

Molding Minds: The Roman Use of the Cuirassed Statue in Defining Empire

Prologue

“Indeed, not only must they [Roman emperors] receive obeisance, but their images must do so as well, whether painted or sculpted, in order that their majesty be more insatiable and more complete. To these representations each emperor delights in adding different things: some depict the more distinguished cities bringing them gifts; some add Victories holding crowns over their heads, or magistrates offering obeisance and being honored with the tokens of their office; some depict the slaughter of beasts and feats of archery; and still others add diverse scenes of barbarians being defeated and trampled underfoot and slaughtered. For these men love not only the reality of those deeds on which they pride themselves, but also the representations of them.”¹

So wrote the fourth-century A.D. Archbishop of Constantinople, Gregory of Nazianzus, towards the end of his first diatribe against Julian the Apostate. While emphasizing the vanity of Roman rulers, Gregory offers the modern scholar an important perspective concerning the value ascribed to imperial artwork and specifically images of the emperor. Sculptures and paintings of the current ruler were not simply ornamental; the work of art garnered its importance from who it represented and served as a marker of presence for: the emperor. And since art is not bound by the constraints of time and distance, the emperor could be *Pontifex Maximus* in one setting, a

¹ Gregory Naz. Or. 4.80; see Clifford Ando, *Imperial Ideology and Provincial Loyalty in the Roman Empire*, (Los Angeles, University of California Press, 2000), 231

triumphant general in another, toga-clad in another, etc. All of these different depictions could occur within the same city, in front of the same audience, for years at a time. The emperor, in all of his glorious manifestations, was omnipresent in the lives of the populace of the empire through the production of imperial artwork.

What must the arrival of a new imperial sculpture been like? Did residents clamor to see the new representation of their emperor, or did many have more important matters to attend to? Did the placement of the statue of a new emperor cause collective whispers concerning what happened to the previous ruler, or did unimpressed residents merely quip that the exedra was becoming overcrowded with sculpted rock? Among the chaotic activities of an ancient city, it is difficult to determine just how imperial art would have been received. Regardless, I contend that one particular genre of imperial artwork had the potential to elicit reactions and potentially interactions in a different manner than other media: the cuirassed statue.

The face of the breastplate on the statue enabled an emperor to do precisely what Gregory describes above: different scenes could be carved onto the breastplate in an effort to transport the ruler into another level of veneration. The reality of the compositions mattered little; the impression of the emperor onto the viewer was the endgame. Terrifying gorgoneia, imposing griffins, exotic barbarians, elegant Victories: all were shipped to the provinces, having been carved onto the breastplate of the emperor, for man, woman, child; citizen, non-citizen; freedman, slave; barbarian, magistrate; legionnaire, veteran: to witness.

The Genre and Pre-Imperial Precedents

In order to understand the individual works addressed below within the grand scheme of the cuirassed statuary type, a brief survey of the history of the genre in the period leading up to the Augustus of Prima Porta is warranted. Though more than 600 cuirassed statues have survived in some capacity, many are mere torsos. Furthermore, since the god Mars was typically portrayed in the cuirass armament, it is often difficult to determine whether a given work was originally of this deity or of an important mortal.² On the breastplate itself the musculature of the human torso was often imitated to a flattering degree (i.e. large pectorals, chiseled abdominal muscles, etc.).³ Such glamorization adheres to the nature of idealization in ancient sculpture. Traditionally, the torso, legs, plinth, and adjoining support statue were all one piece of marble⁴; the head and arms were inserted later. This manufacture enabled the former to be mass produced and widely distributed and the latter to be added later per the needs of the patron.⁵ Furthermore, this technique also enabled potential reuse of the cuirasses as heads could simply be removed and replaced with a more appropriate bust, as will be seen later. The stance of the portrayed figure was often in a Polykleitan contrapposto position with a chiastic arrangement of the legs and arms; an arm was raised that potentially held a lance, sword, globe or other object, while the other arm either rested while supporting the fold of a cloak or held an object of its own. All of these features⁶ added to a sense of drama and reality.⁶ (Fig. 1)

² Jane Fejfer, *Roman Portraits in Context* (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2008), 213

³ Richard A. Gergel, "A Late Flavian Cuirassed Torso in the J. Paul Getty Museum." *The J. Paul Getty Museum Journal* 16 (1988): 7

⁴ Gergel 1988, 9

⁵ After the 1st century AD, most statues had separate heads and torsos. See Cornelius C. Vermeule, "Hellenistic and Roman Cuirassed Statues", *Berytus* 13 (1959): 6

⁶ Fejfer 2008, 208

Drawing from 5th and 4th century BC Greek originals, the Romans used two types of cuirassed statuary: Classical and Hellenistic. The former, introduced during the Augustan period, was the most common type used by the Romans. A clear example of the type is the cult statue of Mars Ultor. (Fig. 2) One or two rows of lappets (*pteryges*) were hinged on the lower edge of the breastplate over the long leather straps of the vest worn underneath the cuirass. These were customarily decorated with images of animals (Roman eagles, elephants, lions, the head of a ram), military equipment (helmets, shields), or mythical allusions (gorgoneia). Such images could be apotropaic—such as the gorgoneia—or be placed in reference to the power of the patron or even to specific campaigns or legions.⁷

The Hellenistic style, though introduced slightly earlier in Rome, was never quite as popular as the Classical among Roman emperors. The armor derives its name and origin from the type of armor worn by Alexander the Great and his generals.⁸ The major differences of this style lie in its lack of lappets and the more bell-shaped nature of the cuirass itself. Instead of lappets, there is merely a row of short leather straps hanging off of the bottom of the breastplate. A miniature bronze statuette of Mars, which is a variant of the 1st century AD Augustan Mars Ultor type, demonstrates this style well (Fig. 3).⁹

Over the cuirass itself a general's cloak (*paludamentum*) was normally worn along the left shoulder and across the breastplate. In the Primaporta and other Hellenistic works, the

⁷ Ibid; Gergel 1988, 10-11. While the interpretation of the lappets does aid in helping to date the statue and speculate on its message, I have opted to omit such discussion from my present study for the sake of brevity.

⁸ Vermuele 1959, 3

⁹ See Richard A. Gergel, "An Allegory of Imperial Victory on a Cuirassed Statue of Domitian." *Record of the Art Museum, Princeton University* 45, no. 1 (1986): 3

garment was slung around the hips in a style called a Hüftmantel.¹⁰ When a general or emperor left Rome for a military campaign, they traditionally donned the *paludamentum*.¹¹ This garment, both an essential component to the cuirassed genre and to the wardrobe of any militaristic emperor, was easily distinguishable from the more common *sagum* of the non-officer by both its greater size and scarlet color.¹² It is likely that cuirassed statues were painted; as such, the striking red hue of the *paludemantum* would have been accurately depicted (Fig. 4).¹³ A ceremonial sash called a *cingulum* was also worn in many works along with a sword belt called a *baletus*.¹⁴ The *cingulum*, which was tied around the waist once or twice in an elaborate square knot commonly referred to as the Hercules knot, was an apotropaic device.¹⁵ This entire ensemble would have been familiar to Roman soldiers as cuirasses of some form had regularly been used ever since Hellenistic monarchs had equipped their mercenaries in them; Roman legionaries themselves were even able to purchase the armor while on campaign.¹⁶ While the elaborate cuirasses discussed in the present study are thought to have mainly been primarily worn during parades or other ceremonial displays, smaller ones were worn on campaigns and in battle.¹⁷ These, just as the more elaborately decorated sculptural depictions, were normally worn over tunics and were made of either leather bands, corselets of metal plates, or disks mounted on

¹⁰ Ernest H. Kantorowicz, "Gods in Uniform", *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 105, no. 4 (1961): 381

¹¹ The cloak was similar to the Greek *chlamys*; see Phyllis G Tortora, and Keith Eubank, *Survey of Historic Costume: A History of Western Dress*, (New York: Fairchild Publications, Inc., 2005), 74, 78

¹² Richard A. Gergel, "Costume as Geographic Indicator: Barbarians and Prisoners on Cuirassed Statue Breastplates." In *The World of Roman Costume*, ed. Judith Lynn Sebesta and Larissa Bonfante. (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1994), 191

¹³ Vermeule 1959, 43

¹⁴ Fejfer 2008, 208-209

¹⁵ Gergel 1994, 191-194

¹⁶ Kantorowicz 1961, 368

¹⁷ Fejfer 2008, 208

fabric or leather.¹⁸ Though emperors were not supposed to wear military armor inside the *pomerium* of Rome, by the end of the 1st century AD rulers began to always wear military attire with the attributes and insignia of their rank.¹⁹ Thus, the entire ensemble would have been easily recognizable to a Roman soldier and also by a certain date many non-military inhabitants of the empire as well.

Though I presently focus primarily on the 150 of the 600 extant cuirass statues that allude to specific moments in Roman history, rather than the 350 that are generic in form and employ standard motifs, it is still worthwhile to examine two common motifs since they do appear on the works in my purview.²⁰ Perhaps the most universal of all the motifs was that of the gorgon head that commonly occupied the top central plane of the breastplate and occasionally the surface of a lappet. The symbol has a long history in classical art dating all the way back to archaic temples and was popular on the shields of Greek warriors due to the ferocious nature of the image.²¹ In the grand Alexander mosaic from Pompeii, Alexander himself even displays a gorgoneion on his cuirass while in battle (Fig. 5). It was also possible for an artist to replace the gorgoneion with another image to denote the locale of the scene below or to spatially define the breastplate by placing a celestial figure at the top and terrestrial figures below.

Heraldic griffins were also popular, especially during the Augustan and Julio-Claudian periods, to denote imperial power and affiliation with the ruling household. Often two of the creatures are shown in symmetrical fashion while possibly flanking a candelabrum (Fig. 6).

Their connection with Apollo, and consequently Augustus, is straightforward and allowed the

¹⁸ Totura & Eubank 2005, 78

¹⁹ Whether or not the actual cuirass itself was worn or not remains unclear; however, it seems reasonable that the *paludamentum* may have been commonly worn; see Kantorowicz 1961, 381; Totura & Eubank 2005, 74

²⁰ Gergel 1994, 194

²¹ OCD³: Gorgo/Medusa

bearer of the image to align himself with the ruling house and the venerated memory of Augustus. The Romans also regarded griffins as the arms of Mars that spread terror since they were not only the animals of Apollo, but Nemesis as well.²² In sum, they can be read as protectors of imperial power and symbols of the eternity of such power.²³ While there are other motifs that occur frequently within certain time periods and on statues of certain rulers—barbarians, Victoriae, trophies— these will be discussed when appropriate.

The genre had a long tradition in Greek, Etruscan, and Republican Roman societies, with the guise conventionally reserved for either generic warrior figures or a deity of war (Fig. 7).²⁴ In the Hellenistic period, the genre began to be used for both portraying deceased men on their funerary reliefs and also in the depiction of living kings and military leaders.²⁵ While in classical times such men tended to prefer representation in either divine or heroic guises, cuirassed statues slowly began to appear.²⁶ In the 1st century BC highly decorated cuirasses were donned by prominent figures in eastern military parades. A 1.90 m. high marble trophy with a decorated breastplate found at a Rhodian necropolis illustrates a typical cuirass worn by the generals in these processions. (Fig. 8) The work dates to 1st century BC and was possibly connected with the Mithridatic Wars. On the top of the breastplate two lions attack a fallen bull; while in the central scene, a male Arimaspe fights off two griffins.²⁷ The myth of the Arimaspes, as recorded by

²² Paul Zanker, *The Power of Images in the Age of Augustus*, (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1988), 200

²³ Fejfer 2008 211; Gergel 1994, 195

²⁴ Fejfer 2008, 207

²⁵ Fejfer 2008, 211

²⁶ Kantorowicz 1961, 7

²⁷ Brunilde Sismondo Ridgway, *Hellenistic Sculpture III: The Styles of ca. 100-31 B.C.* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2002), 80

Herodotus, is appropriate for an armor possibly meant to commemorate an eastern war.²⁸ Even though the Rhodian officer did not wear such an outfit during battle, its use in ceremonial affairs demonstrates the value that a richly decorated cuirass possessed for its ability to relay messages and stand as a symbol of wealth.

As Greek and other eastern influences infiltrated the art of Rome in the 2nd and 1st centuries BC, the cuirassed genre appealed to the elites. The first Roman depicted in the type was the governor C. Billenius, who held office ca. 100 BC on the island of Delos. Given the originally eastern influence of the genre such a provenance should not surprise.²⁹ Sixty years later Marc Antony utilized the style to depict himself in a cuirassed work that was found on Naxos, an island he held control over. It appears then that in the eastern Mediterranean, Roman magistrates were beginning to utilize the genre to present themselves as powerful and respectable to their subjects. The artist, following in the Hellenistic tradition of adorning the face of the cuirass, carved a relief that depicted the punishment of Dirce. When Dirce's strong connection with Dionysus is taken into account, we see how the myth was used in this instance to strengthen a message that Antony was striving to send: that he was the new Dionysus. It is even thought that in his right hand he held a Nike-like statuette that may have been a maenad.³⁰ The artist thus portrayed Antony in a manner that both spoke to his military strength and also aided in propagating his claim to be the new Dionysus; the history and connotations of the cuirassed figure coupled with the artistic potential of the breastplate itself facilitated such a depiction

²⁸ Herodotus 3.116; 4.13, 27: The Arimaspes were a one-eyed people who lived north of the Scythians in central Asia. They obtained their vast treasure by secretly stealing gold that was guarded by the griffins. See Gergel 1994, 196

²⁹ Fejfer 2008, 211

³⁰ Brunilde Sismondo Ridgway, *Hellenistic Sculpture II: The Styles of ca. 200-100 B.C.* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2000), 275-277; Ridgway 2002, 80

effectively. Such a productive union between specific chosen imagery, the cuirassed statue, and the desired message of the patron will be seen throughout this work.

The following discussion will focus on three emperors—Augustus, Vespasian, and Domitian—who were deliberate in their aims to represent their latest military victories on cuirassed statuary. Though each emperor held power in different historical contexts, each utilized the cuirassed statuary genre to convey messages of imperial hegemony and personal military prowess. All called upon the established imagery of barbaric “others” from Republican precedents, the Roman triumph, or other contemporary media to symbolize their military prowess, the expansion of Roman territory, and the assimilation of new peoples into the empire. The historical context of each emperor’s reign will also be addressed since each ruler found himself in a unique historical environment that necessitated new uses of the cuirassed statuary type. The peculiar nature of cuirassed statuary in the Julio-Claudian period will also be discussed, as well as a brief examination of the genre under Trajan and Hadrian.

