Wesleyan University The Honors College

Tyrants and Tyranny in the Late Roman Republic

by

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Class of 2008

A thesis submitted to the
faculty of Wesleyan University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
Degree of Bachelor of Arts
with Departmental Honors in Classics

Middletown, Connecticut April, 2008

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INTRODUCTION

In 510 BCE, Lucius Junius Brutus led a revolution to expel Tarquin the Proud, the seventh and last king of Rome, and became the first consul of the Roman Republic. Many generations later, another Brutus – Marcus Junius Brutus, of Shakespearean fame – tried to liberate Rome from a new tyrant, but fell short of his ancestor's legacy. As Cicero lamented in his *De Officiis*, "If only the Republic had endured as it had begun, instead of falling under the control of men who did not want to reform the state but to overthrow it!" (Cic. *Off*. II.1.3) Because of this heritage, the Republican Romans had a very clear idea of what constituted tyranny before Caesar ever crossed the Rubicon. Cicero explained that "no one whose mind has been equipped well by Nature is willing to obey anyone, unless that person is a teacher or a tutor or commands justly and legitimately for the common good" (I.4.13).

Invoking the "law of Nature," Cicero emphasized the importance of controlling one's appetites or passions with reason (I.28-9.101-2). By contrast, he suggested, a tyrant did not exercise reason and was dominated by his desire for unnatural power, which drove him to overpower justice with force (I.19.64). "If someone alleges that this desire is ethical, he is out of his mind; for he is approving the destruction of laws and liberty, and he thinks that cruel, heinous oppression confers glory on him" (III.21.83). Because a tyrant transgressed the law of Nature, Cicero asserted that "society does not exist between us and tyrants. …Therefore one does not act against Nature if one steals from [a tyrant] when he can, and indeed it is honorable to assassinate a tyrant" (III.6.32). Thus, in short, a tyrant was defined as an oppressive ruler who violated natural justice and the bonds of society, and because his

behavior was so extreme, violent retribution from his abused subjects was fully justified.

During Cicero's lifetime, one ambitious politician after another sought to circumvent the traditional oligarchic system and become the single most powerful man in the city, and in so doing dissolved the state into uncertainty, factionalism, and civil wars. In this paper, I propose to construct an intellectual history of tyranny from 88 BCE to 14 CE in order to look more closely at the cultural basis for would-be tyrants' actions, and thus to better understand the so-called Roman Revolution. Our period of focus extends from Sulla, the first tyrant of the late Republic who maintained his preeminence for an appreciable extent of time and set the stage for those who followed, to Octavian and the principate. We will approach the definition of a tyrant from two directions. First, we will investigate the sources of the Republicans' notions of tyranny. We will begin with the kings of Rome's own Regal period, traditionally dated from 753, the founding of the city by Romulus, to 509, the expulsion of Tarquinius Superbus and founding of the Republic. We will then proceed to another important source of Roman mythology and culture: the theater, particularly tragedy, which was the genre in which kings and tyrants were usually found. The third exemplar of absolute power in Rome was the kings of Asia and North Africa, the powerful friends and enemies of the Roman empire.

The second part of the project will be a study of how the definition of tyranny shaped and was shaped by trends in the political scene in the first century BCE. First, the proverbial divide between *optimates et populares*, who were both labeled tyrannical in turn. We will conclude with an examination of how the recurring theme

of military dictators, *imperatores* in the city, informed the Romans' perspective on tyrants as a category as well. Throughout this study, the reasons for Octavian's success as a *princeps* or proto-emperor will be of special interest. The fall of the Republic and Octavian's rise to power, the move from tyrannicide to principate in the space of a single generation, contain a paradox which challenges historians. How does a culture make the intellectual leap from Cicero's oratory to Augustus' principate? How can the society which produced Cicero and his eulogy of the free Republic accept autocracy and the *Pax Augusta*?

One traditional response to this mystery has been an emphasis on the genius of individual actors in appropriating excessive power. In Roman history textbooks, Sulla, Caesar, and Octavian stand out as the primary examples of men who achieved sole power by sheer force of personality. In 88 BCE, Lucius Cornelius Sulla marched an army on Rome itself. In the view of most Romans and modern historians, Sulla's march was primarily for personal reasons. From Sulla's vantage point, however, Marius and Sulpicius, a popular ex-general and an ambitious tribune, had gone too far in their perversion of the political system and Sulla rescued Rome from their control as consul and *imperator*. After ordering the deaths of seven ringleaders of this movement, Sulla was elected dictator, reformed the constitution to restore authority to the Senate, and abdicated.[1] As if once were not enough, Sulla marched on the city again eight years later with essentially the same results, with the addition of the proscriptions, the systematic murder of hostile or unfortunately wealthy elements of

[1] Scullard 71-2.

the aristocracy to shore up Sulla's regime. And again, Sulla laid down the dictatorship voluntarily, but this time he retired from politics altogether.[2]

Thirty-odd years later came the second episode in the Roman Republic's flirtation with tyranny, the age of Caesar. When he defeated Pompey the Great and his aristocratic following, he was elected dictator and then dictator for life.[3] Caesar, however, showed little interest in political reforms or abdication, and Cicero has already told us how that ended. Brutus, Cassius, and their co-conspirators freed Rome and the world from servitude to a tyrant. The heir of Caesar, however, was destined to solve the problems which plagued his adoptive father and ascend even further into political preeminence. At the age of 19, in the year his adoptive father Caesar was assassinated, Octavian entered the spotlight by joining forces first with the Senate and then with Antony,[4] only to betray each. He defeated Antony – or rather Cleopatra, with Antony reduced to the status of her sidekick – in 31 BCE.[5] In reality, he had ruled Rome by himself for years as a triumvir, ever since Antony had left for Asia in 40 BCE.[6] Antony had become irrelevant in Rome and was further alienated through propaganda linking him to Cleopatra, and his defeat at Actium was a mere formality.

Octavian, given the title "Augustus" in 27 BCE by a grateful Senate, brought peace and prosperity to Rome after a century of civil war and ushered in a Golden Age of art and literature.[7] In his autobiographical *Res Gestae*, inscribed on pillars

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[2] Ibid. 79, 82-6.
[3] Ibid. 153.
[4] Ibid. 161-2.
[5] Ibid. 173.
[6] Ibid. 166.
[7] Ibid. 217.

outside his mausoleum, he announced that he had restored the Republic. In other words, Augustus' ostensible answer to the paradox of the Republic's fall was that it had not fallen. This answer was not satisfactory to many historians, however. A century later, Tacitus gave another hypothesis:

> When [Augustus] had seduced the army with gifts, the people with grain, and everyone else with the charms of peace, he grew stronger little by little. He collected the responsibilities of the Senate, the magistrates, and the courts for himself, with no one to stop him because the most energetic men had fallen in battle or proscriptions. As for the rest of the aristocrats, the more willingly they subjected themselves to slavery, the more they were rewarded with wealth and honors. …Everything was peaceful, and the magistrates had the same names as before. The younger citizens had been born after Augustus' victory at Actium, and the older ones were born during the civil wars: who remained who had known the Republic? (Tacitus, *Annales* I.1-3)

Tacitus, Gibbon, and many modern historians agree that Augustus succeeded as a ruler because the Romans were simply exhausted, to the point that anything – even autocracy – seemed like an acceptable alternative to more violence and civil war; *pax et princeps*, as Sir Ronald Syme called it. This answer is suspect in its simplicity. To say that the Romans merely did not want another civil war, or to argue that Octavian somehow duped an entire civilization into thinking that he was not an absolute ruler, is not to take the propaganda of the Augustan regime seriously on its own terms. By investigating Republican paradigms, we will gain a much more genuine understanding of how Augustus successfully controlled them.

This brings us to an important point: we cannot interpolate our grasp of Roman history and its main players into the perspective of an author who actually lived through that period. We see the civil wars and factional infighting of the first century BCE as the death throes of the Republic; the Romans saw no such thing. We must remember that Republican politicians were responding to each new

development individually as they attempted to win prestige for themselves, in the way Roman politicians had for centuries. Where we see a continuous, inevitable trend toward one-man rule, the Romans of that era could not discern a definite foreseeable end. Cicero's dejection and conviction that "no Republic…was to be found anymore" (II.1.3) after 49 BCE were his response to a set of circumstances, not a statement of historical truth – only in retrospect can we say that he was, in fact, right.

The implication of this disclaimer is that we must look to literature only from our period of focus to surpass a superficial understanding. Just as our perspective differs from that of a Roman because of intervening centuries of experience, the concept of power was fundamentally changed between Cicero's generation and the generation which Tacitus claimed did not remember the Republic. Augustus was successful as a *princeps* because he invoked and manipulated the Republican concept of power to stabilize the state, with himself as its leader and savior. The resulting "Golden Age" then produced an entirely new perspective. During the Republican era, the balance of political influence shifted constantly from person to person and faction to faction, and power was never the property of just one individual. Tyranny was an unnatural accretion of sole power by which the tyrant repressed maneuvering within the system and forced politics to become inert. By contrast, power under the principate was concentrated in one man in order to promote peace. Politicians still strove for influence, *imperium*, and *auctoritas*; the stakes were just lower. Tyranny under that system of thought represented movement, disturbance, and upheaval. The contrast in the conception of power between Cicero's oratory and Virgil's *Aeneid*, for example, shows that shift in progress.

It follows that the works of authors like Plutarch, Appian, and Suetonius, which contain historical material on our designated time period, nevertheless cannot help us with the present discussion. Those authors wrote a century or more after Augustus' death, when the Republic was only a name, barely even a memory. Even if their knowledge of the events of this period had been the same as Cicero's, which it almost certainly was not, their description and interpretation must inevitably have been colored by the fact that the only form of government they had ever personally experienced was autocracy. They could not sympathize with Republican authors, and they cannot tell us anything about the Republican *zeitgeist*. The goals of this project demand that we consider how the Republicans perceived and responded to the world around them, rather than focusing on our historical interpretation of the events Therefore, as frustrating and Cicero-centric as it may be to limit our sources to documents composed in our period of focus, it will be historiographically necessary.

Finally, before we dive in, a word on the vocabulary of tyranny in this period seems necessary, particularly since Latin and Greek texts will be quoted in translation.[8] It consists mainly of derivatives from three words: *tyrannus*, *rex*, and *dominus*. The Greek cognate for the Latin *tyrannus* was a neutral term for a ruler who had usurped power but did not necessarily abuse it. The Romans, however, used the term as we do, with definite negative connotations. Cicero's enemies called him a *crudelis tyrannus*, a cruel tyrant, because he executed the Catilinarian conspirators without a trial, and also claimed that he had tried to set up a *regnum*, a regime headed by a *rex* or king (*Dom*. 94). The word *rex* was mainly used to describe an absolute

[8] The translations from the Latin will be my own; the Greek translations are cited in the bibliography.

ruler like Jupiter, Romulus, or Mithridates, often a hereditary monarch. Thus, the verb *regnare* indicated absolute power, which was not necessarily negative. In Cicero's *de Re Publica*, Scipio asserts that *tyrannus* was the name which "the Greeks used to designate an unjust king," while the Romans understood a *rex* to be a ruler with perpetual power (II.49). Although the *odium regni* which Republicans harbored has become proverbial, Cicero actually described the feelings of the first Brutus towards Tarquinius Superbus as *odium tyranni* (*Tusc. Disp*. IV.22). *Occupare* or *appetere regnum*, however, was definitely a negative term. It was an accusation leveled at excessively powerful politicians like Tiberius Gracchus, Cinna, Marius, and Sulla (*Har. Resp* 54, *Sest*. 72). Finally, a *dominus* was a master of a slave, and so *dominatio* indicated a particularly oppressive and unjust regime. In *de Re Publica*, the distinction between a king and a tyrant is the tyrant's "*dominatum iniustiorem*" (II.29). Similarly, in the same work Scipio suggests that the name of tyrant is usually applied to a ruler "eager to dominate (*dominandi*) or to gain sole power, enslaving (*dominantem*) an oppressed people" (I.50).

REGAL PERIOD KINGS

Despite the *odium regni* cliché, surviving ancient accounts portray the seven kings of Rome as ambitious, accomplished men worthy of honor for their contributions to the new city. Families like the Marcii, Calpurnii, and Julii proudly touted their descent from individual kings to demonstrate their families' prominence

and their own inherited status.[9] Absolute power did not corrupt absolutely until the end of the Regal period, as Sallust suggested: "the rule of the kings, which was intended from the beginning to preserve freedom and glorify the state, fell into tyranny and despotism" (Sallust *Bell. Cat*. VI.7). Cicero gave a similar analysis:

> Scipio: Who came before [Tarquinius Superbus]?
> Laelius: A very just king. Indeed, the same is true of kings all the way back to Romulus, who was king six hundred years ago.
> …
> Scipio: Do you not see that the title of king became hated by the Roman people because of the callousness and hubris of just one Tarquin? (*Rep*. I.58-62)

Kings could use their power for good or evil, an idea which had been familiar since the rule of the Pisistratids in Athens, and so could Republican politicians. Each first century leader accused of seeking a throne did indeed encounter *odium regni*, but it was a propagandistic invention of his senatorial rivals with little relevance to the legacy of the Roman *reges*. As will become clear from the kings' general role in rhetoric and literature and their especially vigorous relationships with Sulla, Caesar, and Octavian, the Roman kings were were only criticized on occasions when it seemed that their powers were unnervingly similar to those assumed by some late Republican figures.

Livy and Dionysius of Halicarnassus left us the most complete historical narratives of the kings, and in their descriptions of each man's characteristics and achievements they also catalogued qualities which made each king comparable to men living 500 years or more later. Dionysius, for example, noted three ways in

[9]The Marcii and Julii from Ancus Marcius and the Calpurnii from Numa Pompilius, Syme 85. Also see Rawson 153. Numa and Ancus seem to be the only kings cited as progenitors of these families, though; perhaps Romulus was too strong a statement, and the Etruscan Tarquins and the slave-born Servius Tullius would probably have been undesirable family members.

which kings gained the throne which were clearly informed by Republican reality: election by the Senate, election by the people, and usurpation. Romulus was chosen by the people after allowing them to choose their own form of government and remained a popular leader throughout his reign (DH II.3). Eventually, according to one version which Dionysius included, because of his populist tendencies Romulus met his death at the frustrated senators' hands, even though he was the founder of the Senate (ibid. II.56). Numa, conversely, was elected by the Senate and lived peacefully into old age, and his reluctance to become king at all was also praiseworthy (ibid. II.56-8).

Tarquinius Priscus was chosen by the previous king but carefully left the ultimate choice up to the Senate and people (ibid. III.48, IV.41), in contrast to his grandson,[10] a violent usurper destined to become the quintessential tyrant. Servius Tullius was the most outstanding example of a king of the people; he was born a slave, but because of his services to the city and military ability he was made a patrician, married the king's daughter, and "the Roman people honored him next to the king" (ibid. IV.3). Technically he was a usurper, but the circumstances of the assassination of Tarquinius Priscus and the fact that Tarquin's heirs were too young to rule seem to justify it in Dionysius' view (ibid. IV.5-8). Appeals to popularity, military success, and divine right as well as the recourse to a violent takeover all proved successful strategies for seizing power in the late Republic as well as the Regal period, and aristocratic historians showed the same favor for senatorial support of monarchs and Republicans alike.

[10] Grandson according to DH IV.6, son according to others.

The Romans also saw the roots of the conflicts and civil wars of the first century BCE in the Regal period. Dionysius provided one account of Romulus' death in which he was killed because he favored the original Roman citizens over Sabine and Italian newcomers, evoking the Social Wars and the struggle of the Italians for citizenship in the early first century BCE.[11] Similarly, the battle in which Remus was killed was described in terms which called contemporary civil conflicts to mind. Cicero asserted that Romulus murdered Remus for expediency's sake, since dual rule was impractical; the contests between dynasts and triumvirs in Cicero's own time were comparable. Livy wrote that the brothers came to blows because of jealousy and ambition, and when "each was hailed as king by his own contingent" a brawl followed in which Remus was killed (I.7). Dionysius added that Romulus had tried to deceive Remus during the taking of the auguries, and similarly described the outbreak of hostilities as the result of partisan conflict (DH I.86-7).

All these authors emphasized the factional strife, the shared culpability, and the uncertainty over which leader would or should emerge victorious – Romulus, Remus, their opposing factions, and even the omens prevented peaceful resolution – which also characterized the late Republic, torn apart by Marians and Sullans, Caesarians and Pompeians. Dionysius, in fact, ultimately rejected the story of fratricide altogether and identified Celer as Remus' assassin,[12] which especially emphasized partisan rather than fraternal strife. In the same way, Ovid wrote that conflict ended with the punishment of the tyrant Amulius and that Remus, after his slight to Romulus' wall, was killed by the aristocrat Celer without Romulus'

[11] Plutarch excluded this version, perhaps because the Social Wars were a distant memory by the time of his writing.
[12] Fox 57.

knowledge or consent (809-48). Perhaps since Ovid and Dionysius wrote after the civil wars had ended and there was no more conflict between dynasts, an invocation of the dangers of partisanship was more relevant than fraternal violence.

