

MILITARY DEFEATS, CASUALTIES OF WAR  
AND THE SUCCESS OF ROME

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## ABSTRACT

BRIAN DAVID TURNER: *Military Defeats, Casualties of War and the Success of Rome*

(Under the direction of Richard J. A. Talbert)

This dissertation examines how ancient Romans dealt with the innumerable military losses that the expansion and maintenance of their empire demanded. It considers the prose writers from Polybius (c. 150 B.C.E.) through Dio Cassius (c. 230 C.E.), as well as many items from the material record, including triumphal arches, the columns of Trajan and Marcus, and other epigraphic and material evidence from Rome and throughout the empire. By analyzing just how much (or how little) the Romans focused on their military defeats and casualties of war in their cultural record, I argue that the various and specific ways that the Romans dealt with these losses form a necessary part of any attempt to explain the military success of Rome.

The discussion is organized into five chapters. The first chapter describes the treatment and burial of the war dead. Chapter two considers the effect war losses had on the morale of Roman soldiers and generals. The third chapter compares the response at Rome to news of a defeat in both the republican and imperial periods. Chapter four examines the memory and commemoration of Roman war losses. Finally, the fifth chapter analyzes the inclusion of casualty figures in the sources, and pays particular attention to the Roman idea of winning a bloodless victory.

Underpinning the analysis is the explanatory model developed by military historian John Lynn in his book, *Battle: A History of Combat and Culture* (2003). The model argues that the discourse of war, which encompasses all the cultural depictions of war (including monuments, texts, and ideologies), necessarily influences the reality of battle. While this discourse can never perfectly match that reality, it is, nevertheless, constantly evolving to mirror better how war was actually fought. This model helps explain why the Romans responded to military losses the way that they did, and why these responses were so fundamental to the success of Rome.

For Kathryn

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staff of Davis Library, and indeed the library itself, have my greatest thanks. I can only hope – though I fear in vain – that I will ever again have such easy access to such a breadth of resources. The faculty and graduate students in both the departments of History and Classics at both UNC and Queen's, especially my fellow graduate student cohort of so-called ancients, have improved this experience beyond measure. I am lucky to be part of such an institution.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviations of most ancient authors follow the conventions in the *Oxford Latin Dictionary* and Liddell and Scott's *Greek-English Lexicon*. Those that differ are self-evident and in the first instance are named in full in the text. All other abbreviations follow the conventions of *L'Année philologique*, again with a few exceptions, including the following.

<i>AE</i>	<i>L'Année Epigraphique</i>
<i>ANRW</i>	<i>Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt</i> , ed. H. Temporini, Berlin, 1972 -
<i>BAtlas</i>	<i>Barrington Atlas of the Greek and Roman World</i> , ed. R. J. A. Talbert, Princeton, 2000.
<i>CAH</i>	<i>Cambridge Ancient History</i> , 2 <sup>nd</sup> edition, Cambridge, 1970-
<i>CIL</i>	<i>Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum</i> , ed. T. Mommsen et al., Berlin, 1862-
<i>ILS</i>	<i>Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae</i> , ed. H. Dessau, 3 vols. Berlin, 1892-1916
<i>LTUR</i>	<i>Lexicon Topographicum Urbis Romae</i> , ed. E. Steinby, Rome, 1993-2000.
<i>OLD</i>	<i>Oxford Latin Dictionary</i> , ed. P. G. W. Glare, Oxford, 1997.
<i>RE</i>	<i>Real-Encyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft</i> , Pauly-Wissowa, 1893-1980.

## Introduction

“For us,” declared the messenger, “the war is against a hydra.” This was the announcement to Pyrrhus, king of Epirus in the early third century B.C.E. and the mercenary leader of the Greeks in southern Italy. His army had just defeated a Roman army, killed as many as 15,000 Roman soldiers, captured a Roman camp, and gained the support of a number of Roman allied towns. When the king sent his messenger to Rome in order to complete a pact of peace, the Romans – made steadfast by the harangue of Appius Claudius Caecus – refused to surrender and instead enrolled an even larger army than had been assembled previously. The analogy to the hydra, a mythical many-headed beast that restored any severed-off head with two replacements, perfectly described the Roman war machine. The Roman ability to absorb losses and return to battle even stronger both impressed and dismayed the king. For a brief time, Pyrrhus continued the fight, but within a few years he abandoned Italy and his fellow Greeks to the Romans. By the mid-third century B.C.E. Rome controlled the entire Italian peninsula south of the Arno River.<sup>1</sup>

The allusion to the hydra evidently struck a chord in the second and early third centuries C.E., especially among those of Greek descent. Plutarch (46 – 120 C.E.) from

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<sup>1</sup> App. (*Sam.*) 3.10.3: ... πρὸς ὕδραν ἔστιν αὐτοῖς ὁ πόλεμος, (the context of the quote makes clear the translation of αὐτοῖς as "us" ). Appian also suggests that Pyrrhus, himself was the source of the quote. Dio Cass. 9.40.28 and Zon. 8.4 (see Loeb edition) credit Pyrrhus with the comparison. Plutarch, *Pyrrh.* 19.5 reports that one of the king's most trusted advisors, a Thessalian named Cineas, was responsible for the comparison.

Chaeronea, Appian (c. 95 – c. 165 C.E.) from Alexandria, and Dio Cassius (c. 155 – after 229 C.E.) from Nicaea, all record some version of the story. But the comparison of the Roman army to the mythical hydra in the sense that the Romans would return a bigger and stronger army after a defeat was not limited to these Greek authors. Tacitus, the early second century C.E. author and senator, twice described the opinions of those under the dominion of the Romans. First, in the *Annals*, a group of captured Germans intimated that the Romans appeared to be unconquerable even by natural disasters. In 16 C.E. a massive storm had shipwrecked an army led by Germanicus, the heir of the emperor Tiberius. With the Roman fleet all but destroyed, with innumerable weapons lost, and with many of his horses and soldiers lying dead on the shore, Germanicus nonetheless led a courageous and defiant attack against the Marsi (a German tribe) “as if with increased numbers” of men.<sup>2</sup> Second, in the *Histories*, a group of Batavians, arguing against joining the open revolt of Gaius Julius Civilis in 69 C.E., asked rhetorically “What [had] been accomplished by cutting down and burning a legion except that more and stronger legions [had] been called up?”<sup>3</sup> These examples do not specifically refer to the hydra, but the principle behind their message is the same. Roman armies, even under the worst conditions, always seemed to respond with vigor, might, and increased numbers. Or, at least, this was how the ancient sources chose to portray the Roman army.

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<sup>2</sup> *Ann.* 2.25.3: *quippe invictos et nullis casibus superabilis Romanos praedicabant, qui perdita classe, amissis armis, post constrata equorum virorumque corporibus litora eadem virtute, pari ferocia et velut aucti numero inrupissent*, “They proclaimed the Romans invincible and conquered by no misfortunes; with their fleet destroyed, with their weapons lost, and after covering the shore with the corpses of their horses and men, [the Romans] attacked with the same courage, and equal daring, and as if with increased numbers.”

<sup>3</sup> *Hist.* 5.25: *Quid profectum caede et incendiis legionum nisi ut plures validioresque accirentur?*

Such portrayals may have had an effect on how Romans prepared for and fought wars. A passage in Caesar's commentary on his Gallic Wars suggests that he understood the importance and usefulness of portraying this mythical explanation of Roman capabilities:

Caesar, expecting for many reasons greater commotion in Gaul, decided to hold a levy by means of his legates, Marcus Silanus, Gaius Antistius Reginus, and Titus Sextius; at the same time, he asked Gnaeus Pompey, as proconsul – since he was staying at Rome with imperium for the sake of the republic – if he would order those men from Cisalpine Gaul, whom as consul he had bound by military oath, to join their units and depart to [Caesar]. He thought that it was of great importance both at that time and in the future to create an impression in Gaul that the resources of Italy were so great that, if any loss were sustained in war, it could not only be restored in a short time, but could even be augmented by a greater force. When Pompey, for the republic and for friendship, complied, [Caesar], having quickly completed the levy through his legates, formed and brought up three legions before winter ended, and having doubled the number of the cohorts which he had lost with Quintus Titurius, he illustrated [to the Gauls], by both his swiftness and his forces, what the discipline and support of the Roman people could do.<sup>4</sup>

On one level, this passage written by Caesar himself suggests that he was trying to restore losses sustained the previous year. He had indeed just lost about a legion's worth of

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<sup>4</sup> Caes. BG 6.1: *Multis de causis Caesar maiorem Galliae motum exspectans per Marcum Silanum, Gaium Antistium Reginum, Titum Sextium legatos dilectum habere instituit; simul ab Gnaeo Pompeio proconsule petit, quoniam ipse ad urbem cum imperio rei publicae causa remaneret, quos ex Cisalpina Gallia consulis sacramento rogavisset, ad signa convenire et ad se proficisci iuberet, magni interesse etiam in reliquum tempus ad opinionem Galliae existimans tantas videri Italiae facultates ut, si quid esset in bello detrimenti acceptum, non modo id brevi tempore sarciri, sed etiam maioribus augeri copiis posset. Quod cum Pompeius et rei publicae et amicitiae tribuisset, celeriter confecto per suos dilectu tribus ante exactam hiemem et constitutis et adductis legionibus duplicatoque earum cohortium numero, quas cum Quinto Titurio amiserat, et celeritate et copiis docuit, quid populi Romani disciplina atque opes possent.*

men.<sup>5</sup> On another level, the passage suggests an awareness of the fickleness of war and the need for foresight to anticipate the possibility of even more losses yet to come. Here then Caesar was concerned as much with restoring the physical number of his army as he was with creating an impression that Rome had access to an infinite reserve of soldiers. The extent to which these resources actually had to exist is less important than the perception. Caesar, as part of his preparations for war, was preparing the hydra.

### *The Problem*

For most of the republican period (to 31 B.C.E.) the Romans were more often in a state of war than a state of peace. The early first century CE soldier-writer Velleius Paterculus even claimed that the Romans had been in a true state of peace just three times in their history.<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, Rome's wars were often bloody and brutal. Appian recorded that on occasion Rome lost as many as 20,000, 40,000, or 50,000 men in a single day.<sup>7</sup> In the first two years of the Second Punic War (fought between 218 – 201 B.C.E.), the Romans (and their allies) lost about one hundred thousand men to Hannibal's army.<sup>8</sup> Rosenstein recently calculated that the more than 55,000 Romans killed in a thirty-three year period in the early second century B.C.E. represented nearly nine

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<sup>5</sup> For the losses sustained by one of Caesar's legates, Quintus Titurius Sabinus, in 54 B.C.E., see Caes. *BG* 5. 24-37.

<sup>6</sup> 2.83.3, referring to the closing of the gates of Janus, the symbol that Rome was at peace.

<sup>7</sup> App. *Pref.* 11.

<sup>8</sup> As calculated by App. *Hann.* 25.



percent of the total number of soldiers who served in the army during that same period.<sup>9</sup> Despite these staggering losses Rome survived, expanded and flourished. This dissertation then addresses a fundamental question: how did the Romans survive and flourish as long as they did, despite so many terrible defeats and long and bloody military conflicts? While Pyrrhus' messenger, with his comparison of the Roman army to the mythical hydra, offered an explanation for Rome's ability to sustain the ultimate costs of war, we ought to seek less mythical reasons of greater explanatory power.

### *Historiography*

Some modern historians have tried to explain the reality behind the hydra myth by attempting to calculate and understand the status of the population of Italy, the territory from which the Roman army drew its massive number of soldiers during the republican period. Brunt's magisterial *Italian Manpower, 225 B.C. – A.D. 14* (1971) relied on the dubious census figures preserved in the ancient sources (especially Livy), as well as demographic projections and calculations to estimate the changing population of Italy in the last two centuries B.C.E. His analysis illustrates the common view that Rome's free population regressed in the second century B.C.E. as a result of Rome's constant warfare.<sup>10</sup> Rosenstein challenged this view in his *Rome at War: Farms, Families, and Death in the Middle Republic* (2004) which actually argued for an increase in the

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<sup>9</sup> (2004): Table 2 on page 110 – specifies 55,280 killed, totaling 8.8 percent of those who served between 200 B.C.E. and 168 B.C.E.

<sup>10</sup> See in particular Brunt (1971): 155 and see the brief review of the *communis opinio* in Rosenstein (2005): 3-6

population of free Italians.<sup>11</sup> Both works illustrate that modern historians have been concerned about issues of manpower and how they relate to the success of Rome. The frequent occurrence of census data in the ancient sources confirms that the Romans also concerned themselves with manpower issues. Demography does indeed play an important part in any explanation of how Romans dealt with the costs of war. A surplus population, meaning a population that can sustain military endeavors, casualties of war and yet still survive and prosper socially and economically on the home front, is certainly a necessary element of the explanation for Rome's success, but it is not a sufficient explanation. Elements of psychology, particularly a society's sensitivity to mounting casualties must also be considered, because it is in these realms that the will of the society to continue fighting is measured.

Other scholars have considered the emotional effect military defeats and casualties of war had on the Romans. In an article examining the defeat of the triumvir Marcus Licinius Crassus at Carrhae in 53 B.C.E. and its implications for Roman theories of the just war, Mattern concluded that,

The Romans never forgot their great defeats; they are at least as prominent in historiography and literature as the great victories, and ancient accounts of the battle of the Caudine Forks, Cannae, or the sack of Camulodunum are too famous and familiar to need citation here. The purpose of Roman historiography was partly to preserve, even to exaggerate, the memory of disasters. The well-worn slogan that history is written by the winners is too simplistic. It is in their defeats that the Romans found their most powerful source of national feeling and the will to conquer.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> See especially Rosenstein (2004): Chapter 5: Military Mortality and the Agrarian Crisis.

<sup>12</sup> (2003): 396.

Mattern focused on what motivated Romans to go to war; or rather, what justified a Roman decision to go to war. Her conclusion that defeats often motivated their desire to conquer is incontrovertible; but it remains to test the ways in which the Romans developed and channeled such a “national feeling” and “will” in the aftermath of defeat beyond using the defeat as a *later* justification for war. Mattern’s conclusion is similar to a host of works concentrating on Roman fear of foreign attacks, for example the so-called *metus Gallicus*, and *metus Punicus*.<sup>13</sup> Such works do consider how Romans depicted their enemies, and that depiction is usually grounded in an historical defeat; but this psychological fear was more often used as a motivating force to go to war and not as an explanation of how the Romans initially responded to the loss or recovered from it. Whether or not there was a genuine fear among the Roman populace of the Gauls, in the sources *metus Gallicus* is less a fear of being injured by the Gauls, as it is a justification for taking revenge on them. It better reflects the motivations of the Romans in the long-term aftermath of a defeat, than the initial response to military loss.

Mattern’s article on the defeat of Crassus was one of four contributions to the 2003 volume of the journal *Classical World*, subtitled “Roman Military Disasters and their Consequences.” The other three were Rosenberger’s “The Gallic Disaster,” Tipps’ “The Defeat of Regulus,” and Benario’s “Teutoburg.” The volume illustrates another difficulty with studying Roman war losses: while the articles offer insightful suggestions regarding the meaning and outcome of the studied defeats, their analyses are also limited in scope. As Benario himself admits in the introduction to the volume, the contributions

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<sup>13</sup> For which see Bellen’s (1985) *Metus Gallicus, metus Punicus : zum Furchtmotiv in der römischen Republik*, Kneppé’s (1994) *Metus Temporum: Zur Bedeutung von Angst in Politik und Gesellschaft der römischen Kaiserzeit des 1. und 2. Jhdts. n. Chr.*, and Rosenberger’s (2003) “The Gallic Disaster” published in *Classical World* (which forms an important challenge to Bellen’s conclusion that fear of the Gauls motivated Roman expansion).

are “selective” and focus on “turning points” in Roman history.<sup>14</sup> The vast bibliography discussing the Roman defeats at Cannae or Teutoburg might also be added to this category of case studies of individual defeats.<sup>15</sup> Although this dissertation will draw heavily on such focused scholarship, its main aim is rather to provide a general framework of how Romans responded to their military losses over time. The goal is to find broader patterns of behavior that may offer another explanation for Roman success in war.

Attempts at expanding the analysis to encompass multiple defeats and therefore to a broader context have been made, but they too are limited in one way or other. In his 1936 dissertation, *Die römischen Niederlagen im Geschichtswerk des T. Livius*, Bruckmann examined Livy’s portrayal of military defeats in his *Ab Urbe Condita*, and concluded that in his descriptions of Roman defeats, Livy commonly found a way to praise the defeated Romans at the expense of the victorious enemy.<sup>16</sup> Livy had the benefit of being well aware that Rome had recovered from the long list of military disasters he was describing; nevertheless, his willingness to find examples worthy of praise and pride in the defeats suffered by his ancestors illustrates one way in which the memory of military losses could be manipulated for the sake of Roman success. Even so, Bruckmann’s work was limited to Livy alone and therefore addresses only a limited portion of a much larger context.

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<sup>14</sup> Benario (2003): 364. Mattern’s submission has been dealt with above; as has Rosenberger’s. Tipps analyzes the tactical and strategic outcome of Marcus Atilius Regulus’ defeat in the First Punic War. Benario focuses on what might have been if only the Romans had properly developed an infrastructure (or if only one existed) in Germany. A lack of roads, Benario argues, ended Roman expansion.

<sup>15</sup> For Cannae see Healy (1994); Goldsworthy (2001); or Daly (2002). For Teutoburg see Wells (2003).

<sup>16</sup> (1936): 125.

In a similar way Wolfgang Will limited his examination of defeated Roman commanders to only those found in Livy.<sup>17</sup> Less than a decade after Will, in 1990, Rosenstein published his *Imperatores Victi: Military Defeats and Aristocratic Competition in the Middle and Late Republic*, in which he concluded that Roman generals, quite surprisingly, were not unduly punished in the political arena for their military failures. His work in turn largely focused on the political lives and memory of Rome's elite, and to that extent is still limited in scope. This dissertation, too, sets limits of its own (discussed below), but nevertheless aims so far as possible not to confine its treatment of Roman military defeats to any single battle, author, or political class.

Despite the works cited above, the historiography of the Roman military and warfare remains dominated by victory.<sup>18</sup> Studies of the Roman army often limit their comments regarding the aftermath of battle; and such comments typically focus on the presentation of awards rather than on the burial of the war dead or the consolation of weary and shocked soldiers.<sup>19</sup> Archaeologists and scholars of the material record likewise focus on the depictions and commemorations of victories. Dillon and Welch's (2006) altogether excellent collection of essays, *Representations of War in Ancient Rome*, might be more accurately titled *Representations of Victory in Ancient Rome*. Victory deserves its accolades to be sure, but it can also create an unduly narrow focus because it is often

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<sup>17</sup> The 1983 *Historia* publication was titled: "Imperatores Victi: Zum Bild besieger römischer Consuln bei Livius".

<sup>18</sup> It is a matter of regret that I have not been able to incorporate the conclusions of what is certain to be a notable exception. Jessica Clark's Princeton dissertation, *Vestigia Cladis: The Afterlife of Defeat in the Roman Historical Imagination*, appeared too late for me to incorporate into this dissertation. The completed dissertation was announced in the Spring 2009 newsletter of the Princeton Classics Department. The dissertation is unavailable on the ProQuest database.

<sup>19</sup> Gilliver (1999) offers only a few pages; Except for a brief section on "Military Medicine: (233-236), Southern's (2007) recent work, *The Roman Army: A Social and Institutional History*, makes little mention of the aftermath of battle.

easier to measure the success of the Romans, and the duration of their rule, by the victories of their war machine. But throughout the long history of Roman hegemony, the number of victories is not much more than the number of defeats. Furthermore, even in victory, Rome could suffer heavy casualties. How the Romans managed to deal with their military losses, in both the short and the long term, is therefore as important an element of Roman success as how their legions were organized, outfitted, or commanded. Indeed, as this dissertation urges, the various means by which Romans dealt with their war losses form a vital part of any explanation of Roman success that has too long been overlooked.

#### *Sources, Method and Limitations*

This dissertation examines how Romans responded to and reacted to their war losses, including both military defeats and casualties of war prior to c. 200 C.E. It is dependent upon an analysis of various types of sources that are subsequently utilized to construct what might be called an aftermath narrative. Pagán once described such narratives as

the picture of the battlefield strewn with decaying corpses, weapons, horses, helmets, and debris. The field is inspected in broad daylight, usually on the morning after the battle, by the living, either the victorious generals or, less specifically, the survivors whose concern it is to bury the dead. Thus the reader sees the aftermath through the eyes of those who return to the battlefield. This inspection is an intermediate step between the destruction of war and the funeral rites.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Pagán (2000): 424.

The aftermath narrative is thus limited to the description of the days immediately following battle. For the purposes of this dissertation, I intend to expand this definition so that it includes all those sources that depict the often bloody result of war. Thus the definition is expanded in two opposing directions to include [1] those sources that illustrate death during battle, and in particular the survivors' reactions to such deaths, and [2] those sources that commemorate, however far in the future, the memory of a defeated army or a lost soldier. In this way a more complete picture of how the Romans long endured their military losses emerges.

The specific sources used include monuments, inscriptions and, most frequently the major prose authors from Polybius (c. 150 B.C.E.) through Dio Cassius (c. 230 C.E.). The works of the Latin poets, although they very often deal with issues of defeat and loss, are not included in the specific analysis of Roman responses to war losses; they do, however, appear from time to time as examples of a broader theme. Latin poetry, more than any other source, is often overcome by the shadow of its Greek antecedents, leaving it difficult to decipher what is a Greek and what is a Roman cultural value. At least an analysis of the monuments, inscriptions and prose authors may provide a firm basis from which a future study of the Latin poets' depiction of Roman war losses can be developed.

Collectively the sources examined here form what military historian John Lynn would call a discourse about war. Such a discourse is composed of all of those cultural constructions – including physical images, textual recreations, and ideological values – that depict how a society fights. In his *Battle: A History of Combat and Culture: From Ancient Greece to Modern America* (2003), Lynn argued that there exists a distinct relationship between the discourse and the reality of warfare to such an extent that the

two realms constantly interact and modify one another. “The discourse on war,” he wrote, “tries to modify reality to more nearly resemble conceptions of how war *should* [sic] be.” Meanwhile the “discourse must adjust to the reality, if for no other reason than survival.”<sup>21</sup> While Lynn's model was developed to explain changes that occurred on the battlefield specifically, it can equally, and fruitfully, be applied to explain what happened after battle. By understanding the aftermath narrative as a particular discourse, we can attempt to decipher general conclusions about the reality of Roman military losses. Moreover, and perhaps more importantly, we can come to terms with Roman attitudes towards military losses.

In addition, a study of the connection between the discourse and the reality of Roman responses to military losses permits less concern with the historical veracity of individual events as they are depicted in the sources. What the Romans thought happened is as important as what actually happened. According to the model, what the Romans thought happened, and what they depicted as having happened, would necessarily affect what *would* happen in the future. Thus my concern is less with the historical accuracy of Livy's description of the aftermath of Cannae, for example, than with the impact that description may have made on those Romans who read Livy's work. Approached in this way, our sources' descriptions of early Roman history, which are often rooted in only the slightest factual base, can prove instructive.

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<sup>21</sup> (2003): xxi.



## *Organization*

Rather than create a catalogue or a chronological record of Roman defeats and casualties of war, the organization of this dissertation is based on the chronology of the aftermath narrative. The aim is therefore to consider individually the various actions and ideologies associated with Roman responses to military losses from the first moment of the loss on the battlefield, through the recollection of the loss in the ancient sources. In this way, a layered picture will emerge, and any changes which may have occurred over time, in particular between the republican and the imperial period, can be discussed in relationship to a particular sub-topic.

The first two chapters consider how Roman soldiers and generals dealt with military losses. Chapter One, *The War Dead*, investigates the treatment of those who died fighting for Rome both during and immediately following battle; particular emphasis is placed on the grim realities of battle and the practical difficulties associated with the burial of the war dead. The second chapter, meanwhile, considers the fate of the survivors of battle, including both the physically wounded and emotionally scarred, and offers a challenge to the modern assessment that Roman soldiers were bloodthirsty warriors. In this chapter, I examine how the cultural discourse surrounding the treatment of military losses may have affected how generals responded to the emotional needs of their soldiers.

The third chapter, *The Immediate Aftermath of Defeat in the City of Rome*, shifts our focus from the battlefield and camp to the city of Rome, and examines how civilians and magistrates responded to the shocking news of a Roman defeat in the period immediately following the loss. This chapter traces the depiction and development of a

specific set of actions that Roman magistrates took in response to military losses, and considers how those procedures changed when the emperor and his professional army replaced the republican system of government and the citizen militia.

The final two chapters, *The Memory and Commemoration of Roman War Losses*, and *The Discourse and Reality of Casualty Figures in the Ancient Roman Historians*, examine how Romans remembered their military losses. The former chapter analyzes some of the specific ways Romans commemorated (or failed to commemorate) their military losses, usually in the form of monuments, but also in terms of the memories associated with a particular date or location. The latter chapter interprets the inclusion of casualty figures in the ancient sources, and examines the development and unintended consequences of an especially prevalent Roman discourse about war losses: that Roman armies would win victories in which not a single Roman soldier would die. However powerful (and neglected, even misunderstood, in modern scholarship) this discourse may be, it remains essential to begin with the bitter reality of the battlefield itself, where Roman military losses were first felt.

## Chapter One

### The War Dead

#### *1.1 Introduction*

The Roman battlefield was often a bloody and chaotic mess. In the *Bellum Jugurthinum*, Sallust (86 – 34 B.C.E.) succinctly described the battlefield as being covered with “with javelins, weapons and corpses, and among these the ground was stained with blood.”<sup>1</sup> Modern Roman historians have recently begun to reconstruct the reality of the ancient Roman battlefield. For example, Gregory Daly, following and indeed borrowing from both John Keegan and Victor Davis Hanson, described in detail the “physical circumstances of battle.” These circumstances included the cacophony of soldiers' war cries, mixed with the clinks and clangs of metal weapons and the moans of the wounded and dying; the smell of fresh death mixed with vomit, sweat, urine and feces; the sight of slaughtered friends and family; and the feeling of the warm blood of friend and foe covering the bodies of those still strong enough to fight. Daly rightly concludes that the battlefield must have been “hellishly traumatic.”<sup>2</sup> While such

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<sup>1</sup> 101.11: ... *constrata telis, armis, cadaveribus, et inter ea humus infecta sanguine.*

<sup>2</sup> Daly (2002): 166-172; see also Hanson (1989); Keegan (1976); Daly (2002); Gilliver (1999); Lendon (2005); Sabin (2000) and (2007).

descriptions by modern scholars accurately and terrifyingly describe the 'face of Roman battle,' they also follow a very ancient method of describing war. They may be realistic (perhaps overly so), but they tend to focus on the fighting, the killing, and the experiences of those doing the fighting and killing. Modern historians generally do not emphasize the various depictions of the war dead found in the ancient sources.

It is therefore worth considering the fate of the war dead, specifically the treatment of corpses both during and after battle. Such an inquiry can help illuminate Roman attitudes towards war. Onasander, a first century C.E. Greek who wrote a military manual, suggested that the burial of the dead was necessary to keep up the morale of the surviving soldiers.<sup>3</sup> Catherine Gilliver, in her brief section describing the events “after the battle,” accepted this ancient conclusion.<sup>4</sup> Although Onasander dedicated his manual to a Roman consul, he was a Greek; therefore, it is worth examining in further detail whether or not his cultural assumptions about the importance of burying the war dead really did hold true for most Romans. An examination of how the ancient sources described the treatment of corpses both during and after battle can illuminate Roman attitudes towards the treatment of the war dead, and illustrate how these attitudes may have differed from other contemporary societies (specifically the Greeks). This chapter first considers how the dead were treated while the battle was still being fought. It then examines the evidence for the fate of the corpses after the battle, including their collection, identification, repatriation, and burial.

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<sup>3</sup> For more on Onasander's advice, see below, page 35.

<sup>4</sup> (1999): 122.

## 1.2 *The Fate of the Dead During Battle*

This first main section considers how the war dead were treated during battle. This treatment will illustrate not only certain Roman attitudes towards war, but also the brutal reality of the Roman battlefield.

### 1.2.1 *A Wall of Corpses*<sup>5</sup>

Some sense of the brutality of the battlefield is seen in an exemplary episode from the civil wars that shattered the Roman republic in the mid-first century B.C.E. On 17 March 45 B.C.E., near the town of Munda in southern Spain, Julius Caesar's legionaries slaughtered some 30,000 men loyal to Gnaeus Pompey, the eldest son of Caesar's enemy Pompey the Great. Caesar's army meanwhile had nearly 1,000 killed and 500 wounded.<sup>6</sup> After the survivors of Pompey's army took refuge in the town, Caesar's men encircled it. Lacking the materials and time necessary to construct a proper rampart, the soldiers constructed a makeshift wall by piling up the corpses and weapons of the dead. While five separate sources describe the erection of this wall, they do not all agree about the motive for its construction. A comparative analysis of these passages offers our first example of the interconnections between the discourse and reality of war, and illustrates how the latter could generate competing discourses.

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<sup>5</sup> Cf. *Caes. Hisp.* 32.2: ... *pro caespite cadavera collocabantur*, "... corpses were collected for the mound." *Caespes*, technically meaning a piece of turf, here refers to the turf mound or wall that the Romans constructed as around their camp. The technical term of the palisade was *vallum*.

<sup>6</sup> *Caes. Hisp.* 31. The numbers are of course debatable. See Chapter 5.2 for further discussion regarding casualty figures found in the sources.

The unfortunate condition of the manuscript has left much of the text of the earliest version of the story, provided by the anonymous author of the *Bellum Hispaniense*, corrupted and therefore difficult to decipher.<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless it is relatively clear that the corpses and weapons of the dead were used as the building material for the rampart and palisade. Even more chillingly, in this version of the story severed human heads were impaled on the tips of swords and arranged around the corporal rampart so that they faced the enemy positions.<sup>8</sup> According to the author the gruesome barrier was not only fabricated to limit the enemy's movements, it was purposefully designed to terrorize the enemy and illustrate the valor of Caesar's men.<sup>9</sup> It is also worth noting that the author of the *Bellum Hispaniense* began this narrative of the wall by noting that Caesar's men “were compelled by necessity to encircle” Munda. In the context of this particular passage the necessity may only refer to the general military need to surround

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<sup>7</sup> Although the text is usually included in collections of Caesar's writings, the identity of the author has been much debated. See Strocchi (1996) and Hooff (1974) for two suggestions. Certainty is likely impossible, but whoever it was, Conte (1994): 230 is most likely correct to identify the author as a “*homo militaris*.” See Pascucci (1965): 336-338 and Diouron (1999): 130 for discussion about various emendations and reconstructions.

<sup>8</sup> An artistic representation of such severed heads impaled on pikes and erected on the tops of a wall can be seen on a Dacian fort depicted on the Column of Trajan. We do not know if the heads came from Roman dead or from some other enemy of the Dacians. See Lepper and Frere (1988): plate XVIII, scene 24 and plate XX, scene 25. For more on the column and its representation of Roman war dead, or lack thereof, see Chapter 4.5.2.2 below.

<sup>9</sup> *Hisp.* 32.1-3 (text from Diouron (1999)): [1]... *evaserunt > ex fuga hac qui oppidum Mundam sibi constituissent praesidium, nostrique cogebantur necessario eos circumvallare.* [2] *Ex hostium armis < ... > pro caespite cadavera collocabantur, scuta et pila pro vallo, insuper occisorum in gladiatorum mucronibus [et] capita hominum ordinata ad oppidum conversa. † Universa † hostium timorem < ... > virtutisque insignia proposita viderent et vallo circumcluderentur adversarii*, “those who escaped from this flight set themselves up a fortification at the town of Munda, and our men were compelled by necessity to encircle them. [2] From the enemies' arms ... corpses were collected for the mound, shields and javelins for the palisade, on top of the dead, human heads were impaled on the points of swords and were set facing the town. The entire enemy was terrified (?) ... and they [the severed heads ?] seemed to have been displayed as a mark of bravery and the enemy were encircled by the palisade.”

the enemy. On the other hand, the reference may also suggest that the construction of the wall of corpses needed justification.

A similar version of the story is found in Valerius Maximus, who wrote an anthology of “memorable doings and saying” during the reign of Tiberius (14 – 37 C.E.), Rome’s second emperor. The collection of anecdotes is divided into various chapters, each concentrating on particular subjects. The story of the wall of bodies at Munda is found in a chapter titled *De Necessitate*, “About Necessity.” Incorporating a similar justification as the author of the *Bellum Hispaniense*, Valerius Maximus specifically concluded his version of the incident with the claim that “necessity” taught the Romans to employ the novel building technique.<sup>10</sup> Furthermore, Valerius Maximus also indicated that the wall was made with only “enemy cadavers.” The implied consequence of the inclusion of this information is that Caesar’s army did not use the corpses of any of their fellow comrades in the wall; an attempt perhaps to distinguish between the ‘us and them’ of civil war. David Wardle has noted that Valerius Maximus “attaches no blame to Caesar – his *exercitus* perpetrates the deed – nor uses any emotive terms for the abuse of the corpses of Roman dead ...” Wardle therefore concluded that Valerius Maximus offered an *apologia* for the actions of Caesar’s army and therefore of Caesar himself.<sup>11</sup> The implication of the modern historian is that such an action as building a wall of corpses required an apology.