The Prima Porta Statue of Augustus

In choosing the cuirassed statuary type to mark the Parthian settlement and dawning of the *saeculum aureum*, Augustus established a key precedent in the genre while simultaneously creating a work that is an anomaly in its design and message. He was able to effectively combine revolutionary barbaric imagery with the established genre of cuirassed statuary to produce a message of universal peace and prosperity. No cuirassed work before had utilized imagery of a foreign foe or had even employed the statuary type to celebrate or commemorate a specific moment in Roman history.³¹ The Prima Porta statue—the only complete and undisputed cuirassed work of this ruler—is unique not only for its unorthodox nature, but also because its high level of iconographical interaction would never again be repeated. Thus, Augustus may have set in motion the popularization of the cuirassed statue when one wished to depict a conquered enemy or commemorate a moment in time, but no future emperors attempted narratives of such depth and intricacy.

Having emerged from many years of chaos and bloodshed, Augustus quickly realized that the most valued commodities he could offer the Roman people were peace and security to themselves and their property.³² The *princeps* used all of his iconographical capital to put forth images that signaled a new golden age in Rome, one marked by tranquility and prosperity. Augustan art was concerned primarily with peace, but with strong underpinning messages about the power and authority of the ruler—the guarantor of this peace.³³ The new ruling house

³¹ Gergel 1994, 196

³² Ando 2000, xii

³³ I. M. Ferris, *Enemies of Rome: Barbarians Through Roman Eyes*, (Gloucestershire: Sutton Publishing Ltd., 2000), 38

constantly propagated a self-image of, “vigor, expansionism, triumph, and dominance”³⁴, coupled with reassurances that the decades of bloody civil war were gone.

At the same time, Augustus was keenly aware that demonstrating his prowess in military affairs would strengthen his position and garner more public support. Though Augustus was attempting to modify the ways of the Republic, the traditional notion that military success legitimized one’s political authority was alive and well. In the Republic, the actions of the victorious general had been, “envied, honored and celebrated.”³⁵ Accordingly, like the strong rulers before him, Augustus would find that his charismatic appeal was ultimately derived from his success in war.³⁶ While he did celebrate a triple triumph in 29 BCE for his conquest of Illyricum, victory at Actium, and annexation of Egypt³⁷, it was difficult to disguise the fact that such victories and his very position resulted from civil war. A conquest was needed that was undeniably over a foreign threat and which underscored his powerful ability to bring about peace in the world. Augustus found such an opportunity when the decision was made to retrieve the lost standards of Crassus— a task that had eluded and taken down two of top men in recent Roman memory.

The defeat of Crassus in 53 BCE at Carrhae was one of the worst defeats the republic had suffered since the Hannibalic wars and one that had lingered in Roman minds ever since. Not only had twenty thousand men been killed, but also another ten thousand were taken captive.³⁸ In addition, several legionary standards had also been captured: both an embarrassment and an evil

³⁴ Erich Gruen, “The Expansion of the Empire Under Augustus”, in *Cambridge Ancient History X*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 197

³⁵ Gruen 1996, 147

³⁶ Ando 2000, xii

³⁷ Suetonius, *Div. Aug.* 22; Dio 51.21.5-9

³⁸ Charles Brian Rose, “The Parthians in Augustan Rome”, *American Journal of Archaeology* 109, no. 1 (2005): 22

omen to the Romans. If Augustus wished to portray Rome as an omnipotent power, the lack of the standards would constantly serve to undermine such a notion.³⁹ Julius Caesar had planned to march eastward and retrieve the standards, but such an endeavor was prevented by his assassination. Antony battled the Parthians, hoping to claim a key victory in his struggle of power with Octavian; however, he was defeated and more standards were lost.⁴⁰ Now, in the mid 20's BCE, it was up to Augustus to march east, like a new Alexander, and accomplish what some of the most powerful men before him had failed to do: restore the honor of Roman arms.⁴¹

Augustus succeeded while not losing a single Roman life and even managing to return to Rome both the valuable standards *and* thousands of Romans who had been held captive for thirty-three years. The settlement was treated as a military victory rather than a diplomatic success.⁴² As Cassius Dio describes:

Augustus received the standards and the prisoners as though he had defeated the Parthians in a campaign; he took great pride in the settlement, and declared that he had won back without striking a blow what had earlier been lost in battle.⁴³
(Tr. Earnest Cary)

The senate even urged Augustus to celebrate this monumental success with a triumph. However, he declined and instead chose to simply display the recovered standards in the new temple of Mars Ultor on the Capitoline.⁴⁴ The victory was well suited for the imperial message of the ruler:

³⁹ Gruen 1996, 159

⁴⁰ Suetonius, *Div. Aug.* 21

⁴¹ Rose 2005, 46

⁴² As Erich Gruen writes, "A compact of mutual advantage and mutual agreement took on the glow of military mastery." Gruen 1996, 160

⁴³ Cassius Dio, 54.8

⁴⁴ Zanker 1988, 186; cf. Augustus, *Res Gestae* 29 (Tr. Thomas Bushnell)

the state was revived spiritually, the gods were back with Rome, and the age of Augustus would produce unknown tranquility and prosperity.⁴⁵ Augustus seized upon the image of the Parthian to stress the peaceful resolution that had occurred and also his own unique ability to bring about such a result.

In the grand corpus of Augustan art, the Parthian victory was given much more attention than any other military success of Augustus—even over those that had actually included warfare and a triumph.⁴⁶ Such controlled observation was undoubtedly a deliberate effort on the part of Augustus: not every victory—especially the long and bloody ones—needed to be celebrated. The emphasis on peace and security brought about by the Parthian settlement would help to erase the memories of the bloody campaigns in Spain, Illyria, and Germany.⁴⁷ Parthian themed monuments were constructed in abundance around Rome during the reign of Augustus: the Parthian Arch, statues placed within the Basilica Aemilia, the Arch of Gaius, the retrieved standards in the new Temple of Mars Ultor on the Capitoline, and most importantly for the present study, the Primaporta statue. (Fig. 9) Unlike images of the Germans or Spaniards—who were often depicted in the art of the provinces and in the private imagery of the imperial court as bound and in mourning—Parthians were depicted as respectful equals of Rome, free to bow on their own accord or hand over the standards without any force. While the poets of Rome wrote about exacting a satisfying revenge on the Parthians for their past destruction of so many Roman

⁴⁵ Zanker 1988, 185-186

⁴⁶ Rose 2005, 66. More attention is also paid in the *Res Gestae* (27, 29, 32, 33) to Augustus' pacification of Parthia and Armenia than to his policies anywhere else. Undoubtedly, his taming of the east was an accomplishment he wished to have especially commemorated. Cf. Rose 2005, 21.

⁴⁷ Zanker 1988, 187

legions, the imagery that the Augustan regime employed spoke to a different narrative that was comprised of humility and cooperation.⁴⁸

The Primaporta statue is thought to be a marble copy from an originally bronze work that was likely commissioned soon after the Parthian settlement. The original composition was possibly displayed somewhere in Rome—perhaps even abroad as well—and seems to have gained favor from either Augustus or his inner circle since the extant marble copy was found at a villa of Livia.⁴⁹ The back of the work is unfinished; indicating that the statue was similar to other cuirassed works and placed within a niche of some sort.⁵⁰

The work coyly hints at the ruler's elevated status from that of a regular Roman: his footwear are not those of a mortal but deliberately allude to the classical nude imagery of gods and heroes while his body itself is in close imitation to the Classical forms of Polyclitan sculpture—a form that had the purpose of making the subject appear to be elevating onto a higher plane.⁵¹ By amalgamating a well-established indicator of divine approval (military success) with a new iconography of celestial providence and earthly prosperity in sculptural form, Augustus was able to portray himself as the materialized product of the dawning of the new *aureum saeculum*—an age brought about by Augustus as well.

The statue depicts the ruler in the guise of a triumphant general making the gesture of *adlocutio*: the visual references on the breastplate and around his body summarize the message of this address.⁵² (Fig.10) On the breastplate we find a, “combination of mythological figures,

⁴⁸ Horace *Epistles* 1.12.27: *ius imperiumque Phraates Caesaris accepit genibus minor* (Phraates, on humbled knees, has accepted Caesar's imperial sway. Tr. H. Rushton Fairclough) See also Rose 2005, 22

⁴⁹ Zanker 1988, 188-189; Rose 2005, 24

⁵⁰ Vermuele 1959, 7

⁵¹ Zanker 1988, 189; Kantorowicz 1961, 381

⁵² Rose 2005, 24

symbolic representations, and allegorical personifications”⁵³, in a concentrated effort to convey the message of imperial victory to the observer.

On the top the sky god Caelus draws a blanket of protective clouds over the scene below. Sol appears across the upper left and center of the breastplate driving his chariot across the sky. Next to him appears Aurora carrying an urn and Luna holding a torch. This entire scene signifies the dawning of a new day in Rome, one that has arisen from the actions of Augustus.⁵⁴ At the lower edge is a reclining female figure with two infant children that draw off the established iconography of Romulus and Remus. She has been identified as a number of female deities, but the most reliable seems to be that of Terra Mater.⁵⁵ She signals how the new golden age brought about by Augustus has produced peace and prosperity in the Roman world.

To the left and right above her we find Apollo and Diana respectively. Both were the patron deities of Augustus and their presence further strengthens the notion that Augustus has won the favor of the gods. In addition, their inclusion in the composition indicates how it is likely that the breastplate composition borrowed much of its theme from the great Secular Games. These marked the coming of a new prosperous age and took place from May 30th to June 3rd in 17 BC. Augustus seized upon the fact that a comet was expected for that summer and used this natural wonder to declare that a new *saeculum* had arrived.⁵⁶ During these festivals sacrifices were made to Apollo, Diana, Latona, and Terra Mater—to whom even Augustus himself

⁵³ Gergel 1994, 94

⁵⁴ Gergel 1994, 195

⁵⁵ She also been labeled as Italia, Tellus, Magna Mater, Ceres, and Cybele. Cf. Zanker 1988, 189; Gergel 1994, 196; at Rose 2005, 27 he identifies the figure as an amplified conception of Terra Mater since she has two babies rather than one; thus emphasizing the increased prosperity brought about by Augustus while also coyly alluding to the origins of Rome.

⁵⁶ Zanker 1988, 167

sacrificed a pregnant sow.⁵⁷ Horace composed the *Carmen Saeculare* for the occasion and children in festive white costumes sang the hymn in front of the Temple of Palatine Apollo. In the poem we find the very deities who appear on the Primaporta breastplate invoked to give their blessings to the new Rome:

Phoebus and Diana Queen of the Woods,
radiant glory of the heavens, ever to be worshipped
and ever worshipped, grant our prayers on this holy occasion...

Life-giving sun, who with your shining car
bring forth the day and hide it away,
who are born anew and yet the same,
may you never be able to behold anything greater
than the city of Rome...

May Mother Earth, who is fertile in crops and livestock,
present Ceres with a crown of corn;
May Jove's wholesome showers
and breezes nourish all that
she brings forth.

Apollo, lay aside your weapon, and listen mildly
and gently to the boys' prayers.

Do you, o Moon, crescent-shaped Queen
of the stars, give ear to the girls...

Now Good Faith, Peace, and Honor,
along with old-fashioned Modesty and Virtue,
who has been so long neglected,
venture to return, and blessed Plenty
with her full horn is seen by all.

Phoebus the prophet, arrayed with his shining bow,

⁵⁷ Zanker 1988, 169

who is dear to the nine muses,
and by his healing art relieves the body's weary limbs—
he, if he looks with favor, as he does,
on the altars of the Palatine
prolongs Rome's power and Latium's prosperity
for another cycle and another ever improving age.
Diana, who possesses the Aventine and Mount Algidus,
listens to the prayers of the Fifteen Men and lends a
gracious ear to the appeals of children..
We carry home the good and certain hope
that such is the will of Jupiter and the other gods—
we, the chorus trained to sing
in praise of Phoebus and Diana. (Tr. Niall Rudd)⁵⁸

The images of Apollo, Diana, and their associative astral deities, Sol and Luna, could also be seen all throughout the temple precinct⁵⁹; the children invoked the celestial beings while surrounded by an imagery of these gods. Moving away from the celestial context of the composition, notice how the gods invoked above are intermingled with the recent events in the Augustan world; by doing so, Augustus was able to link his actions with the workings of the divine and the coming of the new golden age.

