triumphatores*.<sup>85</sup> What Pompey had tried and failed to do Augustus succeeded in doing through representation alone, where there was no risk of being foiled by the logistical considerations presented by reality. In the resulting imagery, including both of the aforementioned coin types and the elephant statue itself, we may find one of the many seeds of what would eventually become the imperial ruler cult.

This connotation reached “full-blown divinization” under succeeding emperors, beginning immediately with the Julio-Claudians.<sup>86</sup> Under Tiberius the figure of Divus Augustus

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<sup>84</sup> Elephants, lions, tigers, panthers, bulls, griffins: Dionysus-Bacchus; lions alone: Cybele; doves: Venus; dragons: Ceres and Medea; deer: Diana (as on the reverse of *RRC* 222/1, an anonymous denarius, c. 143 B.C.); goats: Juno (specifically Caprotina), as on the reverse of *RRC* 231/1 (a denarius of C. Renius, c. 138 B.C.; cf. the chariot of Thor, drawn by the goats Tanngrisnir and Tanngrjóstr in the Eddas); hippocampi: Neptune, Amphitrite, Venus (*Apul. Met.* 4.31), and various Nereids. Centaurs draw the biga of Hercules on the reverse of *RRC* 229/1a–b (M. Aurelius Cotta, c. 139 B.C.), perhaps the closest parallel for the subjugated elephants that pull the chariots of Alexander and Pompey. Dionysus is also shown in a biga drawn by centaurs in a mosaic from the Trajan baths at Acholia, Tunisia (now in the Bardo Museum). The use of exotic creatures as draft-animals seems comparable to the use of exotic mounts absent the chariot: for example, Dionysus and members of his retinue are sometimes shown riding a goat, Apollo a griffin, Diana a stag, Dea Caelestis a lion, and Nereids a hippocampus.

<sup>85</sup> One of the more fanciful anecdotes from the *Historia Augusta* underscores the exotic nature of using an elephant as a mount or draft-animal even in the late empire: along with “driving” an elephant (*elephantum rexisse*), Firmus is said to have swum amongst crocodiles, sat on a hippopotamus, and nearly achieved flight by being carried on the backs of ostriches (*SHA quatt. tyr.* 6.1).

<sup>86</sup> Toynbee 1973: 42.

is featured in the style of Zeus-Jupiter (that is, wearing a laurel-wreath and holding a scepter in his left hand and a patera in his right) seated on a throne or curule chair placed atop a chariot drawn by elephants.<sup>87</sup> The same image appears on the reverse of a tetradrachm struck under Claudius and later Caligula on Crete, including at Gortyn<sup>88</sup>—the very place where the Metelli had stamped their victory with an elephant seal. Under Nero, the figure of Divus Augustus is replaced by that of Divus Claudius (*RIC I*<sup>2</sup> Nero 6–7, A.D. 55), the only other Julio-Claudian to be deified.<sup>89</sup> These types may be meant to commemorate the funerals of these two emperors, with the similarity of the Neronian issues reflecting the fact that Claudius’ funeral was modeled on that of Augustus.<sup>90</sup> Vespasian too would later be honored with this memorial type “in the tradition of Augustus,”<sup>91</sup> while living emperors contented themselves with empty cars; a sestertius of Domitian, for example, features a triumphal arch surmounted by two quadrigae drawn by elephants, which—much like the aegis draped over Domitian’s bust on the obverse—

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<sup>87</sup> *RIC I*<sup>2</sup> Tiberius 56, 62, 68.

<sup>88</sup> *RPC I* 963.

<sup>89</sup> The figure seated next to Divus Claudius on these two issues is typically identified as Divus Augustus (as per the description in *RIC*), but in the appendix entitled “Further research on Nero” (*I*<sup>2</sup> p. 149 n. 6) that identification is rejected on the grounds that the figure’s hair “is dressed in feminine manner and the figure can show female breasts.” The authors suggest an identification of Fides Praetorianorum on the basis of the *aquila* held by the figure (for which cf. Claudius’ IMPER RECEP type, p. 122 no. 7). If a reading of Divus Augustus is rejected, it would not be inappropriate for a personification such as Fides Praetorianorum to join Divus Claudius in the elephant-drawn chariot (cf. the similarly situated pairing of Roma and Augustus on the Gemma Augustea).

<sup>90</sup> Tac. 12.69.3: *caelestesque honores Claudio decernuntur et funeris sollemne perinde ac divo Augusto celebratur, aemulante Agrippina proaviae Liviae magnificentiam.*

<sup>91</sup> *RIC II* p. 115.

lend the emperor (and his victories) a semi-divine quality.<sup>92</sup> The connection between elephants and deification was further reinforced by the practice of parading a statue of Divus Augustus in an elephant-drawn chariot around the circus as part of the *pompa circensis* that opened the games.<sup>93</sup> In the following centuries other deified members of the imperial family would come to be featured in elephant-drawn chariots, including Julia, daughter of Titus and hence niece of Domitian;<sup>94</sup> Marciana, sister of Trajan;<sup>95</sup> and Faustina, wife of Antoninus Pius.<sup>96</sup> The legends on these women's coins makes it clear that all are *divae*, while the reverse legend on several issues of Faustina makes explicit the immortality implied by the elephants: it reads simply AETERNITAS.<sup>97</sup> Only on the coins of Alexandria were emperors shown before their deification in elephant-drawn *quadrigae*,<sup>98</sup> just as Julius Caesar had enjoyed the “divine honor” of having his statue paraded at the opening of circus games even while he was alive.<sup>99</sup> Even in these lifetime

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<sup>92</sup> e.g. *RIC* II Domitian 416.

<sup>93</sup> *RIC* I<sup>2</sup> Tiberius 42; Suet. *Claud.* 11.2; *Anth. Pal.* 9.285.

<sup>94</sup> *RIC* II.1<sup>2</sup> Domitian 219–220, 272.

<sup>95</sup> Woytek 724–725 (*RIC* II Trajan 747 and 750, respectively).

<sup>96</sup> *RIC* III Antoninus Pius 1113, 1139, 1140, 1698.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.* 1140, 1698.

<sup>98</sup> Domitian: *RPC* II 2694, 2703, 2721–2723; Trajan: *RPC* III 4223–4224, 4297, 4386–4387, 4510–4511, 4605–4606, 4667, 4831–4832, 4938–4939 (regnal years 11–20 = A.D. 107/108–116/117); Hadrian: *RPC* III 5019, 5101–5102, 5163, 5185, 5235–5236, 5279, 5350–5351 (regnal years 2–6 = A.D. 117/118–121/122). The type seems to have begun with Domitian, who introduced a large number of types at Alexandria; no bronze coinage was issued at Alexandria under Nerva.

<sup>99</sup> On Caesar: Humphrey 1986: 79.

appearances an aura of divinity can be inferred, for the elephant (particularly in its role as a draft-animal pulling a chariot) had had “significance in connection with eternity and deification” since at least the Hellenistic era.<sup>100</sup>

Throughout the Empire, then, the elephant chariot numbered among the many honors reserved for the imperial family, especially those members who were deified. Even the use of the elephant as a stand-alone symbol, independent of the triumphal connotations of the chariot, fell under imperial purview. After Metellus Scipio’s issue of 46 B.C., the next time an elephant appears by itself on a Roman coin is under Titus in A.D. 80. Although the legend that accompanies the elephant type does not specify the occasion on which it was struck, the type itself should commemorate the dedication of the Flavian amphitheatre, in which capacity it is very easily read as a symbol of imperial largess.<sup>101</sup> At the same time, however, the inaugural games held at the Colosseum in 80, which famously lasted for one hundred days, might also be interpreted as funeral games for Vespasian, who had died and been deified just the year before. What better animal than the elephant to represent both the largess of Titus and the deification of Vespasian in one and the same image? Moreover, it was not money alone that brought such impressive beasts to Rome, although it must have taken quite a lot of that; the elephant as imperial symbol also highlighted the power of the emperor’s reach in possessing direct access to the animal. Whether it came from Africa or from Asia, the elephant served as a representative

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<sup>100</sup> Price 1991: 34.

<sup>101</sup> *RIC* II.1<sup>2</sup> Titus 114–116. The legends refer only to Titus’ name and titles: (obv.) IMP TITVS CAES VESPASIAN AVG P M; (rev.) TR P IX IMP XV COS VIII P P.



example not only of the exotic and dangerous beasts that had come into the power of the Romans but also of the enemies faced by the Romans in conquering the territories to which the animal was native. Moreover, the elephant had long been used both as an animal of war and as a symbol by some of the most powerful enemies of the Romans, including the Ptolemies and Seleucids in the east and the Carthaginians<sup>102</sup> in the west. This particular animal thus had resonances of imperial power unmatched by other animals that appeared in the arena, e.g. the rhinoceros, exotic and fearsome as they might have been. The capture of elephants in war had certainly been an impressive feat on the part of the Republican aristocracy, but the Roman emperors outdid even that both by using the animal to connote and celebrate imperial divinity and by reducing the oversized warhorse, long feared in battle and with good reason, to a form of public spectacle. By the age of the emperors, then, the elephant no longer belonged either as a weapon of war or as a cultural emblem to the Barcids or the Seleucids or the Ptolemies or even to the Metellans, the first Romans to take it for their own—it now answered to the imperial family alone both in representation and in reality.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> The elephant appears on Barcid coinage struck at Carthago Nova (from the 230s B.C.) and then in Italy during the Second Punic War. Scullard 1948; Robinson 1956, nos. 6b and 6d (= SNG BM Spain 99), and 1964, pl. 5,6; Burgos 485, 487; SNG Cop. 293; Villaronga 12; Villaronga-Benages 552. The connection in the Roman perspective between the Carthaginians and their elephants was so strong that Lucretius even suggested (albeit wrongly) that the Carthaginians had been the first to use elephants in battle (5.537–538).

<sup>103</sup> Compare the mention of a private herd belonging to the imperial family in Latium (Juv. 12.102–6). Cassius Dio (43.4.1) implies that such a herd existed in Italy even under Julius Caesar and that it was from here that Caesar brought elephants to Africa in order to let his soldiers train against them before the battle of Thapsus in 46.

## The Lion Kings

nempe pro telis gerit  
quae timuit et quae fudit: armatus venit  
leone et hydra.

Indeed, for weapons he bears  
what he feared and what he felled: he comes armed  
with the lion and the hydra.

Sen. *HF* 44–46

Thus Seneca describes the eponymous hero of his *Hercules Furens*, referring to the fact that the first and the second of Hercules' labors produced spoils that the hero adopted as *arma*: from the Nemean lion Hercules took its impenetrable skin, and from the Lernaean hydra he took its poisonous blood, into which he dipped his arrows.<sup>104</sup> There is perhaps no more iconic example in the ancient world of an individual incorporating spoils into his own *arma*, not least to such an extent that those spoils became so emblematic of their new owner that their original one was effectively eclipsed. (This is particularly true of the lionskin, which is much more readily identifiable from a visual perspective than hydra poison.) Together with his third piece of *arma*, his club, the lionskin and his bow and arrows are essential elements of Hercules' character. Indeed, he is often easily identified by these attributes, and he is hardly ever found without at least one of them, at least in iconography. As a result, this equipment could be used as an iconographic handle by which to manipulate the figure of Hercules. In its tamer forms, this

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<sup>104</sup> Cf. the description of the arrows at Ov. *Fast.* 5.397–398, where they are described as *squalentia...venenis*. While *squalens* can simply mean “rough” as a result of the poison covering the weapons, in this particular context it may cleverly recall the Hydra, a water-snake, as the origin of the poisonous blood via the connection to *squamae*, rough “scales” (cf. *Georg.* 3.544–545 and *Stat. Theb.* 4.168–169, the latter with the commentary of Harrison 1992: 249).

manipulation consisted of presenting the hero as an ancestor or a kind of patron, and later as a *comes* (“companion” or “partner”),<sup>105</sup> but when taken to extremes it eventually became a way of becoming the hero himself.

Like all *arma*, the lionskin, club, and bow and arrows fittingly represented their owner’s formidable *virtus*. (“A man worthy of these arms,” Chiron exclaims in Ovid’s *Fasti*, “and arms worthy of the man!”<sup>106</sup>) Indeed, Hercules’ arsenal was as exceptional as his *virtus*, and of all ancient heroes he is arguably the one most closely associated with markedly masculine brute strength and courage. (In this respect he was overshadowed in Roman culture only by the Augustan Romulus.) He was the exemplum of the strongman *par excellence*, dominating opponents in the realms of athletics, warfare, and hunting.<sup>107</sup> It may have been Hercules’ connection to athletics that led (presumably by way of Apollo) to the development of Hercules

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<sup>105</sup> On the connotations of the term *comes* within the context of imperial coinage, where it seems to develop a note of slight inferiority, see Nock 1947.

<sup>106</sup> 5.393–394: *respicit interea clavam spoliumque leonis, | ‘vir’que ait ‘his armis, armaque digna viro!’* As Newlands points out (1995: 116), the use of *vir* in this context is complicated by the idea that Hercules as the embodiment of “man at war” stands “in rude contrast to the half-man [*semivir* 5.380] Chiron, who embodies the noblest of human culture.” Hercules’ *arma* play an essential role in constructing his rude character here, being the products of the “undeveloped animal world.” Compare Prop. 4.10.19–21 for a very similar use of rustic *arma* (in the context of Propertius explicitly juxtaposed with refined metalworking) in characterizing *virtus* (here Romulus’) as wild, coarse, and savage.

<sup>107</sup> In addition to his labors, only a minority of which required killing, Hercules was famous for athletic victories (e.g. his wrestling match with the giant Antaeus; cf. Luc. 4.581–824) and military feats (e.g. his sack of Troy: *Il.* 7.451–453, 20.145–148, 21.442–457, [Apollod.] 2.5.9). For the connection between Hercules and athletics, especially gymnasia and palaestrae (Paus. 4.32.1), see Gardiner 1930: 107. See also Yegül 1992: 175–176 for discussion of a college of “Herculean Athletes” at the Baths of Trajan at Rome.

Musarum (“of the Muses”).<sup>108</sup> Much like his father Jupiter, the hero was intimately connected from an early time at Rome with military success and the formal celebration thereof: during a triumph, a statue in the Forum Boarium depicting him in his aspect as Hercules Triumphalis was dressed in triumphal regalia (*habitus triumphalis*), and a feast was held in the temple of Hercules at the triumphant general’s expense.<sup>109</sup> This feast is probably to be identified with the one funded by the *pars Herculanea*, the tithe offered to Hercules upon successful completion of military campaigns (and also of commercial transactions); women, slaves, and freedmen were excluded from this feast, just as they were from the Roman army.<sup>110</sup> Women were largely excluded more generally from the worship of Hercules at Rome, especially in his guise as Hercules Invictus (the Unconquerable) or Hercules Victor,<sup>111</sup> as well as at Lanuvium.<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> The first known *aedes* of Hercules Musarum at Rome was constructed by M. Fulvius Nobilior c. 187 B.C. (Macrob. *Sat.* 1.12.16; Plut. *Quaest. Rom.* 59; cf. Serv. auct. *ad Aen.* 1.8; Richardson 1992: 187; Ferrary 2014: 565–568); the concept of this aspect of Hercules seems to be related to the Greek epithet Μουσαγέτης (Lat. Musagetes, “leader of the Muses”), a title of Apollo (cf. pseudo-Probus’ commentary on *Georg.* 3.293) granted also to Hercules (Eum. *Rest. Schol.* 7.3: *Heraclen Musageten...id est, comitem ducemque Musarum*). The *aedes* of Hercules Musarum was restored by L. Marcius Philippus in 29 B.C. (Suet. *Aug.* 29.5). The figure of Hercules Musarum appears amongst the denarius issues of Q. Pomponius Musa (*RRC* 410/1, 56 B.C.), which feature Apollo as obverse type and the nine Muses as alternative reverse types.

<sup>109</sup> On the statue, see Plin. *NH* 34.16.33; for the feast, see Athen. 4.153c (citing Posidonius *FGrH* F1 = 53 Kidd).

<sup>110</sup> On the *pars Herculanea*, see Plaut. *Bacch.* 666; Fest. 237; Plut. *Quaest. Rom.* 18.267f.; Diod. Sic. 4.21.3f; Macrob. *Sat.* 3.6.11; *ILLRP* 136, 149, 155. On the feasts funded by the *pars Herculanea*, see Serv. auct. *ad Aen.* 8.278; Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 1.40. On the exclusions, see Plut. *Quaest. Rom.* 60.278f. and Prop. 4.9 (women); Serv. *ad Aen.* 8.179 (slaves and freedmen). Dogs were also excluded (Plut. *Quaest. Rom.* 90).

<sup>111</sup> On the issue of female worship of Hercules at Rome, see Schultz 2000. On the eventual conflation of Hercules’ epithets Invictus and Victor, see Ziolkowski 1988: 311 with n. 6.

<sup>112</sup> Tert. *Ad nat.* 2.7.

Hercules' *virtus* was exceptional not simply because Hercules himself was a hero who happened to perform feats of courage and strength but because it was these very acts of *virtus*, canonized in the form of the Twelve Labors,<sup>113</sup> that defined him as a hero and later as a god. In the words of Phaedrus, Hercules was *caelo receptus propter virtutem* (*Fab.* 4.12.3, “taken into heaven on account of his *virtus*”), an explicit expression of the theme implied in the Alcestis episode, where the hero literally wrestles Death into submission; in the visual allegories of Hercules striking down Geras (“Old Age”); and by the frequent appearance of Hercules’ labors on Roman sarcophagi, where such imagery may be read as an illustration of the hero in the act of earning immortality.<sup>114</sup> Even among the Olympians his *virtus* was comparable to that of Minerva and of Mars, the gods of war themselves,<sup>115</sup> and Hercules came to embody this quality in the same way that Apollo represented *sapientia*.<sup>116</sup> As the god who governed *virtus*,<sup>117</sup> Hercules could be called upon as its guarantor;<sup>118</sup> in iconography a connection to this divine He-Man, backed by his most famous characteristic, could be invoked by means of a depiction of the hero himself or

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<sup>113</sup> Cf. Apul. *Met.* 3.19, where Lucius boasts in jest that he can count his “slaying” of three wineskins as his first act of *virtus* in the spirit of Hercules’ twelve labors: ‘*ergo igitur iam et ipse possum*’ inquam ‘*mihi primam istam virtutis adoriam ad exemplum duodeni laboris Herculei numerare...*’

<sup>114</sup> On this sentiment, cf. [Sen.] *Herc. Oet.* 1833–36; Lact. *Div. Inst.* 1.9.1 and 1.21.36. For a more general connection between Hercules and *virtus*, cf. Cic. *Sest.* 143; Cic. *Off.* 1.118; Sen. *HF* 115 and 1275–77.

<sup>115</sup> Vitruvius *Arch.* 1.2.5: *Minervae et Marti et Herculi aedes doricae fient; his enim diis propter virtutem sine deliciis aedificia constitui decet.*

<sup>116</sup> Cf. Fulgentius *Mit.* 1.22 (*denique et Apollinem et Herculem sibi propitiat, id est sapientiam et virtutem*) and 2.4 (*denique a virtute gloriae quasi ab Hercule superatur*).

<sup>117</sup> Macrobius *Sat.* 1.20.6 (*dei virtutem regentis*).

<sup>118</sup> Cf. Sen. *HF* 114–115: *inveni diem, | invisam quo nos Herculis virtus iuuet.*

simply of his primary attributes, the three pieces of his *arma* mentioned above. Of the three, Hercules' lionskin is worth further attention because of the particularly creative ways in which it was used to make claims about identity, ways which both developed over time and differed in the Roman world as compared to the Greek, especially from the Hellenistic era.

Like many aspects of the Greek world, the meaning of Hercules' lionskin was forever changed thanks to Alexander the Great. As part of a "dramatic coinage reform" instituted early in his reign, the Macedonian conqueror introduced new standard types for his regal currency, including the famous obverse portrait type of a young, beardless man wearing a lionskin.<sup>119</sup> Scholarly opinion has long been divided over whether the man is meant to be interpreted as a young Herakles, the only figure associated with the lionskin until that point, or Alexander as Herakles, with the lionskin conferring upon the mortal all the divine connotations of the deified hero.<sup>120</sup> In recent decades there has emerged a preference for the latter interpretation: Price notes that Herakles was an apt choice for Alexander's coinage because "it was through the hero that the Macedonian royal line could claim to be of truly Greek descent;" this was particularly important

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<sup>119</sup> Price (1991: 24–30) dates the introduction of these new types to 336–334 B.C. This type is the standard for the silver coinage, including "decadrachms, tetradrachms, didrachms, drachmae, and larger fractions." It also appears on many (but not all) of the bronze issues. On the silver it is paired with a standard reverse type of Zeus enthroned, holding a sceptre in his left hand and an eagle outstretched in his right. The bronze units have related reverse types featuring Herakles' bow, arrows, and club or an eagle standing on a thunderbolt.

<sup>120</sup> See Athen. 12.537F for the claim that Alexander used to wear a lion skin and carry a club; see also Sauter 1934: 78–85.

at this early stage of Alexander's reign when the new king's position was "somewhat tenuous."<sup>121</sup>

In the absence of "clear indications" to the contrary, Price characterizes attempts to infer a disguised portrait of Alexander as "at best conjectural"—at least for the king's own lifetime.<sup>122</sup>

That had changed by the end of Alexander's lifetime and the ensuing dawn of the Hellenistic era. Posthumous portraits were introduced almost immediately in the aftermath of Alexander's death. Just as Alexander had done at the beginning of his own reign, his successors turned to numismatic iconography to help secure their new positions. For the two Diadochi with more tenuous claims to succession, Ptolemy in Egypt and Seleucus in Asia, it was apparently not enough to feature Alexander as the conquering hero by portraying him in Hercules' lionskin, which would have represented a continuation of the king's own coin type with individualized features designed to emphasize Alexander himself. Rather, these two successor kings put a highly localized spin on this type by replacing the lionskin with an elephant-skin headdress or a leopard-skin helmet, respectively. The intended message, that Alexander belonged to these places (and hence to these successor kingdoms) as exclusively and as iconically as the animals that he was made to wear numbered among the variety of ways in which the Ptolemies and the Seleucids attempted to establish themselves as the true successors to Alexander, much as he himself had

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<sup>121</sup> Price (1991: 31) further characterizes the choice of Herakles as a product of Alexander's "particular veneration" for the hero (cf. Diod. Sic. 17.4.1; Arr. 1.4.5) and justifies Herakles, an archetypal "warrior hero," as "suitable for a coinage of a military nature."

<sup>122</sup> Price 1991: 33. Price allows the possibility that engravers (particularly at Memphis) "may have consciously introduced the king's features into their depiction of Herakles. Even so," he continues, "it would be an extension of customary practice for the king to assume the attributes of Herakles and to take the place of the divine hero on the royal coinage. It is unlikely that Alexander intended this to occur."

emphasized his line's claim to Herakles through his own choice of type. From then on, the wearing of a lionskin and its localized variants remained intimately connected with Alexander even more than with Hercules.

At Rome, meanwhile, the lionskin evidently remained free of the seismic shift in meaning that it had undergone in the Greek East. The lionized head of Hercules appears on some of the earliest Roman bronze issues (e.g. *RRC* 27/3, a double litra, c. 230–226 B.C.) and was the standard obverse type of the bronze quadrans from about 225 B.C. (*RRC* 35/4) until the Augustan period, when it was replaced with imperial types.<sup>123</sup> Aside from the quadrans, Hercules appears on 19 types in Republican coinage,<sup>124</sup> of which he is shown with his lionskin on all but three.<sup>125</sup> The lionskin in turn appears without Hercules only once: it is shown draped over a club, surrounded by a bow and arrow, on the reverse of a denarius issue of Q. Sicinius and C. Coponius (*RRC* 444/1a–c, 49 B.C.). These can belong to none other than Hercules; Crawford suggests “perhaps Hercules Victor” specifically and labels the imagery a “private or family type” of the moneyers, who were striking military issues as lieutenants of Pompey. Commanders such

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<sup>123</sup> Certain quadrans issues (*RRC* 39/2, 42/2, 69/5, and 72/7) feature the head of Hercules in what seems to be a boar-skin, for which Crawford provides no explanation. Perhaps compare *Ov. Fast.* 5.395–396, where the description of the skin as *saetis* should suggest a boar (*saetiger*).

<sup>124</sup> The following types show Hercules with his lionskin: *RRC* 20/1 (obv.); *RRC* 39/1 (rev.); *RRC* 229/1a–b (rev.); *RRC* 255/1 (rev.); *RRC* 297/1a–b (obv.); *RRC* 329/1a–d (obv.); *RRC* 348/6 (obv.); *RRC* 385/2 (obv.); *RRC* 410/1 (rev.); *RRC* 426/2 and 4a–b (obv.); *RRC* 455/1a–b, 2a–b (rev.); *RRC* 461/1 (rev.); *RRC* 494/2a–b and 38 (rev.). All are denarii except 20/1 (didrachm), 39/1 (triens), 348/6 (as), and 494/2a–b (aurei). Crawford does not include the lionskin in his description of Hercules on the reverse of 255/1, but some examples show traces of it draped over the hero's shoulder.

<sup>125</sup> The exceptions are *RRC* 380/1 (rev.: Hercules strangling the Nemean lion), *RRC* 397/1 (obv.: bare head of Hercules, bearded), and *RRC* 494/37 (obv.: laureate head of Hercules, bearded).



as Sulla (cf. *RRC* 426/2)<sup>126</sup> and Antony (e.g. *RRC* 494/2) similarly associated themselves with the hero and his promise of victory, the latter in particular claiming descent from Hercules as an ancestor of the Antonii.<sup>127</sup>

Unlike the case in the Hellenistic world, the Romans never truly took to the lionskin as a symbol of Alexander the Great. For that they turned to other spoils: when Pompey wished to portray himself as Alexander's spiritual successor, for example, he wore the military cloak that he had won from Mithridates, who himself had inherited it as a supposed blood descendant of the Macedonian king. Roman *imperatores* also emulated Alexander, among other elite commanders, in being portrayed in armor decorated with the *gorgoneion*, a visual shorthand for the aegis that began to appear in more fully-fledged form as imperial iconography developed. In another notable example of Alexander-emulation, a cult statue commissioned by the Augustales at Misenum portrays Domitian (reworked as Nerva) on a rearing horse spearing an absent victim in a pose that directly recalls the famous bronze of Alexander now in Naples.<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> *RRC* 426 is Faustus Cornelius Sulla, the dictator's son, but many of his types relate to his father's successes (e.g. the surrender of Jugurtha to Sulla by Bocchus on the reverse of 426/1 and the three trophies that graced Sulla's signet ring on the reverse of 426/3, for which cf. Dio 42.18.3). Crawford suggests that "family tradition linked the capture of Jugurtha with the favor of Hercules" and notes that "Sulla certainly cultivated Hercules later in his life," for which cf. Plut. *Sull.* 35; Stat. *Silv.* 4.6.59–60 and 85–88; and Mart. 9.43.

<sup>127</sup> Cf. App. *BC* 3.60 and 72; Plut. *Ant.* 4.36 and 60.

<sup>128</sup> Domitian (Nerva): Museo Archeologico dei Campi Flegrei nel Castello di Baia, inv. 155743; Alexander: Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Napoli, inv. 4996. Cf. Laird 2015: 155 ("the statue [of Domitian]...copies a famous portrait of Alexander the Great") with n. 59 (Appendix I, Inscription 2) on the commissioning of the Domitian statue.

On the other hand, Hercules was not the only one ever portrayed as wearing his lionskin in Roman culture. In the case of certain emperors, attempts to assimilate themselves to Hercules took an uncomfortable turn towards the exceedingly intimate. Like Alexander before them, both Caligula and Nero reportedly liked to play dress-up with a lionskin and club as a way of impersonating the hero.<sup>129</sup> Whereas Caligula (we are told) was an equal-opportunity impersonator, playing all the gods in turn with their respective attributes, Nero indulged in a particular affinity for Hercules, which he seems to have begun to develop on his tour of Greece. Upon his return to Rome in A.D. 67, when the emperor was hailed by the public as the ultimate victor in the Greek athletic games, the acclamations of Nero as “Olympian victor,” “Pythian victor,” and even “Nero Apollo” could be expected, but the phrase “Nero Hercules” was a “novelty.” In his further attempts to construe himself as Hercules, indeed at points claiming even to surpass the hero in his own Herculinity, Nero “moved beyond representation to action,” transcending make-believe stage-play and taking his new persona into life itself.<sup>130</sup>

While Nero is not known to have been portrayed as Hercules in portraiture, in the succeeding decades the mortal-turned-god continued to play an increasingly integral role in imperial representation. Comparison between emperor and hero became a commonplace in poetry and panegyric. Statius, for example, compares Domitian to Hercules in his *Silvae*;<sup>131</sup> such

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<sup>129</sup> Cass. Dio 59.26; Suet. *Nero* 53; Cass. Dio 63.20.

<sup>130</sup> Champlin 2003: 136–138.

<sup>131</sup> *Silv.* 4.2.50–51 and 4.3.155–157, the latter with commentary at Coleman 1988: 134.

similes are analogous to visual representations of Hercules, e.g. those found on numerous issues of Roman coinage and the Herakliskos depicted on the shoulder-strap of the cuirass of the equestrian Domitian statue mentioned above. These are all effective ways of tying Hercules to the identity of the Roman individuals concerned. But comparison or connection is not the same as assimilation: it is one thing to be *Herculean*—whether by descent or merely by association; it is quite another to be *Hercules* himself. Martial picks up on the latter in dubbing Domitian the Greater Alcides to Hercules’ Lesser, implying through the transferred patronymic that Domitian has usurped Hercules’ identity right down to his blood-relations;<sup>132</sup> the comparison is thus no longer between Hercules and Domitian but rather between the “earlier Hercules” (9.101.3 *Alcidae...prioris*), the plain old regular one, and this newly synthesized Domitian-Hercules, whose cult statue on the Via Appia occasioned the poem.<sup>133</sup> In fact, despite Nero’s personal obsession with playing the hero, Domitian is the first emperor known to have been represented in portraiture as Hercules.<sup>134</sup>

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<sup>132</sup> *Epigr.* 9.101.11; cf. 5.65. *Alcides* refers to Hercules as a descendant of Alceus (Gr. Ἄλκεύς), the father of Amphitryon and thus the grandfather of the hero. Amphitryon was technically Hercules’ step-father, since Hercules was the son of Amphitryon’s wife Alcmena by Zeus, who cuckolded Amphitryon while the latter was away at war (cf. Plautus’ *Amphitruo*). The use of a patronymic invoking Hercules’ relationship to Alceus, which would have existed de facto as well as de jure had Zeus not usurped Amphitryon’s role as Alcmena’s husband, might be read as a comment on the nature of Domitian’s usurpation of Hercules’ identity.

<sup>133</sup> Cf. Mart. *Epigr.* 9.64.1–6, where the poet describes Domitian as being venerated “in the guise of Hercules” (1: *simili venerandus in Hercule Caesar*), with the commentary of Henriksen 2012: 396–401 (and more generally xxviii–xxx). On the statue see Darwall-Smith 1996: 135. Cf. the colossal basalt statue of Hercules from the Aula Regia of the Domus Flavia, now in the Museo Nazionale d’Antichità, Parma, which may represent Domitian as Hercules.

<sup>134</sup> Fredrick 2003: 211. Extant examples include marble busts in Boston (Museum of Fine Arts acc. no. 1978.227, of the Genzano type) and Compiègne (see Daltrop, Hausman, and Wegner 1966: 100) and a carnelian cameo in Munich (Staatliche Münzsammlungen A2222; see Palagia 1986: 145).

Domitian was certainly not the last. As in many other things, Trajan's relationship to Hercules both in literature and in art constituted in some respects a continuation of and in others a marked change from the emperor's relationship to the hero under Domitian. Pliny the Younger manages to harness both to Trajan's advantage: in comparing Trajan's early military successes under Domitian to Hercules' labors, thus continuing the trope of praising the current emperor as Herculean, Pliny ends up flipping the script on the late Flavian by implicitly placing him in the position of the tyrannical Eurystheus.<sup>135</sup> Hercules and his *arma* continue to appear frequently on imperial coinage as well to emphasize a close connection between Trajan and the hero,<sup>136</sup> but representations of Trajan *as* Hercules are distinctly lacking in comparison to those of Domitian-Hercules.<sup>137</sup> There is, however, one exceptional statue of Trajan in a lionskin (Figures 3.19–20):

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<sup>135</sup> Hekster 2005: 205.

<sup>136</sup> Cf. e.g. Woytek 72–73, 99–100, 164 (*RIC* II Trajan 37, 49, 50, 79); Alföldi 1976–1990: 282; the comparison is especially pointed on a silver tetradrachm struck at Tyre (A.D. 103–109) that pairs an obverse portrait of the laureate Trajan with the reverse portrait of the laureate Melqart-Hercules with his lionskin draped around his neck (Prieur 1495; McAlee 455).

<sup>137</sup> The obverse type of certain coins of Trajan (*RIC* II Trajan 699–702; Woytek 602–604A) consisting of an unbearded male bust wearing a lionskin has sometimes been identified as “Trajan as Hercules” (Dattari 1901, no. 1248; Curtis no. 542; Strack 1931: 95–105; Skowronek 1967: 21), but both the authors of *RIC* and Woytek read the figure simply as Hercules. Woytek (2010: 486) acknowledges that the features of the unbearded Hercules are reminiscent of Trajan but thinks it erroneous to identify the figure as the emperor himself. The case is similar with certain coins of Hadrian, including posthumous portraits of Trajan (Burnett 2008: 473, n. 43) and lifetime portraits of Hadrian himself, at least one of which has been read as Hercules “with the features of Hadrian” (Cook 1906: 418). The misreading goes back at least to the work of Dattari (1901, e.g. no. 1248). These identifications are not universally accepted, and it is not impossible that these portraits represent a situation similar to that suggested by Price (1991: 34) for some of the later Alexander lifetime issues, namely that engravers began to incorporate the current ruler's features absent the express direction of the ruler himself.



Figure 3.19



Figure 3.20

Figures 3.19 and 3.20: Statue of Trajan-Hercules. A.D. 108–113. Rome, Palazzo Massimo alle Terme, inv. 124481.

The lionskin is sufficient in and of itself to identify this statue as a representation of the subject “as Hercules,” and at first glance this image seems to be what we might expect if Trajan had followed in Domitian’s footsteps and endorsed a synthesis of Trajan-Hercules. But examination of the details of the portrait suggests that it was recarved, and Domitian seems to be the most likely candidate by far for the original subject.<sup>138</sup> Rather than seeing this as an example of a more widespread trend of a Trajan-Hercules, then, we should interpret it as a sign that disposing of

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<sup>138</sup> For one, the lionskin (identifiable by the paws tied about Trajan’s shoulder) does not have a face; presumably it was recarved into the wreath.

Domitian's portrait was more important in the context of the moment than avoiding a final product in which Trajan happened to take on the lionskin—and therefore the identity—of Hercules. In other words, this is likely not an affirmative portrait of “Trajan-Hercules” so much as evidence of a desire to remove Domitian from “Domitian-Hercules,” with Trajan replacing Domitian by virtue of being emperor at the time. In the apparent recarving of the face of the lion into a wreath (Figure 3.20), which significantly mutes the visual impact of the skin (compare the headdress on the bust of Commodus, Figure 3.21 below), we might also find an attempt at least to downplay the assimilation of the new subject with the hero.<sup>139</sup> Even if a skin with paws but no face is notably odd, apparently it was considered preferable to leaving the face intact.

While neither the first nor the last Roman emperor to become Hercules by donning his lionskin, Commodus remains arguably the most (in)famous thanks in large part to the proliferation of images of him unabashedly wearing the skin and frequently carrying other attributes of Hercules. Of such images the most striking is the lifesize marble bust now in the Capitoline Museums<sup>140</sup> of the emperor draped in a massive lionskin (its paws tied into the iconic

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<sup>139</sup> The difference between wearing the lionskin around the neck as opposed to over the head is also apparent on depictions of Septimius Severus certain coin issues meant for wide circulation (with the lionskin around neck) as opposed to those on medallions meant for a more limited audience (with the lionskin over his head); see Rowan 2012: 48.

<sup>140</sup> Palazzo dei Conservatori, inv. MC1120. Its provenance is identified by the museums as the Horti Lamiani on the Esquiline (1874).

knot, the *nodus Herculeanus*,<sup>141</sup> below his sternum) and holding in his right hand a club and in his left the apples of the Hesperides, a reference to the hero's penultimate labor (Figure 3.21):



Figure 3.21: Bust of Commodus as Hercules. A.D. 180–193. Musei Capitolini inv. MC1120.

This bust alone contains no fewer than four references to the hero: in addition to the aforementioned lionskin, club, and the apples of the Hesperides, the Amazons at the base of the bust relate to the labor in which the hero acquired the girdle of the Amazonian queen Hippolyta. Portraying an individual “as Hercules” in statuary such as this could be accomplished by

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<sup>141</sup> Cf. Downey 1969: 15, 51–52.

endowing the subject with any of Hercules' particular accoutrements, or combination thereof, including even his female dress from the Omphale episode,<sup>142</sup> but his *arma* remained the most popular, as befits a paragon of *virtus*. When such representation spread to coinage, as it did first under Hadrian and then again under Commodus,<sup>143</sup> the lionskin became the principal attribute used to portray the ruler as hero.

The iconographic expression of Commodus' personal relationship with Hercules developed progressively over the course of his time in power. Towards the end of his rule, from about A.D. 190, the formula "Hercules Commodianus" began to appear on imperial coin types featuring the hero (e.g. *RIC* 221). This formula represents a personal claim on Hercules, to be sure, but it must be seen as part of a slew of similar claims on a variety of elements of Roman culture, including the months of the year, the whole age (dubbed "saeculum aureum Commodianum"), and even Rome itself (now "Colonia Lucia Aurelia Nova Commodiana");<sup>144</sup> Hercules too was tagged as "Commodian"—but not as Commodus. The full assimilation between the two would come only in A.D. 192, when for the first time in coinage the obverse type of Commodus' portrait began to bear a lionskin headdress.<sup>145</sup> The reverse legend was likewise

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<sup>142</sup> Omphale, in turn, could be shown in Hercules' lionskin, and sometimes carrying his club, as a complementary expression of their role-exchange.

<sup>143</sup> A medallion of Hadrian (Gnecchi 1912: 19, no. 90 = British Museum no. R.5072) seems to bear an obverse type of the bust of Hadrian in Hercules' lionskin.

<sup>144</sup> Garzetti 1974: 547. The new name of Rome is sometimes given as Colonia Lucia Annia Commodiana or Colonia Lucia Aelia Nova Commodiana.

<sup>145</sup> Cf. Herodian 1.14.8, *SHA Comm.* 1.8.5.



updated to specify the emperor as “Hercules Romanus,” the Roman Hercules. The reverse types of these issues fall into two general groups.<sup>146</sup> One features Hercules’ *arma*: either a club alone (RIC 250–252, 637–638) or a bow, a club, and a quiver full of arrows (253, Figure 3.22; 639); the legend on these issues is consistently an abbreviated form of “Herculi Romano Augusto.” The other group features a figure with a lionskin and club driving a plough with two oxen (247, 629); the accompanying legend is an abbreviation of “Herculi Romano Conditori Consuli VII Patri Patriae.”<sup>147</sup> In both cases we find additional elements of imperial titulature appended to the phrase “Herculi Romano,” which suggests that this phrase should be read as performing the same function as the name “Commodus” (or any of the longer forms that appear as part of the obverse legends on his coins<sup>148</sup>). There can be no doubt here: the figure to whom the weapons—and the lionskin—belong, the figure shown at the plow as *conditor*, is no longer plain old Hercules or even a uniquely Commodian Hercules but rather Commodus-Hercules himself. The emperor thus uses the hero’s attributes to form not just an association but an identification between them, consistent with Commodus’ reported belief that he was a reincarnation of Hercules, in which capacity he would be entitled to claim both Hercules’ *arma* and his role as founder of Rome. In addition to these two groups of coin types, a total of nine “Commodus-Hercules” types appear on

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<sup>146</sup> RIC III Commodus 247, 250–253, 629, 637–639, 644–645. See Alföldi 1999: 54–56; Hekster 2002: 104–106; Palagia 1986: 147.

<sup>147</sup> The legends of both groups sometimes also include “S[*enatus*]C[*onsulto*]”.

<sup>148</sup> Until about A.D. 190, Commodus’ name on coinage resembles his father’s (including Marcus Aurelius Commodus Antoninus); in his final years, Commodus took up new names, including L. Aelius Aurelius Commodus and Hercules Romanus.

contemporary medallions, which are especially “closely connected to the person of the emperor.”<sup>149</sup>



Figure 3.22: Aureus of Commodus. Rome, A.D. 192. Obv.: Head of Commodus r., in lionskin headdress; around, clockwise from lower l., L·AEL·AVREL·COMM·AVG·P·FEL. Rev.: Bow, club, and quiver; around, clockwise from lower l., HERCVLI·ROMANO·AVG. *RIC* III Commodus 253.

While he may have taken it to extremes not seen since Nero and Domitian, Commodus’ connection to Hercules was not purely a personal eccentricity. Indeed, the Antonine dynasty as a whole tried to emphasize a familial connection to the hero-turned-deity, and Hadrian even appeared in a lionskin on his own medallions. (Examples from ordinary coinage and statuary are notably lacking.) Following in the footsteps of both Hadrian and Commodus, Septimius Severus too is portrayed in a lionskin on a limited number of medallions and coins. We have no evidence that Severus thought himself another reincarnation of Hercules; rather, the goal of such imagery in his case seems to have been to establish a familial rather than a personal connection. In the wake of Commodus’ assassination, it was imperative for Severus to secure his claim to power—to

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<sup>149</sup> Rowan 2012: 45; Toynbee 1944: 74–75, 208.

this end, he even gave out that he had been adopted as the son of Marcus Aurelius and hence brother of Commodus, whose memory Severus restored in 195. The general Antonine and specifically Commodian claims on Hercules' lionskin provided an opportunity for Severus to corroborate his claims via official iconography. The visual continuity provided by the lionskin headdress would have served as a powerful message advertising Severus' rise to power as a legitimate inheritance.<sup>150</sup> In effect, thanks in large part to Commodus' popularization of the hybrid ruler-hero in the final years of his rule, the lionskin had come to represent the imperial power of the Antonines and of Commodus in particular, a power connected and eventually assimilated to that of the hero himself; the transfer of the skin from Commodus to Severus thus aptly symbolized the transfer of that power from one emperor to the next.