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<sup>10</sup> 7.6.5: *Divi Iulii exercitus, id est invicti ducis invicta dextera, cum armis Mundam clausisset aggerique exstruendo materia deficeretur, congerie hostilium cadaverum quam desideraverat altitudinem instruxit, eamque tragulis et pilis, quia roboreae sudes deerant, magistra novae molitionis necessitate usus, vallavit*, “When the army of the divine Julius, that is the unconquered right hand of the unconquered general, had surrounded Munda with arms and the material for the construction of a rampart had run out, it built one with a mass of enemy cadavers to the desired height, and fortified it with spears and javelins because their wooden stakes had run out. Necessity was the teacher of the new building technique.”

<sup>11</sup> (1997): 329-330.

Two Greek authors also record the story. Appian, who erroneously places the event at Corduba rather than Munda,<sup>12</sup> included the event in his narrative of the Roman Civil Wars. He did not clearly apologize for or moralize against the action. His comment that Caesar ordered the town to be encircled to prevent the enemy from escaping and preparing for another set battle nevertheless offers a justification for the construction of the wall. Likewise, his description of Caesar's soldiers as “weary” helps explain why they decided to use corpses as building materials. Appian is indicating the dire circumstances under which the wall was constructed, and therefore, although the word does not appear, he is illustrating that its construction was based on necessity, in this case a tactical and practical necessity.<sup>13</sup> In a similar way, Dio Cassius, another Greek author of the imperial period, did not specifically attribute the wall to necessity; nevertheless his narrative offers a subtle justification for its construction.<sup>14</sup> His use of the verb ἀπορέω, “to be at a loss,” or “to be without means or resources,” to describe the soldiers of Caesar's army suggests that they were indeed in desperate circumstances. Note also that Dio, unlike the author of

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<sup>12</sup> The confusion should elicit little problem. Corduba was not far from Munda, and even the location of Munda is today not entirely certain. See BAtlas Map 26, E4 where Munda is located by the symbol “o?”, an indication of approximate but uncertain placement. Appian may have purposefully transferred the location of the event to a more well-known location for the benefit of his Greek readers.

<sup>13</sup> 2.15.105 (434): ὁ μὲν Καῖσαρ, ἵνα μὴ διαφυγόντες οἱ πολέμιοι πάλιν ἐς μάχην παρασκευάσαιντο, ἐκέλευε τὸν στρατὸν ἐκτειχίσαι τὴν Κορδύβην, οἱ δὲ κάμνοντες τοῖς γεγυόσι τὰ τε σώματα καὶ τὰ ὅπλα τῶν ἀνηρημένων ἐπεφοροῦν ἀλλήλοις καὶ δόρασιν αὐτὰ διαπηγνύντες ἐς τὴν γῆν ἐπὶ τοιοῦδε τείχους ἠύλισαντο, “Caesar, so that the enemy could not escape from the city and prepare for battle, ordered his army to besiege Corduba, and wearied from what had happened, [the soldiers] piled the bodies and the weapons of the slain together and fastening them to the earth with spears they encamped behind such a wall.” Note that in the Loeb volume, White translates τοιοῦδε τείχους as the “ghastly wall” which may, I think, give too much weight to the possibly negative connotation of τοιοῦδε, and reflect modern attitudes towards the incident more than ancient.

<sup>14</sup> 43.38.4: τοσοῦτον δ’ οὖν τὸ σύνολον τῶν Ῥωμαίων πάθος ἐκατέρωθεν ἐγένετο ὥστ’ ἀπορήσαντας ὅπως τὴν πόλιν, μὴ καὶ νυκτὸς ἐκδρῶσι τινες, ἀποτειχίσωσιν, αὐτὰ τὰ σώματα τῶν νεκρῶν αὐτῇ περινήσαι, “And so, the collective misfortune of the Romans was so great on either side that being uncertain how they could wall up the city so that no one could run out in the night, they heaped up the bodies of the dead around it.”



the *Bellum Hispaniense* who offered a 300 : 1 ratio of Pompeian versus Caesarian killed, does not distinguish between the losses of the Pompeians and the losses of Caesarians. Rather there was collective calamity on both sides. Furthermore, as with the previous examples of the story, Dio confirms that Caesar was afraid that some of the enemy might try to escape. So in a similar way to Appian, Dio Cassius has illustrated that necessity lay behind the construction of the wall, but has also provided a more realistic illustration of what might have happened at Munda.

Of the five extant sources for this incident, only Lucius Annaeus Florus, who wrote in the first half of the second century C.E.,<sup>15</sup> specifically criticized the erection of the barricade. He alone described the wall in a specifically negative context as he attributed its construction to the “anger and fury” of Caesar's forces. Furthermore, while Florus called the Caesarian forces “victors” and the Pompeians “conquered,” the fact that the four other sources, to one degree or another, all stated that the wall was necessary to hem in the still fighting Pompeians suggests that the battle was not yet over. Finally, and most incriminatingly, Florus wrote that the wall was “detestable even [if it were used] against barbarians.”<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Lucius is probably to be identified with Publius Annus Florus, the poet, orator, and friend of the emperor Hadrian; see Conte (1994): 550.

<sup>16</sup> 2.13.85: *Quanta fuerit hostibus caedendis ira rabiesque victoribus, sic aestimare posses, quod a proelio profugi cum se Mundam recepissent, et Caesar obsideri statim victos imperasset, congestis cadaveribus agger effectus est, quae pilis tragulisque confixa inter se tenebantur, - foedum etiam in barbaros, “How great the anger and fury of the victors was towards the slaughtered enemy you could estimate in this way, because after fleeing from the battle, they returned to Munda with him and Caesar immediately ordered the defeated men to be besieged, a rampart was constructed from heaped up corpses, which were held together by javelins and spears pierced through them, - detestable even [if it were used] against barbarians.”*

Wardle suggested that Florus likely provides “an indication of the slant in Livy's account and the anti-Caesarian tradition, which Valerius [Maximus] ignores.”<sup>17</sup> Even though Wardle does not investigate the point further, there is good reason to agree with his proposal. First, and most obvious, Florus was writing an epitome of Livy, and so it should come as no surprise that his commentary might reflect the same attitudes as those of the original author. But, likely as that may be, this fact does not rule out the possibility that Florus added his own criticisms. We are left to consider the extant sections of Livy for any sort of clue as to his judgment of the incident. While our text of Livy for this event is lost,<sup>18</sup> a hint of the historian's opinion is found in his narrative of the Second Punic War (218 – 201 B.C.E.). The Roman army had just been destroyed at Cannae (in 216 B.C.E.) when the consul Gaius Terentius Varro tried to raise the spirits of some envoys from the city of Capua, a wavering Roman ally. In the speech recorded in Livy, Varro defamed the Carthaginians and their general Hannibal. Specifically, he concluded that Hannibal “made himself savage by constructing bridges and embankments from piles of human corpses.”<sup>19</sup> These words of Varro along with the opinion expressed in Florus offer, so far as is possible, a reasonable account of what Livy might have thought about the incident at Munda. In short, he would not have approved. The abuse of corpses even in the midst of battle was not justifiable; rather, it was barbaric, or, if such a thing were possible, even worse than barbaric.

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<sup>17</sup> (1997): 330.

<sup>18</sup> The *Periocha* of book 115 does specifically refer to the battle of Munda, and states that Caesar won a “victory with great peril” (*victoriam cum magno discrimine*), but there is no mention of the wall.

<sup>19</sup> Livy 23.5.12: ... *ipse efferavit pontibus ac molibus ex humanorum corporum strue faciendis ...*

So the five sources present accounts of varying detail and judgment. It is certainly true that the four versions suggesting that the wall's construction was (to various extents) a necessary reality of war could have been devised to hide an even grimmer reality: that Caesar's men purposefully mutilated and abused the corpses of the dead (and, in the euphoric chaos of victory, perhaps even some of their own dead). The fact that this was civil war, and that even the enemy were Roman citizens, made the construction and willful mutilation all the worse. Nevertheless, even if this were true, which seems doubtful considering how difficult the fighting was in Spain, the different judgments presented in the sources actually share a similar genesis. Whether it be the chastisement of Florus or the apology of Valerius Maximus, each of the five sources indicate that the actions taken by Caesar's soldiers at the battle of Munda were not overwhelmingly approved by the citizens of Rome – how else to explain the need to justify the action in the first place? Even the earliest version of the event, presented in the *Bellum Hispaniense*, fits this conclusion. The morality of the wall must have been discussed at Rome – particularly within the context of the civil wars – and therefore an explanation of sorts was necessary; by including one, the author tried to defend the action as being a necessary reality of war.

The general opinion that the construction of a wall out of corpses constituted a mistreatment of the war dead illustrates a particular convention in the Roman cultural discourse about how war should be fought. In short, many Romans evidently believed that it was unacceptable to use corpses in such a way. If the author of the *Bellum Hispaniense* is correct and one of the reasons for the construction of the wall was to terrify the enemy, than it is clear that even he (and at least some of the soldiers who

stacked the bodies and impaled the decapitated heads) understood that such actions were considered objectionable. We are left to consider how these attitudes can be understood next to the reality of the event. In the case of the corporal barrier we might conclude that at the end of the first century B.C.E. and during the early imperial period, such an act disturbed the Romans. Their culturally constructed ideal of war did not admit the use of corpses in such a way. There were, therefore, limits to the viciousness of war.

Nevertheless, as we shall see, such treatment was not atypical in Roman warfare. The abuse of bodies on the battlefield was part of the reality of battle; a reality which the nature and form of battle in the ancient world necessitated. The fact that so many of our sources justify (or at least defend) the construction of the wall as being the result of the necessities of battle suggests that the reality of warfare was often too powerful a force to be constrained by any cultural conventions.

### *1.2.2 Heaps of Men and Weapons*<sup>20</sup>

The close-quarter combat typical of ancient warfare meant that the dead and the severely wounded fell where they fought.<sup>21</sup> The ancient sources describe the remains of the war dead as being scattered about in “heaps” around the battlefield.<sup>22</sup> These heaps could make it difficult to fight if the casualties in the battle became particularly high. In

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<sup>20</sup> The title of this section comes from a passage of Livy 30.34.9 ... *strages hominum armorumque* ...

<sup>21</sup> Hanson's (1989) chapter titled “The Killing Field” (pages 197-209) offers a good description of the Greek battlefield. Hanson also uses other pre-modern battles - Keegan's (1976) description of Agincourt in particular - as examples of bodies being heaped up upon one another.

<sup>22</sup> For the Latin word *strages* see the various examples in the *OLD*.

one version of the events surrounding the almost complete extinction of the Fabian *gens* in 477 B.C.E., Dionysius of Halicarnassus reported that at one point the fighting was so serious, and so many were killed, that “the heaps of dead bodies piled up all over the place were in many places a hindrance to those fighting.”<sup>23</sup> The recognition of the practical difficulties associated with the nature of close-quartered warfare and the inability to recover the dead during battle is seen elsewhere in the sources.

The historian Polybius (c. 203 – 120 B.C.E.) described the brutal reality of the ancient battlefield in his narrative of the battle of Zama, the culmination in 202 B.C.E. of Rome’s nearly two-decade long second war with Carthage:

After the area between the two remaining armies became filled with blood, gore and corpses, it presented a serious problem to the Roman general as an impediment to the rout of the enemy. For the slipperiness of the dead bodies, which were blood-soaked and had fallen in heaps, and of the weapons that were thrown down at random among the corpses, would make it difficult to cross the battlefield in formation. Nevertheless, having his wounded carried to the back of the line, and having recalled with the horn those *hastati* who had been in pursuit, he set them up in the front of the battlefield across from the enemy’s center; and having formed the *principes* and *triarii* in close-knit order on either wing, he ordered them to make their way over the dead.<sup>24</sup>

Livy, who read Polybius and used him as a source for his own history, provided an equally gruesome version:

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<sup>23</sup> 9.21.2: ... ὥστε τοὺς σωροὺς τῶν νεκρῶν ἐμποδῶν αὐτοῖς εἶναι τῆς μάχης πολλαχῆ κεχυμένους.

<sup>24</sup> 15.14.1-4: γενομένου δὲ τοῦ μεταξὺ τόπου τῶν καταλειπομένων στρατοπέδων πλήρους αἵματος, φόνου, νεκρῶν, πολλὴν ἀπορίαν παρείχε τῷ τῶν Ῥωμαίων στρατηγῷ τὸ τῆς τροπῆς ἐμπόδιον· ὅ τε γὰρ τῶν νεκρῶν ὄλισθος, ὡς ἀν αἰμοφύρτων καὶ σωρηδὸν πεπτωκότων, ἢ τε τῶν χυδῆν ἐππριμμένων ὀπλων ὁμοῦ τοῖς πτώμασιν ἀλογία δυσχερῆ τὴν διόδον ἐμελλε ποιῆσειν τοῖς ἐν τάξει διαπορευομένοις. οὐ μὴν ἀλλὰ τοὺς μὲν τραυματίας εἰς τοῦπίσω τῆς παρατάξεως κομισάμενος, τοὺς δ’ ἐπιδιώκοντας τῶν ἀστάτων ἀνακαλεσάμενος διὰ τῆς σάλπιγγος, τοὺς μὲν αὐτοῦ πρὸ τῆς μάχης κατὰ μέσους τοὺς πολεμίους ἐπέστησε, τοὺς δὲ πρίγκιπας καὶ τριαρίους πυκνώσας ἐφ’ ἑκάτερον τὸ κέρας προάγειν παρήγγειλε διὰ τῶν νεκρῶν.

But so great were the heaps of bodies and weapons that filled the place where the auxiliaries had just stood that it was nearly more difficult to cross than it had been through the crowded ranks of the enemy. And so those who were first, the *hastati*, following the enemy wherever they could through heaps of bodies and weapons and through puddles of blood, brought into disorder their maniples and lines. The maniples of *principes* also began to fall apart after seeing the unsettled line before them. When Scipio saw this he immediately ordered the recall of the *hastati*, and after leading the wounded to the rear of the line, he brought forward the *principes* and the *triarii* to the wings, so that the center of *hastati* would be safer and more firm.<sup>25</sup>

Both descriptions illustrate the reality of ancient battle: the nature of close quarter combat meant that in large part the dead became part of the battlefield, an obstacle to be maneuvered around or over. While the first half of the Polybian passage is melancholic, it is the cold precision of the final words, “he ordered them to make their way over the dead,” that illustrates the reality of ancient battle. While it is certainly possible and reasonable to believe that many soldiers were shocked and terrified by the sight of so many dead,<sup>26</sup> it is also clear that the nature of warfare required that soldiers fight atop the bodies of the fallen. Gruesome and difficult to be sure, but a reality that all Roman soldiers must have realized and accepted.

Within the Roman discourse of war, meanwhile, maneuvering over the war dead (whether Roman or not) could be seen as an illustration of just how dire a certain

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<sup>25</sup> 30.34.9-13: *Ceterum tanta strages hominum armorumque locum in quo steterant paulo ante auxiliares compleverat ut prope difficilior transitus esset quam per confertos hostes fuerat. Itaque qui primi erant, hastati, per cumulos corporum armorumque et tabem sanguinis, qua quisque poterat, sequentes hostem et signa et ordines confuderunt. Principum quoque signa fluctuari coeperant vagam ante se cernendo aciem. Quod Scipio ubi vidit receptui propere canere hastatis iussit et sauciis in postremam aciem subductis principes triariosque in cornua inducit, quo tutior firmiorque media hastatorum acies esset.*

<sup>26</sup> Daly (2002): 171 used the first half of the Polybian passage to illustrate the difficulty of the gruesome task of maneuvering over the battlefield. He then used this gruesome picture to transition into a discussion about how Romans could have suffered from 'battle-shock'.

situation was. Livy, for instance, used such descriptions as a way to illustrate a particularly bloody and difficult battle. His description of a Roman army “escaping through a heap of corpses and weapons” made the depiction of their defeat at the hands of the Volscians all the more grievous and distressing.<sup>27</sup> In his commentary on the first pentad of Livy, R.M. Ogilvie succinctly – and without reference to the reality of battle – called the line an example of “Livian battle colouring.”<sup>28</sup> In Book Nine, while describing a difficult battle fought with the Etruscans towards the end of the fourth century, Livy wrote that the Romans had reached such a point of distress and danger “that the Roman cavalry, after dismounting from their horses, made their way over weapons and over corpses to the front lines of the infantry.”<sup>29</sup> Likewise, in his narrative of the Third Samnite War,<sup>30</sup> Livy described how the Samnites were faced with a terrible choice. Surrounded by the Roman army, “they must either die in that very place or cut down their enemies and escape over their bodies.”<sup>31</sup> S.P. Oakley, in his commentary on Book Nine, notes the possibility that such passages may be derived from earlier poetical passages such as those found in Vergil.<sup>32</sup> Caesar, in his *Civil Wars*, meanwhile, was much more straightforward. He described how panicked soldiers, attempting to escape from a besieged camp, jumped from the ramparts, and then sought an escape to safety over the

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<sup>27</sup> Livy 2.59.8: ... *per stragem corporum armorumque evasere* ...

<sup>28</sup> (1965): 384.

<sup>29</sup> 9.39.8: ... *ut equites Romani omissis equis ad primos ordines peditum per arma, per corpora evaserint.*

<sup>30</sup> This third war finally brought the Samnites under Roman domination. The Samnites lived in the Appennine Mountains southeast of Roman controlled Latium. The first two wars were fought from 343 - 341 B.C.E. and 326 - 304 B.C.E.

<sup>31</sup> 10.35.19: *illo loco aut cadendum esse aut stratis hostibus per corpora eorum evadendum.*

<sup>32</sup> (2005): 501.

bodies of the dead.<sup>33</sup> So while the inclusion of such passages describing the trampling of dead bodies in the battle narratives could readily be described as a literary technique used by our sources to indicate the difficulty of a particular battle, they also reflect a very specific reality of ancient warfare: soldiers, at one time or another, would have to maneuver over dead bodies.

Our sources also appear to use such descriptions to illustrate the courage and bravery of those unaffected by the piles of dead lying around them. So Livy described the Volscian Messius methodically and straightforwardly leading a group of “the bravest young men over the scattered enemy dead.”<sup>34</sup> Caesar went a step further and praised the courage of his enemies who fought while standing on the bodies of their comrades.<sup>35</sup> It may be appropriate to compare Caesar’s verdict about the courage displayed by those who fought upon the bodies of the dead with the story of the “wall of cadavers” recorded by the author of the *Bellum Hispaniense*. The wall was supposed to instill fear in the enemy; the implication of this expectation was that any soldier who was not terrified by the sight of the wall must have been courageous. In both examples, then, soldiers who are unaffected by the sight of the war dead, and are able to subject their own fears to the

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<sup>33</sup> *BC* 3.69: ... *primisque oppressis reliqui per horum corpora salutem sibi atque exitum pariebant*, “... and after the first were crushed, the rest created a safe passage for themselves and a way of escape over their bodies.”

<sup>34</sup> 4.29.1: *Messium impetus per stratos caede hostes cum globo fortissimorum iuvenum extulit ad castra Volscorum*, ... “The assault carried Messius with a band of the bravest young men over the scattered enemy dead to the camp of the Volscians, ...”

<sup>35</sup> *BG* 2.27: *At hostes etiam in extrema spe salutis tantam virtutem praestiterunt, ut, cum primi eorum cecidissent, proximi iacentibus insisterent atque ex eorum corporibus pugnarent*, “But the enemy, even in the final hope of safety, illustrated such great courage, that, when their first line had fallen down, the next line stood on the dead and fought from their corpses.” For another example in which Caesar praises such actions, see *BG* 2.10: ... *per eorum corpora reliquos audacissime transire conantes multitudine telorum reppulerunt*, “... they repelled with a multitude of javelins the remaining men who were making a most courageous effort to cross over their bodies ...”



necessity of battle, are illustrative of true courage. Brave soldiers are able to overcome the realities of the battlefield and perform their duty.

Not surprisingly, the narrative description of soldiers maneuvering over or standing on the dead could also illustrate pure dominance. Thus, Livy, in his seventh book, describes the exhortation of the consul of 316 B.C.E. Marcus Popilius Laenus to his troops before a battle with the Gauls. The consul tried to rouse the courage of his men by reminding them that Gauls could not be incorporated into Roman society like the Latins or Sabines. This was truly a fight to the death. He reminded them of their previous victories and the need to renew the attack. In an effort to rouse the spirits of his men, in the midst of this speech Livy has Popilius say that the Romans “stood upon the scattered corpses of their enemies.”<sup>36</sup> This example of dominance would later, in the early second century C.E., be depicted on one of Rome's lasting war memorials. In the depictions of battle seen on Trajan's Column, Roman soldiers are regularly seen standing on and trampling over dead and dying Dacian soldiers.<sup>37</sup> In these depictions, the soldiers' willingness to march over the bodies of dead illustrates a form of supreme dominance.<sup>38</sup>

However dominant they may have been, during battle Roman soldiers were frequent witnesses to death. They stood in line as friends, and comrades fell in front, behind and beside them. It was inevitable that the dead would be pushed aside and trampled. The necessity of battle ensured it. It appears that those who were not affected by this reality were, in the eyes of soldiers such as Caesar and the author of the *Bellum*

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<sup>36</sup> 7.24.5: ... *stratis corporibus hostium superstatitis* ...

<sup>37</sup> For more on the monumental record, see Chapter 4.5.

<sup>38</sup> Another method of illustrating this dominance can be seen in the massive discrepancy indicated by a source's inclusion of casualty figures; for which see Chapter 5.2.4.

*Hispaniense*, paragons of courage. However brave a soldier may have been, instincts of self-preservation must also have steeled his nerve. Often there was no choice but to forge ahead atop the corpses of enemies and friends alike. It remains to consider how the dead were treated when the cacophony of the battle was silenced and replaced by the moans of the dying and the grim task of burying the dead.

### 1.3 Burial

Modern scholars have not completely ignored the actual burial of the Roman war dead, though the topic has suffered from a lack of detailed analysis.<sup>39</sup> Part of the reason for this oversight has to do with the nature of our sources. Although, throughout the long history of Roman hegemony, hundreds of thousands of Romans died in battle, and although our sources frequently describe these losses, they rarely offer more than a brief mention of the collection and burial of the war dead. Daniel Peretz's recent article titled "Military Burial and the Identification of the Roman Fallen Soldiers" is a welcomed addition to a neglected area of study.<sup>40</sup> Peretz, however, focused mainly on the imperial period and based his conclusions in large part on information found in Vegetius' *Epitoma Rei Militaris*, a source from late antiquity, possibly even the fifth century C.E., and one which too often reflects an ideal scenario that had little to do with the reality of war.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Toynbee (1971): 55; Gilliver (1999): 122-125; Hope (2003): 87-88 are all brief and general. Campbell (2002): 68-70 concentrated almost entirely on the difficult problem of numbering the dead. Giorcelli (1995): 235-242 contributes a very useful paper, though some details, such as the collection and the process of cremating or burying the dead, are taken for granted.

<sup>40</sup> Peretz (2005).

<sup>41</sup> For more on Vegetius, and especially a discussion on the context in which he wrote, see Charles (2007).

C.F. Konrad noted that even when scraps of information are available in the sources, it is only because of some unusual circumstance – a significant change in the military or diplomatic situation, or because burial was denied for some reason. His discussion is based on the belief that all Roman soldiers sought proper burial.<sup>42</sup> The following subsections first consider whether or not Roman soldiers actually expected burial, and if they did, how realistic such expectations were. Discussions concerning the collection, identification, and repatriation of the war dead are followed by an explanation of the most likely scenario for the burial of Roman casualties of war.

### *1.3.1 Expectations of Burial*

Roman popular belief demanded the burial of the dead because the *manes*, or soul, of the dead continued to exist even after death. Burial ensured that the continued existence of the soul was not completely piteous.<sup>43</sup> Although they are not examined within the scope of military defeats, the poets offer a useful example of Roman attitudes towards the dead. During his journey into the underworld Aeneas came across the soul of his helmsman Palinurus, “mourning among the many shadows,”<sup>44</sup> unable to cross the River Styx into the underworld because he was left unburied. The shadow begged Aeneas

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<sup>42</sup> (1997): 35.

<sup>43</sup> There is no apt English word to describe what the Romans called their *manes*; ‘soul’ is perhaps closest, but the idea that this is the same as the immortal Christian soul should be avoided. For more on the *manes* see Nielson (1984); see also Toynbee (1971): 33-39, 43 and Hope (2000): 105-108. The necessity of burial to ensure peace for the soul is the general attitude of most upper class Romans.

<sup>44</sup> Verg. *Aen.* 6.340: *hunc ubi uix multa maestum cognovit in umbra*, “... there, when [Aeneas] barely recognized him mourning among the many shadows, ...” Properly translated as shade or shadow, *umbra* was commonly used for the miserable soul.

“to save [him] from this evil,” by either finding his body and giving it proper burial or taking him across the river himself “so that [he] might find some quiet place to rest in death.”<sup>45</sup> Left unburied, his soul was in a sort of limbo, unable to reach whatever sort of rest awaited it in the underworld. While it was believed that burial would give repose to the souls of the dead, the expectation of burial also gave comfort to the dying. The knowledge that they would be buried, and not exposed to rot among the elements, brought peace to those about to make the transition from this life to the next. It also brought peace to those who survived the deceased and provided them with an opportunity to perform socially accepted rituals to detach themselves from a loved one who had died.<sup>46</sup>

Wealthy Romans, who were successful in war or government, might receive a public funeral, paid for by the state. Polybius argued that such funerals were a main reason for Roman success because they elicited in Roman youths the desire to achieve the same renown as the dead man for whom the funeral was being held.<sup>47</sup> Meanwhile, the funerals of most wealthy Romans would also include elaborate ceremonies and rituals. The family would attend to the dying and a loved one would impart a final kiss. After

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<sup>45</sup> Verg. *Aen.* 6. 365-371: *eripe me his, invicte, malis: aut tu mihi terram / inice, namque potes, portusque require Velinos; / aut tu, si qua via est, si quam tibi diva creatrix / ostendit (neque enim, credo, sine numine divum / flumina tanta paras Stygiamque innare paludem), / da dextram misero et tecum me tolle per undas, / sedibus ut saltem placidis in morte quiescam*, “Unconquered one, save me from this evil: either, find the Velinian harbour, for you are able, and sprinkle some earth on me; or if there is some way, if your divine creator shows you one (for I believe you would not attempt to sail such waves and the Stygian marsh without the will of a god), give your hand to this wretched one and lead me with you over the waves so that I might at least be at peace in a quiet place.” See also the examples of Misenus in Verg. *Aen.* 6.149-155 and the unknown sailor in Hor. *Carm.* 1.28.

<sup>46</sup> For more on the importance of such rituals see Hopkins (1983): 217-226; Huntington, R and Metcalf, P. (1979); Durkheim (1915) (trans. J. Ward Swain), especially pages 389-414; and see the fundamental psychological study on attachment and loss by Bowlby (1969 – 1980) published in three volumes, *Attachment, Separation, and Loss*.

<sup>47</sup> Polyb. 6.53-56 and for a detailed analysis of such funerals see Wesch-Klein (1993).

death the corpse was ritually cleaned and prepared for a public viewing. A funeral procession would then lead the corpse outside the city to the burial ground, where it would be disposed of in an acceptable manner (either inhumation or cremation, depending upon the time period). Various rituals, including the sacrificing of a pig, were performed after the interment and could continue throughout the year and at annual festivals for the dead.<sup>48</sup> Yet even these funeral ceremonies were beyond the monetary capabilities of many, perhaps even most, Romans. The city's poorest citizens were often left exposed or buried unceremoniously in mass graves or collective pits called *puticuli*, located just outside the city.<sup>49</sup> Such burial became the norm during incidences of widespread death, such as the onset of a plague, or, it ought to follow, a war. It is impossible to know whether or not these poor Romans shared the desires and expectations of the rich as eloquently described by Vergil.

The burial of Roman soldiers can be divided into two categories: burial during peacetime and burial after battle.<sup>50</sup> While our main concern is the treatment of the dead during wartime, a brief review of Roman soldiers' expectations towards burial during peacetime is warranted because it will help clarify their attitudes towards death and burial after battle. Perhaps surprisingly, during the republican period, the performance of proper burial rites even superseded Rome's other traditional observances: preparing for and waging war. Romans were excused from attending the consul's levy if they had a funeral or burial to attend.<sup>51</sup> Although the exemption was only for the day of the obsequies, the

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<sup>48</sup> The *Parentalia* in February, and the *Lemuria* in May. The funeral ceremonies are fully described by Toynbee (1971).

<sup>49</sup> Hopkins (1983): 207-208 and Bodel (2000).

<sup>50</sup> By peacetime I mean simply those periods in which the army was not fighting.

willingness of the Romans to accept attendance at funerals as an excuse for delaying their military responsibilities illustrates just how seriously the society took the rituals and ceremonies associated with the transition from life to death.

In the citizen militia of the republican period, when soldiers were not part of a standing army, it was much less likely that they would die from natural causes in the camp and much more likely, if they survived the war and returned home to their farms and families, that when they did die they would be buried by their family, like any other Roman of means. In the imperial period, when professional soldiers were stationed in military camps scattered throughout the empire, burial of the dead became the responsibility of one's fellow soldiers. Thus, Vegetius wrote that the soldiers of the imperial Roman army made an annual contribution to a common fund from which they would pay for the obsequies of any comrade who might die.<sup>52</sup> The numerous examples of stone grave memorials set up by heirs, friends, or family indicate that soldiers commonly took care to ensure that their peers would be properly buried.<sup>53</sup> Cemeteries filled with the tombstones of Roman soldiers, and located right next to their frontier forts also illustrate that soldiers regularly received proper Roman burial.<sup>54</sup> In times of peace, Roman soldiers

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<sup>51</sup> Gell. *NA* 16.4.4.

<sup>52</sup> Veg. 2.20. Though the article is unclear, Peretz (2005): 128 seems to argue that this monetary collection would help pay for soldiers who were killed during wartime. His interpretation probably should be qualified: there is a significant difference between the deaths of one or two soldiers on patrol and the deaths of entire cohorts of soldiers in outright war. In the latter occasion it is difficult to believe that burial on the scale for which the collections had been made was ever offered.

<sup>53</sup> Some illustrative examples include, *CIL* XIII 8519; *CIL* XIII 6940; *CIL* III 11213; *CIL* VI 66.

<sup>54</sup> See Hope (2003): 125-137 for an extended discussion of these "fortress cemeteries", mainly in Britain.

differed little from most other Romans who had money to spare: they desired and expected proper burial.<sup>55</sup>

Although it is safe to generalize that Roman soldiers expected (and generally received) proper burial in peacetime, whether or not soldiers killed in war expected to be buried presents an entirely new problem. Peretz concluded that “The Roman legate had the authority and the obligation to conduct military burial and ceremonies in close proximity to the battlefield or on a later date.”<sup>56</sup> Indeed a number of sources suggest that his conclusion is valid. One first century C.E. Greek commentator, Onasander, advised the good general to bury his war dead to ensure the morale of his surviving soldiers.<sup>57</sup> He thought that soldiers were more willing to fight if they knew that their bodies would be properly buried if they died. Dionysius of Halicarnassus provided another example, albeit with a frightening anecdote: in an effort to motivate his men, Aulus Postumius, an early fifth century B.C.E. dictator, threatened not only to kill any Romans who acted cowardly in battle but also to deny them burial rites, and leave them “to be torn apart by birds and beasts.”<sup>58</sup> Postumius’ threat depended upon the Roman soldiers’ desire for burial. While these two Greek writers recognized differing motives for burial – Onasander saw it as a

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<sup>55</sup> Giorcelli (1995): 236-237. For more on the burial of soldiers in peacetime, see also Lisa Anderson's recent (2009) dissertation “The Roman Military Community as Expressed in its Burial Customs during the First to Third Centuries CE” and Carroll (2006): *passim*.

<sup>56</sup> Peretz (2005): 138.

<sup>57</sup> Onasander 36.1: Προνοείσθω δὲ τῆς τῶν νεκρῶν κηδείας, ..., “[The general] should think about the care of the dead ...” See Chapter 2.3.3 for more on how generals should deal with the morale of their men in the aftermath of battle.