Slightly above Apollo and Diana are two seated female figures that personify provinces from which Augustus had also recently recovered lost standards. While both are difficult to securely identify, due to a lack of parallels in the extant material corpus, certain characteristics do allow tentative determinations. Though their lowered heads and dejected looks make it clear that they represent pacified peoples, they lack the customary crowns and associative symbols of

⁵⁸ Horace, *Carmen Saeculare*, 1-3, 9-12, 29-36, 56-76

⁵⁹ Zanker 1988, 172

prosperity and cultural assimilation that usually accompany provincial personifications; however, given their placement in relation to the main scene, they should be understood within the context of the return of the standards.⁶⁰ The figure on the left (Fig. 11), sitting in deep sorrow while extending a sword with her right hand, has been identified as personifying the province of Hispania due to the presence of the *gladius Hispaniense*. Agrippa had won key victories in the land and acquired previously lost standards in 19 BC, but it was still not fully pacified—hence the presence of the *gladius*.⁶¹

The effigy on the right (Fig. 12) holds an empty sheath in her left hand and a dragon trumpet in her right while on the ground lies a military standard decorated with a wild boar; she has been identified by some scholars as the province of Gaul.⁶² Similar to *Hispania*, Gaul too was the location of many conflicts during the Augustan period, as it had been for many centuries before. Agrippa had traveled to Gaul in 20 and 19 BC as well to quell rebellions. The fighting continued though, and in 16 BC Augustus himself traveled to the region to affect the peace process. In that same year a weak peace deal was struck that only lasted a three years. In 13 BC Drusus, the stepson of Augustus, lead a force into the region.⁶³ Regardless of the actual events in Gaul, Augustus could still lay claim to the 16 BC peace deal as additional evidence of the desirable effects of his inspired leadership. Having also recovered previously lost Roman standards from both *Hispania* and Gaul further signified the healing of Rome's wounded self-image and the strengthening of her destined world hegemony.⁶⁴

⁶⁰ Gergel 1994, 195

⁶¹ Gergel 1994, 196; Gruen 1996, 166

⁶² Gergel 1994, 196

⁶³ Gruen 1996, 179-180

⁶⁴ Augustus, *Res Gestae* 29: I recovered from Spain, Gaul, and Dalmatia the many military standards lost through other leaders, after defeating the enemies. (Tr. Thomas Bushnell). As concerns Dalmatia, a decorated trophy and the left wing of Victory were placed on the back of

Moving into the main scene (Fig. 13), we find the restoration of the standards to be the central matrix that ties together these images of pacification and allegorical figures of universal peace. What is most immediately striking is the manner in which both figures are presented as equals. On late Republican precedents, scenes of Romans and their opponents are never presented in such a peaceful and equal manner, but rather enemies are shown bound. (Fig. 14).⁶⁵ The depiction is thus quite accurate since a negotiated settlement featured no warfare and as such there was no need for images of tied or bound Parthians.⁶⁶ The two figures are obviously a Roman and Parthian but their exact identities stir up hot debates among scholars. I tend to side with C. Brian Rose who makes a strong case for identifying the Roman figure as Roma and the Parthian as a straightforward allegorical representation of Parthia.⁶⁷ The Parthian is depicted as free, his hands are not bound and he looks up rather than down in mourning. He is surrendering

the cuirass over the right hip. Such a scene could be in reference to Dalmatia, thereby accounting for all the races that Augustus recovered standards from and adhering to the theme of the work. Why a scene would be carved on the otherwise unfinished back of the statue is unclear. See Gergel 1994, 195

⁶⁵ Rose 2005, 35-36

⁶⁶ Rose 2005, 27

⁶⁷ Rose 2005, 25. He justifies such an identification with the following reasons: the attic helmet (standard headgear in the iconography of Roma and the Amazons but not so for Roman soldiers or Mars); the tufts of hair that escape from the side and back of the helmet (appropriate for Roma, but not a Roman male); the same kind of fleshy face with full lips appears in the depiction of other females on the cuirass itself; the rendering of the anatomy (the tapering cuirass effectively creates a narrow waist and a large buttocks, appropriate for a female); and the presence of the dog (this type of dog appears in the corpus of Amazon imagery, from which the attributes of Rome were consistently drawn).

Other possible identifications for the Roman figure include: a youthful Tiberius (figure is too generalized to be a portrait); Mars, Aeneas, or Romulus (the figure does not conform to the standard iconography of any of these figures). Cf. Gergel 1994, 194 where he contends that identifying the figure to any particular historical or mythical figure is unwise since such a depiction on the part of the Romans would have run counter to the traditional methods of breastplate iconographical practice, which relied on symbol and allegory to convey its message to the viewer. In his estimation then, the figure is simply a symbol of Roman military might strength.

to Roma the standards⁶⁸ on his own accord, not as a result of force or coercion. Such an approach to the enemy was a new one. The old layout of the bound and chained barbarian implied resistance, but now it appeared that Augustus had finally domesticated the east and as a result a new golden age was beginning; one ripe with the universal bounties of peace and prosperity.⁶⁹

Even though Augustus celebrated no triumph for the Parthian settlement, he did treat the matter as if it had been a great military victory. Given the prominence of the image of the kneeling Parthian handing over the standards on coins and on the Parthian Arch that was set up in the Roman forum, it seems likely that a scene of a Parthian figure handing over the standards to Augustus would have occurred in the triumph if one had happened.⁷⁰ The scene on the central face of the Prima Porta breastplate was one of imperial conquest, just like the depictions used by the Flavians below. Augustus may not have annexed new territory for the empire or quelled a rebellious race in his dealings with Parthians, but he did secure peace in the empire. After years of chaotic civil war, no other victory could have been more valued and worthy of celebrating.

⁶⁸ Even the standard is uniquely crafted to convey the magnitude of Augustus' grand achievement. It is crowned by an eagle while three *phalerae* decorate the shaft; thus, clearly mixing the *Aquila* and the *signum* to symbolize the range of standards that were returned. While securing the military standard of one legion is honorable, retrieving many standards is all the better; a fact Augustus surely did not want forgotten. Cf. Rose 2005, 24

⁶⁹ Rose 2005, 35-36; Gruen 1996, 163

⁷⁰ For the arch, see: Cassius Dio, 54.8; Zanker 1988, 187; Rose 2005, 29-33. On the top of the arch is thought to have been a scene of Parthians presenting the standards to triumphing Augustus. There was a similar scene on an arch that was set up around the same time in Pisidian Antioch; see Annalina Caló Levi, *Barbarians on Roman Imperial Coins and Sculpture*, (New York: The American Numismatic Society, 1952), 8

The Julio-Claudians

The successors to Augustus in the Julio-Claudian dynasty did not capitalize on this new precedent of complicated iconography and novel use of barbarian iconography on cuirassed statuary. Instead, they eliminated the complex levels of imagery for a more economical use of allegory and symbol. A didactic message of greater clarity thus emerges.⁷¹ Tropes that I labeled above as generic (e.g. heraldic griffins, Gorgoneion), were the standard symbols used by the emperors to convey their chosen message. In addition, imperial art now tended to focus more on legitimizing the rule of the emperor through stressing his descent from Augustus. While a natural assumption would hold that an emperor may choose to do just this by creating works similar to the Primaporta statue, this does not, for whatever reason, appear to have been the case.

If we accept the notion that the cuirassed statue was a prime vessel for honoring military achievement, then it is difficult to imagine a man more deserving of such recognition than Tiberius. Though he achieved some key victories for the empire (Pannonia, Germania Rhaetia, Illyricum, and to an extent the Parthian settlement), there are no extant cuirassed statues that can be firmly identified as the emperor.⁷² Tiberius even celebrated a triumph after successful campaigns along the northern frontier of the empire.⁷³ A possible reason for this lack of distinction could stem from his shaky relationship with Augustus or his desire to appear as a citizen leader, rather than a general.

⁷¹ Gergel 1994, 196

⁷² Due to the nonspecific nature of Julio-Claudian cuirassed statuary, precise identification of works is difficult.

⁷³ It was common during the empire for an emperor who celebrated a triumph to be honored with a cuirassed statue. Note the examples of Vespasian, Titus, Domitian, and Trajan below. See Suetonius, *Tiberius* 9 for Tiberius' triumphs.

Tiberius' brother Drusus the Elder was both extremely popular with the people and on excellent terms with Augustus. It is perhaps little wonder then that a cuirassed statue of him does survive from a theater in Caere. (Fig. 23) On the breastplate we find two heraldic griffins flanking a candelabra underneath a Gorgoneion. None of his military victories are directly alluded to on the work; the iconography refers simply to the power of the imperial house. With Drusus wearing such imagery, the inhabitants of Caere were told of a powerful young member of the imperial family whom they should remember for his military prowess and relationship to Augustus.

Though the young emperor Caligula was no stranger to self-aggrandizing, we have but one intact extant cuirassed statue of the ruler. (Fig. 16) The composition of the breastplate appears to be similar to most Julio-Claudian breastplates and does not refer to any specific historical moment during the ruler's brief reign.⁷⁴ One might expect some form of reference to his much-publicized, but by all accounts ill-conceived, foray into Germania and dealings with Britannia. In all of the chaos of his reign though he never received a triumph⁷⁵ so perhaps a triumphal depiction was scarcely warranted. Of course, in the end Caligula did receive a *damnatio memoriae* and as such any cuirassed statues may have been destroyed or reused with the head removed.⁷⁶

Though Claudius brought a large part of Britannia to submission and even celebrated a triumph for this victory, no cuirassed work survives that commemorates this exploit. The victory was well suited for praise since no ruler had even attempted such a conquest since Julius Caesar

⁷⁴ The only picture available of the work stems from an eighty year old guidebook to the Naples Archaeological Museum and its quality is regrettably lackluster. Even so, from what I can gather the breastplate does not appear to be exceptional.

⁷⁵ Suetonius, *Gaius Caligula* 49

⁷⁶ See n.5

(apart from Caligula's bizarre antics). The victory is celebrated at the Sebasteion in Aphrodisias where Claudius is depicted as a new Achilles subduing the female divinity of Britannia.⁷⁷ (Fig. 17) However, no such scene of domination and imperial might appears on a cuirassed breastplate.

Three different works from the Neronian period offer insights into the purposes and styles of the cuirassed statuary genre in the late Julio-Claudian period. All were discovered in the eastern half of the empire. Such a provenance is sound given both Nero's well-known affection for the Greek east and his militaristic activities in the region. The first work under consideration stems from this latter factor.

In dealing with the Parthian wars during the early years of his reign, Nero appointed the general G. Domitus Corbulo. The commander was a worthy choice since he possessed great experience, but it also benefitted the young emperor to align himself with a general of his prominence and power. In 58 AD, Corbulo destroyed the capital of Armenia, Artaxata, and this was lauded as a supreme victory, with Nero himself being unanimously saluted as *imperator*. Sometime during the campaign or after the peace deal was struck in 63, Corbulo was honored with a cuirassed statuary depiction. Though Nero received the triumph— since Augustus had relegated the ceremony to the exclusive purview of the imperial family— some party nevertheless honored Corbulo with a cuirassed statue.

The composition on the breastplate is similar to the Primaporta in that it utilizes mythology and eastern archetypes to commemorate a specific moment in Roman history. (Fig. 18) Though it is not as complicated or intricate as the Primaporta, the work does show a refined

⁷⁷ See Zanker 1988, 300-301

taste that is typical of the Julio-Claudian period.⁷⁸ On the breastplate itself we find two primary scenes: on the top section the sun god Helios rides towards the viewer in a three-dimensional scene in a *quadriga* while below him two Arimaspes are positioned back-to-back as they offer libation dishes on one knee to pendant griffins. The meaning of the scene is clear: the Romans have gained control over the wealth of the East, similar to how the Arimaspes obtained gold over the griffins.⁷⁹ Just as Augustus exploited his own mythological connections to convey a certain message, so too did the artist of this work. Only, in this case, mythology was utilized to acknowledge Roman territorial expansion, rather than any divine personal connection of the mortal being honored.

The other two works worth mentioning both originate from Asia Minor. The first is a cuirassed statue that was found in modern-day Germencik, in the Aydian province in the Aegean region of Turkey (Fig. 4). Two faded flanking griffins decorate the breastplate above the customary Hercules knot of a double *cingulum*. The iconography is standard of the Julio-Claudian period; the type of cuirass is not. This style would not become popular throughout the empire until 130 AD.⁸⁰ For whatever reason, Asia Minor adopted this variety of the genre earlier than other provinces. If not for the inscription on the plinth that identifies the work as depicting Nero, the work would have likely been regarded as a product of the mid-second century.

A relief from the Sebasteion at Aphrodisias is the second composition presently examined. Nero is portrayed in an undecorated cuirass, which resembles the statue discovered in Germencik, while his mother Agrippina Minor, grasping a cornucopia and in the guise of a

⁷⁸ Gergel 1994, 196

⁷⁹ Ibid; see n.28 above

⁸⁰ Vermeule 1959, 43

female divinity, crowns the young emperor. (Fig. 19)⁸¹ While much could be said concerning the history of the site and the various reliefs, the simple fact that Nero is depicted in the cuirass in an imperial cult site will suffice for now. As will be argued below, portraying the emperor in cuirassed form was deemed appropriate for an imperial worship context.

The Julio-Claudians thus did not continue the complex model sketched out by Augustus in the Primaporta statue, but rather opted for a more refined and in many ways simplistic style. The Flavians, on the other hand, seized upon the medium to propagate their desired messages in methods similar to the traditions found in Roman commemorative art. Such a new method was inferior in Vermelue's opinion: arguing that the Julio-Claudian period produced cuirassed works that were crafted with precision and clarity, while the artists in the Flavian period put forth works that were crowding, undercutting, and made with lessened craftsmanship.⁸² Regardless of any subjective leanings, in the Flavian period we find clear and precise programmatic messages taking the place of the intricate usage of myth and history during the Augustan era. Artists were becoming more familiar with the language of imperial visual art throughout the first century and were thus able to convey a much simpler message to a much wider audience.⁸³ While griffins and other common devices were not altogether dismissed, previously unused imagery was borrowed from other media to convey the chosen imperial message with the cuirassed statue.

⁸¹ See Zanker 1988, 300-301

⁸² Vermeule 1959, 42

⁸³ Rachel M. Kousser, *Hellenistic and Roman Ideal Sculpture: The Allure of the Classical*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 47

The Revival of the Cuirassed Statue under the Flavians

During the Flavian period, richly decorated scenes on cuirasses become the norm rather than the exception.⁸⁴ Vespasian and Titus were both former field commanders and accordingly may have felt more drawn to the medium; or perhaps since they lacked the formerly required Julio-Claudian pedigree they needed to focus on another way to legitimize their position as *princeps*: their military prowess. Additionally, in linking themselves back to the traditions of the Republic through their dedication to popularizing their triumph and emphatic desire to make their military capabilities known, they sought to further validate their rules. The cuirassed statuary genre experienced a renaissance during this period.

While Vespasian's rise to power itself served as proof of his martial aptitude, he, like Augustus, could not afford to allow a victory over fellow Romans to serve as the sole validation for his rule. As such, it is not surprising to find that, in the same vein as Augustus, Vespasian seized upon a military victory over a foreign enemy to stress the legitimacy of his reign. Soon after assuming the principate, Titus provided the military success needed to secure popular approval for both Vespasian's rule and his dynastic ambitions.⁸⁵ A triumph was held in 71 CE and coins were minted to celebrate the defeat of Judea (Fig. 20). From these coins we find the precedent for the iconography of the defeated Jewish barbarian that Vespasian, and possibly Titus⁸⁶, utilized on their cuirassed statuary.