As a symbol of imperial power with heroic connotations, the lionskin headdress regained popularity in the later 3<sup>rd</sup> century A.D., when it was adopted as an apt visual expression of the *signum* Herculi, the title given to junior emperors as a complement to the senior *signum* Iovius.<sup>151</sup> This relationship between senior and junior emperor, in which the emperors were conceived as sharing power based on the divine model of Jupiter and his son Hercules, respectively, began in A.D. 286, when Diocletian formally elevated his junior partner Maximian, formerly titled "Caesar," to Diocletian's own level of "Augustus." The *signa* Iovius and Herculi were used to distinguish the two Augusti, and Maximian advertised his new status on coinage not

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<sup>150</sup> Rowan 2012: 47–49.

<sup>151</sup> See esp. Rees 2005.

with words but with the lionskin headdress (e.g. Figure 3.23). The pairing of an obverse type of the emperor wearing a lionskin with a reverse type of Hercules suggests a comparison to the issues struck in the final years of Commodus' reign, where the figure on the reverse carrying Hercules' *arma* is most probably to be interpreted as Commodus-Hercules. Upon closer inspection, however, these 3<sup>rd</sup>-century issues differ from their Commodian counterparts. In the aureus below (Figure 3.23), for example, the reverse legend is best taken as HERCVLI DEBELLAT*ori* ("to Hercules the Conqueror"), in which the name Hercules appears in the dative.<sup>152</sup> This reverse type of Hercules subduing the Hydra may be meant to recall Maximian's victory-by-proxy over the rebel Carausius, who fell to Constantine, then Maximian's Caesar, in 293. But the figure on the reverse, helpfully identified by the legend, is not Maximian or Constantine but rather Hercules himself as a patron of Maximian in his recent military success, the slaying of the hydra a visual metaphor for contemporary imperial victory.<sup>153</sup> Correspondingly, the lionskin headdress in Maximian's obverse portrait is best explained as a sign that the emperor should be seen not as *Hercules* but as *Herculius*. Whereas Commodus merited the lionskin by being the new and improved Roman version of Hercules himself, Maximian merits it by filling the role of the hero, emulating him as a kind of avatar or agent, his

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<sup>152</sup> The exergual mark PROM is the signature of the mint of Rome. The aureus series with mint-mark PROM was omitted from *RIC* VI, apparently in error. Webb (*RIC* V.2, p. 214) notes that PROM only appears after Diocletian's reform of 293/294, whereas PR occurs both before and afterwards.

<sup>153</sup> Toynbee 1944: 208–209.

mortal double on earth (“Hercules’ protégé,” per Toynbee<sup>154</sup>). In other words, while Hercules-Commodus is an *assimilation*, or “complete identification,”<sup>155</sup> Hercules-Maximian is an *association*—a close relationship, to be sure, but one that has its limits.



Figure 3.23: Aureus of Maximian Herculeus. Rome, A.D. 293–294. Obv.: Bust of Maximian r., wearing lionskin headdress; around, clockwise from lower l., MAXIMIANVS P F AVG. Rev.: Hercules standing r., grasping Hydra with l. hand and striking it with club in r. hand; around, clockwise from lower l., HERCVLI DEBELLAT; in exergue, PROM. Cohen VI<sup>2</sup> 254 var.

At the end of the first chapter, we saw how Turnus made a serious misstep in wearing the baldric of the late Pallas, thereby causing a conflict in that the semantic space of the *arma* was being occupied by two different men. While it avoids violating cultural norms in the same way, the adoption of the lionskin of Hercules, like that of the torque of the Torquati and the elephant of the Metelli, operates on exactly the same principle, namely that the arms must match the men. The fundamental problem highlighted by the Turnus incident, among others, is that the spoils in those cases are reused by *different* men. In deliberately adopting spoils as insignia, the adopters

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<sup>154</sup> Ibid. 184.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid. 208.

send the opposite message: that they are entitled to those spoils, not only to the mere possession of them but to the right to redeploy them as their own. Whether claimed adversatively from an enemy or cooperatively from a predecessor (be it ancestral or merely spiritual), spoils become handles by which claims can be made upon the identities that they represent. The adoption of spoils is therefore not simply a message of alliance or solidarity, as would be the adoption of any set of arms or visual signifier, but of a fundamental sharing of identity, specifically with respect to the power required to claim them.

### Plundering Power

In concluding, I wish to return briefly to the particular arrangement of spoils discussed at the beginning of the chapter, namely the *tropaeum*. Whereas the torque, the elephant, and the lionskin are examples of specific spoils, the trophy itself is a form of spoils-*display*. Hölscher (2006) has recently traced the development of the trophy as a popular method of commemorating victory adopted by the Romans from the Greeks, illustrating some of the key differences in the ways in which the Romans used the trophy as opposed to the Greeks. But these differences grew to be more than simply Roman variations on an originally Greek concept, as the Romans' own view of the trophy and its origins demonstrably changed over the course of time. Whereas early Roman literary sources contain references to the taking of Greek trophies as spoils, by the Augustan period the Romans had begun to claim the very concept of the trophy itself for their own.

The earliest references to *tropaea* in extant Latin literature appear in fragments ascribed to plays with Greek contexts, such as Accius' *Armorum iudicium* and *Eurysaces*.<sup>156</sup> The acknowledgement of the trophy as originally Greek persisted in later times as well: Propertius, for example, credits Ennius with mention of Greek trophies brought to Rome by Aemilius Paulus in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century B.C.<sup>157</sup> Both Livy and Virgil, however, recast the trophy as a (proto-)Roman invention to the utter exclusion of its historical Greek origin. In the *Aeneid*, it is primarily Aeneas (or a surrogate, such as Haemon) who constructs trophies, for example the one of Mezentius' arms discussed at the end of the first chapter; Nielson notes that, while Virgil's Italians are already familiar with the trophy, Aeneas was "traditionally" the one who brought the first trophy to Italy.<sup>158</sup> Aeneas' and Haemon's choice of Mars as the dedicatee of their trophies further emphasizes the ultimately Roman nature of the trophy in Virgil, for Mars plays a vital role as the divine progenitor of Rome. In Livy, on the other hand, the first trophy in Roman history is an *ad hoc* invention of Romulus made to display the uniquely Roman *spolia opima* as part of his establishment of the first temple and the first pomerium at Rome, all critical acts in the foundation of the city and her culture.<sup>159</sup> In this passage Livy even refrains from using the word

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<sup>156</sup> *Armorum iudicium* (TrRF fr. 148): *nam tropaeum ferre me a forti viro | pulcrum est: si autem vincar, vinci a tali nullum mi est probrum*; *Eurysaces* (TrRF fr. 366): *tot tropaea transdes, summam gloriam evorti sines | tam desubito?*

<sup>157</sup> Prop. 3.3.8.

<sup>158</sup> Nielson 1983: 27.

<sup>159</sup> Liv. 1.10.

*tropaeum*, a marked Graecism in that it was a direct transliteration,<sup>160</sup> this avoidance can be read as linguistically distancing Romulus' creation from any connotation of Greekness. Thus Virgil and Livy closely identify the invention of the trophy with the establishment of Roman culture by Aeneas and Romulus, respectively, both in a general era and in specific contexts focused particularly on these two figures as founders of Roman culture.

In these two passages we find a new form of cultural appropriation at work. The trophy as portrayed in Augustan literature is not a product of "Romanization" in the sense of imitation, adaptation, or even two-way syncretism. Rather, it exemplifies the wholesale re-envisioning of a foreign cultural product as a native one. The complete co-option of the trophy as a form of spoils-display represents a takeover not just of a specific power belonging to one person, family, or nation, but of the transference of power symbolized by the trophy itself. Thus the Romans did not simply adopt the trophy as an icon of the symbolic power of victory but wholly subsumed into their own cultural identity the very concept of the trophy as the prime mechanism of claiming such power, thereby turning the trophy into an ideological spoil all its own.

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<sup>160</sup> Cairns 2006: 420.



#### IV. *Spolia Augusta* Afterlives and Transformations

In the bowels of the Vatican Museums resides another, infinitely more famous statue than the Princeton torso. Its appendages intact, indeed remarkably well preserved, it stands for the most part on its own two feet. While it necessarily shares all of the generic significance of any cuirassed statue, the iconography of this particular example is dominated by the specific: the *tropaeum* that takes pride of place on the Princeton cuirass is still present, but it has been tucked away around the right side of the unfinished backplate, leaving the breastplate free for imagery intimately connected to the man who wears it (Figure 4.1). As discussed in the first chapter, even had the head not survived, the sphinxes on the shoulder-straps would be sufficient to identify the statue as a portrait of Augustus. (The findspot of the piece has led to it being called the Augustus of Prima Porta, after the gate near Livia's villa on the Via Flaminia.) The tableau on the breastplate proper is just as particular to the *princeps* as the sphinx that graced his signet ring: the central scene celebrates one of Augustus' most vaunted successes, the recovery of the lost military standards from Parthia in 20 B.C., a feat unmatched in Roman history. The cuirass itself is likewise unmatched not only in artistic complexity but also in terms of iconographic significance, for although most Roman cuirassed statues feature as their centerpiece a visual allegory of generic imperial victory, such as a *tropaeum*, the Prima Porta cuirass presents an image of victory that is uniquely Augustan.



Figure 4.1: Detail of the Augustus of Prima Porta. Vatican Museums, Museo Chiaramonti, inv. no. 2290.

Like the more generic *tropaeum*, the central scene of the cuirass of the Augustus of Prima Porta relies upon spoils as a visual token of the power transfer from the one who yields them to the one who takes (or, as in this case, *retakes*) them. As we have seen, such spoils retain something essential of the identity of their original owners, while at the same time reflecting upon their new owners, specifically with respect to *virtus*. Accordingly, like all spoils won by the Romans, the standards lost to the Parthians and recovered in 20 B.C. speak directly to Roman *virtus*. Having been recovered through the direct intervention of Augustus, however, these spoils reflect not just upon the *virtus* of Rome—an idea evoked directly by the central image on the

cuirass, especially if the cuirassed figure receiving the *aquila* is indeed to be identified as Roma herself—but upon the *virtus* of the *princeps* in particular. Thus it is fitting that we find the return of the standards on the cuirass of no other Roman *imperator* before or after, for this particular victory belongs to Augustus alone.

It is understandable that the recovery of the standards quickly became a principal feature of Augustan iconography, but the standards were not recovered until 20 B.C., more than two decades after Octavian had taken up the mantle of Caesar and seven years after he had been granted the name Augustus, among other honors. The intervening years were hardly devoid of *virtus* on the part of the *princeps*, however, either in image or in action; it was simply that he used other forms of spoil to make his claims to that quality. Here we will explore two spoils traditions that originated in Republican times but were fundamentally reconfigured in the early years of the Principate to speak to specifically Augustan rather than just generically Roman *virtus*. The first is the laurel, whose functionally independent identities as the traditional symbol of imperatorial victory and the sacred plant of Apollo came together in the last days of the Republic and in this new form played an integral part in the rise of Octavian and his particular brand of *auctoritas*. The second is the problematic tradition of the *spolia opima*, the “spoils of honor,” which the *princeps* first buried and subsequently revived in his own image. As we will see, this latter tradition brings us full circle, for it can be connected directly to the return of the standards from Parthia. In the last chapter we traced three narratives that highlighted the pivotal role of specific spoils in making claims of succession; here we will see how two spoils traditions were

transformed in a pivotal moment in Roman history to redefine the very concepts of victory and *virtus* themselves.

### A Crowning Glory

We have already seen to some extent how despoliation constitutes a transfer from victim to victor of a particular object chosen as a physical representative of key intangibles, primarily *virtus* but also its concomitant rank, status, and power. Through this act, the object taken as spoil is reconfigured into a central component of the victor's statement of his victory, and the physical transfer of possession correspondingly reflects a symbolic transformation of the despoiled object (i.e. from non-spoil to spoil) and its meaning as a status symbol (i.e. from a symbol of an unconquered party to that of the one by whom that party was eventually conquered). So far we have focused almost exclusively on examples of *arma* (including animals when used in battle) as the primary targets of despoliation, but in a discussion of transformations in an Augustan context there is one famous narrative of particular interest: Ovid's treatment of Apollo and Daphne in the *Metamorphoses*.<sup>1</sup> While not exactly conventional, both the myth itself and Ovid's telling of it are despoliation narratives at heart, and the latter in particular spotlights the key role of the laurel in Augustan culture.

In the second chapter we saw how Daphne prayed to be transformed physically so that Apollo would not succeed in his goal of possessing her as a man would a woman (i.e. sexually).

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<sup>1</sup> 1.452–567.

Her prayer works to the extent that she ceases being a woman, or at least female in form, and so ultimately she cannot be Apollo's bride in the conventional sense. The god persists in pursuing her even so, but Daphne's transformation forces him to change his approach. Denied his original goal, he nevertheless claims a sort of victory and declares his triumph both verbally and visually. How he does so is particularly relevant for our purposes. In the first place, Ovid's narrative provides an aetiology for one of the most common symbols of victory in Roman culture in the form of the laurel, which is nothing less than the spoil claimed from Daphne by Apollo. Moreover, both the specific words put in Apollo's mouth and the key role of Ovid's Apollo as an *auctor* who fundamentally changes the meaning of the laurel through his act of despoliation call direct attention to Augustus and his own role in doing much the same on a historical level.

While neither predominantly martial nor straightforwardly sexual, Ovid's version undeniably engages with both of these elements in essential ways. It opens with a divine contest of arms, with Cupid setting out to prove that he is more powerful than Apollo in the use of their shared weapon, the bow. The love god wounds not one but two victims: Apollo with a fiery arrow, to incite erotic passion; and Daphne with a leaden arrow, to turn her cold to Apollo's advances. She was already predisposed to reject his amorous overtures, for she emulated Diana in that she lived as a virgin huntress who spurned the traditional role of women and its outward signs, including feminine clothing and elaborate hairdos.<sup>2</sup> Cupid's intervention further ensures

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<sup>2</sup> This part of the myth is consistent across all extant versions, both Greek and Roman. It has been suggested (Róheim 1930: 308; Fontenrose 1978: 49) that Daphne is a stand-in for Artemis/Diana, or is the goddess herself, based at least in part on ancient testimony that Artemis had the epithet Daphnia (Str. 8.3.12) or Daphnaia (Paus.

that she will resist, but it simultaneously forces Apollo to *persist*. To halt his unstoppable force, Daphne becomes an immovable object: through divine intervention she transforms into the laurel tree. Immediately after her metamorphosis, Apollo attempts to claim the newly arboreal nymph as if she were still physically a woman: he feels her heart beneath her bark, and he tries to embrace her branches like human arms.<sup>3</sup> When the Daphne-tree shrinks away from him, Apollo acknowledges that she cannot be his wife (*coniunx mea non potes esse*, 1.557), but in the following line he insists that she will be his tree (*arbor eris certe...mea!* 1.558). Through his words Apollo makes it clear that he considers himself to have won his Laurel, no matter her physical form.

It is worth examining the ways in which Ovid has Apollo claim his prize. The god's initial approach, as a marital suitor, is stymied both by Daphne's lifestyle (she is every bit a *virago*) and then by Cupid's leaden arrow. Apollo's stubborn persistence despite Daphne's change of form may perhaps be characterized as settling for less of a prize than what he had originally desired,<sup>4</sup> but despite an initial verbal concession (reading *certe* as "at least") there is no other hint that his possession of her, and therefore his triumph, is in any sense less than complete. (In fact, in

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3.24.8). Such epithets at least suggest that in some places Artemis was thought to be connected to the laurel as a sacred symbol (cf. Kerenyi 1951: 141) in the same way as her brother, which is not unexpected since they are twins (cf. their use of the same weapon, the bow).

<sup>3</sup> As we saw in chapter 1, human-tree relations also played an important role in despoliation narrative in that a tree or branch served as both literal and symbolic trunk of the trophy (*tropaeum*).

<sup>4</sup> e.g. A.H. Griffiths, *OCD* s.v. Daphne: "[Apollo] **had to content himself** with adopting her foliage as his cultic plant" (emphasis added).

Apollonian cults the suppliant's laurel-branch was interpreted as a wedding symbol, implying that in initiates' eyes the god did indeed end up getting his girl.<sup>5</sup>) Apollo's promised treatment of the new Daphne is designed to convey this completeness of possession: he adopts her as his personal adornment, which he promises to place in his hair,<sup>6</sup> on his lyre, and on his quiver, a trio of things that can be considered to fulfill the same emblematic role as *arma*.<sup>7</sup> The laurel thus becomes Apollo's personal insignia, just as a cuirassed *imperator* might boast a similar allegory of victory as his own emblem. Ovid's Apollo proceeds to "prophesy" that the laurel will attend Roman generals at their triumphs; that it will stand guard at the doorposts of Augustus' house; and that its leaves will remain in perpetuity, just as Apollo's own hair will be forever young. The god thereby assigns his pet plant a new role as the emblem of all Roman *triumphatores*, including the most authoritative of all in the form of Augustus himself. This new function grants both the laurel and the Roman generals who earned it the kind of immortality belonging to the god responsible for endowing it with such symbolic significance. Remaining unsaid—but very much lurking in the background—is the fact that the laurel was likewise used to symbolize and grant the same immortal glory to poets.

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<sup>5</sup> Cf. G.C. Baudy, *NP* s.v. Daphne (2).

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Oppian's description of the god as δαφνοκόμης, literally "laurel-haired" (*Cyn.* 1.365); κόμη could also be used metaphorically to mean "foliage" (*Od.* 23.195).

<sup>7</sup> The quiver is of course part of Apollo's offensive weaponry, while the lyre is the particular implement that he uses to produce music, one of his other major provinces; for hair as a symbolic equivalent to *arma* in a markedly feminine way, see below. It is not at all unexpected to find Apollo exhibiting femininity here. Even in his earliest descriptions and depictions he is most often portrayed as a beardless ephebe marked by androgynous and even effeminate traits, among which his typically long tresses take pride of place.

Thus the Apollo of the *Metamorphoses* incorporates part of his beloved into his own identity and thereby gives the laurel new life and meaning. While it is not explicitly called spoil in this particular episode, such a reading can be supported by an examination of the role that it is made to play. Just as a man's *arma* ought to be considered an essential part of him, so too is the laurel essentially Daphne herself, and their shared identity is reflected in their common name (the Latin *laurus* and *laurea* translate the Greek δάφνη<sup>8</sup>). As a result, when Apollo claims the laurel with the vocative "laure" (1.559), he is claiming Daphne-the-Laurel herself as a prize, saying to her that his hair, his lyre, and his quiver "will have [her]" (*habebunt | te* 1.558–9). Moreover, just as Roman generals and emperors would later add their victories to their names in the form of *agnomina* (e.g. Torquatus and Coriolanus), Apollo's successful pursuit of Daphne is reflected in his name in the form of the epithet Daphnephoros ("Laurel-Bearer"); in Latin the word is rendered *laurifer* or *lauriger*, the latter of which appears as an epithet of Apollo elsewhere in the Ovidian corpus (*Ars Am.* 3.389) and in other Augustan poetry.<sup>9</sup> Apollo thus incorporates

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<sup>8</sup> *TLL* s.v. *laurus* 7.2.1061.6 (van Wees-Buchwald) for δάφνη as a synonym. The term *laurus* supposedly referred to the tree itself and *laurea* to a wreath or branch (*TLL* s.v. *laurus* 7.2.1061.11–12), but this difference is not always observed when they are used by metonymy to mean victory or a triumph.

<sup>9</sup> Propertius likewise has Apollo describe his own hand using the term *lauriger* at 4.6.54. The connection between Augustus in particular and Apollo's laurel will be discussed in greater depth below. The epithet δαφνηφόρος is exclusive among gods to Apollo (Paus. 9.10.4 [Thebes]; *IG* 12(9).191A.11, 210.29, 208.24, IM 78.3 [Eretria]; Anacreon 12.6, Plu. *Them.* 15, *IG* 22.3630.7, 5079 [2<sup>nd</sup> c. B.C.]) and by association the Sun (Lyd. *Mens.* 4.155); the variant δαφνηφόριος is found on an inscription from Chaeronea (*IG* VII 3407). Similar epithets were also used to describe the sites of his oracles and temples (e.g. δαφνηρεφής, Porph. fr. 338.14, of the aditon at Delphi; δαφνηφορεῖον of another one of his temples, Theophr. fr. 119). The adjectival form δαφνηφορικός refers either to Apollo himself or to a festival in his honor, the Daphnephoria, an Attic festival in honor of Ismenian Apollo which featured a young boy assigned to parade a laurel-branch (Poll. 4.53; Suida s.v. Pindaros; Procl. ap. Phot. Bibl. P. 321; *IG* 22.1358B.38, 1092B.25).



the laurel into his own identity on multiple levels: it physically graces his equipment and his body, while at the same time it is reflected onomastically in his epithet, which operates as a victory title. While a plant might not have been quite the kind of *virgineae exuviae* that the god had originally sought, he nevertheless physically and symbolically subsumes the laurel in such a way that we cannot doubt his possession of it (and so of Daphne herself, albeit in an altered state). Indeed, the plant was felt to be connected so closely to the god that oracular priestesses of Apollo in some cases literally consumed the laurel by ingesting its crushed leaves or inhaling the smoke from burning it as a way of channeling the god and his power of prophecy.<sup>10</sup>

Moreover, just as masculine *arma* were prime targets of despoliation because they were perceived to represent their owner's *virtus*, we can identify a crucial element of Daphne's state (both pre- and post-transformation) that represented her own particular virtue. The clue lies in Apollo's final words, in which the god promises his tree that just as his own hair is always young (1.564), so too will she "always bear the perpetual honor of leaves" (*tu quoque perpetuos semper gere frondis honores!* 1.565). Apollo's statement points to the laurel's leaves as a source of her honor—at least as a tree. Pre-transformation Daphne had no leaves, presumably, but she did have the equivalent as established by Apollo in the preceding line: her hair. That hair is indeed one of the parts of her over which Apollo markedly obsesses when he moons over her feminine beauty (cf. 1.497–498, but especially 1.529–530, where Daphne's hair, loosed from its ribbon and streaming in the wind, contributes to her *aucta...forma*, "augmented beauty"). If Daphne's virtue

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<sup>10</sup> Tibull. 2.5.63, Juv. 7.19.

as a woman is expressed through her beauty (as it in Apollo's eyes<sup>11</sup>), and her hair is a primary contributor to that beauty, then it ought to serve quite well as a feminine equivalent to *arma*. In lieu of Daphne's hair, Apollo takes the laurel's leaves, which are the most recognizable feature of the plant from a visual perspective. Indeed, all of Apollo's promises are very visual in nature, as is the Daphne-Laurel's arboreal nod of assent in response to his words, for the symbolic capital of visual symbols only has power insofar as those symbols are seen.

A reading of the laurel branch and its iconic leaves as spoil is strengthened further by an Ovidian intertext, namely the poet's treatment of female hair in *Amores* 1.14. In the very opening lines the narrator begins to console Corinna over the loss of her hair, which she has effectively dyed to death. He takes great pains to describe the lost hair's beauty, a point of comparison with the way in which Ovid describes Daphne's hair. Corinna feels the loss of her own hair so keenly that she considers sending for a wig made of the hair of German captives, which is glossed as the "tribute of a conquered people" (*triumphatae munere gentis* 46). Much as the Roman army incorporated such conquered peoples (together with their arms) and used them to continue conquering, this Roman woman plans to use the source of these defeated enemies' beauty in order to maintain her own. The narrator assures Corinna in closing that the damage is only

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<sup>11</sup> Daphne is portrayed as very much as a mini-Diana at the beginning of the episode. She prefers to hunt and even delights in spoils of her own—specifically the animals that she has caught while hunting. Whereas other armed female figures may operate as men and therefore take and yield spoils as men would (see chapter 2), Apollo is not interested in engaging with Daphne in this way. Instead, Cupid's arrow forces Apollo to wish that Daphne would assume a woman's role so that he could interact with her as a man would with a woman (cf. his plaintive sighing over Daphne's unstyled hair, one of the many signs that she does not subscribe to a traditional feminine gender role).

temporary (*reparabile damnum est* 55), for her “native hair” will grow back eventually. In the meantime, however, Corinna reveals a telling concern: she fears that her fame will no longer be her own, but that the German wig will earn it in place of Corinna herself. In the end, Corinna’s fear of going hairless—and the shame such a sight would bring—trumps her fear that the alien hair will steal her limelight. In expressing this concern she identifies her hair as a key source of her *fama*, just as Roman men relied in large part on their *arma* for the same.

In the *Metamorphoses* too, Ovid treats hair as a primary source of feminine beauty, which is in turn portrayed as a chief feminine virtue, and thus a main source of feminine *fama*. Daphne-as-Laurel’s leaves, like Corinna’s hair (of both the native and imported varieties), are explicitly linked to their owner’s *fama*<sup>12</sup> and are thus made to serve as physical representations of that honor or fame in much the same way that a man’s arms represent the honor or fame that he has won as a result of the deeds that he has performed with them. It is therefore fitting that such “feminine spoil” receive a similar treatment to martial spoils in the sense that both are oftentimes appropriated and incorporated into the identity of the appropriator in an effort to enhance his (or her) prestige. Moreover, both episodes reinforce the idea that the value of such spoils relies entirely on their display, which is again consistent with the highly visual nature of Apollo’s promises and Daphne’s response. It is also consistent with the typical treatment of martial spoils, including the lavish spoil-displays in triumphal processions, the dedication and ensuing display

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<sup>12</sup> It may not be coincidence that *Amores* 1.14, a poem about feminine hair and the *fama* that it brings, is immediately followed by a poem about a man seeking immortality in the form of eternal fame (*fama perennis* 1.15.7).

of spoils in temples, and the Roman custom of displaying spoils in the most conspicuous places in the home.<sup>13</sup>

Finally, there is still one more metamorphosis worth mentioning in Ovid's narrative, namely that of the narrative itself, which underscores the fundamental nature of despoliation as a transfer of power on multiple levels. Ovid's account of Apollo's pursuit of Daphne highlights the god's creativity in pursuing his object despite her unexpected change, much as Peleus must adapt to Thetis' shifting forms in order to win her as a wife. Apollo is not as lucky as Peleus, however, for Daphne does not eventually revert to her original state. Instead, Apollo himself adapts in reaction to her transformation and ultimately comes away as a triumphant victor—even if that victory, as we have seen, was not in the form that he had originally sought. His claiming of spoil from Daphne (or rather of Daphne herself as spoil), followed closely by his subsequent subsuming of that spoil into his own identity, transforms the narrative from one of failure into one of triumph. Entirely forgotten is the fact that Apollo's victory logically redounds to Cupid's credit as well—in fact, Cupid himself falls entirely by the wayside. Apollo instead seizes the narrative as his own, effectively effacing his rival, and becomes sole victor by responding to initial disappointment in such a way that in hindsight it seems hardly to have been a hurdle at all: his achievement is presented as a triumph no less glorious for Daphne's sudden metamorphosis. Indeed, it is Daphne herself in the form of the laurel who bestows the glory of that triumph on

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<sup>13</sup> Polyb. 6.39.10: ἔν τε ταῖς οἰκίαις κατὰ τοὺς ἐπιφανεστάτους τόπους τιθέασι τὰ σκῦλα, σημεῖα ποιούμενοι καὶ μαρτύρια τῆς ἑαυτῶν ἀρετῆς.

Apollo through her leaves, the evergreen manifestation of everlasting fame.<sup>14</sup> Apollo's right to such a victory is predicated not just on his lengthy verbal claim but at least as much on the tangible takeaway from his victim, which he reconfigures as a symbol to represent the honor won by himself and promised to his chosen thereafter. Here at last we find something conventional about Ovid's tale: just as any claim to triumph relies in large part upon display of a physical prize in the form of spoil, Apollo's claim to victory here likewise rests squarely upon his laurels.

### The *Princeps* Laureate

The promises put in Apollo's mouth by Ovid barely do justice to the close connection between the laurel and the concept of victory in the Roman world. Already synonymous with victory in Republican times, during the transition to Empire the laurel was further manipulated and transformed in an effort to maximize its potential in terms of symbolic capital. Much like the torque of the Torquati and the elephant of the Metelli, the laurel became yet another example of the funneling of power and authority, formerly available to a relatively wide field of aristocratic competitors, into one predominant line: that of Augustus. The words of Ovid's Apollo neatly echo that transition, attributing the laurel as the god's bequest first to Roman *imperatores* as a class and then to Augustus individually, the man whose personal connection to that symbol would eclipse even his adoptive father's.

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<sup>14</sup> Cf. Pliny's claim that the laurel, as the sign of victory (*victoriae insigne*), "would decorate" (*decoraret*) the rise of Trajan (*Paneg.* 8.2). The verb *decorare*, a synonym for *ornare*, describes the application of *decus*, a distinction of honor.

Just as Ovid has Apollo “predict,” the laurel enjoyed pride of place in the Roman triumph even in Republican times: during the procession the *triumphator* himself wore a laurel-wreath<sup>15</sup> and carried a laurel-branch in his hand,<sup>16</sup> while the *fasces* of the general’s lictors and the weapons of his soldiers were bound with laurel in honor of the occasion.<sup>17</sup> It was as an announcement of victory, and perhaps in anticipation of a triumph, that the laurel would also be included by a general in his letters to the senate reporting the initial news of his success.<sup>18</sup> Thus the *insignia laureae* were less obliquely the *victoriae insigne*,<sup>19</sup> and the words *laurea* and *laurus* by themselves could even be used by metonymy to refer to such a military victory or to a triumph that resulted from it.<sup>20</sup> We can see this at work in the second part of Cicero’s famous phrase “cedant arma

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<sup>15</sup> Plin. *NH* 15.127: *laurus triumphis proprie dicatur*; cf. 15.39.125, where M. Crassus is said to have worn a laurel-wreath, properly worn only during a full triumph, when he celebrated an ovation for his victory over Spartacus (Plut. *Crass.* 11.8). Plutarch likewise notes that the wearing of a laurel-wreath, like the use of the quadriga and the accompaniment of trumpets, was proper to a triumph but not an ovation (*Marc.* 22.2).

<sup>16</sup> Plut. *Paull.* 34.

<sup>17</sup> Cic. *Att.* 7.10; Ov. *Met.* 1.560; Plin. *NH* 15.136; Plut. *Marc.* 22.3.

<sup>18</sup> *TLL* s.v. *laurus* 7.2.1062.34–43 (van Wees-Buchwald), citing esp. Plin. *NH* 15.133; for the concept of *litterae laureatae*, see *TLL* s.v. *laureus* 7.2.1058.21–24. Cf. *B.C.* 3.71.3 for a notable exception (in the aftermath of Dyrrhachium, July 48 B.C.): *Pompeius eo proelio imperator est appellatus. hoc nomen obtinuit atque ita se postea salutari passus sed neque in litteris adscribere est solitus neque in fascibus insignia laureae praetulit*. Perhaps Pompey declined to use the *insignia laureae* because he was not assured that he had been completely successful against Caesar: according to Plutarch, Pompey declined to finish off Caesar’s army either out of inability or out of fear (*Pomp.* 65.5). The acclamation of *imperator* would have come from Pompey’s troops, who evidently thought the victory real enough—as did Caesar, who took the opportunity to retreat to Thessaly while purportedly admitting to friends: “Today the enemy would have had their victory if they had had a victor.” (Plut. *Pomp.* 65.5: Σήμερον ἂν ἡ νίκη παρὰ τοῖς πολεμίοις ἦν, εἰ τὸν νικῶντα εἶχον.)

<sup>19</sup> *Caes.* *BC* 3.71.3 (*insignia laureae*); Plin. *Pan.* 8.2 (*victoriae insigne*).

<sup>20</sup> Cic. *Fam.* 2.16.2; Plin. *Pan.* 14; Stat. *Silv.* 4.1.4; Mart. 7.6.10; Juv. 8.253; Plin. *NH* 7.117: *primus in toga triumphum linguaeque lauream merite*; cf. Plaut. *Cist.* 1.3.53: *parite laudem et lauream*. Cf. also the parallel use of *palma*.

togae, concedat laurea laudi,”<sup>21</sup> where *laurea* alludes to the triumphal glory won abroad through *arma*, whose position it parallels, whereas *laus* correspondingly signifies the kind of verbal praise earned “at home” in the civic sphere.<sup>22</sup> In imperial times this verbal metonymy developed further still to the point where a laurel-branch came to be used on occasion as a physical replacement for the triumphal procession itself.<sup>23</sup>

Ovid likewise relies on the laurel’s role as both insignia and metonym of the orderly Roman triumph when he sets it in counterpoint to the *thyrsus*, the similarly sceptral attribute of the wild Bacchic procession.<sup>24</sup> Like the traditional scepter, which was carried by the *triumphator*

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<sup>21</sup> Cic. fr. 6 Soubiran = fr. 11 Blänsdorf = fr. 12 Courtney = fr. 16 Morel (who has *linguae* as the original reading). The full line reappears at *Off.* 1.77, and the second half of the line (with *laudi*) at *Pis.* 74.

<sup>22</sup> Cicero himself explains the significance at *Pis.* 74. A *lectio varia* for *laudi* is *linguae*, which also appears in the pseudo-Sallustian invective; as a parody it would refer to Cicero’s habit of praising himself incessantly in his own oratory ([Sall.] *in Cic.* 3.6). Cf. Plutarch’s translation (*Comp. Dem. Cic.* 2.2): τὰ ὄπλα ἔδει τῆ τηβέννω καὶ τῆ γλώττη τὴν θριαμβικὴν ὑπέκειν δάφνην; his use of the phrase ἡ θριαμβικὴ δάφνη (“the triumphal laurel”) to translate *laurea* confirms that the term *laurea* should be taken here as metonymy for the military triumph. (The Greek noun ὁ θριαμβος and its corresponding adjective, θριαμβικός, are used to translate the Latin *triumphus* and *triumphalis*, respectively.) For another Ciceronian example of the contrast between martial insignia (namely *currus* and *laurea*) and *laus*, cf. Cic. *Fam.* 15.6.1: *quem ego currum aut quam lauream cum tua* (sc. Catonis) *laudatione conferrem?*

<sup>23</sup> Suet. *Dom.* 6, *Tib.* 17, *Ner.* 13; Plin. *Pan.* 8.

<sup>24</sup> Ov. *Pont.* 2.5.67. The line is mangled, but not beyond all hope. Peter Green proposes *thyrsus enim nobis gestata est, laurea vobis*, with his explanation relying in large part precisely on the ready comparison between the *thyrsus* and the *laurea* as principal attributes of the Bacchic procession and Roman triumph, respectively (p. 323). While the leaves of the laurel were considered to impart the power of prophecy when ingested (cf. *Tib.* 2.5.63 and *Juv.* 7.19), and so laurel-chewing might be connected with the notion of the poet as *vates* (cf. the opening of Ov. *Fasti* 4), this interpretation runs into difficulties. Since the *thyrsus* is never chewed (unless by rabid Bacchae playing fetch?), it becomes difficult to explain why its counterpart should be treated as a consumable in this context. Moreover, were the laurel in its Ovidian context here the generic attribute of poetry and prophecy, then it would be hard to explain why only *one* of the two poets (Ovid but not Salanus) should have access to it. I find it much more likely that each poet is meant to be given a single attribute, as Green argues: one the *thyrsus* and the other the laurel, each meant to characterize the nature of their respective poet’s work. The laurel will then be the attribute of military glory, particularly that won by Germanicus, to which Ovid alludes in the second line of the poem.

along with the laurel- or palm-branch,<sup>25</sup> in the context of the triumph the laurel may also have signified the pseudo-divinity enjoyed by the general for the day, especially as this plant conveyed connotations of sanctity and sacredness outside of the triumph as well: laurel-wreaths were used to adorn not only the brows of victors (military, athletic, and poetic) but also of priests<sup>26</sup> and ancestral *imagines* during festivals.<sup>27</sup> The laurel is equally identified with victory in iconography, where it frequently appears as an attribute of Victory personified, much like the trophy. Victory is typically shown with a branch or wreath in hand, the latter often used to crown an honorand, and much the same message could be conveyed by the placing of her branch directly in the hand of the victor. (Hence, for example, Jupiter holding a laurel-branch may be interpreted as Jupiter Victor.<sup>28</sup>) Thus the laurel, whether as branch or wreath, was synonymous with victory, and it correspondingly served as the *insigne* of the *imperator as triumphator*.<sup>29</sup>

Apollo's much more specific promise in the *Metamorphoses* that the laurel would grace the doorposts of Augustus' house naturally benefitted from Ovid's hindsight at a time when Augustus had become closely associated with both this particular plant and this particular god. The specific laurels to which Ovid's Apollo alludes were part of the massive symbolic capital

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<sup>25</sup> The triumphator carried a scepter in his left hand (Dion. Hal. 5.47, Val. Max. 4.4.5) and a laurel-branch in his right hand (Plut. *Paull.* 34).

<sup>26</sup> Liv. 23.11, Ov. *Fast.* 3.137 of *flamines* specifically.

<sup>27</sup> Cic. *Mur.* 41.

<sup>28</sup> *RRC* 531/1a–b with commentary in Crawford 1974: 533.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. the gloss on *laurus* at *TLL* 7.2.1062.7–8 (van Wees-Buchwald) as “*insigne imperatorum, triumphatorum*” during the Republic.



granted to the *princeps* by the senate in January of 27 B.C. in response to his decision to give up a substantial amount of his formal power. In addition to the two laurel-trees planted outside his front door, the *princeps* was granted the name of Augustus; the honor of the *corona civica*, an oak-wreath traditionally awarded for saving the life of a fellow citizen; and a golden shield whose dedicatory inscription praised him for four particular virtues (*virtus*, *clementia*, *iustitia*, and *pietas*).<sup>30</sup> Along with the oak-wreath and the shield, Augustus' twin laurel trees appear quite frequently on contemporary coinage,<sup>31</sup> but Ovid's suggestion that it was *Apollo* who somehow granted them to Augustus is something of a false aetiology. It is true that the laurel grew to become more intimately associated with Augustus than it had been with any other individual before him and that it passed thereafter to his successors as a standard component of the imperial image. Despite the claims made by Ovid's *Apollo*, however, the god was not solely—or even, I would argue, primarily—responsible for Augustus' connection to the plant. Indeed, contemporary evidence points strongly to the idea that the *princeps*' initial inspiration was a different figure who famously wore the laurel: his adoptive father, Julius Caesar.

Caesar himself had ample opportunity to cultivate a connection to *Apollo*,<sup>32</sup> but he seems never to have done so, refraining perhaps in favor of emphasizing his family line's supposed

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<sup>30</sup> *RG* 34.2, with Lowrie's observation on the nature of this trade-off as an exchange of political for symbolic capital (2009: 291–292).

<sup>31</sup> *RIC* I<sup>2</sup> Augustus 26a–b, 33a–b, 36a–b, 50a–b, 51, 52a–b, 229–230, 277, 285–286, 302, 323, 325, 327–330, 419, 549. Tiberius and Claudius continued the Altar of Lyons (ROM ET AVG) type: *RIC* I<sup>2</sup> Tiberius 31–32; Claudius 1.

<sup>32</sup> Among other things, he had been born on the first and most important day of the *ludi Apollinares*, the annual games held at Rome in the god's honor (cf. Gagé 1955: 467–73). Caesar was born on the 13<sup>th</sup> of Quintilis, from 44

descent from Venus through the figures of Aeneas and Ascanius-Iulus.<sup>33</sup> Yet Caesar certainly developed an undeniable and in some respects exclusive connection to the laurel, which he first earned by distinguishing himself through martial success<sup>34</sup> and then cemented through political acumen. His frequent military victories afforded him a number of occasions on which he was voted a triumph and thus entitled to wear the laurel-wreath, a key piece of the *insignia triumphalia*, and hence called *corona triumphalis*, *corona insignis*, or simply the *laurea insignis*.<sup>35</sup> Eventually his cumulative success prompted the senate to vote him the right to wear the *triumphator's corona aurea*, as well as the *toga triumphalis*, not just at his triumphs but everywhere and at all times;<sup>36</sup> of all the honors granted him by the senate and people, Suetonius writes, there was none other in which Caesar took more pleasure.<sup>37</sup>

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B.C. called July in his honor, which was the initial (and originally the only) day of the *ludi Apollinares* (Liv. 27.23.7). Although Caesar played a significant role in the celebration of these *ludi* in 45 B.C., he was taking advantage of the “unique circumstances” in that year, as the games were held “by one of Caesar’s city prefects, at Caesar’s expense,” making Caesar in effect their sponsor; in fact, the senate’s decree “that public sacrifices were to be performed on the day of Caesar’s birth” had the effect of “shift[ing] some of the attention away from Apollo to Caesar on 13 July, the most important day of the *ludi Apollinares*” (Ramsey and Licht 1997: 34–35). For links between the Julii and Apollo that pre-date Caesar, see Wissowa 1902: 296 with n. 3; Koch 1937: 79.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. the reverse of the denarius of L. Julius L.f. Caesar, cos. 90, (*RRC* 320/1, 103 B.C.), where the lyre symbol—even if we assume that it is meant to represent some familial connection to Apollo—plays second fiddle to the main type: Venus in a biga of Cupids, clearly alluding to the Julians’ self-image as descendants of Venus.

<sup>34</sup> Lucan describes Caesar’s *currus* as *lauriferi* (5.332), referring to his many military victories.