The kings became stock characters by the time of the late Republic, and the mere mention of a king's name became a commonplace in political invective. Cicero's enemies called him the third foreign king of Rome after Numa Pompilius (a Sabine) and Tarquinius Priscus (an Etruscan) in a trial of 62 BCE (Cicero *Sull.* 22). In turn, Cicero denounced Mark Antony for keeping a bodyguard, which even Sulla, Cinna, and Caesar had not done when they "had more power than the whole state had after the city was liberated by L. Brutus" (*Phil.* V.6.17). Numa and Tarquin the Elder were not particularly evil figures in historical accounts, but the mere name of king was enough to slander a statesman who purportedly wielded autocratic power. In fact, Cicero's own mention of Numa in 57 BCE to mock Clodius' apparent piety suggests that Numa's legacy was generally praiseworthy (*Dom.* 127). Kingly behavior was perhaps an especially potent criticism of a consul, since the kings' powers were supposed to have been given to the consuls at the founding of the Republic to be used fairly and with a limit on scope and tenure (Livy II.1). In any case, a king's name was a popular form of slander; Cicero, Sulla, Pompey, Caesar, and probably many others were called "Romulus" by their enemies.[13]

Tarquinius Superbus, the bad apple of the Regal period, eventually became the symbol of all that was evil in politicians. His reign was directly opposed to liberty and the founding of the Republic, and as such he tended to accrue every

[13] Cicero: ps.-Sallust *Inv. In Cic.* 7. Sulla: Sallust Hist. I.48.5. Pompey: Plut. *Pomp*. 25.4. Pompey or Caesar: Catullus 29.

negative characteristic of every tyrant over the years. He became a "cruel and greedy, overweening and domineering person who disregarded the tradition of his forefathers, and went out of his way to treat the notables with brutality."[14] Even his family members became tyrannical by association, including his son Sextus who massacred the leading citizens of Gabii and raped Lucretia and, of course, his degenerate wife Tullia. Tarquin therefore appeared in the most pejorative invective, the sort Cicero reserved for Catiline and Mark Antony.[15] Perhaps evoking the Tarquins, Cicero accused Antony himself of every kind of public and private wrongdoing, and spread Antony's "lust, cruelty, profligacy, insolence" and other vices of a "most repulsive and vindictive despot" in the *Philippics* throughout Antony's family to his wife Fulvia and brother Lucius (III.11). Although invective evoking the kings was a commonplace, the severity of a reference to Tarquin is illustrated by Antony's later proscription of Cicero.

Refusal to cooperate with the Senate became the major catalyst for accusations of tyranny for kings and Republicans alike. Livy illustrated the ambitious nature of Tarquinius Priscus by asserting that he added the *gentes minores* to the Senate from his own faction to ensure the cooperation of the body as a whole (I.35.5). When Servius Tullius' legitimacy was questioned by the Senate, according to Dionysius of Halicarnassus (IV.8), he turned to the people for their approval to overrule the Senate in a way reminiscent of many later *populares*. Excessive power made each Republican dynast a target for assaults on his career and character by the jealous aristocrats who had taken a slower, more traditional route to power through

[14] Yavetz 186.
[15] Ogilvie 186.

years in the Senate. Once a dynast had achieved a preeminent position, he had to maintain that authority in order to preserve his precariously overgrown *dignitas* or retire from politics altogether. He could, however, attempt to defend himself against this sort of invective through a comparison with the more positive achievements and aspects of the Regal period. Romulus, for instance, was honored for his innovations and so appeared on late Republican coins and continued to receive honors as the original *parens patriae*.[16] Indeed, Ovid's jab at Romulus as the founder of a tradition of snagging women at the theater played on the importance of the founder in Roman culture (*Ars Amatoria* I.IV).

Beyond their availability for everyday invective purposes, the kings had more serious interactions with the handful of men who dominated the course of the first century BCE. The propaganda campaigns of Sulla, Caesar, and Octavian, as well as the reactions to each which have been recorded for us, provide excellent case studies for the complex attitude toward the Regal period and the kings. These three figures did not necessarily reject all association with the kings; implications of Regal power were a useful tool in persuading the general public of one's influence. These particular examples also show that monarchy as a system of government was undesirable and tyrannical behavior was unacceptable, but that the individual kings also commanded respect for their achievements and supremacy, all of which provided a useful parallel with contemporary princes who were not all bad themselves. Additionally, while the trend from Sulla's short-lived dictatorship to Octavian's ruling dynasty is obvious to us, the statesmen of the Republic had no reason to fear the reestablishment of the monarchy after five hundred years. Their concern with

[16] Yavetz 40.

latter-day "kings" had much more to do with their personal anxiety about being overlooked by posterity than a real fear for the mortality of the Republic. In fact, if they had possessed the foresight with which historians often credit them and had anticipated the establishment of an autocracy and the near-extinction of their class, the Republican aristocrats might have been more inclined to seek concord rather than playing one dynast against another in order to come out on the winning side.

Sulla's stint in the limelight clearly demonstrates such ambivalence. His extension of the *pomerium* in 81, a clear throwback to the Regal period, provoked an outcry against the "sinister Romulus" from other statesmen (Sallust *Oratio Lep*. I.48.5), who "had already declared his dictatorship to be nothing more than a thinly disguised monarchy."[17] Cicero commented that Sulla "without doubt possessed kingly power" even without the name of king (*Phil*. I.3). Sulla, for his part, did not deny having such power but instead responded to the epithet of Romulus by identifying himself as a second Servius Tullius instead.[18] After putting his rivals to death Servius had successfully expiated his illegitimate ascent with valor in war and a new and improved constitution. Sulla hoped similarly to atone for his military assaults on the city by preserving the Republic with a new constitution. Furthermore, Servius had become king because of his military valor despite his low birth; Sulla rose from a decayed patrician household through military exploits as well and, like Servius, married into the upper echelons of society, Sulla into the Metelli[19] and Servius into the royal family (DH IV.3). By portraying himself as a Servius-type

[17] Keaveney 193.
[18] Keaveney 193, Ogilvie 15.
[19] Keaveney 56.

rather than a Romulus-type autocrat, Sulla endeavored to legitimize his power and establish a memory of his rule as constructive and positive overall.[20]

In the final reckoning, Sulla's enemy was the Marian faction, not the Senate. His dictatorship was ostensibly proposed by the *princeps senatus* and validated by the Senate's vote,[21] and he used his power to bolster their authority in return. Sulla belonged to an older generation of perceived aspirants to the throne which included men like the Scipiones and the Gracchi. While those men disregarded orders on occasion and enjoyed fame which left other men of their class in the shadows, they never truly sought to undermine or strip away the Senate's control of the state. Cicero portrayed the Rome of the Scipiones as balanced, led by one great man but not dominated by him, perhaps to contrast that state of affairs with his own era, the age of Pompey.[22] Even Sulla's occupations of the city could be explained away by his aristocratic need to protect his *dignitas*; these occupations could even be called liberation from the tyranny of the Marian factions. Pompey, however, represented the birth of a new generation, a group of men who understood the full range of possibilities open to a single preeminent figure. He won or extorted triumphs, commands ordinary and extraordinary, and a reputation with which to compete with the aristocrats of better-known families. As it turned out, he could not complement his successes abroad with success in the political life of the city itself because he lacked oratorical skill and thus could not escape the constant tug-of-war between the Senate and popular figures.

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[20] Doubtless he did not appreciate the further parallel with Servius Tullius of being supplanted by a young protégé who had married into his family.
[21] Scullard 82.
[22] Syme 319.

Caesar, however, had all the political savvy and speaking ability he needed. He began his career in a fairly traditional way: he claimed descent from the kings, from Ancus Martius and from Iulus himself. His family heritage was decidedly *popularis*; Marius was his uncle, he was married to Cinna's daughter, and he gave the eulogy for his aunt during the funeral during which Marius' portrait was displayed, but he maintained a low enough profile to avoid retribution from the Sullan regime.[23] He began to attract serious negative attention from the Senate, however, in 63, when he bought the office of *pontifex maximus* for himself to the disgrace of the older, more glorified men who ran against him (Sall. *Bell. Cat*. 49). His services to the then-preeminent Pompey, his blatant disregard for his colleague or any other check on his consular power, and his escape to a proconsulship in Gaul before he could be prosecuted earned him a crowd of enemies. It was at this point that he earned the nickname "Romulus," among other epithets, from Catullus (29).

After he became dictator, Caesar's power and prestige grew enormously, even excessively. During the Lupercalia of 44 BCE – weeks before he was assassinated – his co-consul Antony approached him with a diadem in his hand and "persisted in putting it on Caesar's head, to the dismay of the people, and Caesar refused it and was applauded" (Cic. *Phil*. II.xxxiv.85). Although Caesar may have engineered this performance to declare to the people that he was not a tyrant, Cicero later declared that this was unequivocally an attempt to reestablish a monarchy at Rome. Dio Cassius, Plutarch, and Suetonius adopted Cicero's perspective and described Caesar as a megalomaniac who offended the Senate's pride too many times to survive, who

[23] Gruen 78.

"relied so much on his personal charm that he overlooked the need for tact."[24] They repeated the episode at the Lupercalia and added descriptions of other occasions on which Caesar acted like an aspiring king (Dio Cassius XLIV.4-11; Plutarch *Caesar* 60-1; Suetonius *Div. Iul.* 76-9). Caesar's *superbia*, suggested Cicero and these later authors, provoked Brutus and his co-conspirators to end the tyranny: when Caesar was dead, "'Brutus, immediately raising his bloody dagger, shouted to Cicero by name and congratulated him on their regained liberty'" (Cic. *Phil*. II.xi.28). Although Brutus' ancestor had merely expelled Tarquinius Superbus from the city, the Republican Brutus' tyrannicide provided a close enough connection to create lasting anti-Caesarian propaganda.

The criticism Caesar attracted as dictator also survived in the influence he had on Dionysius' and Livy's histories, particularly their accounts of Romulus' life and death. Dionysius' Romulus was a similarly great man with great crimes marring his legacy. As discussed above, Romulus was responsible in part for a civil war and acted tyrannically at the end of his life, and Dionysius gave versions of his death in which he was assassinated by slighted senators or the citizens themselves. However, he also received praise and even worship as a god because his contributions to the city, his military exploits, and his popularity apparently outweighed his misdeeds. Caesar was also praised for his talents: "there was genius, reason, memory, education, prudence, thoughtfulness, industry; in war he performed deeds which, although they were disastrous for the state, were great nevertheless" (Cicero *Phil*. II.45).

Livy wrote that during the interregnum which followed Romulus' death, the plebs complained of their "multiplied servitude" under the senators who all fought for

[24] Ibid. 213.

ascendancy and that Numa pacified plebs and senators alike by accepting the kingship to end this struggle (I.17-8), as Caesar's pious heir hoped later historians would say of him. Likewise, Livy had ominously hypothesized that premature liberty before Tarquinius Superbus' reign would have caused civil strife between plebeians and senators and consequently the dissolution of the nation (II.1.4). When that premature liberty had apparently come to pass in the first century BCE, a monarch to rule a people who demonstrably could not rule themselves was a plausible solution.

"In the end, as was fated, it came round to monarchy again."[25] By the time Ovid wrote his *Fasti*, the story ran that Caesar had been taken up to heaven by Vesta at the time of his assassination by "sacreligious hands" (III.700-2). Simultaneously, in the *Metamorphoses*, Romulus was benignly "giving royal laws to his people" at the time of his apotheosis (XIV.823-5). Of all the Republican politicians Octavian proved most adept at managing his image through parallels with the kings. He alluded in his propaganda to characteristics he shared with the kings to enhance the unofficial political authority which made him *princeps*. He was particularly interested in casting himself as a re-founder of the city, having rebuilt its institutions, traditions, and newly marbled physical monuments. For that reason, as we will see, his propaganda focuses on Romulus, Numa, and Aeneas, the only three Roman kings who were present in the Forum of Augustus.

Although Republican politicians frequently invoked Romulus' name as an insult,[26] Augustus nurtured a connection with him, to the extent that he was nearly known to us as "Romulus" instead of "Augustus" if we can believe Suetonius (*Aug*.

[25] Syme 9.
[26] See above, p. 4.

7); in any case, the name "Augustus" itself evokes Romulus because of a well-known line from Ennius.[27] Augustus lived on the Palatine near the hut of Romulus, and he also restored the temple of Jupiter Feretrius which according to legend was originally built by Romulus (Livy X.5-6). He could also claim descent from Romulus, as from Numa and Aeneas, because he was the son of Julius Caesar.[28] Suetonius certainly took Augustus' hints about his affinity with Romulus: he claimed that when Octavian first returned to the city after Caesar's death and took the auguries, he saw twelve vultures just as Romulus had before he founded the city. As for Numa, portrayed by Livy as the second founder,[29] Augustus' continual and persistent attempts to revive many archaic or extinct religious traditions were suggestive of his legacy. Augustus struck a balance between the two founders, as suggested by Augustus' privileged place between the two in the Virgilian Underworld (*Aen.* VI.781-812). Numa's positive legacy of peace and piety displaced the association of war and tyranny with Romulus.

The association of Virgil's Aeneas with Augustus has probably been analyzed since the first reading of the work, and a full analysis of their relationship would overwhelm our discussion here. In any case, the general effect of Virgil's work was to support Augustus' claim to be a founder. Identification with a founder bestowed "an authorization, divine in character, for the control of the state,"[30] as indeed Augustus, Aeneas, and Romulus all shared the enhanced mandate to rule from a divine parent . And unlike Romulus, Aeneas was untouched by stories of fratricide

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[27] Ennius Ann. 245 M: "*augusto augurio postquam inclita condita Roma est*."
[28] The Julii claimed that Iulus (and thus his father Aeneas, and their descendants the Alban kings and Romulus) and Ancus Martius (and therefore his father Numa) were their ancestors.
[29] Fox 113.
[30] Scott 1925: 82.

and senatorial hostility which might have invited more awkward, negative comparisons. Earl's argument for Aeneas as a symbol of aristocrats under the principate is worth mentioning here: he argues that Aeneas was pious, peaceful, and promoted unity and growth, while Turnus represented pride and disruption, like a Republican aristocrat eager to promote only himself.[31] In any case, the Virgilian Aeneas' role as the founder of the Julian family in Italy qualified him for propagandistic representations in the *Aeneid*, on the Ara Pacis, and elsewhere. His lack of interest in world domination and sense of duty rather than glory also suited Augustus' purposes perfectly, as Virgil presumably intended.

Augustus' connections with the divine also powerfully enhanced his *auctoritas*. Through Aeneas and Romulus Augustus was related to Venus, Mars, and Quirinus, and Divus Iulius completed his hereditary pantheon. For Julius Caesar, any allusions he might have made during his career to his own potential divinity seemed only to contribute to his opponents' depiction of him as a tyrant. They took it as a sign that he had ambitions to become a ruler in the style of a divine Hellenistic monarch. However, after Octavian had established himself as *princeps* and thus rehabilitated his adoptive father, Ovid wrote that:

> [Julius] Caesar is a god in his own city; exceptional in battle and in a toga, as great as his son in wars ending with triumphs, achievements at home, and glory quickly won by civil service, he has become a new star and tailed comet; and none of his achievements was greater than being the father of Augustus. (746-51)

Augustus, for his own part, emphasized his privileged relationship with *Divus Iulius* by building a temple for Divus Julius in the center of the Forum (*Res Gestae* 19).

[31] Earl 66-8.

Rather than implying that he himself was divine, Augustus focused his propaganda on his divine ancestors and thus displaced the uncomfortably Hellenistic image of divine rule. It was also safe for Augustus to be compared to a god. In Ovid, "Jupiter rules the heavens and the kingdoms of the threefold world, and the land is ruled by Augustus; each is father and ruler" (858-60). The very name "Augustus" provided another connection between Jupiter and Octavian:

> This colleague shares his name with supreme Jove. The fathers call sacred things "august," and temples sanctified by the priests' hands are called "august;" "augury" also comes from this word's root and whatever Jupiter "augments" with his power. May he augment the power of our leader, may he augment his years, …and with divine auspices may the heir of such a great name take up the burden of ruling the world with his father's omens. (Ovid *Fasti* I.609-16)

Livy also used the word "*augustus*" as "meaning a contrast to *humanus*, especially in regard to outward appearance and majesty," and thereby attached that honor to Augustus.[32] Augustus played on the etymological associations of his name and had himself represented on coins holding an augur's *lituus* in order to represent his personal piety, his devotion to the state cult as an augur, and the divine favor he enjoyed as a ruler.[33] The *lituus* was also closely connected with Romulus, its first user, and the augury after which he founded the city. As with other references to the Regal period, Augustus managed his affinity with his divine forebears so as to enhance his own prestige while minimizing his (already minimal) opposition's opportunity to criticize him.