⁸⁴ Gergel 1988, 9

⁸⁵ Gergel 1988, 17

⁸⁶ For an unknown reason, Vermeule lists no work that has the IUDEA CAPTA imagery on the breastplate as belonging to Titus. Though he notes that a cuirassed sculpture from Sabratha, discussed below, could have belonged to Titus. See Vermeule 1959, 44 no.85

Though a cynical viewer may have mused over whether suppressing a rebellion in a Roman province was truly a foreign conquest worthy of such celebration, it was nevertheless vital for the Vespasian to direct public attention away from the civil war.⁸⁷ In addition, the triumph was to serve as the formal introduction of the Flavian family as this was not only the first public appearance of Vespasian's would-be successor Titus, but also the first time that the entire imperial family would appear together since Vespasian's proclamation as emperor in 69.⁸⁸ In effect, as Mary Beard convincingly argues, Josephus (the Flavian "lackey" who vividly recorded the triumph) desires for the reader to understand the triumph as, "the inaugural moment of a new dynasty—a combination...of imperial *adventus*, victory parade, and accession ritual."⁸⁹

Like emperors and generals before them, Vespasian and Titus promoted the victory that warranted the triumph with relentless tenacity. Twenty different types of coinage were issued that all advertised the Flavian victory over Judea. Such a quantity was far more than any previous ruler had issued.⁹⁰ The new dynasty also strove to give the impression that though a new ruler was in charge, Rome itself was still the same, by adhering to all of the time-honored traditions of the triumphal procession.⁹¹ In doing so, they linked themselves back with both the lauded days of the Republic and the only previously legitimate rulers Rome had known at this point: the Julio-Claudians. Through all of their efforts in propaganda and procedure, the Flavians were able to successfully undergo a public metamorphosis: "the once successful usurpers turned into an established imperial dynasty."⁹²

⁸⁷ Mary Beard, "The Triumph of Flavius Josephus." In *Flavian Rome: Culture, Image, Text*, ed. A J Boyle and W J Dominik, (Boston: Brill, 2003), 557

⁸⁸ Beard 2003, 550

⁸⁹ Beard 2003, 548

⁹⁰ Kousser 2008, 69

⁹¹ Beard 2003, 554

⁹² Beard 2003, 552

Unlike the Parthian settlement, the campaign against Judea had involved actual warfare and resulted in the loss of Roman life. Accordingly, the imagery of the campaign took on a much darker tone than that of Augustus so many years earlier. Vespasian sought to stress that the enemies of Rome who occupied the land of Judea were no longer a threat: not because they sought *amicitia* with Rome like Augustus claimed Parthia had⁹³, but because they were bound and thoroughly demoralized and defeated. On Flavian cuirasses we see scenes normally reserved for coinage and reliefs transplanted onto the stone canvass of the breastplate: barbarians tied to trophies, mourning, looking up with faces of desperation, etc. In particular, we find on a cuirassed statue of Vespasian from Sabratha a specific allegory of imperial victory. (Fig. 21) Unlike the coins, which speak to a similar narrative, the breastplate of the life-size statue of the new emperor could not help but be noticed and interpreted by the inhabitants of the Roman province.

Judging from the numismatic parallels, the statue probably portrays Vespasian as emperor when Judea was subdued (Fig. 20).⁹⁴ On the breastplate itself we find a date palm in the middle of the composition, signaling an eastern locale. A winged victory in the guise and pose of Venus of Capua inscribes a victory message on a shield that appears to hang from the tree trunk. Drawing again on numismatic parallels, the non-extant painted inscription on the shield would have likely read IUDEA CAPTA or IUDEA DEVICTA.⁹⁵ The sensuous nature of the winged goddess suggests the attractive nature of the ruler's victory.⁹⁶ The victory over Judea was thus portrayed as having been pre-ordained and the composition puts forth the notion that Vespasian

⁹³ Augustus, *Res Gestae* 29: I compelled the Parthians to return to me the spoils and standards of three Roman armies, and as suppliants to seek the friendship of the Roman people. (Tr. Thomas Bushnell)

⁹⁴ Gergel 1988, 17 & Gergel 1994, 197

⁹⁵ Gergel 1994, 197

⁹⁶ Kousser 2008, 73

has conquered by the will of the gods. Next to the tree and below it we find two barbarian captives that are depicted noticeably differently than the images of defeated foes we find on the Primaporta.

The captive to the viewer's right of the tree is male, donned only in a mantle and *sagum*, with his hands bound behind his back. The second captive, also male, sits below on a pile of oval and polygonal shields. He is not bound but rather raises his right hand in supplication to the goddess as he leans back slightly on his left hand. In desperately imploring the goddess above, the barbarian serves to praise the celebrated clemency of the emperor.⁹⁷ Given how the palm tree signals an eastern setting and there are established correlations in coinage, it is certain that these two figures represent conquered Judeans. However, they are not depicted in actual Judean garb but are rather the products of artistic license. For the seated figure wears *bracae*, the tailored leggings which a Roman audience understood as the costume of barbarians. However, Judeans did not wear these. The barbarian motifs have been, "employed solely for the purpose of identifying the Jewish people as yet another nation which has been humiliated and subdued by Roman might."⁹⁸ For the purposes of imperial propaganda it was sufficient that viewers comprehended that the foes of Rome had been defeated by Vespasian and were now no longer a threat. Adherence to actual dress and appearance was irrelevant.

Another possible explanation for portraying the Jews as barbarians could stem from the way the Romans viewed the people. Elite Romans regarded Jews as ridiculously superstitious and, as Tacitus writes, thought that, "the Jews regard as profane all that we hold sacred; on the

⁹⁷ Ibid

⁹⁸ Gergel 1994, 197

other hand, they permit all that we abhor.”⁹⁹ The race was also thought of as extremely insular, full of detestable customs, and out to enrich their fellow adherents:

Whatever their origin, these rites are maintained by their antiquity: the other customs of the Jews are base and abominable, and owe their persistence to their depravity. For the worst rascals among other peoples, renouncing their ancestral religions, always kept sending tribute and contributions to Jerusalem, thereby increasing the wealth of the Jews; again the Jews are extremely loyal toward one another, and always ready to show compassion but toward every other people they feel only hate and enmity.¹⁰⁰

Perhaps worst of all in the minds of the imperial administration though, they refused to pay homage to the images of emperors: “they set up no statues in their cities, still less in their temples; this flattery is not paid to their kings, nor this honor given to the Caesars.”¹⁰¹

Even though Judea had become a province in 6 BCE, they were not portrayed in the imperial iconography like other provincials in the Roman Empire. They appear in compositions usually reserved for conquered peoples beyond the borders of the world. One possible reason for this could be that on several occasions under Gaius and Claudius they had resisted attempts to institute some of the most important hallmarks of Roman civilization: statues, temples, and cults (including the imperial cult).¹⁰² Their refusals and subsequent rebellion signaled to the Flavians that they were no better than the barbarians on the frontiers who so feverishly resisted the process of Romanization. While the Jews were portrayed as worthy foes—for an emperor does

⁹⁹ Tacitus, *Hist.* 5.4 (Tr. Clifford H. Moore)

¹⁰⁰ Tacitus, *Hist.* 5.5 (Tr. Clifford H. Moore)

¹⁰¹ *Ibid*

¹⁰² Jane M. Cody, "Conquerors and Conquered on Flavian Coins", In *Flavian Rome: Culture, Image, Text*, ed. A J Boyle and W J Dominik, (Boston, MA: Brill, 2003), 110

gain much from advertising defeat over a weak enemy—they were also seen as equal in their barbarism to any other mutinous race and accordingly rendered in similar imperial iconography. Perhaps the artist of these works was also aware that Rome at the time possessed a considerable Jewish population. It is reasonable to suspect that Vespasian did not wish to offend or incite the Jewish residents in Rome at a time when peace was so desperately needed. As such, the Jews which Vespasian and Titus defeated were depicted as barbaric outsiders, different from the urban Jewish dwellers.

Domitian

Whereas Vespasian and Augustus only focused on one military victory in their cuirassed statuary, Domitian seized upon the precedents of placing barbaric imagery on cuirasses to commemorate all of his victories—regardless of how such conquests were received by the senatorial elite. In the works associated with Domitian, we find firm evidence that for the Flavian dynasty peace was something achieved through military conquest and territorial expansion, as opposed to the message of the Prima porta which emphasized peace through negotiations and collaboration.¹⁰³ Though Domitian, like Caligula and Nero before him, suffered a *damnatio memoriae*,¹⁰⁴ we have a substantial collection of breastplates from his rule. Possible reasons for this seemingly contradictory fact are discussed at the end of this section.

¹⁰³ Gergel 1994, 203

¹⁰⁴ Suetonius, *Domitian* 23

Unlike his father and brother, Domitian did not have a great military victory or a strong reputation in the legions on which to justify his rule.¹⁰⁵ In contrast, he simply had the blood relation to a dynasty that was just over a decade old. While traditionally emperors with little military glory tried to seek it soon after taking rule¹⁰⁶, Domitian found himself at a rather inopportune time for one perhaps in need of a great victory to lend credibility to his rule. In contrast to Augustus and Vespasian, he lived not in a world of disorder and uncertainty, but rather one in which, “after a decade of peace and prosperity, when men had enough to eat, time to think and, more important, no need for a leader to save them from anything.”¹⁰⁷ With conquest and supreme rule inseparable in the Roman mindset¹⁰⁸, then Domitian was ill equipped to be emperor.

The new ruler did inherit an ongoing war in Britannia, but such a campaign was far from Rome and posed little immediate threat to most of the empire. Even with such negating factors, over the course of his fifteen-year reign Domitian celebrated three triumphs¹⁰⁹ and waged war against German tribes, Dacians, and other peoples along the Danube. In the corpus of his cuirassed statuary we find references to these victories in high abundance. In fact, Domitian used the cuirassed statue to advertise his military prowess and commemorate his martial actions for

¹⁰⁵ For Vespasian: Tacitus *Hist.* 2.5: “Vespasian was energetic in war. He used to march at the head of the troops, select a place for camp, oppose the enemy night and day with wise strategy and, if occasion demanded, with his own hands. His food was whatever chance offered; in his dress and bearing he hardly differed from the common soldier. He would have been quite equal to the generals of old if he had not been avaricious.” (Tr. Clifford H. Moore)

For Titus: Tacitus *Hist.* 5.1: “Moreover, in his own conduct, wishing to be thought greater than his fortune, he always showed himself dignified and energetic in the field; by his affable address he called forth devotion, and he often mingled with the common soldiers both at work or on the march without impairing his position as a general.” (Tr. Clifford H. Moore)

¹⁰⁶ Brian W. Jones, *The Emperor Domitian*, (New York: Routledge, 1992), 126

¹⁰⁷ Pat Southern, *Domitian: Tragic Tyrant*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press: 1997), 36

¹⁰⁸ Beard 2003, 556

¹⁰⁹ There is dispute among modern scholars as to how many triumphs Domitian actually did celebrate: some say three, others four. For a brief summary of the dispute see Southern 1997, 98

the empire more than any emperor before or after him. This enables the modern scholar to see both how Domitian capitalized on the precedents set by earlier rulers and also how he tweaked the genre to suit his individual needs.

Judging from the high prevalence of cuirassed works that depict Domitian's campaign against the Chatti, which occurred early in his reign in 83 AD, the military offensive must have been regarded by the new ruler as especially important and worthy to popularize throughout the empire. In the present study I have come across eight cuirass statues that are recognized through numismatic parallels and identifiable iconography as referring to the war with the Chatti. Thereby, making it the most commemorated event in Roman history in the cuirassed genre.

It is generally unclear when the actual war began. Some scholars believe that the campaign itself began in early 83 AD with Domitian celebrating a triumph later that same year. If this is case, then such a campaign was incredibly short and could not have escaped comparison with Caligula's similarly ephemeral campaign against Britannia. It is possible that Domitian prepared for the operation covertly in 82 before launching it in early 83.¹¹⁰ Regardless, even though the war itself was not considered completed until 85¹¹¹, Domitian is thought to have celebrated a triumph for his victory in late 83 AD.

While the emperor may have thought of his victory as one worth honoring, the ancient authors did not agree. Tacitus writes that Domitian recognized how he was laughed at for his, "mock triumph over Germany, for which there had been purchased from traders people whose

¹¹⁰ Southern 1997, 80. The author also discusses the different current theories as to the start of the war.

¹¹¹ It is not known whether the triumph occurs in the middle of a two-year campaign (83-85 AD), or whether the triumph in retrospect serves as the marker between two separate campaigns (i.e. Domitian thought victory was won, celebrated, but then more warfare was deemed necessary). It is curious that after the triumph Domitian is thought to have played little role in the war against the Chatti. Cf. Southern 1997, 81

dress and hair might be made to resemble those of captives....”¹¹² Cassius Dio, writing well over a century after Domitian’s reign and no doubt influenced by Tacitus, records:

Next he made a campaign into Germany and returned without having so much as seen hostilities anywhere. But why should I go on and mention the honors bestowed upon him on this occasion for this exploit or from time to time upon the other emperors who were no better than he? For they were bestowed merely to keep such rulers from suspecting, as they would if the honors had been few and insignificant, that the people saw through them, and from becoming angry in consequence. Yet Domitian had this worst quality of all, that he desired to be flattered....¹¹³

Suetonius himself writes that Domitian’s campaign against the Chatti was quite unjustified in military terms.¹¹⁴ Even with such overwhelming damning remarks from the ancient authors, it seems unlikely that the campaign was undertaken purely for reasons of self-glorification. If Domitian had simply wished for immediate martial glory, he could have saved himself the trouble and assumed the title of Britannicus or Dacius by claiming the victories that were won by his generals at opposite ends of the empire for himself.¹¹⁵ He was the ruling emperor and such victories did, in essence, belong to him. It seems more likely that Domitian wished to emulate the grand achievements of Augustus and more specifically Tiberius and claim a victory that was all his own.