<sup>35</sup> Liv. 10.7.9; Val. Max. 3.7; 5.1.10; Aul. Gell. 5.6, Ov. *Pont.* 2.2, 81; Tibull. 1.7.7; Plin. *NH* 25.39; *corona insignis*: Liv. 38.47.4; *laurea insignis*: Liv. 7.13.10. The actual *corona* worn by a *triumphator* may have been made of gold (Gell. *NA* 5.6.5), but it was in the shape of the laurel-wreath.

<sup>36</sup> Dio 37.21.3–4 and 23.4.

<sup>37</sup> Suet. *Iul.* 45.2: *ideoque et deficientem capillum revocare a vertice adsueverat et ex omnibus decretis sibi a senatu populoque honoribus non aliud aut recepit aut usurpavit libentius quam ius laureae coronae perpetuo gestandae.*

The right to wear the laurel-wreath *perpetuo* was unique in Republican Rome. Pompey too had earned his share of laurels<sup>38</sup> and had been granted the right to wear the same *corona aurea* at all public games,<sup>39</sup> but Caesar surpassed his rival by adorning himself with the laurel crown “always and everywhere alike.”<sup>40</sup> Suetonius implies through context, while Dio states outright, that Caesar cited his baldness as an excuse for indulging in this privilege habitually, despite the possibility that donning laurel leaves as surrogate hair might have been considered effeminate and thus tied to the more widespread reputation for royalty and effeminacy neatly captured by Catullus’ infamous slur, *cinaedus Romulus*.<sup>41</sup> Yet when a statue of Caesar was bedecked with a laurel-wreath, it was not the wreath itself that invoked public enmity so much as what was tied to it: the *fascia candida* (white fillet) that was the Hellenistic diadem of kingship.<sup>42</sup> (Caesar himself refused this diadem when it was offered to him by Marc Antony at the Lupercalia in February of 44.<sup>43</sup>) Moreover, not even the mythical origins of the laurel as spoil taken from a

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<sup>38</sup> Lucan applies the same epithet “laurel-bearing” (*laurifer*) to Caesar’s chariot (5.332) and to Pompey’s youth (8.25).

<sup>39</sup> Dio 37.21.4. Dio claims that Pompey was granted this right primarily through the cooperation of Caesar. It seems that Pompey desisted when he was met with a frosty reception (Cic. *Att.* 1.18.6; Vell. *Pat.* 2.40.4; Taylor 1931: 57).

<sup>40</sup> Dio 43.43.1: ...καὶ τῷ στεφάνῳ τῷ δαφνίνῳ ἀεὶ καὶ πανταχοῦ ὁμοίως ἐκοσμεῖτο. This is paralleled by a similar right granted to Caesar, namely that he was entitled to have lictors who always had laurel bound around their *fasces*, as a *triumphator* would (Dio 43.44.4).

<sup>41</sup> 29.5, 9; cf. *Cat.* 57 with Fratantuono 2010. Caesar was often accused by his political enemies of having been the pathic partner in a homosexual relationship; he was even called the “Queen of Bithynia” in reference to his rumored affair with Nicomedes IV (Suet. *Iul.* 49). On Caesar’s effeminacy, including his image as “androgynous, catamite, and wearer of effeminate clothing,” see Olson 2014.

<sup>42</sup> Suet. *Iul.* 79.1; App. *BC* 2.108.

<sup>43</sup> Cic. *Phil.* 2.87; Nic. *Dam. Aug.* 71–75; Liv. *Per.* 116; Plut. *Caes.* 61.1–6; Dio 44.11.2–3.

female nymph by an androgynous god seem to have tarnished its reputation as a symbol of military victory and therefore of *virtus*.

In adopting the wreath as a permanent personal effect, Caesar effectively became *imperator perpetuo*. Both Suetonius and Dio report that the Senate granted Caesar the term *imperator* as a proper name (Suetonius explicitly calls it a praenomen, Dio simply τό...τοῦ αὐτοκράτορος ὄνομα), and the biographer goes so far as to list it among the many “excessive honors” that Caesar accepted.<sup>44</sup> The epigraphic evidence does not support these authors’ claims: “no coin exists, or inscription, attesting ‘Imperator Caesar’ as the nomenclature of Caesar the Dictator.”<sup>45</sup> Even so, Caesar certainly used the term as an agnominal title, and even in an age where the term *imperator* was becoming a commonplace on the coinage of military leaders vying

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<sup>44</sup> Suet. *Iul.* 76.1 (cf. Nic. Dam. *Aug.* 8): *honores...nimios*; Dio 43.44.2–3.

<sup>45</sup> The quote is from Syme 1958: 176. IM[P]erator follows CAESAR on coins struck in the dictator’s name whenever word order can be determined: *RRC* 480/3, 4, 5a–b (January–February of 44 B.C.). Had Caesar in fact taken *Imperator* as a praenomen, and especially if the senate had declared it a familial inheritance (so Dio), then Octavian would almost certainly have used it as such from his earliest issues as well, which he does not: see *RRC* 495/1 and 2a–2d (42 B.C.), where Octavian is identified as CAESAR-IMP-III (“*imperator* for the third time”) but not IMP-CAESAR. Indeed, there is no evidence that Octavian adopted *imperator* as a praenomen before 38 B.C. (Syme 1958: 175–177). Syme’s claim that “there is no Caesarian precedent for the *praenomen* of Caesar’s heir” (177) must be qualified: Caesar is not known to have used *imperator* as a praenomen (*pace* Suetonius and Dio), but Octavian did (in my view) treat *imperator* as an inheritance from his adoptive father on the basis of Caesar’s undeniably particular connection both to the title *imperator* and to the particular *imperium* that it represented. If Syme is correct in characterizing Octavian’s praenominal usage of the term *imperator* as an instance of a cognomen being “transferred and used as a *praenomen*” (177), then it may be fair to say that Caesar used *imperator* as a *cognomen* rather than a *praenomen*. On this interpretation Dio could be technically correct, and Suetonius would only be wrong by one syllable, but again the expected evidence is lacking: see again Syme (1958: 177–179) on the fairly free usage of the acclamation *imperator* by others beyond its formerly strict expiration and Caesar’s apparent lack of attachment to the term. If Suetonius and Dio are right (although the evidence is doubtful), then Caesar did not make much of this particular privilege. On the other hand, these authors may be providing evidence of a claim made after the fact (perhaps as early as the Augustan era) and retrojected to the mid-40s that the name *imperator* was an explicit and official legacy inherited from Caesar, just as an Apolline connection to the laurel was retrojected in hindsight by Augustan authors.

for authority, Caesar's claim stood out. In the *pro Ligario* of 46, for example, Cicero goes so far as to say that Caesar could have been the only *imperator* in the whole of the Roman *imperium*, had he not permitted others to retain both the title and the trappings, such as the laurel-wreathed *fascēs*.<sup>46</sup> Thus, in the picture painted by Cicero, Caesar is portrayed not just as one of many *imperatores*, or even as *primus inter pares*, but indeed as the exemplar and controlling authority of the very title of *imperator*, by whose grace others shared in what rightfully belonged to him alone.<sup>47</sup>

While Cicero's language may be exaggerated for rhetorical effect, the extent and exclusivity of Caesar's claim to the laurel—and to the symbolic capital that it represented—is corroborated in a striking manner by the numismatic evidence. Of the 27 mortals whose portraits appear in Roman Republican coinage, only Caesar is ever shown laureate.<sup>48</sup> In fact, he is never shown *without* the laurel-wreath on any of the more than thirty distinct coin types that bear his portrait.<sup>49</sup> In my view, this remarkable correspondence should be connected directly to Caesar's exceptional right to wear the laurel *perpetuo*—a coin portrait is a rather permanent image, and it would be inappropriate to immortalize an ordinary, temporary *triumphator* in the

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<sup>46</sup> *Lig.* 7.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. Suet. *Iul.* 76.1: *ac nullos non honores ad libidinem cepit et dedit.*

<sup>48</sup> See the appendix for a list of issues. Octavian first appears laureate on denarii of 29–27 B.C. (*RIC I*<sup>2</sup> Augustus 270–272, with n. on p. 60).

<sup>49</sup> Posthumous Roman provincial coinage is another matter. On the coinage of certain mints Julius Caesar (styled *Divus Iulius*, sometimes spelled *Divos Iulius*) is consistently shown laureate, as at Rome, while the coinage of other cities tended to show him bare-headed.

guise reserved for the ephemeral occasion of his triumph. The laurel had already appeared as an attribute of Caesar in the last years of his life, when on denarii of Lollius Palicanus and C. Considius Paetus we find it placed atop the *sella curulis*, the magistral seat reserved for those with *imperium* that had been voted to Caesar as a perpetual privilege following his victory at Thapsus in 46.<sup>50</sup> Furthermore, on a posthumous denarius both a laurel-branch and a caduceus, items traditionally associated with Victory, are shown behind and before Caesar's head, respectively, in the locations usually occupied by attributes of gods.<sup>51</sup> Just as the wreath could serve as a visual stand-in for Caesar on Palicanus' and Paetus' denarii, mere mention of the laurel could be used to evoke thoughts of the dictator in literary accounts of his life as well. On two separate occasions, once each in Dio and Suetonius, a bird carrying a laurel-sprig is said to have been interpreted as a sign concerning Caesar, meant to forewarn him of danger and of death,

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<sup>50</sup> Palicanus (written Palikanus on his coins): *RRC* 473/2a–d with n. on p. 483. Crawford interprets the types of both 473/1 and 473/2 as “presumable” references to Palicanus' father but allows for the possibility that they could also be interpreted as Caesarian; on the other hand, he takes Paetus' identical wreath-on-*sella* type as a likely reference to Caesar's privilege (for which see Dio 43.14.5, 44.4.2; 44.6.3; Andersen 1938: 33; Weinstock 1957: 149). Paetus: *RRC* 465/1a–b, 2a–b with n. on p. 736. Crawford dates Paetus' mint magistracy to 46 B.C., but K.-L. Elvers (*NP* s.v. Considius [I 5]) finds it “doubtful” that Paetus held that position in the same year in which he had been captured and then pardoned by Caesar (*Bell. Afr.* 89.2). The putative Caesarian nature of the wreath-on-*sella* tableau fits in very well with the almost exclusively Caesarian character of both Palikanus' and Paetus' other types (Crawford 1974: 478, 736–737).

<sup>51</sup> *RRC* 494/24, 42 B.C. Cf. the appearance of the laurel-branch behind the head of Roma on earlier Republican denarii (*RRC* 76/1a–b, 209–208 B.C.; *RRC* 239/1, c. 136 B.C. [laurel-wreath]; *RRC* 253/1, 131 B.C. [wreath]; *RRC* 260/1, 128 B.C. [wreath]; *RRC* 276/1, 122 B.C.). Cf. also a denarius of Sextus Pompey, bearing the name of his fleet-commander Q. Nasidius on the reverse, which features a similarly posthumous portrait of Pompey the Great in which a dolphin and a trident appear as attributes on either side of his head (*RRC* 483/1–2, 44–43 B.C.). The association with the sea-god is further emphasized by the legend, NEPTVNI (cf. *RRC* 420/1a–b and 511/2, where the trident appears over Neptune's shoulder). As Sextus claimed to be the “son of Neptune,” it would make sense for him to portray his father with the attributes of Neptune to reinforce the identification.

respectively.<sup>52</sup> (He failed to heed the latter.) Yet there was no explicit relationship between the Caesarian laurel and Apollo, unless one counts the god's singular appearance on the obverse of Paetus' wreath-on-*sella* denarius (ostensibly the moneyer's choice of type) and Apollo's generic connection to prophecy. Such implicit ties were eclipsed by the abundance of explicit references to the divinity most closely associated with Caesar in victory: Venus, especially in her aspect as Venus Victrix, whose image graced his signet ring and his coins.<sup>53</sup>

In the wake of Caesar's assassination it became imperative that his heir, the young Octavian, tie himself to his adoptive father in highly visible ways, for the young up-and-comer relied first and foremost upon his connection to the late dictator to establish and secure his own place among the Roman elite, at least initially.<sup>54</sup> Coinage afforded Octavian an early opportunity not only to associate himself with Caesar but to identify himself explicitly as Caesar's heir through a widespread and easily accessible medium. Accordingly, we find coinage in the name of Octavian appearing very shortly after Caesar's death, with some of his very first issues pairing Octavian's portrait on one side with types depicting or referring to his adoptive father on the

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<sup>52</sup> Danger: Dio 41.39.1, where a kite in the Forum drops a laurel sprig on one of Caesar's companions. This is interpreted as an omen that Caesar is no longer safe in the city, and he heads off to Macedonia to face Pompey. Death: Suet. *Iul.* 81.3, where a "little king-bird" (*avis regaliolus*) bearing a laurel sprig (*laureus ramulus*) flies into the Curia of Pompey on the day before the Ides of March only to be mobbed and torn to pieces by its avian enemies.

<sup>53</sup> For Venus Victrix as Caesar's watchword at Pharsalus: App. *BC* 2.281, 318, 424 (cf. 2.430 for Venus as watchword at Munda); Dio 43.22.2; Serv. *ad Aen.* 7.637. For Venus Victrix (i.e. ἔνοπλος, "in arms") on his signet ring, cf. Dio 43.43.2: τό τε ὄλον τῆ τε Ἀφροδίτῃ πᾶς ἀνέκειτο, καὶ πείθειν πάντας ἤθελεν ὅτι καὶ ἄνθος τι ὥρας ἀπ' αὐτῆς ἔχοι: καὶ διὰ τοῦτο καὶ γλύμμα αὐτῆς ἔνοπλον ἐφόρει, καὶ σύνθημα αὐτὴν ἐν τοῖς πλείστοις καὶ μεγίστοις κινδύνοις ἐποιεῖτο. For Venus (often Victrix) on his coins: *RRC* 457/1; 458/1; 480/4, 5a-b, 7a-b, 8-18; 481/1; 482/1; 485/1.

<sup>54</sup> Gurval 1995, esp. 93.

other.<sup>55</sup> The legends on these early imperial issues also often feature titles shared by father and son, including *imperator*, *pontifex*, and *augur*. (The last two were reiterated visually with pontifical and augural emblems, respectively.) But Octavian was not alone in advertising himself by these titles; other men were doing so avidly as well, including Octavian's fellow triumvirs. Moreover, Antony in particular was also attempting to connect himself to Caesar by striking coins that featured his own portrait on one side and Caesar's on the other. Octavian had the advantage, however, in being able to emphasize CAESAR as nomenclature unique to himself and the deceased dictator, and he did so strenuously. (Antony had to content himself with naming his second son after Caesar: hence Iullus.) Moreover, Octavian stressed his adoptive father's status as both *imperator* and *dictator perpetuo* by reviving Palicanus' and Paetus' shared type of the *sella curulis* surmounted by a laurel-wreath, foreshadowing the monopoly on imperial power that he would come to enjoy in Caesar's footsteps. If there was any doubt about the Caesarian nature of the wreath that appeared atop the *sella curulis* on the issues of Palicanus and Paetus, there is none on the future *princeps*: the chair on his denarius is inscribed CAESAR·DICTator·PERpetuo (RRC 497/2a–d).<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> RRC 490/2, 4 (43 B.C.): Octavian's portrait (obv.) paired with Caesar's (rev.); 494/3a–b (42 B.C.): Octavian's portrait (obv.) paired with a reverse type of Aeneas carrying Anchises, an iconic example of filial piety.

<sup>56</sup> See Weinstock 1957: 149 for the privilege granted to Caesar of having a golden *sella* with a wreath represent him at the theatre in his absence. Like the laurel-wreath, this *sella*-with-wreath type seems to be a numismatic representation of one of the privileges granted to Caesar in perpetuity; the images are appropriate to coins in light of their longevity (see Meadows and Williams 2001 for coins in general as *monumenta* in the sense of "remembrancers").



These claims did not go uncontested. By the autumn of 42, Brutus' legate M. Costa had struck two notable issues of aurei. The first (RRC 506/1) was Brutus' equivalent of Octavian's joint portraiture with Caesar: it pairs the head of Brutus the Elder (cos. 509) on the obverse with the head of Brutus the Younger himself on the reverse. Both portraits are surrounded by similar oak-wreath borders, emphasizing the points of contact between the two men, including the shared cognomen BRVTVS. The wreaths on this issue are certainly of oak and are therefore to be identified as representations of the *corona civica*, the crown awarded for saving the life of a fellow citizen; as another feature common to both Bruti, these wreaths represent a visual claim that the Younger Brutus had followed in the footsteps of the Elder by preserving his fellow citizens through disposing of a tyrant.<sup>57</sup> (Caesar had also been granted the oak-wreath, but it was not until 27 that Augustus would be able to claim the same.<sup>58</sup>) The wreath that appears on Costa's other aureus issue of 42 (RRC 507/1a–b) is different but equally significant. Here the Younger

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<sup>57</sup> A similar message of Brutus the Younger striking a blow for freedom by assassinating Caesar, albeit without the explicit reference to the elder Brutus, is found on the contemporary EID MAR issue (RRC 508/3). Struck as a denarius (RRC 508/3), and perhaps also as an aureus, it features an obverse portrait of the Younger Brutus (BRVTus IMP, just as on the reverse of RRC 506/1) paired with the famous reverse type of a pileus between two daggers accompanied by the legend EID·MAR. There are only two known examples of the aureus, which Crawford did not list in his catalogue on the grounds that the type was not genuine (1974: 552); the British Museum claims that he has now accepted it. The aureus was rejected by Cohen (1857) but accepted by Cahn (1957: 213; 1989, no. 24a).

<sup>58</sup> Caesar was first granted the *corona civica* by Lepidus following the siege of Mytilene in 80 B.C., when he was 20 years old (Suet. *Iul.* 2). Unlike the *corona aurea*, which was normally a temporary honor worn only in the context of the triumph, any man who earned the *corona civica* was entitled to wear it for the rest of his life (Pliny *NH* 16.5). Caesar was again voted a *corona civica* by the senate in 45, this time not for saving the life of a single soldier in battle but for saving the lives of numerous citizens and even Rome herself. It is in this sense that the oak-wreath appears on Costa's coin for Brutus (RRC 506/1, 42 B.C.) and as a border around the portrait of Pompey the Great on the aureus struck by his son Sextus in the name of his father and brother (RRC 511/1, 42 B.C.), and it was on the same basis that Augustus was voted the right to the *corona civica* as part of the *senatusconsultum* of January 27 B.C.

Brutus' head appears in a laurel-wreath border on the obverse, while the reverse type is a combined terrestrial and naval trophy. Both the wreath on the obverse and the trophy on the reverse complement the obverse legend: BRVTVS·IMPerator. While Brutus' portrait is not technically laureate on this issue, the effect of the laurel-wreath border approximates a laureate portrait in meaning. It is thus highly suggestive without being outright transgressive; Caesar remained the sole mortal shown properly laureate on Roman coinage, as he would until Actium. The story might have been very different had Philippi not put a quick end to Brutus and his imperial aspirations to wreaths of oak and laurel.

In the aftermath of the two monumental Caesarian events of 42, first Caesar's formal deification as *divus Iulius* by the senate in January and then the Battle of Philippi in October, Octavian set about capitalizing upon their outcomes as part of an effort to establish his own identity and *auctoritas* independent of and even superior to his fellow triumvirs. The year 41 saw the end of the joint coinage produced in the names of Octavian and Antony; from this point on, no single issue bore types or legends related to both men. In going his own way, at least numismatically, it is no surprise to find that Octavian's ensuing types and legends emphasize his unique connection to Caesar. Thus while Octavian continued to be billed as "C. Caesar the Triumvir" on his later issues of 41, in the following year a spate of issues struck by Ti. Sempronius Gracchus<sup>59</sup> advertised a new style: DIVI·Filius. No Roman other than Octavian

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<sup>59</sup> In 40 B.C. Ti. Sempronius Gracchus was both mint-magistrate (*IIIvir monetalis*) and *quaestor designatus*. Two issues were struck by him in his capacity as mint-magistrate (525/1-2); the other two were struck specially *ex*

could have laid claim to such a title, for no Roman before Caesar had been declared *divus*. Moreover, the phrase *divi filius* was more than just a title—a unique variation of the standard Roman patronymic, it was very much a part of Octavian’s name, and it gained great currency as a regular feature on his imperatorial coinage.



Figure 4.2: Dupondius of Octavian. Italy, c. 38 B.C. Obv.: Head of Octavian r., slightly bearded; on r., downwards, CAESAR; on l., downwards, DIVI-F. Rev.: Laureate head of Julius Caesar r.; on r., downwards, DIVOS; on l., downwards; IVLIVS. *RPC I 620; RRC 535/1.*



Figure 4.3: Dupondius of Octavian. Italy, c. 38 B.C. Obv.: Head of Octavian r., slightly bearded; below chin, star (*sidus Iulium*); behind, downwards, DIVI-F. Rev.: DIVOS | IVLIVS within laurel-wreath. *RPC I 621; RRC 535/2.*

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*senatusconsulto* (525/3–4), wherefore he identifies himself not as mint-magistrate (which would indicate a regularly struck issue) but as *quaestor designatus*.

Very often on Octavian's coinage his styling as *divi (Iuli) filius* is accompanied and reinforced by imagery marking him as Caesar's heir. One such image was the *sidus Iulium*, or Julian star, which represented the comet that had been seen overhead at Caesar's funeral and was interpreted by advocates of deification to be the dictator's soul rising to the heavens.<sup>60</sup> As we will see, this small symbol could be used, much like the laurel, as a visual byword for Caesar himself. But Octavian's coinage of this period also reveals both a keen awareness of Caesar's particular attachment to the laurel, especially in the form of a wreath, and a concerted attempt at leveraging that connection to Octavian's advantage, such as on the above pair of dupondii (Figures 4.2 and 4.3) struck c. 38 B.C.<sup>61</sup> Between these two bronze issues, Octavian's obverse portrait and half of his titulature remains the same. The word CAESAR in Octavian's name on the one (Figure 4.2, *RRC* 535/1) is replaced on the other by the *sidus Iulium* (Figure 4.3, *RRC* 535/2). The name and star are thus made interchangeable, and both underscore the idea that Octavian is building his name—literally and symbolically—upon that of his adoptive father. The reverse types demonstrate a similar equivalence between the visual and the verbal: Julius Caesar's laureate portrait (*RRC* 535/1) is reiterated in the form of his name (DIVOS IVLIVS) within a laurel-wreath (*RRC* 535/2). (The wreaths on both coins notably lack fillets, consistent with Caesar's

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<sup>60</sup> On the interpretation of Caesar's comet, see Ramsey and Licht 1997: 135–153.

<sup>61</sup> Crawford 1974: 102. See *RPC* I p. 161 for an attribution of the coins to a mint in Italy rather than Nemausus (so Goudard 1893) or Lugdunum (so Sydenham 1917 and Martini 1988). The authors of *RPC* reject Grant's attribution of these issues to Puteoli (1946: 47–50) and that of Alföldi and Giard to Perusia (1984: 147–161) but profess difficulty with identifying the Italian mint responsible. For the identification of both issues as dupondii, see Amandry 1986 and Amandry and Barrandon 1988: 145–146.

rejection of the *fascia candida*.) A reading of the latter reverse (535/2) as a kind of rephrasing of the former (535/1) is further supported by comparison with a later provincial bronze of Achulla featuring the portrait of a bare-headed Julius Caesar together with the legend DIVOS IVLIOS, all within a laurel-wreath.<sup>62</sup>

The reverse of 535/2 marks only the third time in Roman coinage that a title or name had appeared alone within a laurel-wreath,<sup>63</sup> and as such it stands in sharp contrast to contemporary issues featuring names and titles, such as those of Agrippa and Antony, alone but unwreathed, surrounded by a simple border of dots.<sup>64</sup> The first instance of a type featuring a legend alone within a laurel-wreath occurred in 45 B.C. on the obverse of a quinarius issue of L. Valerius Acisculus (*RRC* 474/6), where the wreath border appears to be an attribute of Victory, whose bust appears on the reverse.<sup>65</sup> In the following year came the second instance: the reverse of *RRC*

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<sup>62</sup> *RPC* I 799. The authors of *RPC* date this coin to 7–6 B.C. but note that “it could be considered as the inaugural coinage of the city, c. 20 B.C., and parallel to the series struck at Colonia Iulia Pia Paterna (758) and Lepti Minus (784) which have the same obverse legend (CAESAR DIVI F).” Their reasons for dating it later are found on p. 201.

<sup>63</sup> One issue of D. Junius Brutus Albinus (*RRC* 450/3a–b) and two of L. Mussidius Longus (*RRC* 494/44a–b, 45) feature the moneyer’s name in a wreath as a reverse type, but in both cases the wreath is distinctly made up of corn-ears, not laurel. Cf. also *RRC* 456/1a–b for a similar aureus in the name of Caesar: the reverse type features the pontifical jug and lituus above ITER (“for the second time,” qualifying *DICTator* on the obverse), all within a laurel-wreath.

<sup>64</sup> Agrippa: *RRC* 534/1–3, also 38 B.C. The legend reads M·AGRIPPA·COS | DESIG. Cf. also the slightly later issues of *RRC* 542/1–2 (33 B.C.), denarii whose reverses feature the names and titles of Antony (ANTONIVS | AVG·IMP·III, 542/2) and M. Junius Silanus (M·SILANVS·AVG | Q·PRO·COS, 542/1) similarly alone and unwreathed in a border of dots.

<sup>65</sup> The interpretation of the laurel-wreath on *RRC* 474/6 as an attribute of Victory rather than Acisculus himself is supported by *RRC* 474/7, another quinarius issue of Acisculus, which bears a similar obverse type of an acisculus surrounded by the legend ACISCVLVS but has a border of dots rather than a wreath; the reverse type of 474/7, a double cornucopia, correspondingly does not seem to be related to victory or to a laureate god. Acisculus’ other coin

481/1 (Figure 4.4 below), a special aureus issue struck in 44 B.C. in honor of Caesar's fifth consulship (rev.: COS·QVINC), in which context it would naturally recall Caesar's intimate association with the laurel and its starring role in his everyday life. (By virtue of appearing on an aureus, the laurel wreath on this particular issue was quite literally a *corona aurea*, the type of wreath voted to Caesar.) The wreathed DIVOS IVLIVS type on Octavian's bronze of 38 bears a marked resemblance to the COS·QVINC type of 44 in its arrangement, and it is only natural to interpret the wreath on the bronze as a personal attribute of the deified Julius much as it appears elsewhere as an attribute of Victory, Jupiter, and Apollo, among others.



Figure 4.4: Aureus in the name of Julius Caesar. Rome, 44 B.C. Obv.: Diademed bust of Venus r.; around, clockwise from lower l., CAES·DIC QVAR. Rev.: COS·QVINC within laurel-wreath. RRC 481/1.

Alongside the image of the laurel-wreath, the legends on Octavian's aurei and denarii of 38 B.C. exhibit for the first time a similarly unique claim to the original title associated with the laurel: *imperator*. Whether Caesar formally accepted the title as a praenomen or merely

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types feature two other gods connected to the laurel: Apollo (474/1a-b, 2a-b, 3a-b) and Jupiter (474/4). All of these save the first Apollo variant (474/1a) have laurel-wreath borders as well.

embraced it de facto by wearing his *corona aurea* on a more or less permanent basis, Octavian certainly did insert the term before his own praenomen on his coinage, the first (barring Caesar) to do so of many to come. The emerging *princeps*' particular usage of the laurel-wreath together with the corresponding title IMP on his coinage does more than simply invoke an association with Caesar: it reflects a concerted attempt to portray these trappings as a personal inheritance from the *imperator perpetuo* himself. Indeed, on no pre-Actian coin of Octavian do we find IMPerator as a praenomen without it being followed by the phrase DIVI (IVLI) *Filius*, typically with CAESAR situated in between.<sup>66</sup>



Figure 4.5: Denarius of Octavian. Moving mint, 37 B.C. Obv.: IMP·CAESAR· | DIVI·F within laurel-wreath. Rev.: Tripod with cauldron; around, clockwise from l., COS·ITER·ET·TER·DESI. *RRC* 537/2.

<sup>66</sup> *RRC* 534/1 (without CAESAR), 534/3, 537/1–2, 538/1–2 (= *RPC* I 514–515), 540/1–2, 546/4–6; *RPC* I 517. To these may be added a quinarius dated to 36 B.C. and now attributed to a military mint in central or southern Italy (Sydenham 1339 = *RIC* I [1<sup>st</sup> ed.] 9 = *BMC Africa* 38). The legend IMP CAES[AR] begins to appear without DIVI [IVLI] F only after the battle of Actium (*RIC* I<sup>2</sup> 264–274), after which point all combinations of IMP, CAES[AR], and DIVI F are found.



Figure 4.6: Denarius of Octavian. Moving mint, 37 B.C. Obv.: Tripod with cauldron inscribed R·P·C; around, clockwise from lower l., IMP·CAESAR·DIVI·F·III·VIR·ITER. Rev.: COS·ITER·ET | TERT·DESIG within laurel-wreath. *RRC* 538/2.

All three complementary elements of Caesarian inheritance (*imperator*, *divi filius*, and the laurel-wreath) appeared on the same coin for the first time in the following year. Two of the four denarius issues struck in the name of Octavian in 37 exhibit the same exceptional use of the Caesarian laurel-wreath border as on the reverses of Caesar's COS·QVINC aureus (*RRC* 481/1) and Octavian's DIVOS | IVLIVS bronze (535/2). On these denarius issues of 37, however, it is no longer his adoptive father's title that appears in the wreath but Octavian's own. Thus we find the name IMP·CAESAR·DIVI·F in a laurel-wreath as the obverse type on *RRC* 537/2 (Figure 4.5) and the title COS·ITER·ET·TERT·DESIG in a similar wreath on the reverse of 538/2 (Figure 4.6). The strikingly similar appearance and use of the laurel on these issues of 37 B.C. as compared to the DIVOS | IVLIVS (*RRC* 535/2, Figure 4.3) and to the COS·QVINC (*RRC* 481/1, Figure 4.4) types suggests that the laurel performs a similar function on these denarii as it does on the earlier coins, namely as a means of framing Octavian as Caesar's heir. Moreover, it is particularly noteworthy that Octavian's name-within-wreath type occurs on the *obverse* of 537/1, the side of the coin



typically reserved for portraits. It is not so unusual when one does the visual math: if a name within a wreath can be interpreted as an approximate equivalent of a laureate portrait, as we saw with Octavian's bronzes of 38 (Figures 4.2 and 4.3) and Costa's aureus for Brutus before that, then the obverse of 537/1 should correspondingly approximate in meaning the image of a laureate Octavian. Thus the type is not only patently suggestive of his aspirations to the laurel but in fact can be read as constituting such a claim years before the introduction of his first laureate portraits on coinage.

Those portraits would appear for the first time in the wake of Octavian's victory at Actium.<sup>67</sup> Despite the close connection fostered thereafter between Octavian and Apollo, the numismatic iconography features elements that instead establish a link to Jupiter and imperatorial victory: a laureate herm atop a thunderbolt (*RIC I*<sup>2</sup> 269a–b rev.); a laureate herm bust given the features of Octavian and a thunderbolt behind (*RIC I*<sup>2</sup> 270 obv.) opposite Octavian seated on the *sella curulis* holding Victory (*RIC I*<sup>2</sup> 270 rev., Figure 4.7); and an obverse laureate portrait of Octavian opposite a reverse type of a statue of Octavian, heroically nude, standing atop a rostral column representing—or at least recalling—the naval spoils won at Actium (*RIC I*<sup>2</sup> 271). On all of these issues there appears the same legend: IMP CAESAR. Both terms are equally

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<sup>67</sup> Previously dated as early as 36 B.C., the laureate portraits of Octavian discussed here are now thought to have been struck after Actium at the earliest, perhaps as much as a year after the battle (winter of 30 or even in 29), but before the events of January 27.

significant, for the iconography of victory was as much Caesarian as Jovian, thanks to the conception of Caesar—and now Octavian—as *imperator perpetuo*.<sup>68</sup>



Figure 4.7: Denarius of Octavian. Italian mint (Rome?), 29–27 B.C. Obv.: Laureate herm bust r., with features of Octavian; behind, thunderbolt upright. Rev.: Octavian, togate, seated l. on *sella curulis*, holding in r. hand Victory advancing l. with branch and wreath. *RIC I*<sup>2</sup> Augustus 270.

Like all Republican *imperatores*, Caesar had earned his laurels first and foremost through military success. Repeating that feat would prove Octavian a fitting successor not only by law but also by right—a right to which he promptly laid claim by pursuing a major military victory, moreover one designed specifically to avenge his adoptive father’s death, a chief duty of the pious son. In light of that, it would be reasonable to propose that Octavian’s exceptional use of the laurel wreath on his imperial coinage could be tied in some way to his victory over Caesar’s assassins at Philippi in October of 42. We need not settle for speculation, however, given a particular provincial bronze issue struck at Philippi in the Augustan period (*RPC I* 1650, Figure

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<sup>68</sup> On the connection between the deified Julius Caesar and Jupiter, especially as expressed by the name *Iuppiter Iulius*, see Weinstock (1971: 287–317) and Fishwick (1987: 66–67). The name *Iulius* itself may be connected to *Iuppiter* as well (K.-L. Elvers, *NP* s.v. Iulius). For *Imperator* as an epithet of Jupiter, cf. Cic. *Ver.* 4.128 and Liv. 6.29.8.

4.8). The obverse of the coin bears a laureate portrait of Augustus while the obverse legend celebrates the renaming of Philippi as *COLonia AVGusta IVLia* (sc. *Philippensis*) at the order of Augustus (*IVSSV AVGusti*) shortly after his own renaming in January of 27 B.C.<sup>69</sup> It is the reverse type that makes explicit both Octavian's claim to the laurel and the specific rationale behind it.<sup>70</sup>



Figure 4.8: Æ26 of Philippi, (late?) Augustan period. Obv.: Laureate head of Augustus r.; around, counter-clockwise from lower r., *COL·AVG·IVL·PHIL·IVSSV·AVG*. Rev.: Three bases, l. and r. ones empty; on middle one, statue of Augustus in military dress crowned by statue of Divus Julius hipmantled; on l., upwards, *AVG·DIVI·F*; on r., upwards, *DIVO·IVL*. *RPC I 1650*.

The reverse features three bases or pedestals, the middle of which bears two figures.<sup>71</sup> The figure on the left, identified by the legend as *AVGustus DIVi Filius*, is shown in military dress

<sup>69</sup> For this coin in particular the authors of *RPC I* suggest a date during the latter half of Augustus' reign, citing both the laureate and the "relatively mature" nature of the portrait (p. 308).

<sup>70</sup> This type is closely paralleled by an Augustan issue struck at Amphipolis (*RPC I 1627*). The authors of *RPC* (p. 305) note that the spelling of the ethnic (*ΑΜΦΙΠΟΛΕΙΤΩΝ*) on the obverse of that issue suggests that it belongs to the earlier part of Augustus' reign; on coins dating to the latter part of Augustus' reign, the ethnic is spelled without the epsilon (*ΑΜΦΙΠΟΛΙΤΩΝ*). The reverse legend, *ΚΑΙΣΑΡ ΣΕΒΑΣΤΟΣ*, which translates the Latin *CAESAR AVGVSTVS*, provides a *terminus post quem* of 27 B.C., just as does the appearance of the abbreviation *AVG* on the coin of Philippi.

<sup>71</sup> To the best of my knowledge, it remains an open question why the bases on the left and right are both empty.

striking a pose of *adlocutio*, very similar to the Augustus of Prima Porta, and being crowned with a wreath by a second figure. The one doing the crowning is not the usual winged Victory, but rather a hipmantled male identified as *DIVus IVLius* himself. The presence of the bases suggests that this type illustrates a statue group, one presumably erected in the vicinity of Philippi. Both the events surrounding the battle of Philippi and Caesar's status as *divus* in this group, evident from his state of dress as well as the legend, give a likely *terminus post quem* for the statue of 42 B.C., while the coin itself is much later, certainly after 27 based on the appearance of the name Augustus and perhaps even from the second half of Augustus' reign.<sup>72</sup> We have already seen several examples of the numerous issues of coinage struck in the fifteen years from the battle of Philippi to the *senatusconsultum* of 27 that emphasize Octavian's identity vis-à-vis Caesar as *imperator divi filius*, some of which employ Caesar's laurel-wreath to reinforce that relationship visually. The Philippi bronze is distinct from these in how explicitly it characterizes Octavian's claim to the laurel not merely as a generic symbol of victory that he happened to share with Caesar as *imperator par excellence* before him but as his deified father's own bequest, earned by Octavian as a result of his victory over Caesar's murderers. This explanation for the use of the laurel by Augustus notably remains (like Caesar's own claim to it) entirely independent of Apollo despite the deep connection between the *princeps* and the god that had come to pervade the Roman imagination by the time this coin was struck.

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<sup>72</sup> Although Caesar may have been divinized or treated as divine even before his death (see Fishwick 1987: ch. 6), he was declared *Divus Iulius* by a decree of the senate only on January 1, 42 B.C. On the significance of the hipmantle as the iconic dress of Divus Julius, see Koortbojian 2013 (ch. 7).

For all that, however, it is ultimately futile to deny any connection whatsoever between the laurel and Apollo in Octavian's coinage. Indeed, while the laurel may have begun as an emblem of imperial inheritance, its potential as an attribute of Apollo did not go untapped. Returning to the tripod types of the Octavian denarii of 37 (Figures 4.5 and 4.6 above), we find imagery that inescapably evokes thoughts of the god of prophecy. Indeed, these seem to be the first issues in the name of Octavian to bear Apolline iconography, and they already suggest a merging of two meanings:<sup>73</sup> while the laurel-wreath works easily as a means of framing Octavian as heir to Caesar, the laureate *divus* himself, it fits in equally well as a complement of the distinctly Apolline tripod. As we have seen, there is no evidence that a relationship with Apollo was part of Octavian's inheritance from Caesar. In fact, nothing connects Octavian with Apollo before the battle of Philippi at the earliest.<sup>74</sup> Even in the context of Philippi the nature of that connection is in question: Taylor and others attribute the god's name to Octavian's side as a

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<sup>73</sup> See Taylor 1931: 119–121 for the beginnings of the relationship between Octavian and Apollo. (She believes that Octavian's side, not the Liberators, used Apollo as watchword.)

<sup>74</sup> Miller (2009: 15) sees no connection at all until the so-called "Banquet of the Twelve Gods," a private affair in which Octavian reportedly dressed up as Apollo, according to three "hostile reports" known to Suetonius (*Aug.* 70). While Gurval sees the private nature of the banquet as precluding a desire on the part of Octavian to be connected publicly with Apollo (1995: 96–98), Miller interprets Octavian's choice of dress as part of an intentional "self-image" (2009: 17–18). Miller dates the banquet no earlier than 40 B.C. and no later than 36 (2009: 15) on the basis of a reference to a shortage of food supply and ensuing starvation, which can be connected with some confidence to the state of affairs caused by Sextus Pompey's naval blockade; in Taylor's view the banquet is to be dated more specifically to shortly after the peace of Brundisium in 40 B.C. (1931: 119), while Scott suggests that it occurred more specifically in connection with Octavian's marriage to Livia in late 39 or early 38 (1933: 30–31). We have no information concerning Octavian's reasons for dressing as Apollo: Taylor sees no need to suppose that Octavian was "really claiming to be identified with Apollo" even at this point in his life (*loc. cit.*). Whatever the significance of Octavian's choice of outfit, if indeed the banquet did happen (an open question: see Miller 2009: 17), Philippi certainly predates the whole affair.

watchword, but it may actually have been the Liberators who used it in their own armies.<sup>75</sup> Either way, the Liberators' coinage is littered with undeniably Apolline imagery—including several instances of a tripod, sometimes surmounted by a cauldron with two laurel-sprigs,<sup>76</sup> as well as a unique type featuring a plectrum, lyre, and laurel-branch tied with a fillet.<sup>77</sup> Five of these six issues bear an obverse type of the bust of Libertas, marking them as distinctly anti-Caesarian.<sup>78</sup> Apollo, then, either belonged entirely to the Liberators at Philippi or was claimed by both sides at the time of the battle. Only one of those sides survived to enjoy exclusive rights to him thereafter, and Apollo made a pretty prize indeed, for cultivating an association with the god in the wake of Philippi worked in Octavian's favor in many ways.

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<sup>75</sup> Taylor 1931: *loc. cit.* Miller (2009: 19–20) sees the head of Apollo on the obverse of *RRC* 494/34 (42 B.C.) as “indubitably refer[ring] to Octavian by way of the Julian family’s connection with this deity,” pointing out the standing Venus on the reverse. I am not convinced that so much weight can be placed upon this particular pairing when several other issues of the same college of *monetales* (which was highly prolific, striking 45 known issues) feature Apolline imagery, including 494/20a–b and 21 (if one reads with Miller the head of Sol “glossed as Apollo” by the quiver symbol behind his head), 494/22–23, and perhaps 494/43a–b (a facing bust of Sol, without quiver). Many of the types issued in 42 honor Caesar, but even Miller admits that there is no connection between Caesar and Apollo (2009: 23–24). On the other hand, many types of 42 honor Antony, who is directly associated with Sol on the contemporary issues *RRC* 496/1 (Antony’s portrait/temple with radiate head of Sol facing) and 496/2–3 (Antony’s portrait/radiate head of Sol r.), an association that Antony was still promoting in 38 B.C. (*RRC* 533/2) and 36 (*RRC* 539/1). Miller (2009: 27 n. 43) wants to see Octavian and Antony as sharing the iconography of Apollo/Sol from 42, but it seems to me that Antony is more closely connected to Apollo/Sol at this time (see Wallmann 1977: 31, 35). I would not rule out the possibility that *RRC* 494/34 represents a fusion of Antonian (Sol) and Julian (Venus) types: cf. *RRC* 494/43a–b, consisting of an obverse type of a facing bust of Sol and a reverse type of Venus Cloacina.

<sup>76</sup> Cassius’ tripod types, which consistently feature two laurel-sprigs and for obvious reasons cannot be dated after October of 42, seem to complicate Fishwick’s claim (1987: 109 n. 80) that it was the two laurels voted to Augustus in 27 that began to “creep into the cult of Apollo.”