The late Republican discourse on the Roman kings was continually divided into laudatory historical narrative and negative polemic. The historical kings were the

[32] Scott 85.
[33] Ibid. 101-3.

"prestigious and majestic" factor in Scipio's balanced constitution in the *De Republica* (I.45.69) and provided models of devotion to the city and glorious achievements on its behalf which Republicans hoped to emulate. In doing so, however, men like Sulla, Pompey, and Caesar stepped hard on many senatorial toes, and the resulting tension was the real parent of expressions of *odium regni*.[34] The name of king was only odious insofar as it was applied to a Republican figure, because in the Republic such a concentration of political power was inappropriate. The Senate had everything to gain from stirring up a love of liberty in the people against alleged tyrants and abuse of the constitution, as Livy suggested they had in 509 to fortify the nascent Republic,[35] because they could thereby regain control of the government. Thus, the resurgent relevance of the Regal period during the first century BCE shows that the senatorial oligarchy conceived of its authority as dependent on the suppression of rising stars, and so the aristocrats grew more and more anxious as this suppression was continually evaded. Regardless of this rather petty contest, however, the kings as the original *parentes patriae* also endured as the standard by which the dynasts were judged. Because of this overall positive view of the kings, Sulla first and then Augustus with greater success emphasized their positive aspects viewed through the lens of the Regal period. Their capitalization on the grandeur of the kings eventually resulted in what we know as the beginning of the Roman Empire.

[34] Fox 138.
[35] Ibid. 127.

TYRANTS OF TRAGEDY

The production of Roman tragedies began in the third century, when Livius Andronicus began to adapt Greek tragedies for the Roman stage. Productions could be sponsored for religious festivals, funerals, celebrations of triumphs, and many other occasions.[36] Although few original plays were still being written in the first century BCE, audiences of the late Republic continued to enjoy productions of the old classics by celebrated tragedians like Naevius, Pacuvius, Ennius, and Accius. Kings, princes, and royal families were popular characters in these plays, and through them the playwrights developed a distinct character type for stage tyrants. In fact, the earliest known use of the Latin word "tyrannus," borrowed from the Greek, is attested in a tragedy.[37]

The playwrights had an opportunity to provide philosophical commentaries on the nature of tyranny through choral odes and the speeches of characters who were victims to a tyrant. Through such speeches, the playwrights also developed a stock character type for the tyrant as a distinctly theatrical, all-around degenerate villain. This tragic tyrant had an appreciable effect on Roman poetry, rhetoric, and philosophy. References to tragedy helped Cicero and Sallust to cast contemporary political figures as evil and thereby to incite popular outrage and even reprisal against them. After all, the tyrant never came out of a tragedy as the winner. After defining the tragic tyrant and his effects on non-dramatic literature in greater detail, we will

[36] Erasmo 3.
[37] The *Atreus* of Accius, Erasmo 106.

also consider several cases in which Roman politicians sponsored specific tragedies to suit their propagandistic needs and thus contributed to the discourse on tyranny.

Greek and Roman tragedy had many tyrants in common. The House of Atreus provided especially fertile ground. As various plays tell us, Thyestes seduces his brother Atreus' wife and tricks Atreus into giving up the throne, but Atreus regains power and banishes Thyestes. When Atreus learns about his wife's part in the plot, he recalls Thyestes and feeds Thyestes' own children to him at a banquet. Thyestes' son Aegisthus then avenges his father, murders Atreus, and plots the murder of Agamemnon, one of Atreus' sons. Aegisthus, of course, is eventually murdered himself by Orestes. Thyestes' attempt to seize the throne, Atreus' revenge, and Aegisthus' takeover of Mycenae are situations in which each dramatically exposes his tyrannical nature. Sophocles and Aeschylus each wrote a tragedy based on parts of this story, although that of Sophocles does not survive, and Livius Andonicus, Pacuvius, Ennius, and Accius all interpreted it for the Roman stage.

Revenge, a popular theme for tragedy in general, brought out the worst in tyrants. An act of revenge exposed the cruelty and vindictiveness of a tyrant in the story of Prometheus and Zeus, interpreted in Aeschylus' *Prometheus Bound*, Accius' *Prometheus* and an attested unperformed translation by Cicero.[38] Additionally, in his *Antigone* Sophocles gave us Creon, who combines vindictiveness, impiety and cruelty in his prohibition of burial for Antigone's brother Polyneices and then shows a tyrant's violent anger towards Antigone. Inspired by Sophocles, Accius wrote his own *Antigone* for Roman audiences. Euripides also provided many examples of tragic tyrants: Lycus in *Heracles*, Jason in *Medea*, and Pentheus in the *Bacchae*, to

[38] Erasmo 51.

name a few. Lycus in *Heracles* is essentially an unmodified stock character: he is a shameless, violent, impious usurper who tries to murder the defenseless father, wife, and children of Heracles because he believes they threaten his regime (*Her*. 38-40, 243-6). In *Medea*, even though Jason does not possess much political power, he is still portrayed as tyrannical because of his behavior and his proximity to the king, Creon. He is accused of being insensitive, shameless, and ambitious (*Medea* 84, 469-71), which all become trademarks of other tyrants.

In the *Bacchae*, Pentheus certainly does have political power and also demonstrates the same tyrannical characteristics of arrogance and violence. He refuses to acknowledge Dionysus as a god, ridicules his more pious father's credulity, and threatens to use force to prevent the entire city from participating in the rites (*Bacc*. 345-50, 511-14). At Rome, Pacuvius, Accius, and Ovid all composed their own versions of the story of Pentheus. As for Jason and Lycus in Rome, Accius' *Medea* preserves Jason's sins for the Romans, and although we have no Republican tragedy relating the story of Heracles, Seneca's *Hercules Furens* demonstrates that the legend was at least familiar to the literati in Rome, and Lycus is useful as an obvious conglomeration of the attributes of all these other examples. There are other tyrannical figures attested in tragedies, of course, but the above characters are particularly helpful since they survive in both Greek and Roman versions. We can thus discern differences in interpretation, estimate the popularity of specific stories and characters, and, to some extent, fill in the gaps of fragmentary Roman plays with their Greek forebears.

The story of each tragedy may have been different, but these tragic tyrants were all cut from the same cloth. Aeschylus' identification of the two servants of the tyrant Zeus in *Prometheus Bound*, "Power and Violence" (25), provide a useful organizing principle for these attributes. Power was the primary characteristic of any tyrant, since without absolute power the tyrant could not inspire such dramatic fear and loathing. Aeschylus' line about Zeus neatly encapsulates despotic power: "Zeus cannot tell a lie, He doesn't know how to. Whatever He says, it happens" (*Prom.* 1578-81). Because of his power a tyrant could act and speak as he pleased with impunity, independent of any law or convention. "A prince's power is blessed in many things, not least in this, that he can say and do whatever he likes" (Soph. *Ant.* 550-2). Inspired by the Greek tragedians, Sallust asserted in the context of Roman history that "to be allowed to act with impunity is to be a king" (BJ 31).

Because of their absolute power, slavery provided a particularly evocative analogue for the relationship between arbitrary rulers and their oppressed subjects (Aesch. *Ag*. 1618-9, Eur. *Bacc*. 514). As Medea explains when asking for support from the Athenian king against Creon and Jason, "my claims are weak, whereas *they* have both wealth and royal power" (Eur. *Medea* 739-40). Using the same trope in his philosophy and rhetoric, Cicero remarked on the tyrant's "desire to master" (*de Rep.* I.50) and the threat which would-be tyrants posed to the freedom of the Roman people (*Phil*. V.iii.6, VIII.iv.12, *de Rep*. I.XLIV). Sallust also denounced the nobility for reducing the Romans, "born to rule," to servitude (BJ 31). Tyranny subjected its victims to "the most unjust and severe servitude of all" (Cic. *Rep*. I.XLIV) because

the tyrant as defined in tragedy, history, and philosophy alike was the cruelest master imaginable.

"And who are these men who have taken over the state? The most wicked men, with bloodstained hands," as Sallust characterized them (BJ 31). Violence, Power's companion in *Prometheus Bound*, also plays a vital role in depictions of tyranny in every genre. In Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*, for example, Aegisthus threatens the Mycenean elders with torture and imprisonment (1648-54, 1668-72). Pacuvius and Accius quoted those lines almost verbatim for their own versions of the same story (Pac. *Dulorestes* 131-2, Acc. *Aegisthus* 8-9). Likewise, Euripides and then Ovid described how the impious Pentheus threatened the Bacchants with torture and death (Eur. *Bacc*. 310, 489, 511-4; Ovid *Met*. III.514, III.693). "Roman kingship also gave us an example of tragedy" (Livy I.46) in the shape of Tarquinius Superbus, who seized power with cruelty and violence by murdering his father-in-law.

Cicero borrowed from the theater in his emphasis on the cruelty of tyrannical figures like Catiline, Antony, and even himself as depicted by political opponents (*de Inventione* I.102, *Cat*. I.30, *Dom*. 93-4, *Phil*. III.xi.28, XI.i.1). In the eleventh Philippic, for instance, Cicero claimed that even despots like Cinna, Marius, and Sulla had not contemplated such "unprecedented, unheard-of, savage, barbaric" actions as Antony, whose agent had tortured and then murdered a Roman citizen (XI.i.1). Additionally, the use of a bodyguard or group of thugs was a marker of tyranny. Just as Euripides' Lycus amasses gangs of degenerate men to support his revolution who have wasted their fortunes (*Her*. 590-2), so does Sallust's Catiline (*Bell. Cat.* II.15). Cicero accused Antony of employing a similar bodyguard (*Phil*. II.xlii.107, V.vi.17).

The tyrant was able to actualize his violent and cruel impulses through his armed supporters, so a bodyguard implied tyranny by association.

By acting with such cruelty and violence, the tyrant established a reign of terror. Euripides' Pentheus and Sophocles' Creon display such a propensity toward anger and violence that their subjects are afraid to voice any discontent (Eur. *Bacc.* 668-71, Soph. *Ant*. 744-5), while Accius' Atreus professed his own disregard for his people's moral judgment with the famous line "Let them hate me, as long as they fear me" (*Atreus* 168). The irony was that the tyrant often became as fearful as the people he terrorized. Cicero quoted another line from Accius to this effect: "Many enemies and false friends belong to kingship, but few who wish them well" (*Off*. III.21.84). There are many precedents for this paranoia in Greek sources. One major example occurs in *Prometheus Bound*: Prometheus tells Io that one of her descendants will overthrow Zeus, and Zeus sends Hermes almost immediately to interrogate him (944-1029). Similarly, in Euripides' *Heracles*, the new tyrant Lycus betrays his insecurity by his desire to kill Heracles' family. Heracles' wife Megara then tells Lycus that he is wise "if, base yourself, you fear the offspring of the best" (206-9).

Borrowing that trope, Cicero wrote that Tarquinius Superbus "wished to be feared himself because he feared the greatest punishment of his own wickedness" (Cic. *Rep*. II.45). Cicero also provided the most iconic portrayal of a tyrant's paranoia with his story of Dionysius I of Syracuse, who hangs a sharpened sword by a single horsehair over the courtier Damocles to show him what being a king is really like (*Tusc. Disp*. V.62). On a related note, Cicero also says that Dionysius "lacked all human culture and companionship; he lived with fugitives, criminals, and barbarians;

he thought that no one could be a friend to him who was worthy of freedom or wished to be free" (*Tusc. Disp.* V.63). Centuries later, historians writing about Roman emperors such as Tiberius and Domitian continued this tradition of juxtaposing the paranoid fear and violent cruelty of tyrannical emperors.

The stereotypical tyrant used political power, violence, and fear to acquire and maintain despotic power. As a ruler, he was unjust and excessive. In addition to these political crimes, Greek and Roman authors portrayed vices that made the tyrant a truly evil human being. In fact, tragedians often compared tyranny to mental illness,[39] of which "greed, ambition, womanizing, stubbornness, drunkenness, gluttony, and the like" (Cic. *Tusc. Disp*. IV.26) were all symptoms. Hubris or a lack of shame was a typical tragic flaw for the tyrant, since he lacked the moral compass or mental capacity to restrain himself.[40] Euripides' Medea claims that shamelessness is the worst of vices, "For since [a shameless man] is confident that he can cleverly cloak injustice with his words, his boldness stops at no knavery" (*Medea* 469-71, 582-3). In Roman tragedy, Pacuvius' Orestes exclaims over the "rashness of tyrants" (*Dulorestes* 144).

"Because of the popularity of these adapted Greek tragedies, the orator in addressing his audience – whether the senate or the people – could rely on being understood when he called a political opponent a tyrant and charged him with behavior characteristic of the tyrant."[41] Thus, Cicero depended on tragedic

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[39] Παρακοπή, Aesch. Ag. 223; νόσημα, Aesch. Prom. 227; νόσος, Eur. Medea 471, 1364, Soph. Ant. 1052; Dementia, Acc. Tereus 639-42; furor, Cic. Phil. XI.i.2, Tusc. Disp. IV.77; amens, Cic. Phil. II.iv.9.

[40] In Greek, ἀναιδεία (Eur. Med. 469-71), ὕβρις (Eur. Bacc. 374); in Latin, impudens, audacia, superbia, petulantia, insolentia.

[41] Dunkle 156

precedents for his description of Antony as so "remarkably shameless that he regarded all the goods, services, and laws of the kingdom as up for sale" (*Phil*. III.iv.9). Likewise, Sallust recounted the "many arrogant and vicious crimes" (BJ 30) of the remorseless aristocracy. The tyrant's "savage and accursed nature" (Accius *Diomedes* 257) and arrogance enabled him to flout social conventions and moral codes, and his consequently unpredictable, capricious behavior intensified the fear he induced.

In addition to arrogance, the typical tyrant displayed impiety. Pentheus' refusal to acknowledge Dionysus as a god and his contempt for the seer Tiresias exemplify this trend (Eur. *Bacc*. 345-50). Likewise, Euripides' Lycus orders his thugs to burn down a shrine with Heracles' family inside (*Heracles* 243-6), while Sophocles' Agamemnon and Creon dare to prohibit the burial of war heroes (*Ajax* 1047-50, *Ant*. 21-38). Following this tradition, Cicero recounted an occasion on which Antony stationed armed "brigands" in the Temple of Concord itself and "the temple became a prison" (*Phil*. V.vii.18). Cicero also accused Antony of ignoring or even falsifying the auspices as augur (*Phil*. III.iv.9) and identified impiety as one of the classic traits of a tyrant (*de Inventione* I.102). Sallust recorded a rumor of Catiline's swearing his conspirators to secrecy by drinking wine mixed with human blood (*Bell. Cat.* 22). While Sallust does not believe this about Catiline, his inclusion of it suggests one or both of two things: that the rumor was widely believed and therefore plausible for a tyrannical figure, and that the depiction of Catiline as an unholy monster was propagandistically useful. Again, the tyrant's contempt for tradition and order made him more intimidating; furthermore, a tyrant's impiety

might well have been taken as a foreshadowing of that tyrant's demise, since impious behavior gave a fairly clear cue for divine or heroic vengeance.

Finally, playwrights and authors frequently attributed sexual greed to tyrants to show their disdain for decorum. In a play by Accius, probably based on a lost play of Sophocles,[42] Thyestes' seduction of Atreus' wife sets the string of tragedies in motion (*Atreus* 169-77). Feeding a villain's own children to him at a banquet was also a feature of the story of Tereus and Philomela told by Accius and Ovid, for which a lost play of Sophocles was also an important source,[43] and once again it was an act of revenge for a sexual crime, this time Tereus' rape of Philomela's sister Procne (Acc. *Tereus* 639-42, Ov. *Met*. VI.453-675). And, of course, the rape of Lucretia catalyzed the expulsion of the last king of Rome, a familiar story from the tragic stage (Accius *Brutus* 39) as well as historical texts (Livy I.57-9). Evoking such stories, Cicero denounced Clodius as lustful (*Sest*. 16-8), also claiming that if Clodius had gained more power, the chastity of the wives and children of Roman citizens would have been endangered (*Mil*. 76). Cicero also accused Antony of spending his time indulging in debauchery instead of rebuilding the state (*Phil*. II.3, III.11). Sallust listed the "criminal debaucheries" of Catiline "with an aristocratic maiden, with a Vestal priestess, and other lawless acts of the same sort" as a prelude to his political crimes (*Bell. Cat.* 15). Consensual or not, sexual misdeeds inspired outrage against the tyrant because they showed the result of a vicious personality combined with unrestrained power. Impiety and lust, usually private affairs, threatened the stability of the entire state when represented in a tyrant.