Even from an early age Domitian was eager to acquire the kind of military glory that brought both his father and brother fame and gave their reigns credibility: “To acquire a military

¹¹² Tacitus, *Agricola* 39

¹¹³ Cassius Dio, 67.4 (Tr. Earnest Cary)

¹¹⁴ Suetonius, *Domitian* 6

¹¹⁵ Southern 1997, 84-85

reputation that would compare favorably with his brother Titus', Domitian planned a quite unnecessary expedition into Gaul and Germany from which, by luck, his father's friends managed to dissuade him."¹¹⁶ Perhaps then he wished to prove what he would have been capable of had he been given the chance that had earlier been denied to him?¹¹⁷ The Chatti were also not a feeble opponent by any means if we accept Tacitus' lengthy elaboration concerning their formidable customs and mannerisms.¹¹⁸ By conquering such a mighty opponent, he would be able to achieve the kind of glory that had eluded him all his life and prove his ability to keep the empire safe and possibly even expand her borders. While the exact motivation driving the campaign and the actual events of the operation will always remain unclear, we do have sufficient material evidence to see how Domitian wished the war to be regarded and remembered.

Four of the eight pieces that depict Domitian's victory over the Chatti are all variations of a central theme: one or two iconographically consistent German barbarians bound and tied to the base of a single trophy. It is thought that the works were commissioned shortly after Domitian assumed the title of Germanicus in the summer of 83 AD.¹¹⁹ The scene also bears a strong resemblance to a denarius issued by Titus in 80 AD to commemorate the victories of Agricola in Britannia (Fig. 22). Richard Gergel studied a moderately well-preserved work housed at the Princeton University Art Museum (Fig. 23) and came to some general conclusions concerning the overall scheme of the statue: the figure originally stood in a classical Polykleitan contrapposto stance with a chiastic arrangement of the arms and legs, the slight bend in the hips

¹¹⁶ Suetonius, *Domitian* 2

¹¹⁷ Southern 1997, 79

¹¹⁸ Tacitus, *De Germania* 30

¹¹⁹ Gergel 1986, 3; Jones 1992, 129, who even pinpoints the assumption of the title by Domitian to June 9- August 28 83 when the title begins to appear for the first time on coins and official documents. The moniker would remain part of Domitian's official titulature throughout his reign.

gave the statue a sense of vigor and spontaneity, and, judging from similar intact works, the left arm was presumably relaxed while the hand may have held a baton, scroll, sacrificial tool, or *parazonium* (a symbol of imperial authority), while the outstretched right hand held a sword, spear, or baton.¹²⁰

Though the Princeton breastplate appears to have been willfully mutilated at some point in its history—likely from the *damnatio memoriae* decree following Domitian’s assassination in 96 AD¹²¹—it is still possible to make out the various elements of the breastplate while other more well-preserved works also aid in interpreting the desired message. At the top of the breastplate is the typical Gorgoneion while below it we find the main scene in which two winged Victories hang polygonal shields onto the arms of a trophy. At the base of the trophy a single barbarian is depicted with knees drawn to his chest and hands tied behind his back. (Fig. 24) While the figure here is too badly damaged to confidently identify, a near identical composition from a work found at the Palazzo Colonna in Rome offers telling details. (Fig. 25) Fitting the standard iconography found elsewhere—tight-fitting pants, long hair, full beard, shirtless¹²²—and closely mirroring the description put forth by Tacitus¹²³, the barbarian has thus been identified as a German.¹²⁴

A slight variation on this allegorical motif exists in a piece now housed in the Louvre and restored with a head of Trajan. (Figs. 26) On this breastplate we find the same message as before—Domitian is the conqueror of Germania—but two minor differences slightly alter the meaning of the composition: the substitution of the river god Rhenus for the usual apotropaic

¹²⁰ Gergel 1986, 6

¹²¹ Gergel 1986, 7, 14.

¹²² Gergel 1994, 199

¹²³ Tacitus, *De Germania*, 30: hardy frames, close-knit limbs, fierce countenances, long hair and beard (until they have slain a foe).

¹²⁴ Gergel 1986, 10

Gorgoneion, and the inclusion of two barbarians instead of one. The former aids in establishing the location of the victory that is being celebrated, while the later further emphasizes the magnitude of the victory by showing not one defeated and demoralized barbarian, but two.

Judging from a work found now in Auch, France, it appears that Victories were not necessarily mandatory, for, on this cuirass we find two German barbarians bound to a trophy but no Victories are present (Fig. 27).¹²⁵ Also, the shields that the Victories are normally portrayed as in the process of affixing to the trophy are already in place. This work, which likewise bears a head of Trajan, can then perhaps be regarded as not so much allegorical but rather literal. While other works also celebrate the Chatti triumph of Domitian¹²⁶, the four detailed above do so by directly alluding to the victory itself and drawing on established numismatic precedents. Such depictions, in my estimation, more directly engaged an audience than elaborate references to mythology or other symbolical motifs: no prior education was required to grasp the concept of a defeated foe.

Domitian's next commemorated triumph is thought to have occurred in 89 AD and to have come at the expense of the Dacians and once again the Chatti.¹²⁷ While the ancient

¹²⁵ Also of note is that the cuirass itself is of the Hellenistic style rather than the Classical type which both the Princeton and Louvre works employ. The significance of this shift, if any at all, is unknown.

¹²⁶ Other sculptures include: an unusually plainly decorated cuirass in the J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles; a cuirass with two winged Victories jointly holding a wreath over an incense burner in the Palazzo Altieri, Rome (Fig. 28); a cuirass with two Victories flanking a trophy, but no barbarians, in Luni, Italy; and a cuirass with two winged Victories decorating a trophy at the Museo del Prado, Madrid (Fig. 29). Cf. Gergel 1988.

¹²⁷ Southern speculates that the Chatti stood in as a euphemism for his victory over the rebel Saturninus. See Southern 1997, 98. Also, whether or not Domitian celebrated a single triumph over the Dacians in 86 AD is much disputed- see n. above and also Jones 1992, 139: He argues that Domitian celebrated the triumph in 86 AD after his first engagement with the Dacians. The problem seems to lie with Suetonius' accounts; at 6.2 we are told that Domitian celebrated a double triumph (*duplicem triumphum*) over the Dacians and Chatti; while, at 13.3 it is recorded that Domitian changed the names of two months after two triumphs (*duos triumphos*). While

commentary is not nearly as hostile to these victories, they are not entirely amicable either. Suetonius, though acknowledging the necessity of the campaign against the Dacians since they had killed both a former consul and a praetorian prefect, considers the engagements with the enemy that led to the triumph as having been “indecisive”.¹²⁸ Such a judgment is questionable when the facts of the campaign against the Dacians are examined. Though in 86 Domitian had lost the rash commander Cornelius Fuscus after he decided to invade Dacia itself¹²⁹, in 87 Domitian had appointed a new commander, one Tettius Julianus, who defeated the Dacians at Tapae in late 88 and was well on his way to sacking Sarmisegetusa, the Dacian King Decebalus’ capital, before troubles in Germania forced Domitian to reconsider.¹³⁰ In an effort to avoid a two-front war against both the Dacians and the Suebian Germans, Domitian negotiated a treaty with the Dacian King in a manner that was consistent with Roman diplomatic practice.¹³¹ Moreover, in the official propaganda, Domitian had avenged the death of Fuscus:

*Ille sacri lateris custos Martisque togati,
credita cui summi castra fuere ducis,
hic situs est Fuscus. licet hoc, Fortuna, fateri:
non timet hostilis iam lapis iste minas.*

some find these two statements misleading and evidence that there was no separate Dacian triumph in 86 (see Jones 1992 139, n.91), Jones makes a strong case that 6.2 refers to the double triumph of 89 AD while 13.3 refers to Domitian’s first two triumphs over the Chatti (83 AD) and the Dacians (86 AD). Pertinent to the current study is the fact that no works have been identified which refer exclusively to the Dacian triumph of 86 AD- the significance of such exclusion is certainly worth future investigation.

¹²⁸ Suetonius, *Domitian* 6.1

¹²⁹ At *Agricola* 41.2 Tacitus remarks, “so many armies lost through the rashness of their commanders”—a direct reference to Fuscus.

¹³⁰ Jones 1992, 142

¹³¹ The position of the king was recognized, money and men were sent for assistance; see Jones 1992, 151.

*grande iugum domita Dacus cervice recepit
et famulum victrix possidet umbra nemus.*

Here lies Fuscus, guard of the sacred person,
of Mars in gown, to whom an army of our supreme leader was committed.
This, Fortune, may be avowed; this stone fears enemy threats no longer.

The Dacian has bowed his neck and received the mighty yoke.

A victorious shade possesses the captive grove. (Tr. D.R. Shackleton Bailey)¹³²

The emperor even celebrated the truce as if a true military victory had been won when, with the truce having been struck:

Domitian placed a diadem on the head of Diegis [member of Dacian royal family sent to Rome in Decebalus' place], just as if he had truly conquered and could give the Dacians anyone he pleased to be their king. To the soldiers he granted honors and money. And, just as if he had won a victory, he sent to Rome, among other things, envoys from Decebalus and also a letter from the king, as he claimed, though rumor declared that he had forged it.¹³³

The Senate appears to have treated the truce as a military victory worthy of laudation as well when, “so many honors were voted to him that almost the whole world (so far as it was under his dominion) was filled with his images and statues constructed of both silver and gold.”¹³⁴ A massive equestrian statue was even erected in the forum.¹³⁵ (Fig. 30) Pliny the Younger—a far

¹³² Martial 6.76

¹³³ Cassius Dio, 67.7.3

¹³⁴ Cassius Dio 67.8.1

¹³⁵ Statius, *Silvae* 1.1.1-107

from unbiased source—did not see the value of the peace treaty like perhaps the rest of the Roman world did (or were made to at least), when he scorned it and contrasted Trajan’s victories with Domitian’s achievements: “Today, therefore, we are receiving hostages, not paying for them; huge losses and vast sums of money are no longer needed to buy terms of peace which shall name us as the conquerors.”¹³⁶ The fact that the final outcome of the conflict with the Dacians resulted from a peace treaty certainly affected the iconography that was chosen to recognize both the triumph and the campaign itself. While captives were still depicted as bound and in deep sorrow, a familiar goddess of prosperity made a significant return.

Two near identical works in the Vatican museum and British museum respectively serve as unique and stunning examples of the way in which Domitian utilized the cuirass to commemorate his double triumph. (Figs. 31 & 32) These statues are the only two published pieces that depict a single goddess of imperial victory being flanked by two barbarians of *different* ethnicities who are tied to trophies.¹³⁷ In the center of the cuirass is a Victoria Augusta (the Flavian goddess of imperial victory) carrying a cornucopia—traditionally a symbol of Fortuna—in her left hand and holding a palm of victory with her right. Below her sits Tellus who is displaying the fruits of the earth in the folds of her mantle. The axial position of these two female deities has a twofold meaning: recognition of the prosperity brought to the world via the military conquests of Domitian, and that the victory was land-based.¹³⁸ To the left and right of the main scene are two barbarian captives bound to their own respective trophies. (Fig. 33) While we have seen two barbarians on cuirasses before, the inclusion of two trophies alludes to

¹³⁶ Pliny the Younger, *Panegyricus*, 12.2

¹³⁷ Gergel 1988, 16

¹³⁸ Gergel 1994, 203

two victories and thus a double triumph. The captive to the viewer's left has appropriately been identified as a German, while the one on the right as a Dacian.¹³⁹

When interpreting this composition, one is no doubt immediately reminded of the Primaporta of Augustus discussed above. Just as on the Augustan piece, here we find multiple imperial victories commemorated in the astral dimension. Tellus, though lacking the twin babies, is strikingly similar to the Primaporta statue in both her pose and placement on the cuirass. In fact, the work was once thought as so similar to the Augustus of Primaporta that it was even regarded by early scholarship as Augustan.¹⁴⁰ The importance of the similarity between the two works is difficult to discern. On the surface, both rulers wished to focus on the peace and prosperity brought about by their actions and, as such, Tellus was a natural device to seize upon. Like emperors before and after him, Domitian also strove to align himself with the venerated memory of Augustus. Accordingly, it is possible that this similarity in breastplate iconography was a deliberate attempt at linking to Augustus and the Julio-Claudian dynasty.

The final key victory achieved by Domitian was against the Sarmatian tribes along the Danube in late 92 AD. By this point, Domitian had proven to be fond of triumphs and the accompanying glory, but he opted to celebrate no such ceremony for this victory. Instead he received an *ovatio* and dedicated a laurel wreath to Jupiter Capitolinus.¹⁴¹ Though the campaign against the Sarmatians was only eight months long¹⁴², the war versus the Chatti was of a similarly short duration and he celebrated a triumph in that instance. The court poets Martial and

¹³⁹ Gergel 1988, 15 & Gergel 1994, 203

¹⁴⁰ Gergel 1994, 203

¹⁴¹ For laurel wreath see Suetonius, *Domitian* 6.1; Pliny the Elder notes that the dedication of a laurel wreath to Jupiter Capitolinus was an ordinary part of a triumph (*NH* 15.30). See Jones 1992, 152; Southern 1997, 110

¹⁴² Jones 1992, 152

Stattius though view Domitian's decision to forego the triumph as yet another sign of his supreme character. As Martial portrays it, Domitian celebrated a private triumph:

*Dum nova Pannonici numeratur gloria belli,
omnis et ad reducem dum litat aera Iovem,
dat populus, dat gratus eques, dat tura senatus,
et ditant Latias tertia dona tribus.
hos quoque secretos memorabit Roma triumphos,
nec minor ista tuae laurea pacis erit.
quod tibi de sancta credis pietate tuorum,
principis est virtus maxima nosse suos.*

As the new glory of the Pannonian war is scored up and ever altar makes accepted offerings to Jove the Home-bringer, the people and the grateful knights and senate give incense and a third round of gifts enriches the Latin tribes. This private triumph too shall Rome remember, nor shall this laurel of your peace be less esteemed. You trust yourself concerning your people's pure devotion; it is a prince's greatest virtue to know his subjects. (Tr. D.R. Shackleton Bailey)¹⁴³

Stattius sees a grand act of mercy in Domitian's decision not to celebrate a triumph:

*...quando
haec est quae victis parcentia foedera Cattis
quaeque suum Dacis donat clementia montem,
quae modo Marcomanos post horrida bella vagosque*

¹⁴³ Martial, *Ep.* 8.15

Sauromatas Latio non est dignata triumpho.