<sup>77</sup> Tripod with cauldron, all in the name of C. Cassius Longinus: 498/1 (with M. Aquinus as legate), 499/1 (again with M. Aquinus), 500/1 (with Lentulus Spinther). Tripod without cauldron, all in the name of Brutus with L. Sestius as proquaestor: 502/1–2, 502/4.

<sup>78</sup> The one exception is 500/1, where Cassius’ tripod-with-cauldron obverse type is combined with Lentulus Spinther’s reverse type of a jug (*gutus*) and lituus.

In the first place, a claim on Apollo at this time effectively constituted an appropriation of the god as patron, taken over from the recently extinguished Liberators, and a corresponding rebranding of Apolline imagery from anti- to pro-Caesarian. It may also have been cast as a revival of the lapsed links between the *gens* and the god, connections which Caesar was apparently content to ignore but with which Octavian may well have been familiar thanks to his antiquarian interests.<sup>79</sup> Such a restoration of Apollo to the Julian family could be construed as a way of further establishing Octavian (having been born into the *gens Octavia*) as a rightful member of the *gens Iulia* and therefore all the more entitled to their claims of divine ancestry reaching back to Venus as mother of Aeneas. Moreover, a connection between Octavian and Apollo would naturally provide a complementary route by which Apollo's *princeps* could all the more naturally adopt Apollo's plant, which would in turn further validate Octavian's use of the laurel-wreath as an essential visual expression of his identity as *Imperator Caesar Divi Filius*.

Octavian's adoption of the Apolline laurel in addition to the Caesarian one in the years following Philippi thus neatly fulfilled the other half of the dual model of inheritance introduced in the previous chapter. On the one hand, the laurel was presented as a filial legacy passed down from father to son, earned not just through legality or blood-kinship but through a trial-by-

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<sup>79</sup> The *gens Iulia* was responsible for the sole temple to Apollo erected during the Republic: the temple to Apollo Medicus near the Circus Flaminius, dedicated by C. Julius Mento (cos. 431) in the year of his consulship in response to an epidemic (Liv. 4.25.3, 4.26.2 [where Mento's praenomen is given incorrectly as Cn.], 4.27.1, and 4.29.7), was the first temple of Apollo at Rome and remained the only one until the time of Augustus (F. Graf, *NP* s.v. Apollo C.2), when it was renovated by C. Sosius and joined by Augustus' temple to Apollo on the Palatine. Also of significance may be the lyre that appears as a symbol on the reverse of the single denarius issue of L. Julius L.f. Caesar (*RRC* 320/1, 103 B.C.). See Miller 2009: 23–24.

combat in which Octavian came into his own as Caesar's avenger and heir. On the other, the laurel was advertised as a principal emblem of the god whom Octavian had wrested away from his enemies. In both respects Philippi was the first decisive moment in which Octavian won his laurel. It would certainly not be the last: in 36 B.C. Octavian went on to win a significant victory at Naulochus over Sextus Pompey, the younger son of Caesar's bitter rival, who had used Apollo's tripod as a symbol on an aureus as far back as 42. But it was the aftermath of Actium that saw Apollo and his tripod come into their own as Augustan symbols representing the god as the patron of the *princeps*, with Palatine plaques representing the myth of Apollo's tug-of-war with Hercules over the tripod used as a visual allegory for Augustus' (then Octavian's) fight against Antony, whose line claimed descent from Hercules. If the tripod can thus be considered a prize of Actium, then the laurel may all the more easily be interpreted as its Philippian counterpart.

The unique symbolic power of the Augustan laurel in its ultimate form lies precisely in this polyvalence as both an inheritance of the deified Caesar *and* as an Apolline emblem of which Octavian relieved his enemies. In the years following his issues of 38 and 37 B.C. Octavian continued to cultivate personal connections to both of these figures simultaneously. We hear that the future emperor began to make increasingly more public claims on Apollo as early as 36 B.C., when he made a vow to the god on the eve of Naulochus. Later this purported vow, together with the similar one that Octavian reportedly made before Actium, would be connected with the *princeps'* dedication of his famous temple to Apollo on the Palatine. Largely on the basis of



victories such as Naulochus and Actium, Octavian would also go on to be granted the very same right that Caesar had enjoyed of wearing the laurel-wreath in perpetuity,<sup>80</sup> and while, being less bald, he might have derived less relief from it than Caesar, he apparently derived no less pride. Later, as Augustus, his connection to the laurel grew even more personalized in the public eye, to the point where the wreath that he wore and the branch that he held in his triumphal processions were said to be drawn from his own private laurel grove, which in turn was said to have been planted at the insistence of his then-fiancée Livia after a hen carrying a laurel-sprig dropped in her lap.<sup>81</sup> (It seems that such auguries ran in the family as well.)

The *senatusconsultum* of January 27 B.C. that granted Octavian both the name Augustus and his two personal laurel-branches can be interpreted as a landmark moment not only in many other respects but especially in the merging of these hitherto parallel relationships. Consider the following pair of issues struck at the official mint at Lugdunum between 15 and 13 B.C. (*RIC I*<sup>2</sup> 170 and 171a–b, Figures 4.9 and 4.10 below). Struck to commemorate Augustus' tenth acclamation as *imperator* (IMP·X), they share a common obverse type of the bare head of Augustus with the legend AVGVSTVS DIVI·Filius. The reverse type of the first issue (*RIC I*<sup>2</sup> 170) depicts the *princeps* seated on the *sella curulis* atop a platform, receiving a single laurel-branch apiece from two soldiers. On its own, the type appears to highlight the imperial nature of the laurel-branches—Apollo is nowhere in sight. But the god takes center stage on the reverse of the

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<sup>80</sup> App. *BC* 5.130.541–542; Dio 49.15.1.

<sup>81</sup> Plin. *NH* 15.136–137.

second issue (*RIC I*<sup>2</sup> 171a–b), where his appearance on a coin celebrating Augustus’ tenth acclamation (*IMP·X*) can be explained by the legend in the exergue: *ACT*, recalling the battle of Actium. Just as Caesar had had *Venus Victrix*, so Augustus has his Actian Apollo as the god who oversaw his martial victories. Thus while the laurel-branches on the first issue are quite reasonably interpreted as a military honor granted to Augustus, and in this sense are perfectly correlative with the title *imperator* in its traditional sense as an acclamation bestowed upon a general by his soldiers, the reverse of the second issue suggests that there is a distinctly Apolline flavor to them because it was that god who had granted Augustus the victory itself. That was not to take away from the pre-Augustan laurel’s significance as the *insigne* of the *imperator-triumphator*—rather, the Apolline significance seems to have added further meaning: compare Propertius’ Apollo promising to guide Augustus’ “Julian” ships at Actium with his “laurel-decked” hand (4.6.54 *ducam laurigeram Iulia rostra manu*).<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> See Coleman 2003 for an analysis of Apollo’s speech to Augustus in Propertius 4.6 as “a *suasoria* that conveys a special bond between Rome’s future *princeps* and his divine champion” (37).



Figure 4.9: Denarius of Augustus. Lugdunum, 15–13 B.C. Obv.: Bare head of Augustus r.; around, counter-clockwise from top l, AVGVSTVS DIVI·F. Rev.: Two soldiers to l. standing r., offering one laurel-branch apiece to Augustus seated l. on *sella curulis* atop platform; in exergue, IMP·X. *RIC I*<sup>2</sup> Augustus 165a.



Figure 4.10: Aureus of Augustus. Lugdunum, 15–13 B.C. Obv.: Bare head of Augustus r.; around, counter-clockwise from top l, AVGVSTVS DIVI·F. Rev.: Apollo, draped, standing l., holding plectrum in r. hand and lyre in l.; in field, to l. and r., IMP·X; in exergue, ACT. *RIC I*<sup>2</sup> Augustus 170.

As is evident even from these two issues, the Apolline connection to Augustus' laurels did not erase their imperial nature; rather, these aspects worked best together as complements. Thus the *Palatinae laurus*, to borrow a phrase from Ovid,<sup>83</sup> comprised a specifically Augustan

<sup>83</sup> *Ov. Fast.* 4.953.

icon in which we can locate two formerly distinct concepts of the laurel. The first is the pre-eminent symbol of imperial victory in Roman Republican culture, with its specific ties both to Julius Caesar, the *divus imperator perpetuo*, who perpetually enjoyed the promise of immortality conveyed by Daphne's evergreen leaves and who bequeathed his crown to his son and heir as a personal inheritance, as well as to Caesar's divine counterpart Jupiter, the Olympian *imperator* himself and as such the dedicatee of every *triumphator's* personal laurel.<sup>84</sup> The second is the attribute of Apollo, both as a longstanding emblem and even tool of the god of purification and prophecy<sup>85</sup> (the latter of which especially facilitated a connection between Apollo and Augustus) and as an icon effectively appropriated by Octavian from the murderers of Caesar.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> For Octavian's advertisement of the connection between Jupiter and the laurel, and his assimilation to the laureate Jupiter, cf. esp. a denarius of 29–27 B.C. (*RIC* I<sup>2</sup> 270) bearing an obverse type of a laureate herm bust with the features of Octavian, behind which appears Jupiter's thunderbolt as an attribute. This is a "paired issue" with a second denarius (*RIC* I<sup>2</sup> 269a–b) featuring an anepigraphic obverse type of Octavian's bare head and a reverse type of a laureate herm with a thunderbolt at its base, on either side the legend IMP CAESAR. Given that these are paired issues, I believe that the full herm, whose features are exceedingly difficult to read due to their small size (and usually worn off, to boot), should be interpreted as possessing the features of Octavian, as shown on the obverse of *RIC* I<sup>2</sup> 269a–b. An identification of Octavian as Veiovis, as suggested in *RIC* (p. 60), would be fitting. (The long strands on either side of the herm's neck should be interpreted as the ends of the fillet tied to the laurel-wreath, exactly as on the portrait of the herm on the obverse of *RIC* I<sup>2</sup> 270.) Note that in both cases the herm is laureate and identified with Jupiter through the appearance of the thunderbolt.

A laurel-branch was deposited in the lap of Jupiter Optimus Maximus by the *triumphator* at the end of his triumph, which terminated at the Temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus on the Capitoline (Plin. *NH* 15.136; Sen. *Consol. ad Helv.* 10.8: *laureamque in Capitolini Iovis gremio reposuerat*; Stat. *Silv.* 4.1.41: *nondum gremio Iovis Indica laurus*; cf. Plin. *Pan.* 8, where Nerva places a laurel in the lap of Jupiter, thus celebrating his adoption of Trajan as if it were a triumph and granting Trajan's future rule the promise of invincibility).

<sup>85</sup> F. Graf and A. Ley, *NP* s.v. Apollo. Apollo purified himself with the laurel after killing Python and used it to purify Orestes of the blood-guilt of killing his mother. Apollo traditionally gave his prophecy "from the laurel" (ἐκ δάφνης, *Hymn. Hom.* 3.396); the Pythia of Delphi likewise gave her prophecies "from the tripod and laurel of Phoebus [Apollo]" (Lucr. 1.739, 5.112).

<sup>86</sup> See esp. Kearsley 2009.

This fusion constitutes just one example of the *princeps*' formidable expertise in leveraging extant symbols—and the symbolic capital that came with them—to augment his *auctoritas*, a substantial part of which was generated by his role as *auctor* in reconfiguring the meaning of such symbols.<sup>87</sup> This authority in turn is evident even in the fact that Augustus' distinct treatment of the laurel, as of so many other things, set a precedent for emperors to come.<sup>88</sup> Furthermore, like both Cicero's vision of Caesar and Ovid's portrayal of Apollo, Augustus became the sole authority through whom the laurels were dispensed. Quite literally, to boot: it was under this gatekeeper's watch that the triumph and its trappings were restricted to the imperial family, with the last triumph celebrated by a private citizen being that of L. Cornelius Balbus in 19 B.C.<sup>89</sup> As a result of this monopoly, the laurel ceased to be a viable avenue for fair aristocratic competition and instead grew synonymous with imperial privilege.

Returning in conclusion to the *Metamorphoses*, we can now see that in constructing his narrative of Apollo's winning of the laurel, Ovid seizes upon the *Palatinae laurus* as a kind of

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<sup>87</sup> Cf. Pliny's suggestion of the possibility that Augustus had changed the species of laurel used in triumphs (*NH* 15. 130: nisi id a Divo Augusto coepit); Pliny seems to consider this change entirely within Augustus' power, especially in light of the tradition he institutes of drawing triumphal laurels from a private grove belonging to the Caesars.

<sup>88</sup> In addition to the fact that Roman emperors are frequently shown laureate on their coinage, Pliny reports (*NH* 15.127) that laurel stood guard as the *ianitrix* ("portress," for which cf. *custos* at *Ov. Met.* 1.562) of the imperial palace and (*NH* 15. 137) that future emperors emulated Augustus in drawing the laurels that they wore and carried in their triumphs from their private laurel grove.

<sup>89</sup> *Fasti*: L·CORNELIVS·P·F·BALBVS·PROCOS·A(nno)·DCCXXXIV | EX·AFRICA VI·K(alendis)·April(is). (Degrassi 1937: 13.1.87.) The triumph, for Balbus' successes as proconsul in Africa (21/20 B.C.) is the last inscribed in the *Fasti Triumphales* (set up c. 12 B.C.); interestingly, it was also the first celebrated by a "naturalized" Roman citizen (E. Badian, *OCD* s.v. triumph; K.-L. Elvers, *NP* s.v. Cornelius [I 7] C. Balbus, L.). (Balbus was not born a Roman but, along with the rest of his family, had been granted Roman citizenship by Pompey in return for his uncle's service against Sertorius in Spain in the 70s.)

handle by which he could comment on its historical *auctor*, Augustus himself. In light of the *princeps*' particular relationship to the laurel in the historical context in which the poem was written and circulated, a relationship explicitly invoked by Apollo's direct reference to Augustus in his victory speech, it becomes clear that it was not Augustus who emulated Ovid's Apollo but rather vice versa: that Ovid's Apollo is modelled on Augustus not only as laurel-bearer but as laurel-creator, a single powerful *auctor* who reshaped the meaning of the laurel to reflect his own unique *auctoritas*. Likewise, the poet's presentation of the Daphne episode as a whole mirrors the historical development of the laurel in late Republican culture as a longstanding tradition given a new, uniquely Augustan flavor.<sup>90</sup>

### The Spoils of Honor

Thus the laurel was reshaped from the symbol on the one hand of the Republican *imperator* as a genus and of Jupiter and Caesar specifically as divine and deified exemplars, respectively, and on the other hand of Apollo and his poets and prophets into the personal adornment of first Octavian and then Augustus as its rightful inheritor in both senses. There was necessarily a sense of *virtus* lurking within the laurel in both of these contexts. In the former sense, for a general to earn it required a military success that garnered recognition first from the general's own soldiers, from whom the acclamation of *imperator* originated, and then from the senate, who considered the formal application for a triumph (i.e. the only context in which any

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<sup>90</sup> Cf. also Hölscher 1967: 160.

*imperator* not named Caesar or Pompey would normally be allowed to wear the laurel in the form of a wreath and hold it in the form of a branch). In the latter, its Apolline origin myth, its potency as a symbol of victory is explicitly attributed to its nature as the prize won by the god in despoiling his nymph as best he could, an act of pseudo-sexual domination readily comparable to a more martial equivalent, as we saw in the second chapter. While it is worth recalling the gender complications exhibited by both Caesar and Apollo, the two individuals most closely associated with the laurel in each sense before Octavian-Augustus, it is hard to identify any sense in which the *princeps* suffered from a similar characterization. Even so, as potent as the laurel was as a handle on Caesar and Apollo as Augustan paragons in their own right, it was neither *divus* nor *deus laureatus* who was ultimately enshrined in Augustan iconography as the paragon of *virtus*; that honor fell to Romulus, specifically in his aspect as *Romulus tropaeophorus* (the Trophy-Bearer). It was this particular figure, and his far more conventional but equally particular set of spoils, that became the focal point of *virtus* in the Augustan age, enabling the *princeps* not only to advertise his own *virtus* by association but even to redefine the parameters of *virtus* itself—that is to say, the best ways to demonstrate it, to earn the proof and testament of it, and finally to dispense and dispose such proof to best effect.

Romulus played a key role in Augustus' building program, which was dedicated to framing the *princeps* as the best and greatest in a long line of Romans, from Romulus and his counterpart Aeneas down to Julius Caesar. This was particular evident in his forum, where a temple of Mars Ultor eventually came to dominate a large courtyard flanked by four hemicyclical

exedrae. Romulus appeared as the trophy-bearing paragon of *virtus* in the southeastern exedra opposite Aeneas, exemplar of *pietas*. The first king of Rome also appeared on the pediment of the temple of Mars Ultor taking an augury as part of his seminal act as the founder of Rome; as we will see, Augustus greatly concerned himself with his own *auctoritas* particularly as founder and restorer of Roman temples and institutions alike.<sup>91</sup> The elogium inscribed on the base of the *princeps*' statue, which dominated the forum, included the corresponding title *pater patriae*, which highlighted his relationship not only to Romulus but also to Aeneas and to Caesar, among others. Moreover, Augustus himself was often referred to as a second Romulus, and it was even said that, when he was still Octavian and in search of a more memorable name, he would have taken Romulus' had it not already been spoiled by invective.<sup>92</sup>

In its exedrae and porticoes, the Forum of Augustus provided an impressive display of Roman history. To the north, Aeneas bearing his father Anchises on his shoulder and leading his son Iulus by the hand headed the Alban kings and the Julii of Rome, all ancestors of Augustus; to the south, Romulus carrying the first set of *spolia opima*, "the spoils of honor," led a long line of *summi viri*, for the most part *triumphatores* like himself.<sup>93</sup> This butterflyed presentation of historical elite, not only the best men of Rome but all implicitly presented as predecessors of

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<sup>91</sup> See again Kearsley 2009; cf. also Livy 4.20, discussed in further detail below.

<sup>92</sup> Hirst 1926; Stem 2007. Examples of such invective include Catullus' *cinaedus Romulus*, used of Caesar (29.5, 9; cf. Antony's accusation that Octavian had effectively paid for his adoption by Caesar with sexual favors: Suet. *Aug.* 68); [Sallust], *Romulus Arpinas*, of Cicero (*in Cic.* 4.7); and Sallust's *scaevos iste Romulus*, of Sulla (*Hist.* 1.55.5).

<sup>93</sup> On the *viri illustres* as a kind of "hall of fame," see Hurlbut 1920; Drew 1925; Zanker 1988; Luce 1990; Evans 1992; and Geiger 2008.



Augustus (not a few of them putatively ancestors as well), proudly emphasized two of Augustus' crowning virtues, namely *pietas* and *virtus*. But from the very beginning the Forum also served as an embodiment of those virtues as well. It had been vowed by Augustus, or so Suetonius tells us, on the eve of the battle of Philippi, when the *princeps* avenged his father's murder.<sup>94</sup> The choice of Mars Ultor also complemented Caesar's own Venus Genetrix,<sup>95</sup> which was likewise manubial, and perhaps recalled Caesar's intention to build a temple to Mars "greater than any which had been built before."<sup>96</sup> In these ways and more Augustus' temple and forum were material proof and long-lasting evidence of his *pietas*. While the dedication to Mars and the occasion for the temple were both related to (and therefore evocative of) *virtus*, the function of the Forum of Augustus as a testament to not just Augustan but Augustus' *virtus* remains to be seen. As we can infer from their parallel displays, just as the story of *pietas* in an Augustan context begins with the figure of *pious Aeneas*, so too does the narrative of *virtus* begin with the symbolic power of *Romulus tropaeophorus*.

The term *tropaeophorus* can simply describe any figure carrying a *tropaeum*, which is how Jupiter, Mars, Minerva, and Victory sometimes appear in Roman art, including coinage of both the Republican and Imperial periods. The *tropaea* carried by these divinities are quite

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<sup>94</sup> Suet. *Aug.* 29.2.

<sup>95</sup> For Caesar's vow to Venus Genetrix on the eve of Pharsalus in 48, see App. 2.10.68, 2.15.102. The temple was dedicated in 46. The exedrae and porticoes of the Forum of Augustus, along with their respective statues, can also be seen as representative of Venus (through Aeneas, the Alban kings, and the Julii) and Mars (Romulus and the other *summi viri*, many of them *triumphatores*).

<sup>96</sup> Suet. *Div. Jul.* 44.1; Cic. *Att.* 13.33a.

generic: even if they may be tied to a particular *people*, they cannot be connected to one particular *person*. On the other hand, the trophy borne by Romulus *tropaeophorus* had a very specific meaning in Augustan iconography: not only was it arguably the first set of spoils assembled into a trophy in Roman history, but it was inarguably (at least by the Augustan age) the first set of spoils regarded as *spolia opima*. In context the word *opima* means literally “noble” or “illustrious,” and hence the full phrase is often translated as the “spoils of honor.”<sup>97</sup> As we might expect from our examination of value in the second chapter, the most illustrious spoils could only be taken from the most illustrious opponent, and indeed we find that the only uncontested qualification of *spolia* as *opima* is that they must have been stripped from an enemy commander (e.g. a general or king) by the Roman who defeated him in battle. Winning such spoils would have been the greatest feat of *virtus* in the good old martial sense of the word, because it would require having defeated the greatest enemy.

Peri- and post-Augustan sources regard Romulus as the first to have won *spolia opima* when he defeated Acron, king of the Caeninenses, in the first year A.U.C., consistent with his depiction as *tropaeophorus*, the exemplar of *virtus*, both in the context of the Forum of Augustus and elsewhere in contemporary Roman art. At the same time, however, the precedent set by the *opima*-bearing *tropaeophorus* posed something of a problem for Augustus and his legacy with

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<sup>97</sup> TLL s.v. *opimus* 9.2.708.52–9.2.711.73 (Keudel), esp. 9.2.708.81–9.2.709.73. The term *opimus* (from *ops*, *opis*) also encompasses the notion of “rich” in other ways, such as “abundant” or “magnificent.” Its particular usage in the phrase *spolia opima* might be interpreted as another example of the (originally monetary) worth of a man’s armor being consistent with his rank.

respect to Roman *virtus*. While no one could reasonably have expected Augustus to emulate *pius Aeneas* by saving his family (or at least its male members) from the burning ashes of a city and re-establish his people elsewhere, tradition held that the feat of winning *spolia opima* had been repeated twice after Romulus in the course of Roman history. While somewhat lapsed, the practice was still theoretically alive as the then-Octavian was coming to power, and as we will see, it was revived as a hot topic in the final decades of the dying Republic. It is in the *princeps'* response to this tradition and the attention that it received that the key to Augustan *virtus* lies.

### *Spolia Opima*

Both the origin and the details of the tradition of taking *spolia opima* were a matter of great debate even in antiquity. Flower has argued that the concept itself was wholly invented by the Marcelli in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century B.C. after M. Claudius Marcellus (cos. 222, 216, 214, 210, and 208) defeated the leader of the Insubrian Gauls at Clastidium in the year of his first consulship.<sup>98</sup> Indeed, it seems to have been only after this that the idea was retrojected back to the earliest days of Rome, with the feat further ascribed to two men in particular: Romulus in the 8<sup>th</sup> century B.C. and A. Cornelius Cossus in the 5<sup>th</sup>. In the extant literary sources of the late Republic and Augustan age, these three Romans consistently appear as the canonical dedicators of *spolia opima*, although (as we will see) the details of Cossus' dedication were deliberately called into

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<sup>98</sup> Flower 2000; Marcellus' entry in the *Fasti Triumphales* reads: M·CLAVDIVS·M·F·M·N·MARCELLVS·AN(no)·DXXXI | COS·DE·GALLEIS·IN SVB RIBVS·ET·GERMAN(ibus) | K(alendis)·MART(iis)·ISQVE·SPOLIA·OPIMA·RETTVLIT | [D]VCE·HOSTIVM·VIRDV·MARO·AD·CLASTIDIVM | [INTERFECTO].

question. On the other hand, it was a matter of consensus that all three sets of *spolia opima* were deposited by their respective dedicators in the temple of Jupiter Feretrius, the traditional home of the fetial priests and their scepter and flint (*lapis silex*).<sup>99</sup>

According to this consensus of the 1<sup>st</sup> century sources, it was in his first year of kingship that Romulus won the first set of *spolia opima* from Acron, king of the Caeninenses in Latium.<sup>100</sup> Livy imagines the scene in detail: having stripped the armor from Acron's body, Romulus brought it back to Rome, set it up on an ad hoc *ferculum* of oak, and outlined the boundaries of a *templum* dedicated to Jupiter Feretrius that would serve as the repository for *spolia opima* at that time and in the future.<sup>101</sup> Ancient authors offered several choices of etymology for this epithet, acknowledging the difficulty in choosing the original from among them, but they agree in identifying the temple and cult of Jupiter Feretrius as the oldest at Rome.<sup>102</sup> This sort of primacy conveyed an additional sense of divinity on Romulus as the founder and first dedicator. Both primacy and divinity were on full display in the Augustan *fasti triumphales*, where the first entry

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<sup>99</sup> Flower 2000: 42, n. 43; Festus 92; Liv. 1.24, 30.43.9; Wiedemann 1986; Harrison 1989: 409.

<sup>100</sup> Liv. 1.10; Val. Max. 3.2.3; Dionys. 2.34; Plut. *Rom.* 16; Serv. *Aen.* 6.859; Flor. 1.1.11; *CIL* I<sup>2</sup> 283.

<sup>101</sup> 1.10.

<sup>102</sup> Springer 1954; Flower 2000: 34, esp. n. 2. The two most popular etymologies were *ferre* (or the related *feretrum*, i.e. *ferculum*), from the notion that the spoils had to be carried to the temple on a frame; and *ferire*, either from the idea that the Roman who won *spolia opima* had to strike down his opponent in combat or from striking a treaty (*foedus ferire*), one of the functions of the fetial priests, whose tools for doing so were kept in the temple of Feretrius.

records the triumph of Romulus, named son of Mars and king of Rome, over the Caeninenses on the Kalends of March in the first year A.U.C.<sup>103</sup>

The next Roman said to have dedicated *spolia opima* was A. Cornelius Cossus, who was supposed personally to have slain Lars Tolumnius, king of Veii, at some point in the third quarter of the 5<sup>th</sup> century B.C.<sup>104</sup> Livy's account of the action is again quite lively: after beheading and despoiling Tolumnius in the field, Cossus, then military tribune, upstaged the dictator Mamercus Aemilius at the resulting triumph, where the "greatest spectacle" was Cossus carrying the *spolia opima* of the slain king to the tune of his fellow soldiers equating him in ribald chants to Romulus, his one and only predecessor as dedicator of such spoils.<sup>105</sup> Livy's version of events not only makes for the most entertaining reading: it is also the one that most clearly reveals the discrepancies regarding both the tradition as a whole and Cossus' particular role in it. These discrepancies will be discussed in greater detail below; for now it is enough to note that to all intents and purposes Cossus consistently featured among the canonical Augustan trio of dedicators despite the doubts that were raised about his position at the time and therefore the year of his dedication.

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<sup>103</sup> The Fasti read ROMVLVS·MARTIS·F(ilius)·REX·ANN(o)[·I] | DE·CAENINENSIBVS·K(alendis)·MAR[t(iis)]. The entry seems to omit any reference to *spolia opima*, as the following line (of which only [M]ARTIS is legible) seems to describe a different triumph of Romulus'.

<sup>104</sup> Liv. 4.17–20; Fest. 189; Val. Max. 3.2.4; Diodor. 12.80; Dionys. 12.5; Plut. *Rom.* 16; Flor. 1.12.9; Serv. *Aen.* 6.859.

<sup>105</sup> Liv. 4.20. Cossus' entry in the Fasti exists only as a lacuna, but the space does not seem to be long enough to permit a mention of his *spolia* such as the one we find for Marcellus. Thus Marcellus is the only dedicator whose spoils are explicitly mentioned in the Fasti.

It was the dedication of M. Claudius Marcellus, third according to tradition even if it had been first in reality, that received the most attention in the run-up to the Augustan period, albeit mainly thanks to members of the *gens Cornelia*. In 50 B.C. Marcellus carrying his spoils into a temple (presumed to be that of Feretrius) was featured as the reverse type of the single known denarius issue of a Cornelius Lentulus Marcellinus, who had the happy fortune of being able to boast descent from both the Claudii Marcelli and the Cornelii (*RRC* 439/1, Figure 4.11 below).<sup>106</sup> Marcellus dedicating his spoils was a perfect subject for Marcellinus' issue, being an image that emphasized not only the moneyer's personal ancestry but also that of three men who had held the consulship at some point during the previous six years: Cn. Cornelius Lentulus Marcellinus (cos. 56); M. Claudius Marcellus (cos. 51), later the subject of Cicero's *pro Marcello*; and C. Claudius Marcellus Minor (cos. 50), cousin of Marcus. The first, Gnaeus, was very likely the moneyer's own father, while the latter two could claim uninterrupted descent from the consul of 222 (and 216, 214, 210, and 208), the dedicator of the *spolia opima* himself. (As if that were not enough, the following year would see the consulship of both another Claudius Marcellus and another Cornelius Lentulus.)<sup>107</sup> The reverse of the denarius provides us with the only visual representation of the temple of Jupiter Feretrius, a tetrastyle rectangular building with a plain

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<sup>106</sup> *RRC* 439/1, with Flower 2000: 47. The moneyer (*RE* Cornelius 232) is identified by Crawford with the quaestor who defended Dyrrhachium for Caesar in 48 (cf. Syme 1985: 250). Crawford gives him the praenomen Publius, likely on the attestation of a P. Cornelius Lentulus Marcellinus as consul in 18 B.C.

<sup>107</sup> 49: C. Claudius Marcellus Maior and L. Cornelius Lentulus Crus.

pediment.<sup>108</sup> Marcellinus' coin shows Marcellus (cos. 222, etc.) placing his spoils inside the temple on a (putatively) wooden frame, much as Livy has Romulus and Cossus do, and it is tempting to see in this image Marcellus setting the precedent for his predecessors as they would later be enshrined in text. Livy's account of Cossus' dedication in particular seems to indicate that statues of the dedicators were set up within the temple alongside the spoils as a sort of miniature "Hall of Fame" à la the much larger parade of *summi viri* whose statues would later line the Forum of Augustus. Marcellus' dedication surely also merited inclusion in the history of the Marcelli composed by Atticus at the request of C. Claudius Marcellus Minor (cos. 50).<sup>109</sup>



Figure 4.11: Denarius of (P.?) Cornelius Lentulus Marcellinus. Rome, 50 B.C. Obv.: Bare head of M. Claudius Marcellus (cos. 222) r.; behind, *triskeles*; before, downwards, MARCELLINVS. Rev.: M. Claudius Marcellus walking r., carrying *tropaeum* into tetrastyle temple; on r., downwards, MARCELLVS; on l., downwards, COS-QVINQ. RRC 439/1.

<sup>108</sup> According to Livy, Ancus Marcius had enlarged the original structure on the Capitoline; Dionysius of Halicarnassus adds that its longest sides measured no more than fifteen feet.

<sup>109</sup> Flower 2000: 47, esp. n. 70.

The exact dates of composition of that history are unclear beyond the *terminus ante quem* of the request itself: Marcellus Minor (cos. 50) died in 40. If he had been inspired by Marcellinus' denarius, or vice versa, then the work may have already been underway when in 45/44 B.C. the Senate granted Julius Caesar the privilege of dedicating *spolia opima*. Martino has argued that Caesar requested this honor on the grounds that he had actually performed the requisite feat, citing as evidence coins struck in his name in Spain from 46–45 (RRC 468/1–2) showing a Gallic trophy and two captives.<sup>110</sup> Trophies and captives, however, are expected commonplaces on coins struck in the name, honor, or memory of victorious generals, and there seems to be nothing exceptional about the depiction of Caesar's Gallic types, much less anything that can be connected to so exceptional a claim as the *spolia opima*. Moreover, Dio claims that it was granted to Caesar "as if he had killed an enemy commander with his own hand,"<sup>111</sup> and Oakley has shown how rare by this point was even the opportunity for single combat, a prerequisite for winning these particular spoils.<sup>112</sup> Whether or not he had any plans to perform the dedication, it seems that the dictator never actually did so.<sup>113</sup> Nevertheless, Caesar's claim to *spolia opima*, even if it

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<sup>110</sup> Martino 2008: 426, arguing that Caesar's coins depict Vercingetorix himself. Martino dates RRC 468/1–2 to 45–44 B.C. (cf. Kent 1978: 17), closer to the date that Caesar was reportedly granted the right to dedicate *spolia opima*.

<sup>111</sup> Dio 44.4.3. Dio's claim, which is not found in any other source, was denounced as "grotesque" by Syme (1979: 419), but it is usually either accepted or at least entertained as a possibility (Harrison 1989: 408–409; Rich 1996: 106; Flower 2000: 48).

<sup>112</sup> Oakley 1985.

<sup>113</sup> Flower 2000: 48.



was honorary and ultimately unfulfilled, shows that it was still topical as an extreme display of personal *virtus* even the better part of two centuries after Marcellus' dedication.

### *Spolia Restituta*

If Atticus was not already familiar with the temple of Jupiter Feretrius and the *spolia opima*, he surely did his due diligence in the course of composing his family history of the Marcelli. Not only would he have been expected to cover Marcellus' dedication as one of the greatest feats of one of the greatest members of the *gens*, but Marcellinus' denarius of 50 B.C. and the special privilege voted to Caesar in 45/44 would have given the topic new relevance. At some point Atticus discovered that the temple itself lay in ruins, its roof collapsed, for it was reportedly at his suggestion that Octavian restored the building.<sup>114</sup> Atticus and Octavian conversed regularly about antiquarian subjects, according to Nepos, and it may have been during one such discussion that Octavian learned about the rites of the *fetiales*, the priests whose ritual implements were kept in the temple of Jupiter Feretrius and who oversaw among other things the declaration of *bellum iustum*, just war. Having restored the temple and by extension the *fetiales*, Augustus took up the role of a fetial priest himself in order to "re-enact" one of their archaic rites as part of his declaration of war on Cleopatra in 32 B.C., leading a grand symbolic spear-casting ceremony before the Temple of Bellona in the Campus Martius.<sup>115</sup> Like the first two dedications of *spolia*

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<sup>114</sup> Nepos, *Att.* 20.3 with Millar 1988.

<sup>115</sup> Dio 50.4.5 with Wiedemann 1986; Volkmann 1958: 169–170; Kearsley 1999: 57.

*opima*, some or all of the details of the ritual as performed in 32, including the throwing of the spear, may have been invented for the occasion,<sup>116</sup> but it would have been important to preserve the semblance of archaism in order to present the rite as part of a Republican past reclaimed. Since Atticus died at the end of March of 32<sup>117</sup> and Octavian took the lead role in a ritual attributed to the *fetiales* later that same year, it seems probable that the temple of Jupiter Feretrius was restored around then as well.<sup>118</sup> If that was the case, then that particular restoration was likely conceived and executed prior to Octavian's wholesale restoration of 82 temples in 28 B.C.,<sup>119</sup> and the temple of Jupiter Feretrius would once again have been the first at Rome.

In becoming *auctor et restitutor* of the temple of Jupiter Feretrius, Augustus took on a role that had previously belonged only to Romulus before him.<sup>120</sup> (Not even Caesar had restored the temple, which he would presumably have had to do before following through on the privilege

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<sup>116</sup> On the original fetial rituals, see Walbank 1949. See Wiedemann 1986: 482–483 for the view that Octavian's "re-enacted" rite was wholly invented and for its associations with Alexander the Great, who was supposed to have declared war on Asia in a similar manner (Just. 11.5.10). Sumi (2005: 319–320 with n. 113) notes the importance of the *columna bellica*, the column in front of the temple of Bellona that figured in the fetial rite (Ov. *Fast.* 6.205–8; Fest. 30L; E. La Rocca s.v. *Columna Bellica*, *LTUR* 1.300–301): in his view, if the column existed before Octavian's "re"-enactment of 32, then the rite could not have been invented by him. On the other hand, if the column were built in the time of Octavian, then it itself would have been part of the fabrication. Aside from the difficulty in determining the column's dating, it is also difficult to ascertain the limits, if any, on the freedoms that Octavian might have taken even if the fetials had once used the column in an archaic rite.

<sup>117</sup> Nepos puts his date of death as March 31 (*Att.* 22.3).

<sup>118</sup> Cf. Flower 2000: 28: "The temple of Jupiter Feretrius was restored, and in fact virtually completely rebuilt by Octavian, probably before Actium and certainly before his return from the East in 29."

<sup>119</sup> *RGDA* 20.4: *duo et octaginta templa deum in urbe consul sextum ex decreto senatus refeci*. It is possible that Octavian took the idea for restoring Feretrius before Atticus' death and that he still counted it among the 82 temples that he claims to have restored in 28, especially if the restoration were delayed (it was not, after all, strictly necessary for the spear-throwing rite of 32) or spanned multiple years.

<sup>120</sup> On Romulus as an *exemplum*, especially in Livy, see Stem 2007.

granted to him by the senate; if he had any such plans, we do not hear of them.) Yet it was one thing to participate in the traditions related to Feretrius by stepping into the shoes of a *fetialis* to reproduce an ostensibly archaic rite; it was significantly harder to contrive a claim to *spolia opima*. It could well have been in Octavian's best interest to concentrate on the restoration of Jupiter Feretrius and its fetial rituals while at the same time allowing himself to be associated with the history of the *spolia opima* only by association, perhaps with a patient eye towards following in his father's footsteps in due time, as he already had done and later would do in so many other respects. It was not necessary for Augustus to secure the right to such a claim, at least for the moment—in the meantime, other ways could be found to emphasize his *virtus*.

Indeed, in October of 31 came Octavian's victory at Actium, the resolution of the "just" war which he had begun with his purportedly archaic spear-throwing spectacle. During that same year two coins were struck at Rome whose reverse types show Octavian in martial dress holding a spear. On one (*RIC* I<sup>2</sup> 251, Figure 4.12) Octavian advances left, his right arm stretched out before him and a transverse spear couched in his left arm. On the other (*RIC* I<sup>2</sup> 253, Figure 4.13) his pose of *adlocutio* prefigures that of the Augustus of Prima Porta, which has been reconstructed with a spear or scepter of a similar sort. It is a distinct possibility that the spear carried by Octavian on these coins could have recalled the fetial spear rite that he led in 32 while also emphasizing his imperial authority in general. As discussed in the first chapter, this spear had particular significance as the symbolic weapon of the *imperator*,<sup>121</sup> and just as the

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<sup>121</sup> See esp. Alföldi 1959.

literary sources consistently refer to the spear used by Octavian in the fetial ritual in 32 as a *hasta*, the one carried by Octavian on these denarii should likewise be identified as *hastae*. That connection is to my mind sufficient to read the coins as potentially evocative of Octavian's ritual, which was in essence a particularized use of the *hasta* by the dominant *imperator* of the time, although it is a stretch to argue that they ought to be seen as illustrations of that rite.



Figure 4.12



Figure 4.13

Figure 4.12: Denarius of Octavian. Italian mint (Rome or Brundisium?), 32–29 B.C. [Obv.: Diademed head of Venus r.] Rev.: Octavian in military dress advancing l., r. hand extended, l. holding transverse spear; in field, CAESAR DIVI·F. *RIC I<sup>2</sup> Augustus 251*.

Figure 4.13: Denarius of Octavian. Italian mint (Rome or Brundisium?), 32–29 B.C. [Obv.: Diademed head of Pax r.; before, olive-branch; behind, cornucopiae.] Rev.: Octavian in military dress standing r., r. hand raised, transverse spear over l. shoulder; in field, CAESAR DIVI·F. *RIC I<sup>2</sup> Augustus 253*.

The *auctoritas* of Octavian both as *restitutor* of Feretrius and the fetials and as leading *imperator* was imperiled not two years later. In 29 B.C., M. Licinius Crassus, grandson of the triumvir, had been sent as proconsul to Macedonia to deal with invading tribes; rumor had it that he had succeeded in killing Deldo, king of the Bastarnae, and intended to dedicate the king's arms as *spolia opima* upon his return to Rome. In light of the prestige at stake, as well as all of the

attention paid to that tradition and the temple of Jupiter Feretrius over the course of the two decades between Marcellinus' coin of 50 and the fetial rite of 32, reports of Crassus' claim should come as no surprise—certainly not more than the fact that he had had the chance to kill a king in single combat in the first place. Absent this claim of Crassus', the right to dedicate *spolia opima* might have remained for Octavian an honor to be earned *honoris causa*, as it had been for his father before him.<sup>122</sup> But Crassus' feat presented a challenge; indeed, the *princeps*' perfect nightmare may well have been Livy's account of *Cossus tropaeophorus* upstaging the general Aemilius at his own triumph, with Cossus being explicitly (if ribaldly) compared to Romulus by Aemilius' soldiers.<sup>123</sup> While Octavian declined to take the name Romulus himself, he could hardly have been willing to brook such a rival.

It is now time to take a closer look at Livy's account of Cossus' dedication, especially the discrepancies concerning Cossus' position when he won and dedicated his spoils. Initially Livy is very clear in identifying Cossus as military tribune,<sup>124</sup> a position that he held in 437 B.C. As if the reduplication in Livy's version of events were not problematic enough,<sup>125</sup> at the end of his account the historian revises his claim regarding Cossus' rank with an intriguing addendum:

omnes ante me auctores secutus, A. Cornelium Cossum tribunum militum secunda spolia opima Iovis Feretri templo intulisse exposui; ceterum, praeterquam quod ea rite opima spolia habentur, quae dux duci detraxit nec ducem novimus nisi cuius auspicio bellum geritur,

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<sup>122</sup> Harrison 1989.

<sup>123</sup> Liv. 4.20.1–4; see also Pittenger 2008.