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[42] Dunkle 154.
[43] Fitzpatrick 90.

The influence of tragic tyrants extended beyond the literary into the world of politics. Theatrical productions at Rome were often sponsored by an individual "wealthy enough to afford the costs associated with producing *ludi*, thereby allowing him greater control of the dramatic program, from the thematic appositeness of plays to the emphasis of scenes."[44] When Pompey celebrated the opening of his theater complex in 55 BCE, he sponsored performances of Accius' *Clytemnestra* and the *Trojan Horse* by either Livius Andronicus or Naevius.[45] To remind the audience of his own triumphal processions, Pompey added a procession of six hundred mules to Agamemnon's triumphant return to Mycenae in *Clytemnestra* (Cic. *Fam*. VII.I.2). Likewise, the staging of the sack of Troy in the *Trojan Horse* glorified Pompey's military successes in Asia and elsewhere.[46]

However, four years earlier in 59 BCE, Pompey had instead suffered by comparison to a character on the stage. "At the *Ludi Apollinares* the actor Diphilus rudely applied a line to our Pompey: 'through our misfortune you are great'" (Cic. *Att*. II.19.3). Cicero did not include the name of the play he quoted, but one scholar has hypothesized that this may be a line spoken by Prometheus in a Roman version of *Prometheus Bound*.[47] In any case, the sentiment is certainly one of a tyrant's victimized subject. How the actor made it clear to the audience that this was an allusion to Pompey is unclear (perhaps by emphasizing the word *magnus*, Pompey's epithet), but the enthusiastic applause that this line received was taken as a serious blow to the first triumvirate's influence (*Att.* II.19.2-3). Likewise, on another

[44] Erasmo 3.
[45] Ibid. 86.
[46] Ibid. 87
[47] Dunkle 155.

occasion M. Tullius Cicero and Servius Tullius were compared through an actor's performance as liberators of the state (*Sest*. 123), presumably linking Tarquin to Clodius.

Cicero provided us with another example in which an aristocrat took the opportunity to make a political statement by his choice of tragedies. After the death of Caesar, Brutus attempted to stage Accius' *Brutus* (Cic. *Phil*. 2.12.28), which chronicled the rape of Lucretia and Brutus' expulsion of the Tarquins.[48] By sponsoring this production, Brutus would have drawn an unequivocal parallel between himself and his ancestor as liberators of the city from tyrants. The connection between Caesar and Tarquin in later sources such as Dio Cassius (XLIV.12) and Plutarch (*Brutus* 9) began with Brutus' own propaganda, of which this play would have been an important part. At the last minute, however, while Brutus was away from the city, Accius' *Tereus* was substituted (Cic. *Att*. XVI.5). Nevertheless, "Brutus seemed to be delighted" by reports about the audience's reaction to *Tereus* (ibid. XVI.2), suggesting that the actors managed to use the generally tyrannical qualities of Tereus to successfully criticize Caesar. One has to wonder, though, how history might have been altered if the *Brutus* had been shown after all.

Like Pompey, Octavian sponsored a play to celebrate his triumph in 29 BCE, the *Thyestes* of Varius Rufus. In fact, a scholiast records that the prominent author Varius Rufus composed his *Thyestes* for this occasion.[49] "The themes of fraternal strife and vengeance seem appropriate in a play that was produced for the festival

[48] Warmington 560-1.
[49] Erasmo 102-3.

celebrating the end of almost a century of civil strife at Rome."[50] The play cast Octavian as the victorious Atreus avenging the crimes of deceitful, ambitious Thyestes. "Atreus possesses the typical features of a ruthless tyrant, but his character may be tyrannical as a response to political pressures, in particular the political ambitions…of his brother Thyestes,"[51] just as Octavian's acts as triumvir were provoked by political pressure. Apollo, who also happened to be Octavian's patron deity, told Thyestes through an oracle how the conflict with Atreus would be resolved, and this may have ended Varius Rufus' play on a positive note.[52] It has also been suggested that unlike Accius and Seneca, Varius Rufus would have used the later part of Thyestes' story for his tragedy in which his son Aegisthus murders Atreus in revenge and Thyestes becomes king. In this version, Antony becomes Atreus, impious and promoting further discord, while Thyestes and Octavian, both guided by Apollo, restore stability.[53]

Thus, the characters in Greek and Roman tragedies offered an opportunity to figures like Pompey, Brutus, and Octavian to glorify themselves through selectively emphasized connections. Given the usual reputation of theatrical tyrants it may seem awkward that Pompey invited comparison with Agamemnon or Octavian with Atreus or Thyestes; apparently Roman actors could make such fine distinctions and apply only specific lines or scenes to the real politicians. Nevertheless, the tyrant remained a villain in most productions as well as in the works of Cicero and Sallust. "In late-republican Rome, tragedy was *par excellence* the exemplary genre for revealing the

[50] Ibid. 109.
[51] Erasmo 108.
[52] Tarrant 150
[53] Ibid. 149.

ways of kings and tyrants,"[54] and as such it provided ample fodder for anti-tyrannical invective offstage. In Ovid's words, "Sin is a kingly affair" (*Fasti* VI.595). This picture of the tyrant's villainous personality is the most important contribution of the tragic stage to philosophical and rhetorical depictions of tyranny.

In his first Catilinarian oration, Cicero marked his transition from matters pertaining to Catiline's "private reputation for vice" and "domestic troubles and depravity" to the problems he presented to "the Republic itself and all our lives" (Cat. I.14). Like the tyrants of the tragic stage, the Catiline described by Cicero has committed every imaginable type of sin in both the private and public spheres. The stamp of the Roman aristocratic ethos on this trope is fairly clear. The reigning oligarchs of Rome were "*boni*" or even "*optimi*," terms that linked social class or wealth with moral superiority. This belief that a good statesman should be a good person is also manifest in the importance of character witnesses in the Roman courtroom, where the prosecution had to prove that a defendant was a plausible criminal. When trying to cast matters in clear, black-and-white terms, the straightforward contrast between good and evil offered by characters and stories from tragedy became a useful source for rhetorical material. Orators could depend on tragic tyrants, as they also depended on the Roman kings, to evoke a definite reaction from the crowd because the tragedies were so well known. The audience of a political speech was conditioned to respond to a reference to a tyrant with indignation and anger, just as if they were booing a character on the stage. The stock character of a tyrant which had been developed through centuries of Greek and Roman theater thus

[54] Wiseman 32.

came to have a profound and conspicuous effect on Roman rhetoric and political thought.

FOREIGN KINGS

Republican Romans felt intensely ambivalent toward the kings they encountered in Asia and North Africa. On one hand, monarchy immediately connoted wealth and prestige. The Romans judged the prestige of their own empire in comparison to these kings and reinforced their own sense of sovereignty by treating kings as equals or even subordinates.[55] "The name of 'king' has always been holy in this city, but the name of 'king' joined with 'ally' is holiest of all" (*Deiot*. 40). Many Hellenistic kings, princes, and tetrarchs conferred the dignity of their status on Rome by becoming collaborators in the Roman expansion. On the other hand, the Roman ideal of the free citizen seemed imcompatible with the stereotype of the Asian despot controlling a complicit society of slaves. For example, Cicero contrasted the orderly balance between Senate and assembly in Rome with the assembly of Pergamum, which "was controlled by Mithridates because he fattened them up with gifts, not because he had any authority there, and they said whatever he wanted. Could you call this the voice of the people?" (*Flacc*. 17) Because Asian and African kings threatened Rome, a stereotype developed of the cruel, violent, deceitful king intent on the destruction of Roman citizens. That archetype exemplified real absolute power

[55] Scullard 107.

which was inherently inimical to Rome, and therefore provided a useful model for anti-tyrannical rhetoric.

The very term *res publica* implies that the Roman form of government was the property (*res*) of the whole population, so that power was a form of property. Roman annexation, subjugation, and alliance added new property to the state in this sense. Under a monarchy, conversely, the state was *res unius*, the property of one ruler. This ideological contrast spawned and perpetuated the feeling that monarchy and the Republic were irreconciliable. In Sallust's *Jugurthine War*, Memmius demonstrates the conviction that power is property in his analysis of the corrupt aristocracy's inability to deal with Jugurtha: "the Senate's authority and our imperial power has been surrendered to our most dangerous enemy; at home and in Africa, our *res publica* has been put on the market" (BJ 31). Another of Sallust's characters, a prince displaced by Jugurtha, petitioned the Senate "By your honor, by the honor of your children and your ancestors, by the sovereignty of the Roman people, help me in my state of misery… do not let the kingdom of Numidia, which belongs to you, be destroyed" (BJ 14). A king who attacked Rome's borders or allies challenged their military ability and their commitment to their allies, but he also threatened their right to control their own state as property-owners. Thus, the Romans treated ally kings as subjects and portrayed kings in a derogatory way in order to reify their own sense of sovereignty.

Cicero depicted the Romans' alliances with kings as based on the patron-client pattern, with the kings usually occupying the lower, dependent status of clients. Therefore, the Romans had a responsibility to protect and support their clients.

Cicero demonstrated this when he denounced Verres for abusing the son of Antiochus, a loyal king who was apparently entitled to expect better treatment from his Roman allies (*Verr*. IV.26.60). Similarly, in order to soothe indignation over Clodius' death, he asserted that Clodius would have abused client kings as well as Romans if he had continued to accumulate power (*Mil*. 72, 76). In his philosophical work *De Officiis*, Cicero developed this notion further. He claimed that imperial Rome had begun by protecting other states and kings, "but after Sulla's victory we lost that tradition completely. Nothing seemed unjust towards our allies anymore when such cruelty had been exercised against our own citizens" (*Off*. II.27). Thus, provincials and their rulers had become extensions of the Roman *populus*. The Caesarians shared this view, as can be seen in the anonymous commentary on the war in Alexandria in 49 BCE. King Pharnaces of Pontus began appropriating territory from other rulers and sent gifts to Caesar's general Domitius to appease him. Domitius, however, "consistently rejected all of these and said that nothing was more important to him than restoring the Roman people's authority and that of their allies" after Pharnaces challenged "the Roman people's sense of justice and honor while they were occupied in a civil war" (*Alex*. 34-6). The ability to protect even kings validated the Republic and legitimized Rome's imperial project.

While Caesar was engaged in the civil war in Alexandria in 49, his encounter with Deiotarus, a minor prince in the region of Galatia and Pontus who had taken Pompey's side in the war, showed how tenuous such a ruler's position was:

> Putting aside his royal insignia and dressed not just as a private citizen but as a convict, Deiotarus went to Caesar as a suppliant. He asked for forgiveness because in his part of the world there was no Caesarian garrison, and he had been compelled to join Pompey's side by the

> Pompeian army. He said that he should not have to judge the conflicts of the Romans, only to obey the current leaders.
>
> Caesar responded that… Deiotarus could not excuse his mistake, since such a prudent and dutiful man should be able to discern who was the leader of Rome and Italy and whom the senate and people supported, …Nevertheless, he would forgive him because of his earlier services, their old ties of hospitality and alliance, the king's status and old age, and the prayers of Deiotarus' friends and acquaintances…and Caesar restored the king's royal dress. (*Alex*. 67-8)

One has to feel sorry for Deiotarus, especially because four years later he found himself on trial in Caesar's own house, with Caesar presiding as judge, when his own grandson charged him with conspiring to assassinate Caesar. He was at least fortunate enough to have Cicero speaking in his defense, although Cicero expressed his reservations about the circumstances of the trial. If the trial were taking place in public, Cicero said, his defense would be easier, "for what citizen would not support this king when he remembers that Deiotarus has spent his whole life fighting wars for the Roman people?" (*Deiot*. 6) Although Deiotarus was not a particularly significant figure in the grand scheme of things, his appearances in the Caesarian commentaries and Cicero's oration certainly illustrate how submissive the Romans expected ally kings to be.

Building on this imperialistic perspective, the Caesarians accused the Catonian generals of being subservient to foreign kings during the civil war. Caesar marveled that his enemies were so demented that they paid taxes to a king rather than live peacefully with their own countrymen (*Afr*. 8) and later grieved that on one occasion an elected Roman official chose to obey King Juba instead of his *imperator* Scipio (*Afr*. 57). The title of king held a certain degree of prestige, which the Romans hoped their Republic could emulate. Thus, for a Roman army to serve a foreign king

was insulting to the Republic; for a Roman army to fight a foreign king, however, was honorable, since this gave the Republic a rank comparable to that of a kingdom. During the Alexandrian War, the rebels petitioned Caesar to release their king and promised to cease hostilities in return. "Although Caesar was well aware that the Egyptians were a deceitful people," he let the king go because if they did not keep the peace, "he could wage a more impressive and noble war against a king than against a gang of refugees and fugitives" (*Alex*. 24). Likewise, during the African War King Juba was summoned to the Catonian ranks "to add some prestige to their army and to frighten Caesar's" (*Afr*. 48).

This unfriendly, imperialistic behavior was a manifestation of insecurity, and this same insecurity initiated the portrayal of foreign kings as evil. In 66 BCE Cicero delivered his speech to the assembly advocating Pompey as the choice for a commander in the war against Mithridates of Pontus. He began by appealing to the assembly's sense of patriotism and reminded them of the "Asiatic Vespers," the night on which Roman citizens all over Asia Minor were massacred by Mithridates' command. Cicero referred to this as "a stain…which has clung to the Roman name and eaten away at it since that night" (*Imp. Pomp.* 7). He emphasized Mithridates' continued abuse of Roman citizens and ambassadors (ibid. 11), and he also portrayed the king as cowardly and conniving:

> At first Mithridates fled from his kingdom, as they say Medea fled from the same region. She scattered her murdered brother's limbs as she fled…so that grief and the effort to collect the pieces of his body might delay her father's pursuit. In the same way, when he fled Mithridates left his enormous treasure of gold, silver, and the most beautiful things… While our soldiers were dutifully collecting all of his wealth, the king himself escaped out of their hands. (ibid. 22)

Like the tyrants in tragedies (and one heroine, according to this passage), foreign kings were characterized as cruel and malicious with an added dimension of hatred toward the Roman people.

Cicero had employed the same tropes in his prosecution of Verres, in which he compared the corrupt governor to the tyrants of Sicily. For example, one of the treasures which Verres had appropriated was a bronze bull used as a torture device by Phalaris of Agrigentum. According to legend, Scipio returned the bull to the people of Agrigentum after he removed Phalaris from power, in contrast to Verres, and "recommended that the people consider whether it was preferable to submit to the tyranny of their own countrymen or to the Romans" (*Verr*. II.iv.73; cf. II.v.143). This last sample shows particularly well that the Romans saw Republican and monarchic rule as an important dichotomy, even though Roman imperialism often matched monarchy in its absolute power. Cicero also expressed this sentiment in his *De Re Publica* through a comparison of Rome and Agrigentum. He suggested that the beauty of these cities resembled a republic, but "can a state be called a republic when all its inhabitants are oppressed by one cruel ruler, when there is no assurance of justice, no cooperation, and no community?" (*Rep*. 1.43)

This model of monarchy became a useful reference point for the dynasts of the Republic, particularly Pompey and Caesar. Pompey's successes in Asia during his commands against the Cilician pirates and Mithridates[56] invited comparisons with the great kings of Asia, and his *cognomen* "Magnus" evoked Alexander. "Like the Macedonian Alexander or the monarchs of the line of Seleucus, the Roman conqueror marched along the great roads of Asia, …displaying power and founding cities in his

[56] Ibid. 99-108.

name."[57] Sallust wrote that "from his early manhood, being influenced by the flattery of his admirers, [Pompey] believed that he would be the equal of King Alexander; what is more, he sought to rival his deeds and his plans" (*Hist*. III.84). However, when Pompey slipped from preeminence, Cicero referred to him as "Sampsiceramus" or "Arabarches," insignificant client kings in Asia whose disadvantaged positions mirrored Pompey's (*Att*. 2.14, 2.16, 2.17, 2.23). Additionally, during the civil war Cicero called Pompey's merciless tactics "Phalarism" (ibid. 7.12) in reference to the Sicilian tyrant discussed above.