For this is the clemency that grants mild terms
to the vanquished Chatti and their mountain to the Dacians,
that lately after rough warfare did not deem the Marcomanni
and the nomad Sarmatians worthy of a Latin triumph. (Tr. D.R. Shackleton Bailey)¹⁴⁴

Perhaps though Domitian learned from both the backlash against his Chatti triumph and the fact that the war continued on past the triumph, and decided to hold off on the triumph until a true victory was within reach. Domitian could have also received word while along the Danube that an opposition party was causing trouble and required his attention; thus, a swift return to Rome was desperately needed.¹⁴⁵ Regardless of the exact rationale, Domitian celebrated no triumph for his Sarmatian victories and—logically enough—no cuirassed statuary has been identified as commemorating this victory.

When seeking to explain why Domitian gravitated to the degree that he did towards the cuirassed depiction, it is vital to recognize that during his reign, whether to gratify his own ego, quell a feeling of inadequacy, or both, Domitian strove to cast himself in the image of the warrior emperor. He spent more time outside of Rome on campaign than any emperor since Tiberius.¹⁴⁶ In addition, striving to gain acceptance from the military also appears to have been a concern for the emperor since he both increased the legionary stipend and later granted citizenship to both

¹⁴⁴ Statius, *Silvae* 3.3.167f-171

¹⁴⁵ Jones 1992, 158

¹⁴⁶ Domitian was present in the military zone on four different occasions: 82/83, 85, 86, and 89. See Jones 1992, 150

the soldiers and their families.¹⁴⁷ Such efforts must have worked since after his assassination Suetonius records that:

Though the general public greeted the news of Domitian's fate with indifference, it deeply affected the troops, who at once began to speak of him as *Divus*—they would have avenged him had anyone given them a lead—and insisted that his assassins should be brought to justice. (Tr. Robert Graves)¹⁴⁸

While past emperors were able to save themselves based on their good standing with the army, such was not the case with Domitian. Given this popularity with a distinct part of Roman society, it no doubt benefitted Domitian to portray himself in the guise of a triumphant general. For a cuirassed statue not only corresponded to how he wished to be seen throughout the empire, but it was also a familiar sight for soldiers and veterans. This latter fact enabled the image to be instantly recognizable and looked upon favorably by a large and powerful part of the Roman world.

Even so, taking into account that the memory of Domitian was condemned, why do so many works that can be traced back to the tarnished ruler survive? Though, as mentioned above, Domitian erected numerous statues and trophies in Rome to mark his victory over the Chatti, and it is thought that he did the same to memorialize his “victory” over the Sarmatians¹⁴⁹, all of these works were likely destroyed in the destructive aftermath of his assassination. A plausible reason

¹⁴⁷ Jones 1992, 142-143; for the text see M. McCrum and A G Woodhead. *Select Documents of the Principates of the Flavian Emperors: Including the Year of Revolution: A.D. 68-96*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1961), 110, no. 404

¹⁴⁸ Suetonius, *Domitian*, 23

¹⁴⁹ Martial, *Ep.* 8.15; see Gergel 1994, 203.

for such prevalence of cuirasses despite the odds is rooted in pure practicality: several years later Trajan was forced to lead his troops through much of the same terrain traveled by Domitian when he himself went to fight the Dacians and Sarmatians, and it was thus only natural for the emperor to usurp some of the cuirasses commissioned by Domitian and use them for his own imperial victory commemoration.¹⁵⁰ A remark by Pliny even indicates that the Romans were quite economical in that the heads of Domitian were removed from his statues and melted down; the rest of the works, those not broken apart or destroyed like the Princeton torso above, were open for reuse.¹⁵¹

The Cuirassed Statue After the Flavians

In the present study I have limited my focus from primarily the early Augustan period to the end of the Flavian period. Such constraints are not only necessary for brevity, but also practical in nature. The use of barbarian imagery on cuirassed statuary, a key crux of my current argument, falls out of favor after Domitian. The period of seventy years between 70 AD and 140 AD saw more cuirassed works produced than the sum total of all years before and after¹⁵²; but, for whatever reason, as Domitian fell, so too did the prevalence of original cuirassed works with barbaric imagery. A few reasons for this change are presently discussed, as well as a brief synopsis of the genre in the 2nd century and beyond.

¹⁵⁰ Gergel 1994, 204

¹⁵¹ Pliny the Younger, *Panegyricus* 52.5: “It was our delight to smash those proud faces to the ground, to smite them with the sword and savage them with the axe, as if blood and agony could follow from every blow. Our transports of joy—so long deferred—were unrestrained; all sought a form of vengeance in beholding those bodies mutilated, limbs hacked in pieces, and finally that baleful, fearsome visage cast into fire, to be melted down, so that from such menacing terror something for man’s use and enjoyment should rise out of the flames.”

¹⁵² Vermeule 1959, 19

Though, as mentioned above, Trajan did reuse many cuirasses that originally belonged to Domitian, his reign still saw the production of a substantial corpus of cuirassed works. In fact, together with Hadrian, the two rulers produced the most cuirassed statuary of all the emperors.¹⁵³ However, when choosing to commemorate key victories in his reign, artists chose to either recycle cuirasses of Domitian or employ purely allegorical and topographical compositions to achieve their ends.¹⁵⁴ Accordingly, only two originally-Trajanic cuirassed works survive that can be dated to the time of the Dacian wars.¹⁵⁵ Neither are commemorative since they both simply employ the standard griffins and candelabra motif. (Fig. 34) The reason for this sudden shift in imperial art is unclear. It could be that there were an excessive amount of appropriately decorated cuirassed torsos left over by Domitian so as to not warrant the construction of any new cuirasses, or perhaps the new ruler wished to distance himself from the excesses of said emperor. As the various figures above have demonstrated, the bust of Trajan *was* placed on works that utilized barbarian imagery. Thus, the practice itself did not disappear, but rather, for unclear reasons, no new barbaric imagery compositions were created under his principate.

In regards to his Parthian campaigns, allegory and mythology were called upon in two similar works. The first bears a strong conceptual resemblance to the cuirassed statue of Corbulo in the Neronian period. On the breastplate a female Arimaspe is depicted fighting off two griffins (Fig. 35). Unlike the libation offering Arimaspes on the Corbulo cuirass, here a woman is vividly fighting off the griffins by grabbing the throat of the right one and plunging a dagger into the torso of the left creature. Her Phrygian cap indicates an eastern origin. The statue likely depicts the emperor posthumously and celebrates his title of Parthicus. Though not as direct as the

¹⁵³ Vermeule 1959, 5

¹⁵⁴ Gergel 1994, 204

¹⁵⁵ Ibid

German and Dacian captives, the griffin-Arimaspe pairing would've been familiar to a Roman audience by this point as an uncomplicated allegory of the wealth of the east.¹⁵⁶

Archaeologists discovered the second work in the ruins of a school of Trajan's in Ostia, Italy (Fig. 36). Just as the work above, this statue depicted the end of Trajan's eastern campaigns and may have been posthumous as well.¹⁵⁷ On the breastplate, two Victories are depicted on the right and left side, each cutting the throat of a bull. The imagery is strikingly Mithraic and leaves little doubt that it refers to events in the eastern half of the empire. The large presence of Mithraic cults in Ostia could have also influenced the choice of iconography.

Though Hadrian produced the most cuirassed works of any emperor¹⁵⁸, his discontinuation of Roman imperial expansion ended any need for commemorating imperial victories on the cuirassed statue breastplate.¹⁵⁹ Hadrian, however, was original in both his use of the medium to stress his domestic policies through allegory and mythology (Fig. 37), and his application of an additional element outside of the breastplate to stress Roman imperial hegemony (Fig. 38). A detailed analysis of how the emperor employed the cuirassed genre is warranted in order to fully compare his strategy with past rulers and also see how the genre evolved during its peak.

As the cuirassed statue changed, so too did barbarian imagery. Motifs involving foreign foes became much more general in all media, ceasing to allude to any specific military victory, but rather now merely stressing an emperor's subjugation of the wild and barbaric foes outside the *limites* of the empire. On coins, images of barbarians became smaller in order to emphasize the grandiose nature of the current ruler (Fig. 39). Emperors were depicted in a number of

¹⁵⁶ Gergel 1994, 206

¹⁵⁷ Vermeule 1959, 51

¹⁵⁸ Vermeule 1959, 5

¹⁵⁹ Gergel 1994, 206

dominant roles over the threatening outsiders: trampling them with their horse, pulling them by their mangy hair, or any other position that emphasized the grand power of the ruler and the small, futile, resistance of the barbarian.

Starting in the Antonine period, more realistic and practical cuirasses begin to replace the decorated variety that had been the norm up to that point.¹⁶⁰ From 200-476 AD, fewer original marble cuirasses were created as artists simply reused the wide variety of works from the preceding three centuries.¹⁶¹ Once common griffins faded away in popularity as plain cuirasses became more desired (Fig. 40). Future research is needed to determine just why this shift occurred and also how the soldier emperors of the 3rd century and the fledgling Christian empire utilized the traditional medium of the cuirassed statue.

¹⁶⁰ Vermeule 1959, 5

¹⁶¹ Vermeule 1959, 6

The Effectiveness of the Cuirassed Statuary Medium as a Vehicle for Imperial Propaganda

What then was the significance of this particular genre? In other words, with different personas for an emperor to adopt—*pontifex maximus*, divine figure—why did certain emperors gravitate so strongly to this particular “outfit”? At its core, the cuirassed statue was a prime vehicle for imperial propaganda. Emperors could disseminate a simple message of imperial power, or employ more intricate allegorical compositions and in turn disseminate more complicated messages.¹⁶² The emperor could communicate with his subjects while simultaneously directing—to a degree—the nature of such exchanges. Of course, there were a variety of media that a ruler could utilize to do this task, but the cuirass held several distinct advantages that made it so popular.

Firstly, whereas arches and columns could commemorate certain important events and promulgate desired themes, most were lofty and the reliefs would have been difficult for the average viewer to examine with the level of scrutiny needed to fully grasp the message. The relief on the cuirass may have been smaller and the surface space for the artist may have been less, but the face of the breastplate was much closer to the natural eye level of an average viewer than arches or columns; thus, it induced and encouraged direct engagement. Coins were another means of mass communication at an emperor’s disposal. They were widely distributed, viewed on a daily basis by a massive audience, and by simply minting a new issue, the message of the coin could be changed. However, coins suffered from a very limited surface space and their obvious utility rendered them commonplace.¹⁶³ While there was a higher quantity of coins, and arches and columns must have been incredibly impressive and imposing, cuirassed statues had

¹⁶² Gergel 1988, 5

¹⁶³ Ando 2000, 228

presence. Such continued, likely daily, recognition by the viewing public meant that, “an understanding of respective status and significance [was] expressed... in a manner liable to determine future practical responses to the powerful.”¹⁶⁴

Our attention is naturally directed to how those men and women in the provinces potentially reacted to cuirassed works as the majority of the extant statues with known provenances come from areas outside of Rome. In addition, the manner in which the residents of the empire viewed imperial busts and interacted with them forms the foundation for the effectiveness of the cuirassed statue in realizing an emperor’s propagandistic aims. Images of emperors in provincial cities acted as markers of presence for the emperor himself in different, but fundamentally related, contexts: busts were placed in law courts and marketplaces for the supervision of activities and to receive oaths of honesty from residents; portraits of the emperor were found in temples, where citizens swore oaths concerning their loyalty to the emperor; the soldiers on Rome’s frontiers were required to swear their allegiance to the image of a new emperor;¹⁶⁵ and the likeness of the current ruler could even oversee diplomatic ceremonies.¹⁶⁶ In this way, a direct relationship was established between the emperor and those who observed, interacted, and venerated the statue on a daily basis.¹⁶⁷

Early on in the empire efforts were made to ensure the sanctity of the imperial bust. Tiberius had men charged with *maiestas* for switching out the head of Augustus for a different bust, changing their clothes too close to a statue of Augustus, or for even bearing a ring or coin

¹⁶⁴ Andrew Bell, *Spectacular Power in the Greek and Roman City* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 8

¹⁶⁵ Tacitus, *Ann.*, 1.3.3; see Ando 2000, 230

¹⁶⁶ Likenesses of Nero were set up during the conference between Corbulo and Tiridates that ratified the peace deal which ended the Roman-Parthian War of 58-63 CE. See Dio 62.23.3

¹⁶⁷ Ando 2000, 212

of Augustus into a bathroom or brothel.¹⁶⁸ The people were being conditioned to understand that any depiction of the emperor—coin, ring, bust, full statue—was sacrosanct and deserved as much respect as the emperor himself did. Clifford Ando even argues that many likely believed that the emperor himself was in charge of the production and distribution of the imperial art. If this was the case, as he asserts it was with coins at least, then the potency of the image was strengthened all the more as people believed that the image had been handcrafted and chosen just for them by the ruler himself.¹⁶⁹

For centuries, people across the Mediterranean had long associated various martial deities with the cuirass. Images of these armored gods were prayed and vowed to for generations and the deities were regarded as vital in the affairs of the state. Mars himself was the paternal deity of Rome and had long held a place of prominence in their pantheon of gods. In the Augustan period, Mars took on a whole new level of importance as Augustus constructed a monumental temple of Mars Ultor in his new forum. For Mars had avenged not only the assassins of Julius Caesar but also taken vengeance upon the Parthians in 19 BC. The cult statue was originally executed in gold and ivory and stood in the cella of the temple, towering over onlookers below (Fig. 41). The god was depicted in a Classical-style cuirass with two heraldic griffins flanking a candelabrum on the face of the breastplate. Though Mars had been an important deity for centuries, Augustus was transforming him into the strong and powerful fatherly figure of the empire. Any provincial city that chose to emulate the great forum and its awe-inspiring temple would have portrayed Mars in a similar fashion.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁸ Suetonius, *Tiberius* 58

¹⁶⁹ Ando 2000, 212

¹⁷⁰ Both *Colonia Augusta Emerita* and *Colonia Patricia Corduba* are known to have copied the sculptures from the Forum of Augustus and placed such works in their own *fora*.