<sup>124</sup> 4.19.1; cf. Dionys. 12.5

<sup>125</sup> Ogilvie 1965: 563–567.

titulus ipse spoliis inscriptus illos meque arguit consulem ea Cossum cepisse. hoc ego cum Augustum Caesarem, templorum omnium conditorem aut restitutorem, ingressum aedem Feretri Iovis quam vetustate dilapsam refecit, se ipsum in thorace linteo scriptum legisse audissem, prope sacrilegium ratus sum Cosso spoliiorum suorum Caesarem, ipsius templi auctorem, subtrahere testem. qui si ea in re sit error quod tam veteres annales quodque magistratum libri, quos linteos in aede repositos Monetae Macer Licinius citat identidem auctores, septimo post demum anno cum T. Quinctio Poeno A. Cornelium Cossum consulem habeant, existimatio communis omnibus est. nam etiam illud accedit, ne tam clara pugna in eum annum transferri posset, quod imbelles triennium ferme pestilentia inopiaque frugum circa A. Cornelium consulem fuit, adeo ut quidam annales velut funesti nihil praeter nomina consulum suggerant. tertius ab consulatu Cossi annus tribunum eum militum consulari potestate habet, eodem anno magistrum equitum; quo in imperio alteram insignem edidit pugnam equestrem. ea libera coniectura est. sed, ut ego arbitror, vana versare in omnes opiniones licet, cum auctor pugnae, recentibus spoliis in sacra sede positus, Iovem prope ipsum, cui vota erant, Romulumque intuens, haud spernendos falsi tituli testes, se A. Cornelium Cossum consulem scripserit.

Following all authorities before me, I proposed that A. Cornelius Cossus had brought the second *spolia opima* to the temple of Jupiter Feretrius as military tribune; on the other hand, besides the fact that those spoils are rightly considered *opima* which a *dux* strips from a *dux*, nor do we recognize a *dux* except under whose *auspicium* a war is waged, the title itself inscribed on the spoils proves *contra* those men and myself that Cossus had taken them as consul. Since I had heard that Augustus Caesar, founder or restorer of all temples, after he entered the shrine of Jupiter Feretrius, which, it having collapsed with age, he rebuilt, and read this himself written on a linen corselet, I thought it would be near sacrilege to deny Cossus Caesar, *auctor* of the very temple, as witness of his spoils. Whether it is an error in the matter that such ancient annals and the books of magistrates, the linen rolls deposited in the shrine of Moneta which Macer Licinius cites again and again as authorities, have A. Cornelius Cossus as consul only with T. Quinctius Poenus in the seventh year afterwards, the judgment is open to all. For there is this reason too that so famous a battle could not be transferred to that year: that there was a period of roughly three years unfit for war because of pestilence and dearth of crops on either side of A. Cornelius' consulship, so that certain annals supply nothing except the names of the consuls as if they were lists of the dead. The third year from Cossus' consulship had him military tribune with consular power, and *magister equitum* in the same year; in this command he produced another signal cavalry engagement. In that respect conjecture is welcome. But, as I see it, it's possible to spin untrustworthy things in favor of any and every opinion, while the *auctor* of the battle, with his fresh spoils set in the sacred seat near Jupiter himself, to whom they had been dedicated, and looking upon Romulus, scarcely to be crossed as witnesses of a false title, wrote that he was A. Cornelius Cossus, consul.

Liv. 4.20.5–11

While elsewhere in his work Livy frequently indulges in presenting two versions of events, here there is none of the integration typical of the other episodes. Instead, the alternative interpretation presented here is entirely contained within this section, which seems to have been inserted after the fact; indeed, Livy has made no apparent attempt to revise his original account to take this new information into consideration. What consideration he does give it is ambivalent: he twice leaves it to his readers to come to their own conclusions, and while he is keen to point out the numerous ways in which Augustus' newfound evidence logically contradicts that of the established record, he explicitly construes the dilemma first and foremost as a matter of *auctoritas*. Thus those who follow the authority of the established record will consider Cossus to have been tribune, while those who follow the authority of the *princeps* will agree that Cossus had been consul. Regardless of Livy's personal feelings as to Cossus' position, this addendum neatly captures the power of Augustus' *auctoritas* in overruling all extant authorities before him.<sup>126</sup> Thus, whether the *princeps* imposed fact or fiction,<sup>127</sup> it is evident from the passage that his *auctoritas* enabled him to re-write history itself. Moreover, Livy's commentary points directly to the particular source of Augustus' authority in this matter: his recently acquired status not just as *restitutor* but explicitly as *auctor* of the temple of Jupiter Feretrius, courtesy of his restoration of that building along with its related traditions. In this

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<sup>126</sup> See Ogilvie (1965: 563) for Livy's exaggeration in writing *omnes ante me auctores* (4.20.5).

<sup>127</sup> Modern scholarship tends heavily towards the latter. In addition to Dessau 1906, see Daly 1981 (refuting Versnel 1970: 308–309), Harrison 1989, Flower 2000, Ingleheart 2007, and esp. Sailor 2006.

respect he had performed yet another seminal act in emulation of Romulus, although an actual dedication of *spolia opima* was still lacking from the *princeps*' résumé.

In 1906 Dessau became the first scholar to connect Livy's addendum and Augustus' intervention to Crassus' failed pursuit of *spolia opima* in 29, and an otherwise esoteric point of archaic fact was shown to have contemporary, practical significance. If Cossus had been consul, as attested by the linen corselet reported by Augustus, then all three Roman dedicators had been supreme commanders at the time of their respective victories, and their common status as leaders could be construed in hindsight as a requirement for their *spolia* having been considered *opima*. That would explain the sudden obsession over the term *dux*, which would cover both Romulus as king and Cossus and Marcellus as consuls.<sup>128</sup> It had always been the case that *spolia opima* had to be taken from an enemy commander; in no source of any time period do we find otherwise. But an insistence that the *Roman* who slew the enemy commander had to be *dux* as well does not appear before this addendum in Livy, just a few short years after Crassus' claim seemingly evaporated as quickly as it had surfaced. This new restriction, parroted with alarming frequency after Livy, conveniently explains Crassus' failure: since he had been *proconsul* when he slew Deldo in 29, the argument could be made that he failed to qualify as *dux*. Accordingly, Dio

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<sup>128</sup> Although Augustus is mentioned only after all three occurrences of the word *dux* in Livy's addendum, there seems to have been no question about the required status of the dedicator *or* the definition of the term *dux* before this mention in Livy. It is therefore tempting to see the obsession over the definition of *dux* to be related to Augustus' intervention.



writes, Crassus *would* have dedicated *spolia opima* “had he been supreme commander,”<sup>129</sup> an explanation that relies directly on the precedent established by the infamous linen corselet and the new “rule” regarding the definition of *dux* that seems to have arisen in conjunction with it.

Crassus’ dismissal relied on more than a mere prefix. Livy points to the underlying reason when he writes that “we recognize no *dux* except the man under whose *auspicium* war is waged.” By inference, the argument must have gone that Crassus had had no *imperium* of his own but was instead fighting under Augustus’ auspices at the time that he killed Deldo; accordingly, he would have been ineligible to win *spolia opima* in his own name. (This may well have been another instance of Augustus taking after his adoptive father, who allowed others to triumph under his auspices, just as Augustus would permit Crassus to do, sans *spolia opima*.<sup>130</sup>) Although modern scholars generally agree that Crassus *did* have *imperium* and *had* been fighting under his own auspices as proconsul in 29,<sup>131</sup> those very auspices must have played a key role in his disqualification. Just as they would later be cited explicitly by Valerius Maximus to explain a similar failure to dedicate *spolia opima* on the part of other famous generals supposed to have slain enemy leaders,<sup>132</sup> the auspices are mentioned (or at least alluded to) in the context of the

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<sup>129</sup> Dio 51.24.4.

<sup>130</sup> Jehne 1987: 63–67.

<sup>131</sup> *Fasti Capitolini* with Càssola 1970: 7; Rampelberg 1978: 201–204; Schumacher 1985; Flower 2000: 52; *contra* Giovannini 1983: 31–56 and Rich 1996: 104.

<sup>132</sup> Val. Max. 3.2.6: *eodem et virtutis et pugnae genere usi sunt T. Manlius Torquatus et Valerius Corvinus et Aemilianus Scipio. hi etiam ultro provocatos hostium duces interemerunt, sed quia sub alienis auspiciis rem gesserant, spolia Iovi Feretrio non posuerunt consecranda.*

*spolia opima* in three different instances in Augustan literature: Livy's unprecedented remark that a *dux* is recognized by his auspices (4.20.6); Virgil's subtle but essential note that Pallas, who explicitly hoped to win *spolia opima* (*Aen.* 10.449–450), contributed men to Aeneas' army *suo...nomine* (*Aen.* 8.519);<sup>133</sup> and finally Propertius' parroting of Livy that a *dux* had to be slain by a *dux omine certo* (4.10.46). It would be an incredible coincidence had Virgil taken the idea from Livy, and then Propertius from either Livy or Virgil. It would be just as unlikely a coincidence that Romulus was portrayed in the act of taking *auspicia* on the pediment of the Temple of Mars Ultor; Augustus' pervasive concern for auguries and auspices, evident even in his chosen title, is well documented.<sup>134</sup>

Whence such concern for the auspices in the matter of Crassus if not from the auspicious *princeps* himself, and why should Augustus have been so concerned as to correct Livy personally? Antiquarian interest may have led Augustus to a rationale, however contrived, but it hardly seems persuasive as a rationale itself when he had a very practical interest in ensuring that Crassus not be permitted to pursue his claim. Having headed off such a claim in the same way in which political enemies denied each other triumphs throughout Republican history, Augustus was absent from Rome from 27 to 24. It must have been around the time of his departure, perhaps shortly before he left, that his version of the Cossus story and his "discovery" of the linen corselet was conveyed to Livy, who then composed his addendum separately and subsequently

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<sup>133</sup> On Pallas' aspirations to win *spolia opima*, see Flower 2000: 54.

<sup>134</sup> See esp. Kearsley 2009 for Octavian's relationship with augury and auspices between 30 and 27 B.C.

inserted it into the extant narrative (but still, in Ogilvie’s view, in advance of the publication of the first pentad, which probably occurred between 27 and 25 B.C.).<sup>135</sup> We hear no more of Crassus’ intentions thereafter, and so the matter was settled for the moment.

Thus Romulus, Cossus, and Marcellus made their way into contemporary literature as the undisputed trinity of *dux*-despoiling *duces*. In *Aeneid* 6, for example, Virgil mentions all three members of the Augustan triad in his catalogue of Roman heroes. Of particular interest is the poet’s treatment of Marcellus, who is said to have dedicated his spoils not to Jupiter Feretrius but rather to “Father Quirinus” (6.859 *patri...Quirino*). Such an anomaly is perplexing, but it can hardly be coincidence that Quirinus appears elsewhere in the tradition of the *spolia opima*: after noting Varro’s opinion that even a member of the rank and file (*miles manipularis*) could win them, Festus cites a so-called Law of Numa specifying how the class of *spolia opima* and the corresponding dedicatee would be determined by the status of the Roman who had won them.<sup>136</sup>

According to the law as cited, *spolia opima* of the first class (*prima*) were taken by a Roman

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<sup>135</sup> For the dating of Livy’s first pentad, see Luce 1965 and Burton 2000. Ogilvie (1965: 564) proposes a date of 27–26 B.C. for the composition of the digression, contemporary with the composition of the book as a whole, but argues that the digression was “inserted subsequently” into an extant draft of the narrative (cf. 32.4 *qui priore bello...intulerit*, which was “written without any knowledge of the digression,” and 20.9 *imbelle triennium*, which “presupposes that the narrative of 30 has already been written”).

<sup>136</sup> Festus 202L: *Unde spolia quoque, quae dux populi Romani duci hostium detraxit; quorum tanta raritas est, ut intra annos paulo — trina contigerint nomini Romano: una, quae Romulus de Acrone; altera, quae [consul] Cossus Cornelius de Tolumnio; tertia, quae M. Marcellus <Iovi Feretrio de> Viridomaro fixerunt. M. Varro ait opima spolia esse, etiam si manipularis miles detraxerit, dummodo duci hostium — non sint ad aedem Iovis Feretri poni, testimonio esse libros pontificum; in quibus sit: Pro primis spoliis bove, pro secundis solitaurilibus, pro tertiis agno publice fieri debere; esse etiam Pompili regis legem opimorum spoliiorum talem: Cuius auspicio classe procincta opima spolia capiuntur, Iovi Feretrio darier oporteat, et bovem caedito, qui cepit aeris CC<C> — Secunda spolia, in Martis ara in campo solitaurilia utra voluerit caedito — Tertia spolia, Ianui Quirino agnum marem caedito, C qui ceperit ex aere dato.*

under his own auspices, who would then dedicate them to Jupiter Feretrius, while those of the second class (*secunda*) were supposed to be dedicated to Mars and those of the third class (*tertia*) to “Janus Quirinus.” Now no authority seems to have claimed that Marcellus was anything short of a *dux* with *auspicium* when he won his spoils, so Virgil’s attribution of Marcellus’ dedication to Quirinus seems *prima facie* inappropriate compared to this schedule of honors. But by conflating the temporal order—in which Marcellus’ spoils were third (*tertia*)—with the ranked dedications listed above, which stop at three, Virgil effectively implies that there can be no fourth dedicatory, for there is no room for a fourth god or a fourth set of spoils in the list given in Festus. Butler supposed this to be an innocent mistake on the part of the poet,<sup>137</sup> but innocent or not (I suspect not) it is noteworthy for the effect that it has in helping to fossilize the Augustan canon of Romulus, Cossus, and Marcellus.

That said, Virgil’s handling of the topic is not otherwise unproblematic—or even necessarily favorable towards Augustus’ view of the tradition. Unlike Propertius’ continual lapse into silence, as a result of which Marcellus comes up shortest in 4.10, it is Cossus whom Virgil gives short shrift: the middle dedicatory merits barely one line, and one that he shares to boot—indeed, a line that rhetorically questions who would pass over Cossus in silence and then proceeds to do essentially just that: *quis te, magne Cato, tacitum aut te, Cosse, relinquat?* (6.841 “Who would leave you, great Cato, or you, Cossus, unmentioned?”). Cossus is thus glossed over in five words, one of which is his cognomen, a striking contrast to the attention heaped upon him

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<sup>137</sup> Butler 1919.

by Livy; by comparison, Virgil's Marcellus is given five *lines* (6.855–859) and Romulus eleven (6.777–787). (That comparison assumes that this Cossus is the Aulus Cornelius who dedicated *spolia opima* in the first place—an assumption itself rendered ultimately unprovable by the poet's silence.) Moreover, while Marcellus is described as *insignis spoliis opimis* (6.855 “distinguished by his *spolia opima*”), there is no similar mention of Romulus' or Cossus' spoils in the catalogue of *Aeneid* 6, in which respect Virgil's treatment of the *spolia opima*, limited as it is, constitutes both a striking parallel to the *Fasti Triumphales* and an implicit departure from the Augustan canon.<sup>138</sup>

### *Spolia Recepta*

The next author to devote such attention to the *spolia opima* as Livy had would be Propertius in the penultimate poem of his final book (4.10, published about 16 B.C.). While the poet seems to conform to the Augustan canon and to present both temple and tradition as inaccessible, a close examination of the work reveals that Propertius likewise draws attention to the problematic nature of the canon as it had come to be established, albeit more subtly than Livy before him. As we will see, the poet takes advantage of the occasion to impugn both the details of the tradition and the concept of Roman *virtus* that it represented. Moreover, just as Ovid's

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<sup>138</sup> Flower (2000: 46) questions Degrassi's view (1937: 13.1.64–65 with 534 and 538) that the mention of Marcellus' spoils in the *Fasti Triumphales* was inserted under Augustus' influence, pointing out that “the same [was] not done for Romulus (or for Cossus).” Given the focus on the three “canonized” dedicators in Augustan authors, I agree that it would be inconsistent with that canon to mention the *spolia opima* taken by Marcellus but not those taken by the others, especially Cossus. I find it troubling that a monument erected c. 12 B.C. would single out Marcellus over the first two purported dedicators, especially in light of the emphasis placed on Cossus' dedication in Livy. On the other hand, it may attest to a feeling of security: not only would no private citizen think of dedicating *spolia opima* again, but no one would even hold a triumph.

portrayal of Apollo can be read as a commentary on Augustus' role as *auctor* of the laurel, so too does Propertius' treatment of the *spolia opima* invite a reconsideration of Augustus' role as *auctor* of Jupiter Feretrius, the restorer and renovator of its traditions, and as such the *auctor* of *virtus* itself.

Once having established access to the tradition by "opening" the temple,<sup>139</sup> the poet cleverly adopts the canonical number of dedicators and employs it to great effect throughout the relatively short piece. The number three is emphasized in a variety of ways, such as alliterated words in the same line,<sup>140</sup> or the three apostrophes interspersed throughout the poem.<sup>141</sup> More often, however, Propertius either repeats the same word three times<sup>142</sup> or uses a given word twice and finishes the group of three with a variant.<sup>143</sup> Occasionally he employs three different words as synonyms<sup>144</sup> or three principal parts of the same verb.<sup>145</sup> We also find pairs of words made into

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<sup>139</sup> 4.10.1: *nunc Iovis incipiam causas aperire Feretri*. Propertius likewise ends the poem with a "closing" word: *nunc spolia in templo tria condita* (line 45).

<sup>140</sup> *Veii, veteres, vos* (27); *Cossus, concurrere, campo* (35).

<sup>141</sup> *Romule* at 5, *Roma* at 10, *Veii* at 27.

<sup>142</sup> *nunc* (1, 29, 45), *Feretri* (1, 45, 48), *dux* (2, 46, 46), *Acron* (7, 9, 15), and *spolia* (11, 16, 45). Accepting the correction of line 43, we find yet another set in *sanguis* (12, 38, 43).

<sup>143</sup> *dux, dux,* and *ductor* appear at 9, 31, 40; *vos, vestro, vestris* occur in 27, 28, and 30; *arx* appears twice (at 9 and 31), followed by the verb *arcuit* (39); the name Romulus appears at 5 and 14, surrounding his alternative name Quirinus at 11; and Tolumnius' name appears twice (25 and 37), with his title *dux Veiens* appearing between them (31).

<sup>144</sup> *cuspis* (8), *spicula* (13), and *gaesa* (42).

<sup>145</sup> *tulit* (18), *relata* (40), and *ferebant* (47).

triplets by way of an example.<sup>146</sup> This pattern of threes is not limited to language. Indeed, it pervades the very structure of the poem itself: the piece is framed by three four-line stanzas, each containing the word *nunc*, sharply marking off the present as distinct from the distant—even legendary—past in which the poet’s narrative is set.<sup>147</sup> Each of the three Roman victors is given progressively fewer lines, as Ingleheart has noted, but the math works out such that Romulus’ episode takes up 18 lines, Cossus’ 12, and Marcellus’ 6, each multiple of three declining sequentially by six.<sup>148</sup> It is also worth noting, in conjunction with Ingleheart’s observation that each dedicator has progressively less speech, that the victims’ names appear three times, twice, and once, respectively, in chronological order.<sup>149</sup>

By the time we reach the end of the poem, we are primed for one last triplet. It is at this point that Propertius provides possible etymologies for the epithet Feretrius as part of the Callimachean aetiological program of his fourth book. At first it seems that he will indulge us: he offers *ferire*, from the act of one commander striking down another (46), and *ferre*, from the fact that the victors had to carry the hard-won spoils of their victims to the temple to be dedicated

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<sup>146</sup> For example, *arma* appears in the text at 2 and 47, with Romulus’ *arma* described from 20–22. Similarly, vows appear three times: *votis* (14) and *voverat* (16) sandwich Romulus’ vow, which takes up all of line 15. Meanwhile, the words *caesi* (22) and *caede* (25) may look forward to the description of the fall of Veii (27–30).

<sup>147</sup> Cf. Feeney on *nunc* and *tum* in Virgil (*Aen.* 6.775–776).

<sup>148</sup> Ingleheart 2007; see also Garani 2007. The sequence of 18, 12, and 6 relies on discounting the four-line apostrophe to Veii (27–30) as a distinct interlude. Much like the introduction and conclusion (each also of four lines), the apostrophe to Veii is not completely integrated with the narrative; moreover, each of these four-line sections is marked with the term *nunc*.

<sup>149</sup> Acron: 7, 9, 15; Tolumnius: 23, 37; Viridumarus: 41. I can detect no pattern with the names of the victors (Romulus: 5, 14; Cossus: 23, 35; Marcellus not at all).

(47). And then he concludes: “Hence the proud altar is called Jupiter Feretrius” (*hinc Feretri dicta est ara superba Iovis*, 48). While this two-pronged ambiguity may be typical of aetiology, the lack of a third alternative leaves us hanging after so many sets of three. Several suggestions have been made that a third etymology is hidden somewhere in the conclusion of the poem. Richardson, for example, takes the position that *Feretri* in line 45 is not the genitive of the god’s epithet but rather the genitive of *feretrum*, the flat platform on which spoils were carried during a triumphal procession.<sup>150</sup> While it is tempting to see a pun in there, Propertius is quite clear that the three sets of *spolia opima* were carried on the victors’ *shoulders*; a *feretrum* would have no place in the narrative as related by Propertius—or anyone else. Indeed, the characteristic depiction of *Romulus tropaeophorus* shows him exactly in the pose described by Propertius in the penultimate line of the poem: *victa suis umeris haec arma ferebant* (“they carried these conquered arms on their shoulders,” 47). Moreover, *feretrum* is closely related to one of the two etymologies already given: Varro recognized it as a derivative of *ferre*.<sup>151</sup>

More recently, Tara Welch has suggested that the hidden etymology disguised by *Feretrius* is *ferre tria* (“nearly three”).<sup>152</sup> While that idea is very much present, *ferre tria* should not actually *be* the third etymology, precisely because that would be a complete set of three and so no

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<sup>150</sup> Richardson 1977: 477, 481.

<sup>151</sup> Varro *LL* 5.166: *ubi lectus mortui fertur, dicebant feretrum nostri*. If anything, an argument that *feretrum* is a legitimate choice of etymon for *Feretrius* suggests that Propertius prefers *ferre* over *ferire* among the two options that he explicitly offers. While there is nothing that indisputably discounts this possibility, I would ask to what end he would prefer either *ferre* over *ferire* or vice versa.

<sup>152</sup> Welch 2005: ch. 6.



longer *ferē tria*. On the other hand, *ferē tria* suggests an alternative possibility: that there is no third etymology at all, hidden or otherwise. Instead, Propertius is taking advantage of the typical dual etymology of Callimachean aetiology to undermine the rule of three that he has established throughout the poem. This idea is borne out by the poet's use of words for three in the poem: the cardinal appears only twice, and distributives are used poetically twice more. Thus even words for three appear twice or four times—either way, *nearly* three.

Propertius' fixity on the number three appears to adhere to the newly fossilized tradition, which Augustus had effectively sealed by shutting down the Temple of Jupiter Feretrius and transferring all of its functions to the new Temple of Mars Ultor that dominated his forum. Propertius himself refers explicitly to opening and closing the temple of Feretrius in the opening and closing of his poem, which reinforces the idea that the tradition represented by the temple had been closed off as well. But the unfulfilled expectation of three at the very end of the poem, helped along by this notion of *ferē tria* lurking in the god's epithet, calls into question just how obediently Propertius is toeing the party line. In the antepenultimate line, for example, when he writes *omine quod certo dux ferit ense ducem* (46 "because *dux* struck *dux* with sure omen"), should we hear agreement with Augustus or a parodic parroting of the *princeps*' definition, complete with requisite allusion to the auspices?

On the other hand, why would Propertius intentionally subvert the expectation that he had worked so hard to create? To answer this question we need to turn to one word in particular, and from there to its resonances in Augustan culture. For all that Propertius' poem is ostensibly

about events long done and dusted, its contemporary relevance is evoked by a single word that is strikingly out of place: in just the second line, Propertius appears to describe the traditional *spolia opima* as *arma recepta*. Now this phrase should mean “*arma retaken*,” as in arms that had been lost and later recovered. (That is precisely how the word is used of *spolia* in the very few other instances of the collocation in extant Latin literature, including both Livy and Virgil.<sup>153</sup>) Such a description is woefully inaccurate of the *spolia opima*, which were not lost and then recovered—they were simply *capta*.<sup>154</sup> The term *recepta*, however, was heavily featured in contemporary Augustan politics as part of a popular slogan describing the *signa* lost by the Romans to the Parthians between 53 and 36 B.C. and recovered by Augustus in 20. In fact, the phrase *signis receptis* was plastered on thousands of coins struck at Rome and abroad in 19–18, just three short years before the publication of Propertius’ Book 4. The slogan was important enough to merit an aniconic reverse type: lacking any image, it reads simply SIGNIS | PARTHICIS | RECEPTIS. The recovery itself was celebrated by all three mint magistrates in 19 as well as coinage solely in the name of Augustus.<sup>155</sup> The majority of the types depict the recovery of the standards as a purely military feat: the coinage in the name of the *tresviri monetales* uses the type of a kneeling

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<sup>153</sup> Liv. 5.16.6 (of Romans recovering the spoils “of their own fields”); Virg. *Aen.* 9.458 (of Etruscans recognizing the spoils and *phalerae* of Messapus, “rewon [*receptas*] with much sweat”); cf. Frontinus, *Strat.* 2.5.34.

<sup>154</sup> While it is not inconceivable that *recepta* might be interpreted as a poetic variation on the expected *capta*, it would be easier to accept the simplex in place of the compound (e.g. *capta* over *recepta*) rather than vice versa. Moreover, with just three years of separation, I find it difficult to imagine that the appearance of the word *recepta* in Propertius’ poem would fail to recall the slogan that had been (and probably still was) circulating on coinage and likely via other media as well.

<sup>155</sup> The three mint magistrates of 19/18 B.C. were P. Petronius Turpilianus (*RIC* I<sup>2</sup> 287), L. Aquillius Florus (*RIC* I<sup>2</sup> 304), and M. Durmius (*RIC* I<sup>2</sup> 315).

Parthian surrendering a *signum*, while several of the non-magistral issues show the standards carried by Mars or in a temple labeled MARS VLTOR. Still other issues in the name of Augustus stress the personal role of the *princeps* himself: on one the standards flank Augustus' *clupeus virtutis*, as had his laurels years before (Figure 4.14 below); on another we find simply Augustus' zodiacal sign, Capricorn, between SIGNIS | RECEPTIS.



Figure 4.14: Denarius of Augustus. Spain (Colonia Patricia?), 19–18 B.C. Obv.: Bare head of Augustus r.; around, counter-clockwise from top l., CAESAR·AVGVSTVS. Rev.: *Aquila* on l. and standard on r. flanking shield inscribed CL·V; around, S P Q R; above, SIGNIS; below, RECEPTIS. *RIC* I<sup>2</sup> Augustus 86a.



Figure 4.15: Cistophoric tetradrachm of Augustus. Pergamum, 19–18 B.C. Obv.: Bare head of Augustus r.; below, IMP·IX·TR·PO·V. Rev.: Triumphal arch, architrave inscribed IMP·IX·TR·POT·V, decorated with *aquilae* l. and r. and surmounted by Augustus in *quadriga* r.; within arch, S·P·R | SIGNIS | RECEPTIS. *RIC* I<sup>2</sup> Augustus 510. *RPC* I 2218.

Augustus himself turned these *signa* and *spolia recepta* into a triple triumph of his own, as directly suggested by a related triumphal arch type (Figure 4.15 above): in his *Res Gestae* he writes that he recovered “the standards lost by three Roman armies,”<sup>156</sup> so that Propertius’ second line (4.10.2 *arma...de ducibus trina recepta tribus*, “three sets of arms received from three commanders”) describes the spoils recovered by Augustus arguably more aptly than it does the ostensible historical subject of the piece. As a result, we are invited to overlay the *signa recepta* on top of the *spolia opima*. First the winners and losers of the historical events: in each case there were three Roman leaders\* and three enemy leaders. The asterisk is appropriate (and even necessary) because Augustus’ claim in his *Res Gestae* that he recovered the *signa* of three Roman *armies* in 20 B.C. does not exactly equate to the *signa* of three Roman *duces*, at least not according to Augustus’ own definition of a *dux*. While the first and last armies chronologically must be those lost by Crassus the triumvir at Carrhae in 53 B.C. and by Marc Antony in Syria in 36, the second army should be that of L. Decidius Saxa, who had not been consul but rather a subordinate of Antony (likely *legatus pro praetore*) when he was defeated by the Parthians under Q. Labienus in 40.<sup>157</sup> Saxa’s lesser status makes the comparison imperfect if one accepts the interpretation advanced by Augustus that Cossus had been consul; on the other hand, it fits perfectly with the pre-Augustan consensus (at least as attested by Livy) that Cossus had been

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<sup>156</sup> RGDA 29.2: *Parthos trium exercitum Romanorum spolia et signa re[ddere] mihi supplicesque amicitiam populi Romani petere coegi. ea autem si[gn]a in penetrali, quod e[st] in templo Martis Ultoris, reposui.*

<sup>157</sup> Syme 1937.

tribune. Moreover, despite using the word *dux* (or the variant *ductor*) six times in the course of the poem, Propertius applies it individually only to the three victims.<sup>158</sup> In direct contrast, no Roman is explicitly labelled *dux* in the course of the poem's narrative; rather, Propertius uses *dux* in reference to the victors only at the end of the poem in a line eerily reminiscent of the revised definitions of *spolia opima* and *dux* as found in Livy's addendum: *omine quod certo dux ferit ense ducem* (46 "because *dux* struck down *dux* with his sword with sure omen").<sup>159</sup> Thus Propertius' use of the word *dux* in his own work may well point to a rejection—or at least a questioning—of Augustus' re-definition on the part of the poet, especially if line 46 may be read as parody.

The recovery of the standards was construed not only as a major military victory but as a seminal act of Augustus as an *auctor* in the sense that he had set a new standard in Roman culture. In this respect his creation of Mars Ultor paralleled Romulus' creation of Jupiter Feretrius, the first of all at Rome. This was far from coincidence: according to Dio, Augustus ordered it decreed that a temple to Mars Ultor be built explicitly "in emulation of the temple of Jupiter Feretrius" as a repository for the standards recovered from Parthia.<sup>160</sup> The purported victory over the Parthians added a new meaning to the term Ultor, as Augustus had avenged not only his father through his victory at Philippi but also the Roman people by retrieving the

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<sup>158</sup> Acron: 9; Tolumnius: 31; Viridomarus: 40.

<sup>159</sup> Cf. Liv. 4.20. *ea rite opima spolia habentur, quae dux duci detraxit nec ducem novimus nisi cuius auspicio bellum geritur.*

<sup>160</sup> Dio 54.8.3: κατὰ τὸ τοῦ Διὸς τοῦ Φερετρίου ζήλωμα.

standards lost to the Parthians by Crassus, Saxa, and Antony.<sup>161</sup> This temple of Mars Ultor, again according to Dio, was to be built on the Capitoline, and coins from Asia and Rome struck in 19–18 B.C. show a round, hexastyle temple which looks nothing like the larger, rectangular one being built in the Forum of Augustus.<sup>162</sup>

The declaration of a new Capitoline temple to Mars Ultor invites the question of why Augustus would have such a temple decreed if the larger one was already being planned and likely already under construction. He may have been impatient with the progress of the one in his Forum, but surely it would have been unreasonable (and perhaps, given limited resources, even counterproductive) to try to make up for the delay by building a smaller temple. Dio may have erred and transposed the phrase “on the Capitoline” from next to Jupiter Feretrius, but again we must ask why Augustus would have decreed another temple to Mars Ultor. The smaller depository may have been decreed once it was recognized that the recovered standards needed somewhere to go upon their arrival in the city and the larger temple to Mars Ultor in the Forum of Augustus would not be finished on time. Whatever the actual story, no trace of the round Capitoline temple of Mars Ultor has yet been discovered, and it is a distinct possibility that it was simply never built at all. Upon their return from Parthia, the standards could still very well have been kept in a temple on the Capitoline, perhaps Jupiter Optimus Maximus, where generals

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<sup>161</sup> Cf. Ov. *Fasti* 5.579–596 and Suet. *Aug.* 21.

<sup>162</sup> *RIC* I<sup>2</sup> 507 = *RPC* I 2220; *RIC* I<sup>2</sup> 39b, 105a, 115.

concluded their triumphal processions, or more probably Jupiter Feretrius, which evidently served as the prototype for Mars Ultor.

Augustus' decree of a temple of Mars Ultor and the accompanying coins would have served to remind the Roman people of the now twofold meaning of Ultor as well as the temple going up in the Forum of Augustus, which would house the recovered standards once finished. Neither purpose would have been compromised had the small round temple never been built. On the contrary, Augustus' call for Mars Ultor as the repository of the standards would also have emphasized that their return was primarily a martial, not a diplomatic, success; likewise, the wording of the decree gave a new dimension to the temple of Mars Ultor which was being raised in his Forum: it was to serve as the successor of Jupiter Feretrius.<sup>163</sup> According to the reverse of Marcellinus' denarius, supported by the description of Dionysius, the temple of Jupiter Feretrius was rectangular. Therefore, Dionysius' claim that the round Capitoline temple to Mars Ultor, if that indeed is the correct interpretation, was designed "in emulation of" the temple of Jupiter Feretrius must have referred to the new temple's functions, including its use as a repository of the exceptional *spolia opima*. Coincidentally, the only known temple of Mars Ultor, the one in the Forum of Augustus, would end up emulating that of Jupiter Feretrius both in form and in function. Augustus moved the *fetiales* and their rituals to his new temple, and he made his forum

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<sup>163</sup> I find it hard to consider Augustus' temple of Mars Ultor (either the large rectangular one in his forum or the round one pictured on his coins of which we have no other evidence) a "rival" to Jupiter Feretrius (so Springer 1954: 32, translating ζήλωμα at Dio 54.8.3). Augustus was *auctor* of both temples, the latter by virtue of having rebuilt it nearly from the ground up, and since he redirected all of the functions of Jupiter Feretrius to Mars Ultor, there hardly seems to be a sense in which the latter rivalled the former as a competitor rather than imitating (and far outdoing) it as a successor.

and temple the center of specifically martial activity at Rome: boys assumed the mantle of manhood with the *toga virilis*, governors set out and returned from their *provinciae*, and the senate deliberated about war and the awarding of triumphs. Triumphal processions now ended at Mars Ultor, where *triumphatores* dedicated their wreaths and scepters to Mars, and the sword of Julius Caesar was reportedly kept there as well.<sup>164</sup> Furthermore, standards won in battle were no longer placed in the temple of Jupiter Capitolinus but rather in that of Mars Ultor, and it is very tempting to see the first dedication of standards in the Temple of Mars Ultor (those recovered by Augustus from the Parthians, of course) as a re-establishment of the *spolia opima* in a new form. Thus, while the temple and tradition of Jupiter Feretrius had been closed, they had been simultaneously renewed in a fresh incarnation of which Augustus was the founder and the first to dedicate, exactly as Romulus is described first by Livy as the founder of Jupiter Feretrius (1.10) and by Propertius as the one who set the example of the *spolia opima*.<sup>165</sup> These defining attributes of Romulus as father of Rome and of Roman *virtus*<sup>166</sup> were likewise recalled by the *elogium* at the base of Augustus' statue in the center of the Forum of Augustus (*pater patriae*), where he was construed iconographically as a second Romulus at least in deed if not in word.

The recovery of the standards gave Augustus the perfect opportunity to lay to rest at long last the troubling tradition of the *spolia opima*. Yet even as he shut the door on it he managed one

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<sup>164</sup> Dio 55.10.1–5; Richardson 1992: 162; Flower 2000: 56.

<sup>165</sup> Prop. 4.10.5–6: *imbuis exemplum primae tu, Romule, palmae | huius*.

<sup>166</sup> Cf. Prop. 4.10.17: *urbis virtutisque parens*.



final dedication at the temple of Feretrius: not the traditional *spolia* but, contrary to custom, a simple laurel in honor of his late stepson Drusus, the last man in Roman history said to have aspired to the *opima*.<sup>167</sup> Whether Augustus was truly disappointed that Drusus had fallen short in his aspirations, having been cut down at only 29 years of age in Germania in the summer of 9 B.C., or whether the *princeps* was in some sense relieved to see those aspirations spoiled, Drusus' death gave his stepfather an opportunity at long last to join the very exclusive company of those who had made dedications at the temple of Feretrius—and in the case of his father, one who was reckoned to have earned it even if he never followed through. Augustus might have lacked a set of *arma*, but he never lacked for spoils, not when he had already worked his auctorial magic on the one example that had always represented the Roman in triumph and which now grew literally in his own backyard as part of his personal grove. It was this symbol, so appropriate for so favored a member of the imperial family, that Augustus brought to the temple of Jupiter Feretrius as part of the last act of dedication recorded there. Even if the laurel were not yet quite synonymous with a triumph, the intimate connection between the two makes Augustus' dedication all the more easily read as a triumphator carrying his extraordinary prize into the temple destined to hold it, and Propertius' image of Romulus “blooding the *exemplum* of this first palm” (Prop. 4.10.5–6) begins to look eerily prophetic in hindsight. Thus Augustus had the

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<sup>167</sup> On the dedication: Dio 55.5.1 (cf. *RGDA* 4.1); on Drusus' hopes for the *spolia opima*: Liv. *Per.* 142 with Levick 1976: 35 (cf. Suet. *Claud.* 1 and Dio 55.1–2).

final say with respect to Feretrius, becoming its first dedicant after the restoration and the last in history.

Just as Ovid's portrayal of Apollo inspired a deeper examination of Augustus' role as *auctor* of the Palatine laurels, so too has Propertius' poem prompted a reframing of the standards recovered from Parthia as Augustus' re-invention of the *spolia opima*, the standard in Roman *virtus*. Having found (and founded) a new emblem and *exemplum* of *virtus* in the *signa recepta*, Augustus set about ensuring that those to come would likewise aspire to his example without quite ever attaining it. Thus his recovery was presented not only "primum omnium," as Romulus' dedication had been before him, but also triple in nature, something no single dedicator had achieved even in winning *spolia opima*. Indeed, while Romulus' purported achievement was supposed to have been repeated twice in Roman history, Augustus' triple triumph was even more daunting in its magnitude: a repeat performance was virtually guaranteed to be precluded by circumstance alone.<sup>168</sup> The *princeps* would therefore serve thereafter as the unmatched *auctor* of this new Augustan *virtus*, drawing upon the combined *auctoritas* of those who had come before and providing inspiration for those yet to come—but ultimately surpassing them once and for all.

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<sup>168</sup> Germanicus, for example, would later (A.D. 16) recover the majority of the eagles lost by P. Quinctilius Varus in Germania in A.D. 9, with P. Gabinius finally recovering the last one in 41. The phrase SIGNIS RECEPTIS alongside DEVICTIS GERM[anis] on commemorative coin types would directly recall those struck under Augustus in 19–18 B.C., and Varus had lost three Roman legions, but even Germanicus could hardly have been said to have recovered *signa* lost by three different commanders on three separate occasions.

## V. Off with Your Head

### Man and the Art of Monumental Violence

hunc videt ante cavas librantem spicula turris  
Romulus et votis occupat ante ratis:  
‘Juppiter, haec hodie tibi victima corruet Acron.’  
voverat, et spolium corruit ille Iovi.

This man he sees poisoning his spears before the hollow towers,  
Romulus does, and attacks with vows preordained:  
“Jupiter, today this victim, Acron, falls to you.”  
He had vowed, and that man fell as spoil to Jove.

Prop. 4.10.13–16

We might be forgiven if we came across this passage, a mere quarter of the way through Propertius’ aforementioned account of the *spolia opima*,<sup>1</sup> and from there jumped to the conclusion that the poor poet had confused despoliation with human sacrifice. The error would be ours in thinking them all that far apart: while Propertius has his own reasons for assimilating these phenomena, in doing so he does not wholly invent a connection between the two concepts but rather capitalizes upon the fact that they share far more than superficial similarities. It is precisely these common elements that allow Propertius to substitute sacrifice for despoliation as part of his commentary on Roman *virtus*.<sup>2</sup> That substitution in turn invites us to explore the essential connection between spoils-taking and related phenomena, including but not limited to human sacrifice, in order to get at the broader significance of the practice of spoils-taking in

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<sup>1</sup> See the fourth chapter.

<sup>2</sup> See Weinlich 2012: 267–271 for the view that Propertius intends to impugn Roman *virtus* by depicting the taking of *spolia opima*, the yardstick of Roman *virtus*, as a horrific tradition best left in the past.

Roman culture. By considering Propertius' application of the term *spolium* to a human being and situating that usage within a broader context of literary and material culture, we can make this conception of humans (or bits thereof) as *spolia* speak to the key question at issue in this dissertation: what *are* spoils? This final chapter will accordingly explore the fundamental connections between despoliation and related phenomena, including not only human sacrifice but also decapitation, relic culture, trophy collecting, and architectural *spolia*, in order to approach a definition of spoils in Roman culture.

### The Human Trophy

Propertius' substitution of sacrifice for despoliation in 4.10 is subtle but pervasive. In the first place, it is particularly striking that in a poem ostensibly about despoiled arms—indeed, about the most prestigious arms ever despoiled in Roman history—no arms are actually stripped. The closest we find is the very passive description of Viridomarus' torque falling from his neck.<sup>3</sup> There is no mention of the arms changing hands, or even of the act of dedication and deposition in the temple whose origins Propertius claims to have revealed. Moreover, while Propertius uses the term *spolia* twice of general *arma*,<sup>4</sup> his use of the same word in line 16 in the passage above is particularly noteworthy. In the first place the word *spolium* is in the relatively rare singular as

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<sup>3</sup> 4.10.44: *torquis ab incisa decidit unca gula* ("the curved torque fell from his gaping throat").

<sup>4</sup> Lines 11 (Acron's vain hope of taking spoils from Romulus) and 45 (of the spoils preserved in the temple).

opposed to the far more common plural,<sup>5</sup> in which respect it is matched by the synonym *exuvio* in line 6, itself a true *hapax* both in the singular and in the neuter.<sup>6</sup> Even more interesting is the reason why: while *spolium* in the singular typically refers to a single weapon, piece of armor, or animal skin,<sup>7</sup> in this Propertian context—which happens to be the only narrative description of despoliation and dedication in the poem—the word *spolium* refers not to arms but to a man.