As for Caesar, Cicero wondered at the outbreak of the civil war whether "he would imitate Phalaris or Pisistratus" (*Att*. 7.20), a wicked Sicilian tyrant or a benevolent Athenian usurper, and Cicero eventually decided that Caesar more closely imitated Pisistratus in his popularity and *clementia* (ibid. 8.16). Cicero also commented that the Italians and Romans rushed to give Caesar gifts "as though he were a god, and their gratitude was not fake" (ibid.). Like Pompey Caesar had assumed the status of a divine monarch in the Hellenistic East, because of his conquests during 49 BCE. To greet Caesar, the Alexandrians "dressed themselves as if they were going to beg forgiveness from a ruler, and they brought out the sacred objects whose holiness they were accustomed to use to placate offended or angry kings" (*Alex*. 32). Honorific inscriptions also survive from Ephesus, praising Caesar as a divine ruler in the Hellenistic style.[58] Likewise, in his effort to buy off the Romans Pharnaces had sent Caesar a gold crown, which the author suggested was a traditional gift for a conquering general in Asia. However, while a gold crown might

[57] Syme 30.
[58] Eilers 93.

be an appropriate gift for a Roman general in Asia, it was not appropriate in Rome. In the *Philippics*, Cicero referred to Antony's gift of a diadem to Caesar as an attempt to establish a monarchy at Rome (*Phil*. II.85). Caesar's own reign was perceived as increasingly Hellenistic and increasingly despotic, the whole Pisistratid dynasty encapsulated in one man.

"It has been supposed and contended that Caesar either desired to establish or had actually inaugurated…monarchic rule, despotic and absolute, based on worship of the ruler,"[59] and that the conspiracy of Cassius and Brutus was a direct result. Cicero's account tends to condemn Caesar; he filled his defense of Deiotarus, for instance, with absurdly sycophantic references to Caesar's power as "the brightest light of all nations and in all our history" (*Deiot*. 15). Also, it is difficult not to suspect a hint of irony in his defense of Rabirius Postumus when Cicero comments that "occupied with the greatest deeds which he has achieved and is achieving, it would not be surprising if [Caesar] forgot everyone else, and if he remembered them, he could easily excuse his forgetfulness" (*Rab. Post*. 41). For the purposes of this discussion, Caesar's secret desires to be a king or lack thereof are not particularly important. The perception that such desires existed, however, is significant. In Republican sources, such as the quotations from Cicero above, Caesar's behavior as a dictator apparently constituted clear evidence that Caesar modeled his reign on a Hellenistic monarchy.[60] Sallust's ambivalence toward monarchy, which is expressed in his uniquely even-handed criticism of foreign kings and the Roman treatment of

[59] Syme 54.
[60] Yavetz 18.

them (BJ 81; *Epistula Mithridatis* 5, 22), was a product of this analogy, as are the depictions of Caesar's ambitions in later historians.

Livy's histories can also be interpreted as a response to the reign and assassination of Caesar, particularly Livy's depiction of Scipio Africanus. Scipio and Caesar were both great conquerors, but where Caesar accepted gifts and even worship from the peoples he conquered, Scipio told the Spaniards who saluted him as king that "the name of king may be great to others, but to Romans it is intolerable" (27.19.3). "This must be understood not in the context of the late third century B.C. but in that of the aftermath of Caesar's dictatorship and assassination. Indeed, there is nothing in Polybius' version to match the retort which is found in Livy."[61] Because of Caesar's legacy, Octavian and the Augustan authors were careful to praise traditional virtues specifically located in Rome, leaving the Hellenistic East to Antony and Cleopatra. The building of Augustus' mausoleum and the reliefs of Romulus and Aeneas on the Ara Pacis are only some of the physical manifestations of this propaganda. Livy's so-called Alexander digression (9.16-9), in which he argues that Alexander would have been defeated if he had faced one of Rome's great Republican generals, exemplifies this new brand of occidental patriotism as well. Livy even makes that superiority implicitly dependent on the Augustan peace: "[the Roman soldier] has repulsed and will repulse a thousand battle lines more threatening than Alexander's Macedonians, as long as the love of peace and concern for civil unity, such as we now enjoy, becomes perpetual" (9.19).

The Augustan poets also show the influence of this doctrine. Virgil's account of the Trojan Horse and depiction of Ulysses as "the originator of wicked deeds"

[61] Erskine 107.

(*Aen*. 2.165), for example, established a contrast between Ulysses and pious Aeneas and between monarchy and Roman *auctoritas* and *virtus*. Propertius and Horace both capitalized on the Augustan account of the Battle of Actium to highlight the cultural clash between East and West. Horace borrowed many familiar tropes to describe the period "when the mad Queen [Cleopatra], defiled by her diseased army of disgraceful men, threatened to leave the Capitolium in ruins and destroy our empire" (*Carm*. I.37), a flamboyant overstatement. Horace's grudging respect for her suicide, by contrast, preserved the undeniable quality of reverence attached to monarchy in the Roman imagination. That prestigious position combined with hatred toward Rome instilled the sort of xenophobic fear which helped to cast Augustus as Rome's defender, captured in Propertius: "How does the expulsion of Tarquin, whose behavior gave him the name of 'Proud,' help us at all if we must submit to a woman now? Rejoice in your triumph, Rome, and pray for a long life for your savior Augustus!" (III.11)

In addition to the Regal period kings and tyrants of the tragic stage, foreign kings provided Republican Romans with its third principal model for sole power. Because Rome was still interacting with foreign kings on a regular basis, this last model proved the most internally conflicted. Intellectually, it seems that the Romans had not quite reconciled their own expansion into the larger Mediterranean region with their anti-cosmopolitan brand of patriotism. Their mixed feelings about Hellenistic monarchy were the result of an awkward clash of moral obligation toward allies against the inherited suspicion that Rome must conquer or be conquered, manifest in the depiction of foreign kings' virulent hatred towards Rome. In fact, it

has been cogently argued that the Romans incorrectly located the birth of their own *odium regni* in the Regal period, and that it properly belonged in the Hellenistic East.[62] In any case, Caesar's death demonstrates that this suspicion of sole rulers, initially applied to foreign figures, was easily transferred to a Roman dictator, and Augustus' success rested partially on his ability to coopt this prejudice for his own purposes.

An orator discussing tyranny in the first century BCE was not, of course, limited to these three models. Rather, these archetypes of absolute power provided easily recognizable landmarks in a complex network of philosophy and tradition. An orator could depend on his audience, be they senators, plebeians, theatergoers, or jury members, to immediately draw the conclusions he intended based on one of these points of reference. Tragedy provided the simplest implication: a tragic tyrant was a villain inside and out, characterized by an outrageous excess of power, cruelty, libido, and impiety. As for the Roman and foreign kings, the core message behind a reference to one of these was inherent incompatibility with the Republican state. A Roman *rex* was an enemy of Rome as a Republic; a Hellenistic-style monarch was a threat to Rome as an empire; and a tragic tyrant was an enemy of the human race. All together, these stock characters provide a fully developed profile of characteristics of the tyrant as the Romans conceived him.

Having examined how the Romans evoked an idea of tyranny, we will now shift our focus to why such allegations became more frequent and virulent in the first century. In the foregoing chapters, we saw how the three literary models suggest that

[62] Erskine 107-9, 116-7.

an accusation of tyranny expressed an aristocrat's concern for his own career, and the possibility that a single preeminent figure might eclipse all his contemporaries. Two trends in the politics of the first century BCE triggered this insecurity above all else among the conservative members of the ruling class. The first was the schism between the *optimates* and *populares*, which converted the political system from a fluid network of ad hoc alliances to a more rigid, factionalized, and hostile system of semi-permanent political parties. The latter was the increasing tendency of Roman generals to use their military authority to extort political power in the city. Tracking the discourse on tyranny through the context of these two developments illustrates the amplification of aristocratic neuroses and demonstrates precisely how this political climate produced chaos and civil war. Although these were real historical events, we will restrict our discussion to surviving authors' interpretations of them to preserve the integrity of the contemporary perspective. Furthermore, we will see once again how Octavian was able to escape the fray and manipulate concepts of power to his advantage.

OPTIMATES* AND *POPULARES

It has often been noted that the Republican system of alliances and *amicitiae* bore little similarity to our modern party system, but as the Republic accelerated toward its dramatic end this began to change. Cicero and Sallust both elaborated on a growing divide between the so-called *optimates* (also called *boni* or *nobiles*) and

populares during the late Republic. In Cicero's view, this rift was opened by the populist legislation of the Gracchi from 133 to 123 BCE (*Sest*. 103) and continued to grow throughout the first century. It began as a distinction of methodology: during the process of seeking election or support for legislation, the *optimates* supported the traditional aristocratic hierarchy,[63] while the *populares* sought authority outside that hierarchy by appealing to "the people," the non-senators. Individual politicians might use the tactics of either side to their advantage in any given situation. However, by 49 BCE these somewhat artificial categories had been transformed into factions closer to our modern conception, well-defined and hostile enough to go to civil war. This process can be tracked through the rhetorical exchanges of the two groups.

The *populares* were still aristocrats themselves and were striving for the same *auctoritas* as their optimate counterparts. Avoiding the usual climb through the *cursus honorum* to preeminence gave the *populares* what must have seemed like an unfair edge. The oligarchs expressed their consequent anxiety over losing their grasp on the government through allegations of tyranny, not to mention increasing tension and even violence in the Forum. In response, non-*optimates* like Caesar and Sallust flung the charge of despotism back at the oligarchs as a group. In Republican literature, the development of this conflict in the first century BCE can be divided into three stages. Sallust and Cicero saw the origins of the political violence of their own day in the turmoil caused by the Gracchi, *Sullani*, and Marian *populares*, which was the first stage. Cicero then portrayed Catiline and Clodius as the heirs to this

[63] Because the *optimates* were generally aristocrats and because they tried to restrict political office and influence to their conservative circle, I think it is appropriate to translate *optimates* as "oligarchs" and will use the terms interchangeably in this chapter. I can think of no corresponding translation for *populares* and so will use the Latin term throughout; where I refer to them as demagogues, it is only an expression of an optimate or Ciceronian opinion.

legacy, the second stage. Finally, the formation of the first triumvirate catalyzed the third stage, the factionalization of *optimates* and *populares* into the parties of Cato and Caesar respectively. In the Caesarian party were the members of the first triumvirate, while that alliance held together, and Antony;[64] on Cato's side were Bibulus, Pompey during the civil war, Brutus, Cassius, eventually Cicero, and finally Augustus, as I will argue. The relative paucity of important names in the Caesarian party affirms the tendency of the *optimates* to represent the aristocracy of established families, and of the *populares* to recruit men without an inherited place in the public eye. By considering these stages in the evolution of *optimates* and *populares*, and then Catonians and Caesarians, through the lens of anti-tyrannical rhetoric, we will consider the parties' role in the civil wars and the Republic's end.

The conservative aristocrats had always been responsible for the well-being of the Republic. The *populares* therefore had to persuade their audiences that the aristocracy was no longer worthy of their status and that they, the *populares*, could and should fulfill this responsibility instead. This strategy was also useful to *novi homines* like Marius and Cicero trying to break through the ranks of the oligarchy in order to access public office (*Verr*. 5.181). In Sallust's *Jugurthine War*, characters such as Marius and Memmius suggest that they, the *populares*, represent the aristocratic Roman ethos better than their oligarchist peers. Marius acknowledges that his family lacks distinction but argues that "if [the aristocrats] are entitled to despise me, let them treat their own ancestors the same way – they earned their nobility through excellence, as have I" (BJ 85). An assault on the aristocrats' *virtus*,

[64] If Sallust were to be categorized, it would of course be as a Caesarian since this was his party as a politician; as an author, however, Sallust was a disillusioned neutral, which is why I have left him out here.

in the most literal sense of manliness, served the same goal. Marius contrasted his own sense of moral rectitude and diligence with the oligarchs' love of luxury, banqueting, and "womanly elegance" (BJ 85). Cicero borrowed this trope in his invective against Clodius and Antony as well (e.g. *Red. Sen*. 12, *Dom*. 25, *Phil*. II.45). A degenerate aristocracy would pollute the state, they suggested, while their own meritocratic efforts would restore the virtue of olden days. It is important to remember that the *populares* and *optimates* were coming from the same social class with the same cultural values, hence the eagerness of each to portray themselves as defenders of traditional Rome.

Earlier in the *Jugurthine War*, Gaius Memmius, "a zealous enemy of the aristocrats' supremacy" (BJ 27), had gone a step further and accused the *optimates* of destroying the state. He claimed that rather than feeling respect or reverence, the enslaved Roman people ought to feel outright terror for the ruling class. Memmius incited the populace to action but discouraged outright violence, suggesting that the people demand justice in court instead (ibid.). Memmius also reminded his audience "how for the past fifteen years the arrogance of a few men has made a mockery of you, how your defenders have been shamefully murdered with no one to avenge them" (BJ 31). Specifically, Sallust implied, the deaths of the Gracchi were an insult to the people, and the *senatus consultum ultimum* which had been issued against each Gracchus was illegitimate. The *optimates* blamed political violence on the *populares*, so Sallust responded by returning the same accusation against them. The language of tyranny remained the same, independent of the author's partisan feelings. Sallust's

portrayal of Marius and Memmius also shows the *popularis* conviction that the *optimates* were at least partially culpable for the crises of the first century.

The aristocrats' subsequent efforts to stabilize their regime against attackers like Marius and Memmius also proved counterproductive. In Sallust's *Histories*, for example, Licinius Macer recalled "Gn. Pompey, to whom [the aristocrats] yoked themselves when they were living in fear, and whom they are now tearing apart because their fear is gone." The oligarchy wanted military support from Pompey but were alarmed at the prospect of another war hero seizing political power as Marius or Sulla had done, according to Sallust. As a result, Macer asserted, Pompey would become a *princeps* with the people's support instead of looking to the aristocratic regime and "would reestablish tribunician power first of all" (*Oratio Macri*). Again, the distinction between *populares* and *optimates* was methodological at this point: while Pompey would express his new *popularis* affiliation through the restoration of the tribunate, his change of heart was, at base, merely an attempt to circumvent the aristocracy's resistance. Sallust shifted the blame onto the aristocracy for blocking aspiring political figures like Pompey, thus demonstrating their own *superbia* and forcing young men to adopt *popularis* methods. Catiline himself voiced that sentiment in Sallust's monograph: "Because I was prevented from enjoying the fruits of my labor and diligence, I could not maintain a position of honor, and so I publicly took up the cause of the unfortunate" (*Bell. Cat*. 35).

As suggested by the fact that Catiline, an unequivocally amoral character, expressed this criticism of the aristocrats, Sallust's critical eye was not restricted to the *optimates*. "Some alleged that they were defending the rights of the people,

another party insisted that the senate's authority should be increased. While appealing to the public good, each man fought for his own power" (*Bell. Cat.* 38). Sallust also wrote a critique of the *populares* in his *Histories*. The optimate orator Philippus describes the *populares* as "these men who sow the seeds of one disturbance after another, one war after another – the factions of Saturninus, after him Sulpicius, then Marius and Damasippus, and now Lepidus" (Sall. *Or. Phil*. 7). He blames them for causing destruction, violence, and chaos by upsetting the old regime, also referring to Cinna, "on whose return to this city the dignity of the Senate perished" (ibid. 19). Furthermore, he criticizes the motives of Lepidus and his popular rebellion in 78 BCE,[65] alleging that Lepidus pretended "to promote peace by restoring the tribunes' powers, from which all present conflicts arose" (ibid. 14). Thus, *populares* and *optimates* alike attempted to undermine the legitimacy of their opponents by alleging ulterior motives for power. Sallust was reacting against the oligarchy and thus emphasized their culpability, but he also seemed to blame the conflict between *optimates* and *populares* itself for the Republic's problems.

Cicero also suggested that the Gracchi, Sulla, and the Marian faction set the stage for later *populares*. When denouncing a *popularis*, one of Cicero's preferred rhetorical devices was a list of notorious demagogues,[66] culminating in the object of his invective at that moment. In fact, the above quotation from the oration of Philippus in Sallust's *Histories* sounds suspiciously like an imitation of Ciceronian anti-*popularis* oratory. These series of names were intended to evoke memories of

[65] Scullard 88-9.
[66] E.g. *Phil*. 1.42, 5.6, 11.1, 13.1.

violence and attempts at sole power in particular. For example, when haranguing Vatinius, a pro-Caesarian tribune, Cicero questioned him thus:

> Is it not true that you were not a tribune of the people, but rather an intolerable tyrant raised from mud and darkness? …Did you not trample on those most sacred laws, the Aelian and Fufian I mean, which survived the savageness of the Gracchi, the insolence of Saturninus, the rabble of Drusus, the controversy of Saturninus, the carnage of Cinna, and even the military assault of Sulla? (*Vat*. 23)

In his defense of Milo, Cicero described the state as calloused and inured to abuse such as Clodius' persecution of leading citizens and use of force (*Mil*. 76) or the examples in the quotation about Vatinius. This sort of abuse, according to Cicero, began with Sulla. "Sulla subdued Sulpicius…Sulla avenged the cruel acts of [Marius and Cinna's] victory afterwards, but there is no need to tell you how many citizens were murdered, or how great a disaster it was for the state" (*Cat*. 3.24). The division of *populares* from *optimates* had begun with the Gracchi, but the subsequent, more important precedent of tyrannical reigns of terror began with Sulla and Cinna.