With such a strong tie to Augustus, depicting one's self in a similar manner to Mars Ultor appealed to certain men of power such as the magistrate M. Holconius Rufus, who commissioned a cuirassed statue of himself in the guise of the god. (Fig. 42) Rufus was a military tribune and priest in the cult of Augustus in the city of Pompeii—an obviously wealthy and influential man. The work was placed outside the Stabian baths on the Via dell' Abbondanza, regarded as having been a busy street corner in the ancient city.¹⁷¹ Such prominence and foot traffic facilitated a wide viewing audience for the work, while onlookers may have simultaneously noticed the distinct similarity to the iconography of Mars. Rufus and similarly depicted emperors received levels of veneration beyond the usual amount reserved for imperial busts since they were in the costume of the highly revered god of war and father of Rome. The inhabitants of the Mediterranean had been conditioned to honor the image of Mars and the emperors seized upon this tradition in an effort to re-direct the reverence towards themselves. Any message they strove to convey was granted an additional level of legitimacy as a result.

In addition to the possibility for supplemental exaltation supplied by the established iconography of Mars, the cuirass was also deemed appropriate attire for the devotional image of the Imperial cult. Such a depiction in the context of ruler veneration had eastern Mediterranean origins as Hellenistic works have often been found in areas closely related with the religious aspects of the respective ruler cult.¹⁷² Though early Roman imperial cult sites appear to have

¹⁷¹ Fejfer 2008, 212

¹⁷² A cuirassed statue of Mithradates was found at a commemorative shrine on Delos. See Vermuele 1959, 6 for other examples.

preferred depicting the supernal ruler in a divine or heroic guise¹⁷³, by the time of the Flavians it became appropriate for an emperor to wear a decorative cuirass.

Two unique works of Titus are known to have come from two different imperial cult sites, one at Olympia and the other in Herculaneum. The Titus from Olympia was discovered in the Metroön of the site (Fig. 43). The temple had formerly been sacred to Rhea since its construction in the 4th century BC; it was later converted into a Julio-Claudian cult site. Inside the cella along with Titus were also statues of Claudius as Zeus, Titus' daughter Julia (which likely faced him), a mid-2nd century cuirassed work with a bound eastern barbarian by the right foot (Fig. 44), and a large heroic statue of Augustus that took the place of Rhea upon the conversion of the site.¹⁷⁴

What is especially curious about such a provenance is that directly next to the imperial cult site was the Nymphaeum of Herodes Atticus. Here, in 160 AD, the prominent builder decorated the structure with statues of the Antonine dynasty. There were two floors to the semi-circular structure, each with eleven niches in which marble statues were placed (Fig. 45).¹⁷⁵ Among the works were cuirassed depictions of Hadrian and Marcus Aurelius. (Figs. 46 & 47) Taking the Metroön into account, we find two different uses of the cuirassed depiction in close proximity. While the imperial cult image may have only been widely exposed during public sacrifices and ceremonial processions¹⁷⁶, the potential still existed for an onlooker to gaze upon an emperor worshipped in a cuirass in one direction and then see a secular depiction of the

¹⁷³ Vermuele 1959, 7

¹⁷⁴ Olympia Vikatou, *Olympia: The Archaeological Site and the Museums* (Greece: Ekdotike Athenon S.A.: 2006), 28; Vermuele 1959, 7; Cornelius C. Vermeule. "Hellenistic and Roman Cuirassed Statues: A Supplement." *Berytus* 15 (1964): 101

¹⁷⁵ Vikatou 2006, 25-26

¹⁷⁶ John North, "Rome", in *Ancient Religions*, ed. Sarah Iles Johnston (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007), 227

emperor in cuirass form in the other. To what extent did the two unique situations merge in the mind of the viewer? If it was customary for emperors to don the cuirass when worshipped, perhaps utilizing the precedent found in the ruler cult of the Hellenistic world, then we cannot discount the notion that many viewers looked upon a cuirassed statue of an emperor in a non-worship based setting in a manner that still maintained some of the reverence reserved for the imperial cult object.

At Herculaneum, a cuirassed statue of Titus (Fig. 48) was unearthed in the Augusteum, along with heroically nude bronze statues of Augustus and Claudius, and two over life-size marble statues of the same divine emperors sitting with *paludamenta* draped across their laps. Two bronze statues of Agrippina Minor were also discovered along with inscriptions that refer to statues of Livia and Antonia Minor. Minus the colossal bronze work of Claudius, the works depicting the Julio-Claudians were donated in 49-50 AD by L. Mammius Maximus. He also likely financed the building of the structure during the reign of Claudius around 50 AD, though it was later renovated under the Flavians. It was likely during this renovation that the statues of Titus, Domitia, Julia Titia, and Flavia Domitilla were introduced into the structure.¹⁷⁷ The entire layout of the site stressed the continuity of the principate and with Titus included, who was still alive at this time, in a pose and cuirass very similar to the cult statue of Mars Ultor, the current emperor was portrayed as a ruler worthy to be worshipped next to the divine Augustus and Claudius, perhaps even destined to one day join them in the heavens. In being portrayed as the natural and chosen successor to the Julio-Claudian dynasty, the legitimacy of Titus' rule was also legitimized. If the layout of the statues was similar to Fig. 49, then Titus surely received a similar amount of veneration as the two divinities flanking him. When the image was public and viewers

¹⁷⁷ Rosanna Capelli and Annalisa Lo Monaco, *The National Archaeological Museum of Naples* (Italy: Electa Napoli, 2009), 16

got a glimpse of Titus in cuirassed form among the greatest divine emperors, not only was the status of the emperor elevated, but so too was the cuirassed statue genre itself.

Context and Distribution

In considering works with such well-established provenances, it is worth taking the time to discuss the importance of context and placement of cuirassed statuary in relation to the construction of the desired narrative. In addition to the examples presented at Olympia and Herculaneum, also reconsider the cuirassed statue of Vespasian from Sabratha (Fig. 21). It was discovered alongside a cuirassed statue of Titus (Fig. 50) in the exedra of a basilica in the forum of the city—a place where it was visible to all on a daily basis. A statue of Domitilla Minor was also found in the exedra, thus establishing that the work formed part of a dynastic group. Furthermore, a portrait of Caligula and a cuirassed statue of Trajan were also discovered during the archaeological excavations in the same exedra. Thus, the site was an established location for the placement of imperial art.¹⁷⁸ Here a broad panorama of imperial rule was established that served to both be seen by all and supervise the workings of the basilica.

In all three provincial cities, these constructions of multiple cuirassed works that were linked by dynastic ties enabled the viewer who found himself before the compilation to see, “the current emperor as one in a series of uniquely capable individuals, whose succession encapsulated and expressed a narrative of stability and strength.”¹⁷⁹ Thus the validity of the current emperor was strengthened by his ties and similar appearance to those who came before

¹⁷⁸ Kousser 2008, 73

¹⁷⁹ Ando 2000, 209

him. Such a context was much more powerful than the size or shape of the work.¹⁸⁰ In the temples, viewers saw the current ruler as worthy to stand beside the deified rulers of the past, while in displays such as those found in the Nymphaeum at Olympia and the basilica in Sabratha, dynastic legitimacy was confirmed; all of these contexts encouraged respect for the current ruler and veneration for the imperial house as a whole.

The exact mechanisms that brought these images to provincial cities can never be fully understood, but judging from the examples shown above, local magistrates sometimes set up imperial portrait arrangements for both their own self-aggrandizement and to facilitate reverence for the ruling family. Many provincial officials were no doubt motivated by their own self-interests when choosing to publicly display their patriotic leanings.¹⁸¹ We find one such example in a letter Pliny the Younger composed to Trajan in which he requests to set up a series of imperial busts:

Your late father, Sir, the deified Emperor, had encouraged liberal giving among his subjects in his fine public speeches and by his own noble example. I therefore sought permission to transfer to the town of Tifernum the statues of former Emperors which I had inherited through various bequests and had kept as I received them on my estate some distance away; I also asked if I might add to them a statue of himself. He had given his permission with his full approval....I pray you then first to permit me to add your statue to the others which will adorn the temple I propose to build.... (Tr. Betty Radice)¹⁸²

¹⁸⁰ Rose 2005, 50

¹⁸¹ Ando 2000, 306

¹⁸² Pliny the Younger, *Ep.* 10.8.1-2, 4

The works discussed above from Sabratha may have originated in a similar manner as a local magistrate sought the favor of the ruling house. The cities themselves may have also set up works in gratitude to the ruling family and in hopes that such deeds would bring them imperial benefactions.¹⁸³ We know that in Herculaneum L. Mammius Maximus took it upon himself to honor the imperial family, as did Herodes Atticus at Olympia. In addition, beginning in the first century AD, provincial cities had cuirassed works in the cellas or under the porches of temples, in public spaces such as *fora*, in the skene-façades or the seats of theaters, in monumental gates with forecourts, and the statues maintained a close spatial connection with triumphal arches.¹⁸⁴ The average provincial viewer was thus exposed to broad presentations of imperial rule in a variety of contexts.

It has also been shown that, when the provenance of a work is known, cuirassed statues were composed with local marbles and in geographically distinct styles, indicating that they may have been produced near the site of their discovery.¹⁸⁵ Given the similarity of the portrait types and breastplate compositions, it is difficult to imagine that there wasn't at least some form of imperial oversight to the whole process.¹⁸⁶ In a practical sense, the sheer necessity of the imperial likeness for all the functions mentioned above also meant that there was a constant need for sculpture of the current emperor in the provinces. A letter from Arrian of Nicomedia to Hadrian also indicates the desire felt by some in the provinces to honor the emperor:

¹⁸³ Charles Brian Rose, "The Imperial Image in the Eastern Mediterranean." In *The Early Roman Empire in the East*, ed. S. Alcock, (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 1997), 109; Ando 2000, 230-231

¹⁸⁴ Vermeule 1964, 95-96

¹⁸⁵ Vermuele 1959, 11

¹⁸⁶ Ando 2000, 230

A statue of you [Hadrian] stands there, one quite suitable in its posture—for it points towards the sea—but as far as the execution goes, neither did it resemble you, nor was it very handsome. Send, therefore, a statue in the same posture, one truly worthy to carry your name, for the place is wholly suitable for an eternal memorial.¹⁸⁷

While it is not possible to discern what type of statue Arrian is referring to, his desire to create an eternal memorial to the emperor through art is characteristic of the attitude among many provincial magistrates. The cuirassed statue was but one tool at their disposal; however, it possessed more potential in composing narratives than other artistic creations due to the plastic nature of the breastplate. The narratives found on the breastplates served as supplemental sources of information when placed within the context of imperial artwork panoramas. Not only did the viewer interpret the meaning of having multiple emperors displayed in a continuous fashion, but also the individual compositions on the breastplates contributed additional information that could strengthen the overall scene.

Regardless of the exact means or motivation, artistic representations of the emperor made their way to all corners of the empire. When artists chose to include representations of defeated foes on cuirassed works, the genre reached its full potential in the construction of narratives and identities.

¹⁸⁷ Arrian, *Periplus* 1.3-4; see Ando 2000, 230

The Impact of the Barbarian Image: The Creation of the Portable Triumph

When Augustus decided to include the image of barbarians on his cuirass in the Primaporta statue, the entire nature of the cuirassed genre changed. A new narrative form took hold that was similar to what we find on the reverse of coins: a juxtaposition of history and mythology, stereotypes and personifications, all relaying a message of imperial victory to the observer. The face of the breastplate was transformed into a “visual panegyric” to the triumphing emperor.¹⁸⁸ Now specific victories could be commemorated and made known throughout the empire; now the image of the lowered foe could be utilized to elevate the victorious emperor; now, as will be shown, the Roman triumph could be captured in marble form and disseminated throughout the empire for all to see. The impact of this last development is one to which I will devote special attention.

On the surface, the decision to include barbarian imagery on the cuirass breastplate appears rather practical; it not only allowed the victories of the Roman emperor to be celebrated, but also provided a useful tool in documenting the course of Roman territorial expansion and assimilation of new peoples into the empire.¹⁸⁹ Such an advertisement of victory was also useful since emperors requested in verbal and financial forms gratitude for certain military victories from the provinces.¹⁹⁰ In order to receive this honor, Roman emperors needed a means of distributing news of their recent victories wide and far; this was not overly complicated as decrees or other written measures could accomplish such a task with relative ease.

¹⁸⁸ Kousser 2008, 73

¹⁸⁹ Gergel 1994, 191, 206

¹⁹⁰ Usually the provinces showed such thankfulness to the emperor in the form of gold for an honorary crown; see Ando 2000, 8

However, as Ando argues, emperors also needed to shape their conquests in such a way that the benefits of the victory appealed universally to every inhabitant of the empire regardless of location or social class. By universalizing the actions of the emperor, “Roman propaganda was not only universalizing, but unifying, as well.”¹⁹¹ I argue that this notion should be taken a step further: not only did emperors need to make their victories universally applicable, but they also needed to stress that the troubles Rome faced were problems for the provinces as well. Victories and the anxiety of the “other” needed to be shaped and presented in such a way that it would be applicable and meaningful to any inhabitant. In doing so, a solidarity and common identity was created among geographically distant and ethnically distinct peoples that assisted in ensuring a stable and secure empire. Such a process of unification was already an aspect of the Roman triumph; by transporting the triumph to the lands outside of Rome, emperors were able to garner many of the same valuable results that occurred when the ceremony took place in the capital city.