<sup>58</sup> Dion. Hal. 6.9.4: καὶ περίεσται τοῖς οὕτως ἀποθανοῦσι μήτε ταφῆς μήτε τῶν ἄλλων νομίμων μεταλαβεῖν, ἀλλ’ ἀζήλοισ ἀκλαύστοις ὑπ’ οἰωνῶν τε καὶ θηρίων διαφορηθῆναι, “... and it will come to pass for those who die to have no burial nor any other customary rites, but being miserable and unwept, to be torn apart by birds and beasts.” The speech occurred before the famous battle at Lake Regillus shortly after the kings were thrown out of Rome.

carrot and stick approach, while Postumius really offered only the stick – both illustrate that among Greek authors of the late first century B.C.E. and early first century C.E. the morale of Roman soldiers was connected to their expectation of receiving burial.

Offering a similar message in the early second century C.E., the Roman author and senator Tacitus criticized the failure of a Roman general to bury his war dead. After the German tribe called the Frisii rebelled in 29 C.E., so Tacitus reported, the centurion appointed to manage Roman interests and the collection of taxes fled to a nearby castle and awaited reinforcement by the governor of Lower Germany, one Lucius Apronius. Hard fighting ensued. The Romans retreated from the Frisian territory and according to Tacitus the “Roman commander did not prepare vengeance, or bury the bodies, although many of the tribunes and praefects and distinguished centurions had died.”<sup>59</sup> On the one hand, it is possible to conclude from these stories that Roman soldiers expected burial after battle. On the other hand, such stories may actually reflect only the expected actions of the 'good' commander rather than the actual expectations of regular Roman soldiers. Oftentimes it must have been near impossible to bury the war dead, especially after a severe defeat, or even after a victory in which there were heavy losses and the necessities of war did not allow for proper burial.

Once again we have here a meeting of the discourse and the reality of war. In reality, the proper burial of the dead under many circumstances must have been near impossible. On the other hand, the discourse of war, produced by the elites of the city, demanded that Roman generals bury their war dead. It is precisely because of this

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<sup>59</sup> Tac. Ann. 4.73: *neque dux romanus ultum iit aut corpora humavit, quamquam multi tribunorum praefectorumque et insignes centuriones cecidissent.*



discourse that some Roman generals made special effort to bury the war dead from battles long since passed.

In 67 B.C.E., Rome's long-time adversary in the East, Mithridates, was responsible for the deaths of 7,000 Roman soldiers near Zela in modern Turkey. The defeat was the result of the failed ambition of Gaius Valerius Triarius, who had attempted to attack Mithridates without the support of his commander, Lucius Licinius Lucullus. When Lucullus arrived many of the Roman troops began to question his leadership and openly sought out Triarius as a scapegoat for their wrath. Lucullus had to hide his legate from the army's wrath.<sup>60</sup> In an effort to calm the growing discontent, he turned almost immediately to chase Mithridates and his ally Tigranes. In all the commotion the dead Roman soldiers were left unburied. Three years later, Pompey, who had been sent to remedy the supposed dalliance of Lucullus in his pursuit of Mithridates, returned to Zela and gave the soldiers "an honorable and splendid funeral." This delayed burial was an opportunity for Pompey to compare his fortune and skill as a general with that of his predecessor.<sup>61</sup>

Perhaps the most famous belated burial in Roman history occurred in Germany's Teutoburg Forest. In 9 C.E., Publius Quinctilius Varus led three Roman legions through its woods and marshes. The Germans, led by Arminius, a Roman trained mercenary, ambushed them. All three legions were destroyed and Varus committed suicide.<sup>62</sup> Six years later in 15 C.E., the imperial prince Germanicus led another Roman army through

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<sup>60</sup> Plut. *Luc.* 35.1.

<sup>61</sup>Plut. *Pomp.* 39.1:... ἔθαψε λαμπρῶς καὶ φιλοτίμῳς ἅπαντας, "... he gave them all a magnificent and honorable funeral ..."

<sup>62</sup> For more on this defeat, and particularly the reaction in Rome see Chapter 3.3.1.

this German territory. Discovering his proximity to the site of the disaster, “the desire of performing the last rites for the soldiers and their leader possessed [him].”<sup>63</sup> Tacitus, as he had with his criticism of Apronius discussed above, emphasized the importance of the proper burial of the war dead, a deed which he called in this case a “dearest duty.”<sup>64</sup> That it could be deemed such a duty, and that the burial of the war dead could have political consequences, is made all the more clear by Tacitus’ description of one attempt to criticize the burial.

According to Tacitus, Germanicus’ uncle, adoptive father, and emperor of Rome, Tiberius, did not approve of the burial. The historian offered three reasons for Tiberius’ displeasure: [1] perhaps it was because he looked unfavorably upon every action of Germanicus, or [2] because he feared that the sight of so many unburied Roman dead would weaken the resolve of the army, or [3] because Germanicus, as a priest, was not supposed to come in contact with dead bodies.<sup>65</sup> The last of these excuses does at least have some basis; certain priesthoods were forbidden to have any association with the dead.<sup>66</sup> The second reason is odd considering Tiberius’ own extensive experience as a military commander. It is true that he was very careful to take care of his men and he often considered the potential losses before committing to an attack.<sup>67</sup> But if the morale

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<sup>63</sup>Tac. *Ann.* 1.61: *cupido Caesarem invadit solvendi suprema militibus ducique*; the burial is also mentioned (but with much less detail) by Suet. *Cal.* 3 and Dio Cass. 57.18.1.

<sup>64</sup> Tac. *Ann.* 1.62: *gratissimum munus*.

<sup>65</sup> Tac. *Ann.* 1.62.

<sup>66</sup> Details of the passage are often discussed in commentaries. See the still useful notes on the passage by Furneaux’s (1884 – 1891): 234; Nipperdey (1978): 125; Kostermann (1963 - ):213-214; and Goodyear (1972): 99-101. One is left to wonder why the Romans would ever invest a general with a priesthood of any sort. More needs to be done on this subject.

<sup>67</sup> See Chapter 2.3.3 for more on Tiberius’ positive treatment of his soldiers.

of surviving Roman soldiers, as Onasander suggests, was indeed strengthened by the burial of the war dead, then Tiberius should have supported Germanicus' actions, (this is to assume that the emperor was genuinely interested in the well-being of his army). The remaining reason – that Tiberius simply disapproved of every action of Germanicus – certainly suits the theme of tension between the emperor and the heir that Tacitus was trying to create. It also illustrates that Tiberius may have recognized the potential for the morale boost and propaganda coup now available to Germanicus. Less than a year earlier the same soldiers had offered Germanicus the empire, and now the heir appeared to be purposefully gaining the support of the troops.<sup>68</sup> How could Tiberius, the former leader of those same armies, not be disquieted by these events? Furthermore, according to Tacitus, the soldiers, far from being demoralized, were made even angrier with the enemy and more desirous to fight.<sup>69</sup> Tiberius' fears then never materialized.

Whether any of the reasons were true or not, the episode gave Tacitus the opportunity to compare the generalship of Germanicus with that of Tiberius. There is a certain irony here insofar as Tiberius was a renowned general, but since Tacitus began his narrative in 14 C.E. he did not have to describe any of Tiberius' successful actions as a commander of a Roman army and could instead set up the emperor as a foil to the young and successful Germanicus.<sup>70</sup> Underlying Tacitus' attack on Tiberius, however, is the sense that the emperor and Germanicus were locked in a competition. Tiberius had been in Germany after the defeat of Varus, but he had not sought out and buried the Varian

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<sup>68</sup> Tac. *Ann.* 1. 35 and see *Ann.* 1.7 for more on Tiberius' anxiety over the popularity of Germanicus.

<sup>69</sup> Tac. *Ann.* 1. 62: ... *aucta in hostem ira* ..., "[their] anger against the enemy was increased ..."

<sup>70</sup> For more on Tacitus' portrayal of Tiberius see Syme's classic account in his *Tacitus* (1958): 420 – 434.

dead; Germanicus saw an opportunity to overshadow him. So in the end Tacitus is able to provide a specific example of the importance of the burial of the war dead, defame the emperor, and, though perhaps this was not his goal, illustrate how competitive values may have been behind the desire to perform the burial.

Tacitus provides one other example of the integration of competitive politics and the burial of the war dead. During the reign of Nero tensions in the east exploded into war and the Parthians forced the Roman general, Caesennius Paetus, into an embarrassing surrender in 62 C.E. Detested by his soldiers, he returned to Rome, only to be mocked by Nero.<sup>71</sup> One year later, Gnaeus Domitius Corbulo arrived to negotiate a treaty with Vologaeses, the king of Parthia. The king determined that the parlay should take place at the same location as Caesennius' surrender: the memory of it, he thought, only emphasized the strength of Parthia. Corbulo accepted the location because he believed that his renown would be greater if he achieved a success where his predecessor had failed.<sup>72</sup> When the meeting took place, Corbulo took the opportunity "to bury the remains of the unsuccessful battle."<sup>73</sup> To further contrast his success over his predecessor's failure, Corbulo ordered Caesennius' son, a tribune in his army, to complete the burial. Just as Pompey and Germanicus before him, Corbulo took the opportunity to bury the Roman war dead long after the battle. All three did so in an effort to increase their own standing as much as to offer the last rites to their long dead countrymen.

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<sup>71</sup> Tac. *Ann.* 15. 25. Afraid that Caesennius might suffer an outbreak of uncontrolled panic Nero mockingly offered him an immediate pardon.

<sup>72</sup> Tac. *Ann.* 15. 28. According to Tacitus (*Ann.* 15.10), during the entire eastern conflict, Corbulo was interested with increasing his fame. Corbulo did not rush to relieve Paetus because he wanted to arrive in the thick of battle. Paetus had been sending mixed messages about the need of relief. See Chapter 4.2 for more on battlefields as a source of memory.

<sup>73</sup> Tac. *Ann.* 15.28: ... *operire reliquas malae pugnae.*

The discourse surrounding the burial of the war dead supports the conclusion that Roman generals should bury their dead. Nevertheless, above all else the Romans were a pragmatic people and so it seems that the burial of the war dead may not have been as high a priority for them as it was for others (especially, say, classical Greeks, and in particular fifth century Athenians).<sup>74</sup> The nature and reality of warfare meant that burial was not always possible and it seems that, in general, the Romans accepted this fact.<sup>75</sup> In his *Fourteenth Philippic*, Cicero noted that it was not considered something pitiful to be left unburied after dying for the fatherland.<sup>76</sup> In doing so, Marta Sordi suggested, he was referring to a distinctly Roman tradition.<sup>77</sup> The evidence presented here confirms this assumption. While burial may have been desired, it was not absolutely expected by those who served in the army. Nevertheless, despite any recognition of the pragmatic reality of war, there is no doubting that the burial of the war dead was a way to keep score among competitive elites. The various difficulties associated with burial (to which we now turn) may explain why Romans accepted that it was not always possible.

### 1.3.2 *The Collection of the War Dead*

While Roman soldiers were often buried on the battlefield, they were rarely buried precisely where they fell. The corpses needed to be collected and sorted before

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<sup>74</sup> For more on the Athenians' public funeral see Thuc. 2.34 - 46. and Loraux (2006).

<sup>75</sup> Hope (2003): 88.

<sup>76</sup> Cic. *Phil.* 14.34: *quod tamen ipsum pro patria non miserandum putatur*, "but even that [being left unburied] is not consider miserable if it was for the sake of the country."

<sup>77</sup> Sordi (1990): 177. Much of the *Fourteenth Philippic* is based on Greek ideals; see, for example the discussion in Chapter 4.5 about Cicero's suggestion to build a memorial for the war dead.

burial.<sup>78</sup> Livy specifically references the collection of the dead into large piles for cremation: after a battle with the Carthaginians, the Romans “cremated their dead who had been heaped up together in a single place.”<sup>79</sup> After another Roman victory over the Carthaginians Livy wrote that the consul ordered that “the bodies of their comrades, having been collected in one place, be burnt.”<sup>80</sup> When it was feasible, the collection of the dead may have been a matter of routine, and therefore a matter rarely recorded; hence our sources do not describe the process by which the collection and preparation for burial of the war dead occurred. There is, however, another possible reason for the lack of useful descriptions of burial.

Even in a battle where casualties were relatively low, the task of sorting and collecting the dead must have been difficult and time-consuming. The Roman dead, slippery with blood and muck, perhaps even in the first stages of rigor mortis or decomposition, were scattered amongst the equally putrid corpses of the enemy. Under certain circumstances, deciphering friend from foe must have been difficult.<sup>81</sup> The corpses, still wearing their armor, must have been formidably heavy, as difficult to disentangle as to transport.<sup>82</sup> And this is to say nothing of those bodies sliced apart and lying in scattered pieces – an arm here, a leg there – across the battlefield.

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<sup>78</sup> In Livy 23.26.4 the Romans left the bodies of their enemies unburied; this indicates that the Roman dead had to be sorted out from enemy dead and transported to a common burial place.

<sup>79</sup> Livy 27.2.9-10: .... *congestos in unum locum cremavere suos*.

<sup>80</sup> 27.42.8: *spolia legi caesorum hostium et suorum corpora conlata in unum sepeliri iussit*.

<sup>81</sup> During the wars in Italy for example, or even following battles with Hannibal, after the Carthaginian general had armed his men with captured Roman arms.

<sup>82</sup> Vaugn (1993) describes the difficulties in a Greek context.

Some sense of the grim task may be found in comparative evidence. While it would be unfair to compare the attitudes of Romans towards burial to those of foreign and later (and even contemporary) cultures, it can be useful to compare the processes and difficulties associated with the collection and burial of the dead with other societies, especially those that did not have modern conveniences such as mobilized ambulatory care. Drew Gilpin Faust, whose *This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War* asks many of the same questions for nineteenth century America as I have for ancient Rome, offers this description of how bodies were collected in the Civil War:

Burial parties customarily collected the dead in a single location on the field by tying each soldier's legs together, passing the rope around his torso, and then dragging him to a row of assembled bodies. A bayonet, heated and bent into a hook, could keep a soldier from having to touch what was often a putrescent corpse.... G.R. Lee described the procedure [of mass burial] in his unit: "Long trenches were dug about six feet wide and three to four deep. The dead were rolled on blankets and carried to the trench and laid heads and feet alternating so as to save space. Old blankets were thrown over the pile of bodies and the earth thrown on top."<sup>83</sup>

This depiction of the burial of the war dead, some 2,000 years removed from the Roman world, illustrates some of the difficulties and concerns of the mass burial of the war dead. The difficulty of dragging bodies, both physically and emotionally, hence the use of the bayonet, and the desire to arrange them so as to save space in the trench, which really means to save time from having to dig a bigger trench, are all problems that the Romans could have faced. Indeed, it is not very difficult to imagine many of the same tasks being performed in the aftermath of a Roman battle.

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<sup>83</sup> Gilpin Faust (2008): 71.

In fact, the Romans were certainly aware of the practice of using a hook to drag dead bodies.<sup>84</sup> John Bodet, using an inscription outlining funerary provisions and responsibilities for Puteoli and Cumae, confirmed that the hook was one of the tools associated with the guilds of undertakers.<sup>85</sup> In a fragment of Livy, recorded by Obsequens, we learn that Pompeius Strabo, the father of Pompey the Great, was dragged by a hook after his death.<sup>86</sup> Xiphilinus, the epitomizer of Dio Cassius, confirms that the hook was a tool of the public executioners.<sup>87</sup> Juvenal described how the imperial agitator Seianus “was dragged by a hook” after his death.<sup>88</sup> After the death of the emperor Tiberius, some of the people “threatened his corpse with the hook and the Gemonian Steps.”<sup>89</sup> Evidently this was viewed as a fair end to the man who was complicit in so many innocent men and women (of all ages) being dragged by the hook to the steps.<sup>90</sup> Although as an historical source the *Historia Augusta* necessitates careful use, its reference to the demand of the people and senate that the body of Commodus, a notorious and nefarious emperor of the second century C.E., be dragged to the Tiber by the hook

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<sup>84</sup> See Kyle (1998): 156 and 163, who is particularly interested in how the hook was used during the many gladiatorial conflicts witnessed in Rome.

<sup>85</sup> (2004): 156.

<sup>86</sup> Obsequens 56a in the Loeb edition (vol. 14, page 294): ... *corpus unco traxit*, “... his body dragged by a hook.”

<sup>87</sup> See Loeb edition of Dio Cass. epitome of book 61 page 32 (60.35.4): ἐπειδὴ γὰρ τοὺς ἐν τῷ δεσμωτηρίῳ θανατουμένους ἀγκίστροις τισὶ μεγάλοις οἱ δήμιοι ἔσ τε τὴν ἀγορὰν ἀνείλκον κἀντεῦθεν ἔσ τὸν ποταμὸν ἔσυρον, “... , since the executioners dragged with large hooks those who had been executed in prison to the forum and then hauled them to the river ...”

<sup>88</sup> *Juv. Sat.* 10.66: *Seianus ducitur unco*.

<sup>89</sup> *Suet. Tib.* 75.1: *alii uncum et Gemonias cadaueri minarentur*.

<sup>90</sup> *Suet. Tib.* 61.4: *Nemo punitorum non in Gemonias abiectus uncoque tractus, uiginti uno die abiecti tractique, inter eos feminae et pueri*, “Every one of those who were executed was thrown onto the Gemonian Steps and dragged with a hook, as many as twenty were tossed and dragged in one day, among them were women and children.”



further illustrates the ready knowledge in Roman society of the use of the hook to drag dead bodies.<sup>91</sup> Although the majority of this evidence appears with reference to the deaths of public figures, it is not difficult to imagine similar sorts of tools being employed after battle.

There is evidence of a hook-type tool being used during wartime, as was the case after the capture of Byrsa in Spain by Scipio Aemilianus in 146 B.C.E. Appian, in a vivid passage recounting the terror of a captured city, wrote that

... for the λιθολόγοι, who were removing the fallen debris with mattocks, axes and long hooked poles, were making the roads passable for those running around. Some tossed the dead into pits in the ground with their mattocks and axes, while others used the hooks of the long poles, as if dragging sticks and stones, and turned [the dead] over with [these] implements ...<sup>92</sup>

It is unclear who these λιθολόγοι, or masons, were. They may have been inhabitants of Byrsa or they may have been a detachment of Scipio's army. Certainly the Roman army, especially by Appian's day in the second century C.E., would have employed masons for a variety of purposes. While their chief job must have been the construction of encampments, roads, and other permanent structures, it might be suggested that another one of their jobs was the collection of the war dead on the day after battle. Masons, after all, may have been responsible for remaining at the site of the battlefield with orders to

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<sup>91</sup> HA *Com.* 17.4: *Corpus eius ut unco traheretur atque in Tiberim mitteretur, senatus et populus postulavit*, "The senate and people demanded that his body be dragged with the hook and sent into the Tiber." Pertinax, the new emperor, refused, but the senate still issued a scathing proclamation that declared his crimes and repeatedly demanded (some twenty times) the hook, HA *Com.* 18-19.

<sup>92</sup> App. *Pun.* 129: λιθολόγοι γὰρ ὅσοι πελέκεσι καὶ ἀξίναϊς καὶ κοντοῖς τὰ πίπτοντα μετέβαλλον τε καὶ ὠδοποιοῦν τοῖς διαθέουσιν, οἱ μὲν τοῖς πελέκεσι καὶ ταῖς ἀξίναϊς, οἱ δὲ ταῖς χηλαῖς τῶν κοντῶν, τοὺς τε νεκροὺς καὶ τοὺς ἔτι ζῶντας ἐς τὰ τῆς γῆς κοῖλα μετέβαλλον ὡς ξύλα καὶ λίθους ἐπισύροντες ἢ ἀνατρέποντες τῷ σιδήρῳ ...

erect a celebratory trophy.<sup>93</sup> Admittedly the idea that Roman soldiers used hooks to expedite the collection of the war dead is conjecture, and however plausible it is, we cannot say for certain how that collection was completed. As Bodel rightly emphasizes, the hook was readily associated with execution and punishment,<sup>94</sup> and as the passage from Appian illustrates, its appearance and use could be traumatic and depressing. So while the routine nature of the collection and burial of the war dead may explain the paucity of details in our sources, the degrading reality of that collection may provide an additional, and perhaps even more important, reason why our sources chose to rush over the topic. The reality of collecting the dead was grim at best; so too was the task of identifying the dead.

### *1.3.3 The Identification of the War Dead*

The identification of the Roman war dead was inevitably difficult. The nature of ancient warfare, close-quarter combat with edged and pointed weapons, ensured that wounds were devastating and bloody. If facial wounds or decomposition had not completely disfigured the corpse beyond recognition, caked on blood and muck would have.<sup>95</sup> As noted above, the bodies and heads of many would have been trampled on throughout the battle. Such treatment made their identification nearly impossible. Josephus remarks that in the chaos that ensued in the aftermath of the capture of

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<sup>93</sup> For the rarity of the memorial to the Roman dead, see Chapter 4.5.

<sup>94</sup> (2000): 146.

<sup>95</sup> For disfigurement see Salazar (1999): 34 - 36.

Jerusalem in 66 C.E., when many of the inhabitants had been crushed by crowds trying to flee the Romans, their bodies were so disfigured that their relatives could not recognize them to give them burial.<sup>96</sup> Another example which does not recount a military event, but does provide insight into the problems of identifying corpses, is Tacitus' description of families seeking out the bodies of their loved ones after the theater collapsed at Fidenae in 27 C.E. Desperate family members mistakenly identified their kin through “a similarity of form or age.”<sup>97</sup> Such misidentifications must have been common in the aftermath of battle, especially, it seems, during the republican period.

After the disaster at Lake Trasimene in 216 B.C.E. the women and men of Rome, when they heard the news about the defeat, crowded around the gates of the city and inquired from every soldier that was returning home about the health and safety of their family members. Livy described the sad saga of one such mother who sat in her home mourning the death of her son. In the midst of her lamentations her son entered the house; shocked by the sight of him, the mother died from her joy after discovering that “the death of her son had been falsely announced.”<sup>98</sup> Such mistakes must have been common, especially in the early and middle republic when many soldiers returned home from a battle exhausted and scared.<sup>99</sup> Under such circumstances, where the eyewitnesses themselves participated in the carnage, it is not surprising that the wearied soldiers

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<sup>96</sup> *BJ* 2.327: ... καὶ οὐδὲ πρὸς ταφήν τις γνώριμος τοῖς ἰδίοις κατελείπετο, “... and some did not leave a familiar appearance for burial by their relatives.”

<sup>97</sup> *Ann.* 4.63: *et saepe certamen, si confusior facies, sed par forma aut aetas errorem adgnoscentibus fecerat*, “and there was often a dispute, if the features were rather confused, but a similarity of appearance or age resulted in a mistaken identification.”

<sup>98</sup> *Livy* 22.7.13: *cui mors filii falso nuntiata erat*. The story is also reported, nearly verbatim, by *Valerius Maximus* (9.12.2).

<sup>99</sup> See Chapter 3.2.1 for a discussion on the exaggerations of defeat produced by fleeing soldiers.

mistakenly informed families of the deaths of their husbands, fathers, and sons. The chaos of any battlefield and, quite literally in the case of Trasimene, the fog there, no doubt confused the observations of participants.<sup>100</sup> Their exaggerated reports about the status of the army often meant that families received incorrect information about the welfare of their kin.

On another occasion, also from the republican period, a father received a report of the death of his soldier son. The father understandably changed his will to include new heirs. After the death of the father, the soldier, who had been mistakenly reported dead, returned home from service. Cicero wrote that, “the false report about his death came to his home from the army.”<sup>101</sup> Valerius, closely following the wording of Cicero, offered: “he (the father) received the false report about the death of his son from the camp.”<sup>102</sup> The implication is that the army, whether that be someone from the command structure, or the report of a friend or tent-mate, sent some sort of announcement back to Rome, or to wherever the father lived, to announce his son’s death. It may, of course, be simple rhetoric on the part of Cicero and copied by Valerius, but the vignette illustrates that families did learn about the deaths of their kin who were off at war. Unfortunately these reports were not always reliable. There is no way of knowing how often such mistakes occurred, nor is there any way to fully understand the effect such misidentifications had on Roman society as a whole. The above examples suggest that, however often they

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<sup>100</sup> The point is clearly seen in Keegan’s seminal book *The Face of Battle*, (1976). The work posited that battles could be understood through the examination of the experience of soldiers. Keegan illustrated that soldiers on various parts of the battlefield had different impressions of the outcome of the battle. Although the earliest battle Keegan discusses is Agincourt, on October 25, 1415, the idea is found throughout ancient history. When a rout occurred, soldiers often assumed the worst for their comrades.

<sup>101</sup> 1.175: *De cuius morte cum domum falsus ab exercitu nuntius venisset.*

<sup>102</sup> 7.7.1: *cum de morte filii falsum e castris nuntium accepisset.*

occurred, at least some Romans could be seriously affected by such misidentifications. In a society without identification cards or widespread visual media, with relatively few choices for names, and with little literacy or written communication, the potential for such mistakes should not elicit surprise.<sup>103</sup>

The frequency of such mistaken identifications might be understood from a curious story recorded by Plutarch. In his exposition on Roman customs, he sought to explain the odd practice which required those who were mistakenly reported to have died in a foreign country to enter their home from the roof, rather than through the front door whenever they returned.<sup>104</sup> Plutarch first cited the explanation of the Roman antiquarian Varro, who claimed that the custom was related to the “Sicilian war” in which, after a great naval battle, many Romans were erroneously declared dead.<sup>105</sup> Eventually a great number returned to Rome, all but one of them entering their homes through the front door. All but the latter died shortly thereafter. The single survivor found his door locked; not to be denied his return, the intrepid sailor climbed to the roof of his house and lowered himself inside through the atrium. Safe in his own home, he “was fortunate and lived to be an old man.”<sup>106</sup> The fantastic story certainly suits Roman sensibilities,

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<sup>103</sup> Cases of mistaken identity were common, especially when emotions ran high, as in the aftermath of the assassination of Caesar. Cinna, a friend of Caesar, was murdered by an angry mob at the funeral of the dictator because he shared a cognomen with one of the conspirators (Plut. *Caes.* 68.6). Recognizing a similar threat to himself, the tribune Gaius Casca thought it necessary to announce to the people of Rome that he was not the same individual as Publius Servilius Casca, one of Caesar’s assassins (Dio Cassius 44.52.2-3). For other examples see also Dio Cassius 45.10.5; 59.22.4; 35.109.17. It appears that Dio Cassius was particularly interested in this particular aspect of the Roman world. For another of his apparent hobbies see the discussion about the writing of names on shields in Chapter 1.3.3.

<sup>104</sup> *Quaest. Rom. (Mor.)* 264.5 = 264D - 265B.

<sup>105</sup> The reference to Sicily and to a naval battle suggests the First Punic War (264 - 241 B.C.E.). While it is possible that a different war is meant, placing the genesis of this custom before Romans started writing history (at the very end of the 3rd century) explains its fantastic nature.

<sup>106</sup> *Quaest. Rom. (Mor.)* 264.5 = 264F: ποιήσαντα δ’ οὕτως εὐτυχῆ γενέσθαι καὶ γηραιόν·

especially their pragmatic and sensible nature. Nevertheless, the scholar Plutarch saw parallels with Greek rituals of purification and the general unwillingness to admit a person for whom a funeral had been held. Whatever the nature and purpose of the ritual, its inclusion in Plutarch's discussion of Roman customs suggests that even in the second century C.E. this custom was still in need of explanation. This suggests that even if the custom was not still regularly performed it was still remembered. The professionalization and bureaucratization of the Roman army in the empire sought to deal with this problem of misidentification.

It appears that under the empire military officials took considerable steps to ensure the identification of soldiers. The fact that many military documents, especially the military diplomas which attested the official retirement of a soldier, required the names of witnesses to be included on the document may be evidence of an attempt to ensure the proper identification of the recipient.<sup>107</sup> This idea may further explain the details found in a letter from the reign of Trajan that concerned the inclusion of six recruits on the roster of a cohort. The letter not only provided the names and ages of the soldiers, but, importantly, it also included distinguishing marks on their bodies. So, although Gaius Veturius Gemellus, 21 years old, had no mark [*sine i*], Gaius Longinus Priscus, 22 years old, had a scar on his left eyebrow [*i supercil sinistr*], and Gaius Iulius Saturninus, 23 years old, even had a mark on his left hand [*i manu sinistr*]. Such documents, and the yearly reports of units called *pridianum*, illustrated the growing concern of the imperial army to keep an accurate record of their soldiers. The *pridianum*,

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<sup>107</sup> For a good example see ILS 9059.

though not specifically listing names, included categories for losses and deaths that the unit had suffered.<sup>108</sup>

Such a concern for the identification of their soldiers may explain a particularly curious episode recorded by an imperial historian. Dio Cassius was apparently fascinated by the fact that the Romans wrote names on their shields. He noted that during the second triumvirate, soldiers wrote the name of Sextus Pompey on their shields.<sup>109</sup> Later, he indicated that some Roman soldiers loyal to Antony had inscribed the name of Cleopatra upon their shields.<sup>110</sup> It could be that on the battlefields of the late republic, when Roman was fighting Roman, the names on the shields were designed to help distinguish friend from foe. Whatever the reason, there was a change during the imperial period.

During the reign of Domitian, Dio recorded that one of the emperor's generals, a man named Tettius Julianus, instituted a number of "excellent regulations" over the army, one of which was that they should inscribe their own names, and the name of their centurion, on their shields. Dio concluded that this innovation was designed so that commanders could recognize any soldier who performed any distinguished or equally cowardly act on the battlefield.<sup>111</sup> This explanation is difficult to believe. How, for instance, in the midst of battle would a commander be able to see a soldier's shield well enough to distinguish a name? Generals more commonly learned of the bravery of their soldiers in the various accounts told after the battle.<sup>112</sup> Ancient battle was a brutal

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<sup>108</sup> Phang (2007): 293; various examples are found in Fink (1971).

<sup>109</sup> Dio Cassius 48.30.6.

<sup>110</sup> Dio Cassius 50.5.1.

<sup>111</sup> Dio Cassius 67.10.1; Vegetius 2.18 adds that the shields of a cohort were all the same color and that their names, their cohort number, and their century were listed.

experience and in its aftermath the faces and bodies of the dead were left indistinguishable by blood and bruises. Thus, it may be that the inscribed shields acted rather as the modern soldiers' identification or "dog tags." It so happens that there is a precedent for such a practice in the only other ancient army that may have rivaled the Romans in professionalism and capability – the Spartan army. Polyaeus wrote that the Spartans scratched their names on their shields so that their friends would recognize them when it was time to collect the dead.<sup>113</sup> The dead of a battle could be identified by the shields left lying on the ground. It is not a stretch to understand this as the reasoning behind Tettius Julianus' decision. Nor is it surprising to find a Roman historian trying to mask the reality of this action. Dio cleverly swapped the meaning of an action from one which conjures images of death and loss in war into one that emphasizes bravery on the battlefield.

#### *1.3.4 The Repatriation of the War Dead*

Depending on the time period and the location of the battle, once the soldiers were identified they may have been repatriated back to Rome. Although Lellia Cracco Ruggini offers general comments about the repatriation of the dead, especially in the late empire, and especially regarding elites and imperial family members who died abroad,

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<sup>112</sup> App. *BC* 2.82 recalls how Caesar's soldiers reported and praised the exploits of a fallen soldier.

<sup>113</sup> 1.17. The evidence is described by Hanson (1989):206-207, who also refers to these inscribed shields as ancient "dog tags". Peretz (2005): 131 -136 offers a number of suggestions for the identification of the war dead, however, they are all based on accepting the very idealized picture depicted in Vegetius. For example, Peretz suggests that the emphasis in Vegetius on Romans learning their position in the battle line would help with the identification of fallen soldiers. This could only be possible if the line stayed perfectly rigid throughout battle - an ideal scenario that does not suit the reality of ancient warfare, especially large scale battles with significant casualties.



the mass repatriation of the Roman war dead has not been considered in much detail.<sup>114</sup> It is probable that during the early republican period, the Roman war dead were brought back to the city to be buried by their families in private ceremonies. As the empire expanded, the realities of war became less visible. Thousands of Romans died on the battlefields in Spain, Africa, Asia Minor, and Southern Gaul. Even those who died in southern and northern Italy could not expect to be returned to the city. With these battles being so far away, repatriation would have been an impossible task.

In 90 B.C.E., during a battle in the Social War (91 – 88 B.C.E.), Italian forces led by one Vettius Scaton ambushed a Roman army on a river crossing somewhere south of Rome. Not long after the battle began, Marius arrived with reinforcements and defeated the Roman enemy. Despite the reinforcements, the Romans suffered heavy casualties: the consul Rutilius and many patricians died along with a number of other Roman soldiers. The bodies of the consul and the patricians (there is no mention of the other dead) were brought back to Rome where the response of the Roman citizens was unexpected. A great outpouring of mourning lasted “many days” as Rome witnessed the “piteous sight” of their war dead. According to Appian, the Roman senate decreed that from then on “those who were killed in war should be buried where they had fallen, so that others should not be deterred by the spectacle from joining the army.”<sup>115</sup> This is a very different assessment

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<sup>114</sup> (1995): 117-134.