Sulla seems to be an aberration in Cicero's lists; it would indeed be difficult to argue that Sulla was himself a *popularis*, since the Sullan constitution undeniably increased the power of the Senate and curtailed the powers of the people's tribunes.[67] However, the methods Sulla used to seize power echoed the violence which was often blamed on the *populares*. According to Cicero, riots and destruction were characteristic of the *populares*, while the *optimates* symbolized stability and tradition. In his defense of Sestius, Cicero suggested that if seditious *populares* like Clodius stopped their agitations, the people and Senate would coexist peacefully (*Sest*. 104). Sulla therefore resembled the *populares* by instigating politically motivated violence,

[67] Scullard 83-5.

especially because he used an army which was proportionately composed of more "common people" at this point due to Marius' enlistment reforms. Additionally, as stated at the beginning of this chapter, the usual pattern was for the oligarchy to be accused of tyranny as a group while the *populares* received such criticism as individuals, and Sulla was clearly an individual actor and sole ruler. Thus, Sulla's approach to seizing power was reason enough for Cicero to place him with the likes of Marius, Cinna, or Antony despite his attempts to bolster the aristocracy. This corroborates the argument that in the early decades of the first century, *popularis* and *optimas* were primarily methodological distinctions.

By contrast with these generations of rabble-rousing *populares*, Cicero eulogized the oligarchy embodied in the peaceful, powerful, post-Sullan senate. In a letter to Atticus in 61 BCE, Cicero eulogized the dignity of the senate, Rome's "Areopagus; nothing is more harmonius, nothing more austere, nothing stronger" (*Att.* 1.14). Along the same lines, in his defense of Flaccus Cicero glorified the Roman senate by contrast with the irrational, frenzied Greek assembly's control of their state (*Flacc*. 16).[68] "Even here, in this most somber and restrained city, …when the Senate house, the conqueror of imprudence and the ruler of offices, presides and occupies the *rostra*, still we see such floods of excitement in the people's assemblies!" (ibid. 57). This division of austere, reliable Senate from foolish, excitable assembly legitimized the oligarchy. It also legitimized the oligarchy's use of any means necessary to defend their Republic from popular leaders, to save the

[68] Cicero also criticizes the Greeks' practice of ostracism as a manifestation of the assembly's inability to govern well, which is ironic given that *popularis* Clodius succeeded in an effort to exile Cicero; Cato's tenure in Cyprus (Scullard 121) has also been interpreted as a kind of exile for which the triumvirate was responsible.

people from themselves with the *senatus consultum ultimum*. Like the Roman kings, the oligarchs could become good rulers or wicked tyrants, and Cicero participated in their effort to cast themselves as the former. This suggests that Cicero also grouped Sulla with the *populares* in order to disown him, since Sulla's destructive reign could not be affiliated with the peace-promoting oligarchy.

Cicero accused the demagogues of his own day of seeking a *regnum* for themselves by recalling the legacy of Sulla, Marius, and Cinna. When Cicero himself was accused of being tyrannical in his punishment of the Catilinarians, he replied that "obviously I did not establish a monarchy in my magistracy; I prevented one" (*Sull.* 21), suggesting instead that Catiline intended to make himself a monarch. In fact, Catiline was not the only aspiring ruler among the conspirators: "Lentulus assured them that according to the Sibylline Books and the *haruspices*, he was the third Cornelius who would obtain power and kingship in Rome" (*Cat.* 3.9). Similarly, Cicero claimed that Clodius intended to use his army of slaves to "be the master of everyone's property and the whole state" (*Mil*. 76). Sulla, Cinna, and Marius had seized control of the city and the state through violence; Cicero used them as precedents to arouse fear and opposition toward such characters as Catiline and Clodius.

Cicero's accusations against Catiline and Clodius of threatening or perpetrating violence to seize power, from plans to burn the city to allegations of sexual assault (*Cat*. 4.12, *Har. Resp*. 59, e.g.), also relied on the recognizable motif of violence as a characteristic of tyranny. Adding a classist dimension to that indictment, Cicero also referred to Clodius as a "gladiator" (e.g. *Dom*. 6, 81) and

compared Antony and Catiline to Spartacus (*Phil*. 4.6). Cicero and the *optimates* hoped to convince the people that the *populares*, their "defenders," would ultimately cause the destruction of the entire city. To portray them as proponents of chaos and civil war Cicero also claimed that the *populares* wanted to massacre the ruling class. He declared that the Catilinarian conspirators planned to assassinate the senators along with their wives, children, and state (*Cat*. 4.12). He likewise charged Clodius with "planning to endanger the bravest and best citizens" (*Sest*. 1, cf *Har*. 45, 53), and accused Caesar and Antony of actually carrying out such a scheme (*Phil*. 2.22). Cicero's rhetoric was designed to alienate these *populares* from the ruling class, presumably to convince other aristocrats not to support the demagogues or to convince the people that they were not fit to rule. Likewise, when Cicero referred to the gangs of thieves or bribed men following these demagogues (e.g. *Dom*. 24, *Sest*. 106), the implicit contrast with the traditional aristocrat's peaceful, unarmed entourage of clients divorced the *popularis* from the traditional image of a leading citizen.

The period of Clodius' rise to power also belongs in the larger context of the formation of the first triumvirate, beginning in the consulship of Caesar and Bibulus in 59 BCE. Although the triumvirate's influence and even its existence have been questioned,[69] Cicero's letters from the year of Caesar's consulship show that at least he was taking their authority seriously; he refers to it as a *regnum* in his letters (*Att*. 2.13). "We have good reason for being afraid; [Pompey] is setting himself up as a tyrant. What else could this hasty marriage alliance…mean?" (Cic. *Att*. 2.17) The ominous marriage to which Cicero referred was that of Pompey to Caesar's daughter,

[69] Gruen 90.

which sealed their political alliance and pooled their *clientelae*. However, a few months later the alliance began to weaken, which Cicero observed by the crowd's response to Caesar as he entered a theater (*Att*. 2.19).[70] "For the moment, nothing is as popular as hating the *populares*" (*Att*. 2.20), as Cicero related to Atticus. The year of Caesar's consulship provides uniquely fertile ground for the study of *optimas-popularis* conflict, since there was a consul from each party in office and their relationship quickly deteriorated from bad to worse. Although Bibulus was ineffective as a consul – even Cicero could not see why the people adored him (ibid. 2.21) – he was able to rally Caesar's former supporters by portraying himself as a non-participant in an increasingly unpopular regime, hence Suetonius' account of the "'consulship of Julius and Caesar'" (*Iul*. 20.2).

However, Cicero seemed more apprehensive than relieved by the triumvirate's fall from grace. In a letter to Atticus he described a *contio* in which Caesar attempted to rile up an angry mob against Bibulus during their consulship, and although he did not succeed, further violence was clearly a possibility (*Att*. 2.21). Likewise, he told Atticus that he "was afraid that [Pompey], such an aggressive and pasionate man unaccustomed to insults, might obey his anger and resentment" (ibid.). In this period the main opposition to Caesar and the triumvirate was headed by Cato, energetic even in his absence, having been ejected from Rome by the triumvirs because of their "excessive bitterness" towards him (Sall. *Bell. Cat.* 53). Sallust wrote that in his lifetime, "there were two men of outstanding merit with contrary personalities" (ibid.), Cato and Caesar. The disparity and hostility between Cato and Caesar

[70] This during the performance in which the actor denouncing a tyrant indicated an analogy with Pompey.

catalyzed the coalescing of *optimates* and *populares* into political parties based on personal relationships and, more importantly, personal vendettas. After the civil war, Sallust was able to see the problem quite clearly: "This sort of conflict has brought ruin on many great states, when one group wants to defeat another group by any means possible, and the winners are violent in their revenge" (BJ 42).

After the outbreak of civil war in 49 BCE, Caesar did not blame Pompey in his propaganda for initiating the war but Cato for spurring Pompey to join the optimate side.[71] He also claimed that when a Caesarian tribune had attempted to mediate, Cato had filibustered with vehement opposition and prevented peace. In the Senate Caesar "discussed the malice of his enemies, who…would rather throw everything into crisis than surrender their power and armies" (*Bellum Civile* I.32). Likewise, the author of the *African Wars* portrayed Pompey and his son Gnaeus as figureheads with Cato as the real leader (*Afr*. 22). In response, as Cicero later discussed in his *de Officiis*, the *optimates*' designation of Caesar as a *hostis* literally alienated him from the heritage of Roman leadership (*Off.* I.12). That this was Caesar's vendetta and perhaps not political reality is reflected in Cicero's letters about the civil war, in which he tended to write only about Pompey as the leader of the anti-Caesarian effort because of his own conflicted desires to help his friend Pompey and to promote peace. He did note that Pompey switched from *popularis* to *optimas* and became a "defender of the republic" during his third consulship (*Att.* 8.3), his sole consulship in 52, the shift for which Caesar blamed Cato. Cicero was disappointed in

[71] Taylor 161.

49 that Pompey "was always successful when he worked for bad causes, and now he stumbles serving the best ones" (*Att*. 7.25).[72]

As Lily Ross Taylor observed, "The heated and often violent struggles in public meetings, assemblies, and law courts were practically ended at Rome after Caesar crossed the Rubicon. Henceforth party conflict was mainly in the hands of trained soldiers."[73] The situation invited an uncomfortable analogy with the age of Sulla. During the civil war, Cicero wrote to Atticus that "it is amazing, our friend Pompey wants to imitate Sulla's rule. I speak truly; he has never made anything more obvious" (*Att*. 9.7; cf. 8.11). By contrast, Cicero preserved a letter from Caesar to Cornelius Balbus in which Caesar declared that he did not want to imitate Sulla in his treatment of the Italians (*Att*. 9.7 C). After several intervening decades, Sulla's legacy still seemed to lie at the crux of the factional conflict. Indeed, the terms of the debate were the same in 49 as they had been in the 80s. Like Cinna and Sulla, Caesar and the Catonians asserted that they were acting to protect the rule of law and the Republic, and that the opposing side was oppressing the city. After the onset of the civil war it seems inappropriate to refer to *populares*, since both parties were struggling to endear themselves to the people through such propaganda. The old methodological distinction between factions could not be made anymore; the conflict was now personal, thinly masked by ideological invective.

In his campaign to portray himself as the more merciful, popular leader during the civil war, Caesar emphasized the treatment of provincials in Asia and Africa as a major difference between Caesarians and Catonians. Caesar wrote that Pompey and

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[72] In fact, it is tempting to translate the second phrase as "he stumbles serving the optimate cause," since Cicero uses the word *optima*.
[73] Taylor 162.

the *optimates* extorted money from provincials and tax companies in Asia (*Bell. Civ*. III.3), and that whoever "behaved with the greatest violence and cruelty, he was honored as the best man and greatest patriot" (ibid. III.31). In Africa, Caesar was apparently moved to tears when leading men in the African towns came to tell him about their treatment at the hands of Cato's army (*Bell. Afr*. 26, cf. ibid. 87). Caesar thus extended his *popularis* image to the provincials of Africa and Asia as well as Italy through the language of patronage. He even noted that some former Marian clients allied with Caesar as the heir of Marius (*Afr*. 32). This also recalls the comparison made to Sulla above, since Sulla was also notorious for his harsh settlements in the East after the Mithridatic War, just as the Catonians who Caesar argued were Sulla's heirs abused the eastern provinces later.

At the end of the civil war, it seemed that the optimate party might have died with Pompey and Cato. The unfortunate repercussion of incorporating the aristocrats who represented the senate into the Catonian faction was that when Caesar conquered the Catonians, he also conquered the senate, and he behaved accordingly. Cicero had been aware of the problem from the beginning of the war: "if I stay here and desert the society of the best (*optimi*) and most illustrious citizens, I must fall under the domination of one man" (*Att*. 8.3). Cicero's decision to retire from politics after the civil war demonstrates how grim the oligarchy's future seemed: "there was no place anymore for collaboration or honor" (II.1.2). Apparently Brutus believed that Caesar might reconcile himself with the *optimates* and senatorial authority, but Cicero responded to that hope with disillusioned pessimism: "Really? Brutus says he will join the *boni*? Good news – but where will he find them? Perhaps if he hangs

himself" (*Att.* 13.40). Nevertheless, Cicero's letter shows that the *boni* were still conceptualized as a cohesive group, and Caesar's tyrannical behavior as dictator seems to have pushed the former members of that group back into an alliance.

In fact, Cato's name was still the major rallying point for the Catonians, since his suicide in Africa transformed him into a highly romanticized martyr of the Republic. Cicero wrote a panegyric to Cato after the war to that effect, to which Caesar responded by publishing an "Anticato" which Cicero characterized as employing every device of invective imaginable against Cato (*Topica* 25.94). Caesar's petulant response could not outweigh Cato's new reputation: Sallust portrayed this rehabilitated Cato's perspective in his *Bellum Catilinae*: Cato professes that "since I have never forgiven any fault in myself, I can scarcely pardon another man's depraved crimes" (*Bell. Cat*. 52). This uncompromising sense of justice contrasted sharply with Caesar's tyrannical behavior as well as his policy of *clementia*, and the martyred Cato's idealism inspired new resolve in the *optimates*. The *optimates* as a group gained a new label from Cato's sacrifice: Republicans.[74] The label of "tyrannicides" was not far behind.

Even tyrannicide, however, could not rid the *optimates* of the Caesarians. Antony assumed Caesar's role as a party leader, and he began his career well by abolishing the title of dictator (*Phil.* 1.3-4) and generally giving the impression that he would support and respect the *optimates*. When he introduced a guard of soldiers into the city, and when rumors began that the altar to Caesar in the Forum would be restored after the *optimates* had had it removed (*Fam*. 11.2), the hope of a unified government was lost. Cicero was especially outraged when Antony and the

[74] Ibid. 167.

Caesarians managed to honor Caesar's memory by naming a month after him: "What could be more disgusting to Brutus than 'July?'" (*Att*. 16.1). Brutus and Cassius directed Antony to "consider what you are doing, what you can do, and think carefully not about how long Caesar lived, but about how long he ruled" (Cic. *Fam*. 11.2-3). Such was Caesar's legacy: Antony's actions were partisan but not particularly regal, yet his identification as a Caesarian leader immediately produced a suspicion of a renewed *regnum* and drove the state to civil war again.

Octavian entered the political scene in a paradoxical position: he was Caesar's heir, but used Caesar's name to rally an army to support the *optimates* against Antony. Cicero announced that he and the rest of the *optimates* owed their lives to Octavian (*Phil*. 5.42) and also compared Octavian to Pompey, since each had raised an army on his own initiative as a young man to serve the state, and since Pompey had spent his last months fighting alongside the optimate senators as Octavian now did. However, there was one important difference: "By [Pompey's] assistance Sulla reigned, and by [Octavian's] protection a tyrant has been crushed" (ibid. 5.44). Cicero even remarked that if Caesar had been on such good terms with the Senate as a young man as Octavian was, Caesar would not have had the motive to become a *popularis* at all (ibid. 5.49). All the signs, then, indicated that the young Caesar had become an *optimas*. Upon forming the second triumvirate, however, Octavian acted the part of a Caesarian. He allowed his defender Cicero to be proscribed and participated with Antony in the annihilation of the Catonians at Philippi.

Then, as the schism between him and Antony grew, Octavian resumed his optimate persona. "The republic had become more and more popular in the years

when Antony in the East had been assuming the role of the Hellenistic king, and it was common talk that Antony was the successor of the tyranny of Caesar."[75] This characterization of Antony then allowed Octavian to put Caesar aside, to some extent, and to portray himself as an *optimas*. Through Cato, the *optimates* had become symbolic of the traditional Rome of the past, the ideal republic.[76] Consequently, they also became the representatives of the republic against the tyranny of Caesar and Antony. Octavian opportunistically and successfully chose the best attributes of Caesar and Cato. As Caesar's heir he acquired a famous name, an army, popular support, and a divine parent; by taking up Cato's legacy, he became a champion of the Republic, an anti-tyrant. The Augustan poets thus continued to portray Cato as a hero and a martyr (Hor. *Carm*. 2.1.24, 3.3.1-8). In the Underworld in the *Aeneid*, when Aeneas encounters Cato, far from suffering in limbo for committing suicide or promulgating war, Cato is presiding as judge over the pious (VIII.670).