At the beginning of the first chapter I noted that *arma*, especially in the narrow sense of military equipment, were the most common targets of despoliation.<sup>8</sup> As we have seen, this idea could be construed broadly to include non-traditional *arma* such as war-animals and even, in quite extended use, the branches of the laurel tree. The application of the word *spolium* to a human being, while exceptionally rare, is not beyond the pale—in fact, it is in a sense the inevitable conclusion to which our previous explorations have led: if arms *are* (parts of) their men, the “limbs” of a soldier, as Cicero puts it, then stripping those arms is very much an act of dismemberment and dedicating them is likewise a sacrifice of the men despoiled, all while

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<sup>5</sup> By my count, the singular occurs only 60 times in Latin before A.D. 200. Two authors account for over half of those instances: Ovid (13) and Seneca the Younger (12, with another 6 in the pseudo-Senecan *Hercules Oetaeus*). Other authors use it more sparingly: Virgil (2), Propertius (1), Sallust (1), Seneca the Elder (1), Lucan (1), Manilius (4), pseudo-Ovid (1), Petronius (1), Valerius Flaccus (3), Silius Italicus (7), Statius (2), Juvenal (1), Quintilian (1), Pliny the Elder (2), and Suetonius (1).

<sup>6</sup> The usual form of this word is *exuviae*, the feminine plural.

<sup>7</sup> The most common usage of *spolium* in the singular is Hercules’ lionskin and the Golden Fleece. It is also used of Hippolyta’s girdle or other individual pieces of military equipment. Its other notable usage, as a reference to the head of Medusa, will be discussed below.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. the definition of *spolia* in the *OLD* and Lewis & Short (q.v. II): “the arms or armor stripped from a defeated enemy; hence, in general, any thing taken from the enemy, booty, prey, spoil.” Lewis & Short in particular include a note under II.β: “Poet., in gen., = arma, *arms*, Ov. *M.* 13.153.”

allowing the victor to refrain from sacrificing actual flesh. (The blood was still necessary.) Virgil had already hinted as much through Aeneas' couching of Mezentius' trophy as a truer embodiment of the dead king than the man's own flesh and bones, a pronouncement followed immediately by a sacrifice of this armorial Mezentius to Mars. Propertius' description of Acron himself as *spolium* likewise highlights the connection, albeit by taking the opposite approach: Acron is very much a sacrificial victim portrayed as spoil.

This sacrificial imagery is by no means limited to the lines quoted above (4.10.13–16). While this passage, the climax of the Romulus episode, contains the most direct references to sacrifice in the poem, including the act of making a vow to a god and the use of the marked term *victima* to describe Romulus' fallen foe, the Cossus episode likewise contains an allusion to divine favor,<sup>9</sup> an important component of sacrifice. Moreover, all three instances of spoils-taking are washed down with a generous helping of blood: Acron's spoils are described litotically as “not dry with his blood,”<sup>10</sup> while Tolumnius' severed neck is said to have “bathed Roman horses with blood,”<sup>11</sup> and Viridomarus' pants are stained with the stuff when his torque falls from his gaping throat.<sup>12</sup> Notably absent from each of these episodes is any description of a military engagement:

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<sup>9</sup> 4.10.37: *di Latias iuvere manus.*

<sup>10</sup> 4.10.12: *non sanguine sicca suo.*

<sup>11</sup> 4.10.37–38: *desecta Tolumni | cervix Romanos sanguine lavit equos.*

<sup>12</sup> 4.10.43–44. Line 43 is corrupt, and there is no single consensus as to the sense of what exactly Viridomarus is doing in his barbaric striped pants. Of those editions published in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the earlier ones follow the manuscripts in having Viridomarus hurl his javelin from or before the battle-line: so Barber (1960), following Postgate (1881), prints *illi ut virgatis iaculans it ab agmine bracis*, and Fedeli (1984) *illi virgatis iaculanti ante agmina bracis*. More recent editions revive Schrader's emendation of the line and give Viridomarus staining his pants with blood: Goold

each enemy is portrayed as a strong ruler heading into his fight against his Roman enemy,<sup>13</sup> but after setting the scene Propertius launches immediately into a description of the victims tossed on their rears, bleeding out like lambs at the slaughter. Indeed, in no case do the two men in question actually cross blades (or trade spear-tips, as the case may be<sup>14</sup>). This is a careful construction on the part of the poet, who uses it as a way of turning the most honorable spoils tradition in Roman history into a scathing indictment of Roman *virtus*: if we recall that blood has to be spilled on *both* sides in a true *certamen virtutis*, then the absence of Roman blood in 4.10 is as damning as the absence of Atys' in *Thebaid* 8.<sup>15</sup> In both cases the man whose blood is not spilled can be interpreted as deficient in *virtus*. As we saw in the second chapter, in the case of Atys this lack can be attributed to his inexperience in war and a marked effeminacy; here the

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(1990), Hutchinson (2006), and Heyworth (2007) all print *illi virgatas maculanti sanguine bracas*. The correction *sanguine* is in my view practically compelled by context alone: the following line (44) describes Viridomarus' torque falling from his gashed open throat, which wants a mention of blood somewhere, and without *sanguine* in line 43 the Marcellus-Viridomarus episode becomes the only one of the three without a direct mention of blood at all. Unlike the Tydeus-Atys episode in *Thebaid* 8, there seems to be no reason that this scene in Propertius should be bloodless—on the contrary, both the sense of line 44 and Propertius' impugnation of Roman *virtus* demand it.

<sup>13</sup> Acron is described as “Herculeus,” suggesting a shared bloodline, and is called “formerly a terror to [Rome’s] borders” (9–10: *Acron Herculeus Caenina ductor ab arce, | Roma, tuis quondam finibus horror erat*), but he ends up taking a spill from his horse even before his introduction (7–8: *portas Caeninum Acrona petentem | victor in eversum cuspide fundis equum*). Tolumnius is portrayed as the leader of Veii “when it was a matter of effort to conquer” that city (23–24: *Cossus at insequitur Veientis caede Tolumni | vincere cum Veios posses laboris erat*), but not much effort is apparent in the episode: Propertius has Tolumnius and Cossus take up positions on the plain (36: *plano sistit uterque gradum*), ostensibly equals, until Tolumnius' neck is rendered *desecta* immediately afterwards. Finally, Viridomarus boasts descent from a river god himself (41: *genus hic Rheno [or Brenno, Eridano] iactabat ab ipso*), and he is described as “adept at” (*mobilis*) or “noble in” (*nobilis*) raining down spears from his chariot (42: also corrupt, but *fundere gaesa* is clear, being surrounded by *evectis, e recti[s], or effecti...rotis*).

<sup>14</sup> No Roman is said to use a sword in the historical narrative of Propertius' poem, despite line 46 (*omine quod certo dux ferit ense ducem*). The term *ensis* is a poetic synonym for *gladius*; it never seems to be used of a spear.

<sup>15</sup> See the second chapter.

Roman victors exceed the bounds of *virtus* by spilling the blood of those who put up no resistance. Accordingly, the profuse and graphic exsanguination of the victims in Propertius' poem is easily read as literal overkill in light of the fact that the three men put up no fight of which (Propertius chooses) to speak.<sup>16</sup>

Thus “the essence of the *spolia opima*,” namely the act of single combat, is indeed lacking from the poem.<sup>17</sup> Instead, the sudden coups at the hands of the three Roman victors (and their gods) in 4.10 read better as acts of sacrifice than of war. Like all sacrifice, the act of dedicating spoils—especially these particular spoils in this particular poem—is a method of communication between gods and men that centers on a form of ritual gift-giving marked by “an act of transfer of ownership.”<sup>18</sup> In Propertius' poem this is clearest in the case of Romulus, who explicitly names Acron as his ritual gift during his battlefield vow:<sup>19</sup> *victima* is properly an animal marked for

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<sup>16</sup> Richmond (1916: 1115) cited this very point in his argument against Schrader's emendation of line 43 (see note 4 above), noting that if *illi virgatas maculanti sanguine bracas* were accepted, then “the *single combat*, the essence of the *spolia opima*, is lacking” (original emphasis). It is indeed lacking, not just in the Marcellus episode but in those of Romulus and Cossus as well. All three victims are described as formidable enemies: Acron “was once a *horror* to your boundaries, Rome”; Tolumnius is portrayed as a strong ruler on the walls of the citadel of Veii “when it was a matter of effort to conquer” that city; and Viridomarus boasts descent from a river god (the name is variously given as Rhenus, Brennus, or Eridanus).

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Scheid, *OCD* s.v. sacrifice, Roman. The imperial coin type of Pax burning *arma*, presumably spoils (e.g. RIC II Trajan 102, 125, 507; Woytek 201, 347, 390), might be connected to—or at least evocative of—the sacrificial act of *immolatio*. Even if spoils were not typically burnt, the ritual disposition of despoiled arms could be directly connected to peace (appropriately represented by Pax on the coins) both among men (in the sense that the arms were permanently retired) and with the gods (*pax deorum*, achieved through sacrifice and supplication).

<sup>19</sup> Propertius seems to be conflating the traditional pre-battle vow of a temple (e.g. Caesar's to Venus Genetrix before Pharsalus in 48, and Octavian's to Mars Ultor before Philippi and then to Apollo before Naulochus and again before Actium) with the act of sacrificing to the gods.



sacrifice. Divine favor becomes progressively less clear in the cases of Cossus and Marcellus, respectively, which may well be read as yet another Propertian reflection on the decline of Roman virtue.<sup>20</sup> Another parallel may be found in the act of sacrifice as a social statement: while Romans who had earned spoils could hang them in their homes as a symbolic contribution to their individual and familial reputations, just as they could perform non-public religious rituals in the home, the *spolia opima* were the equivalent of public sacrifices in terms of the social significance of the statement that they made. They thus presented the perfect opportunity for Propertius to make claims, however implicitly, about Roman *virtus* as a general quality, just as they did for Augustus to redefine it. Furthermore, as Propertius' treatment suggests, blood played a key role in this martial form of sacrifice as a medium of valuation. In the second chapter we saw that the amount of blood spilled in the act of despoliation gave the spoils produced by that act corresponding symbolic value, just as the financial value of a sacrificial animal can be connected to its symbolic value as a sacrifice.<sup>21</sup> Accordingly, insufficient blood-flow appears in *Georgics* 3 as one of the things that can go wrong at a Roman sacrifice,<sup>22</sup> a point of comparison with the "Salmacid spoils" that were acquired without blood or sweat and therefore had no worth.

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<sup>20</sup> This increasing disconnect from the gods, which fits in well with Propertius' "lapse into silence" throughout the poem (Ingleheart 2007), might be read as a progressive abandonment of the Romans on the part of the gods or, vice versa, as an abandonment of the gods on the part of the Romans: Romulus makes a vow in direct speech, which is implicitly answered by Jupiter; Cossus does not vow but nevertheless has divine support; and the gods are entirely absent in the Marcellus episode, at least from the Roman side (Viridomarus can boast a kind of divine descent).

<sup>21</sup> Van Straten 1995: 180f.

<sup>22</sup> 3.492–93: *ac vix suppositi tinguntur sanguine cultri | summaque ieiuna sanie infusatur harena.*

While similar, the Roman practice of *devotio* deserves another mention here, if only to distinguish it both from despoliation and from human sacrifice. The Propertian Romulus does indeed make a *votum* (14: *votis*, 16: *voverat*), but it is made to Jupiter rather than to the chthonic devotees (e.g. Dis pater, Veiovis, Tellus, or the Manes). More importantly, the sense of *self-sacrifice* inherent in *devotio* is lacking from Romulus' vow—he has no intention of dying himself, and he clearly indicates that he intends Acron to serve as a sacrificial offering (*victimam*) rather than a devotional replacement (*vicarius*). Finally, the spoils themselves represent a key point of difference: a Roman who devoted himself to the gods mounted a suicidal charge into the enemy ranks clad only in a toga, girded in such a way that he could perform his ritual act (*cinctus Gabinus*). Meanwhile, his *arma* remained behind friendly lines so that the enemy would not be able to acquire them as spoils and thereby cause a dedicatory inconsistency: the Roman had already dedicated himself, and with their owner thus ritually disposed, his *arma* had no remaining ritual or symbolic significance that would render them fitting for a separate sacrifice. On the other hand, Acron explicitly hopes for spoils from Romulus (a generally ill-fated wish), and both Acron's wish and the context of the poem impute a similar desire to Romulus, who ultimately wins them. Unlike the other accounts of Romulus' victory, Propertius goes so far as to replace the act of despoliation with that of human sacrifice, but even in other cases as well the dedication of spoils (especially despoiled arms) can be readily interpreted as a kind of dedication of their owner, albeit in inorganic rather than organic form.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> I do not think it too much of a stretch to suggest that this may have contributed to Achilles' physical abuse of and

Propertius' invocation of human sacrifice in place of the more traditional despoliation is particularly powerful as a condemnation of Roman *virtus* because the idea of human sacrifice had by that time come to be viewed as generally barbaric. The Romans ascribed the practice to numerous groups of "barbarians," whether enemies proper or simply non-Romans, "as a sign of [their] otherness;"<sup>24</sup> these peoples included the Carthaginians, the Germani, and later Jews and Christians as well,<sup>25</sup> but especially the Celts, who were supposed not only to have practiced human sacrifice but also to have maintained a "cult of the severed head."<sup>26</sup> By contrast, by the 1<sup>st</sup> century B.C. the Romans seem generally to have come to think of themselves as non-practitioners: Livy describes human sacrifice as emphatically *minime Romanum sacrum* ("a rite not at all Roman"),<sup>27</sup> and it had in fact been forbidden in 97 B.C., according to the Elder Pliny.<sup>28</sup> (Jupiter's demand that Numa perform such a sacrifice, ultimately vain, may likewise have been interpreted as primitive in the context of Ovid's *Fasti* and Plutarch's *Life of Numa*.<sup>29</sup>) But the very

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refusal to return Hector's body in the *Iliad*, for Hector had been wearing Achilles' original armor and therefore had yielded no true spoils of his own. While there are admittedly many other factors involved, it is worth noting that Achilles is denied Hector's arms as a result of the latter's choice to wear Achilles' armor after stripping it from Patroclus. Achilles therefore ends up with no physical proof or prize of his victory over Hector besides Hector's body, similar to the way in which he was deprived of Briseis as spoil earlier in the poem.

<sup>24</sup> Scheid, *NP* s.v. human sacrifice III.D.

<sup>25</sup> Carthaginians: Plin. *NH* 7.16; 36.39; Min. Fel. 30.1; Germani: Tac. *Germ.* 9.1; 39.2; Jews: Jos. *Ap.* 2.92–96; 2.121; Christians: Min. Fel. 9.5; Euseb. *Hist. eccl.* 5.1.26; cf. Plin. *Ep.* 10.96.7.

<sup>26</sup> Laing 1981: 113; Clarke 1999; Armit 2012: 18–44.

<sup>27</sup> 22.57.6.

<sup>28</sup> *NH* 30.12.

<sup>29</sup> Ov. *Fast.* 3.329–357; Plut. *Numa* 15.5–10.

fact that this rite was outlawed suggests that it *had* to be outlawed, in other words that there were historical performances of it that led to its being banned. Indeed, we hear of an extraordinary ritual performed both before and after the ban (more specifically, from the 3<sup>rd</sup> century B.C. to the 1<sup>st</sup> century A.D.) in which two pairs of Greeks and Gauls were buried alive in the Forum Boarium.<sup>30</sup>

We have already seen one key example of *arma* as syndecdoche for the human body: the practice of using despoiled arms to form a *tropaeum*, a deliberately “andromorphic” assemblage with great symbolic significance. The practice of constructing *tropaea* in such a shape, whether out of literal spoils or out of more permanent materials such as marble, itself points to the possibility that people could be spoils, too. This in turn is confirmed not only by Propertius’ extraordinary use of the term *spolium* in reference to Acron in 4.10 but also by the many cases in which spoils (either in the form of *tropaea* or simply loose) are displayed alongside the people from whom they were taken. Both spoils and captives played an important role as key features of the triumphal procession, and both appear frequently on coins commemorating major military victories both in Republican and in Imperial coinage.

This frequent juxtaposition suggests that captives shown alongside trophies exhibit the same potential for symbolic significance. Following the generic *tropaeum* that was featured as

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<sup>30</sup> Scheid gives the following dates: from 228 B.C. onwards (Plut. *Marc.* 3.3f.; Zon. 8.20; Oros. 4.13.3), specifically 216 B.C. (Liv. 22.57.2–6) and 114/113 B.C. (Plut. *Quaest. Rom.* 83), up to the time of Pliny the Elder (*NH* 28.12). Scheid also cites Suetonius (*Aug.* 15) and Dio (48.14.4) in suggesting that Augustus “carried out an unusual form of human sacrifice on his opponents” in 41 B.C.

part of the standard reverse type of the victoriati (212/211–180 B.C.),<sup>31</sup> specific *tropaea* are shown with or without accompanying captives practically interchangeably in Roman coinage, beginning in the last quarter of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century B.C.<sup>32</sup> This is particularly clear from two comparisons: first, a pair of early 1<sup>st</sup>-century quinarii bearing the names of P. Vettius Sabinus (*RRC* 331/1, 99 B.C., Figure 5.1) and T. Cloulius (*RRC* 332/1a–c, 98 B.C., Figure 5.2); and second, of a handful of issues struck in the name of Julius Caesar between 48 and 47 B.C. (*RRC* 452/1–2 and 4–5, Figures 5.3–4).<sup>33</sup> Within each group the issues are strikingly similar to each other: they share an obverse type, and their reverses are virtually identical save that one features a trophy alone and the other with a captive at its foot.<sup>34</sup> We may also compare several other noteworthy issues of the 1<sup>st</sup> century B.C. which have no such pairing of captive/no captive but which nevertheless

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<sup>31</sup> A generic *tropaeum* was half the standard reverse type of the victoriatus (212/211–c. 180 B.C.). No trophies are known to have appeared on Republican coinage between the end of the victoriatus denomination in 180 and the denarius of M. Furius Philus in 119.

<sup>32</sup> The first two specific *tropaea* in Roman coinage appear on the denarius of M. Furius L. f. Philus (*RRC* 281/1, 119 B.C.), without a captive, and on the quinarius of C. Fundanius (*RRC* 326/2, 101 B.C.), with a captive. Based on the Gallic nature of the *tropaea* on both of these issues, they may be associated with the defeat of the Allobroges and Averni and the subsequent triumphs of 120 (cf. Crawford 1974: 297) and with Marius' victory over the Cimbri and Teutones in 102–101 (cf. Crawford 1974: 328), respectively.

<sup>33</sup> There are really three distinct types for our purposes between these five issues. The aureus (452/1) and the three denarii (452/2, 4–5) share the same obverse type: a female head r., wearing an oak-wreath and diadem, with LII (Caesar's age) behind. The reverse of 452/1, copied in silver as 452/2, shows a trophy of Gallic arms (including the *carnyx*, that famous Gallic warhorn) with an axe to the right and CAE—SAR written low in the field. The remaining denarii, 452/4–5, both add a captive seated at the foot of the trophy; the only difference between 4 and 5 is that the captive looks right on 4 and up on 5. The quinarius 452/3 has slightly different obverse and reverse types: on the obverse is a female head r., wearing a veil but no diadem, with both LII and a *simpvium* behind; the reverse depicts the same Gallic trophy but surrounded by a wreath on the l. and an *ancile* on the right. (There is no captive on 452/3.)

<sup>34</sup> The obverses of these quinarii, not shown, share the same type as the quinarius of C. Fundanius (*RRC* 326/2): the laureate head of Jupiter facing r.

demonstrate the symbolic force of illustrating captives alongside trophies: the denarius of L. Aemilius Lepidus Paullus, cos. 50 (*RRC* 415/1, 62 B.C.), commemorates his (spurious) ancestor's victory over Perseus of Macedon at Pydna in 168 with a reverse type of the triumphant Paullus crowning a trophy while Perseus and his two sons look on.<sup>35</sup> Then there is a denarius of C. Memmius C. f. (*RRC* 427/1, 56 B.C.), whose reverse shows a captive kneeling beneath a trophy in allusion to victories of the moneyer's uncle, C. Memmius L. f. (Pr. 58), in Bithynia and Pontus.<sup>36</sup> Five years later came Servius Sulpicius' distinctive naval trophy flanked by a captive who is naked save for a crested helmet (*RRC* 438/1, 51 B.C.); the exact reference is unfortunately obscure,<sup>37</sup> but that does not detract from the force of the imagery.

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<sup>35</sup> See Crawford 1974: 441 for further details on the spurious nature of Paullus' claim to descent from the victor of Pydna. The legend (TER | PAVLLVS) commemorates all three occasions on which Paullus was hailed *imperator*, but only that of Pydna is specified by the imagery.

<sup>36</sup> See Brunt 1971: 460 for more on the uncle.

<sup>37</sup> See Crawford 1974: 459–460 for the proposals that have been made, including Pompey's defeat of the pirates (Kraft 1968: 9–10) and the “illusory leniency of P. Sulpicius Galba, cos. 211, *vis-à-vis* the Aeginetans (Cavedoni 1829: 180 and 1831: 167; but cf. Polyb. 9.42.5–8 with Walbank's commentary). Crawford himself suggests the “naval victory and triumph of C. Sulpicius Paternus, cos. 258,” but there seems to me too little evidence to prefer one explanation over another with any certainty.



Figure 5.1



Figure 5.2

Figure 5.1: Quinarius of P. Vettius Sabinus. Rome, 99 B.C. [Obv.: Laureate head of Jupiter r.] Rev.: Victory standing r., crowning *tropaeum*; between Victory and *tropaeum*, downwards, P·SABIN; in exergue, Q; on r., control-mark (A). *RRC* 331/1.

Figure 5.2: Quinarius of T. Cloulius. Rome, 98 B.C. [Obv.: Laureate head of Jupiter r.] Rev.: Victory standing r., crowning *tropaeum*; at foot of *tropaeum*, captive seated l.; between Victory and *tropaeum*, downwards, T·CLOVLI; in exergue, Q. *RRC* 332/1c.



Figure 5.3



Figure 5.4

Figure 5.3: Denarius of Julius Caesar. Moving mint, 48–47 B.C. [Obv.: Female head r., wearing oak-wreath and diadem; behind, LII.] Rev.: *Tropaeum* with Gallic helmet, shield, and *carnyx*; to r., axe; in field, CAESAR. *RRC* 452/1.

Figure 5.4: Denarius of Julius Caesar. Moving mint, 48–47 B.C. [Obv.: Female head r., wearing oak-wreath and diadem; behind, LII.] Rev.: *Tropaeum* with Gallic helmet, shield, and *carnyx*; at foot, captive seated r.; in field, CAESAR. *RRC* 452/4.

It was another set of Caesarian types that more closely resembled later imperial variants. On both these Caesarian issues and their imperial counterparts we find a reverse type of two figures seated or standing before a trophy, one male and the other female (*RRC* 468/1–2, 46–45 B.C., Figure 5.5).<sup>38</sup> The female, who universally adopts an attitude of mourning with a hand to her head, is typically identified as a personification of the people or province subjugated—hence Gallia in the case of Caesar’s coins. The male figure, on the other hand, who is either naked or at least disarmed and whose arms have presumably been used to construct the trophy above him, is likely not a personification proper, for the names of the provinces are feminine and therefore want female embodiments; rather, he is best identified as a representative of the people themselves, especially the male fighting force, whose defeat is commemorated. Whether that representation takes the form of the abstract or the specific is a matter of debate. For example, Martino follows Grueber and Sydenham in identifying the male captive on Caesar’s issues of 48–47 as the Gallic chieftain Vercingetorix, who had been captured at Alesia in 52 and was subsequently paraded and executed as part of Caesar’s triumph in 46.<sup>39</sup> While the naked male captive on Caesar’s coins has a remarkably large head, it is difficult to say whether that enlargement is meant merely to emphasize his typically Gallic wild hair and beard or to suggest a

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<sup>38</sup> Compare the 1<sup>st</sup>-century B.C. relief from the Temple of Apollo Sosianus at Rome that shows a very similar trophy with two Gallic captives sitting at its base, albeit both male (Rutledge 2012: 126, fig. 4.1).

<sup>39</sup> Martino 2008: 416 with n. 15, citing Grueber (1910: 505–507) and Sydenham (1952: 167–169). Martino dates these issues to 50–49 B.C. rather than to 48–47 B.C., which Crawford (1974: 92) assigns based on his interpretation of the obverse figure LII as the numeral 52 referring to Caesar’s age (Caesar was born July 13, 100 B.C., which would make him 52 as of July 13, 48). Crawford dismisses Grueber’s and Sydenham’s claims regarding Vercingetorix, albeit without substantive argument.



portrait of an individual. Even more confusingly, the Gaul's head on Caesar's later coins of 46–45 do not seem to be enlarged like it is on his coins of 48–47, despite the fact that Vercingetorix was only paraded and executed in 46, after which he would have been much more topical. Even if Caesar's male captive could be connected to an individual in light of the spectacle made of Vercingetorix in 46, that would be the exception among trophy-with-captive types more generally; it is difficult to suggest such an individual identification for the naked male captive shown standing or seated before a trophy on coins that do not bear the name of Caesar, such as the earlier quinarii of 99–98 (Figures 5.1 and 5.2 above) and the imperial coins that take these types as their cue, including the famous Flavian *IVDAEA CAPTA* coins (e.g. *RIC II.1*<sup>2</sup> Vespasian 161, Figure 5.6 below).<sup>40</sup> Of the male captive in general it is therefore in my opinion best simply to say that he serves to represent his people, typically in the abstract, just as does the mourning personification in whose company he is often found.

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<sup>40</sup> The substitution of the palm tree on the Flavian coin in place of the usual trophy is somewhat natural in light of the fact that the trophy itself is based on a tree-trunk (as is particularly clear in Fig. 5.5); cf. the appearance of a tree in Pompey's triumph (discussed below).



Figure 5.5



Figure 5.6

Figure 5.5: Denarius of Julius Caesar. Moving mint, 46–45 B.C. [Obv.: Diademed head of Venus l., Cupid on shoulder; before, *lituus*; behind, *scepter*.] Rev.: *Tropaeum* with Gallic helmet, cuirass, two spears, oval and oblong shields, and two *carnices*; below, male captive on l. kneeling l. looking upwards, Gallia on r. seated r., head in l. hand; in exergue, CAESAR. *RRC* 468/2.

Figure 5.6: Sestertius of Vespasian. Rome, A.D. 71. [Obv.: Laureate head of Vespasian r.; around, clockwise from bottom, IMP CAES VESPASIAN AVG P M TR P P P COS III.] Rev.: Palm tree; below, on l. male captive standing r., on r., Judaea seated r. with head in hand, surrounded by various arms; around, IVDEA CAPTA; in exergue, S C. *RIC* II.1<sup>2</sup> Vespasian 161.

The identification of these male and female victims as the archetype and personification of their people, respectively, is key to our understanding of their appearance in conjunction with the trophy. Indeed, just as the *tropaeum* represented the man out of whose *arma* it had been made, so too do these individuals symbolize their respective peoples and their common fate. Again we may return to the Mezentius episode in the *Aeneid* to illustrate this idea at work. In the first chapter we saw that Mezentius' *thorax* was described as having been pierced 12 times (11.9–10: *bis sex thoraca petitum | perfossumque locis*), with the particular use of the term *thorax* (properly the chestpiece or cuirass) bringing to the fore the idea that Mezentius' body must have borne the same twelve holes as his armor. The origin of these holes is not explicitly made clear,

but their number corresponds exactly with that of the Etruscan cities of which Mezentius was king. Mezentius himself mentions his own people with his final breath, claiming that their hatred “surrounds” him as he lays defeated; he even begs Aeneas to fend off their fury and bury him (implicitly) intact.<sup>41</sup> His words suggest a fear of ill treatment at his own people’s hands, and it is therefore fair to speculate that the holes in his *thorax* come from those very men of his, one for each city, as a sign of the very kind of postmortem mutilation that he fears.<sup>42</sup> Among other things, this would serve to highlight the significance of the trophy made from Mezentius’ spoils as a symbolic representation of a king deliberately marked as such by the twelve cities that he ruled (even if it was out of hatred that they had done so). The trophy-with-captive types discussed above likewise illustrate a symbolic statement of victory made via deliberate manipulation (e.g. posture and clothing) of representative figures. The impact of these types did not depend upon whether or how many victims had been despoiled physically—such claims were made during the triumphal procession, in which hordes of captives and piles of arms were marched through the city. Rather, these types conveyed through visual metaphor that the Romans had thoroughly stripped both people and province of their power.

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<sup>41</sup> *Aen.* 10.903–906.

<sup>42</sup> The logistics of the puncturing are unclear, but I cannot believe that the number itself is coincidental. The number reappears as the count of Camilla’s victims during her *aristeia*.

If humans are so readily understandable as spoil,<sup>43</sup> a notion suggested by Virgil's Mezentius, confirmed by the trophy-and-captive(s) coin types that pervaded Roman coinage, and made explicit by Propertius' description of Acron, then we ought to use that idea as an opportunity to test the boundaries of what could be considered spoil in the eyes of the Romans. The examples discussed above make it clear that people, too, could be spoils—but surely not *all* captured people were spoils, just as not all animals, nor even all arms, were considered such. We should recall, for example, that when Tydeus refused to despoil Atys in the *Thebaid*, Atys was no less dead for Tydeus' refusal. Atys' arms were thus by definition those of someone slain in battle, but neither those arms nor Atys himself became spoil merely by virtue of his having been killed. Spoils therefore cannot be defined simply as the arms of a man slain in battle, nor can we merely expand the terms to include any object (including the body itself) of a proper opponent (man, woman, or animal) defeated in a true contest of *virtus* (e.g. war, hunting, or even an athletic contest). As the very terms *spolia* and *exuviae* suggest, the *taking* of spoils is critical to their nature—indeed, it is precisely that act which defines spoils, because spoils do not exist as such until they are given this new meaning through the deliberate act of being stripped. In light of these two ideas, it becomes clear that we cannot simply draw up a list of objects that “become” spoils upon the defeat of their owners, for no such conversion takes place autonomously or automatically. Rather, spoils are created—and therefore defined—as a result of deliberate

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<sup>43</sup> See Allen (2006: 95–125) for further discussion of the symbolic potential of captives and hostages. Much of what he has to say applies equally well to more “conventional” spoils (e.g. *arma*).

treatment: they are objects chosen by the victor and handled in a particular way so as to form a key physical component of his act and statement of victory.

### Symbolic *Capita*

In the course of the previous chapters we have seen again and again the various ways in which *arma* and similar items served as eminently suitable objects of despoliation. Such objects operated as representatives of their original owners and therefore, consciously or not, were used as virtual stand-ins by a people who for one reason or another tended against the practice of abusing the physical bodies of their defeated enemies. Or at least they would like to think so—on the one hand, mistreatment of enemies' bodies plays a key role in the Roman conception of societal corruption or perversion, such as that inherent in civil war, and of distinctly non-Roman barbarism; on the other, there is a substantial corpus of evidence suggesting that Romans (both strictly and loosely defined) participated in the practice of taking human bodies, or bits thereof, alongside more traditional, "sanitized" equivalents. As we will see, Romans are not infrequently depicted in the material and literary record as using these bodies and parts in essentially the same way as *arma* or other non-fleshy bits that are typically considered (and indeed labeled) *spolia* or *exuviae*. If such treatment is the defining element of despoliation, then that definition should apply to organic as well as to inorganic parts; there seem to me to be no good grounds to discount the former while accepting the latter.

Indeed, the sources themselves do not discriminate between the organic and inorganic in this respect. In addition to the examples discussed above of whole humans treated as spoils, this

practice is particularly noticeable in the case of human body parts perceived as *pars pro toto* for the entire body. The idea of literally skinning a human enemy, the natural follow-on from the narrow sense of *spolium* or *exuviae* as an animal skin (used especially of Hercules' lionskin and the Golden Fleece<sup>44</sup>), never quite gained traction among the Romans, although we do hear that Shapur I flayed the Roman emperor Valerian and hung the skin as a trophy in a temple, thus treating it exactly the same way as the Romans did despoiled arms.<sup>45</sup> On the other hand, one particular body part is repeatedly called *spolium* in Latin literature and frequently depicted as such in art, namely the human(oid) head. The idea of the head as *pars pro toto* for the entire body is largely accepted in the general context of Roman art,<sup>46</sup> but we will see that it applies equally well in the context of spoils-taking in Roman culture.

The specific head repeatedly called *spolium* in literature is that of the Gorgon Medusa, whom the hero Perseus decapitated in order to fulfill a hastily made promise to the tyrant Polydectes.<sup>47</sup> Medusa's head was dangerous in its own right, having the power to turn whoever looked upon it to stone; as if that were not enough, it was also decked with snakes for hair.<sup>48</sup> Both

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<sup>44</sup> Hercules' lionskin: Ov. *Fast.* 2.325, 5.393; *Met.* 3.81, 9.113; Sen. *HF* 1151, *Phaed.* 318; [Sen.] *HO* 786, 1666; Manil. *Astr.* 2.32. The Golden Fleece: Ov. *Her.* 6.13; *Met.* 7.156; Sen. *Med.* 664, 983.

<sup>45</sup> Lactant. *De mort. pers.* 5.6; see p. 349 below.

<sup>46</sup> Hallett 2005: 289–295.

<sup>47</sup> For the Gorgon head as *spolium*: Ov. *Met.* 4.615; Manil. *Astr.* 1.360, 5.571. There are several versions of the myth of Perseus slaying Medusa, e.g. Pind. *Pyth.* 12.9–18; Ov. *Met.* 4.753–803; [Apollod.] 2.36–42; and Hyg. *Astr.* 2.13. The head is also described as a wedding gift for Polydectes and Hippodameia at Tzetz. *ad Lyc.* 838 (cf. Pind. *Pyth.* 12.14–15). For a rationalizing account, see Paus. 2.21.5–6.

<sup>48</sup> Ov. *Met.* 4.790–803 (cf. 7.614–620, 699, 741, 771, 784; Stat. *Th.* 1.544).

of these features persisted after it had been removed from the Gorgon's shoulders, which is perfectly consistent with the idea explored in the first chapter that spoils retained key characteristics from before the actual act of despoliation. After Perseus had won the head, he first kept it in a special bag given to him by the god of the underworld, whose name in Greek (Hades, Homeric Ἄϊδης, Attic Ἄιδης) may be connected with the idea of hiding or obscuring, especially with respect to the fame of the dead.<sup>49</sup> The victorious hero removed his spoil from this bag only in order to deploy it against his enemies, including Polydectes among others, in a very striking example of leveraging the persistent power of spoils through a form of spoils-display.<sup>50</sup> Even after Perseus was through with it, having used it to rid his mother of Polydectes' attentions and to save Andromeda from becoming a sea-monster's snack, the hero gave it to Athena, the god who had helped him most in securing it. Perseus' gift is easily read as a votive offering to Athena in

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<sup>49</sup> Cf. Sophocles (*Aj.* 607) and Plato (*Gorg.* 493b4; *Phaed.* 80d; *Crat.* 403a) for the ancient interpretation of Ἄϊδης as “the Unseen” (from α-privative with ἰδεῖν, “to see”). The historical etymology is still debated: see Burkert 1985: 196 (with n. 13 on 426). Ruijgh (1991: 575) traces the name back to \*a-(w)id, “not to be seen,” or “invisible”; in addition to the one mentioned in the myth of Perseus, a helmet or cap of Hades that renders the wearer invisible is mentioned in the *Iliad* as well: [Ἀθήνη] δὴν Ἄϊδος κυνέην, μή μιν ἴδοι ὄβριμος Ἄρης (5.845; cf. *Ar. Ach.* 390; *Plat. Rep.* 612b; *LIMC* s.v. Hades/Aita, nos. 5–6, 10–12, 21). While death does not per se preclude the fame of the deceased from surviving among the living (indeed, fame is an important avenue to a kind of immortality for mortals), the dead can no longer affect their reputations or ensure the survival of those reputations themselves. Odysseus' situation at the beginning of the *Odyssey* exemplifies this: Calypso (perhaps from καλύπτω, “conceal”) is hiding him away from the world on her island, where his fame is consequently obscured, as fame can only exist in the eyes of others; Odysseus' absence from the world therefore renders him as good as dead, which he is indeed rumored to be. In Roman culture too the immortality of the dead was “conditional on the existence of descendants, or at least of a human presence...since it was the celebration of funerary cult, in the form of sacrifices, which ensured the deceased's survival” (Garland and Scheid, *OCD* s.v. death, attitudes to; cf. our phrase “out of sight, out of mind”). In other words, the fame of the dead required active maintenance by the living, lest it lapse into oblivion.

<sup>50</sup> See, e.g., the fresco of Perseus liberating Andromeda, from the west wall of the *triclinium* in the House of the Priest Amandus in Pompeii. Cf. Paus. 2.21.5: ...τὸν Περσεῖα τὸ κάλλος ἔτι καὶ ἐπὶ νεκρῶ θαυμάζοντα οὕτω τὴν κεφαλὴν ἀποτεμόντα αὐτῆς ἄγειν τοῖς Ἕλλησιν ἐς ἐπίδειξιν.

exchange for her patronage, much as a more traditional piece of spoil or full *tropaeum* would often be dedicated to a god. Athena in turn affixed the head to her Aegis, which was itself the spoil of a goat.<sup>51</sup> In this new context the head became an apotropaic symbol identified as the Gorgoneion. As an identifying characteristic of the aegis, the Gorgoneion by itself appears frequently as an emblem invoking the presence of the full aegis and its connotation of divine backing and protection. It is in this sense that the Gorgoneion appears, much like the lionskin of Hercules, as an attribute of Hellenistic kings and Roman emperors alike; it typically takes pride of place on their cuirasses as if to suggest that they too have inherited the aegis as an indication of divine favor or ordainment—or perhaps, in certain cases, even of a divine aspect of the emperor himself.

While unique in key respects, the Gorgoneion was far from the only head taken as a kind of trophy from a defeated enemy in ancient culture. As a general practice, the preservation of human heads for trophy or ritual use dates back to prehistoric times, with the oldest such archaeological finds having been dated c. 15,000 B.C.<sup>52</sup> While some cultures used (and in some

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<sup>51</sup> The term *aegis* (a transliteration of Greek αἰγίς, “goatskin”) refers to the goatskin shield or breastplate that belongs properly to Zeus, although in literature and art it is habitually depicted as a chief attribute of Athena/Minerva, who may be considered to hold it as her father’s proxy or heir. This interpretation of the word was probably already extant in the *Iliad*, where the epithet αἰγίοχος, applied exclusively to Zeus, is traditionally held to mean “aegis-bearer” (from αἰγίς, “goatskin,” and ἔχω, “I hold”). That was almost certainly not its original sense: see Faulkner 2008: 106–107 for a brief overview of and commentary on various suggestions that have been proposed, including “goat-borne” or “goat-drawn” (cf. the goat-drawn chariot of Thor, the Norse god of thunder), as mentioned by West (1978: 366–367). While Faulkner contends that the meaning of αἰγίοχος was still “hotly contested” in classical antiquity (108), the idea of the goatskin (whether held as a shield or worn as a breastplate) seems to have been the accepted tradition as received by the Romans.

<sup>52</sup> Bello, Parfitt, and Stringer 2011.



cases still use) heads or skulls for purely ritual use with no apparent connection to spoils- or trophy-display,<sup>53</sup> headhunting in classical culture is typically portrayed as a practice performed on enemies. Like human sacrifice, it was often imputed by Greek and Roman sources to various “Others” as a barbaric habit, although it was surely not just a figment of the classical imagination. The display of severed heads appears quite early in the material record, such as in the 7<sup>th</sup>-century B.C. “Garden Party” relief from the North Palace of the Assyrian king Ashurbanipal: we see the ruler reclining at a banquet while the severed head of his enemy Teumman, king of the neighboring territory of Elam, hangs in the shade of a nearby tree.<sup>54</sup> (It is worth recalling that trees played a similar role as the bearers of despoiled arms in ancient *tropaea*; we may also compare the Arthurian legend of Sir Turquine, who hung the shields of knights whom he had defeated on a tree in his front yard as a message to passersby and a challenge to other knights errant.) That Teumman’s head is displayed on the walls of Ashurbanipal’s own palace shows that it was hardly considered shameful or outrageous—on the contrary, it seems to be a point of pride and as such fits in perfectly well as a key element of the king’s triumphal celebration.

As we will see, the Romans portrayed themselves as doing much the same both in republican and in imperial times, although there were headhunting-related practices in which they do not seem to have participated. For example, the practice of preserving severed heads as

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<sup>53</sup> Cf. esp. the practice of using a skull as a libation vessel (*kapala*) in India and Tibet and in tantric Buddhist and Hindu rituals. The *kapala* is not meant to be the head of an enemy, nor is the identity of the skull’s original owner necessarily significant at all. This stands in direct contrast to heads or skulls of enemies used in statements of victory or power.

<sup>54</sup> The relief, found at Nineveh, is now in the British Museum (no. 124920). It is dated c. 645 B.C.

skull-cups seems to have been exclusively “barbaric”: both Herodotus and Strabo write that the Scythians drank from the specially prepared skulls of their enemies—including those slain in intrasocietal feuds.<sup>55</sup> Livy likewise reports that the Celtic Boii, upon defeating the Roman commander L. Postumius in 216 B.C., reportedly despoiled his body of his arms and his head; they then cleaned the head, adorned it with gold “according to their custom,” and used it as a libation vessel and ritual drinking-cup.<sup>56</sup> But the Celts in general did not limit themselves to these skull-cups: in addition to Strabo, Diodorus Siculus and Tacitus also contributed to this image of a more widespread Celtic “cult of the (severed) head” with their claims that the Celts nailed the heads of their enemies to their walls and hung them from their horses’ necks.<sup>57</sup> In both cases the display of the heads is vitally important, whether they were (like armorial spoils) tacked up in a home or were instead affixed to a horse (for which the practice of wearing torques and other decorations won in battle serves as an apt comparison). Moreover, Diodorus specifically claims that those who took the heads of their enemies made it a point to refuse gold for them, which is quite consistent with the notion that the symbolic value of these heads, like all spoils, transcended economic limits.