<sup>115</sup> App. *BC* 1.5.43: Ρουτιλίου δὲ τοῦ σώματος καὶ πολλῶν ἄλλων ἐπιφανῶν ἐπὶ ταφὴν ἐς Ρώμην ἐνεχθέντων ἢ τε ὄψις ἀνδρῶν ἢν ὑπάτου καὶ τοσῶνδε ἄλλων ἀνηρημένων καὶ πολυήμερον ἐπὶ τῷδε πένθος ἠγέρθη. καὶ ἀπὸ τούδε ἡ βουλὴ τοὺς ἀποθνήσκοντας ἐν τοῖς πολέμοις ἔκριεν, ἔνθα περ ἂν θάνωσι, θάπτεσθαι, τοῦ μὴ τοὺς λοιποὺς ἐκ τῆς ὄψεως ἀποτρέπεσθαι τῶν στρατειῶν, “And after the body of Rutilius and [the bodies of] many other patricians were brought to Rome for burial, the corpses of the consul and of so many others was a pitiful sight and the mourning for them lasted many days. The senate decreed that from this time on, those who died in war should be buried where they had fallen, so that others should not be deterred by the spectacle from joining the army.”

of the funerary rites of Romans killed in war than the one another Greek historian offered nearly 300 years earlier. Polybius, as noted above, argued that funerals for Rome's greatest men were paid for by the state. These funerals served to motivate Rome's youth to strive to be like the honored deceased. It is true that we may be dealing with a difference in the scale of the number of funerals being celebrated; on the other hand, it appears that something in the Romans may have changed since the mid-second century B.C.E., when Polybius was writing, and the passage of the senatorial decree.<sup>116</sup>

The Social War brought Rome back to its ancient roots of neighborhood warfare and its ancient traditions of how to deal with the dead, who were returned to the city for burial. The shock and trepidation with which the Romans responded to the repatriation in 90 B.C.E. resulted from nearly two centuries in which the losses of war, however severe, were not visible in the city itself. Families certainly knew about and felt these losses, but the bodies of their dead relatives were not laid out in the forum as gruesome images to provoke fear and hesitancy. For this reason the Roman senate banned all repatriations – an attempt to hide the horrible costs of war and preserve the old Roman willingness to continue fighting.

Nevertheless, this provision against the repatriation of the war dead could be ignored, if the status of the individual merited it. The bodies of the two consuls, Aulus Hirtius and Gaius Vibius Pansa, were returned to Rome in 43 B.C.E. after their senatorial forces defeated Antony at Mutina in northern Italy. It was thought that they deserved a public funeral (of the sort described by Polybius), and so they were repatriated to the city where their funeral became as much a celebration of their victory as a mourning for their

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<sup>116</sup> It is, of course, also possible that Polybius' description of the cultural relevance of the Roman public funeral was idealized, and illustrative, perhaps of Greek, more than Roman values.

loss.<sup>117</sup> The event illustrates a common element of the Roman revolution: exceptions were often made for the state's leading men. The rest of the Roman dead from Mutina were buried on the battlefield.<sup>118</sup> In any case, the repatriation to Rome of the war dead was only an issue during the republican period. With the advent of the professional army, which recruited soldiers from throughout the empire, the process of repatriation back to the city of Rome (of soldiers at least) all but disappeared.

### *1.3.5 The Burial of the War Dead*

We have seen how difficult a task it was to prepare the war dead for burial. It remains to consider how the Roman war dead were buried. In private life Romans traditionally practiced two types of burial.<sup>119</sup> According to Pliny the Elder, cremation replaced inhumation as the method of burial for the war dead “after it became known that those who fell in foreign wars were dug up again.”<sup>120</sup> We simply do not know to which wars Pliny referred; nevertheless, it should elicit no surprise that after the Romans buried their war dead and abandoned a territory, local inhabitants might arrive in search of loot. So for the Roman war dead, it has been concluded that “mass cremation on a common pyre seems the most likely option” for their burial.<sup>121</sup> But the chaos of war means that no

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<sup>117</sup> App. *BC* 3.76. Their funerals were even conducted for free by the undertakers.

<sup>118</sup> Cic. *Phil.* 14.13.30-35: suggested that those soldiers be granted a special memorial for the valor and loyalty to Rome. See Chapter Five for further discussion.

<sup>119</sup> Toynbee (1971): 39 cited Lucretius who claimed that the Romans knew three types of burial: cremation, inhumation and embalmment. The last of these was rare. Tacitus (*Ann.* 16.6) wrote that Poppaea Sabina was not cremated according to the *Romanus mos*, “Roman custom.”

<sup>120</sup> Plin. *NH* 7.187: *at postquam longinquis bellis obrutos erui cognovere...*

option should be considered “likely,” at least not without some consideration of the difficulty associated with the production of mass graves. Whichever form we deem to be “most likely,” it is true that vocabulary suggesting both cremation and inhumation appears frequently in the sources, almost as if the terms were considered interchangeable.<sup>122</sup> Or perhaps the conversion of the terms reflects and masks the hidden reality of the burial of the war dead. Cremation may have been the preferred method, but, for a variety of reasons, the Romans must have taken a more pragmatic approach to the burial of their war dead.

For simple mass burial (which is commonly attested), the use of mass graves in the form of long pits should be expected. The Romans probably would have used the natural terrain and the convenience of ditches as pre-constructed tombs.<sup>123</sup> It might also be worth considering that Romans would use the rather deep *fossae*, ditches, that soldiers constructed around their camp as a defensive measure. Romans dug these trenches around their camps every night, and at those camps that they had no intention of re-using such trenches may have become pragmatic burial grounds for their dead, if a battle had been fought near enough to a marching camp.

If cremation was the most common form of burial, some Romans nevertheless recognized a tactical advantage in the inhumation of the dead. In 40 B.C.E., during the

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<sup>121</sup> Hope (2007): 158; and see Hope (2003): 87: “Bodies were generally cremated ...”

<sup>122</sup> Dion. Hal. 5.17.1: ... σκυλεύσαντες οἱ Ῥωμαῖοι τοὺς τῶν πολεμίων νεκροὺς καὶ τοὺς ἑαυτῶν θάψαντες ..., ... the Romans, having stripped the dead of the enemy and having buried their own ...; Dion. Hal. 5.47.1: ... καύσαντες τοὺς ἑαυτῶν νεκροὺς οἱ ὕπατοι ..., “... the consuls burned their dead ...”; Dion. Hal. 9.35.4: ... τοὺς τε τῶν πολεμίων σκυλεύσας νεκροὺς ὁ ὕπατος καὶ τῶν ἰδίων ταφὰς ποιησάμενος ..., “... the consul stripped the dead of the enemy and gave a burial to his own ...”; Dion. Hal. 9.55.4: ... νεκροὺς τε τοὺς ἑαυτῶν ἐκήδευσαν οἱ ἡγεμόνες ... “... the leaders buried their dead ...”; Livy 27.2: ... *et congestos in unum locum cremavere suos*, “and piled up in a single place to cremate them.; Caes. *BG* 1.26: ... *propter sepulturam occisorum* ..., “for the sake of burying the dead.”

<sup>123</sup> As the Americans did during the Civil War, Gilpin Faust (2008):73.

Perusine War, Lucius Antonius, the brother of Mark Antony and the enemy of Octavian, inhumed his dead soldiers in long trenches because he feared that, if he cremated them, his enemies would recognize what was happening and gain strength from his army's misfortunes.<sup>124</sup> In this case Lucius did not cremate the bodies of his dead soldiers because he feared that the smoke from the pyres would be an indication of how badly his army suffered. Frontinus recorded a similar story. A Roman commander in Spain buried many of his men at night so that when the enemy returned to the battlefield the next day, they would think that they had been soundly beaten. The Romans must have been inhumed and not cremated because the fires would have given away the ruse.<sup>125</sup> Inhumation must also have been quicker than cremation because the survivors did not have to wait for the bodies to be burned. Cremating bodies may have been the ideal option (if burial were even possible), but a variety of obstacles often made this impossible.

The complete cremation of a single body is not a very easy task.<sup>126</sup> The human body is not naturally flammable and so it takes a tremendous amount of fuel (perhaps in the neighborhood of 400 pounds of wood) to properly burn even a single corpse.<sup>127</sup> Cremation may have been possible with a small number of casualties, but as the number of dead rose, the possibility for there to be enough fuel for the cremation lessened

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<sup>124</sup> App. BC 5.4.35: καὶ τοὺς ἀμοψύχοντας ὁ Λεύκιος ἐς τάφρους ἐπιμήκεις κατῶρουσεν, ἵνα μήτε καιομένων ἐπίδηλον τοῖς ἐχθροῖς γένοιτο, ... “Lucius buried those who had died in long trenches, lest burning them would be noticeable to the enemy ...”

<sup>125</sup> Strat. 2.10.1. .... *suorum corpora intra noctem sepelienda curavit. ... Hispani postero die ... quia plures ex ipsorum numero quam ex Romanis caesos reppererant, victos se esse secundum eam dinumerationem argumentati*, “... he attended to the burial of his own men in the night. ... On the next day, the Spaniards, because they had found a greater number of their dead than of the Romans, they argued that according to this calculation they had been beaten.”

<sup>126</sup> Noy (2000a)

<sup>127</sup> Noy (2000b): 37.

considerably, and therefore made cremation impossible. Furthermore, without proper circulation of oxygen the body would not burn, at best it would smolder and blacken.<sup>128</sup>

The pyre had to be built with stacked layers of logs so that enough oxygen could circulate around the body, while kindling material, such as papyrus or pitch, might help ignite the fire.<sup>129</sup> One is left to wonder how the various ‘heaps’ of war dead were ever properly cremated, since problems encountered in cremating one individual would only be multiplied when performing the same task for hundreds or thousands of dead soldiers. Furthermore, the Romans did not always fight in well forested areas. Even when they did, how practical could it have been to deforest acres for the sake of cremation? It is unlikely then that Romans found themselves able to perform this type of disposal many times over on the battlefield.

Still, despite all of these problems, the sources often do point to cremation for the Roman war dead. But this might be a literary technique, an attempt to mask the true reality, or reflect the ideal scenario. If casualties were at all high, the mass cremation would have at best been a mass of half-burnt and blackened corpses. Such charring would have effectively quelled any chance of disease and probably would have hindered grave robbers, but it was certainly not similar to the solemn cremation afforded to Roman civilians where the remaining ashes and bones were small enough to fit inside a relatively small cinerary urn. The cremation and burial of the war dead was, in the end, a pragmatic

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<sup>128</sup> Barber (1988): 76.

<sup>129</sup> Noy (2000b): 37.

endeavor;<sup>130</sup> and there was neither the need nor the desire for the historians of Rome to describe the details of the burial.

Finally, it is worth noting that some of the war dead did receive individual burial either on the battlefield or after being repatriated back to the city of Rome. On rare occasions such burial could be granted to a regular soldier. Caesar offered such a burial for the centurion Crassinus who died at the battle of Pharsalus, and whose bravery in battle was praised by the whole army. After finding his body among the heaps of dead, “Caesar granted military honors to it and buried it, and erected a special tomb for him near the common burial-place of the others.”<sup>131</sup> As in life, in death Crassinus was set apart from his fellow soldiers. Once again, an aspect of the burial of the war dead rests on the competitive nature of the Romans. Still, more often than not, such burial was reserved for commanders and officers. The consul Manlius, who could not find the body of his colleague Decius (who had devoted himself for the sake of victory),<sup>132</sup> returned to the field on the day after the battle to continue the search; when he finally found the body he gave it a proper funeral.<sup>133</sup> Numerous other examples exist in which our sources specifically describe the burial of tribunes, praefects and generals, and even those officers of the enemy.<sup>134</sup> These burials were often accompanied by an elaborate funeral ceremony for the dead and it is to that ceremony that we now turn.

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<sup>130</sup> Note Bodel’s (2000) comments about the burial of the poor. And see Giorcelli (1995): 242.

<sup>131</sup> App. *BC* 2.11.82: ... τὰ ἀριστεῖα ὁ Καῖσαρ αὐτῷ περιέθηκε καὶ συνέθαψε καὶ τάφον ἐξαίρετον ἀνέστησεν ἐγγύς τοῦ πολυανδρίου.

<sup>132</sup> On the Roman practice of the *devotio* see Edwards (2007): 25-7.

<sup>133</sup> Livy 8.10.

<sup>134</sup> Livy 10.29; Caes. *Hisp.* 31 (for enemy commanders); Vell. 2.119.5 (Varus); App. *BC* 1.43; App. *Pun.* 8.15.104; Tac. *Hist.* 2.45.

#### 1.4 Ceremonies for the War Dead

In the private sphere, elaborate funeral ceremonies accompanied the burial of a Roman citizen.<sup>135</sup> Eminent men might even receive a *funus publicum*, a funeral paid for by the state, in which a great ceremonial procession led the body through the city. Citizens mourned the deceased; actors wore wax masks and played the role of the deceased man's ancestors; a family member read a public eulogy.<sup>136</sup> There is little evidence of any sort of ceremony attending the mass burials of Roman soldiers. In Hope's straightforward estimation, "Disposal was probably rapid and unceremonious."<sup>137</sup> The single most specific reference to any sort of ceremony honoring the dead appears in Dio Cassius' account of Trajan's Dacian Wars. After suffering severe losses in a battle near Tapae (in 101 C.E.), somewhere near Sarmizegethusa in the Dacian territory, the emperor Trajan ordered the erection of an altar to his war dead. He also proclaimed that funerary rites would be performed annually in honor of the Roman soldiers who died.<sup>138</sup> The altar and the rites, if not novel, were extremely rare. The realities of war ensured that ceremony was not a priority.

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<sup>135</sup> Toynbee (1971): especially pages 50-55.

<sup>136</sup> For more on the *funus publicum* Toynbee (1971): 55; Wesch-Klein (1993). A *funus imperatorium*, a similar ceremony to the public funeral (though with expanded pomp and ceremony) was offered the emperors.

<sup>137</sup> (2003): 87.

<sup>138</sup> 68.8.2: τοῖς δὲ τελευτήσασσι τῶν στρατιωτῶν ἐν τῇ μάχῃ βωμόν τε στήσαι καὶ κατ' ἔτος ἐναγίζειν κελεύσαι, ... "for those of the soldiers who had died fighting in the battle he ordered an altar constructed and annual funeral rites." Many scholars have identified the altar with a large monument found near Adamclisi in the Dobrudja region of modern Romania. We will return to this difficult problem in Chapter 4.5.2.3.



### *1.5 Conclusion*

This chapter has considered the fate of the Roman war dead both during and immediately following battle. It began with an examination of the treatment of corpses while the battle was still being fought. An analysis of battle narratives illustrates that during battle corpses were left on the battlefield and became a hindrance to those who continued to fight. Roman warfare must have been brutal and Roman soldiers, if not inured to the corpses under their feet, must have been accustomed to it – the difference is slight but significant. We then considered the treatment of the dead after battle and discovered that the general idea that Roman soldiers “were buried” is much too simplistic. The task of collecting, identifying and burying the dead was difficult at best and much of it remains beyond our grasp because of the nature of our sources. It is clear, however, that it is probably unfair to conjure up images of an organized and elaborate mass burial procedure occurring in the aftermath of every battle.

It is also clear that the discourse surrounding the treatment of the Roman war dead did not match the reality. Even when it came close, as it may have on Trajan's column, an ideal version was presented. On the column Roman soldiers are seen frequently standing on the bodies of enemy dead: on the one hand this depicts a reality of war, on the other hand, it is idealized beyond belief – none of the dead were Roman. In the ideal world, Roman soldiers were properly buried without much fuss; in reality this was impossible. Still, the discourse affected the reality of battle, especially among the elite, as Roman generals tried to increase their renown by seeking to bury the war dead of their

predecessors. In this way, the burial of the war dead became yet another competitive outlet for Rome's elite.

The evidence for the fate of the Roman war dead both during and after battle suggests that the Roman soldiers took a practical approach towards the treatment of their fallen comrades and the possibility that they might not be buried. The viciousness of ancient warfare no doubt played a role in their understanding and acceptance of their fate should they die in battle. This does not mean that Roman soldiers remained unaffected by the death and destruction that surrounded them. The effect of these casualties on surviving Roman soldiers is the topic of the next chapter.

## **Chapter Two**

### **Wounded Bodies and Minds: The Survivors of Battle**

#### *2.1 Introduction*

Having considered the fate of the war dead, we now turn to those who survived the immediate perils of battle. These survivors can be divided into two categories: (1) those that were wounded, needed medical attention, and might still die in the days after battle; and (2) those who survived relatively unscathed but had to deal with the mental and emotional trauma of having witnessed so many of their comrades killed and wounded. This chapter is divided into two parts. It first considers the fate of the wounded during and after battle. The second part of the chapter examines how military losses affected the morale of Roman soldiers, including both the rank and file and their generals. This part also describes the various ways that generals dealt with the demoralization of their soldiers. The conclusion argues that these responses must be included in any explanation of the success of the Roman army.

## 2.2 *The Wounded*

A number of scholars have already made significant contributions to our understanding of medical services in the Roman army.<sup>1</sup> In a recent study titled *The Treatment of War Wounds in Graeco-Roman Antiquity*, Christine Salazar argued that the ancient sources used “wounding as a metaphor for heroism.”<sup>2</sup> To be wounded and continue to fight was heroic; to stop fighting after suffering a wound was cowardly. Hans Van Wees, in a generally positive review, offered two main critiques of the book. First, he commented that her argument may have been affected too much by modern conventions of the ideal hero depicted predominantly in Hollywood movies.<sup>3</sup> Second, he noted that the work is disjointed; that the study of the physical treatment of wounds and the literary treatment of wounds remain “largely separate topics.”<sup>4</sup> While such criticism is valid, Salazar nevertheless laid the foundation for an important – if not fully developed – thesis by demonstrating that the discourse associated with wounded soldiers did not

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<sup>1</sup> Salazar (2000): 75 includes an exhaustive list of scholarly articles and books concerning the medical services in the Roman army. See also Wilmanns’ (1995) largely prosopographical study on the development of medical services in the Roman imperial period. It is not the purpose of this chapter to review this literature in detail.

<sup>2</sup> Salazar (2000): xxv. The book has three goals: it seeks (1) to describe the medical treatment of war wounds (for the most part as depicted in ancient medical sources), (2) to compare the discourse of wounding in medical and non-medical sources, and (3) to examine the cultural context in which the specific discourse about wounds was created.

<sup>3</sup> (2001): 309, he uses the ‘über-cop’ character from the *Die Hard* series as an example. Another example is James Bond who survives all sorts of punishment and continues fighting while his enemies are thwarted by single punches. It is also worth noting that Salazar’s work is focused mostly on the Greek sources. Livy, for example, is cited only eight times in her *index locorum*; Julius Caesar, only twice.

<sup>4</sup> (2001): 310. In terms of Lynn’s model, discussed in the introduction, van Wees’ criticism is that Salazar does not adequately reflect the effect the discourse had on the treatment of the wounded, and vice versa.

necessarily match the reality; that same discourse, meanwhile, also affected Roman expectations of performance on the battlefield.<sup>5</sup>

While Salazar focused on the treatment of specific types of wounds, and on how the wounded were described in various sources (both literary and material), the main concern here is how the wounded interacted with their comrades both during and after battle. Such an examination can illustrate the effect the wounded had on Roman military tactics and strategy, and the effect the wounded had on the morale of their comrades, a topic which is discussed in greater detail in the second part of this chapter. For now, an understanding of the effect the wounded had on Roman warfare begins with a brief review of the nature of the injuries sustained in ancient battle.

### *2.2.1 The Severity of Wounds and the Likelihood of Survival*

The ancient sources often depicted Roman battlefields as bloody and chaotic. Livy's description of the fifth century B.C.E. battle at Algidus (fought by the Romans against a coalition of the Aequi and Volsci) offers a good example of the types of wounds inflicted in battle. He described the wounds suffered by a number of Roman leaders: one, Postumius Albus, a legate, had to leave the battle after a “stone fractured his head;” another, the dictator Aulus Postumius Tubertus, continued to fight despite a “wounded shoulder;” a third, Marcus Fabius, fought with his “leg nearly pinned” to his horse by a spear; and a fourth, the consul Titus Quinctius, the son of the legendary Cincinnatus,

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<sup>5</sup> Van Wees (2001): 310 is correct that the work is disjointed, but the implication of her argument should not be ignored.

continued to fight despite having an “arm cut off.”<sup>6</sup> If his arm was amputated, as Livy's use of the verb *abscidere* should suggest, the historian never again mentions it and the disability, if it existed, never hindered Quinctius' progress in public life. He survived the battle, was later elected to a second consulship, then elected to be a military tribune, and was still later found commanding military forces in battle.<sup>7</sup> Salazar has correctly cautioned against trusting in such narratives because they are part of our sources' “large set of topoi, prefabricated elements” which were used to “build up their stories.”<sup>8</sup> Indeed, Livy's descriptions of the various wounds had Homeric parallels. As Ogilvie put it, this particular Livian passage “provides a good example of how details were supplied for legendary battles.”<sup>9</sup> While this passage does not likely reflect the reality of the wound suffered by Quinctius, it does illustrate an important point: the ancient sources did not limit the viciousness of the ancient battlefield; in fact, they may even have exaggerated it.<sup>10</sup> This means that Livy's and Homer's audiences expected to read and hear gory descriptions of battle.

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<sup>6</sup> Livy 4.28.7-8: *Unus Postumius ictus saxo perfracto capite acie excessit, non dictatorem umerus vulneratus, non Fabium prope adfixum equo femur, non brachium abscisum consulem ex tam ancipiti proelio submovit*, “Postumius alone, having been struck by a stone, left the line with a fractured head. A wounded shoulder did not force the dictator from such an undecided battle, nor did a thigh nearly pinned to his horse move Fabius, nor the consul [despite] an arm having been cut off.”

<sup>7</sup> For the second consulship see Livy 4.30.4; for the military tribunate see Livy 4.31.1; for the command in war see Livy 4.32.9-10, 4.33.3, 4.33.9, 4.33.12. Quinctius was later put on trial for a military blunder. He was acquitted thanks in part to his being the son of the great Roman hero Cincinnatus. There is no mention of his wound at the trial (Livy 4. 40-41).

<sup>8</sup> Salazar (2000): 227.

<sup>9</sup> Ogilvie (1965): 579: “For instance, like Quinctius, Agamemnon was wounded in the arm (*Il.* 11.252), Diomedes (11.378) was wounded like Fabius, Ulysses (11.437) like Aulus Postumius, and Hector, like Postumius Albas, left the battlefield with a head injury (14.409-32).” Salazar makes no reference to Ogilvie.

<sup>10</sup> Note Brunt's (1971): 695 comment regarding casualty figures: “It is paradoxical that a Roman should have magnified Roman mortality, but the Romans were proud of their heroism in retrieving disasters; the greater the disasters, the more admirable was their recovery; *'tantae molis erat . . .'*” See also

While both the Greeks and the Romans evidently were prepared to imagine such horrible injuries, not all were prepared to witness them. Another description of the vicious variety of wounds suffered in ancient warfare is found in Livy's account of Philip V's attempt to bury his war dead in a public ceremony in 200 B.C.E. Inured (as much as they could be) to the sight of puncture wounds from javelins, arrows and lances, his Macedonian soldiers now

saw bodies beheaded by the Spanish sword, arms with shoulders hacked off, or necks entirely cut through to separate heads from bodies, entrails gaping, and hideous other wounds; in widespread panic they realized what weapons and what men they must fight.<sup>11</sup>

This description of the terror inspired by the sight of such hideous wounds caused by Roman weapons is also rhetorical in nature. While Philip's soldiers were mortified, the passage implies that the Romans, who had fought against the Spanish sword before they adopted it, were habituated to its bloody effect. Even if these passages are part of a rhetorical tradition, they nevertheless illustrate the types of wounds that a soldier in the Roman army might expect to witness or receive in battle.

As the passage about the Macedonian casualties suggests, surviving significant wounds – such as Quinctius' severed off arm – must have been rare.<sup>12</sup> Massive lacerations received in the midst of battle must have been almost always fatal; the sufferer bleeding out in a matter of minutes. But even those soldiers who were not so

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the comments on Brunt in the Introduction and the discussion of numbers in the ancient sources in Chapter 5.2.

<sup>11</sup> Livy 31.34.4-5: *postquam gladio Hispaniensi detruncata corpora, brachiis cum humero abscisis, aut tota cervice desecta divisa a corpore capita patentiaque viscera et foeditatem aliam vulnerum viderunt, adversus quae tela quosque viros pungnandum foret, pavidi vulgo cernebant.*

<sup>12</sup> For survivability of war wounds in a Greek context, see Hanson (1989): 210-218.

badly wounded as to perish on the battlefield often succumbed to their wounds in the days following battle. Some of the wounded barely made it back to their camp, before they died.<sup>13</sup> While relating the aftermath of the 217 B.C.E. battle at Lake Trasimene, Livy divided the Carthaginian dead into those who died in battle and those who died “afterwards from their wounds.”<sup>14</sup> In his description of the battle of Fregellae during the Second Punic War, Livy described how the consul of 208 B.C.E., Titus Quinctius Crispinus, after being struck by two javelins, repeatedly struggled with the pain caused by the wound while trying to command his army; eventually Quinctius “died from his wound.”<sup>15</sup> Although not strictly a war wound, it is reported in Livy's *Periochae* that Drusus, the stepson of the emperor Augustus, died of a broken leg some thirty days after a fall from his horse.<sup>16</sup> His slow death was likely the result of infection. Indeed disease must have been a severe problem that made even relatively minor wounds fatal.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Livy 2.20.9: ... *cum victor in castra esset relatus, inter primam curationem exspiraverit*, “... when as victor he was brought to the camp, he died while the wound was being first dressed.” Livy 9.44.15: *Minucium consulem, cum volnere gravi relatum in castra, mortuum quidam auctores sunt ...*, “Some write that the consul Minucius died after being brought back to the camp with a severe wound.” See below for the recovery of soldiers during and after battle.

<sup>14</sup> Livy 22.7.3: *duo milia quingenti hostium in acie, multi postea ex volneribus periire*, “2,500 of the enemy perished in the line, while many perished afterward from their wounds.”

<sup>15</sup> Livy 27.27.7: ... *cum Crispiano consule duobus iaculis icto ...*, “with Crispinus, the consul, having been struck by two javelins.” Livy 27.28.2: ... *Crispinus et morte conlegae et suo volnere territus ...*, “Crispinus was terrified by the death of his colleague and by his own wound”; Livy 27.29.2: *ipse cum legionibus suis Capuam profectus, vix lecticae agitationem prae gravitate volnerum patiens, ...*, “he himself set out for Capua with his legions, barely bearing the movement of his litter on account of the seriousness of his wound.” Livy 27.33.6: *Exitu huius anni T. Quinctius consul, ... ex volnere moritur*, “At the end of this year, the consul Titus Quinctius, ... died from his wound.

<sup>16</sup> Livy *Peri.* 142: *Ipse ex fractura, equo super crus eius conlapso, XXX die, quam id acciderat, mortuus*, “[Drusus] himself died from a fracture received after a horse fell on his leg, thirty days after the accident.”

<sup>17</sup> The “medical authors” such as Celsus and Galen describe infection in detail. See the sections on “Inflammation and suppuration”, “Tetanus' and spasms”, and “Sepsis and gangrene” in Salazar (2000): 24 - 34.



The unlikelihood of survival explains a sad reality of the ancient battlefield depicted by Dionysius of Halicarnassus in an aftermath narrative of an early fifth century B.C.E. battle in which the Volscians defeated the Romans. The Volscians, in possession of the battlefield, stripped the Roman dead and buried their own, before “taking up those who were half dead, whom there was hope of saving.”<sup>18</sup> Dionysius does not mention what happened to those wounded whom there was little hope of saving. Similarly a passage in Livy suggests that not all the wounded were recovered after battle. On the day following a particularly bloody battle with the Volscians in the fifth century B.C.E., a Roman cavalry commander, Sextus Tempanius, returned to the Roman camp and “carried off with him those wounded he could.”<sup>19</sup> The reference to capability is vague. It could refer to his limited capacity to carry men on his horses; but, as with the story from Dionysius, it could also indicate that Tempanius left those wounded whom there was little hope of saving. The sad implication of these passages is that there were many injured who survived the battle but who were beyond any hope of saving. Even if the required medical services existed, surviving the battle did not necessarily mean that the soldier would survive his wounds. If the soldier did survive, he may have been permanently scarred.

There is evidence that some Romans, covered in battle scars, considered these markings a source of pride. So Livy describes a Roman warrior, Marcus Servilius, in a long speech to the Roman people, saying “I have a body distinguished by honest scars,

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<sup>18</sup> Dion. Hal. 8.86.1: ... καὶ τοὺς ἡμιθνήτας οἷς σωθήσεσθαι ἐλπίς ἦν ἀνελόμενοι...

<sup>19</sup> Livy 4.39.9: ... *quibus poterat sauciis ductis secum* ....

every one of which was received on the front of my body.”<sup>20</sup> More serious long term ailments also existed. For example, according to Dio Cassius, the left arm of Titus, which had been wounded in the Jewish rebellion, was forever weaker.<sup>21</sup> Such examples, however, are not as common in the sources as we might expect for a people as frequently at war as the Romans. Salazar's suggestion that there was a general opinion in Rome that disfigurement should not mar the “warrior's beauty” seems to suit a Greek more than a Roman audience.<sup>22</sup> On the other hand, the limited number of descriptions of disabled and disfigured veterans walking the streets of Rome more likely reflects the reality that most wounds were, or quickly became, fatal. Rhetorically, Servilius was presenting a common discourse about warrior values in the ancient world. A soldier should only have wounds on the front of his body, since wounds on the back were a shameful sign that he had run away. One of the reasons Servilius could brag about his wounds was not so much that he had received them, but that he had survived them.<sup>23</sup>

Only those soldiers with what we might call superficial wounds, cuts and scrapes, perhaps slight fractures, might expect to survive in the long term. Even though the medical authors such as Galen and Celsus describe the use of surgery to deal with more

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<sup>20</sup> Livy 45.39.16: *insigne corpus honestis cicatricibus, omnibus adverso corpore exceptis, habeo*. For more examples of scars being displayed in a political context at Rome see Salazar (2000): 34 - 36 and 217-218.

<sup>21</sup> Dio Cass. 66.5.1: καὶ ὁ Τίτος αὐτὸς λίθῳ τὸν ἀριστερὸν ὤμον ἐπλήγη, καὶ ἀπ’ αὐτοῦ τὴν χεῖρα ἀσθενεστέραν εἶχεν, “and Titus himself was struck on the left shoulder by a stone, and on account of this that arm was weaker.” For other examples of the long term effect of battle wounds see Salazar (2000): 35.

<sup>22</sup> (2001): 35.

<sup>23</sup> It is worth noting that modern medical capabilities, including evacuation methods such as the helicopter, have allowed more and more severely wounded to survive battle. Militaries refer to the “Golden Hour” or “Platinum Ten Minutes” as a timeframe in which treatment needs to be rendered. This results in more veterans with severe disfigurement and disabilities being seen in every day life.

significant war wounds, the performance of such treatment was limited by the nature of battle and the capability to remove soldiers from the battlefield quickly enough to utilize it. Salazar's in-depth analysis of the treatment of war wounds as depicted in such authors illustrates what *could* have been done, or rather, what ancient doctors thought that they were *capable* of doing under the right set of circumstances. The battlefield and the camp could not have met these circumstances very often.

### *2.2.2 Recovery of the Wounded from the Battlefield*

There is evidence that Roman generals and officers who had been wounded could leave the battlefield for treatment. Some, such as the legate Titus Herminius or the consul Tiberius Minucius Augurinus, died of their wounds when they reached their camp.<sup>24</sup> Some leaders, who were able, tried to return to the line so that they could motivate their soldiers, who were demoralized after seeing their commander injured. So Marcus Popillius Laenas, when he was wounded in the shoulder by a javelin in a battle with the Gauls, returned to the battlefield and inspired his dejected troops after having his wound dressed.<sup>25</sup> While it appears then that it was possible for commanders to escape the battlefield to receive treatment, it is difficult to know if this was a result of their position on the battlefield and their rank, or if it genuinely reflects a capability of the Roman army. It remains therefore to consider the fate of the common Roman soldier.

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<sup>24</sup> See citations above, note 172.

<sup>25</sup> Livy 7.24. 3-4: ... *cum consul volnere alligato revectus ad prima signa* “*Quid stas, miles?*” *inquit*; “... when the consul, after having his wound bound up, returned to the front and said, ‘Why are you standing around, soldier?’”.