In the Roman triumph a victorious general, riding in a *quadriga*, paraded through the streets of Rome along with his soldiers, booty, and captives from the victorious campaign. The spoils of bloody and far off victories came in the forms of strange-looking plants, ferocious and previously unseen animals, gleaming treasure, exotic captives, lavish works of art—all meant to inspire awe and wonder in the receptive audience. The triumph brought the world to Rome; or, if we accept the notion that processions are a communicative ritual by which a community represents itself to itself, then Rome showed Rome to Rome.¹⁹² Specifically, Rome visually showed itself the power of its civilizing and conquering capabilities. The ceremony was a means for generals to bring, in Polybius’ view, “the actual spectacle of their achievements before the

¹⁹¹ Ibid

¹⁹² Ida Östenberg, *Staging the World: Spoils, Captives, and Representations in the Roman Triumphal Procession* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 8

eyes of their fellow-citizens....”¹⁹³ While all of this occurred, a constructive process unfolded in which the scrutinizing audience had their worldview molded by what the emperors chose to show them in the triumph. The ceremony itself was so thoroughly institutionalized that it allowed the Roman populace a valuable opportunity to affirm their cohesiveness and collective “superiority over ‘others’ through the agency of the triumphator.”¹⁹⁴ When the residents of Rome observed who they were not (foreign “others”), they learned who they were (Romans). All in all, the triumph and all of its collective glory and pageantry was a tangible expression of Rome’s global imperial power.¹⁹⁵

These “others” that were presented in the triumph took the form of the barbarian captives who were marched in the procession for all of Rome to see; onlookers could now look upon the very men, women, and children who had wanted to defeat them. Their very presence was not only proof of their submission, but also irrefutable evidence of the power of the general.¹⁹⁶ A dramatic role-play occurred as the sickly, defeated, strange and foreign other was juxtaposed with the victorious and glorious Roman self of the ceremony.¹⁹⁷

The captives themselves were displayed in a manner that made their submission and total defeat lucid to all. They were chained or bound as they marched with downcast eyes that were possibly leaking tears onto the Italian soil below. Lavish floats could also be employed that supported the conquered generals and even aided in the fabrication of the desired narrative. In

¹⁹³ Polybius 6.15.8 (Tr. W. R. Patton); see Mary Beard, *The Roman Triumph*, (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007), 162

¹⁹⁴ Richard Brilliant, ““Let the Triumphs Roar!”: The Roman Triumph.” In *The Art of Ancient Spectacle*, ed. Bettina Bergmann and Christine Kondoleon, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), 222

¹⁹⁵ Beard 2007, 123

¹⁹⁶ Beard 2007, 117

¹⁹⁷ Östenberg 2009, 2

the triumph of Vespasian and Titus, the captured Jewish generals were placed on three-to-four story high moving floats on which they re-enacted their moment of capture:

But nothing in the procession excited so much astonishment as the structure of the moving stages; indeed, their massiveness afforded ground for alarm and misgivings as to their stability, many of them being three or four stories high....On each of the stages was stationed the general of one of the captured cities in the attitude in which he was taken.¹⁹⁸

On each float was not just any foe but a general of the rebellious army. The status of a prisoner was of high importance since, after all, a Roman general did not wish to be seen as having defeated a weak or unimportant opponent, but one who truly posed a threat to the security of Rome. The most prized catch of all was naturally a monarch of some kind; no other captives were marked down in the *Fasti* but royal ones.¹⁹⁹ Even Augustus made note of the royal captives he had displayed throughout his reign when he notes in the *Res Gestae*: “In my triumphs kings and nine children of kings were led before my chariot.”²⁰⁰ By viewing previously feared foreign leaders while unanimously grasping their violation against civic order and collectively participating in their public humiliation, the spectators acquired a strong sense of community and a Roman identity.²⁰¹

There is one particular manner in which captives were bound that has piqued my interest and led me to believe that the barbarians displayed on the cuirasses of Vespasian and Domitian were more than just allegorical compositions: the placement of barbarians and trophies on biers

¹⁹⁸ Josephus, *The Jewish War*, 7.139-140, 146 (Tr. H. St. J. Thackeray)

¹⁹⁹ Beard 2007, 121

²⁰⁰ Augustus, *Res Gestae* 4.3 (Tr. Thomas Bushnell)

²⁰¹ Östenberg 2009, 8

or *fercula*. In the cella of the Temple of Apollo Sosianus (Medicus) there is a small-scale sculptural frieze that dates to ca. 20 BC. Of the five preserved fragments, one contains a scene from a triumphal procession in which men at the command of a horn are lifting a *ferculum* (Fig. 51). On this bier are two barbarians, sitting bound with a trophy placed between them. The depiction of these barbarians bears a close resemblance to the cuirasses of Vespasian and Domitian addressed above. In the following discussion, I will detail the context of this work, the evidence for barbarians being displayed in the triumph in such a fashion, and lastly, the implications this holds for our understanding of both the nature of the cuirassed genre and the goals that emperors sought when using the medium.

The temple itself, located north of the Theater of Marcellus and east to the Porticus of Octavia in the Forum Boarium on the Campus Martius, dates to the mid-5th century BC (Fig. 52). Sosius, a loyal supporter of Antony, re-dedicated the temple 34 BC with the booty from his war in Judea. For this victory, he was awarded a triumph.²⁰² After the Battle of Actium in 31 BC Octavian pardoned Sosius; in order to honor his new benefactor, Sosius re-programmed the design of the temple to now exalt Octavian rather than himself. Accordingly, the reliefs on the inside of the temple no longer depicted the Jews that Sosius had triumphed over, but now northern barbarians. Such prisoners likely refer to the Illyrian triumph of Octavian in 29 BC.²⁰³ Relevant to the current study is the fact that a scene from an actual triumph is commemorated with a representation that closely mirrors later barbarian depictions on cuirasses. The question naturally arises though, what reasons are there to suspect that the depiction of the barbarian captives in the frieze is genuine and not just an artistic trope?

²⁰² Diane Favro, *The Urban Image of Augustan Rome* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 91

²⁰³ *Ibid*; see Ferris 2000, 33-34

Scenes of barbarians tied to trophies were common elements in triumphal paintings of the Late Republic; however, here we find for the first time such an incident occurring on monumental architectural sculpture.²⁰⁴ In addition, the temple was the location where the Senate debated the granting of triumphs—before the Temple of Mars Ultor in the Forum of Augustus took over this task²⁰⁵—and was also on the triumphal route (Fig. 53).²⁰⁶ It is accepted that the reliefs on the inner bay of the Arch of Titus accurately depict the triumph of Vespasian and Titus in 71 AD²⁰⁷, and in modern reconstructions the arch is regarded as having also been on the triumphal route (Fig. 53). Thus, it is unlikely that the two reliefs, both on the triumphal route, served two different purposes (i.e. one allegorical and one literal). Rather, both were commissioned to commemorate imperial triumphs and serve as reminders for the might and glory that both emperors once displayed. By depicting both triumphs in artistic form, the event was moved, “into a more elevated realm of significance, magnifying a perpetual vision of undying triumph” that could be viewed by generations to come.²⁰⁸

Further evidence for the presence of barbarians tied to trophies on biers in triumphs is found in two additional reliefs: the first comes from Palestrina and dates to the Trajanic period (Fig. 54); the second has an unknown provenance but has been dated to the Antonine/Severan period (Fig. 55). Though the two reliefs were not directly on the triumph route—and one was not even in Rome—both clearly show a similar scene to what is depicted in the reliefs from the

²⁰⁴ Diana Kleiner, *Roman Sculpture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 86

²⁰⁵ Gruen 1996, 192-193

²⁰⁶ Peter J. Holliday, *The Origins of Roman Historical Commemoration in the Visual Arts*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 23

²⁰⁷ For a description of the triumph see: Josephus, *The Jewish War*, 7.132-152; see Beard 2007, 152

²⁰⁸ Brilliant 1999, 225-226

Temple of Apollo Sosianus. The appearance of barbarians on biers tied to trophies was thus a regular component of triumphal commemorative artwork over multiple centuries.

The literary evidence for the display of captives is non-specific in general, but a section of Propertius and Florus respectively does seem to describe foreign chieftains sitting by their stacked weapons. Propertius writes:

*Mars pater, et sacrae fatalia lumina Vestae,
ante meos obitus sit precor illa dies,
qua videam spoliis oneratos Caesaris axes,
et subter captos arma sedere duces,
tela fugacis equi et braccati militis arcus...*

Father Mars, and fires of inviolate Vesta pregnant with destiny,
let that day come before my death, I pray,
the day on which I see Caesar's chariot laden with spoils
and captured chieftains sitting beneath their arms,
shafts of cavalry in retreat and bows of trousered soldiery... (Tr. G.P. Goold)²⁰⁹

While Florus describes the appearance of King Teutobodus of the Teutons during the triumph of Marius following the Cimbrian War as, "a striking figure in the triumphal procession; for, being a man of extraordinary stature, he towered above the trophies of his defeat." (Tr. Cornelius

²⁰⁹ Propertius, 3.4.11-15

Nepos)²¹⁰ It is not unreasonable to argue that Florus could simply mean that while walking next to his trophies, which were potentially on a bier, the barbarian king towered over them; but, in my estimation, it is just as likely that he was carried on a bier and by either standing or sitting (which would have been all the more shocking) rose above the trophy.

The relationship between the trophy and the triumph dates back to one of the original precedents for the ceremony itself: early Romans celebrated military victories by exalting the commander who brought back to Rome the *tropaeum* of the arms of the enemy combatant that were taken in direct single combat.²¹¹ Roman tradition held that Romulus himself had been the first to dedicate this *spolia* to the gods and henceforth any general who wished to appear both respectful to the gods and to Rome's glorious past conducted a similar consecration.²¹² If the *spolia* on the biers were the weapons meant to be consecrated and offered to the gods, then what role did the adjoining barbarians assume? Just as the benevolent victor offered the captured weapons to the gods, so too did he dedicate the submission of his adversaries. When the formerly strong enemy of Rome surrendered not only their body but also their courage and tenacity, they became a part of the Roman general's spoils.²¹³

Nevertheless, the trophy was a sufficiently established trope of the triumph from the late Republic onwards. Previously, the custom had been to simply burn the weapons of the enemy that were not deemed appropriate for the sacrificial offerings in Rome while still on the battlefield; now, however, the weapons, which once threatened Rome herself, were brought into

²¹⁰ Florus, *Epit.* 1.38.10: ...*insigne spectaculum triumphi fuit. Quippe vir proceritatis eximiae super tropaea sua eminebat.*

²¹¹ Holliday 2002, 23

²¹² Ibid; Plutarch, *Romulus* 16

²¹³ "...however, the coward [Perseus] had not the heart [to kill himself before the triumph], but was made weak by no one knows what hopes, and became a part of his own spoils." (Tr. Bernadotte Perrin) Plutarch, *Aemilius Paulus* 34

the city and reorganized and configured into mere decorative items, rather than deadly tools.²¹⁴ Even so, the presence of enemy weapons must have still elicited some level of emotion; fear and awe may have captured the crowd as they realized that this was the closest many would ever come to warfare. Of course, the defeated were now even more humiliated as their once prized arsenals were exposed to the gaping gaze of the crowd. If they did indeed join their weapons on the bier, then they too formed part of the trophy for the conquering Roman general and people.²¹⁵

If the barbarians that were depicted as bound and mourning on cuirassed statues of Vespasian and Domitian originated from genuine scenes in the triumphs that the rulers themselves celebrated, or were simply regarded as standard visual components of any triumph and its ensuing artistic representation, then the cuirassed medium facilitated an experience of the triumph for those who missed it initially. In other words, a mobile triumph was created. Such an effort is not without precedent: it is known that the paintings that emperors displayed during the triumph, which aided in identifications and shaped the narrative of the procession, were later displayed in prominent places of the city for those who had missed the triumph or wished to re-live its glory again. It is also possible that, in a similar manner, paintings of important victories or even the triumph itself accompanied the bulletins that were sent out to the provinces to announce imperial victories.²¹⁶ Consequently, the cuirassed statue served as another means for the emperor to announce his exalted victories and display both the reasons for the war itself and his triumph: the barbarians.

Like other triumphal pieces of art—columns, arches, equestrian statues, and paintings—cuirassed statues promulgated both, “the alleged *realia* and the symbolic truth of Roman victory

²¹⁴ Östenberg 2009, 25, 27

²¹⁵ See Beard 2007, 175-176

²¹⁶ Ando 2000, 257

and the vanity of the victors.”²¹⁷ The viewers of these works were led to believe that the foreign-looking barbarians were now disposed of and posed no threat to the empire as a whole. But, just how did the emperor expect his audience to react? The empire was far from monolithic and each province brought different backgrounds and beliefs as they approached the monumental sculpture. Alternative interpretations by viewers were inevitable; how then did the Romans adjust for this possibility? The answer lies in the twofold strength of the motif: its certainty and ambiguity.

First, no ancient people could question the military prowess of Rome. The unmatched swiftness with which the Romans had conquered much of the Mediterranean left little doubt that they truly were exceptional in their martial capabilities.²¹⁸ The image of a Roman in military garb, while potentially insulting, was hardly susceptible to mockery. Initially the martial imagery of a triumphant Roman and defeated barbarian may have stirred up resentment, but such feelings were likely tempered with time as inhabitants began to cede to Rome the rights to rule over their land.²¹⁹

Secondly, as mentioned above, while the image was open to different interpretations, this was not necessarily a detriment. For, on the one hand, the motif could serve as an encouragement to some parts of the empire: the emperor had quelled outside disturbances that were threatening Rome and would do so again if needs be; on the other, the motif could also act as admonishment to any recent or potential rebels: if they acted in a manner that required the presence of Roman troops, they would find themselves in a similar predicament to the barbarians on the emperor’s

²¹⁷ Brilliant 1999, 222

²¹⁸ As Ando also points out, such rapid conquest also facilitated a receptive audience for their propaganda: “many populations around the Mediterranean attributed Roman victories to their gods’ desertion of themselves and alliance with the Romans.” If the Romans were good enough for the local gods, they were good enough for the inhabitants as well. See Ando 2000, xii

²¹⁹ Ando 2000, 304

cuirass. Triumphal monuments in the eastern Mediterranean often employed such a twofold message of reprimand for the local non-citizens and reassurance for the colonists.²²⁰ The genre was thus able to speak to those with differing feelings towards the empire and in turn become relevant to their lives. In this way, the imperial art of Rome became especially meaningful when it enabled viewers to place themselves within its world.²²¹

Roman emperors thus seized upon the precedents of Hellenistic monarchs and the established iconography of Mars to portray themselves in a manner that encouraged reverence from their subjects. The breastplate of the cuirass acted as a blank canvass on which a ruler could craft a message of his choosing: Augustus modified the depiction of barbarians in the Republic to stress the new peaceful world that was a direct result of his reign; whereas, Vespasian and Domitian transferred barbarian iconography typically found in either an actual triumph or in commemorative triumphal artwork, onto the breastplate in order to carve a narrative of imperial conquest and victory. Therefore, the emperors were able to bring the triumph to the provinces and weave a narrative that united all the inhabitants of the empire through celebration of imperial victory and a common concern for threatening “others”. Consequently, a universal Roman identity was fostered in the provinces where before it had only been achieved via the triumph in Rome herself. Other media could carry similar narratives, but the unique qualities of the cuirassed statue strengthened the desired message and served as part of the narrative itself.

²²⁰ Rose 2005, 53

²²¹ Ando 2000, 211

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