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<sup>55</sup> Hdt. 4.65; Strab. 7.3.6–7; cf. Livy’s description of skull-cups made by the Celtic Boii in 216 B.C. (38.23.24). There are also attestations of skull-cups from 5<sup>th</sup>-century B.C. China (Sima Qian, vol. 86), 2<sup>nd</sup>-century B.C. Mongolia (Shiji 123), 9<sup>th</sup>-century A.D. Bulgaria (Theophanes 491.17–22, taken by the Bulgar Krum from the Byzantine emperor Nicephorus I), the 16<sup>th</sup>-century A.D. Shaybanid Empire (taken from Muhammad Shaybani), and 16<sup>th</sup>-century Japan (taken by Oda Nobunaga).

<sup>56</sup> 23.24.11–12: *spolia corporis caputque praecisum ducis Boii ovantes templo quod sanctissimum est apud eos intulere. purgato inde capite, ut mos iis est, calvam auro caelavere, idque sacrum vas iis erat quo sollemnibus libarent poculumque idem sacerdotibus esset ac temple antistitibus.*

<sup>57</sup> Diod. Sic. 5.29.4; Tac. *Ann.* 1.61–62; Janes 2005: 20–23.

Much as we saw with human sacrifice, while classical sources often impute headhunting to non-Roman peoples as a barbaric practice, the Romans themselves are attested in both the literary and material record to have taken heads during both extra- and intra-societal conflict. In fact, considering the essential similarities between the two practices, it is probably not coincidence that several peoples who were supposed to have practiced headhunting, including the Scythians, Celts, and Carthaginians, were thought to have practiced human sacrifice as well, nor that the Romans seem to have participated in both while simultaneously seeming to construe it as “barbaric.”<sup>58</sup> For example, while in the *Aeneid* we find the heads of the proto-Romans Nisus and Euryalus affixed to pikes and displayed on the Etruscan ramparts as a brutal act of post-mortem decapitation, in both Livy and Caesar we find instances of heads being taken by Romans as proof of an enemy’s death, especially that of a leader.<sup>59</sup> Livy’s report is of particular interest. He writes that the consul C. Claudius Nero had the head of Hasdrubal thrown into his brother Hannibal’s camp after the Battle of the Metaurus in 207.<sup>60</sup> This was hardly an impromptu act, according to Livy, as Nero had had the head “preserved with care” and brought along to Hannibal’s camp for this purpose. Moreover, the head itself sent a terribly effective message of

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<sup>58</sup> Scythians: Hdt. 4.62; 4.103; Strab. 7.3.6–7. Celts: Caes. *BG* 6.16; Diod. Sic. 5.31.3; 5.32.6; Strab. 4.4.5; Liv. 38.47.12; Plin. *NH* 30.13. Carthaginians: Plin. *NH* 7.16; 36.39; Min. Fel. 30.1. Also accused of the practice were other “barbarian” or non-Roman peoples, including the Germani (Tac. *Germ.* 9.1; 39.2), Jews (Joseph. *Ap.* 2.92–96; 2.121), and Christians (Min. Fel. 9.5; Euseb. 5.1.126; Plin. *Ep.* 10.96.7).

<sup>59</sup> Liv. 27.51.11–12; Caes. *BG* 5.58.6, in which the chieftain Indutiomarus is slain and his head brought back to Caesar’s camp.

<sup>60</sup> 27.51.11.

Roman dominance: together with the display of two bound African prisoners chosen as representatives of all the captives (much like the male figures represented on the trophy-with-captive coin types discussed above), it was reportedly the sight of his brother's head that caused Hannibal, having been struck so great a blow both public and personal, to recognize the ultimate fate of Carthage.<sup>61</sup> It is noteworthy that Livy neither reports nor adds any sense of condemnation to Nero's actions in preserving Hasdrubal's head and using it to put the fear of the Romans into Hannibal. Instead, those actions are presented as very much in keeping with the context of various other celebrations of the consuls' victory over Hasdrubal (27.51.6–10), and they occupy a pivotal place in the narrative: Livy first mentions acts of celebration contained entirely within Roman society (e.g. decrees of thanksgiving [8–9] and the increase in commerce due to financial relief [10]) and then uses Nero's treatment of Hasdrubal's head—part of a direct statement made to the remnants of the Carthaginians—as a transition to the image of those remnants scattering in defeat in the wake of Hannibal's admission that Carthage is doomed to fall.

Similar messages of victory are conveyed by visual portrayals of Romans bearing enemy heads, which correlates well with the characterization in epic of peri-battle beheading as a feat of immense and even heroic strength. A relatively early example is the reverse of the denarius of M. Sergius Silus (*RRC* 286/1, 116–115 B.C., Figure 5.7), which depicts a Roman horseman carrying a severed Gallic head. As with other kinds of *spolia*, the identity of the head—at least on a generic level—is crucial, and the head itself is enlarged compared to the Roman's, presumably

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<sup>61</sup> 27.51.12.

in order to show identifying characteristics such as the long wild hair that is the main trademark of Gaulish physiognomy in Roman iconography. (Even supposing that they simply grew them big in Gaul cannot account for the fact that the naked enemy head is at least the size of the helmeted Roman's, crest and all.) While the individual identity of the Gallic victim—if he is indeed meant to have one at all—is lost, the Roman horseman is likely the moneyer's homonymous grandfather, who held the praetorship in 197 B.C. Pliny the Elder gives a rousing account of the elder Silus' heroics even after losing his right hand in battle;<sup>62</sup> that may explain why the horseman on this coin holds both his own sword and his enemy's head together in his left hand rather than his right, which cannot be seen.<sup>63</sup> The tableau as a whole, with the Roman shown still on horseback, may be meant to suggest that the enemy had been beheaded in battle rather than decapitated after the fact; the former was traditionally considered heroic while the latter is often portrayed as barbaric. Either way, the horseman is evidently parading his hard-won spoil along with the weapon with which he won it.

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<sup>62</sup> *NH* 7.104–106.

<sup>63</sup> The fact that the sword and the head are held in the same hand cannot be adduced as indisputable evidence that the horseman's opposite hand or arm is missing: cf. the gravestone of Insus, son of Vodullus, who is shown using one hand to guide his horse while holding sword and head in the other (Fig. 5.8 below). It could be argued that the rider on Silus' coin is naturally left-handed and that his right arm is merely blocked by the angle of his body. In that case, however, we would have no likely candidate for the identity of the horseman nor any apparent basis for distinguishing him from the de facto Sergian southpaw. It therefore seems most logical to identify the rider as the praetor of 197, who would also then be identified by the name written below his image.



Figure 5.7: Denarius of M. Sergius Silus (q.). Rome, 116–115 B.C. Obv.: Helmeted head of Roma r.; behind, downwards, ROMA and mark of value (XVI in monogram); before, upwards, EX·S·C. Rev.: Helmeted horseman galloping l., holding sword and Gallic head in l. hand; in field beneath horse's hooves, Q; below, M·SERGI; in exergue, SILVS.

A very similar image is found in a much different context, namely a late 1<sup>st</sup>-century or early 2<sup>nd</sup>-century A.D. gravestone found in Lancaster. The deceased is named in the inscription as Insus, son of Vodullus, citizen of the Treveri, and cavalryman of the *ala Augusta*;<sup>64</sup> above the inscription, he is shown on horseback holding the severed head of his enemy, whose decapitated body lies prostrate beneath his horse's hooves. (Ironically, the gravestone is fractured in such a way that Insus too seems beheaded.) The decapitation shown on this particular monument makes it apparently “unique among known cavalry stones” and therefore a key piece of evidence for “the degree of customization permitted by the genre's flexible schema.”<sup>65</sup> Whether the scene represents a one-time act of heroism or a battlefield habit on the part of Insus, the unique nature

<sup>64</sup> The inscription reads: Dis / [M]anibus Insus Vodulli / [fil]ius cive(s) Trever eques alae Aug(ustae) / [t(urma)] [V]ictoris curator Domitia [---]. *AE* 2006, 0750 = *RIB* 3185. For further information on this monument, see Bull 2007 and Iles and Shotter 2009: 68–82.

<sup>65</sup> Cassibry 2015: 479.

of the decapitation element in this particular context suggests that it was an important part of Insus' personal identity—at least in the eyes of the individual responsible for having him shown thus on his funeral monument.

Like Ashurbanipal's Garden Party relief, Insus' monument frames the horseman's decapitation of his enemy as a valorous act of trophy-taking rather than an imputation of barbarism. (Indeed, construing the act of beheading as barbaric relies largely upon context: when done properly, beheading is a swift death and therefore often considered a humane form of execution. As such, decapitation was the typical form of execution for Roman citizens.<sup>66</sup>) In the case of Insus in particular, discussion of headhunting as an act of barbarism is further complicated by the liminal identity of the deceased. On the one hand, the pattern of the inscription follows Roman precedent: the name of the deceased, followed by his father's name and that of his tribe, and finally his status in the army. On the other hand, the content betrays his provincial roots: Insus and Vodullus are far from traditional Roman names, and the deceased is identified both as *cive(s) Trever [sic]* (rather than *Romanus*) and by his position in the cavalry, which was typically made up of non-citizen allies. It might therefore be tempting to construe his act of decapitation as consistent with or even a sign of his Celtic origins—and it may well be fair to make that connection in light of the roughly contemporary talk in literary sources of the Celtic

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<sup>66</sup> Hence the death penalty is called “capital” punishment (cf. *capitale*; *poena capitis*, from *caput*, “head”). The favored forms of capital punishment were decapitation (*decollatio*, *capitis amputatio*), cremation (*crematio*), crucifixion (*crux*) (Paulus, *Sent.* 5.17.2); in the imperial period an offender could also be thrown to the beasts (*damnatio ad bestias*). Freeborn Romans of higher status (*honestiores*) were typically spared the last three, which are more painful and humiliating (Cantarella 1991: 154; cf. 189 for exceptions); when executed correctly, decapitation is swift and painless.

practice of headhunting. At the same time, however, we should not forget the Roman precedent for this behavior as well: it is worth noting both that Insus hailed from the very same people whose leader had been beheaded by T. Labienus during Caesar's campaigns in Gaul more than a century earlier, and that Insus' pose on his gravestone is very similar to that of Sergius Silus on the denarius of his grandson (*mutatis mutandis* for Silus' missing right hand). Both Labienus and Silus had impeccable Roman pedigrees;<sup>67</sup> it is therefore difficult to construe the act of decapitation in those cases as barbaric. Indeed, while Caesar's narrative is relatively neutral in tone, Silus' coin type is a deliberate commemoration of a heroic act of a celebrated relative, in which respect Insus' monument compares to it quite well. The depiction of Insus carrying his enemy's head as a trophy may therefore represent a notable point of commonality between the Roman and non-Roman aspects of his identity. A similar comparison can be found on the roughly contemporary Trajan's Column, which features one scene in which the heads of Roman

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<sup>67</sup> The *gens Servia* was a patrician clan and so traced its origins to the foundation of Rome. On the other hand, the equestrian Labieni bore a name Etruscan in origin and hailed originally from Cingulum in northern Picenum (Cic. *Rab. perd.* 22; Caes. *BC* 1.15.2). The Picentes were Roman allies from about 300 B.C. but had been subdued by the Romans after an apparent rebellion in 269/8 B.C., after which those not deported were granted *civitas sine suffragio*. They sided with Rome against Hannibal in the Second Punic War, and while Picenum was part of the "heart of the insurgency" during the Social War (Dart 2014: 45), the Labieni are attested as already having a presence in Roman politics before then: Quintus Labienus, uncle of the Titus who later served under Caesar, had supported L. Appuleius Saturninus in 100 B.C. and had been slain in the curia for doing so (Cic. *Rab. perd.* 14, 18, 20–22; Oros. 5.17.9). Titus himself (*MRR* 2.167) had a more notable (or at least better documented) career, serving as tribune of the plebs in 63, when he prosecuted Rabirius (unsuccessfully) for the murder of Saturninus; drafting the laws that led to Caesar's election as *pontifex maximus* (Dio 37.37.1) and granted special honors to Pompey (Vell. Pat. 2.40.4); and serving as *legatus pro praetore* under Caesar in Gaul from 58 before taking over the administration of Cisalpine Gaul in 50 (*BG* 8.52.2). The fact that Pompey likewise hailed from Picenum may have played a role in T. Labienus' defection to him from Caesar in January of 49.



soldiers are displayed, affixed on poles, atop Dacian ramparts (Scene XXV) and another in which Dacian heads are displayed almost identically in front of the Roman camp (Scene LVI).



Figure 5.8: Gravestone of Insus, son of Vodullus, of the Treveri. Lancaster, late 1<sup>st</sup> century–early 2<sup>nd</sup> century A.D. Lancaster City Museum acc. no. LANLM.2008.2. *AE* 2006, 750 = *RIB* III 3185.

There are several other noteworthy depictions of severed heads on Trajan's Column. In total some twelve severed heads, some Dacian but others Roman, appear across five scenes on the Column. In the first such scene (XXIV, Figure 5.9) we find two members of the Roman army presenting Dacian heads to Trajan himself. While their armor identifies these two men as auxiliaries, and their provincial origin may therefore be used to argue that their act is not

necessarily indicative of “proper” Roman practice, their deliberate offering to Trajan suggests that they believe that the emperor will recognize the value of the heads as symbolic capital. (Cat-lovers may sympathize with the pleasant surprise of receiving a similarly gory gift.) We may recall that much the same assumption was made by the son of T. Manlius Torquatus Imperiosus, who brought his father the despoiled arms of enemy cavalry as proof of his valor. The act of offering such spoils is also reminiscent of the practice of votive gifts made to the gods at temples; although it is hard to argue that the Roman auxiliaries’ or the younger Manlius’ spoils are votives proper, we see the respective parties attempting to gain favor with the Roman commander in each case by offering items of great contextual significance, presumably procured at great contextual cost, in such a way as to emphasize the strength and valor of the procurers.

This expectation of imperial favor and the concomitant increase in reputation can be found in other examples from Trajan’s Column as well. In addition to the two auxiliaries already discussed, Scene XXIV also features a single mounted auxiliary carrying an enemy head by the hair in his mouth, and in Scene CXIII yet another auxiliary totes a Dacian head while he climbs a ladder. In both cases the auxiliary evidently feels that the head is worth the trouble of preserving, however awkwardly. To an even greater extent than these two scenes, however, one last example of a severed head stands out: that of the Dacian leader Decebalus, which was presented to Trajan by one Tiberius Claudius Maximus. Decebalus is last seen alive in Scene CXLV, where he deprives the Romans of the glory of killing him by slitting his own throat. Nevertheless, Maximus was so proud of having captured the Dacian commander and having brought his head to the

emperor that he had it listed among his honors and accomplishments on a monument that he had erected for himself in his hometown of Philippi after he retired.<sup>68</sup> (It may be observed that Maximus' status as a Roman citizen means that the only Roman citizen to present a head on Trajan's Column brings that of the Dacian leader, while it is exclusively Roman auxiliaries who are shown with generic Dacians.) These particular actions, we are told, earned him a promotion to *decurio*; as the last feats listed before his discharge in his honorary inscription, they might therefore be seen as the apex of a long and illustrious career. In the meantime, Decebalus' head had a notable future of its own: it was sent off to Rome and tossed on the Gemonian stairs on the Capitoline; from the time of Tiberius on, these stairs were the site of frequent executions.<sup>69</sup> This treatment of Decebalus' head might well be interpreted as a surrogate act meant to suggest the fate of the Dacian leader had he not taken his own life first.

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<sup>68</sup> *AE* 1969/70, 583 = 1974, 589 = 1985, 721. Speidel (1970: 142–143) restores the text as follows: Ti(berius) Claudius / Maximus vet(eranus) / [s(e)] v(ivo) f(aciendum) c(uravit). Militavit / eque(s) in leg(ione) VII C(laudia) p(ia) f(ideli), fac/tus qu(a)estor equit(um), / singularis legati le/gionis eiusdem, vexil/larius equitum, item / bello Dacico ob virtu/te(m) donis donatus ab im/p(eratore) Domitiano. Factus dupli(carius) / a divo Troiano (*sic*) in ala secu(n)d(a) / Pannoniorum, a quo et fa(c)/tus explorator in bello Da/cico et ob virtute(m) bis donis / donatus bello Dacico et / Parthico, et ab eode(m) factus / decurio in ala eade(m), quod / cepisset Decebalu(m) et caput / eius pertulisset ei Ranissto/ro. Missus voluntarius ho/nesta missione a Terent[io Scau]/riano, consulare [exerci]/tus provinciae nov[ae Mes/opotamiae . . . . .].

<sup>69</sup> On Decebalus' head specifically: Dio 68.14.3 and *Fasti Ostienses* ad A.D. 106. For the Gemonian stairs, which are not mentioned before Tiberius' reign, see Tac. *Ann.* 3.14 and Suet. *Tib.* 61. They are also notable as the site where Vitellius was struck down in 69.



Figure 5.9: Detail from Scene XXIV of Trajan's Column. Rome, A.D. 113. Two Roman auxiliaries hold out one Dacian head apiece to Trajan (at far l., looking r.).

In between the Republican coin of Silus and the monuments of the High Empire just discussed, the civil strife of the late 1<sup>st</sup> century B.C. and early 1<sup>st</sup> century A.D. gave rise to a distinct flavor of decapitation practiced (mostly) by Romans upon fellow Romans.<sup>70</sup> In many cases the heads involved are treated as metonymically representative of the person, a role that the head served more generally in Roman culture. Just as we saw with the particular animal parts most frequently chosen as spoils, heads are among both the most essential (other appendages can be lost without loss of life) and the most readily identifiable parts of the body. Moreover, in case of travel a head in a bag is far more easily transported than a body bag. All things considered, what could be better suited as proof of death during the Sullan proscriptions, when men on the

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<sup>70</sup> Jervis 2001.

blacklist were hunted down both at Rome and abroad? Sulla himself had Sulpicius Rufus' head displayed in the city; taking a page from the dictator's book, Catiline beheaded his own brother-in-law, M. Marius Gratidianus, and paraded the head through the streets of Rome before depositing it at Sulla's feet, much as Octavian would later leave Brutus' head at the foot of Caesar's statue.

To Caesar himself Ptolemy XIII had presented Pompey's head and signet ring as a gift, but Caesar scorned the offering of these dual markers of identity stripped from Pompey's body as a barbaric overstepping of propriety. Now postmortem decapitation can often be interpreted as an unheroic act (it occurs exclusively off-stage in epic, whereas beheadings in the midst of battle typically get descriptive narratives), and Ptolemy's gift may also have been reminiscent of the brutal fate of Crassus, who lost his life in a spectacular defeat at Carrhae in 53 B.C. and whose head was said to have been removed and filled with molten gold.<sup>71</sup> It was thus consistent with a general Roman attitude towards such decapitation (the dirty tricks of the proscription trade aside) for Caesar to treat Ptolemy's offering as an act of barbarism beyond the pale. In this particular case, however, Caesar may have had a more personal motivation as well: not only had a foreigner intruded into a feud between Romans, albeit one that had gotten grossly out of hand, but Ptolemy's choice to kill Pompey was especially problematic for Caesar because it denied him the opportunity to show his fellow Roman that famous clemency of his. In other words, by killing

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<sup>71</sup> Dio 40.27.3; Serv. *ad Aen.* 7.606; Florus 1.46.10. Crassus' head was also used as a stage prop representing Pentheus' head in a performance of the *Bacchae* (Plut. *Crass.* 33.2–3).

Pompey and using his death to try to curry favor with Caesar, Ptolemy deprived Caesar of the credit that he stood to gain by sparing Pompey himself.<sup>72</sup> Caesar therefore had multiple reasons to be displeased with the gift both publicly and privately.<sup>73</sup>

An even more interesting case of decapitation for our purposes is that of another famous contemporary of Caesar's: M. Tullius Cicero himself. Following Caesar's murder in March of 44, the great Roman orator embarked on a series of speeches in which he virulently attacked Marc Antony. Cicero had never been a fan of the man in the first place, and in the immediate aftermath of Caesar's death he even lamented privately that Antony had not been dispatched by the conspirators as well. With his 14 *Philippics*,<sup>74</sup> Cicero committed himself to a public attempt

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<sup>72</sup> In modern gaming culture this practice has become known as "kill stealing." This occurs in a multiplayer game when one player kills an enemy that another player had already been fighting so that that the interloper receives the credit for the kill in place of the original attacker, who can be left with nothing to show for a potentially immense outlay of time and resources. Such credit usually takes the form of in-game currency, experience points, and loot (including spoils in the narrow sense, depending upon the game); it can also affect a kill-counter or a player's in-game ranking. Modern terminology aside, this practice is quite ancient—in fact, in its widest sense it is not even limited to humans. (Kleptoparasitism, in which one animal steals food, including possibly slain prey, from another, is practiced both intra- and inter-specifically by over 197 species of birds alone, as well as by numerous other vertebrates and arthropods; see Morand-Ferron et al. 2007.) The Romans themselves knew it well: the time-honored tradition of stealing the credit for (a usually external and military) victory away from a political rival (*inimicus*) was an important component of intra-societal aristocratic competition at Rome (see esp. Epstein 1989). Pompey himself was particularly infamous for it. Among other instances, he snatched the credit for Asia away from Lucullus (Plut. *Pomp.* 31.9–10, 11–13; *Luc.* 36.4; Epstein 1989: 83–84), and Crassus rightly feared that he would have to share credit with Pompey for putting down Spartacus (Plut. *Crass.* 11.10–11; *Pomp.* 21.3–4; Epstein 1989: 71). Caesar, on the other hand, had developed an unusual habit of improving his reputation not by killing but rather by granting clemency towards enemies whom he had defeated.

<sup>73</sup> Caesar also seems to have seized upon the occasion to spurn Ptolemy in favor of Cleopatra, his sister and bitter rival.

<sup>74</sup> The first *Philippic* was delivered on September 2, 44 B.C., the fourteenth on April 21, 43. Antony made his initial reaction quite clear when he called a meeting of the senate for September 19 to deliver a scathing response to the *First Philippic*; Cicero declined to attend out of fear for his safety, but he wrote his *Second Philippic* as if it were to be delivered in response to Antony's speech. The publication status of the *Second Philippic* is debated: Ramsey (2003: 158–159) provides a brief overview of scholarly opinions on the question of its publication, which range from an

both to discredit Antony in general and specifically to rally Octavian to turning on the man as well. But Octavian refused to bite, instead allying with Antony and M. Aemilius Lepidus as the *triumviri rei publicae constituendae* in November of 43. This Second Triumvirate immediately declared open season on their political *inimici*, issuing lists of proscriptions with the names of those declared public enemies. Unfortunately for his well-being, Cicero had made an indelible impression upon two of them. While he had spent fourteen speeches ensuring the enmity of Antony, it took only one clever dig to affront the young Octavian: in a letter dated May 24 of 43, Decimus Junius Brutus had warned the orator that Caesar's heir had no complaint against him, "save a phrase which he said that you uttered: 'that the young man was to be praised, honored, and extolled to heaven,'" and that Octavian had absolutely no intention of giving Cicero the chance to remove him.<sup>75</sup>

Despite this, Plutarch claims that Octavian initially protested the addition of Cicero to the proscription list and kept at it for two days. If Plutarch is right that he did so, and if his attempts were genuine, Octavian was ultimately unsuccessful. Cicero immediately fled Rome only to meet his fate on December 7 at Formiae, where he was staying at a villa of his on his way out of Italy.

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actual delivery by Cicero in October of 44 to only posthumous publication; Ramsey himself agrees with the prevailing opinion that the *Second Philippic* was never actually delivered but rather "put into circulation not long after Antony left Rome for Cisalpine Gaul on the night of 28/29 Nov[ember]...either at about the same time as *Philippics* 3 and 4 [20 Dec(ember)]...or slightly before those speeches" (158).

<sup>75</sup> *Fam.* 11.20.1: *ipsum Caesarem nihil sane de te questum, nisi dictum quod diceret te dixisse 'laudandum adolescentem, ornandum, tollendum'; se non esse commissurum ut tolli possit.* The pun is on *extollere*, which means "to raise up," hence "to praise" or "to exalt" (as in English "extol"); cf. the meaning of its simplex form *tollere* as "to take away" or "to remove."

His head made a natural trophy, as had those of countless victims of proscriptions from the time of Sulla on, but Antony had given specific instructions to Cicero's killers, the centurion Herennius and the tribune Popilius, to remove his hands as well. Dio writes that Cicero's head and right hand took pride of place among the heads nailed to the Rostra in the Forum Romanum, the very place where the orator had "so often been heard declaiming against him [Antony]." After Antony had hurled his fill of insults at Cicero's remains, still apparently smarting from Cicero's epic tongue-lashing, his wife Fulvia put the icing on the Ciceronian cake: she abused his head, spat on it, set it on her knees, opened the mouth, pulled out the tongue, and stuck it with the pins that she used for her hair.<sup>76</sup>

Such beheadings of fellow Romans and the treatment to which Roman bodies or parts thereof were subjected in the 1<sup>st</sup> century B.C. are easily seen as part of the horrifying inversion of the natural world order that marked civil conflict and the collapse of the Republic. Even so, the treatment of Cicero's remains is especially revealing. While decapitation had long been the norm in executing the proscribed, the taking of the hands too was an element unique to his case. Dio's description of the postmortem treatment of Cicero's remains highlights the rationale behind Antony's request: he wanted the particular bits of Cicero that had caused him the most harm. Indeed, Dio characterizes Cicero's tongue and right (i.e. dominant) hand as nothing other than

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<sup>76</sup> Dio 47.8.3–4. Hairpins were quite sharp and seemed to be the impromptu weapon of choice for Roman women who were seized by the urge to attack their hairdressers (*Ov. Ars* 3.239–242; *Am.* 1.14.17–18; *Petron. Satyr.* 21; *Mart.* 2.66; *Juv.* 6.490–491). Gibson (2003: 193) notes that "their substantial size and weight virtually made them offensive weapons." For more on Fulvia in particular as a "fighting figure," see Hallett 2015.



the weapons of the wordsmith, now the all-too-appropriate spoils of an orator who prided himself on the fame that he had won through rostral rhetoric rather than through the more traditional armed service abroad.<sup>77</sup> Antony and Fulvia extracted their revenge on the dead man through the physical manipulation (and, in this case, explicit abuse) of the very objects that best represented him and his particular brand of virtue *pars pro toto*.

### Monuments Men

With the notable exception of Cicero, the Romans do not otherwise seem to have targeted body parts beyond the head.<sup>78</sup> In other times and in other cultures, however, the symbolic treatment of human body parts (or similarly personal possessions) has taken many forms, and it is worth examining some of them to gain deeper insight into the function of spoils. Here I will touch on the use of such items in two related practices in order to shed light on spoils practice in Roman culture: religious relic culture and modern human trophy collecting. While certainly distinct from each other in key ways, both of these operate on a common set of fundamental principles, most importantly 1) that these personal possessions were considered to be imbued with a particular significance derived from the identity of that person, and 2) that their power as symbols (the original sense of “symbolic capital” as used by Bourdieu) could be expressed and manipulated through the display and other physical manipulation of the objects themselves. In

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<sup>77</sup> Cf. Plin. *NH* 7.117.

<sup>78</sup> To what extent the Romans can rightly be called “headhunters” or be said to have subscribed to a cultural practice of headhunting, especially outside of the climate of the proscriptions, is a matter of debate: see Voisin 1984 for a survey of Roman beheadings from Cossus’ defeat of Tolumnius to Ti. Claudius Maximus’ decapitation of Decebalus.

introducing these phenomena into a discussion of Roman spoils culture, I hope to contextualize the latter and thereby offer new ways of looking at and discussing both spoils themselves and spoils-taking in the context of ancient Rome.

While the general practice of preserving and venerating relics has long been recognized as a formal aspect of several major religions other than Greek and Roman pagan systems, including Christianity, Buddhism, and Islam, the concept itself is arguably also attested in ancient Greek culture, especially as an element of localized cult. For example, a particular sanctuary could claim to be in possession of either the physical remains (usually bones) or personal effects (e.g. arms and armor, clothing, or even furniture) of a hero: for example, Olympia claimed to hold the ivory shoulder of Pelops, and the sanctuary of Leucippides at Sparta was even given out to be the earthly resting place of the egg of Leda. The bones or bodies of heroes were sometimes venerated as possessing talismanic power and were thought to protect their associated cities, such as those of Theseus at Athens and Orestes at Sparta. Indeed, in these cases each city had been instructed by the Delphic Oracle to retrieve the remains of its respective hero, securing them by force if necessary, and rebury them locally; the remains therefore can be interpreted as a highly material to the particular identities of these cities, just as myths themselves were not infrequently given different points of origin as part of localized claims.

Historical examples are attested in Greek culture as well. One of the most famous is the treatment of the body of Alexander the Great. Upon his death in 323 B.C., there was a debate as to where he ought to be buried. Aegae (modern Vergina) in Macedonia was a natural option,

being the burial place of his father, Philip II, and other members of the Argead line; so too might have been Babylon, Alexander's place of death. According to Curtius Rufus and Justin, however, Alexander himself had requested that he be buried in the temple of Zeus Ammon at Siwa in Egypt, where an oracle had proclaimed his descent from Zeus Ammon himself and consequent legitimacy as pharaoh. Being buried there as opposed to Aegae might have helped to confirm Alexander's wish, as reported by Arrian and Strabo,<sup>79</sup> to be seen as the son of Zeus Ammon rather than of Philip.<sup>80</sup> (Lysimachus likewise advanced this claim by portraying Alexander posthumously on his coinage with a horn sprouting from his temple, the hallmark of Zeus Ammon.) Whether or not Alexander himself had ever made that request, the successors agreed to bury him at Siwa, according to Diodorus—but any such request went unhonored and the plan unfulfilled. The body was sent back, being possibly intended for Macedonia, but that too was not to be: Ptolemy, the general of Alexander who was taking the first steps towards the foundation of the Hellenistic dynasty, had the convoy intercepted and redirected to Memphis, which had been the center of Alexander's administration in Egypt.

Perdiccas and Eumenes maintained possession of Alexander's armor, diadem, and scepter, the symbols of his power, but it was his body itself that became a far more famous

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<sup>79</sup> Arr. *Anab.* 3.3–4; Arrian cites Ptolemy I and Aristobolus later in the same passage concerning the oracular signs that were interpreted as evidence of Ammon's favor. Diodorus Siculus (17.51) and Plutarch (*Alex.* 27) likewise speak of Alexander's desire to be seen as the son of Zeus Ammon.

<sup>80</sup> The Argeads claimed descent from Hercules, which would entail being descended from Zeus through that hero, but that connection would have been more distant than being the direct son of Zeus Ammon. Moreover, there were likely important cultural associations that the syncretic Zeus Ammon offered that a Macedonian conception of Zeus lacked.

attraction and played a central role in the Ptolemies' construction of their identity as successors of the conqueror. His body was relocated sometime before 274 to the Ptolemaic burial ground at Alexandria, where Alexander received ktistic cult worship as the founder of Alexandria and also, by virtue of presiding over the Ptolemaic dead, as the origin of the dynasty. In 215 B.C. it was placed in a new mausoleum by Ptolemy IV Philopater. In ancient sources Alexander's mausoleum and even the whole burial ground are alternately called the Soma (Greek Σῶμα, "body") or Sema (Greek Σῆμα, "sign" or "marker"). The sense of σῆμα is easily understandable, as the word is used quite frequently in practically all periods of any sort of grave-sign or burial-marker, including tombs, cairns, barrows, and gravestones. Nevertheless, all extant manuscripts of Strabo have the *lectio difficilior* Σῶμα, and both recension β and the Armenian translation of Pseudo-Callisthenes' Alexander Romance name the tomb "Body" as well. It is therefore worth contemplating the notion that Alexander's body had sufficient symbolic significance to serve as the name of his tomb—and by extension of the whole park in which the Ptolemies were buried. The idea of the body as tomb actually predates Alexander in Greek culture; in Orphic tradition in particular it was said that the body "imprisoned the divine spark."<sup>81</sup> Like Orpheus' own head, which reputedly gave oracles long after it had been removed from his shoulders,<sup>82</sup> Alexander's

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<sup>81</sup> Green 1990: 592. In Plato's *Cratylus* (400c), before discussing the Orphic idea of the body as a "safe" or "prison" of the soul (for which cf. Plut. *Mor.* 996c), Socrates claims that "some say [the body, σῶμα] is the tomb [σῆμα] of the soul, their notion being that the soul is buried in the present life; and again, because by its means the soul gives any signs [σημαίνῃ] which it gives, it is for this reason also properly called "sign" [σῆμα]" (trans. Fowler, Loeb Classical Library).

<sup>82</sup> Philostr., *Her.* 5.3, *Vit. Apoll.* 4.14; Nagy 1990: 210–212; see *LIMC* s.v. Orpheus, no. 68 for perhaps the earliest visual representation of Orpheus' head remaining alive after his decapitation.

Σῶμα retained much of his own spark, and it received personal visitations from Roman leaders such as Julius Caesar and the emperors Gaius (Caligula), Septimius Severus, and Caracalla.

The physical remains and personal effects of similarly important figures have historically received similar veneration and continue to do so in many religions today. For example, the tooth of Buddha is revered as a relic of the founder of Buddhism; it was even thought to confer the divine mandate upon the rulers of Odisha in the east of India and as such caused an entire war, with the tooth itself as the prize—together with the right to all of the power that it represented.<sup>83</sup> In Judeo-Christian tradition the power of relics more typically takes another form: miraculous healing. This appears already in the biblical tradition, such as 2 Kings, in which a corpse is said to have been revived upon touching the bones of Elisha the prophet, who in life had performed similar miracles, including the resurrection of a dead child.<sup>84</sup> In this early context the bones of Elisha had not been deliberately disturbed or collected; he had simply been buried and happened to have a corpse thrown atop his remains.

Deliberate veneration of the remains of such important religious figures in the biblical tradition arguably began with—but at least was forever changed by—the example of Christ himself.<sup>85</sup> While his body disappeared three days after his death, objects such as the True Cross, the Crown of Thorns, and the Holy Grail became objects of veneration and fascination thanks to

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<sup>83</sup> The war is narrated in the epic *Dāṭhāvamsa*.

<sup>84</sup> 2 Kings 13:20–21 for the resurrection of the unnamed corpse; 2 Kings 4:32–35 for the resurrection of the child.

<sup>85</sup> For a more comprehensive overview and analysis of relics in Christianity, see Burkart 2009; Boutry, Fabre, and Julia 2009; Freeman 2011; George 2013; Robinson, de Beer, and Harnden 2014.

their association with Jesus, in particular as items that received his blood at his crucifixion. As the phenomenon of martyrdom arose in the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> centuries A.D., the bodies (dubbed “first class relics”) and personal effects (dubbed “second class relics”) of martyrs were likewise venerated: perhaps the most famous early example is that of Polycarp.<sup>86</sup> This practice was first facilitated by the construction of *martyria*, or churches built on a central plan, over the site of the burials of martyrs; these martyries often focused on providing access to the physical relics through a sunken floor and a small opening in the floor leading to the grave itself. The most famous of these is probably Saint Peter’s Basilica, whose first form dates to the age of Constantine and which is said to stand over the grave of the saint himself.<sup>87</sup> While the details of the pre-Constantinian shrine as provided by the *Liber Pontificalis* are problematic,<sup>88</sup> it is notable that the text refers to the original work as “the *memoria* of Peter”—in other words, it asserts that whatever earlier construction existed was simultaneously a memorial and a place for worship. Moreover, a fragment of the presbyter Gaius (fl. 200), preserved in Eusebius, twice refers to the tombs of Peter and Paul as the *tropaea* of the apostles.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> *The Martyrdom of Polycarp* or *The Letter from the Smyrnaeans* (c. A.D. 155); cf. Euseb. 4.15 (who gives A.D. 167–168).

<sup>87</sup> The first Basilica was constructed in the time of Constantine, but the *Liber Pontificalis* (5.2) claims that under Anacletus (whose papacy is dated c. 79–c. 92) Peter’s grave had been marked by a sepulchral monument that would have allowed for worship. On June 26, 1968, Pope Paul VI declared that the relics of Saint Peter had been identified.

<sup>88</sup> On the *memoria* of Peter in the *Liber Pontificalis*, see Davis 2010: xvii–xix.

<sup>89</sup> *Hist. Eccl.* 2.25.7: ‘ego,’ inquit [Gaius], ‘habeo tropaea apostolorum, quae ostendam. si enim procedas via regali, quae ad Vaticanum ducit, aut via Ostiensi, invenies tropaea defixa, quibus ex utraque parte statutis Romana communitur ecclesia.’ Gaius (Caius), a presbyter of the Roman Church, is identified by Eusebius (2.25.6) as living under the

In this context, the word *tropaea* cannot refer to the andromorphic construction of arms and armor that we have discussed in the previous chapters. Instead, it ought to refer to the same structures erected on the sites of these apostles' graves which are called *memoria* in the *Liber Pontificalis*. The Romans themselves had already used the word broadly to refer to markers of military success: both the Tropaeum Alpium on the Via Julia Augusta (modern La Turbie, France), which was erected c. 6 B.C. to commemorate Augustus' victory over 45 Alpine tribes,<sup>90</sup> and the Tropaeum Traiani (c. A.D. 109) in modern Adamclisi, Romania, are permanent marble monuments that include depictions of *tropaea* as part of much larger structures.<sup>91</sup> Eusebius' particular use of the word *tropaea* goes even further, stripping it of its traditional martial connotations and relocating it in the religious sphere. That is not to say that this new form of trophy had necessarily lost its value as a symbol of victory altogether: since martyrdom effectively transmutes any sense of failure inherent in death into a kind of religious victory, the apostles' "trophies" may be perceived as commemorating that victory.<sup>92</sup> There is a similar sense of religious triumph in Eusebius 3.23.19, one of only two other uses of the word in his text, in which

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episcopate of Zephyrinus (A.D. 199–217). The fragment cited by Eusebius at 2.25.7 is attributed to Gaius' disputation against Proculus the Cataphrygian.

<sup>90</sup> Plin. *NH* 3.136; *AE* 1973, 323.

<sup>91</sup> The phrase "Tropaeum Traiani" does not seem to be attested in ancient literary sources, but the name of the Trajanic *castrum* nearby (Civitas Tropaensium) suggests that the monument was considered a *tropaeum* in antiquity. For the inscription on the monument itself: *CIL* III 12467 = 13733; *AE* 1891, 125 = *AE* 1896, 20 = *AE* 1965, 276 = *AE* 1972, 521b = *AE* 1996, 1355.

<sup>92</sup> While Paul's death is not treated in the New Testament, Ignatius of Antioch (*Letter to the Ephesians*, ch. 12) and Dionysius of Corinth (*Letter to the Romans*) both claim that Paul was martyred.

John's restoration of a lapsed bandit leader's faith is said to show *insignia quaedam et tropaea visibilis in eo resurrectionis* ("certain signs and proofs in him of a visible resurrection"); compare Polybius' characterization of war spoils as σημεῖα...καὶ μαρτύρια ("signs and proofs") of martial virtue (6.39.10). While in neither case does Eusebius discuss a proper military victory or commemoration thereof, his use of the word *tropaeum* suggests that in it he had found a concept aptly converted to a religious context because of the trophy's essential functions as both memorial and proof.

We can locate both of these functions in the related "trophies of the martyrs," the special reliquaries built to house the body parts or personal effects which are so highly valued in the Christian (particularly Catholic) tradition.<sup>93</sup> Since the relics themselves are believed to possess a kind of talismanic power, the veneration of such relics is not considered merely worship of an inanimate object but rather a way of venerating the saint (typically a martyr) to whom they belong and of which they are the only extant physical pieces. (Venerating such figures is in turn considered a form of honoring the God to whom the saints had devoted their lives and for whose sake these martyrs had gone to meet their deaths.) Relics thus act as physical points of contact with the deceased saints and by extension as material conduits that facilitate communion with a higher power, much as more traditional spoils function as physical objects through which their possessors can direct and deploy the identities that still lie within them even after death. Both relics and spoils are therefore essentially living monuments, that is to say not only markers but

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<sup>93</sup> Noga-Banai 2008.



even containers of memory: compare Virgil's description of the spoils stripped from Pallas as *saevi monumenta doloris* ("reminders of savage grief," *Aen.* 12.945), that is to say objects that evoke the memory of Pallas and his untimely demise.

In his *Roman Questions* Plutarch also explicitly refers to the power of the traditional armorial *tropaeum*, and by implication the spoils with which it was constructed, as just such a keeper and preserver of memory.<sup>94</sup> It is precisely this function that lies at the heart of his explanation for the apparent taboo on cleaning spoils or rehangng them after they had fallen down from the wall of a building: not only was the trophy meant to serve as a visual reminder of the outcome of the battle, the temporary physical act of conflict that had produced it and was therefore aptly represented by it, but Plutarch claims that the trophy served as a physical embodiment of the conceptual conflict (i.e. the enmity between the enemy parties) as well. As such, when the trophy fell apart, as due to age one made with actual arms and armor naturally would, this was meant as a sign that the enmity too had—or at least was supposed to have—ceased. Plutarch therefore condemns the construction of *tropaea* using permanent materials such as stone, for the greater permanence of the material (and therefore the monument) reflected to his mind a deliberate perpetuation of the bad blood between the original parties. While Plutarch calls out a small number of Greek offenders, archaeological remains suggest that it was the Romans who truly elevated the practice of permanent trophies to an art form. It is hard to imagine, however, that the choice of a more permanent medium reflected a Roman desire to be

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<sup>94</sup> Plut. *Quaest. Rom.* 37.

at war constantly, as Plutarch's interpretation implies. As martial as the Romans were, it is only natural to suppose that they loved *winning* at war even more than war itself and therefore that the permanent nature of many of their trophies reflects instead a desire that the victories thus commemorated would be similarly permanent, with the trophies themselves forever broadcasting their claims of dominance and possession as they stood unending watch both in the heart of the city and over the wastelands called peace.