There is evidence that the Roman rank and file who were wounded in battle could also retire from their position in the line and be relieved by fresh troops. Dionysius of Halicarnassus recalls a fifth century B.C.E. battle between the Romans and the Hernicani (a tribe from south Latium) in which the consul, Gaius Aquilius, ordered his wounded and exhausted troops in the front lines to retire to the rear and be replaced by new troops.<sup>26</sup> Organized and efficient, the fresh and furious would replace the wounded and weary. As seen in the passages recorded in full in Chapter One, during the battle of Zama the Roman wounded were removed from the battlefield to the rear of the line when there was a lull in the battle.<sup>27</sup> This capability of the Roman army to relieve wounded and tired soldiers pervades many modern conceptions of how the Roman army fought. Notably the relief of soldiers in measured units illustrates the vaunted discipline of the Roman army.<sup>28</sup> While the Roman army must have been capable of such dramatic maneuvers to an extent, that capability should not be overemphasized.

Despite the evidence suggesting that the Roman wounded could leave the line, in reality the prospect of retiring in the middle of a serious battle to receive treatment must

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<sup>26</sup> Dion. Hal. 8.65.3: τοῦτο συνιδῶν Ἀκύλλιος ἐκέλευσε τοὺς ἀκμῆτας ἔτι καὶ εἰς αὐτὸ τοῦτο φυλαττομένους ὑπὸ τὰ κάμνοντα τῆς φάλαγγος ὑπελθεῖν μέρη, τοὺς δὲ τραυματίας καὶ τοὺς ἀπειρηκότας ὀπίσω τῆς φάλαγγος ἀπιέναι, “Observing this, Aquilius ordered those who were still unwearied and were on guard to reinforce the weakened parts of the phalanx, and those who were wounded and exhausted retire to the rear of the phalanx.” Note that the Greek term φάλαγξ does not necessarily mean that the Romans were fighting in a Greek style hoplite phalanx. Rather the use of the term is a reflection of the difficulty a native Greek speaker had in describing Roman formations.

<sup>27</sup> See above page ?? Livy 30.34.11: ... *sauciis in postremam aciem subductis* ..., “... after withdrawing the wounded to the rear of the line ...”; Polyb. 15.14.3: οὐ μὴν ἀλλὰ τοὺς μὲν τραυματίας εἰς τοῦπίσω τῆς παρατάξεως κομισάμενος, “Nevertheless, having his wounded carried to the back of the line.”

<sup>28</sup> Such attitudes are beginning to dissipate since the development in Roman studies of attempts to study the 'Roman' face of battle. A good (popular) example of Roman skill can be seen in the very first battle scene in the HBO series *Rome*, in which soldiers methodically change positions and relieve the first line of soldiers without breaking the line.

have been difficult at best. For one thing, as Caesar makes clear, there were not always reinforcements available to buttress a weakened line. In his description of a battle fought by one of his legates in the Alps, Roman soldiers found themselves unable to retreat to the rear of the line to recover from their wounds because there were insufficient soldiers to replace them at the front.<sup>29</sup> In another example, again from Caesar, the sick and wounded were not even allowed to rest at night since the ramparts needed constant defense.<sup>30</sup> Even worse, in the chaos of battle it must have been difficult to distinguish between a group of soldiers being relieved and a part of the line that had been broken.<sup>31</sup> Such confusion could be dangerous and completely demoralize those soldiers still in the fight.

Furthermore, those wounded soldiers who could not leave the battlefield under their own power required help. According to Livy, at a battle near Nola during the Second Punic War, the Roman general Marcellus ordered the men of the city to help “carry the wounded from the front line.”<sup>32</sup> Caesar, perhaps because he was a military man, and therefore a frequent witness to such feats and more apt to record the reality of battle, described the enormous effort required to retrieve the wounded during battle. One of the general's soldiers, a Publius Sextius Baculus, was not 'carried' from the battlefield;

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<sup>29</sup> Caes. *BG* 3.4.4: ... *quarum rerum a nostris propter paucitatem fieri nihil poterat, ac non modo defesso ex pugna excedendi, sed ne saucio quidem eius loci ubi constiterat relinquendi ac sui recipiendi facultas dabatur*, “... none of which things could be done by our forces because of their small number, and not only was there no opportunity for the wearied to leave the fight, but even the wounded could not relinquish the place where he stood, and recover himself.”

<sup>30</sup> *BG* 5.40.5: *non aegris, non vulneratis facultas quietis datur*, “an opportunity for rest was given to neither the sick, nor the wounded.”

<sup>31</sup> Caes. *BG* 7.80 suggests that when some of Caesar's soldiers retired because of their wounds, the enemy Gallic forces were inspired by the sight.

<sup>32</sup> Livy 23.44.9: ... *et saucios ex acie efferre iussit*,

rather he was “with difficulty dragged by the hand” from the line.<sup>33</sup> The task of moving a grown man, loaded down with armor, slippery with blood, sweat and muck, and weak from his injuries must have been as dangerous as it was difficult. Indeed, the evacuation of the wounded while under attack could be life-threatening. During a 36 B.C.E. battle in Sicily with Sextus Pompey, many of Octavian's men were killed while trying to help their wounded comrades. According to Dio Cassius, while missiles fell all around them, “the men carrying [the wounded] would perish as well.”<sup>34</sup> So while it is true that at certain times the Roman wounded could be relieved, the difficulties associated with such relief should not be ignored. More often than not Roman soldiers had to fight however badly they were wounded. Reinforcements did not replace the wounded, but rather reinforced them and fought alongside them, or as was the case with the dead, they fought on top of them. In this sense, 'victory or death' was not a slogan or motto, but a reality. In most battles, there must have been no place for the severely wounded to go. For this reason, many wounded must not have been recovered until after the battle was over, by which point, whatever medical service may have existed would have been rendered useless.

If the Romans were victorious and they had gained possession of the battlefield they could sort through the scattered bodies and collect any wounded who may still have been alive. The slightly wounded may have been able to walk off the battlefield under their own power. They would have bandaged their own wounds, or had the help of their fellow soldiers.<sup>35</sup> Severely wounded soldiers would have looked to their comrades for

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<sup>33</sup> Caes. *BG* 6.38.4: *aegre per manus tractus servatur*.

<sup>34</sup> Dio Cass. 49.7.3: εἴτε γὰρ φέροντο, καὶ τοὺς ἀνέχοντας σφας προσαπώλλυσαν, ... “If they were carried, those holding them up would be killed, ...”

<sup>35</sup> Note for example the scene on Trajan's column depicting soldiers bandaging one another Lepper and Frere (1998) plate 31, scene 40.

help getting off the field,<sup>36</sup> perhaps by using carts and litters for this task. During the African war, the Pompeian Titus Labienus, after suffering a defeat against the forces of Caesar, ordered that his wounded soldiers be transported “in wagons” to the city of Hadrumetum on the African coast.<sup>37</sup> In the early republican period, when battles were fought near Rome, the Romans even sent carts from the city to collect wearied and wounded soldiers. After an inconclusive battle with the Volsci, when the army of Gaius Sempronius, the consul of 423 B.C.E., was discovered not far from Rome at the shrine of *Quies*, the senate sent “wagons and beasts of burden” from the city to recover the wounded and exhausted.<sup>38</sup> Velleius Paterculus, later, recalled that during the German and Pannonian wars the future emperor Tiberius “prepared a harnessed vehicle for those who needed it,” and that he (Velleius) had once used the emperor’s personal litter.<sup>39</sup> It is also true that certain officers could rely on being transported in a litter if necessary. In Spain, Gnaeus Pompeus, the son of Pompey, had been wounded in the shoulder and left leg and the rough terrain became impossible for him to maneuver over when he sprained his

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<sup>36</sup> Transportation of wounded is largely overlooked or discussed only in passing. For considerations of similar practices in the Greek world, see Strenberg (1999).

<sup>37</sup> *Afr.* 21: *iubet in plaustis deligatos Hadrumetum deportari*, “he ordered [them], with their wounds having been dressed, to be carried in carts to Hadrumetum.”

<sup>38</sup> Livy 4.41.8: *eo missa plaustra iumentaue alia ab urbe exercitum adfectum proelio ac via nocturna excepere*, “wagons and other beasts of burden were sent there from the city to take out the army which was exhausted by the battle and nighttime march.” A number of other examples exist: Dion. Hal. 5.36.3 records an example of the Roman army using wagons to pick up Etruscan wounded - an attempt to gain their loyalty in the aftermath of the expulsion of the Etruscan king of Rome in 509 B.C.E. Livy 23.36.4 records that ... *Hannibal ... saucios vehiculis portari iubet*, “Hannibal ... ordered the wounded carried in carts.”

<sup>39</sup> 2.114.2: *Erat desiderantibus paratum iunctum vehiculum, lectica eius publicata, cuius usum cum alii tum ego sensi*, “There was a horsed vehicle prepared for those who desired it, his litter was open for public use, the use of which I among others experienced.”

ankle. To facilitate his retreat, “he was carried along in a litter.”<sup>40</sup> As we saw in chapter one, Romans used whatever means they could to manage the care of their casualties.

There was, however, an unintended consequence to the transportation of the wounded with the army’s various wagons and beasts of burden. The necessity of transporting too many wounded could mean that vital supplies could not be moved. While fighting in Parthia, Antony learned first hand the perils of such logistical concerns. Because so many of his wagons carried his wounded men, there was no room to carry with them grinding stones and other implements necessary for the preparation of grain into something edible.<sup>41</sup> So the transportation of the wounded could pose significant problems for surviving Roman soldiers. But these difficulties paled in comparison to another harsh reality: in the aftermath of battle, wounded soldiers, especially those who were severely wounded, could be abandoned.

### *2.2.3 Abandonment of the Wounded*

The abandonment of the wounded was often the consequence of defeat. Livy relates examples in which Rome's enemies, after being defeated or after believing that they were defeated, abandoned their wounded. The Volsci, for example, believed that they had lost what was in reality an indecisive battle, and “abandoned their wounded and part of their baggage and headed for Antium.”<sup>42</sup> On another occasion, this time after

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<sup>40</sup> *Hisp.* 38.2: ... *lectica ... ferebatur*. For the use of litters by Roman officers see Suet. *Caes.* 42. See also Livy 27.29.2 for a wounded officer being carried in a litter.

<sup>41</sup> Plut. *Ant.* 45.4.

<sup>42</sup> Livy 8.1.5: ... *Antium ... sauciis ac parte impedimentorum relicta abierunt*.



defeating the Hernici, the Romans discovered in the enemy camp “some of their wounded whom [the enemy] had abandoned.”<sup>43</sup> Such abandonment was not limited to Rome's enemies. Both the Roman and Volscian armies abandoned their wounded after a particularly bloody and indecisive battle in Livy's narrative of the fifth century.<sup>44</sup> Likewise some of the Romans who survived the crushing defeat at Cannae in 216 B.C.E. abandoned their wounded comrades in an effort to escape and save some remnant of the Roman army.<sup>45</sup> So it was generally up to the victorious army to decide what to do with the wounded. The fate of the severely wounded was cut short. The Carthaginians methodically killed those Romans who survived Cannae severely wounded; the Romans evidently did the same thing in a battle described by Dionysius of Halicarnassus.<sup>46</sup> So, along with the spoils, to the victor went the wounded. It is worth noting that in some cases the killing of the wounded may have been as much about ending a dying soldiers life more quickly than it was about revenge or harsh treatment of the enemy.

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<sup>43</sup> Livy 7.8.6: *Postero die deserta fuga castra Hernicorum et saucii relictis quidam inventi, ...* “On the next day, the camp of the Hernici, which was deserted by the flight, and some of their abandoned wounded was discovered.”

<sup>44</sup> 4.39.6: *Nox incertos diremit; tantusque ab imprudentia eventus utraque castra tenuit pavor ut relictis sauciis et magna parte impedimentorum ambo pro victis exercitus se in montes proximos recipent,* “Night ended the indecisive [battle]; ignorant of the result, such great fear was felt in both camps that the armies abandoned their wounded and a great part of their baggage as though they had been defeated and retreated into the nearest hills.”

<sup>45</sup> Livy 22.52.4: The result was that *castra ipsa ab sauciis timidisque eadem condicione qua altera tradita hosti,* “The camp itself was handed over to the enemy by the wounded and timid on the same conditions as the other.”

<sup>46</sup> For the actions of Carthage see Livy 22.51.5-9, note especially sec. 6: *Adsurgentes quidam ex strage media cruenti, quos stricta matutino frigore excitaverant volnera, ab hoste oppressi sunt,* “from amid the heaps of the dead, bloody figures, whose bound up wounds throbbed with the morning chill, rise up and were subdued by the enemy.” Dion. Hal. 9.26.8: εἶτα βαρυνόμενων αὐτοῖς τῶν μελῶν ἡμιθνήτες κατέρρεον ἐπὶ τὴν γῆν· οὗς οἱ τῶν Ῥωμαίων ἵππεῖς ἐπὶ πολὺ τῆς ὁδοῦ προελθόντες ἀνείλοντο· “then after their limbs were made heavy, they fell half dead on the ground; these the Roman horsemen killed as they proceeded along the road towards the city.”

Despite the reality that wounded soldiers, especially the severely wounded, would have to be abandoned in the aftermath of a defeat, some Romans were criticized for their failure to save their wounded. The consul Gaius Sempronius, who had abandoned his wounded after an indecisive battle (mentioned above), was accused of misconduct during the war; one of the charges against him was that he deserted his “wounded and abandoned soldiers.”<sup>47</sup> One of Tacitus' many criticisms of Caesennius Paetus (the failed commander of a Roman army in Syria in 62 C.E.) was that during his retreat from Armenia he “deserted his wounded all around.”<sup>48</sup> So, despite the fact that sometimes war necessitated the abandonment of the wounded, it appears that under certain conditions such actions could be seen as a failure of the commander. The discourse surrounding wounded soldiers suggests therefore that the successful commander took care of his wounded whenever possible. We can recall from Chapter One that much the same case was seen regarding the commander's treatment of the war dead.

When time permitted, victorious and good commanders would find a place to settle their wounded veterans. So Marcellus, after Hannibal relinquished the battlefield, “left the wounded with a small guard at Numistro.”<sup>49</sup> Publius Cornelius Scipio, the future Africanus, after ridding Spain of the Carthaginians, founded a town, named it Italica, and settled it with his wounded and sick.<sup>50</sup> After defeating the Celtiberians in 181 B.C.E.,

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<sup>47</sup> Livy 4.40.8: *ecquem in castris consulem, ecquem exercitum inveneritis, an deserta castra, relictos saucios milites*, “Whether you (Tempanius and his fellow troops) found any consul in the camp, any army, or (did you find only) a deserted camp and wounded and abandoned soldiers.”

<sup>48</sup> Tac. *Ann.* 15. 16: ... *desertis passim sauciis* ...

<sup>49</sup> Livy 27.2.10: ... *sauciis cum praesidio modico Numistrone relictis* ...

<sup>50</sup> App. *Hisp.* 7.38: ... συνώκισε τοὺς τραυματίας ἐς πόλιν, ἣν ἀπὸ τῆς Ἰταλίας Ἰταλικὴν ἐκάλεσε, “.... he settled his wounded in a town, which he called Italica after Italy, ...”

Quintus Fulvius Flaccus “transported the wounded to the town of Aebura.”<sup>51</sup> While such concern does reflect an attitude that everything should be done to help the wounded for whom there was hope of saving, it also illustrates that a good Roman general, or at least one who wanted to be considered as such, made certain to care for his wounded.

#### 2.2.4 Treatment

As noted above, the specific medical treatments available to Roman soldiers have already received frequent attention.<sup>52</sup> The purpose here is to reflect on how such treatment affected the capabilities of the Roman army. During the early republic, when battles were fought close to Rome, our sources report that wounded soldiers could be transported back to Rome or to the nearest villa of an elite Roman to convalesce. Livy describes how one of the consuls of 480 B.C.E., Marcus Fabius Vibulanus, after winning a bloody victory, “distributed the care of the wounded soldiers to the patricians.”<sup>53</sup>

Tacitus compares the treatment of civilian casualties after the disastrous collapse of a theater in Fidenae with the treatment of Rome’s earliest war wounded.<sup>54</sup> The wounded were convalesced in the homes of nearby elites. These examples may not reflect reality;

Livy, for example, intimates that Fabius' treatment of the wounded was based on a

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<sup>51</sup> Livy 40.33.1: *Sauciis deinde in oppidum Aeburam devectis ...*

<sup>52</sup> See above page 65.

<sup>53</sup> Livy 2.47.12: *... saucios milites curandos dividit patribus.*

<sup>54</sup> *Ann.* 4.63: *Ceterum sub recentem cladem patuere procerum domus, fomenta et medici passim praeibiti, fuitque urbs per illos dies quamquam maesta facie veterum institutis similis, qui magna post proelia saucios largitione et cura sustentabant.* “But during the recent disaster the homes of the elite were opened, medicine and doctors were everywhere made available, and throughout those days the city, although with gloomy appearance, resembled the manners of our ancestors, who after a great battle used to sustain the wounded with generosity and care.”

political desire “to reconcile the spirit of the plebs,” a task with which he had been preoccupied since the beginning of his consulship.<sup>55</sup> Therefore, it may be that Fabius' action reflects a rare instance rather than a common practice. Likewise, Tacitus often glorified the spirit of Rome's ancient past, especially if it allowed him to comment on the degradation of the present. So it is possible that Livy and Tacitus are actually reporting a practice which was rare, or at the very least idealized.

However the wounded were treated in Rome's earliest period, it appears clear that over time, as Rome's empire expanded, and the army was called to fight further and further away from Rome, the treatment of the wounded became the responsibility of the commander. Our sources are quite clear that a good general would take care of his wounded in the camp. In 325 B.C.E., during the Second Samnite War, the Romans appointed Lucius Papirius Cursor as dictator. He quickly gained a reputation among the troops as a severe disciplinarian. So severe, in fact, that despite his generalship, his soldiers were sluggish in battle and an impediment to victory. Papirius recognized this and “he himself went around to his wounded soldiers, stuck his head into their tents, and after asking how each one was doing he entrusted them into the care of the legates, tribunes and praefects.”<sup>56</sup> The passage illustrates how generals should treat their casualties of war. By delegating the responsibility of the care of the wounded after first inquiring into their well-being, Papirius further strengthened bonds of attachment between what we might recognize as enlisted men and officers. By these actions Papirius succeeded in regaining the support of his regular soldiers; or as Livy put it, “after healing

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<sup>55</sup> Livy 2.47.12: ... *reconciliandi animos plebis* ...

<sup>56</sup> Livy 8.36.6: ... *ipse circuit saucios milites, inserens in tentoria caput, singulosque ut sese haberent rogitans curam eorum nominatim legatis tribunisque et praefectis demandabat.*

their bodies, the spirits of the soldiers were more quickly reconciled with the commander.”<sup>57</sup> In this statement, Livy offered what should be considered a proverb rather than an historical analysis.<sup>58</sup> The good commander cared for his wounded soldiers. It is not the only example of commanders showing concern for the proper treatment of their wounded.

Publius Cornelius Scipio, the father of the conqueror of Hannibal, after he failed to stop the Carthaginians at the Ticinus River, retreated to the Po River. According to Polybius, after securing a camp Scipio then concerned himself with his own wounded shoulder and the wounds of his men.<sup>59</sup> Velleius Paterculus did not fail to praise the same quality in the emperor Tiberius.<sup>60</sup> It is noteworthy that Velleius recognized that the care of one’s soldiers not only illustrated the commander’s *virtus*, it also served a practical purpose,<sup>61</sup> since it increased the loyalty of the troops to him. Germanicus, the presumptive heir of Tiberius, performed a similar action after losses he suffered in a disaster at sea in 15 C.E. Here Germanicus “visited the wounded, praised the deeds of individuals, and while inspecting their wounds, (he fortified) some with hope, others with glory, and everyone with exhortation and concern, and he made them firm for himself

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<sup>57</sup> Livy 8.36.7: ... *medendis corporibus animi multo prius militum imperatori reconciliarentur.*

<sup>58</sup> See Oakley (1998): 750.

<sup>59</sup> Polybius 3.66.9.

<sup>60</sup> Vell. Pat. 2.114.1-2.

<sup>61</sup> Vell. Pat. 2.114.1: *O rem dictu non eminentem, sed solida veraque virtute atque utilitate maximam, experientia suavissimam, humanitate singularem,* “And something which is not prominent to describe but is genuine and true, great in virtue and utility, and most delightful in the experience and most remarkable in its humanity.”

and for battle.”<sup>62</sup> Pliny also praised the similar actions of the emperor Trajan, who attended to his weary and sick soldiers.<sup>63</sup> Trajan was even said to have torn his own clothing into strips when his soldiers ran out of bandages.<sup>64</sup> So a commander’s care for his wounded not only increased the loyalty and morale of his soldiers, it also became a topic for his biographers to praise. Nevertheless, not all instances of such activity were seen in the same light by contemporaries.

Tiberius, notoriously paranoid, did not take well to what he perceived as threats to his power. So when he heard that Agrippina, the wife of Germanicus, had saved a considerable portion of the Roman army along the Rhine by refusing to allow the demolition of a bridge, Tiberius feared that the duties of the commander were being completed by a woman who had an interest in making her husband emperor. Agrippina also gave out bandages to the wounded.<sup>65</sup> Of course a number of other events increased Tiberius’ fear, but what is clear is that whether in the republican or imperial period, our sources demanded that one of the good commander’s chief duties was to take care of his wounded soldiers. Indeed, this was precisely why Tiberius was so upset with the actions of Agrippina: not only was she doing the job of the commander, but in doing it she was increasing the levels of attachment the army felt to herself and to Germanicus.

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<sup>62</sup> Tac. *Ann.* 1.71: ... *circumire saucios, facta singulorum extollere, vulnera intuens, alium spe, alium gloria, cunctos adloquio et cura sibi que et proelio firmabat.*

<sup>63</sup> *Pan.* 13.3: ... *solacium fessis, aegris opem ferres*, “... you brought relief to the exhausted, and aid to the wounded.”

<sup>64</sup> Dio Cass. 68.8.2: ὅτε καὶ ἐπιλιπόντων τῶν ἐπιδέσμων οὐδὲ τῆς ἑαυτοῦ ἐσθῆτος λέγεται φείσασθαι, ἀλλ’ ἐς τὰ λαμπάδια ταύτην κατατεμεῖν, “and when they ran out of bandages, it is said that he did not spare his own clothing, but to have cut it up into strips.”

<sup>65</sup> Tac. *Ann.* 1.69: *sed femina ingens animi munia ducis per eos dies induit, militibusque, ut quis inops aut saucius, vestem et fomenta dilargita est*, “But a woman of great spirit took over the duties of the general during those days, and she distributed clothes and medicine to the soldiers, as they were weak and wounded.”

Finally, it is worth pointing out that such treatment could affect the army's ability to operate effectively in war. Caesar frequently avoided chasing down an enemy so that he could deal with his wounded instead.<sup>66</sup> Dio Cassius, according to Zonaras, recorded that the Romans could not pursue the Greek mercenary general Pyrrhus because they were too busy tending to their wounded.<sup>67</sup> Because their soldiers were busy taking care of their wounded, the Romans could not capture Drepana during the First Punic War.<sup>68</sup> It is little surprise that the need to treat the wounded could severely affect the operations of war. It may be that a few days' rest was all that was needed for minor wounds to heal enough that the soldiers could return to active duty. In the end, the wounded, like the dead, could have an effect on the morale of surviving Roman soldiers. It was therefore in the interest of Roman commanders to ensure that their wounded received proper care. It seems clear enough that tending to the wounded was much more complicated an aspect of Roman warfare than is generally assumed. It was nevertheless necessary.

Both the wounded and the dead affected Roman soldiers who survived battle. We have already seen how in the discourse about war the burial of the dead and the treatment of the wounded helped bolster the morale of surviving Roman soldiers. Despite this ideal,

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<sup>66</sup> *BG* 1.26: ... *cum et propter vulnera militum et propter sepulturam occisorum nostri triduum morati eos sequi non potuissent*, "... on account of the wounded soldiers and because of the burial of the dead, our men were delayed for three days and could not follow them." *BC* 3.75: *Itaque nulla interposita mora sauciorum modo et aegrorum habita ratione impedimenta omnia silentio prima nocte ex castris Apolloniam praemisit*, "And so, after permitting no more delay than was necessary for the care of the wounded and the sick, at first night he sent the whole baggage train in silence from the camp to Apollonia, ..." *BC* 3.78: *Caesari ad saucios deponendos, ... necesse erat adire Apolloniam. Sed his rebus tantum temporis tribuit, quantum erat properanti necesse*; "It was necessary for Caesar to go to Apollonia to drop off his wounded. But he allotted so much time to these things as was necessitated by the haste of his movements."

<sup>67</sup> Zon. 8.5 (Dio Cass. 10. Loeb vol. 1 page 354): ... ἐπιδιώξει γὰρ διὰ τοὺς σφετέρους τραυματίας οὐκ ἠδυνήθησαν, "for they were not able to pursue them because of their wounded."

<sup>68</sup> Zon. 8.17 (Dio Cass. 12. Loeb vol. 2 page 12): καὶ εἶλον ἂν αὐτό, εἰ μὴ τοῦ ὑπατοῦ τρωθέντος, ... "They would have captured (the town), if not for the wounded consul, ..."

war was fought in reality and so it remains to consider the extent to which such losses demoralized surviving Roman soldiers and whether or not sagging morale could be improved by other means.

### *2.3 The Traumatized*

Today's Roman historians, laying aside older explanatory models which focused on the organization, technology, or training of the Roman army, have begun to consider the morale, or the emotional state, of the Roman army as an explanation for its martial success. In 1996 Lee, following the “face of battle” method popularized by military historian John Keegan, suggested a number of factors which made soldiers stay and fight rather than turn and run. These factors included the soldiers' honor, fear of punishment, shame, group identity, cohesion, and leadership.<sup>69</sup> Daly followed a similar method in his discussion of Cannae and battle in the Second Punic War.<sup>70</sup> Like most scholarship on Roman warfare, the focus centered on the battle itself or on victory and success. The following sections consider how Roman soldiers felt *after* they fought a battle in which they had suffered significant casualties.

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<sup>69</sup> Lee (1996); historians of ancient Greek warfare, such as Hanson (1989), have taken the lead in following Keegan (1976).

<sup>70</sup> (2000).



### 2.3.1 Soldiers' Morale

In the section above on the severity and survivability of wounds we noted that the various wounds suffered in battle terrified the Macedonians. Other sources suggest that even some Roman soldiers could be rattled by the sight and sounds of the wounded and dying. Cicero, in his *Tusculan Disputations*, asserted that inexperienced Roman soldiers were more affected by the sight of wounds than veterans of battle.<sup>71</sup> The soldier-author of the *Bellum Hispaniense* reported a similar point: the sounds of battle, including the cries of the warriors, the clanks of the swords and the groans of the dead and dying terrified inexperienced soldiers.<sup>72</sup> In another example, Hyginus,<sup>73</sup> in his *de munitioibus castrorum*, explained that the position of the *valetudinarium*, or 'military hospital', in the camp should be set so that it could be quiet for those convalescing.<sup>74</sup> For this reason, Hyginus suggested that the veterinarian clinic and the workshop should be located "further away."<sup>75</sup> But there also is the implication that the infirmary should be set aside

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<sup>71</sup> 2.38: *Cur tantum interest inter novum et veterem exercitum quantum experti sumus? Aetas tironum plerumque melior, sed ferre laborem, contemnere vulnus consuetudo docet. Quin etiam videmus ex acie efferris saepe saucios et quidem rudem illum et inexercitatum quamvis levi ictu ploratus turpissimos edere: at vero ille exercitatus et vetus ob eamque rem fortior, medicum modo requirens a quo obligetur, "Why is there such a difference between the new and the veteran soldier to the extent that we have experience? Indeed we even see wounded men often carried from the line of battle and assuredly there is that inexperience and untrained one shouting out disgraceful wails however slight his wound; yet meanwhile that experienced and aged man, more brave as a result of that experience, only requires a doctor to bandage him up."*

<sup>72</sup> 31: *Ita cum clamor esset intermixtus gemitu gladiatorumque crepitus auribus oblatus, imperitorum mentis timore praepediebat, "And so, as the clamor was mixed with the groans and the clattering of swords attacked the ears, the judgment of the inexperienced was impeded by fear."*

<sup>73</sup> The precise identity of Hyginus is a mystery; for comment see Miller (1994).

<sup>74</sup> 4: *... ut valetudinarium quietum esse convalescentibus posset, "... so that the infirmary could be quiet for those convalescing."*

<sup>75</sup> 4: *... quae ideo longius posita est ...*

away from the hustle and bustle of the camp; such positioning would ensure that the rest of the camp would be shielded from the noises (screams and moans of the wounded and dying) coming from the infirmary. Much as Dio Cassius concluded that the names of soldiers were written on their shields to identify the courageous during battle, a positive spin has been placed on the reality of the military hospital.<sup>76</sup> Nevertheless, it is clear that at least some Romans understood that the realities of battle could frighten the young and inexperienced.

Not surprisingly, one common response to military defeat was terror. In 171 B.C.E. after a battle in Greece in which 200 cavalry and 2,000 infantry were killed, the Roman army returned to their camp frightened by the threat of a renewed enemy attack.<sup>77</sup> Such fright was not uncommon. Livy described the Roman army as “terrified” in the aftermath of the defeats at Lake Trasimene, and the Trebia and Ticinus Rivers.<sup>78</sup> Likewise, after the loss of a reported 6,700 men in a failed excursion into Insubrian Gaul in 199 B.C.E., the consul Lucius Lentulus traveled to the province, relieved the commanding praetor (Gnaeus Baebius Tamphilus) and took command of a “frightened army.”<sup>79</sup> In the imperial period, Tacitus described how the army led by Caecina Severus in 15 C.E. through the marshes of Germany was ambushed by a German force led by Arminius. As night fell, those Romans who had survived the first attack felt that they

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<sup>76</sup> For the conclusions of Dio Cassius see Chapter 1.3.3.

<sup>77</sup> Livy 42.60.3: *apud Romanos non maestitia tantam ex mala gesta re, sed pavor etiam erat, ne extemplo castra hostis adgrederetur*, “On the Roman side there was not only sorrow from their failure, but there was also fear, that camp might be immediately attacked by the enemy.”

<sup>78</sup> Livy 22.12.10: ... *territum pristinis cladibus*, “... terrified by their previous defeats.”

<sup>79</sup> Livy 32.7.7: ... *trepido exercitu...*

might not survive the night let alone the following day.<sup>80</sup> After a serious defeat Roman soldiers could be frightened by the prospect of having to face the enemy again immediately.

Roman soldiers would also mourn the loss of their fellow soldiers. In his description of the aftermath of that same battle in 171 B.C.E. mentioned above, Livy also described the Roman army as grieving over their defeat.<sup>81</sup> One way he described such a demoralized army was to refer to the collective *animus*, or the spirit of the soldiers. Having recounted an indecisive battle between the Roman army and the Samnites near Luceria in 294 B.C.E., Livy wrote that after the battle, while the consul and his officers were ready to fight, the soldiers in general, having spent the night listening to the groans of the wounded and dying, had “dejected spirits.”<sup>82</sup> In another passage, in the immediate aftermath of the deaths of the two Scipios in Spain, Livy wrote that Lucius Marcius rallied the men at first and that they followed his orders “with anything but a disheartened spirit.”<sup>83</sup> The implication of this comment is that considering the circumstances it was actually a surprise that the men were not demoralized. It is perhaps less of a shock then that when news arrived of the enemy commander’s approach, the soldiers suddenly

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<sup>80</sup> Tac. *Ann.* 1.65: *Nox per diversa inquiet, ...* “It was a night of unrest, though for different reasons, ...”

<sup>81</sup> Livy 42.60.3: *apud Romanos non maestitia tantam ex mala gesta re, sed pavor etiam erat, ne extemplo castra hostis adgredertur*, “On the Roman side there was not only sorrow from their failure, but there was also fear, that camp might be immediately attacked by the enemy.”

<sup>82</sup> Livy 10.35. 6: *... sed militum iacere animos ...*, literally the spirits of the soldiers were thrown down.

<sup>83</sup> Livy 25.37.7: *... haudquaquam abiecto animo ...*, again, similarly to n. 237, literally with a spirit cast off or aside. For another example see Livy 42.60.3: *Eumenes consuli suadere, ut trans Peneum transferret castra, ut pro munimento amnem haberet, dum percussi milites animos colligerent*, “Eumenes persuaded the consul that he should move his camp across the Peneus, so that he would have the river for defense, while his soldiers recovered their beaten down morale.”

remembered the loss of their former commanders and comrades and all began crying and bashing their heads, some stretched their arms out to heaven and blamed the gods, while others laid themselves down on the ground and called out the name of their general.<sup>84</sup>

Both of these examples also share the idea that the *animus* of the army had been thrown down or away.