During the course of the first century, conflict between *populares* and *optimates* beginning with the Gracchi, Sulla, and the Marians produced an increasing neurosis for the conservative aristocrats. Such anxiety was expressed through allegations of tyranny, which came to be defined as a criminal desire for power which divorced the politican in question from the traditional concept of a leading man. The *populares* tried to respond in kind, but as we have seen, the *populares* were not revolutionaries and relied on the same cultural values as the *optimates*, which weakened their case. *Populares* and *optimates* alike tried to portray themselves as the true heirs to the Republican ruling class, defined by *virtus*, *pietas*, and *dignitas*. By

[75] Ibid. 177; cf. Syme 317.
[76] Cf. Horace *Carm*. I.12.

Cicero, individual *populares* were described as power-hungry, demented megalomaniacs who would seize control of the state only to destroy its institutions, figuratively and literally. As Cicero professed on one occasion, "[Clodius] profaned modesty, chastity, the Senate's dignity, civil rights, laws, courts – and thus began his path…to power over the state, and he began boasting that he was a *popularis*" (*Har. Resp*. 43). By Sallust and Caesar, the oligarchy was depicted as a self-obsessed, miserly, impotent group who did not deserve their inherited status, but the oligarchy maintained their inherited status nonetheless. Through escalating conflict, expressed in the language of tyranny, this partisan divide produced rigid, well-defined factions based around the reputation of individuals during the course of the century. A discussion of tyranny in this context also yields a definition of the nature of legitimate power in the Roman Republic, an ideology which Augustus used as a key building block for the secure foundation of the principate.

GENERALS AND MILITARY DICTATORS

Military commands were the complement to *popularis* methods in the first century BCE: both allowed young aristocrats to ascend unusually quickly up the hierarchy of political power. With each passing month on campaign, a general could cultivate a closer attachment to local aristocrats in the provinces, as well as his own soldiers and lieutenants. As Cicero observed, the generals' achievements in war were "…great indeed; who denies that? But because they were motivated by great rewards

and the everlasting memory of men, it is not so astonishing that a man who desires immortality should perform such feats" (Cicero Rab. Post. 42). All of these clients made useful political capital when the general returned to civic life at Rome. As Marius and Sulla began employing settled veterans in civil conflicts, the advantages of grateful troops became even clearer. Because of these developments, Cicero wrote with certainty during the civil war in 49 that "Out of victory, among many evils, a tyranny will grow" (*Att*. 7.5.4). To investigate the role of the military in the political crises of the late Republic, we will look at contemporary portrayals of generals through the lenses of civil war and military dictatorship in Rome. Two common literary tropes, a general's convivial relationship with his troops and mutiny, will also help to demonstrate the anxiety which the Marian New Army inspired in generals and senators alike.

In any war, a terrible fate awaited the losers: "virgins raped, boys and children ripped from their parents' arms, matrons subjected to the conquerors' lust, temples and homes plundered; slaughter, fire, and finally a cry of mourning amidst weapons, corpses, and gore" (*Bell. Cat*. 51). For any Roman, Catiline in this instance, to bring such horrors on his own people was unforgivable. "For there is nothing more foul than such a citizen, or such a man, if indeed someone who propagates civil war can be called a citizen or a man" (Cicero *Phil*. XIII.1). In his commentaries, Caesar captured one moment which chillingly portrays the horrors of civil war:

> [Fabius] was looking for Varus and calling his name in a loud voice, as if he were one of Varus' soldiers… When Varus saw that he was being called, he looked back and asked who he was and what he wanted, and [Fabius] lunged at his exposed shoulder with his sword and nearly killed Varus. (*Bell. Civ*. II.35)

It is no wonder that Caesar and Octavian tried to avoid blame for provoking such disasters by alleging that they had conquered a foreign rather than a Roman enemy, Caesar with his African and Spanish triumphs and Octavian after Actium.[77]

Throughout the period from Marius to Octavian, the surviving sources show the leaders in these conflicts constantly struggling to show that they were not responsible for such atrocities. They attempted to convince their armies and the citizens of Rome that they had been provoked by war-mongering, arrogant opponents and therefore had to go to war to liberate themselves and their fellow citizens. Appian recounted Sulla's pithy remark during his march on Rome in 88 BCE that he was headed to deliver Rome from her tyrants (*Bell. Civ.* I.57). While potentially not historical,[78] it neatly sums up the hope of all generals to be seen as champions of justice instead of agents of civil strife.

In this vein, Sulla's victories over Sulpicius, Marius, and Cinna led to the portrayal of those men as tyrannical demagogues in contrast to his own defense of law and order. Sulla's is one of the clearest cases from the ancient world of history written by the winners. Outside Sullan propaganda, there is no doubt that those demagogues portrayed themselves as defenders of the people and Sulla as a tyrant. Caesar had a similar goal: he told his troops, the Senate, and the readers of his commentaries that the Senate's abuse of tribunes incited his crossing of the Rubicon, not his own desire for war (*Bell. Civ*. I.5, I.32). Cicero later mocked Caesar for this excuse and claimed that during the civil war, Caesar's lieutenant Antony, "like Helen

[77] Scullard 146-7; Syme 298.
[78] The story does not occur in Plutarch's biography, which suggests that it was not recorded in Sulla's own memoirs. This seems unlikely if it took place. Alternately, it is possible that Plutarch omitted it from his generally negative representation of Sulla.

of Troy, was the cause of war in this republic, the cause of plague and destruction" (*Phil*. II.22). Cicero also proposed that Octavian be enrolled among the senators "because … [he] raised a force of veteran soldiers to fight for the liberty of the Roman people" against Antony (ibid. V.17). For his part, Octavian later claimed that he "raised an army on his own initiative and at his own expense with which he restored the Roman people's freedom, which was oppressed by the domination of a faction" (*Res Gestae* I). The title of "liberator" excluded the name of "tyrant."

Self-defense was an important component of a general's justification for civil war. Sulla and Cinna both claimed that hostile elements in Rome had deprived them of their rightful authority.[79] Caesar's declaration that "to him, prestige had always been more important than life itself" and that he "was prepared to engage in any battle or to suffer anything for the republic" because he was deprived of public office may sound like the words of a tyrant to us, but he clearly expected his audience to find this a legitimate reason for engaging in civil war (*Bell. Civ*. I.9). Caesar was also determined to show that he had tried to prevent the war on several occasions. He had advocated a mutual disbanding of armies from the beginning (ibid. I.9-11) and sent a peace envoy before the battle of Dyrrhachium (ibid. III.57). He also restored lost property to soldiers in Afranius' army and peacefully disbanded them without any punishment (ibid. I.87). Pompey, less concerned for the wellbeing of the soldiers and the republic, thwarted these efforts at mediation, but Caesar had thus absolved himself of blame for initiating hostilities. Additionally, Caesar recorded one instance in which one of his officer's dying words ordered his troops to save Caesar's eagles

[79] Scullard 71, 74; Hildinger 203.

and his pride from Pompey (ibid. III.64). This shows that the Caesarian army was prepared to espouse Caesar's claim for waging civil war justly.

Having won the war, Caesar tried to prove that he was as rational and merciful as a dictator as he had been as a general. In his commentaries, he described his activities as dictator as carefully calculated to reward those who had defended him and to ensure a functioning rule of law. "He allotted eleven days to these affairs, the Latin Festival, and all the elections, and then abdicated from the dictatorship and set out for Brundisium" (*Bell. Civ*. III.1-2). With his account of Antony in the *Philippics* Cicero provided a contrast to Caesar's benevolent, just dictatorship. Antony first abolished the office of dictator altogether, but he then dashed all hopes of moderation by becoming a dictator in all but name and flaunting his power by adopting an armed bodyguard (*Phil*. I.2). "We remembered Cinna's excessive power, Sulla's tyranny after that, and recently we had observed the monarchy of Caesar. There were swords then, perhaps, but at least they were hidden and not so many. …But they follow him with swords in a whole marching column" (ibid. II.42). In general, these military commanders seemed to use their dictatorial power in the city to do some legislative good; even Antony prevented a complete breakdown of order after Caesar's death by promoting a settlement with the tyrannicides. Inevitably, though, they were met with fear, resistance, and discord because of their autocratic position.

Caesar's *clementia* during and after the war was unexpected and uncomfortable for his enemies; Cicero feared "that all this mercy will lapse into a Cinnan sort of cruelty" (*Att*. 8.9.4). Recent history had taught them to expect proscriptions from a general who was willing to march on Rome itself to protect his

status. Before 83 BCE, Sulla, Marius, and Cinna had used their terms of supreme power to have some rivals executed,[80] but Sulla's proscriptions in that year were on a previously unheard-of scale. By 80 BCE, Cicero was already able to use the widespread fear and revulsion aroused by the proscriptions to subvert one of Sulla's underlings (*Pro Rosc. Am.*). Sallust cited several examples in which politicians criticized Sulla and defamed the horrors of the proscriptions in order to win popular favor (Sallust *Hist*. I.48, I.67). He also claimed that Catiline promised to proscribe the rich simply as a way to reward his followers (*Bell. Cat*. 21). Caesar himself reminded the Senate of how Sulla's punishment of men responsible for conflict and injustice had descended into murder for profit when recommending exile for the Catilinarian conspirators (ibid. 1). Clearly Caesar's subsequent reassurance that he did not expect proscriptions to occur during Cicero's consulate was meant rather to alarm his audience. Cicero's allegation that Antony committed crimes even beyond Sulla's by torturing a Roman citizen also prefigured the brutal treatment Cicero himself and many others would soon receive during the proscriptions of the second triumvirate (*Phil*. XI.1). Proscriptions were a constant threat hanging over the heads of Rome's rich and powerful, and any general who grew too powerful was perceived as already composing his list.

We now come to the army itself, the ways in which it responded to its generals, and its effect on first century politics. In his monographs, Sallust presented the development of the New Army as a downward spiral toward civil war in which the generals grew stronger while the aristocracy grew more defensive. When Marius became consul and commander of the Numidian province "because of plebeian

[80] Scullard 73.

desire" (Sallust *BJ* IX.84) he proposed to reinforce his army by enlisting men from the poorer classes of citizens. The senators "in fact were delighted to decree him additional resources, since they thought the plebs would not want to join the army and Marius would suffer the loss of either military strength or popularity" (ibid.). Marius, however, disappointed their expectations and roused the plebs with an inspiring oration (ibid. IX.85). He contrasted the laziness and arrogance of the aristocrats with his own patriotism, diligence, and hard-earned reputation. If he were replaced in his command with an aristocrat, he said, that man "would probably appropriate someone from the common people to be his teacher in office. It often happens this way, that the man to whom you have given *imperium* must find his own *imperator* to tell him what to do" (ibid. IX.85). Sallust suggested that popularity, which was responsible for Marius' election as consul and appropriation of the command in Numidia, empowered Marius to provoke and taunt the aristocracy. Thus the link between generals and *populares*, because the New Army included an increasing proportion of the *populus*, but a popular politician could do much more damage leading an army than a faction.

Marius continued to establish a personal rapport with his soldiers. In that same oration he touted his lack of education in Greek or rhetoric, showing that he had more in common with the soldiers than with his fellow consulars. He promised to share hardships and profits alike with the soldiers, "for when a man lives safely in luxury but subjects his army to torturous restraint, he is a tyrant, not a commander" (ibid.). Marius also promised to be generous to the troops with plunder, thus the basis for Sallust's misanthropic hypothesis that an ambitious man achieves the highest

position with a party of poor men, since "everything seems right to [the poor] which comes with a reward" (ibid. IX.86). Once in Numidia, "treated moderately and also enriched" by victories (ibid. X.92), the troops remained obedient and loyal. Marius also went around the camp to supervise provisions and praise deserving soldiers himself, even though a consul usually left this to his legates (XI.100). And like Sallust's own general, Caesar, Marius "maintained order in his army by appealing to the troops' sense of honor rather than by punishment" (ibid.). At every turn, Marius sought to make his appearance familiar among the troops to make it clear that he was responsible for their wellbeing and, moreover, interested in it.

Sallust noted that Marius' enemy Sulla, who was not a *popularis*, nevertheless "spoke in a friendly way to the soldiers, giving help to many who asked and others who did not, and unwilling to accept any help himself…he could tell jokes and converse on serious topics with the lowest of men" (ibid. XI.96). Sulla proved an able commander and earned a grass crown for saving his men's lives.[81] He also set an immensely important precedent by using his troops, with whom he was so friendly and who were individually and collectively indebted to him, to march on Rome. The soldiers did not seem to make much distinction between foreign and domestic campaigns. The campaign at home was still lucrative, perhaps even more so because of the proscriptions, and a general with consular *imperium* was still giving their

[81] Keaveney (2007) 95. Appian records one similar episode in which he immortalized Sulla's ability to inspire his troops, and although it is later than our focus, it is impossible to exclude as an *exemplum* of a good commander:

> The Romans fought badly because they were in terror of the enemy's cavalry. Sulla rode hither and thither a long time, encouraging and threatening his men. Failing to bring them up to their duty in this way, he leaped from his horse, seized a standard, ran out between the two armies with his shield-bearers, exclaiming, 'If you are ever asked, Romans, where you abandoned Sulla, your general, say that it was at the battle of Orchomenus.' When the officers saw his peril they darted from their own ranks to his aid, and the troops, moved by the sense of shame, followed and drove the enemy back in their turn" (Appian Mith. VII.49).

orders.[82] As a result, by 63 BCE the common soldiers of Sulla's army, now rich senators, made the perfect recruiting advertisement and illustrated the advantages to be gained in civil wars. This motivated many lower class or otherwise socially unfortunate Romans to join Catiline's conspiracy, according to Sallust (*Bell. Cat.* VI.27). It is debatable whether Sallust saw the generals or the profiteering soldiers as more culpable for the escalation of civil wars and factional strife. It is clear, however, that in his opinion the New Army ultimately facilitated the military despotism of Sulla and those to come.

Caesar's commentaries gave a different perspective on the relationship between a general and his troops. He wrote that a general's responsibility was addressing and encouraging the troops (*BG* V.33) and reminded his soldiers before, after, and during battles to remember their sense of honor. After Quintus Cicero's defense of his winter camp Caesar "praised Cicero for his merit and praised the legion, and acknowledged each centurion and military tribune about whose great bravery he had learned from Cicero's testimony" (ibid. V.52). Caesar also made special mention in the commentaries of a centurion named Crastinus, who had been particularly eager to serve Caesar with his heroism (*Bell. Civ*. III.9, 99). Like Marius and Sulla, Caesar made himself visible to his troops on these occasions to build ties of loyalty with the soldiers, but also because the impression that their superiors were watching made soldiers remember their sense of duty (ibid. I.67). As a result of these efforts, he felt legitimized in asking that his army "defend the reputation and authority of their commander, under whose leadership they served the state for nine years with

[82] Gruen 372-3.

great success and also carried out many campaigns, and subdued all of Gaul and Germany" (ibid. I.7).

Caesar also recorded his attention to the wellbeing and morale of his men on campaign. Victory was the surest insurance against disloyalty or unrest (ibid. II.31), but Caesar also stabilized morale in other ways. In the war against Vercingetorix, Caesar approached each legion and "said that he would give up the siege [of Avaricum] if the food shortage grew too severe, but they all asked unanimously that he not do so" because it would be humiliating for them and for him (BG VII.17). When his men were anxious to face the Catonians in Spain, Caesar took their wishes into consideration and decided on a bolder course of action which suited their enthusiasm (*Bell. Civ*. I.64); by contrast, Pompey formed a plan for the battle of Pharsalus which repressed his soldiers' excitement, showing Pompey's lack of rapport with his troops and basic inability as a commander (ibid. III.92).

To dispel any rumors of his pandering to the men, however, Caesar demonstrated that there was a limit to his indulgence of their fervor. Because he hoped that "he could conclude the affair without any fighting or blood shed by his men" and "was also moved by pity for his fellow-citizens" in the Catonian armies, Caesar avoided confrontation when possible in the civil wars (I.72). After all, although going along with the troops' desires satisfied them, victory was the surest way to secure their allegiance, and defeat the surest way to lose it. After denying his soldiers the immediate chance to redeem themselves after Dyrrhachium so that they would recover their confidence as well as contemplate their responsibility for their general's defeat, he routed Pompey's army at Pharsalus (*Bell. Civ*. III.74).