The "proof" aspect of both relics and spoils is equally significant. For both classes of objects, it is vitally important that they be perceived as genuine articles, because it is their origin that gives them both their unique identity and their corresponding symbolic value. As with spoils, such value could theoretically be created, or at least enhanced, by imposing claims on body parts or personal effects whose identity could not be disproved: a piece of wood might be called a splinter of the True Cross, a lock of hair that of a martyr, or a corpse the body of one of the apostles. Indeed, we hear that Martin Luther, who opposed the veneration of relics, is said to have related numerous stories suggesting the falsification of relics as an impugnation of their value, and that is not unexpected in light of the fact that relics were a key component of cultural competition for the prestige that they brought within the religious community.<sup>95</sup> Even so, in such cases the very attention and veneration bestowed upon the items in question can confer a strong sense of legitimacy in the eyes of the faithful regardless of historical or scientific proof for or

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<sup>95</sup> Luther's most explicit condemnation of false relics can be found in the *Tischreden* (*Table-Talk*). Scheper-Hughes describes Luther's opposition as "a holy war against Rome and the corruption of selling indulgences and sacred relics" (2011: 203). On the theft of relics in the Middle Ages, see Geary 1990.

against their authenticity—and this is just one example of how monuments (especially *monumenta* in the wider Latin sense) can not only *reflect* but actually *produce* power and prestige.<sup>96</sup> Relics played—and continue to play—such a role because they are considered proof not only of the existence of the saints by whom they were left behind but also of that saint’s particular virtue (e.g. the chastity of St. Chiara) and of the persistent power of those virtues over the mundane world even after the saint’s bodily death. In this respect the miracles effected by relics (often in the form of healing or purification) can be seen as the manifestation of the power of the saint, just as armorial trophies could be used in the Greek world to invoke the θυμός of the owners of those arms in battle and just as the baldric of Pallas allows—or, rather, *demands*—his presence in the final scene of the *Aeneid*.

These complementary and simultaneous functions are shared by all trophies, whether they are constructed out of *arma*, marble, metal, or even human skin. This last appears both in Herodotus’ account of the Scythians, who not only decapitated the bodies of those whom they killed but also used the flayed skins as spoils, and in Lactantius’ narrative of the 3<sup>rd</sup>-century A.D. Sasanid king Shapur I, whom the author (although hardly unbiased) accuses of having stuffed the skin of the Roman emperor Valerian and displayed it as a trophy in a temple.<sup>97</sup> Considering the widespread ascription of a mystical or spiritual power to the body parts or personal effects of

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<sup>96</sup> Cf. Crane 1998: 151.

<sup>97</sup> Hdt. 4.64; at 4.64.2 Herodotus specifically notes that the prestige earned varies proportionally according to the number of skin-handkerchiefs displayed. Lactant. *De mort. pers.* 5.6; see *RE* Licinius 183 (Valerian) and 84 (Gallienus, his son).

influential people even outside of martial contexts, for example as part of the religious relic culture just discussed, it should not be particularly surprising to find that such items continue to be taken as trophies today in contexts that are either properly martial or “martial-adjacent.” The former is attested over and over again in the modern era, although it is nominally forbidden by regulations, at least in the U.S. For example, the mutilation of Japanese war dead in World War II by American soldiers is particularly well-documented, with body parts such as teeth, skulls, and ears frequently taken as “war souvenirs” or “war trophies.”<sup>98</sup>

It is no coincidence that these terms, i.e. “souvenirs” and “trophies,” appear in a related context: human trophy collecting as practiced by a significant number of certain kinds of violent offenders, especially serial killers.<sup>99</sup> Like those soldiers who take pieces of enemies whom they have killed, whether organic body parts or inorganic personal effects (e.g. weapons, flags, or uniform pieces),<sup>100</sup> many fantasy-driven violent offenders have been known to keep and collect

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<sup>98</sup> See Harrison 2006 for an overview of human trophy collecting in combat. During World War II it became so widespread that in September of 1942 the Commander-in-Chief of the Pacific Fleet issued an order outlawing the taking of body parts as souvenirs (Harrison 2006: 827). The practice nevertheless continued: on 22 May 1944, *Life Magazine* featured a photograph of a woman sitting at a desk with a Japanese soldier’s skull, sent to her and signed by her boyfriend in the Navy; she named it Tojo (ibid.: 824). Harrison argues that human trophy-taking occurs in societies “in which two conditions hold: the hunting of animals is an important component of male identity; and the human status of enemies is denied” (ibid.: 817).

<sup>99</sup> The taking of trophies or souvenirs, whether organic or inorganic, is particularly associated with fantasy-driven offenses: personal cause homicide, specifically revenge killing (Douglas et al. 2013: 194); sexual homicide, both organized (206–208) and disorganized (214); and serial rape, especially the types defined as “power-reassurance” (336–337) and sadistic (350–351). Stalkers are also known for keeping souvenirs such as credit card records, ticket stubs, and hotel receipts as part of a perceived personal connection to their victims (381).

<sup>100</sup> Inorganic objects such as weapons, flags, or uniform pieces are less likely to incur censure, likely because they do not involve bodily mutilation. International conventions (Lieber Code, Article 45; Hague Regulations, Article 4; Third Geneva Convention, Article 18) authorize the confiscation from an enemy of military equipment—but not personal belongings or effects. This property belongs to the victorious *party* (usually the country) rather than to an

items from their victims. These too can range from body parts to personal effects according to the killer's preference, but they are all chosen specifically to symbolize the kill (whether the victim, the act, or both) in the killer's imagination. As we saw with spoils, the items taken by serial killers often have little to no economic value, such as a driver's license, photos, or used clothing; they are instead tokens coveted by the killer for their symbolic value.<sup>101</sup> Some criminal justice professionals formally distinguish between souvenirs and trophies as two separate categories, souvenirs being those items kept in order to help the killer relive the act as a "pleasurable experience" and trophies those which serve primarily as proof of the killer's "victory, achievement, or conquest."<sup>102</sup> Others, however, see them as indistinguishable on both a practical and theoretical level.<sup>103</sup> Indeed, while these functions (i.e. keeper of memory and marker of

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individual soldier, who typically must petition for permission to keep a piece of equipment as a trophy. Under the U.S. Code (10 U.S.C. §2579, "War booty: procedures for handling and retaining battlefield objects"), all captured enemy material must be turned in to "appropriate" personnel; individual soldiers may then request to items as souvenirs. If approved by the proper authorities (Department of Defense and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms), the requested item must be rendered "unserviceable," i.e. non-functional as a practical weapon. All requests are to be considered with respect to "military customs, traditions, and regulations." It is expressly prohibited to take larger ordnance or private belongings that are not weapons.

<sup>101</sup> Douglas et al. 2013: 14, 207; cf. 46, 208, and 226 for photographs as souvenirs. Elder female sexual homicide is an exception: in such cases the removal of items from the scene by the killer is typically motivated by financial gain, and the items taken (e.g. cash or expensive jewelry) are correspondingly chosen for their financial rather than symbolic value (230).

<sup>102</sup> Turvey 2008: 214–215. Santa (2008) presses the distinction further, defining trophies as exclusively "intrinsic items" (i.e. body parts) and souvenirs as exclusively "extrinsic items" (i.e. personal effects, money, or photographs taken of the crime scene or victim), but that is not the typical distinction; Santa's usage of these terms more closely resembles that of "first-class" and "second-class" relics, respectively. Furthermore, her classification of money as a souvenir is not consistent with the opinion of Douglas et al. (2013: 230), for whom the taking of cash and economically valuable jewelry is motivated by the prospect of financial gain rather than a desire to preserve a piece of the victim as a souvenir or trophy.

<sup>103</sup> Douglas et al. 2013: 206–207 (cf. 214, 246): "trophies or souvenirs...commemorate the successful endeavor and offer proof of [the killer's] skill. They also serve as a means to fuel the fantasy of the act by serving as a

success) can each be appreciated independently, they are in my view better seen as complementary rather than mutually exclusive grounds for classification.

The collection of these souvenir-trophies forms part of each killer's particular signature and may help law enforcement to attribute similar killings to the same offender.<sup>104</sup> In other words, both the taking of an item from each victim and the specific item taken are considered key elements of the killer's signature and so reflect his identity just as much as his (or, more rarely, her) victims. This is particularly clear in one example of human trophy collecting presented in popular culture. In the Showtime television series *Dexter*, as well as the book series upon which it is based,<sup>105</sup> the eponymous protagonist uses his position and expertise as a forensic analyst to identify and dispose of victims who fit his "code."<sup>106</sup> From all of these victims Dexter takes a drop of blood as a trophy<sup>107</sup> and preserves it on a microscope slide. Now while blood often had both

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remembrance." It is no coincidence that trophies and souvenirs are most closely associated with fantasy-driven offenders (see n. 84 above).

<sup>104</sup> Ibid.: 13–14; cf. 208 (organized sexual homicide), 214 (disorganized sexual homicide), and 223 (sadistic sexual homicide) for the inclusion of souvenirs or trophies under "Search Warrant Suggestions." Compare the prevalence of trophy- or souvenir-taking among fantasy-driven offenders and the characterization of an offender's "signature" (i.e. "criminal conduct [that] goes beyond the actions necessary to perpetrate the crime...and points to the unique personality of the offender") as a form of personization, i.e. a "unique personal expression based on [the offender's] fantasies" (24–25).

<sup>105</sup> Jeff Lindsay's series now spans eight novels: *Darkly Dreaming Dexter* (2004), *Dearly Devoted Dexter* (2005), *Dexter in the Dark* (2007), *Dexter by Design* (2009), *Dexter is Delicious* (2010), *Double Dexter* (2011), *Dexter's Final Cut* (2013), *Dexter is Dead* (2015).

<sup>106</sup> Dexter channels his compulsive need to kill humans into a form of vigilante justice: as a forensic analyst, he is in an optimal position to identify other killers who escape the criminal justice system, and he tries to restrict his own kills to these offenders.

<sup>107</sup> In the first season finale ("Born Free"), Dexter chooses not to keep a sample from his biological brother, saying "he's not a trophy."

great symbolic significance in general and a close connection to identity specifically in pre-modern times, it has taken on more specificity as a marker of identity with the discovery of DNA and the advent of DNA testing, something with which Dexter is intimately familiar as a blood analyst. The choice to collect a blood sample from each victim and preserve it on a slide thus reflects Dexter's own identity as much as the blood itself identifies each victim. Thanks to this connection, trophies or souvenirs taken by a serial killer and then recovered by investigators may in turn be considered to represent the offender's own demise, just as in his hands they had symbolized that of his victims.<sup>108</sup>

On multiple occasions Dexter himself narrowly escapes being given away by his slides, which prompts him to take particular care to hide his collection from everyone else in his life. As a matter of practicality, serial killers who take trophies or souvenirs and yet wish to elude authorities need to keep their collections private, as do soldiers who take war trophies without authorization. Again, this speaks to the nature of spoils as proof: in these situations they happen also to serve as proof of law- or rule-breaking for which the spoils-taker is likely to be punished if discovered. Illicit collections are therefore by nature typically curated by individuals who have no intention of allowing them to be discovered, whereas public display is otherwise a crucial element of spoils culture. The persistence of spoils-taking even when it involves extreme risk-taking and its prevalence as a general practice across a variety of independent cultures and subcultures,

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<sup>108</sup> Knox 2003: 298.

albeit in different incarnations, suggest that it is on some level instinctual or reflexive, sometimes even to the point of compulsion.<sup>109</sup>

### Building Blocks

Rome was generally not populated with displays of dead body parts, with the aforementioned exception of the heads (and the occasional hand or two) tacked to the Rostra during the proscriptions of the 1<sup>st</sup> century. There were, however, several notable collections of similarly iconic objects arranged into “displays of domination” over the people or persons from whom they had been taken. Over the course of the previous chapters we have seen how spoils encompassed far more than just despoiled *arma*; rather, they could include animals, people, and even icons and concepts, so long as they had symbolic potential that could be exploited by another party. Here we will see several further examples that will help illustrate the difficulty in establishing a cut-and-dried boundary between *spolia* or *exuviae* in a narrow sense and the

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<sup>109</sup> The taking of these souvenirs was so commonplace, despite official regulations, that body parts were often taken from long-dead bodies as well as fresh kills: while the former were occasionally passed off as “proof” of a kill, more often they were brought or sent back just as “souvenirs” more proper to tourism than combat (Harrison 2012: 132–153). In these cases the body parts functioned more as remembrances, albeit “transgressive” ones, than proof that the souvenir-taker had won or earned the right to the body part in combat. Even non-combat personnel (e.g. ambulance drivers) engaged in this practice. One artillery gunner was sent home from Guadalcanal with a skull that had been taken by another soldier in his unit; failing to catch up with the original collector in order to return it, he put it in his own basement and, “after a while, [he] didn’t give it a thought.” Only after the fiftieth anniversary of Pearl Harbor and Guadalcanal did it occur to him that he wanted to be rid of the skull and ought to return it to the Japanese (148). Even a souvenir-taker who proudly kept his trophy skull on display on a shelf thought “it was no big deal” and that he “just thought he was doing what he was supposed to do over there” (130). Advertisers played upon the desire for such trophies in attracting men to join the war: they spoke of the Japanese as “game” to be hunted and “racked up” and declared “Open Season for Japs,” while the Marine Corps offered “Jap hunting licenses” (131). For those, like Theodore Roosevelt, for whom “the figure of the hunter had an almost mystical significance as the quintessential expression of the U.S. male character” (Herman 2001: 223), the promise of earning spoils as a prize for hunting “the most dangerous game” (cf. Connell’s short story of the same name, 1924) would likely have been hard to resist.



overarching category of *praeda* or *manubiae*. As we saw with relic culture and human trophy collecting, these examples can illuminate the nature and function of spoils even as they push the limits of a definition of that word.

One example that must be mentioned is the collections of *rostra*, or ship's beaks, that were displayed in numerous settings both throughout the city and further abroad. There were a large number in the Forum Romanum alone: the first set, taken from the Carthaginians in the Punic Wars, lined the column erected in honor of Duilius (*columna Duilia*) after the Battle of Mylae in 260 B.C.; other *columnae rostratae* later joined this one in the Forum.<sup>110</sup> Additional *rostra* were added to the speaker's platform at the southern end of the Forum, which earned its name from these beaks,<sup>111</sup> and Julius Caesar's Rostra was decorated with some of the *rostra* seized from the naval forces of Antony and Cleopatra in the Battle of Actium in 31 B.C. Other *rostra* won at Actium were fixed to the victory monument erected at Nikopolis, which was named after Octavian's success. Late Republican coins also illustrate the rostral wreath (*corona rostrata*, *corona navalis*, or *corona classica*) awarded to successful military commanders: Agrippa may have been the most famous general so decorated, but Varro was also granted the honor,

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<sup>110</sup> On the Column of Duilius, see Kondratieff 2004. The reproduction of the Column of Duilius in the Museo della civiltà Romana in E.U.R. (Rome) also has anchors interspersed between the *rostra*, as does the rostral column on the reverse of *RIC I<sup>2</sup> Augustus 271* (29–27 B.C.); cf. the appearance of anchors in naval trophies in Roman coinage (n. 111 below).

<sup>111</sup> This is presumably the Rostra illustrated on the reverse of *RRC 473/1*.

suggesting that this wreath predated Octavian's rise to power.<sup>112</sup> Lammert already recognized these *rostra* as *spolia* in the relevant *RE* entry of 1929.<sup>113</sup> While perhaps not immediately apparent, these beaks served as both the heads and the *arma* of ships: they had painted "eyes" and their metal ends were used for ramming other ships at sea, the only conventional way in which ships were used to damage one another. The appearance of *rostra*, sometimes accompanied by rudders and anchors, on naval trophies in Roman art confirms that the Romans considered them to merit a place alongside traditional *arma*.<sup>114</sup> Like more conventional *arma*, *rostra* displayed as spoils could become a permanent part of the structure to which they were attached: Pompey hung *rostra* in his home, which became known on this account as the *domus rostrata*, and the *rostra*—or at the very least the name itself—remained not only when the house passed to Marc Antony but even to the time of Gordian.<sup>115</sup>

There were of course more terrestrial examples as well. Pompey's "garden museum" showed off an arrangement of plants that he had brought back to Rome and paraded in his

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<sup>112</sup> Pliny (*NH* 16.7) records that the *corona rostrata* was granted to Varro by Pompey the Great for success in fighting the pirates and to Agrippa by Augustus for his success in Sicily (cf. Virg. *Aen.* 8.684, where Agrippa is already wearing the rostral crown at Actium; Vell. Pat. 2.81; Liv. *Epit.* 129; Dio 49.14; Gell. 5.6; Sen. *Ben.* 3.32; Festus s.v. *navalis corona*; Suet. *Claud.* 17.3). Like the laurel-wreath worn by the *triumphator*, the rostral crown was probably made of gold.

<sup>113</sup> F. Lammert, *RE* III.2 A (1929) s.v. *spolia*: 1844.

<sup>114</sup> Cf. the naval trophies on *RRC* 438/1, 507/1a–b, 511/2a–b, 519/2 (cf. 536/2–3). The prow on the reverse of *RRC* 446/1 performs the same function (i.e. as a symbol of naval victory), despite the fact that the typical *tropaeum* structure is absent (cf. the prow symbol on the reverse of *RRC* 273/1 and the prow carrying a *tropaeum* on the reverse of 521/2).

<sup>115</sup> SHA *Gord.* 3, 6; cf. Cic. *Phil.* 2.68.

triumph following his victories in the East.<sup>116</sup> Vespasian's Templum Pacis had similar plants lining the fountains in the forum, a plant parallel for the inorganic spoils taken from Judaea and housed within the temple building.<sup>117</sup> This same collection included objects not military in nature or even used on the field of battle, such as the massive menorah from the Temple of Jerusalem. We may compare the relief on the inside of the Arch of Titus showing the menorah carried in the triumphal procession. While not a weapon or a piece of armor, the menorah was strongly associated—as it still is today—with Jewish religious practice and was therefore a unique icon of the people defeated in this particular case. Much the same can be said of the botanic samples in Pompey's garden and Vespasian's Templum Pacis, which are native to the lands conquered and whose transplantation served as testament to Roman control of those areas. Murphy has even argued that Pliny's encyclopedic *Naturalis Historia* can likewise be read as a “monument to the power of Roman imperial society.”<sup>118</sup>

A similar example of territorial domination can be found in the floor of the Pantheon. The local Italian marble—from Luni (modern Carrara)—was eschewed in favor of a “pantheon of marbles” that “contributed to imperial propaganda by virtue of their provenance, symbolizing

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<sup>116</sup> See Kuttner 1999. At least one tree was exhibited in Pompey's triumph over Mithridates (Plin. *NH* 12.9.20).

<sup>117</sup> Not only did Vespasian and Titus exhibit a balsam tree as part of their triumph (following Pompey's precedent, according to Pliny), but Pliny even personifies the tree as a subject: *servit nunc haec ac tributa pendit cum sua gente* (“this [tree] now serves [Rome] and pays tribute together with its people,” *NH* 12.54.111–112).

<sup>118</sup> Murphy 2004.

Rome's dominion over subject lands."<sup>119</sup> Foreign materials had been used in individual projects before, such as the Parian marble used to rebuild the Temple of Castor and Pollux in the Forum Romanum, but the floor of the Pantheon embodied empire as a multi-faceted collection in a more programmatic and systematic way in comparison to the vision presented by the motley collection of monuments that dotted the Roman landscape. Equally systematic representations can be found in the reliefs depicting the provinces that originally lined the Hadrianeum at Rome (c. A.D. 145), where they were arranged in a very particular way to center on a statue of the emperor of himself. (Interspersed with the personifications of provinces are blocks with reliefs of *arma*, emphasizing the militaristic nature of Rome's expansion.) Hadrian famously toured the provinces as emperor, but it seems that there were comparable collections across the empire that predated him as well, for example the Sebasteion at Aphrodisias. On the other hand, whereas previous emperors anticipated Hadrian in celebrating provinces with coin types, they generally did so on a rolling basis as each province was added; Hadrian was the first to collate these depictions into one series.<sup>120</sup> Both on the Hadrianeum reliefs and on the coins the

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<sup>119</sup> Jones 2000: 211–212 with figures 5.1, 9.1, 9.28, and 9.29. The list of marbles used for the Pantheon includes: porphyry and Mons Claudianus (Egypt); *africano* (Ionia); *giallo antico* (Numidia); *pavonazzetto* (Phrygia); *serpentino* or green porphyry (the Peloponnese); and *verde antico* (Thessaly). On the origin of *africano*, which is perhaps named for its color rather than its origin, see Ballance 1966. On the significance of marble as a symbol of wealth and power, see Zeiner 2005: 84–89.

<sup>120</sup> Since each coin only depicted one province, there was no guarantee that they would all be seen together like the reliefs in the Hadrianeum, but the effect must have been something like the U.S. State Quarters and National Parks series of quarters: anyone familiar with the states or territories can infer the existence of others upon seeing just one.

personifications of the provinces each have unique outfits, including dress, attributes, and (if appropriate) *arma*,<sup>121</sup> making them readily identifiable on a visual basis alone.

These visual representations raise the question of whether art had its limits as spoils. Works of art brought back to Rome following the sack of a city might certainly be construed as representative icons of one of the primary achievements of the “Other” in the Roman imagination (Virg. *Aen.* 6.547–548: *excudent alii spirantia mollius aera | ... vivos ducent de marmore vultus...*). But there is something to be said for the fact that works of art could always be bought, even if despoiled art would presumably be too dear to sell. As a result, artwork was often bound up with the idea of luxury, and the “virtue” of luxury (*luxus*, *luxuria*, or *luxuries*) could easily be construed as vice in the eyes of the Roman elite.<sup>122</sup> Indeed, Pliny cites two episodes in which despoiled marble was re-used ostentatiously at Rome: he cites the great condemnation (*magna reprehensio*) incurred by Lepidus’ use of solid Numidian marble for his door-sills (a *vilissimus usus*), and Lucullus’ use of columns taken from Greece in his own home when none had even been set up in public.<sup>123</sup> Pliny is clear that marble is itself a luxury, despoiled

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<sup>121</sup> A personification is depicted with *arma* presumably when the province that she represents is considered particularly bellicose, such as Britannia and Germania. In addition to weapons, some personifications are shown wearing an elite cuirass, whereas others are shown in the “Amazonian” style of dress (i.e. with her upper garment draped in such a way as to reveal one shoulder and breast).

<sup>122</sup> Cicero distinguishes between private “luxury” as vice and public “magnificence” as virtue (*Mur.* 76: *odit populus Romanus privatam luxuriam, publicam magnificentiam diligit*; cf. *Sen. Ben.* 3.32.4; *Tac. Ann.* 3.55.2). Even so, private luxury was an important part of social competition in the imperial era (*Tac. Ann.* 2.33), and “the polemic against private luxury seems to have lost its edge after the 1<sup>st</sup> cent[ury A.D.],” with the exception of invective aimed at “bad” emperors, e.g. Caligula, Nero, and Vitellius (M. Corbier, *NP* s.v. luxury).

<sup>123</sup> *NH* 36.49.

or not;<sup>124</sup> like *arma*, marble decorations apparently retained their essential nature no matter who took them or where. Lepidus and Lucullus were therefore subjected to invective for putting up symbols of luxury—presumably the story would have been different had they displayed despoiled arms instead.

There was one particular kind of architectural practice where the re-use of such material did not represent *luxuria* first and foremost but rather something unique on each occasion directly dependent upon the original context. These re-used bits are also called *spolia*,<sup>125</sup> and for good reason: they too are chosen as physical handles on the specific virtues of the people or culture that originally created them. We have already seen one example from the Arch of Constantine: two of the tondi featuring Hadrian recarved as Constantine (see Figures 2.7 and 2.8). The same arch also incorporates work from the time of Trajan through Marcus Aurelius, including the Great Trajanic Frieze, which originally commemorated Trajan's success in the Dacian Wars and shows that emperor on horseback spearing a fallen enemy much like he does on the sestertius discussed in chapter 2 (see Figure 2.6). The incorporation of such artwork, although it does not represent a primarily adversarial relationship between Constantine and these previous emperors, uses the same mechanism as despoliation: through the physical incorporation of visual representations of others' virtues into a monument representing Constantine, the latter

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<sup>124</sup> *NH* 36.44–46, 51, 110, 125; cf. *Sen. Ep.* 114.9.

<sup>125</sup> See the work of D. Kinney, esp. 1997, 2001, and 2006 (with comments there on *spolia* in the classical sense), and now Frey 2015; an edited volume has also been dedicated to the topic of *spolia* in a variety of periods (Brilliant and Kinney 2011). There are certainly cases in which building materials are reused out of simple necessity rather than as part of a symbolic statement, but only the latter is relevant to our discussion.

takes on those very virtues himself. In other words, Constantine lays claim through Hadrian to the tradition of aristocratic or even autocratic hunting; through Trajan he becomes the *optimus princeps*, defending Rome by striking down his enemies powerfully and decisively. This follows the model of inheritance laid out in the third chapter, in which families or individuals latched on to particular symbols as emblems or insignia, incorporating them into their own identity and exploiting their symbolic value.

On the other hand, there do seem to have been cases of architectural *spolia* taken forcibly from a foreign culture and incorporated within a new home in a very deliberate way. For example, Foss notes cases in the 5<sup>th</sup> century A.D. in which crosses were inscribed on pagan stone buildings; he argues that the point of these crosses was to ward off *daimones* felt to inhabit the material that had originally been used by non-Christians.<sup>126</sup> The crosses presumably were felt to nullify whatever danger was posed by manipulating objects so closely bound to another culture. This is very comparable to the dedication and inscription of despoiled *arma* as a ritual disposal of *arma* that belonged to someone else and were felt to still possess something of that person's spirit even after death. Like their armorial counterparts, architectural *spolia* could reflect an adversative or non-adversative relationship:<sup>127</sup> for example, inserting reliefs into an arch as if they had been created for that monument might be seen as a co-operative sort of claim, whereas deliberately

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<sup>126</sup> Foss 1977: 65.

<sup>127</sup> Cf. even the title of Kinney 1995: "Rape or Restitution of the Past?"

placing art at an unusual angle or in an odd setting (e.g. laying a statue sideways in a city wall) might represent “a way of acquiring the power of rival gods for one’s own benefit.”<sup>128</sup>

This is just one example of how trends in studies of related phenomena can inform our understanding of *spolia* in the classical Latin sense. Although describing the architectural variety, this quote speaks to the essence of spoils of all sorts: they are items chosen not just to represent but actually to facilitate the transfer of power from one party to another, whether that be adversarial (as in the case of enemies) or not (as in familial or spiritual succession). These objects have great symbolic significance themselves as markers and hence mementos or souvenirs of that power transfer, but they also generate power and prestige in addition to merely representing it. They are therefore not just tools necessary for acquiring fame and glory but also contain this prestige within themselves. As such spoils of every sort are highly sought after, whether *arma*, relics, art, or architecture. As long as these things represent and therefore embody a critical amount of symbolic value, they can be made to work to the advantage of the party who can secure them. The prevalence of spoils in a wide variety of settings in Roman culture suggests that they were invaluable as leverage in social competition. Thus even a war against foreign enemies became a crucial opportunity to compete for a resource necessary for intra-societal survival. Spoils and the taking thereof were therefore vital to anyone who sought to succeed among the Roman elite.

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<sup>128</sup> James 1996: 16.



## Conclusion

We have now established a preliminary framework for the meaning of spoils and the role of spoils-practice in Roman culture. We have seen that the essential nature of spoils as symbolic capital is in fact a holdover from before despoiled items were taken from their original owners; in fact, they were most often used as symbols by those owners themselves. This is consistent with the fact that spoils are not newly created objects but extant objects granted new meaning through their appropriation. The symbolic value of objects taken as spoils is primarily derived from—and therefore directly dependent upon—the *virtus* of the parties involved in taking and giving them. As a result, the stripping of spoils is a physical manifestation of the transfer of *virtus*—and the concomitant power and prestige—from despoiled to despoiler. In classical Roman culture this *virtus* always retains something of its original nature as “manliness” in the sense of courage or prowess in combat; as *virtus* has evolved into our modern sense of “virtue” as any excellence or good quality, the sense of the verb “spoil” has correspondingly evolved into the loss of virtue in a much wider sense, as in a fruit or a child being “spoiled.”

I have proposed that spoils-taking in Roman culture works on a model that I have called “inheritance by conquest.” According to this model, spoils are earned through successful acts of *virtus* and can thereafter be deployed as handles by which to manipulate the identity of their original owners. This could work on an adversarial level (i.e. a victor in battle taking spoils from his victim) or on the basis of non-adversarial descent (e.g. familial or spiritual succession). The case studies presented here show that these two routes operate on the same fundamental

principles. The case studies of spoils traditions (the laurel-wreath and the *spolia opima*) likewise highlight the nature of spoils as objects of transformation and power transfer, for it is this very nature that allowed the *princeps* to manipulate the flow of power itself by influencing spoils traditions just as others leveraged the identity of individual persons or nations by appropriating and re-deploying their insignia as spoils. Finally, by looking to related phenomena we have been able to draw out the dual nature of spoils as both proofs and remembrances. These related practices have shown that there is something universal and enduring underlying the practice of taking and displaying spoils for these complementary purposes.

Even so, there is much left to be said on topics discussed only briefly here. Due to time constraints, I have not been able to address spoils in the context of civil war, that is aside from the short discussion of the headhunting practiced during the proscriptions of the 1<sup>st</sup> century B.C. But an examination of spoils in Roman treatments of civil war (e.g. Caesar, Lucan, and Statius) would provide an opportunity to see how well spoils practice reflects more general Roman attitudes: for example, we should probably expect such episodes of spoils-taking to reflect the Roman horror of civil war. The issue is further complicated by the conflicting ideas of spoils as proofs and remembrances and of the Roman resistance towards celebrating and remembering—or even acknowledging—acts of civil violence. One of the most interesting historical examples in this area will be the naval monument at Nikopolis, which celebrates Octavian's victory at Actium; while frequently portrayed as a victory over a foreign power in the form of Cleopatra, it would be worth considering whether the *rostra* attached to this particular monument may have been from

Roman ships, and if so what that says about Roman victory commemoration in practice as compared to how the Romans themselves portrayed it.

It will also be worth exploring the *spolia opima* still further in order to draw out the key distinctions between “normal” *spolia* and the “*opima*” variety. It is tempting to think that *spolia opima* are simply *spolia* taken from (and possibly also by) a *dux*, however that word may be defined, but there are key differences in the treatment of the subcategory of *opima* and the more general category of *spolia*, just as there are differences in the treatment of *spolia* as opposed to *praeda*. Given that *spolia opima* are (nominally) clear-cut cases of spoils stripped by one individual from another, we might have expected the victor in each case to have placed his spoils in his own home—that is, in sight of the public but still in a location intimately identified with the man responsible. And yet the attestation of Jupiter Feretrius as a repository for the *spolia opima* means that these spoils were placed not in any aristocratic *domus* but rather a temple (reportedly) on the Capitoline. Even if Flower is correct in characterizing the whole tradition of *spolia opima* as an invention from the 3<sup>rd</sup> century B.C., it is still in my opinion worthwhile to contemplate the meaning behind this particular form of display: why, for example, would Marcellus have deposited his spoils in the temple of Jupiter Feretrius if there was a general practice of hanging spoils in the most conspicuous places of the home? The issue deserves further thought at least.

There is also, I believe, plenty of room to contextualize spoils as *monumenta*. Virgil’s description of Pallas’ *arma* as *monimenta* might be exceptional simply in terms of wording, but

the conception of spoils as performing the same key “remembrancing” function as monuments in the ancient world is, as I hope I have shown, by no means a stretch. Flower (esp. 1996) and Roller (2010) have already hinted in this direction, but I believe that scholarship would benefit from more dedicated treatment. This could also help illuminate the role of spoils as bearers of a message, either implicit or explicit, issued by one party to an intended audience.

With this study I have made a start towards accounting for the great significance of spoils in Roman culture and the corresponding ubiquity of examples, both general and specific, in a wide variety of media in all periods of Roman history. Much of what I have argued and shown applies as much to other classical and even non-classical cultures as it does to that of Rome, but I have made an effort to point out the facets of spoils-practice that are distinctly Roman along the way. As I have outlined above, there is still in my view much work to be done. In the meantime, I hope that this framework will prove useful to contextualize discussion of spoils both in previous scholarship and in that still to come.

## Appendix

### Mortals with Portraits Depicted in Roman Republican Coinage (Numbers as in *RRC*)<sup>1</sup>

The following types feature a portrait of Julius Caesar (all laureate):<sup>2</sup>

<u>RRC no.</u>	<u>RRC date</u>
480/2a–c, 3–4, 5a–b, 6, 7a–b, 8–20 <sup>3</sup>	44 B.C. <sup>4</sup>
485/1	43 B.C.
488/1–2	43 B.C.
490/2	43 B.C.
494/16, 24, 39a–b	42 B.C.
525/3, 4a–c	?40 B.C. or later
526/2, 4	?40 B.C. or later
534/1–2	38 B.C.
535/1 (rev.)	?38 B.C.

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<sup>1</sup> Unless noted otherwise, all portraits appear on the obverse. Crawford does not include coins struck after 31 B.C. in his catalogue; *RIC* covers the first laureate portraits of Octavian in Roman coinage (I<sup>2</sup> Augustus 270–272, p. 60, dated there 29–27 B.C.).

<sup>2</sup> The question of whether Caesar should be interpreted as a mortal on these issues is one that deserves further attention. For example, his laureate appearance and the perpetual privilege such imagery represents fit in well with Caesar's exceptionalism, but whether a lifetime laureate portrait implies divinity is another matter. On Caesar as superhuman and potentially even divine before his official deification in 42, and possibly before his death, see Taylor 1975: 58–99; Weinstock 1971; and Gradel 2002: 54–72.

<sup>3</sup> On types 12–16, Caesar is both wreathed and veiled.

<sup>4</sup> Crawford (1974: 492–493) dates 480/2a–c, 3–4, 5a–b, 6, 7a–b, and 8–16 before Caesar's assassination, with 17 and 18 struck in the wake of the Ides of March and finally 19 and 20 posthumously. Alföldi (*Beiträge* 17–22 = *SNR* 1968, 85–6 and 90–1) was of the view that 15 and 16 were also posthumous rather than lifetime.

Other mortals, listed in order of first appearance in *RRC*:<sup>5</sup>

Titus Tatius: 404/1

Ancus Marcius: 425/1

L. Junius Brutus (cos. 509 B.C.): 433/2; 506/1

C. Servilius Ahala: 433/2 (rev.)

Q. Pompeius Rufus (cos. 88 B.C.): 434/1

L. Cornelius Sulla (the dictator): 434/1 (rev.)

C. Coelius Caldus (cos. 94 B.C.): 437/1a–b, 2a–b, 3a–b, 4a–b

M. Claudius Marcellus (cos. 222 B.C.): 439/1

Numa Pompilius: 446/1

Pompey the Great: 470/1a–d; 477/1a–b; 483/1–2; 511/1 (rev.), 3a–c

Gnaeus Pompey (Pompey the Younger): 477/2, 3a–b; 511/1

[Julius Caesar: see the table above]

Marc Antony: 480/22 (veiled); 488/1–2; 492/2; 493/1a–b; 494/2a–b, 5, 8a–b, 11, 14, 17, 32; 495/1, 2a–

d; 496/1–3; 516/1–5; 517/1a–b, 2–3, 4a–b, 5a–c, 6–8; 520/1; 521/1–2; 527/1, 528/1a–b, 2a–b, 3;

529/1, 3; 531/1a–b, 533/3a–b; 536/1–4; 539/1; 541/1–2; 542/1–2; 543/1, 545/1–2

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<sup>5</sup> With the exception of the ancestral(?) series (514/2, 515/2, 519/1–2), Caesar's placeholder entry in this list marks a general divide between posthumous and lifetime portraits. In 44, Caesar became the first Roman to have a lifetime portrait struck at Rome (see *RRC* 480 and its subtypes in the table, with previous note); the gold stater featuring a lifetime portrait of T. Quinctius Flaminius was struck in Greece (548/1, 196 B.C.).

Octavian: 490/1–2; 492/2; 493/1a–b; 494/3a–b, 9a–b, 12, 15, 18–19, 25, 33; 497/1, 2a–d; 513/2–3;  
518/1–2; 523/1a–b; 525/1–2; 526/1, 3; 528/1a–b, 2a–b, 3; 529/1, 2a–c; 534/2, 3; 535/1–2; 538/1;  
540/1–2

M. Aemilius Lepidus, the triumvir: 494/1, 4, 7a–b, 10, 13

L. Livineius Regulus,<sup>6</sup> praetor: 494/26a–b, 27–31

M. Junius Brutus = Q. Servilius Caepio Brutus: 506/1 (rev.); 507/1a–b; 508/3

Gnaeus Pompey: 511/1 (rev.)

Unidentified males (possibly ancestors of the respective moneyers): 514/2; 515/2; 519/1–2<sup>7</sup>

Q. Labienus Parthicus: 524/1–2

Octavia: 527/1 (rev.); 533/3a–b (rev.)

Marcus Antonius, son of the triumvir: 541/1–2 (rev.)

Cleopatra: 543/1 (rev.)

T. Quinctius Flamininus (cos. 198 B.C.): 548/1

### Comments

I have omitted from this list divine figures such as Quirinus (427/2) and the Dioscuri (a standard type on early Roman denarii), who are shown laureate like several other gods. If the Gaul whose portrait features on the obverse of 448/2a–b is to be identified as an individual

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<sup>6</sup> *MRR* 2.464. The year of his praetorship is unclear.

<sup>7</sup> Crawford notes, citing Sydenham, that the male head on 519/2 bears a resemblance to the Younger Brutus, but the identification remains tentative.

(Vercingetorix has been suggested), although I am not convinced that he is, then he should be added to the total of mortal figures not shown laureate. (The new total would be 27.)

I am intentionally excluding the exceptional as of Gnaeus Pompey (*RRC* 479/1, late 45 B.C., Spain and Sicily), which alters the standard as obverse type of the head of Janus by giving the faces of the god the features of Pompey the Great. The amalgamation (a Pompey-faced Janus? a Janiform Pompey?) makes Pompey *appear* laureate, but the laurel-wreath properly belongs to Janus, who is frequently shown laureate elsewhere in Republican coinage. I also exclude Marc Antony's wreathed portrait on a series of cistophoric tetradrachms struck at Ephesus c. 39 B.C. (*RPC* I 2201–2202): his wreath is of ivy, consistent with the other Dionysiac imagery that appears on these issues. Antony is never shown wreathed on coins attributed to the mint at Rome.



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### Abbreviations

- AE* *L'Année Épigraphique* (Paris, 1888–)
- ARV*<sup>2</sup> J.D. Beazley, *Attic Red-Figure Vase-Painters*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Oxford, 1963)
- BMC* *A Catalogue of Greek Coins in the British Museum* (London, 1873–1927)
- CIL* *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* (Berlin, 1862–)
- FGrH* F. Jacoby, *Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker* (Berlin, 1923–1958)
- HN Italy* N.K. Rutter, et al., *Historia Numorum: Italy* (London, 2001)
- IG* *Inscriptiones Graecae* (Berlin, 1873–)
- IL Afr* R. Cagnat and A. Merlin (eds.), *Inscriptions latines d'Afrique (Tripolitaine, Tunisie, Maroc)* (Paris, 1923)
- ILLRP* A. Degraffi (ed.), *Inscriptiones Latinae Liberae Rei Publicae* (Florence, 1965–)
- ILS* H. Dessau (ed.), *Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae* (Berlin, 1892–1916)
- LSJ* H.G. Liddell, R. Scott, and H.S. Jones, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 9<sup>th</sup> ed., with Revised Supplement (Oxford, 1996)
- LTUR* E.M. Steinby (ed.), *Lexicon Topographicum Urbis Romae* (Rome, 1993–2000)
- MRR* T.R.S. Broughton, *The Magistrates of the Roman Republic* (New York, 1951–1986)
- NP* H. Cancik and H. Schneider (eds.), *Der neue Pauly: Enzyklopädie der Antike* (Stuttgart, 1996–2003); trans. into English as: C.F. Salazar and D.E. Orton (eds.), *Brill's New Pauly: Antiquity* (Leiden, 2006–2011)
- OCD* *Oxford Classical Dictionary*, 5<sup>th</sup> ed. (Oxford, 2016)
- OED* *Oxford English Dictionary*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Oxford, 1989)
- OLD* P.G.W. Glare (ed.), *Oxford Latin Dictionary*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed (Oxford, 2012)
- PMG* D.L. Page (ed.), *Poetae Melici Graeci* (Oxford, 1962)

- RE* G. Wissowa, et al. (eds.), *Paulys Realencyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft: neue Bearbeitung* (Stuttgart, 1894–1980)
- RIB* R.G. Collingwood and R.P. Wright (eds.), *The Roman Inscriptions of Britain* (Oxford, 1965–)
- RIC* C.H.V. Sutherland and R.A.G. Carson (eds.), *Roman Imperial Coinage* (London, 1923–1994; rev. ed. 1984–)
- RPC* M. Amandry, A. Burnett, and C. Howgego (eds.), *Roman Provincial Coinage* (London and Paris, 1992–)
- RRC* M.H. Crawford, *Roman Republican Coinage* (Cambridge, 1974, repr. 2001)
- SIG* W. Dittenberger (ed.), *Sylloge Inscriptionum Graecarum*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Leipzig, 1915–1924)
- SNG BM Spain* *Sylloge Nummorum Graecorum, British Museum 2: Spain* (London, 2002)
- SNG Cop.* *Sylloge Nummorum Graecorum, Danish National Museum* (Copenhagen, 1942–1987)
- TLL* *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae* (Leipzig and Stuttgart, 1900–)
- TrRF* O. Ribbeck (ed.), *Tragicorum Romanorum Fragmenta* (Leipzig, 1871)

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