The use of the noun *animus* was not, however, always necessary to convey the idea that a defeat or casualties of war had demoralized the army. For example, after suffering a defeat in Spain in which 5,000 Romans and allies died, Livy described the Romans as *perculsi*, which can mean both beaten down and dispirited.<sup>85</sup> Livy used the same word to characterize the army of Publius Licinius after the defeat in 171 B.C.E. (which, as mentioned above, had also been suffering from grief and fear).<sup>86</sup> In the wake of a disaster as great as Cannae, the demoralization of some of the survivors was even greater. Livy describes how Publius Furius Philus interrupted the war council being held at Canusium by Scipio, the future Africanus. Lamenting that all hope was lost, that the Republic had been given up and mourned over, Philus informed Scipio that some of the

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<sup>84</sup> Livy 25.37.9: *...flere omnes repente et offensare capita et alii manus ad caelum tendere deos incusantes, alii strati humi suum quisque nominatim ducem implorare*, “suddenly all were crying and banging their heads and while some lifted their hands to the sky and blamed the gods, others while lying on the ground, invoked the name of their own generals.” Presumably they were calling out the names of their recently deceased generals, and not the name of their new general. In Chapter Four, we see Augustus acting in much the same manner.

<sup>85</sup> Livy 39.30.3: *non institere percussis hostes*, “the enemy did not attack the beaten down [Romans]. See the entry for *percello* in the *OLD* and *TLL*.

<sup>86</sup> Livy 42.60.3: *Eumenes consuli suadere, ut trans Peneum transferret castra, ut pro munimento amnem haberet, dum percussi milites animos colligerent*, “Eumenes persuaded the consul that he should move his camp across the Peneus, so that he would have the river for defense, while his soldiers recovered their beaten down morale.”

nobles who had survived the battle were even then preparing to flee Italy.<sup>87</sup> The passage is usually used to illustrate the courage and steadfastness of the young Scipio, who immediately confronted those who were attempting to flee.<sup>88</sup> However, the desperate adjectives used to describe the state of the Republic are also worth emphasizing because they illustrate a genuine response by some Romans to military loss. Certainly when the news reached Rome, similar attitudes were recorded – a topic to which we shall return in the next chapter.

While such examples are most often found in the pages of Livy, he was not the only author to record descriptions of a demoralized Roman army. In the imperial period Tacitus described how the soldiers who accompanied Germanicus to bury the dead from the Varian disaster alternately experienced grief and rage while they buried the bones of the fallen. Tiberius evidently thought that the sight of such a brutal defeat would demoralize the army and make them less willing to fight.<sup>89</sup> The anxiety of the emperor suggests that it was at least possible, even for a Roman general as experienced as Tiberius, to believe that the sight of Roman dead could weaken the resolve of the seasoned Roman legions. Likewise, when Corbulo relieved Caesennius Paetus and his legions in 62 C.E., he found the men of the fourth and twelfth legions – the men who had suffered the brunt of Paetus’ supposed misadventures – completely terrified and unsuited

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<sup>87</sup> Livy 22.53.5: *nuntiat P. Furius Philus, consularis viri filius, nequiquam eos perditam spem fovere; desperatam comploratamque rem esse publicam; nobiles iuvenes quosdam, quorum principem L. Caecilium Metellum, mare ac naves spectare, ut deserta Italia ad regum aliquem transfugiant*, “Publius Furius Philus, the son of a consular, announced that they were fostering a squandered hope; the republic had been given up and was being mourned over; some of the young nobles, of whom the leader was Lucius Caecilius Metellus, were considering the sea and ships, that after abandoning Italy they would flee to some king.”

<sup>88</sup> Scullard (1970): 30; see also Antonelli (1999): 11.

<sup>89</sup> Tac. *Ann.* 1.62: *tardatum ad proelia*, “... slowed for battle.” For more on this passage see the discussion about battlefields in Chapter Four.

for service.<sup>90</sup> Even Josephus, who praised the discipline, organization, and brutality of the Roman army, wrote that the army of Vespasian was “without spirit” after losses sustained during their first attempt to take Gamala.<sup>91</sup> Despite the creation of the imperial professional army, the emotional effect that the loss had on soldiers was still very real. Although our sources seldom describe how men reacted to the loss of their comrades, it is clear enough from the examples above that Roman soldiers were not automatons unaffected by loss. Grief and fear formed as much a part of Roman soldiers’ emotional outlook as rage and courage. Nor were the rank and file the only Romans affected by casualties of war. Commanders too might react emotionally when faced with the loss of their soldiers.

### 2.3.2 *Generals' Morale*

Even Rome's most able general could be affected by military defeat and the loss of his men. The sources generally agree that the battle between the armies of Julius Caesar and Gnaeus Pompey at the battle of Munda in March 45 B.C.E. was hard fought and bloody – a battle barely won by the dictator. The *Bellum Hispaniense* describes the battle in gruesome detail, but nowhere relates how the battle affected Caesar.<sup>92</sup> Velleius

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<sup>90</sup> Tac. *Ann.* 15.26: *ceteris exterritis parum habiles proelio videbantur*, “with the rest terrified, they seemed unfit for battle.” The career of Paetus is interesting and worthy of a future study. His failure on this occasion and the mockery of Nero belie the fact that he returned to the East under the reign of Vespasian. A study questioning the role of Corbulo (who was out for glory) in Paetus’ original failure is worth pursuing as an example of military and political rivalry among imperial elites.

<sup>91</sup> Jos. *BJ* 4.39: ... ἀθυμοῦσαν τὴν στρατιάν ...

<sup>92</sup> For the bloody details see Chapter 1.2.1. For the lack of any description of Caesar's mentality at the battle, see Butler (1927).

Paterculus says that when the outcome of the battle was in doubt, Caesar dismounted his horse, proceeded to the front of the line, cursed his fortune and chided his men for leaving their commander in such a situation.<sup>93</sup> Plutarch, who wrote in the early second century C.E., had Caesar rushing into the enemy and asking his men if they felt shame for handing him over to such young men.<sup>94</sup> Appian, like Plutarch, had Caesar rushing into battle ahead of his men and shouting “this will be the end of my life and of your military service.”<sup>95</sup> It is Sirianni's opinion “that Caesar must have been forced to utter the above *dicta* – in a personal and desperate effort to retrieve the grave situation in which he found himself and bring the waverers to a halt.”<sup>96</sup> In these versions of the battle, Caesar tried to rally his men to victory, one which could still be accomplished.<sup>97</sup> In this sense Caesar is seen as the unwavering general, who restored his soldiers' morale with a bold charge and a healthy hint of guilt. While this characterization suits what is known about the generalship of Caesar, another even more desperate tradition of his reaction to the difficulties faced at Munda has also survived.

Suetonius, in a section recording the losses Caesar suffered in various civil wars, wrote that during the battle for Munda, Caesar “even had thought about killing

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<sup>93</sup> 2.55.2-3: ... *adeo ut plus quam dubio Marte descenderet equo consistensque ante recedentem suorum aciem, increpata prius fortuna, quod se in eum servasset exitum, denuntiaret militibus vestigio se non recessurum: proinde viderent, quem et quo loco imperatorem deserturi forent*, “ in one battle that was more than in doubt, he dismounted from his horse and posting himself in front of his weakening line, after first reproaching fortune, which had saved him for this end, he announced to his soldiers that he would not give back a step: and then they saw what a commander and in what position they were going to desert.”

<sup>94</sup> *Caes.* 56.2; Polyaeus 8.23.16 and Frontinus 2.8.13 offer very similar versions.

<sup>95</sup> App. *BC* 2.15.104: ἔσται τοῦτο τέλος ἔμοί τε τοῦ βίου καὶ ὑμῖν τῶν στραπειῶν,

<sup>96</sup> (1993): 236.

<sup>97</sup> There is an element here of the Roman ritual of *devotio*, in which a commander sacrificed himself for the good of Rome. For more on the *devotio* see Edwards (2007): 25-27.

himself.”<sup>98</sup> Other sources confirm this existential crisis. Florus, in writing an epitome of Livy, offered a version similar to that found in the work of his contemporary Suetonius: Caesar, in the middle of the battle, acted “as if he wanted to come to death by his own hand.”<sup>99</sup> Eutropius, writing in the late fourth century C.E. and therefore illustrating the longevity of the tradition, repeated the version that Caesar had “wished to kill himself” at the battle of Munda.<sup>100</sup> The contemplation of suicide suggests that in the heat of battle Caesar's military losses left him so desperate that, far from leading his men on a rallying charge, Caesar thought the time had come to end it all. The hard work of over a decade of fighting had come down to this single battle which he was about to lose. As with Cato or Brutus, the only thing left for the defeated commander was to share in the fate of his men; such was the price of failure in civil war. The only reason we generally do not recognize Caesar to be contemplating suicide is because he won the battle. His actions therefore could be viewed not as suicidal but as motivational. Although she was referring to a different passage, Edwards' comments are instructive: “there is some considerable slippage here between the leader who dies fighting for a lost cause and the leader who takes his own life once he sees his cause is lost.”<sup>101</sup> Our sources offer competing versions of how potential defeat affected one of Rome's most successful and battle-hardened generals. It is impossible to know for sure how he reacted. Nevertheless the various passages illustrate that even one of Rome's greatest generals, a man who should have

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<sup>98</sup> Suet. *Caes.* 36.1: ... *etiam de consciscenda nece cogitavit.*

<sup>99</sup> Florus 2.13.83: ... *quasi occupare mortem manu vellet*; It is probably beyond knowing whether or not Florus was repeating a version of Livy or if he was inserting a contemporary reference.

<sup>100</sup> Eutrop. 6.24: ... *se voluerit occidere ...*

<sup>101</sup> (2007): 32-3; Edwards was not specifically describing the Caesarian narrative.



been inured to the vicissitudes of war, could be variously affected by defeats suffered and casualties sustained. Caesar, of course, was not the only example.

According to two of the epitomizers of Dio Cassius, Gaius Julius Vindex, having vainly attempted the overthrow of Nero in 68 C.E., killed himself because of grief for the deaths of so many of his soldiers in a battle with the forces of Verginius near Vesontio.<sup>102</sup> It is possible to conjecture a more pragmatic motive for Vindex's suicide: once his army was defeated, he would be executed for treason.<sup>103</sup> Nevertheless, the fact that at least one source offered the conclusion that the deaths of a general's men could be viewed as a legitimate motive for suicide illustrates that some generals could be severely affected by the loss of their men.<sup>104</sup> Even in wars against foreign enemies suicide was an option for the defeated general. Publius Quinctilius Varus killed himself when three of his legions were slaughtered by German tribes in 9 C.E.<sup>105</sup> As Edwards noted, suicide “had always been available to unsuccessful military leaders.”<sup>106</sup>

Nevertheless, not all Roman generals who suffered losses committed suicide. Suetonius reports that in 54 B.C.E, Julius Caesar, being so moved by the losses suffered by his legate, Quintus Titurius Sabinus, refused to cut his hair or shave his beard until

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<sup>102</sup> Xiph. 183: ... καὶ ἀσυντάκτοις οἷσι παμπόλλους κατέκοψαν. ἰδὼν δὲ τοῦτο καὶ περιαλγήσας ὁ Οὐίνδιξ αὐτὸς ἑαυτὸν ἔσφαξε, “killed very many of them. Vindex, seeing and being greatly pained by it, killed himself.” Zon. 11.13: Τῆς δ’ ἀποστασίας παρατεινομένης ὁ Οὐίνδιξ ἑαυτὸν ἀπέσφαξε, τῶν μετ’ αὐτοῦ στρατιωτῶν κινδυνευσάντων ὑπεραλγήσας ..., “Vindex, while the revolt continued, killed himself, because he was greatly pained by the danger inflicted upon his soldiers, ...” See the Loeb edition of Dio Cassius 63.24.4 (page 178). Wellesley (2000): 5.

<sup>103</sup> The same may hold true for Caesar.

<sup>104</sup> Joann. Antioch (fr. 91 Muell. v. 10-22): as contained in the Loeb edition of Cassius Dio 63.24.1-4 (page 176-179); for more on the suicide of Vindex see also Hainsworth (1962).

<sup>105</sup> Dio Cass. 56.21.5 suggests that the motive was to avoid capture.

<sup>106</sup> (2007): 32.

they were avenged.<sup>107</sup> The description of this public display of mourning is found in a passage that describes the various methods by which Caesar curried favor with his soldiers. The other actions included a relatively lax approach to discipline and freedom to act frivolously – at least outside of battle, addressing the soldiers as *commilitones*, comrades, and providing them with weapons of great value.<sup>108</sup> According to Suetonius, these actions made Caesar's men “most devoted to him” and “most brave.”<sup>109</sup> The author's decision therefore to include Caesar's mourning among these actions suggests that it was a praiseworthy attribute for a successful general to display his grief for the loss of his troops.<sup>110</sup> Even the possibility that Caesar was not genuinely grieved over the loss and, that he only saw an opportunity for gaining the support of his men with crocodile tears, does not change the fact that Suetonius recognized such a display as partially responsible for his positive relationship with his men.

The reaction of generals to their casualties was not always praiseworthy, however. For example, deflated by their losses some generals (who chose not to commit suicide) refused to hear casualty reports. While marching his army out of Armenia, after the failure of his eastern campaign in 36 B.C.E., Antony did not allow anyone to bring him

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<sup>107</sup> *Caes.* 67.2: *Diligebat quoque usque adeo, ut audita clade Tituriana barbam capillumque summiserit nec ante dempserit quam vindicasset*, “He loved them to so great an extent, that after he heard about the disaster of Titurius, he let his hair and beard grow long and he would not cut them before he had claimed vengeance.”

<sup>108</sup> *Caes.* 68.1-2.

<sup>109</sup> *Caes.* 68.1: *Quibus rebus et devotissimos sibi et fortissimos reddidit*, “By which actions he made them most devoted to himself and most brave.”

<sup>110</sup> For a disheveled appearance as standard behaviour for those in mourning, see Hope (2007): 173. As we shall see in the next chapter there is an important difference between a general displaying his grief to his own soldiers and displaying his grief to the civilians at Rome.

news of his casualties.<sup>111</sup> Although he concealed the extent of this debacle in his letters to Rome, rumor spread the truth. At the time, Augustus did not use the information for propaganda purposes because he was in the midst of suffering his own severe losses at the hands of Sextus Pompey.<sup>112</sup> Nevertheless, Dio's report confirms that eventually the story was used as propaganda to portray Antony in a negative light. Caesar, in full view of his troops, mourned when he suffered losses; Antony ignored them. In this sense ignoring the fate of ones' soldiers may be seen as a negative quality.

The author of the *Bellum Hispaniense* recorded a similar story. When one of Gnaeus Pompey's standard-bearers deserted to Caesar's side during the brutal fighting near Corduba, he brought with him the telling information that although in a previous engagement his unit had lost thirty-five men, he and his fellow soldiers could not announce, nor even mention in the camp that they had suffered casualties.<sup>113</sup> While it is possible to see how this prohibition against mentioning losses was the general's attempt to limit the spread of grief and mourning within his own camp,<sup>114</sup> the context in which it is presented suggests that it was designed to criticize the leadership of Gnaeus Pompey. The passage in which Pompey forbade the announcement of casualties also describes his

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<sup>111</sup> Dio Cass. 49.31.2: ὅθεν περ συχνῶν μὲν ἀπολλυμένων συχνῶν δὲ καὶ ἀπομάχων γιγνομένων, οὐκ ἤνεγκε τὴν καθ' ἕκαστον αὐτῶν πίστιν, ἀλλὰ ἀπηγόρευσε μηδὲν τοιοῦτο μηδένα οἱ ἀγγέλλειν, "At that time, after so many had been lost and so many had been rendered unfit for service, he did not have a report about each one of them, but he forbade anyone from making any such announcement."

<sup>112</sup> Dio Cass. 49.32.1-2.

<sup>113</sup> Caes. *Hisp.* 18: *Eodemque tempore signifer de legione prima transfugit et innotuit, quo die equestre proelium factum esset, suo signo perisse homines XXXV, neque licere castris Cn. Pompei nuntiare neque dicere perisse quemquam*, "At this time a standard-bearer from the First legion deserted and it became known, that on the day of the cavalry battle, his own unit lost 35 men, but that they were neither permitted to announce this in the camp of Gnaeus Pompey nor say that anyone had been lost."

<sup>114</sup> So Pascucci (1965): 261.

mistreatment of envoys, and his decision to grant asylum to a runaway and murderous slave; it also illustrates that Caesar received messages from inside the town, a fact that may suggest that Pompey had lost the faith of the inhabitants.<sup>115</sup> So in these two examples, Antony and Gnaeus Pompey were criticized for their treatment of their casualties of war, specifically for their attempts to ignore their existence. This differs significantly from the public display of grief and mourning Caesar offered for his war dead. In the camp, in the aftermath of battle, the good general did not ignore his losses.

### 2.3.3 *Treating the Demoralized: Restoring Morale*

Some generals, faced with a demoralized army, avoided large scale battles. For instance, Quintus Fabius Maximus, after being appointed dictator in the aftermath of the Roman defeat at Lake Trasimene in 217 B.C.E., consistently avoided engaging Hannibal in a large battle. Instead he organized “small skirmishes of lesser difficulty” because he thought that small victories would restore his soldiers’ morale.<sup>116</sup> Nearly fifty years later, after Perseus defeated a Roman army led by the consul Publius Licinius near Larissa in Thessaly in 171 B.C.E., the latter followed the advice of his ally Eumenes and moved his

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<sup>115</sup> *Bell. Hisp.* 18.

<sup>116</sup> Livy 22.12.10: ... *et parva momenta levium certaminum ex tuto coeptorum finitimoque receptu adsuefaciebant territum pristinis cladibus militem minus iam tandem aut virtutis aut fortunae paenitere suae*, “... and from positions of safety and with nearby refuge he began small skirmishes of lesser difficulty, and his soldiers having been frightened by previous defeats were becoming accustomed to feel less sorry for their courage or their fortune.” Livy is essentially translating Polybius 3.90.4: τὰ ἅμα δ’ ἐποίει, βουλόμενος ἅμα μὲν ἀφ’ ὠρισμένου πλήθους ἐλαττοῦν αἰεὶ τοὺς ὑπεναντίους, ἅμα δὲ τὰς τῶν ἰδίων δυνάμεων ψυχὰς προητημένους τοῖς ὅλοις διὰ τῶν κατὰ μέρος προτερημάτων κατὰ βραχὺ σωματοποιεῖν καὶ προσαναλαμβάνειν, “He did these things, hoping on the one hand to continue to diminish the number of the enemy by dividing them, and at the same time to recover and organize by means of these small victories the spirit of his own troops which had been altogether shattered by their defeats.”

camp across the Peneus River so that his “demoralized soldiers could recover their spirits.”<sup>117</sup> Even Julius Caesar tried to limit the action that a unit would see if he felt they were demoralized by a defeat. After a troop of German cavalry killed seventy-four members of his cavalry, Caesar, when his army was next on the move, “ordered the cavalry to follow the army, because he thought that their recent battle had left them terrified.”<sup>118</sup> Nevertheless, the competitive nature of Roman society meant that such avoidance could be seen as cowardly. Long before Fabius’ nickname, *Cunctator*, the Delayer, became an honored cognomen, it was meant as a slur.<sup>119</sup> Likewise, Publius Licinius thought that his decision to move his army across the river was a “shameful act of admitting fear”; in the end, reason prevailed and he led his men to safety.<sup>120</sup> Because his soldiers were demoralized, caution was the better part of valor. The Roman discourse that pushed towards war and criticized delay, often repeated in the sources, suited neither the realities of battle, nor the morale of the soldiers.<sup>121</sup>

Roman generals could also show concern for the well being of their soldiers in the aftermath of defeat. When Publius Scipio, the future Africanus, arrived in Spain, he

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<sup>117</sup> Livy 42.60.3: ... *dum percussi milites animos colligerent*. This same defeat, and its effect on Roman soldiers, is discussed above.

<sup>118</sup> Caes. *BG* 4.13: *ipse omnes copias castris eduxit equitatumque, quod recenti proelio perterritum esse existimabat, agmen subsequi iussit*.

<sup>119</sup> 22.15.1: *Quamquam probe scit non in castris modo suis sed iam etiam Romae infamem suam cunctationem esse, obstinatus tamen tenore eodem consiliorum aestatis reliquum extraxit*, “Although he well knew that his delaying was negatively received in both his camp and even in Rome, he nevertheless remained steadfast to this same plan and dragged out the rest of the summer.” See also Livy 22.12.11-12; 22.14.5; 22.14.10; and Polyb. 3.90.5-6. For *Cunctator* as praise see Ennius 9: *Unus homo nobis cunctando restituit rem*, “One man by delaying saved the state for us.”

<sup>120</sup> Livy 42.60.4: *Consul moveri flagiti timoris fatendi; victus tamen ratione, silentio noctis transductis copiis, castra in ulteriore ripa communivit*, “The consul was moved by the disgrace of acknowledging his fear; nevertheless, having been conquered by reason, and after leading his forces across [the river] in the silence of the night, he fortified a camp on the further bank.”

<sup>121</sup> See the general discussion of this topic in the conclusion below.

addressed his soldiers, many of whom as veterans served with his father and uncle and had grieved their deaths. Scipio, wrote Livy, thought that the address was necessary not only because he was their new commander, and so young, but also because those who had served in Spain were survivors of serious defeats.<sup>122</sup> In the speech, a version of which is recorded by both Livy and Polybius, Scipio praised the men and asked for their continued good service.<sup>123</sup> That Scipio thought such a speech was necessary illustrates the importance of a commander recognizing and understanding the emotions of his men.

Caesar also concerned himself with the morale and welfare of his soldiers after particularly bloody battles. When the Nervii attacked the camp of his legate Quintus Cicero, Caesar arrived to find that barely ten percent of the legionaries left in the camp were uninjured.<sup>124</sup> He went around the camp and praised the bravery of individual centurions and tribunes. The next day, he called an assembly of the troops and consoled and encouraged them. Blaming another one of his legates (not Cicero), he told the men to bear the loss with an “even spirit” because “their misfortune would be expiated by the favor of the immortal gods and by their own courage, and that lasting joy would not linger for the enemy nor would grief be long lasting for them [Caesar's soldiers].”<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> Livy 26.41.2: *Quo cum venisset, adloquendos maxime veteres milites qui tantis superfuerunt cladibus ratus*, “When he arrived there he thought that he had to address particularly the veteran soldiers who had survived such great defeats ...”

<sup>123</sup> Polyb. 10.6 also records the speech, though in much less detail. Livy was either following a different source, or was adding his own comments to Scipio’s speech.

<sup>124</sup> Caes. *BG* 5.52.2: *Legione producta cognoscit non decimum quemque esse reliquum militem sine vulnere*, “After the legion was brought forward he noticed that not a tenth of those soldiers remaining were without wounds.” Caesar does not specify how many died in this passage.

<sup>125</sup> Caes. *BG* 5.52.4-6: *... hoc aequiore animo ferendum docet, quod beneficio deorum immortalium et virtute eorum expiato incommodo neque hostibus diutina laetatio neque ipsis longior dolor relinquatur.*

Caesar recognized just how tenuous the morale of the Roman army could be, and that under certain conditions morale needed to be soothed and enhanced.

Another technique for dealing with a demoralized army saw many Roman generals purposefully stoking the desire for vengeance in the aftermath of a defeat.<sup>126</sup> After the deaths of the two Scipios in Spain, Marcius tried to rally his troops by telling them of a dream he had, in which their former generals appeared demanding that the surviving Roman soldiers avenge their deaths.<sup>127</sup> Likewise, Metellus, who himself had grieved for a Roman defeat near Vaga during the Jugurthine War, was spurred to achieve vengeance.<sup>128</sup> His army, having marched all night, appeared a mile away from Vaga before they began to complain of exhaustion. But Metellus fired up their spirits by reminding them of the need to avenge their fellow citizens who had been killed in the previous defeat.<sup>129</sup> By sowing the seeds of vengeance the army would demand to fight, rather than be ordered. In Spain, for example, after a severe defeat had left the Roman army demoralized, those same soldiers, having been consoled by their generals,

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<sup>126</sup> On this point see Mattern-Parkes (2003) and also Chapter Five. Note also how the cover story by C.J. Chivers for the April 20, 2009 edition of *The New York Times* illustrates that similar attitudes exist in today's American army. After having a comrade killed in an ambush, the American captain told his grieving troops that the best thing they could do was to go back out and attack the enemy.

<sup>127</sup> The dream is recorded by Livy (25.38.1-10). For more on the role of Marcius in restoring the morale of his men see Jaeger (1997): 94 - 131.

<sup>128</sup> Sall. *Jug.* 68.1: *Metellus postquam de rebus Vagae actis comperit, paulisper maestus ex conspectu abit. Deinde ubi ira et aegritudo permixta sunt, cum maxuma cura ultum ire iniurias festinat.* "After Metellus learned about what had happened at Vaga, grieving for a time he went off out of sight. Then when his anger and grief were mixed, he hastened with the greatest care to avenge the attack."

<sup>129</sup> Sall. *Jug.* 68.3-4: *Ibi milites fessos itineris magnitudine et iam abnuentis omnia docet oppidum Vagam non amplius mille passuum abesse, decere illos relicuum laborem aequo animo pati, dum pro civibus suis, viris fortissimis atque miserrimis, poenas caperent; praeterea praedam benigne ostentat. Sic animis eorum arrectis ...* "In that place he told his soldiers, exhausted by the length of the march and now refusing everything, that the town of Vaga was not more than one mile away, and that they should endure patiently the remaining task, and then they could avenge their fellow citizens, who were the bravest and most miserable; and then he promised favorable plunder. So, after raising up their spirits ..." Note also the reference to the promise of booty as an illustration that multiple factors influenced the Roman soldiers' desire to fight.

eventually “demanded” that their commanders lead them in a vengeful attack to wipe out their previous disgrace.<sup>130</sup> So the morale of the Roman army constantly shifted and needed careful attention.

Despite concerns for the welfare of their men, Roman generals, driven by the reality of Roman society and its distinctive cultural values, might also exercise harsher measures in the aftermath of military losses; depending upon the severity of the general in question, these harsh measures might even be the first recourse. Roman generals could criticize or scold their demoralized soldiers. Livy describes how after suffering severe losses against the Samnites in a battle near Luceria in 294 B.C.E., the consul Marcus Atilius confronted his officers and soldiers. His officers were prepared for battle, but they warned the consul that the regular troops, after spending a night in a camp filled with the groans of wounded and dying men, were frightened and had “lost their spirit.”<sup>131</sup> Shame alone was all that had kept them from fleeing. Atilius thought it necessary to address the troops, but his comments were harsh and severe. Livy claims that he addressed them with “taunts and reproaches.”<sup>132</sup> In a similar Livian example, Marcius, the man who saved the Spanish armies after the death of the Scipios, taunted the remnants of the Roman army – calling them “womanly and useless” – because they were not prepared to defend themselves and their country, and worse yet, did not focus on avenging their dead

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<sup>130</sup> Livy 39.30.8: ... *et iam miles quoque ad delendam priorem ignominiam hostem poscebat*, “and now even the soldiers were demanding the enemy to destroy their prior dishonor.” Likewise prior to Cannae, the Roman soldiers were reminded of their families and told to wipe out their previous disgraces, App. *Hann.* 21.

<sup>131</sup> Livy 10.35.6: *Omnes adfirmant se quidem omnia facturos sed militum iacere animos; tota nocte inter volnera et gemitus morientium vigilatum esse*, “All [the officers] confirmed for him that they were ready for everything, but that the soldiers had lost their spirit; they had been kept awake all night among the wounds and the groans of the dying.”

<sup>132</sup> Livy 10.35.11: ... *iurganti increpantique* ...



commanders.<sup>133</sup> On another occasion during the Second Punic War, when the Roman army lost some 2,700 men, the general berated his soldiers with such ferocity that as a result of the defeat earlier in the day the soldiers were even more affected by his words.<sup>134</sup> This particular general illustrates that in the aftermath of defeat Roman soldiers were not always coddled, and that there were different ways to raise morale.

Such a berating could lead to outright threats on those whose morale had been so diminished that they had lost faith in Rome's ability to recover. After Cannae, when Scipio learned that a group of nobles were about to flee Italy, he confronted them, sword in hand, and made them swear an oath that they would never desert Rome or permit others to do so.<sup>135</sup> If anyone failed to confirm his loyalty, Scipio was prepared to use his sword against them. Such a story suits the Roman ideal never to admit surrender.

The height of such harsh action was that in some cases, despite severe losses, and frail morale, generals could sometimes severely punish their soldiers. In general, punishments, such as decimation, were reserved for those soldiers or units that failed to follow orders or displayed cowardice on the battlefield.<sup>136</sup> Nevertheless, the punishment of soldiers (sometimes even the execution) after a battle in which military losses were sustained illustrates a particular gruesome reality of Roman warfare and Roman cultural

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<sup>133</sup> Livy 25.37.10: *muliebres et inutiles* ... Although it is not a focus of this dissertation, it is worth noting how gender featured in such descriptions.

<sup>134</sup> Livy 27.13.1: *Marcellus postquam in castra reditum est, contionem adeo saevam atque acerbam apud milites habuit ut proelio per diem totum infeliciter tolerato tristior iis irati ducis oratio esset*, "Marcellus, after he had returned to the camp, made such a savage and acerbic speech to the soldiers that having endured the battle unsuccessfully for the whole day, the oration of the irate general was more harsh to them."

<sup>135</sup> Livy 22.53.9-11.

<sup>136</sup> For general comments on decimation see Phang (2008): 123-129 and page 123, n.79 for a detailed bibliography.

consciousness: defeat was not acceptable, and if defeat was the result of substandard performance, then it was perfectly legitimate for death to be piled upon death. Nevertheless, there is a sense that decimation reflected a specific elite view of the discipline required of Roman soldiers. As Phang has noted: “That the obedience of soldiers should be categorical and absolute was an elite ideal rather than reality.”<sup>137</sup> Expectations of the elite, especially our elite sources, were difficult to achieve on the battlefield. Once again the discourse and reality of how Romans dealt with military losses did not always match.

In another sense, the decimation of an army could be seen as a form of ritual purification after a defeat so that the actual execution of soldiers may not have been necessary. This ritual form of decimation could explain why Caesar’s army evidently offered to be decimated after their defeat at Pharsalus.<sup>138</sup> The offer was an attempt to reaffirm their loyalty, bravery, and unwillingness to accept defeat. By offering to undergo the highest punishment, these Roman soldiers demonstrated their own disgust at how the battle had turned out. While this episode can also be seen as illustrative of Caesar’s *clementia* (he did not in fact decimate the legion) and therefore its veracity can be doubted, it nevertheless illustrates that to some Roman soldiers decimation could be a legitimate means of proving their loyalty.<sup>139</sup>

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<sup>137</sup> Phang (2008): 111.

<sup>138</sup> Suet. *Caes.* 68.

<sup>139</sup> Phang (2008): 126.

## 2.4 Conclusion

In the end, although he was referring to the bloody end of a civil war, Sallust's conclusion that battle could leave Roman soldiers variously affected seems fitting.<sup>140</sup> They could be joyous and relieved in victory, but the evidence suggests that they were equally despondent and depressed in defeat, or when a significant number of their comrades had been killed. Likewise their commanders could suffer the loss of their soldiers. But the good Roman general ensured the continued good morale of his soldiers and restored that morale when needed.

It is true that the evidence is sparse, but this can be explained by the nature of the sources. Roman defeats were described, sometimes in bloody detail, but aftermath narratives that specifically describe the morale of the Roman army are comparatively infrequent, especially if the army was victorious. Instead, their focus is situated more on Roman ferocity in battle itself and numbering the dead. This focus on the viciousness and the numerical outcome of battle is responsible for modern analysis of Roman courage.<sup>141</sup> While courage is certainly a necessary condition for Roman martial success, it may not be a sufficient explanation for the long term nature of that success.

Lendon recently suggested a new model for the explanation of Roman martial success. In his *Soldiers and Ghosts*, he focused on the importance of such culturally constructed values as *virtus*, which he defines as “aggressive bravery,” and *disciplina*,

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<sup>140</sup> Sall. *Cat.* 61: *Ita varie per omnem exercitum laetitia, maeror, luctus atque gaudia agitabantur*, “And so rejoicing, mourning, grief and joy were interchangeably felt throughout the whole army.”

<sup>141</sup> See, for example, Harris (2006).

which he sees as acting as a “brake” against *virtus*.<sup>142</sup> So for Lendon, “victory depended on maintaining a careful balance between undisciplined *virtus* and competitive *disciplina*.”<sup>143</sup> Prior to, but similar to Lendon, Rüpke recognized an innate sense that Roman soldiers were guided by a “warrior-fury” which led them to accept nothing but victory or death.<sup>144</sup>

The evidence presented in this chapter has important implications for the study of Roman warfare. The recent approach to it which suggests that the balance between *virtus* and *disciplina* best explains Roman success is incomplete. If *virtus* is seen to be some sort of aggressive impatience, as Lendon repeatedly suggests that it is, and if *disciplina* is seen as a brake on this aggressiveness, how are we to explain the occurrence of demoralized soldiers, and the need of generals to deal with such demoralization? How are we to explain how Roman armies recovered after suffering a harsh defeat or sustaining heavy losses? Lendon has quite rightly admitted that the Roman army was not made up of disciplined automatons, as Josephus’ famous dictum suggests.<sup>145</sup> But he has, perhaps purposefully and provocatively, pushed the pendulum too far the other way. In doing so Lendon has created aggressive automatons, which elsewhere he characterized as

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<sup>142</sup> For criticism of the role of small unit cohesion see Lendon (2005): *passim*, but especially his useful biographical note on page 432 in which he notes that small-unit cohesion is now being challenged in military history outside of the ancient field. Lendon (2005): definition of *virtus*, 171; elsewhere he defines it as “martial courage” (176); “impatient aggressiveness” (200); “competitive bravery” (221). For *disciplina* as a “brake” see page 177; elsewhere *disciplina* is described as “more a curb than a spur” (178); “subordination” (221).