The rewards given to soldiers were also a subject of controversy. Livy wrote that from the time of Scipio Africanus and the war with Perseus, generals had offered rewards to their soldiers in order to boost enlistment (XXXVII.4, XLII.32.). Caesar, however, avoided the subject. He noted only a few instances in which he rewarded his soldiers with plunder and always legitimized it by reminding readers of the local population's treachery or resistance, or the actions by which the soldiers earned such recompense. The first soldier over a besieged city's wall and the centurion and his cohort who saved Caesar's fort at Dyrrhachium, for instance, earned their rewards (BG VII.27, *Bell. Civ*. III.53). Likewise, the city of Gomphi earned retribution by betraying Caesar after Dyrrhachium, and Caesar made an example of the city by handing it over to his soldiers to plunder (ibid. III.80). By contrast, the Pompeian general Scipio gave cities to his soldiers for plunder merely "to strengthen the soldiers' loyalty" (ibid. III.31). Caesar appreciated the fine line between rewarding and buying loyalty and was sensitive to this distinction in his accounts of his own leadership.

On the subject of purchasing an army's loyalty, Caesar says that in preparation for the civil war he borrowed money from his centurions and military tribunes and distributed it to the army, an act which "had two consequences: that he bound the centurions to himself with loyalty by the loan and procured the soldiers' cooperation by his generosity" (ibid. I.39). This brings up an interesting difference between the loyalty of officers and the loyalty of common soldiers. As noted above, Sulla's rewards to his soldiers made other common men join the army with hopes of social advancement and personal wealth, and the soldiers generally seemed happy as

long as rewards seemed forthcoming. To the common soldier, Sulla was a consul, their *imperator* who had brought them victory and profit, and the disregard for his status by Sulpicius and Marius was a crime which they could avenge in his service.

However, the officer class was more demanding. When Sulla set out for Rome in 88, "With the exception of his quaestor Lucullus, all his senior officers abandoned him" because they "thought they were actually being led in an attack on their country."[83] Sulla's one-year tenure as consul was insignificant in comparison to their larger perspective on history and precedent; this also shows how tightly knit the Caesarian and Catonian camps, from which few officers deserted, were in comparison to the earlier groups of *optimates* and *populares*. Caesar also noted that Pompey's aristocratic officers betrayed their status by quarreling over magistracies and properties even before they had won the war (*Bell. Civ*. III.82-3). Caesar's own act of borrowing from his officers implied that the officers would be more eager to assure his victory if money were at stake, and thus in effect encouraged them to think only of financial gain like the common soldiers. Apparently this was successful, for of Caesar's officers only Labienus left him at the Rubicon.[84] Alternately, it could also suggest that Caesar's officers, since they were less aristocratic than their Catonian counterparts, had different priorities from the start. Thus, while the Catonians dishonored their status, the Caesarian generals behaved according to their position.

By speaking to the troops and ensuring their satisfaction, the generals of the late Republic ingratiated themselves with the New Army. As a result, they also turned it into the apparently capricious, destructive force that many authors through

[83] Keaveney (2007) 38.
[84] Ibid. 42

the ages have blamed for the civil wars of the first century. The soldiers do seem to have become more politically aware and autonomous when it came to choosing a side in civil wars. Far from following any leader who promised them money, or consistently obeying a single leader, the troops proved themselves capable of alarmingly free will. Literary descriptions of mutinies contribute important information about the common soldier's feelings about civil war. Factors like the celebrity, success, and the personality of a general proved important to the troops, and the status of a consul, proconsul, or dictator still seemed to impress them on some occasions.

Sulla seemed to have made a revelatory discovery of the full range of possibilities offered by the New Army when he successfully employed it in a march on Rome in 88 BCE. Throughout his military career he portrayed himself as blessed by the gods, particularly Venus, hence the addition of "Felix" to his name.[85] His reputation for well-omened campaigns and great successes paid off in civil wars and conflicts with other generals. In 83 BCE, the army of Appius Claudius Pulcher, apparently not quite as attached to their general as he might have hoped,[86] agreed to serve Cinna in his attempt to reassert his consular authority. When Cinna ordered them to make a dangerous crossing of the Adriatic to march against Sulla, however, the army reached the end of their tolerance for this new commander and killed him. Rid of Cinna and convinced where the army's loyalties lay, the optimates apparently became more staunch supporters of Sulla at this point.[87]

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[85] Ibid. (2007) 12-3.
[86] At least, not so attached that they could not be bribed; Keaveney (2007) 39.
[87] Hildinger 203.

Meanwhile, the army sent to replace Sulla's in the campaign against Mithridates abruptly deserted to Sulla, and their leader Fimbria committed suicide.[88] Sulla showed his magnanimity and non-tyrannical nature by allowing Fimbria an official burial.[89] Likewise, when Sulla returned to Italy and faced the consul Scipio, some mixing of the troops and a short parade showing Sulla's strength resulted in the desertion *en masse* of Scipio's army. Satisfied with the outcome, Sulla allowed safe passage for Scipio and his son.[90] Never one to spare his enemies, Sulla's comparatively lenient responses in these situations reflected how enormously such desertions and mutinies improved his public image. The army's loyalties frightened the aristocrats at Rome into supporting him, so much so that making an example of the opposing generals was unnecessary.

Despite his frequent success in winning the loyalty of other armies, however, Sulla did suffer some setbacks. Just after marching on Rome for the first time, he betrayed his ultimate lack of insight into the soldiers' mood when he replaced one army's commander, Pompeius Strabo, with his own adherent and co-consul Pompeius Rufus. Soon after Rufus attempted to take control, the troops mutinied and murdered him; Strabo's involvement was unclear, and Sulla did not punish Strabo or the army with any real severity.[91] Even the will of Sulla, fresh from his assertion of his power over Rome in 88 and endowed with divine favor, could not compete with the troops' loyalty to their commander on this occasion. Perhaps if Sulla had taken command of that army himself, his *felicitas* and conviviality would have won them over. In any

[88] Ibid. 201.
[89] Keaveney (1982) 110.
[90] Hildinger 205.
[91] Ibid. 184.

event, this mutiny shows that Sulla was no more an ingenious innovator than his peers, and that any able commander could theoretically win an army's loyalty and keep it despite civil conflicts.

The importance of mutinies in establishing Sulla's military dictatorship shows that the troops' loyalty legitimized their general's cause. Thus, mutinies continued to have great symbolic significance after Sulla's rule. Caesar took great care to explain the causes of the mutiny of his Gallic army at Vesontio in 58 BCE, and also recorded the arguments with which he ended it. He claimed that unrest began with military tribunes, prefects, and the sycophants in his army because of their cowardly fear of the Germans, and it then spread throughout the whole army and resulted in a mutiny. "When he had summoned the centurions of all ranks to a council," Caesar reminded them of their past bravery and victories as well as his own proven ability to take care of the army's provisions and safety. He concluded that "even if no one followed him, he would go by himself with only the tenth legion, whose readiness he did not doubt" (*BG* I.40). Apparently ashamed for ever doubting their commander's capacities and eager to reassert their integrity, the army consequently conceived a miraculous "eagerness and desire to go to war" (ibid. I.41). The tenth legion, meanwhile, thanked Caesar for his confidence in them.

Mutinies and desertions in Caesar's commentaries on the civil war are abundant on the Catonian side, not surprisingly. According to Caesar, Pompey affirmed the importance of loyalty in one's army before the war broke out by assuring the Senate that "he had found out that the soldiers were opposed to Caesar and could not be persuaded to defend or follow him" (BC I.6), and that any war would thus be

easy. Cicero also praised the desertion of Labienus, who "refused to be [Caesar's] partner in crime" at the Rubicon (*Fam*. 16.12). However, after that war began, events proved Pompey a poor judge of the soldiers' loyalties. Armies deserted the Catonian generals Varus (ibid. I.13), Lentulus Spinther and Domitius (I.20), and Afranius (I.78), and Caesar seized control of Catonian armies in Italy and Spain. This trend continued throughout the war. At Dyrrhachium, two Allobroges deserted to Pompey's side because they had mistreated the Caesarian soldiers under their command and feared a mutiny of their own. Pompey then paraded the two around his camp because "before that time, no one, soldier or cavalry, had crossed from Caesar's side to Pompey's, although they escaped almost every day from Pompey to Caesar" (ibid. III.59-61).

Meanwhile, even when Caesar reprimanded his troops, as after Dyrrhachium, it only made them more eager to prove themselves (ibid. III.74). The memorable story of Caesar's repression of a mutiny during the civil war by telling the "Quirites" (citizens, as opposed to soldiers) to turn in their standards first appears in Lucan (*Pharsalia* V.358) but supports Caesar's depiction of himself as ultimately in control of his troops, while Pompey seemed unable to exert similar authority. Caesar himself omitted the vast majority of mutinies in his own army from his commentaries. While he recognized the inevitability of the Roman people hearing such stories about his Gallic campaigns, his discussion elsewhere of the effect of rumor on the civil wars (BC II.17, III.80) suggests that he hoped to contradict stories of mutiny and so reduce them to the status of mere gossip or wishful thinking.

All these mutinies, and the generals' encouragement of soldiers who defected to their armies, created a monster. Appian wrote of the age of Sulla that armies "served only the man who enlisted them, and even so not under compulsion of the law, but by private inducements. …Desertion, formerly an unpardonable offence for a Roman, was at that time rewarded by gifts" (ibid. 5.17). Keaveney argues that Appian conflated the age of Sulla with the age of the second triumvirate, and indeed desertion and mutiny seem to have gone completely beyond the control of any general by the 40s BCE. Cicero himself praised the bravery and even the loyalty of the Martian legion when they deserted Mark Antony: "when they judged that Antony was an enemy of the Roman people, they refused to be companions to him in his insanity" (*Phil*. III.3). He also asserted that "if Antonius is a consul, [the consul Decimus] Brutus is an enemy; if Brutus is the savior of the republic, then Antony is an enemy" (ibid. IV.3). While Cicero may have found this an easy distinction, the soldier's responsibility to follow his commander and protect the republic must have become so completely confounded at this point that a choice based on moral judgment was nearly impossible.

Thus, mutiny and desertion as a literary trope illustrated the political tension in the first century between the Senate and generals. More surprisingly, it shows that the common people had both a political will and the agency to use it to affect politics. For generals, mutiny on the opposing side or the ability to quickly suppress dissent among their own troops implied that the people in the city would also support them. After all, after Marius began enlisting non-propertied poorer Romans and as military service became more profitable for the common man, soldiers and non-aristocratic

city-dwellers often came from the same walks of life. The use of armies to march on Rome or foment civil war only increased the stakes in this contest.

The Senate's anxiety was also directed toward the generals who appeared able to control these armies. Sulla's anger was directed against Marius, Sulpicius, and Cinna, but Caesar could legitimately claim that the senate as a whole, represented by the *optimates* who controlled and embodied it, had insulted him and deserved his reprisal. By allying themselves for the most part with Pompey and Cato because of their own fear of domination, the senators cornered Caesar and encouraged him to use his army against them, eventually bringing about the second dictatorship at Rome in fifty years. When the senate tried to send out generals of their own like Fimbria, the consul Scipio, and ultimately Pompey to defend their authority and those generals failed to do so, the *optimates* blamed their continuing failures on the apparently uncontrollable troops. This is presumably the source of the depiction of the Republican army found in Dio (XLI.26) and Appian (*BC* 5.28). The *optimates*' disappointment when their first genuinely successful supporter, Octavian, made his own peace with Antony must have been enormous.

Because Marius and Sulla used the army to subvert the Senate's control of the state, the military became a breeding ground for tyranny in the first century BCE. Military command allowed men like Sulla and Caesar to collect money, clients, and political capital, and their opponents in the city were correspondingly eager to remove them from such lucrative posts. In the middle of all this was the New Army, whose support became a symbol of legitimate power and popularity. Sallust took a rather cynical view of the power struggle between the generals and resistant aristocrats and

said that civil war, albeit risky, was the only way to surpass the oligarchy (BJ I.3), as indeed it seemed to Sallust's commander Caesar. This resulted in a continual escalation of conflict, and the unfortunate side effect of victory for a general was a position as military dictator.[92] Sulla tried to use his to stabilize the state, but his actions as dictator were so heinous that generations of politicians used the repeal of his reforms to bolster their careers. Time and again, a politician's efforts to overcome anonymity and the Senate's resistance to any individual who became too big a celebrity became a vicious circle which resulted in war and chaos.

CONCLUSION

Republican orators fabricated parallels between an opponent and Hellenistic, Roman, or theatrical tyrants to convince the citizens of Rome that this opponent should not be a participant in the government, because he was not a worthy representative of the Roman ethos. By contrast, because of the Romans' experiences with the Gracchi, Sulla, and the Marians, the label of general or *popularis* was so contrary to the Romans' sense of a leading man that it immediately and irrevocably placed a politician in that category of tyrants. Their use of force and extraconstitutional methods helped to strengthen the analogy, but the real basis for it was that the conservative aristocracy had been the ruling class since the Republic's inception. This norm was so deeply entrenched that non-oligarchs were consigned to a constant, ultimately futile uphill climb against it. Even Sallust himself, never

[92] Cf. Cicero *Q. Fr.* 4.9.

sparing in his criticism of "the zealotry of parties and the morality of the state," believed that the Gracchi "were not reasonable in their desire for victory" (BJ 42). As Syme put it, "The Romans as a people were possessed by an especial veneration for authority, precedent and tradition, by a rooted distaste of change unless change could be shown to be in harmony with ancestral custom,"[93] and even "revolutionaries" could not shake off that tradition.

Our discussion of precedents and models for tyranny in the Republic has demonstrated how even the *populares* and generals had to use the traditional aristocratic language of defending the Republic in their propaganda, and this ultimately subverted their claims to legitimacy. The evidence for this appears in modern historiography: textbooks describe Pompey as a political failure, Clodius as a maniac, Caesar as a despot, Antony as the orientalized victim of the Augustan juggernaut,[94] and Sallust as the ironically moralizing author who was ejected from the Senate twice for unethical behavior, while Cato stands as an example of uncompromising moral fortitude. Octavian, however, understood the problems inherent in Caesar's legacy and found solutions. His avowed purpose to avenge his adoptive father and his sponsorship of the *Ludi Victoriae Caesaris*[95] showed a very traditional *pietas* but still attracted popularity. His service to the Senate may have ended in a march on the city, but his consequent election to the consulate was rather

[93] Syme 315.
[94] That is, if the textbook is being kind.
[95] Zanker 34.

anticlimactic and thus almost praiseworthy after the military coups of Sulla and Caesar.[96]

In fact, Octavian's alliance with Antony showed an impressive degree of political savvy in its own right: even though Cicero explicitly compared him to Pompey, the *adulescentulus carnifex*, the senate had clearly not learned their lesson about trying to use an ambitious young man with an army at his back as a tool of their regime. At least Octavian extorted a suffect consulship instead of a triumph, which was rather less threatening. When Octavian formed his alliance with Antony, even Antony's superior political influence was turned to his advantage: Antony was the *popularis* who took up Caesar's mantle, Antony was the agent of civil war at Mutina, Antony was the despot who proscribed Cicero, Antony was a Hellenistic king, and Antony was even the superior general, thus making Octavian's power as an *imperator* potentially less threatening by comparison.

None of the generals or demagogues had successfully incorporated themselves into the government, and had rather imposed themselves uncomfortably upon it. Octavian, by refuting his connection to those trajectories, achieved incorporation by taking on the lawful position of a consul and then "a triumvir for the rebuilding of the republic" (*Res Gestae* 1), but also by dealing with each exemplar of tyranny in turn and manipulating it to his advantage. With the nod to the *summi viri* of the Republic in his forum, his marriage and sumptuary laws, and his explicit announcement that he had restored the Republic (ibid.), Octavian placed himself in the genealogy of conservative oligarchs. Thus, no one rose to take the place of a Cicero or Cato

[96] Scullard 161-2; cf. *Res Gestae* 1, "*senatus…consularem locum sententiae dicendae tribuens… Populum autem eodem anno me consulem…creavit*"

because there was no longer a Caesar against whom their anti-tyranny rhetoric would be relevant.

Octavian did not trick the aristocracy; he beat them at their own game and assuaged the fears which had driven them to civil war in the past, giving them their "*cum dignitate otium*" (Cic. *Fam*. I.9.21). Likewise, his chosen patron god Apollo "stood for purification and for punishment of any form of excess," and it was probably no mistake that Apollo was also the patron god of the Republicans, Brutus and Cassius, at Philippi.[97] If Tacitus and later authors saw this as a farce, it was because they could not appreciate Octavian's participation in Republican paradigms. Apollo also marked the transition from the Republic to the principate by symbolizing a Golden Age of peace and art under the auspices of the state's savior. In addition to being a *pater patriae* in the tradition of the Republic, through such soteriological associations Octavian also became "Augustus." He completed his rise to sole power, which had begun with the oath "all Italy" had sworn to him as their leader and patron.[98] With the new concept of a state-sanctioned leader who "excelled all his peers in authority, though [he] had no more power than those who were [his] colleagues in office" (*Res Gestae* 34), the Republic was intellectually at an end.

[97] Zanker 49, 52.
[98] Syme 288.

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