<sup>143</sup> Lendon (2005): 257.

<sup>144</sup> Rüpke (1990): 249: “Krieger-*furor*”. See also Harris (1979) which describes the martial culture of the Romans. For a contradictory model see Eckstein (2006) and the useful review by Quillin in *BMCR*. 2009.06.44.

<sup>145</sup> See especially his chapter on the Jewish War, and note also Fagan’s review of Lendon, *Mouseion* (2006) 6.1, 36-42.

bloodthirsty.<sup>146</sup> While this chapter does deny that Roman soldiers were sometimes bloodthirsty, it has shown that more than occasionally Roman soldiers needed to have their aggressive courage restored. The losses sustained in war had an effect on Roman soldiers and, as we shall see in the next chapter, on civilians in the city of Rome.

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<sup>146</sup> See Lendon's (2007) contribution to *The Cambridge Companion to Greek and Roman Warfare*, in which he largely re argues his conclusions from *Soldiers and Ghosts* (2005). In the former he wrote: "In the old days, the belief that the Romans were like us, and that they were good, blinded us to the Roman taste for blood."

## Chapter Three

### The Immediate Aftermath of Defeat in the City of Rome

#### 3.1 Introduction

The first two chapters considered how Roman soldiers dealt with defeat and casualties of war. This third chapter shifts our focus from the battlefield and military camp to the city of Rome, and therefore concentrates on how the Roman people and magistrates dealt with military losses. The aftermath of defeat in the city of Rome consists of two distinct phases. The first of these phases was the immediate *reaction* to the defeat. The core of this stage is the initial outpouring of emotions provoked by the defeat. The second phase consists of the various *responses* to the defeat; these generally include those actions taken by the authorities to deal with both the new military reality created by the defeat, and the reaction to the defeat among Romans themselves.

The chapter is divided into two broad chronological sections. The first considers the reactions and responses to defeat among the citizens and magistrates of Rome during the republican period. The second section is devoted to the imperial period, and begins with an analysis of the emperor Augustus' reaction and response to the *clades Variana* of 9 C.E. I argue that this infamous disaster, in which three Roman legions were slaughtered by a coalition of German tribes, illustrates a turning point in the reaction and response to

defeat in the city of Rome. Examples of how various emperors dealt with defeat in the aftermath of the *clades Variana* complete this second section.

### 3.2 *The Republican Period*

Most of Rome's military losses occurred during the republican period when Rome was solidifying its hegemony over Italy and expanding its empire across the Mediterranean.<sup>1</sup> While our sources frequently describe the numerous losses (both defeats and casualties) that the Romans suffered, their accounts present a particular and significant problem. The aftermath narratives rarely include the reaction and response in Rome to a military defeat. The one source that regularly (though not always) refers to the outcome in Rome is Livy; but his work presents even more difficulties. Except for a few fragments and summaries, all of Livy's *Ab Urbe Condita* after the year 167 B.C.E. (recorded in Book 45) is lost.<sup>2</sup> As a result we know very little about the aftermaths of significant Roman defeats at, for example, Arausio in 105 B.C.E. or Carrhae in 53 B.C.E. Furthermore, while the first ten books of Livy, which record in bloody and gruesome detail Rome's expansion throughout Italy, frequently refer to the aftermath in Rome following a loss, the historical accuracy of these narratives is doubtful at best. That is, we cannot be sure if the events depicted actually occurred in the way Livy says they did. Livy's narratives of these years (especially prior to the Gallic sack of Rome in 390 B.C.E.

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<sup>1</sup> Losses did occur during the imperial period, but nowhere near on the scale of the republican period.

<sup>2</sup> Unfortunately the summaries and epitomes of Livy are not of much help because they do not include enough details about the reaction and response in Rome.

recorded in Book Five) is largely based on memory, myth and literary reconstruction.<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, this problem offers an opportunity. Because Livy was, in most cases, following a particular narrative pattern, we can develop from those narratives the outline of the typical Roman reaction and response to defeat as envisaged by Livy.<sup>4</sup> Other sources, which describe the aftermath of military losses at Rome far less frequently and usually in far less detail than Livy, can be used periodically to augment his examples. Thus, a general framework of how the Roman people and government were expected to deal with military losses during the republican period is illuminated.<sup>5</sup> The organization of the remainder of this section is based on this general framework so that we trace the aftermath of defeat in roughly chronological order.

### *3.2.1 Discovering the Costs of Empire*

In the early republican period, before the third century B.C.E., when the militias of Rome fought mostly in central Italy, Roman soldiers were often the first to bring back to the city any news of victory or defeat. Many battles ended with physically exhausted

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<sup>3</sup> Livy laments the difficulties of recording events prior to 390 B.C.E. in his second preface at the beginning of Book 6. For more on Livy's first decade see the commentaries of Ogilvie (1965) and Oakley (1997). For Livy's composition in general see Luce (1977).

<sup>4</sup> For more on Livy's narrative patterns, especially for battle narratives see Oakley (1997): 84; Schmitt (1991): 246; Burck (1992): 64; and for specific reference to Livy's narrative of military defeats see Bruckmann's (1936) dissertation *Die römischen Niederlagen im Geschichtswerk des T. Livius*. Here Bruckmann organizes Roman military defeats into one of three categories based on their similarity to the defeats at the Caudine Forks, at the Allia River and at Cannae.

<sup>5</sup> A similar method has been used to understand another aspect of Roman society (related in a way to military defeats). Linderski (1993) noted that the complete procedure observed if prodigies were witnessed is nowhere explained in full by Livy. Nevertheless, we can develop the framework for that procedure from various elements randomly presented by him. This method also allows us to present those examples in which the reaction or response does not match the specific framework into a specific context - in particular, see the changes occurring during the early empire discussed below.



and emotionally drained survivors bringing terrible and often exaggerated accounts of battle back to Rome.<sup>6</sup> Dionysius of Halicarnassus, for example, while describing the aftermath of a Roman defeat against the forces of Veii, Rome’s neighbor and perennial enemy in the early fifth century, wrote that those Romans who had managed to escape the “great rout” made their way back to Rome and arrived there in the middle of the night. Their arrival signaled the defeat and initiated “great confusion” among the citizens.<sup>7</sup> Livy recorded a similar story after describing a late-fifth century defeat at the hands of the Aequi, a people who lived in the foothills of the Apennine Mountains west of Rome. When the Aequi took a Roman camp, the Roman army fled for safety. While many of the soldiers took refuge in the nearby town of Tusculum, about twenty kilometers from Rome, “others scattered through the fields at random and by many different routes returned to Rome where they announced a greater disaster than was inflicted.”<sup>8</sup> In another example from Livy, this time referring to a battle in the early fourth century, the Romans were defeated by the forces of Veii and the first news that reached Rome was an “exaggerated rumor.”<sup>9</sup> Although Livy does not specifically say how the news reached Rome on this occasion, the nearness of Veii and Rome, and the fact that the Roman forces had been ambushed suggest that at least some of the Roman soldiers scampered back to Rome.

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<sup>6</sup> For the effect of battle on Roman soldiers see chapter two.

<sup>7</sup> Dion. Hal. 9.24.1: Οἱ δ' ἐν τῇ Ῥώμῃ τὴν τε ἀπώλειαν τῶν σφετέρων καὶ τὴν ἄλωσιν τοῦ χάρακος μαθόντες – ἦκον γὰρ οἱ πρῶτοι διασωθέντες ἐκ τῆς τροπῆς πολλῆς ἔτι νυκτὸς οὐσης – εἰς μέγαν θόρυβον ὥσπερ εἰκὸς κατέστησαν, “When those in Rome learned about the destruction of their army and the capture of their camp – for the first survivors of the great rout arrived when it was still night – they fell into great confusion as is to be expected.”

<sup>8</sup> Livy 4.46.7: *palati alii per agros passim multis itineribus maioris quam accepta erat cladis nuntii Romam contenderunt.*

<sup>9</sup> Liv. 5.18.9: ... *multiplē fama.*

So it appears that those Romans who survived battle might exaggerate the extent of their defeat. An explanation for such exaggeration is not difficult to suggest: fear follows flight. In order to justify their survival to themselves and to the citizens of Rome, those who escaped the slaughter could exaggerate the extent of the defeat and the fortune of their escape. The Roman discourse of war required soldiers to conquer or die.<sup>10</sup> It was necessary, therefore, for Roman soldiers to defend their survival if so many of their comrades had died. Of course, it is also true that on some occasions, such as the aftermath of Cannae, no amount of exaggeration could compare to the reality of the loss.

News of military losses could also reach Rome via messenger, especially when the battlefield was further away from the city. Roman commanders in the field would send official letters announcing the condition of their army. After the battle of Cannae, the consul Varro sent a letter to Rome announcing the survival of what had the appearance of a consular army.<sup>11</sup> Marcellus, another general from the Second Punic War, sent a letter to Rome outlining Roman losses after the battle at Herdonea.<sup>12</sup> On other occasions a commander in the field might attempt to conceal the full effect of the losses suffered. According to Polybius, the consul Sempronius attempted to hide the losses his army suffered at the Trebia River, in December 218 B.C.E. Rather than admit defeat at the hands of Hannibal, he sent messengers to Rome to announce that a sudden storm had

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<sup>10</sup> Though note that this was not necessarily the reality; see Edwards (2007): 19-45.

<sup>11</sup> For the letter see, Livy 22.56.1; for the appearance of a “consular army” see Livy 22.54.6.

<sup>12</sup> Livy 27.2.1: *Marcellus nihil admodum tanta clade territus litteras Romam ad senatum de duce atque exercitu ad Herdoneam amisso scribit*, “Marcellus, being not at all terrified by so great a defeat, writes a letter to the senate at Rome about the loss of the general and of the army at Herdonea.”

snatched away a victory.<sup>13</sup> Even in less significant battles than those of the Second Punic War, generals might try to hide their losses. In a letter to Caelius, Cicero, describing his adventurous siege of some little and unimportant town, wrote that “if, as I hope, I do take it, then I will send an official dispatch.”<sup>14</sup> No doubt if Cicero had failed, he would not have sent a dispatch to his senatorial colleagues. Even though it was common practice to keep the senate informed of the goings on in the provinces,<sup>15</sup> it is no surprise that the competitive nature of Roman politics would limit the description of military losses.

Despite the best attempts of commanders to diminish their losses in their dispatches to Rome, they were often found out. One possible reason could be that literate members of the army also wrote to Rome. Livy notes that reports of a victory were confirmed not only by letters from the commanders but also from the “soldiers generally.”<sup>16</sup> While in this case the letters of regular soldiers confirmed a victory, it is also possible that such letters could confirm defeats, contradict false reports, and exacerbate rumors and exaggerations. Dionysius of Halicarnassus, for example, reported that Roman soldiers once sent letters to their friends in which they accused their general

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<sup>13</sup> Polyb.3.75.1: Ὁ δὲ Τεβέριος εἰδὼς μὲν τὰ συμβεβήκοτα, βουλόμενος δὲ κατὰ δύναμιν ἐπικρύπτεσθαι τοὺς ἐν τῇ Ῥώμῃ τὸ γεγονός ἐπέμψε τοὺς ἀπαγγελοῦντας ὅτι μάχης γενομένης τὴν νίκην αὐτῶν ὁ χειμῶν ἀφείλετο, “Tiberius, knowing what had happened and wishing as far as possible to conceal the result from those in Rome, sent messengers to report that while a battle had been fought a storm had taken victory from them.” Livy made no reference to Sempronius’ attempt to diminish the extent of his defeat.

<sup>14</sup> *Fam.* 2.10.3: *Quod si, ut spero, cepero, tum vero litteras publice mittam.*

<sup>15</sup> Campbell (1984): 148.

<sup>16</sup> Livy 22.30.7: *dein litteris non magis ipsorum imperatorum quam volgo militum ex utroque exercitu adfirmata*, “[this] was then confirmed by letters not only from those generals but also generally from the soldiers of both armies.”

of incompetence.<sup>17</sup> These soldiers may have exaggerated the extent of a defeat in order to criticize an unfit commander.<sup>18</sup> Although Roman soldiers may have been able to send letters (though a lack of writing materials and illiteracy must have limited the frequency), their reports, as illustrated above, may not have been perfectly accurate.

The reality of warfare meant that in many cases soldiers simply could not have known what had occurred in battle. As Keegan illustrated in his *Face of Battle* the soldier's view of combat is much different than the commander's.<sup>19</sup> It is difficult for a soldier on one wing of the battlefield to know what happened on another. So, along with attempts to criticize their commanders, the confusion of war could affect a soldier's knowledge of the battlefield. This may help explain the references to the misidentification of the war dead discussed in Chapter One.

At Rome, in the midst of so many rumors and exaggerations, the senate would make a public announcement. After the defeat at Lake Trasimene (fought near modern Cortona on 24 June 217 B.C.E.), in which some fifteen thousand Romans were killed, the Roman Forum was crowded with women and men demanding to know what had happened. Evidently some of those soldiers who survived the battle had already returned to the city and reported the defeat.<sup>20</sup> A large crowd, as if there was about to be some public assembly, gathered around the senate house and demanded information from the

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<sup>17</sup> 8.89.3: αὐτοὶ δ' οἱ στρατιῶται τὸν ὑπάτου ὡς οὐχ ἱκανὸν στρατηγεῖν ἠτιῶντο, γράμματα πέμποντες ὡς τοὺς ἐπιτηδείους ἑαυτῶν ἕκαστοι, "The soldiers themselves accused the consul of being unfit to command, and each one sent a letter to their friends."

<sup>18</sup> For more on the political consequences for failing generals see Rosenstein (1990).

<sup>19</sup> (1976) Keegan's work seeks to present battle narratives in a different way - by showing the battle from the soldiers' points of view. The implication of his argument is that soldiers have limited field of vision on the battlefield.

<sup>20</sup> Polyb. 3.85.9.

magistrates.<sup>21</sup> Finally, a praetor named Marcus Pomponius Matho emerged from the senate and announced that “we have been defeated in a great battle.”<sup>22</sup> Lazenby described the “studied calm” of this announcement, but its curt nature actually belies any sense of repose.<sup>23</sup> The announcement could just as easily suggest panic on behalf of the magistrates, if the Roman senate was uncertain about what to do after such a disaster. The abrupt announcement constituted all the information the praetor had for the people, who had to piece together the terrible truth from various rumors floating throughout the city: “the consul with a great part of his army had been slaughtered.”<sup>24</sup> Such rumors and exaggerations would spread throughout the city. During the height of the Second Punic War, when Hannibal tried to relieve Capua by marching on Rome, the terror and confusion in the city was increased by men who ran around uttering news of the danger based on unfounded reports.<sup>25</sup> Not surprisingly, such rumors had an effect on the population of Rome.

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<sup>21</sup> Liv. 22.7.8; Although Polybius does not describe this distraught mob, he did note that the senate was “forced” to call an assembly, 3.85.7: ἠναγκάζοντο. While this does indicate that the people were demanding answers, Polybius does not describe the chaos with anywhere near as much detail or emotion as Livy. Part of the reason for this must have been Polybius' unfailing belief in the capabilities of the senate. Livy, who wrote after the fall of the Republic and the decline of senatorial power, presented a different view. A detailed discussion about the differences in Livy's and Polybius' narratives of the Second Punic War can be found in Schmitt (1991).

<sup>22</sup> Livy's version (22. 7.8-9): *Pugna, inquit magna victi sumus*, is a translation of Polybius' (3.85.8): Λειπόμεθα μάχη μεγάλη.

<sup>23</sup> (1998): 67.

<sup>24</sup> Liv. 22.7.9: ... *consulem cum magna parte copiarum caesum* ...

<sup>25</sup> Liv. 26.9.6: *Tumultuosius quam allatum erat* .... “ There was greater confusion than had been reported ...”

### 3.2.2 *Terror ac Tumultus: The Initial Reaction to Roman Defeat*

The initial reaction in Rome to news of a defeat was terror and panic. According to Livy, the first news of the defeat at Lake Trasimene brought “terror and upheaval” to the citizens of Rome.<sup>26</sup> Polybius wrote that they lacked “moderation and dignity” in their reaction.<sup>27</sup> Matho's announcement (mentioned above) proved so shocking that even those soldiers who had somehow already managed to return to Rome from Lake Trasimene felt that the defeat must have been worse than what they had witnessed.<sup>28</sup> They lost focus on the war itself and thought only of their own safety and the well-being of their kin. Livy described in detail the response to the defeat at Lake Trasimene: for days afterwards nearly as many women as men crowded around the gates of the city and waited “either for their family members or news about them.”<sup>29</sup> Anyone returning to the city was a potential source of information, and distraught Romans begged them for details about kin unaccounted for. According to Livy, some mothers died because they were so relieved to

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<sup>26</sup> Liv. 22.7.6: ... *terrore ac tumultu* .... Similar sentiments were felt in the aftermath of the two battles fought prior to Trasimene but after Hannibal had arrived in Italy. After the defeats at the Ticinus (21.52.1) and Trebia (21.57.1) Rivers, Livy notes the lack of hope (*spes*) that the Romans felt. *Terror* is also found in his description of the Trebia River defeat (21.57.1).

<sup>27</sup> Polyb. 3.85.9: οὐ μετρίως οὐδὲ κατὰ σχῆμα.

<sup>28</sup> Polyb. 3.85.8: ... τηλικαύτην συνέβη γενέσθαι διατροπήν ὥστε τοῖς παραγενομένοις ἐφ' ἑκατέρων τῶν καιρῶν πολλῶ μείζον τότε φανῆναι τὸ γεγονὸς ἢ πᾶρ' αὐτὸν τὸν τῆς μάχης καιρὸν, “what happened brought such great confusion, that, to those who were present at both events [the defeat and the announcement], the result [of the battle] seemed much greater at that time than at the time of the battle itself.”

<sup>29</sup> Liv. 22.7.11: *aut suorum aliquem aut nuntios de iis opperiens*. The comment that *maior prope mulierum quam virorum multitudo*, “by a crowd of more women than men” suggests that it was not only women that were so adversely affected by the loss, but that Roman men too felt the severance of an emotional bond.

see their sons alive that their bodies could not withstand the emotional shift.<sup>30</sup> This rumor and exaggeration continued to spread throughout the city.

Livy's aftermath narrative of the battle of Cannae is similar to the one for Lake Trasimene, though it is considerably more detailed. The first discovery and immediate reaction to the defeat at Cannae is presented in a compelling passage:

At Rome it was reported that not even these remnants of citizens and allies survived, but that the army with the two consular leaders had been killed in a slaughter and that all forces had been lost. Never, with the city safe, had there been such fear and upheaval within the Roman walls. And so I will give into the burden and not attempt to narrate that which I would make less than the truth by describing. The year before, a consul and his army had been lost at Lake Trasimene, and now it was not wound on top of wound, but multiplied disaster: it was reported that two consular armies, with two consuls had been lost, and that there was no longer any Roman camp, nor leader, nor soldiers; Hannibal held Apulia, Samnium and now nearly the whole of Italy.<sup>31</sup>

Similar to his description of the effect of the defeat at Lake Trasimene, Livy stated that the condition inside the city after the defeat at Cannae was one of fear and panic; though in this case *pavor* replaced *terror*; *tumultus* remained. He then tried to deprecate his own ability to describe adequately the emotional burden suffered by the Romans in the aftermath of such a defeat. In *Livy's Written Rome*, Jaeger, in a chapter about the memory

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<sup>30</sup> Livy 22.7.10-14. For the misidentification of the Roman dead see Chapter 1.3.3. It is also possible that some soldiers, eager to assuage anguished mothers and wives lied about the well-being of their loved-ones.

<sup>31</sup> Livy 22.54.7-10: *Romam ne has quidem reliquias superesse civium sociorumque sed occisione occisum cum duobus consularibus ducibus exercitum deletasque omnes copias allatum fuerat. Nunquam salva urbe tantum pavoris tumultusque intra moenia Romana fuit. Itaque succumbam oneri neque adgrediar narrare quae edissertando minora uero faciam. consule exercituque ad Trasumennum priore anno amisso non volnus super volnus sed multiplex clades, cum duobus consulibus duo consulares exercitus amissi nuntiabantur nec ulla iam castra Romana nec ducem nec militem esse; Hannibalis Apuliam, Samnium ac iam prope totam Italiam factam.*

and monuments of the Second Punic War, noted that Livy's deft disavowal of his ability actually heightened the pathos of the scene.<sup>32</sup>

But there is still more to this cleverly constructed passage. In the section immediately preceding this one, in the last sentence in fact, Livy recorded that the consul Gaius Terentius Varro and various survivors of the defeated Roman army had regrouped at Canusium, a town not far from Cannae. These remnants, according to Livy, "resembled a consular army."<sup>33</sup> The reader then is well aware of the exaggerated rumor being spread throughout Rome, where reports swirled that both consuls and the entire army met with total destruction. As if this contradiction between reality and rumor was not enough to explain the reaction in Rome, Livy also repeated the extent of the losses barely two sentences apart. Modern writers who wrote such a passage might be criticized for redundancy, but in Livy's work the iteration (that Rome had lost two consular armies and two consuls) illustrates in written form both the chaos in the city itself and how the exaggerations spread throughout the city. The task of the ancient historian was as much about creating a sense of emotion as it was about describing events. So, just as was the case in the aftermath of the defeat at Lake Trasimene, panic and rumor ruled Rome.

In the aftermath of both Cannae and Trasimene, Livy even portrayed the senate as ineffectual and panicked, just like the citizen body. About the reaction of the senate to the defeat at Lake Trasimene, he reported that "for some days, from sunrise until sunset, the praetors held the senate in the curia, debating which leader or which forces could resist

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<sup>32</sup> Jaeger (1998): 100.

<sup>33</sup> 22.54.6: ... *species consularis exercitus* ...



the victorious Carthaginians.”<sup>34</sup> Polybius at first said that in the aftermath of the defeat the senate “remained in fit state of mind.”<sup>35</sup> After news arrived that another two thousand Roman soldiers had been killed and as many taken prisoner in a battle that followed Trasimene, Polybius finally admitted that the senate was “overwhelmed.”<sup>36</sup>

Similarly after Cannae the senate was in turmoil. The two praetors, Publius Furius Philus and Marcus Pomponius called a meeting of the senate, where the magistrates added fuel to the rumor that the armies had been annihilated and that Hannibal would soon besiege the city. Livy's narrative describes the senate at a loss; the dangers too great and unknown. The deafening commotion of women crying and lamenting in the Forum outside the Curia Hostilia made deliberations near impossible.<sup>37</sup> While she notes the emotional chaos of the Forum in the aftermath of Cannae, Jaeger wrote that “Livy's account of the response to the defeat shows how the Romans manage these emotions from the start ...”<sup>38</sup> This statement needs to be qualified as it depends entirely on what is

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<sup>34</sup> 22.7.14: *Senatum praetores per dies aliquot ab orto usque ad occidentem solem in curia retinent, consultantes quonam duce aut quibus copiis resisti victoribus Poenis posset.*

<sup>35</sup> 3.85.10: ἄλλ’ ἐπὶ τοῦ καθήκοντος ἔμενε λογισμοῦ.

<sup>36</sup> 3.86.6: ... διατραπήναι.

<sup>37</sup> Livy 22.55.1-3: *P.Furius Philus et M. Pomponius praetores senatum in curiam Hostiliam vocaverunt, ut de urbis custodia consulerent; neque enim dubitabant deletis exercitibus hostem ad oppugnandam Romam, quod unum opus belli restaret, venturum. Cum in malis sicuti ingentibus ita ignotis ne consilium quidem satis expedirent, obstreperetque clamor lamentantium mulierum et nondum palam facti vivi mortuique per omnes paene domos promiscue complorarentur, ...* “Publius Furius Philus and Marcus Pomponius, the praetors, called the senate together in the Curia Hostilia, so that they could consult about the defense of Rome; for they did not doubt that after wiping out their armies, the enemy would come to besiege Rome, which was the one task of the war remaining. When, among such huge and unknown dangers they could not arrange any sufficient plan, and the clamor of the lamenting women was deafening (as both the living and dead – not yet having been publicly announced – were mourned indiscriminately throughout almost every house, ...”

<sup>38</sup> Jaeger (1998): 100; and see page 97: regarding the aftermath of Cannae: “The narrator mentions disaster (*clades*) three times (*eas clades, acceptae cladis, tanta clade*) and thus reminds the reader just how devastating the defeat at Cannae was, while the Romans, in contrast, refuse to acknowledge the devastation at all.”

meant by “from the start.” With the first announcement of the news, there was absolute chaos in Rome; in Livy's version neither the citizen-body nor the magistrates were, “from the start,” prepared to face Hannibal and the oncoming Carthaginian army. Polybius' version, on the other hand, may offer such a conclusion. In his narrative the Roman “senate did not abandon the things it was supposed to do, but it encouraged the masses, strengthened the city's defenses, and deliberated manfully about those things that had to be done.”<sup>39</sup> But Polybius' unfailing support for the senate must have had an effect on his judgment.<sup>40</sup> Eventually the Romans did respond to the defeat at Cannae, but the fact that there were any emotions at all that needed to be managed illustrates how seriously the defeat, and defeats like it, affected Roman citizens and magistrates. Patience and ardor were not necessarily natural qualities.

So when news of a defeat was reported at Rome, fear was the most common and immediate reaction. *Terror* was felt after Trasimene; *pavor* after Cannae. Both of these words express fear, though the latter may indicate a more sudden and panicked feeling.<sup>41</sup> In aftermath narratives Livy prefers some form of *terror*, though along with *pavor*, *conterritus* and *timor* also appears.<sup>42</sup> As noted above, our other sources do not record the

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<sup>39</sup> 3.118.7: οὐ μὴν ἢ γε σύγκλητος οὐδὲν ἀπέλειπε τῶν ἐνδεχομένων, ἀλλὰ παρεκάλει μὲν τοὺς πολλοὺς, ἠσφαλίζετο δὲ τὰ κατὰ τὴν πόλιν, ἐβουλεύετο δὲ περὶ τῶν ἐνεστῶτων ἀνδρωδῶς.

<sup>40</sup> See above page 117 note 35.

<sup>41</sup> See the entries in *OLD*.

<sup>42</sup> For *terror*: Livy 4.31.9: when the forces of Veii, after defeating the Romans, allied with those of Fidenae in 426 B.C.E., there was *terror ingens*, “great terror” at Rome; 4.40.1: there was “terror” in Rome after a defeat at the hands of the Volscians; 10.4.1: after a Roman army was ambushed in Etruria in 302 B.C.E.; 21.57.1: after the defeat at the Trebia River there was “terror” in Rome; 26.9.6 there was “terror” in Rome after news of the defeat at Fregellae in 211 B.C.E.; 26.9.6: there was “terror” in the city when news arrived that Hannibal was marching towards the city; 41.5.1: “terror” reached Rome after the exaggerated report of a captured Roman camp near Aquileia reached Rome; *conterritus*: Livy 10.21.3: uprisings in Etruria and threat of war “frightened” the Romans; 41.5.1; *pavor*: 22.54.8 after Cannae; *timor*: Livy 27.2.3: there was “fear” at Rome after Marcellus sent a letter reporting the Roman defeat at Herdonea.

reaction in Rome as frequently as Livy. Still, Appian, while describing the Roman reaction to the defeat at Lake Trasimene, does note that the Romans were afraid that Hannibal would march on the city.<sup>43</sup> Sallust meanwhile offers an instructive example of the fearful reaction in Rome after a defeat on distant soil. When describing the Roman reaction to the defeat and surrender of Aulus Postumius Albinus in Numidia, Sallust wrote that “fear and grief seized the community [at Rome].”<sup>44</sup> Although they were defeated, an attack on the city (from modern day Algeria) could not have been a genuine cause of fear. On the other hand, this distance suggests that Sallust followed a sort of literary convention that was honed by a certain set of expectations. For most Romans of the republican period, a feeling of terror in the aftermath of defeat was not uncommon or unexpected. Furthermore, those who read Livy, Sallust, or any other author, must not have been shocked or surprised by such descriptions. In short, they had to be believable and therefore possible.

Another part of this convention of describing the reaction to military defeats involved pairing a “fear” word with the word *tumultus*, as Livy did in his aftermath narratives of the Roman defeats at both Lake Trasimene and Cannae. The basic definition of *tumultus* refers to a state of panic, disorder, or upheaval. This certainly suits the mood of Rome after a significant defeat. The word appears in a number of Livian aftermath narratives and no doubt reflects a literary trope of the author.<sup>45</sup> A similar sense of panic in the aftermath of defeat might also be found in the use of a synonym for *tumultus*, such

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<sup>43</sup> *Hisp.* 11: ... καὶ δέισαντες μὴ εὐθὺς ἐπὶ τὴν πόλιν ὁ Ἀννίβας ἔλθοι, “and fearing that Hannibal might march against the city immediately ...”

<sup>44</sup> *BJ* 39.1: *Sed ubi ea Romae comperta sunt, metus atque maeror civitatem invasere*, “But when this was made known at Rome, fear and grief seized the community.”

<sup>45</sup> Livy 1.29.2; 4.46.8; 26.9.6; 37.5.1; 41.5.1.

as *trepidatio*.<sup>46</sup> So the idea that in the aftermath of a defeat the city of Rome was filled with “terror and panic” – *terror ac tumultus* – is a description used by our sources as part of the literary convention for aftermath narratives. If such a convention existed it must reflect what Romans, at least of the late first century B.C.E. and early first century C.E., saw as the likely reaction to a defeat. To put it another way, if the Romans were a hard people, inured to the losses of war, the descriptions of the reaction to defeats that saw the Roman people in a chaotic mess would not only be unbelievable – they would be a mockery of the Roman spirit. Therefore, such descriptions must have some basis in reality.

Clausewitz, in his *On War*, described the real effect of a military defeat on the people and government (i.e. not on the army):

The effect of all this ... is a sudden collapse of the most anxious expectations, and a complete crushing of self confidence. This leaves a vacuum that is filled by a corrosively expanding fear which completes the paralysis. It is as if the electric charge of the main battle had sparked a shock to the whole nervous system of one of the contestants. This effect may differ from case to case, but it always exists to some degree. In place of an immediate and determined effort by everyone to hold off further misfortune, there is a general fear that any effort will be useless. Men will hesitate where they should act, or will even dejectedly resign themselves to leave everything to fate.<sup>47</sup>

In short, after a defeat, paralytic fear replaces a devastated self-confidence. It is clear that military defeats had a significant effect on the people and magistrates of Rome. Romans did not always hold steadfast in defeat. If the Romans were inured to the costs of war, we

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<sup>46</sup> So Vell. Pat. 2.130.2 refers to the panic that usually occurred when conscription was enforced.

<sup>47</sup> (1989): 225 (Trans. Howard and Parent).

should expect no examples of emotional outpouring of fear, grief and panic, as the sources depict, even if some of these may have been exaggerated.<sup>48</sup> In fact, if the Romans accepted their losses without emotion, our sources' descriptions of a terrified city would be unbelievable and perhaps even offensive to the author's contemporary audience. The aftermath narratives that describe the Roman people and magistrates as terrified and even hysterical illustrate precisely the “complete crushing of self-confidence” described by Clausewitz. As he noted, this loss of confidence leaves a vacuum into which fear expands. This paralytic fear is incapable of supporting the society. This type of situation leaves only two courses of action: first, the society can acquiesce to fate and accept defeat. In this case, the society collapses and is at the whim of the enemy. In the alternative action, the society can respond, and attempt to replace the paralytic fear with some other emotion or action which will allow the state to hold out against what may seem to be unbelievable odds. The Romans always chose the latter option; they always found a way to overcome defeats and respond to the paralytic reactions caused by defeat. This was Roman steadfastness: not an indifference towards defeat, but an unwillingness to allow the dangers brought on by defeat to destroy their society. The Romans always found a way to cope. What is important is that this coping was developed over time, and was not necessarily a natural condition.

### *3.2.3 Declaring a Tumultus*

We have seen how in the aftermath of defeat Romans, far from reacting in a measured and calm way, were actually quite terrified and panicked. For such times of

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<sup>48</sup> Mattern (2003): 396.

upheaval they had developed a series of measures by which they would manage the chaos created by this initial reaction to the defeat.<sup>49</sup> One of the first orders of business was the declaration of a state of emergency, or *tumultus*. As noted above, our sources use the term *tumultus* to describe upheaval in the city, but there is also another meaning of the word. Oakley, for example, defined *tumultus* as referring to “either a sudden uprising amongst Rome's enemies or the state of emergency declared after such an uprising.”<sup>50</sup> Cicero tried to have a state of *tumultus* declared in early January 43 B.C.E. in response to the threat posed by Antony. As Cicero described it, a *tumultus* was something that could be ordered and included the suspension of business, the donning of military clothes, and the calling of an extraordinary levy, that is, a levy with no exceptions.<sup>51</sup> This secondary meaning of *tumultus* illustrates that there developed in Rome a specific procedure for dealing with extraordinary threats like those expected after a military defeat. Cicero was, in effect, issuing a pre-emptive state of emergency.

In her discussion about the aftermath of the battle of Cannae, Jaeger divided the Roman response to that defeat into three phases: “first, the repression of grief, despair, and panic in the interests of security (22.55.1 – 57.1); second, the extreme measures taken to appease the gods (22.57.2 – 6); third, the recruitment and outfitting of a new army

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<sup>49</sup> While the chronology of such a development is important, it is not the goal here to determine when a particular element of the Roman response to defeat came into being.

<sup>50</sup> (1997): 126 and see Rosenberger's (1992):142-145 similar definition and explanation. See also the brief discussion about *tumultus* in Kunkel (1995): 228-229.

<sup>51</sup> Cic. *Phil.* 5.31: *tumultum decerni, iustitium edici, saga sumi dico oportere, dilectum haberi sublatis vacationibus in urbe et in Italia praeter Galliam tota*, “I say that it is necessary to pronounce a *tumultus*, to proclaim a suspension of business, to put on military cloaks, and to have a levy without exceptions in the city and in the whole of Italy except Gaul.”

(22.57.9 – 12).”<sup>52</sup> These three phases can be simplified into three general categories: civil, religious and military responses. About the episode, she concluded that “[a]fter Cannae, then, in discrete phases and on different fronts, and largely through the influence of extraordinary men, the Romans manage their emotions and their memory so they will not aggravate the damage already done and to ready themselves for continuing the war.”<sup>53</sup> There is little to disagree with in this conclusion. The purpose here is to use Cannae as a base from which other examples from the sources can be compared. In this sense it is clear that just as the reaction after Cannae (*terror ac tumultus*) was not unique, the response after Cannae was common and even expected in Rome.<sup>54</sup>

### 3.2.4 *The Civil Response*

In Livy’s aftermath narrative of Cannae, the former dictator Quintus Fabius Maximus Cunctator saved Rome from the panic of the people and the hesitancy of the senate. Fabius recognized the danger of rumor and chaos in the city, and suggested that the Romans needed to gain better intelligence. To this end, he suggested sending out horsemen to gather information from whatever sources they could.<sup>55</sup> The collection of useful intelligence was an important part of after-battle actions. It was necessary to know

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<sup>52</sup> (1997): 99.

<sup>53</sup> (1997): 107.

<sup>54</sup> It may well be that Cannae is the ultimate source for the Roman responses to defeat, but that is an argument to be developed elsewhere.

<sup>55</sup> Livy 22.55.4: ... *censuit equites expeditos et Appia et Latina via mittendos, qui obvios percunctando* ... “... [he] urged that light-armed horseman be sent out along the via Appia and via Latina and that they should question those they meet ...”

not only the state of the Roman army, but also the location and plans of the enemy army. In order to achieve this, the magistrates would send scouts out of Rome to gather intelligence.<sup>56</sup>

While the younger men in the city went out to gather information, the senators and elders, suggested Fabius, ought “to quell the upheaval and trepidation” in the city itself.<sup>57</sup> They ought to compel all Roman matrons to return to their homes and await official news from the senate. A limit should be placed on lamentation, and silence should be procured throughout the city. Finally, guards should be placed at the city gates – not to protect the city from invading forces – but to stop anyone from leaving.<sup>58</sup> As Fabius suggested, the senate needed to make the people believe that the only hope for safety was within the city and its walls.<sup>59</sup> Fabius' motives are simple enough: quelling the panic, and procuring silence throughout the city would allow the senate to deliberate in peace. It would also restore the faith of the Roman people in their government. Evidently, Fabius had learned from the reaction (and lack of response) after Trasimene. By keeping

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<sup>56</sup> Livy 4.46.9: *Iussuque eiusdem per minores magistratus sedato in urbe tumultu speculatores prope missi nuntiavere Tusculi duces exercitumque esse, hostem castra loco non movisse*, “And after the lesser magistrates, by his order, had calmed the panic in the city, the scouts who had been quickly sent out reported that the generals and the army were at Tusculum, and that the enemy had not moved from their camp.”

<sup>57</sup> Livy 22.55.6: ... *ut tumultum ac trepidationem in urbe tollant*.

<sup>58</sup> Livy 22.55.6-8: *illud per patres ipsos agendum, quoniam magistratum parum sit, ut tumultum ac trepidationem in urbe tollant, matronas publico arceant continerique intra suum quamque limen cogant, comploratus familiarum coerceant, silentium per urbem faciant, nuntios rerum omnium ad praetores deducendos curent – suae quisque fortunae domi auctorem expectent – custodesque praeterea ad portas ponant qui prohibeant quemquam egredi urbe ...*, “there was another task for the fathers to do, since there were not enough magistrates, that they should quell the panic and trepidation in the city, that they should keep the women out of public places, that they compel each of them to remain within their own home; limit the mourning of families, [and] render silence throughout the city, they should order that those bearing news of anything be brought to the praetors – everyone should await the announcement of their fortune in their own homes – and furthermore, they should place guards at the gates who should prohibit anyone from leaving the city.”

<sup>59</sup> Livy 22.55.8: ... *cogantque homines nullam nisi urbe ac moenibus salvis salutem sperare*, “and urge the men that there was no hope of safety unless the city and its walls remained intact.”



the women (and probably men) off of the streets and away from the city gates, the senate and magistrates could control the flow of information and avoid the spread of exaggerated rumor.

Although Livy never uses the term in this section, Fabius has effectively suggested the ordering of an *iustitium* – a suspension of business that included the closing of all the shops and public buildings in the city. The senate or a dictator could implement an *iustitium*,<sup>60</sup> and there was no set length for its duration. Livy twice refers to specific lengths of time. On one occasion the suspension of business lasted four days, on another, eighteen days. In both cases the suspension was lifted after it was clear that the enemy threat had been defeated.<sup>61</sup> When referring to the humiliation at the Caudine Forks, where the Roman army surrendered to the Samnites in 321 B.C.E., Appian says that the *iustitium* lasted until the disaster was avenged.<sup>62</sup> Whatever the duration, the point of the *iustitium* was to calm the immediate sense of panic, and place all Romans in a similar set of circumstances. All were confined to their homes, so that all would share, at least physically, in the sense that something terrible had happened. Of course, those who actually lost loved ones in the war would feel the loss at an emotional level as well. Once this sense of community was achieved, the shops could be opened again.

Livy, for his part, did not use the term *iustitium* all that often. It appears seventeen times in the first decade, only once in the third decade, and not at all in the fifteen remaining books that survive. Livy seems to have preferred to describe how the city was

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<sup>60</sup> Senate, Livy 10.21.3; Dictator, Livy 3.27.2 and see Ogilvie 1965 (397).

<sup>61</sup> Four days, Livy 3.3.8; Eighteen days, Livy 10.21.6.

<sup>62</sup> App. (*Sam.*) 3.4.7: ... ἕως τὴν συμφορὰν ἀνέλαιβον, "... until the disaster was retrieved." See also Oakley (1997): 9 for further discussion regarding the length of time an *iustitium* would last.

made quiet, or to use another phrase to indicate that an *iustitium* was in force. For example, shortly after the disaster at Cannae on 2 August 216 B.C.E., another Roman army was destroyed in northern Italy.<sup>63</sup> The Gauls set up an ambush in a forest somewhere near modern Modena, and killed the consul designate, Lucius Albinus Postumius, and most of the 25,000 Romans and allies of his army.<sup>64</sup> According to Livy,

when this disaster was announced, the state was for many days in such great fear that shops throughout the city were closed just as if it were deserted at night-time, so that the senate gave the aediles the job of going around the city and ordering that the shops be opened and that the appearance of public mourning be set aside.<sup>65</sup>

In this case, an official *iustitium* had not been announced; nevertheless, the people of Rome had taken it upon themselves to act as if one had been. Livy's reference to the “appearance of public mourning” indicates that the *iustitium* was part of this procedure.

It is also noteworthy that magistrates had to order the people to go back to work and return to their shops and shopping in the Forum. This indicates that an *iustitium* did not necessarily always follow a defeat. Indeed, the purpose of the *iustitium* was to clear the forum and limit the dangerous spread of exaggerated rumors. It also ensured that whatever their personal emotion (whether grieving the loss of a loved one, or rejoicing their safe return) all Romans remained in the same frame of mind. The implementation of such actions as the *iustitium* helped procure a sense of community. In this case, since all the Romans voluntarily took on the aspect of public mourning there was no need to create

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<sup>63</sup> The precise chronology is uncertain, but Polybius 3.118 says that it was μετ' ὀλίγας ἡμέρας, “after a few days.”

<sup>64</sup> Livy 23.24.6-13 records the details of the ambush. See also Frontinus 1.4.4 and Polybius 3.118.

<sup>65</sup> Livy 23.25.1-2: *Hac nuntiata clade cum per dies multos in tanto pavore fuisset civitas ut tabernis clausis velut nocturna solitudine per urbem acta senatus aedilibus negotium dare ut urbem circumirent aperirique tabernas et maestitiae publicae speciem urbi demi iuberent.*

an artificial mood. As Wesch-Klein notes in her work on the *funus publicum*, one purpose of the *iustitium* was to ensure that the population all felt a similar sentiment.<sup>66</sup> Indeed, this manufactured but common ideology served as the purpose behind Cicero's proposal in the Fifth Philippic (discussed above). Along with proposing that a *tumultus* (in the state of war sense) be proposed, Cicero also proposed an *iustitium*, the donning of military cloaks, and an extraordinary levy. The reason for all these actions was to create a united front against Antony – the cloaks handled the outward appearance, and the close of business in the forum would present a further visual appearance of unity, as well as limit any potential outbreak of panic.<sup>67</sup>

### 3.2.5 *The Military Response*

While the senate mandated most actions in the immediate aftermath of the disaster at Cannae, it did eventually elect a dictator.<sup>68</sup> In Livy's first decade the appointment of a dictator was the regular response to a military threat or defeat.<sup>69</sup> It is interesting that in the initial stages of the Second Punic War the Romans never named a dictator until after the defeat at Lake Trasimene. In his narrative Livy comments that the "citizens had recourse to a remedy, the appointment of a dictator, which was already for a long time

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<sup>66</sup> (1993): 91. She also showed how the Roman imperial family usurped this military action to create a feeling of loss among all Romans at the death of a member of the imperial family.

<sup>67</sup> Manuwald (2007): 665-666's lengthy commentary on these sections is detailed but lacks a thorough analysis of the broader purpose of the *iustitium*.

<sup>68</sup> Livy 22.5.9

<sup>69</sup> Livy 4.17.8; 4.26.12; 4.31.9; 4.46.8; 5.19.1; 7.6.12; 7.9.6; 10.4.1.

neither desired nor used.”<sup>70</sup> The loss of Livy’s second decade, books eleven through twenty, hinders our understanding about why the dictatorship went out of use.

Furthermore, its use during the Second Punic War was unparalleled. After the defeat of Hannibal, the dictatorship was never used again in its traditional form. When it was revived, Roman politicians found new uses for it. Sulla and Caesar used the office to reassert authority in the city of Rome. Although their dictatorships were not assumed in response to a military defeat, they were responses to civilian upheaval. In this one sense the purpose of the dictatorship remained the same. The dictatorship was as much about command of the army as it was about aligning the entire population of Rome behind a single leader and therefore a single policy. The legal position of the dictator left him all-powerful and ensured that Rome, in an emergency, responded with a single voice.<sup>71</sup>

While it cannot be said that the appointment of a dictator was a necessary or even usual step in the process by which Romans dealt with defeats, it is true that they needed strong centralized leadership. In the aftermath of the defeats at Lake Trasimene and Cannae, the senate’s leadership failed and a dictator proved necessary. Evidently, by the end of the Second Punic War, the senate had an increased sense of authority or *auctoritas* that enabled it to provide the centralized leadership necessary for the expanding empire.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Livy 22.8.5: *Itaque ad remedium iam diu neque desideratum nec adhibitum, dictatorem dicendum, civitas confugit*. For a discussion on the dictatorship see Ogilvie (1965): 281-2.

<sup>71</sup> On this point note the disaster that occurs when the dictator’s authority is challenged - in particular when Fabius Maximus’ *magister equitum* is named co-dictator and then leads his army into defeat. More on this event, especially with respect to how the Romans handled military defeats in purely tactical terms on the battlefield, is a task for future analysis.

<sup>72</sup> For more on the political structures in the aftermath of the Second Punic War see Astin (1989): 163-196. But it is worth noting that the senate’s authority was often challenged during the second century B.C.E.

This may explain why, after the Second Punic War, the dictatorship again fell out of use for more than a century.

Whoever was in charge, the immediate military need (after the collection of intelligence discussed above) concerned the revitalization of the military. After Cannae, an extraordinary levy was held. Young men, even under the age of seventeen, were enlisted. When this was not enough to fill the need, the senate bought 8,000 slaves who were willing to serve.<sup>73</sup> These raw recruits received weapons and armor, and when supplies ran low the Romans “took down from the temples and porticoes the ancient spoils of their enemies.”<sup>74</sup> Such recycling of old weapons is another example of just how dire a situation the Roman faced. Livy also noted that the recruitment of slaves was novel.<sup>75</sup> While it is true that slaves had never before been used – and their use on this occasion was heavily debated – the concept of doing whatever was necessary to defend the state allowed for this *res nova*.

In his commentary on Books Six through Ten of Livy, Oakley lists numerous occasions where extraordinary levies took place.<sup>76</sup> He also describes the enlistment of all available Roman troops in the aftermath of disaster as a standard motif found throughout Livy.<sup>77</sup> As it is, there is nothing particularly surprising about how Rome responded to military disaster by calling up all available reserves. Dionysius of Halicarnassus and

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<sup>73</sup> Livy 22.57.9-12.

<sup>74</sup> Livy 22.57.10: ... *vetera spolia hostium detrahunt templis porticibusque*.

<sup>75</sup> Livy 22.57.11: *Et formam novi dilectus inopia liberorum capitum ac necessitas dedit*, “And the scarcity of freemen and the need gave it the form of an unheard of levy”.

<sup>76</sup> See Oakley (1998): 127 for the various citations.

<sup>77</sup> (1997): 84.

Appian also include references to the extraordinary enlistment.<sup>78</sup> In a case similar to the aftermath of Cannae, Velleius Paterculus described Augustus' response to the Pannonian revolt from 6 C.E. On that occasion, Augustus recalled all the veterans to service, and all Romans from a certain census level had to present the *princeps* with freedmen to serve as soldiers.<sup>79</sup> Perhaps the best known emergency levy occurred in the aftermath of Roman defeats in northern Italy / southern Gaul, especially the one at Arausio in 105 B.C.E. Although it first occurred in the years immediately preceding this defeat, such losses, and a tradition in which all available manpower was levied when disasters struck, may help explain Marius' decision to enroll the *capite censi* – those poor Romans who had otherwise been restricted from service in the army.<sup>80</sup> In this sense the extraordinary levy was less about recruiting soldiers to fight as it was about engaging as many citizens, or inhabitants, of Rome in a common cause. Just like the implementation of an *iustitium* or the declaration of a *tumultus*, the extraordinary levy acted as a way to create a community, a sense of which proved vital to Roman survival.

### 3.2.6 Religious Response

In his aftermath narrative of Cannae, Livy also described the various religious actions taken by the Romans. One of these was the limitation of mourning to only thirty

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<sup>78</sup> Dion. Hal. 5.17.1-6; 7.37.4; App. *Hann.* 27.

<sup>79</sup> Vell. Pat. 2.111.1. As we shall see below, Augustus' next attempt at such a levy fails miserably.

<sup>80</sup> Various interpretations of Marius' decision have been offered. For recent and brief reviews of the changes to the republican army during the late second century B.C.E. see Cagniat (2007) and Serrati (2007): 494-7.

days.<sup>81</sup> Traditionally, Roman law and custom limited the amount of time allowed to mourn: female mourners had up to a year (and at the very least ten months).<sup>82</sup> In the aftermath of Cannae, mourning was limited because so many people were affected by the losses sustained at that battle that a festival to Ceres had to be cancelled.<sup>83</sup> Valerius Maximus suggested that the limitation would illustrate the resilience of the Romans. Supposedly, their willingness to lay aside mourning to ensure the continuation of religious rites would shame the gods into helping the Romans.<sup>84</sup>

There is another reason for the limitation placed on mourning periods. Private mourning rituals, while publicly displayed, are also intensely private. They are not communal; in fact they set the performer outside of the community. So far we have seen how the response to military defeat reinvigorated or recreated a communal spirit. In this sense, in the aftermath of Cannae, the rituals of public religion superseded the rituals of private mourning. Communal rituals held more importance than private ones. Whatever the reason for its suspension, this limitation of private mourning rituals appears to be unique in Roman history. No other aftermath narrative describes such a specific limitation. Nevertheless, despite its singularity, the limitation does reflect a general

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<sup>81</sup> Livy 22.56.5.

<sup>82</sup> See Hope (2007): 173-180. Another possible purpose of the limitations was that it allowed Roman matrons to remarry earlier. The ten month mourning period was as much about allowing a widow to grieve as it was about ensuring the parentage of any future child. In this case, the considerations of Roman manpower issues (however distant their fruition) may have played a role in the senate's decision. See Hope (2007): 174 and Plut. *Num.* 12.

<sup>83</sup> Livy 22.56.4. Those in mourning were prohibited from performing religious rites.

<sup>84</sup> Val. Max. 1.1.15.

Roman attitude that the world of the gods and the world of men were inseparable and that for the Romans the communal ought to come before the private.<sup>85</sup>

Livy also illustrated the recognition that the gods prevail in all aspects of Roman life when he described the Roman reaction to a moral scandal which struck Rome around the time of Cannae. Two Vestal Virgins (young women assigned the protection of the sacred hearth) and a pontiff were convicted of immorality.<sup>86</sup> Punishment was swift and severe. One of the Vestals killed herself, a relief from the customary punishment suffered by the other, who was buried alive. The pontiff was so severely flogged that he died from his wounds. The Romans could not divorce the immorality of the Vestals and Pontiff from the defeat at Cannae. As Livy noted “In the midst of so many disasters, this sin, as happens, was turned into a portent.”<sup>87</sup> To deal with the wrath of the gods the Romans turned to their two standard means of understanding the will of the gods: the Delphic Oracle and the Sibylline Books. The books ordered an unusual act: human sacrifice. And so, in the Forum Boarium, along the banks of the Tiber, two Gauls and two Greeks (a man and a woman of each) were buried alive. Livy commented that such practices were not typical of the Romans – but to follow the advice of the Sibylline Books certainly was. Scholars have long discussed the purpose of this rare action,<sup>88</sup> but for now it is necessary

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<sup>85</sup> For a general review of Roman religion in the late republican period, see Beard's (1994) contribution to the *CAH* vol. 9: 729-768. A study of Roman attitudes between the communal loyalty and private loyalty would be most welcomed. An interesting example of such divided loyalties can be seen in Livy's description of Hannibal's attendance at a dinner in Capua during the Second Punic War. The host's son planned to assassinate the Carthaginian and prove his families loyalty to Rome. The father intervened and the son agreed not to attack Hannibal because of his loyalty to his father (Livy 23.8-9).

<sup>86</sup> Livy 22.57.2-3. The official crime was *stuprum*, illicit sexual intercourse.

<sup>87</sup> Livy 22.57.4 : *Hoc nefas cum inter tot, ut fit, clades in prodigium versum esset ...*

<sup>88</sup> A considerable amount of scholarship has discussed the importance of the act. For recent treatments see Parker (2004) and Várhelyi (2007).



only to recognize how seriously the Romans took their relationship with the gods and that after a military defeat they turned to propitiate those gods. Towards the end of the year, Quintus Fabius Pictor returned from Delphi with instructions from the god about how to alleviate the sufferings of Rome. The Pythian response neatly surmised the Roman attitude towards the proper relationship with the gods: “If you do such things, Romans, your situation will be better and easier, and your republic will move forward more from your judgment, and there will be victory for the Roman people in war.”<sup>89</sup>

Portents such as those recognized after Cannae had to be dealt with so that the *pax deorum* could be restored.<sup>90</sup> The sources also commonly refer to Romans rushing to temples after a defeat to pray for the safety of the state.<sup>91</sup> The belief that the defeat at Cannae could be explained by divine disapproval was not unique. The demise of Claudius Pulcher had become anecdotal by Livy’s day. As an admiral during the First Punic War, Pulcher became impatient when his sacred chickens (whose appetite illustrated the gods’ approval) refused to eat. Pulcher instead offered the chickens a drink and threw them into the sea. He was then soundly defeated in the ensuing naval battle, relieved of his command and tried at Rome.<sup>92</sup> In another example, Livy had one of Rome’s great heroes, Marcus Furius Camillus, sum up the sentiment in a speech Camillus gave shortly after the Romans expelled the Gauls from Rome in 390 B.C.E. “For consider,” he said, “either the successes or the defeats of these last years; you will

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<sup>89</sup> Livy 23.11.2 : *Si ita faxitis, Romani, vestrae res meliores facilioresque erunt, magisque ex sententia res publica vestra vobis procedet, victoriaque duelli populi Romani erit.* For a discussion of the role of the gods in Roman defeats see Crommelin (1995): 13-16.

<sup>90</sup> For more on the recognition and importance of prodigies see Rosenberger (1998).

<sup>91</sup> Livy 3.5.14; 5.18.9; App. *Hann.* 27; Polyb. 9.6.

<sup>92</sup> See Rosenstein (1990): 184-5 for a complete list of ancient citations.

discover that everything came out prosperous when we followed the gods, and everything came out unfavorably when we spurned them.”<sup>93</sup> Camillus argued that so long as the gods were sufficiently propitiated, Rome could not be conquered. This type of conditional argument might be simplistic and ultimately fallacious, but it also meant that all losses could be atoned for and explained; there was, therefore, never any reason to accept defeat since defeat was only an aberration. While some of the actions taken in the aftermath of Cannae were unique, the sensibility of the Romans performing those actions was typical and conventional. After a defeat, if it was necessary to assuage the gods and the defeat was not accepted, it was then necessary to prepare for the next battle.

### *3.2.7 Summary of the Republican Reaction and Response to Military Defeat*

In the aftermath of defeat, terror and panic spread throughout Rome. During the Republican period a pattern emerged by which the defeat and its accompanying terror and panic were dealt with. The declaration of a state of emergency preceded the implementation of a period of public mourning or an *iustitium* to control the public mood. Meanwhile, emergency levies filled out the ranks of the army. These levies not only required all Roman citizens to prepare for war, but also required the participation of those who were generally ineligible to serve in the army. Assuaging the anger of the gods became a final step in the process. As extraordinary a defeat as Cannae was, Livy's description of the reaction and response of Romans is not unique. While it is difficult, if not impossible, to determine the chronological development of the actions taken by the

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<sup>93</sup> Livy 5.51.5: *Intuemini enim horum deinceps annorum vel secundas res vel adversas; invenientis omnia propera evenisse sequentibus deos, adversa spernentibus.*

Romans, it is clear that by the first century B.C.E. there was a general convention about how to describe the aftermath of defeat. This similarity in the sources' narratives presupposes that their readers not only expected historians to describe aftermath narratives in this way, but also that these aftermath narratives were, for the most part, believable. It follows then, that Romans of the first century B.C.E. would also have *expected* such actions to occur when the state suffered a defeat.

In this sense, it is possible to consider the actions taken in the aftermath of defeat as ritualistic in nature. Jonathan Smith proposed that “ritual represents the creation of a controlled environment where the variables (the accidents) of ordinary life may be displaced precisely because they are felt to be so overwhelmingly present and powerful.”<sup>94</sup> Military defeats, as Clausewitz noted, destroyed a sense of self-confidence and created a vacuum into which fear and panic rushed. The Romans developed civil, martial and religious procedures to fill the void left by defeat; in doing so, they created a controlled environment which displaced feelings of fear and panic and replaced them with a renewed self-confidence and purpose. Since rituals are expected actions in response to a specific environment,<sup>95</sup> if that environment changes, even in the slightest, then the rituals no longer hold value and those participating in them no longer appear to be controlling or maintaining the environment; rather, they appear delusional and out of touch with the needs and desires of the community. This is precisely what happens in the imperial period, where a new way of dealing with military defeats needed to be developed.

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<sup>94</sup> Smith (1987): 106.

<sup>95</sup> Rappaport (1999): 23-68 outlines the basic definitions of ritual.

### *3.3 The Imperial Period*

Evidence for the Roman reaction and response to defeat in the early imperial period is limited for two reasons. First, Rome suffered fewer major defeats than in the republican period. Second, our main literary sources for the period, Tacitus, Suetonius, and Dio Cassius, focus more on the political relationships of Rome's new rulers with the senate and people of Rome than on those military defeats that did occur. There are, nevertheless, enough examples in these sources, and in other sources such as Josephus, to provide a general picture of the reactions and responses of the emperor and the citizens and magistrates of Rome to military losses.

#### *3.3.1 The Clades Variana*

The slaughter of three Roman legions in the Teutoburg Forest in 9 C.E. ranks as one of the most significant military defeats in Roman history. Some 20,000 Romans were killed, or committed suicide, as in the case of their commander, Publius Quinctilius Varus, for whom the disaster is named. Writers and scholars from the ancient world to the present day have commented on the importance of the defeat. The imperial biographer Suetonius, writing roughly a century after the disaster, concluded that it was “almost fatal.”<sup>96</sup> Florus, a contemporary of Suetonius, lamented that the defeat had halted

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<sup>96</sup> *Aug. 23.1 ... Varianam paena exitiabilem ...*

Roman expansion on the banks of the Rhine River.<sup>97</sup> Many modern scholars have presented the defeat in a similar way. The common view is best summed up in the title of Peter Wells' book, *The Battle That Stopped Rome*.<sup>98</sup> Yet a number of scholars have challenged this view. Werner Eck, for example, wrote in his biography of Augustus that in the aftermath of the defeat "it appears that [Augustus] decided to continue his offensive strategy ..."<sup>99</sup> While the debate about the effect the defeat had on Roman foreign policy will no doubt continue, our present aim is to abandon the debate about the extent of the Roman frontier and consider the reactions and responses to the defeat in the city of Rome.

Unlike in the aftermath narratives of republican defeats, our sources provide no specific evidence for the reaction of the civilian population in Rome; the entire episode, in all our sources, centers around the reaction and response of the emperor Augustus. Dio Cassius noted that when Augustus first learned about the defeat of Varus he was overcome by "great grief."<sup>100</sup> Apparently the emperor was so distraught that according to some reports he tore his clothing (an act which had become an extravagant, but not

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<sup>97</sup> 2.30: *Hac clade factum, ut imperium, quod in litore Oceani non steterat, in ripa Rheni fluminis staret*, "The result of this disaster was that the empire, which had not stopped on the shores of the Ocean, would be stopped on the banks of the Rhine River."

<sup>98</sup> While Wells' book, published by Norton in 2003, is a popular narrative account of the *clades Variana*, it is useful and does include a reasonably full bibliography of works (in multiple languages) devoted to the disaster. For discussion of the common opinion see Gruen (1996): 185. For the battlefield at Kalkrise, see Harnecker (2004).

<sup>99</sup> (2003). See also Kienast (1999): 373 - 377; Böckmann (2007); Timpe (1970); Oldfather (1915) and Gruen (1996) for further discussion about the effect the defeat had on Roman foreign policy.

<sup>100</sup> 56.23.1: τότε δὲ μαθὼν ὁ Αὐγουστος τὰ τῶν Οὐάρῳ συμβεβηκότα τὴν τε ἐσθῆτα, ὡς τινὲς φασί, περιερρήξατο, καὶ πένθος μέγα ἐπὶ τε τοῖς ἀπολωλόσι καὶ ἐπὶ τῶν περὶ τε τῶν Γερμανιῶν καὶ περὶ τῶν Γαλατιῶν δεῖν ἐποιήσατο, τό τε μέγιστον ὅτι καὶ ἐπὶ τὴν Ἰταλίαν τὴν τε Ῥώμην αὐτὴν ὀρμήσειν σφᾶς προσεδόκησε, "Augustus, when he learned of the disaster to Varus tore his clothes, as some say, and displayed great grief both on account of those who had been killed and on account of his fear for the German and Gallic provinces, and in particular because he expected [the enemy] to march toward Italy and Rome itself, ..."

completely uncommon visual display of grief in Roman culture of the late republic).<sup>101</sup>

Dio also reported that while Augustus grieved for those soldiers who had been lost in the defeat, he was also struck by fear for the safety of the German and Gallic provinces and even of Italy and Rome itself. Augustus' initial reaction to the defeat is therefore similar to the reaction of Romans in general during the republican period.

In his *Metus Temporum*, Knepe considered it “peculiar” that “only Augustus felt fear, and not the entire population of Rome, as was usually the case.”<sup>102</sup> He went on to suggest that Dio Cassius reflected an early third century C.E. bias which saw such disasters as being the emperor's responsibility alone. While it is possible that the civilian population of Rome did react, as was typical, with fear and panic, *and* that the sources, focusing on Augustus, chose not to describe this reaction, it is also possible that the civilian population of Rome no longer reacted in the same way they had in the aftermath narratives of the republican period. If the latter conclusion is correct, then the so-called third century bias, in which the emperor held responsibility for foreign policy matters, had already started to develop by the end of Augustus' reign. Indeed, it is worth noting that neither Suetonius, who wrote a little more than a century after the defeat, nor Velleius Paterculus, who wrote only two decades after the defeat, made any specific mention of the reaction of the populace.<sup>103</sup> This does not mean that Roman civilians

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<sup>101</sup> See Levy (1947) for a brief history of tearing clothing at Rome.

<sup>102</sup> (1994): 74.

<sup>103</sup> Suetonius, in his biography of Tiberius (17.1) wrote that *Triumphum ipse distulit maesta civitate clade Variana*, “[Tiberius], with the state mourning the Varian disaster, put off his Triumph.” This does not necessarily mean that the people were mourning; as noted above, such a situation was decreed by the authorities in an effort to restore order and create a common sentiment among the people. Note that Velleius did not fail to mention the “trepidation of the senate, the confusion of the people, [or] the fears of the city” that accompanied Augustus' death (2.124.1: ... *quae senatus trepidatio, quae populi confusio, quis urbis metus*, ... ) Unlike military defeats on faraway borders, the death of the emperor was a concern for

displayed complete complacency about the defeat. It is, nevertheless important to the history of this episode and to the history of the Roman imperial period that the civilian population of Rome evidently did not react to the news of the defeat in the same way as it had in previous generations.<sup>104</sup> So while the populace no longer reacted in the same way as they did in the republican period, Augustus certainly did.

Both Dio Cassius and Suetonius describe the emperor's actions taken in response to the defeat. Suetonius relates that Augustus “ordered a guard throughout the city, lest any outbreak of panic (*tumultus*) should arise.”<sup>105</sup> To further security, Dio Cassius notes that Augustus also expelled any Gauls or Germans living in the city.<sup>106</sup> Furthermore, Dio reports that in Rome “none of the usual business was carried out, nor were the public festivals celebrated.”<sup>107</sup> The posting of guards, the expulsion of Gauls and Germans and

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many Romans, because everyone feared a return of civil war. Similarly, the revolt of the Pannonian and Dalmatian legions in 14 CE after the death of Augustus produced, according to Tacitus (*Ann.* 1.46.1), *trepida civitas*. But it was not the fear of foreign defeat or war that produced this angst, rather it was the fear of another civil war, a fate which rightly terrified Romans, but an emotion that is very different from the loss of an army. Kneppe (1994): 76 appears to count these two very different types of fear as being the same.

<sup>104</sup> Note Rüger (1996): 517: “If, in Caesar's case, fear of the adversary was still a factor, it soon ceased to be. Even the catastrophic defeat in the Teutoburg Forest (A.D. 9) did not re-awaken the old Cimbric terror of the Germans.” The distance at which the defeat took place admittedly would have played a role here, but even that has limits. Note that after the uprising in Pannonia in 6 CE Augustus evidently informed the senate that unless something was done the enemy could be at the gates of Rome within ten days (*Vell. Pat.* 2.11.1). It is worth noting that it is Augustus who is rousing the senate and people to action. Even before the *clades Variana* then, foreign policy was for the emperor. According to Dio Cassius (55.31.4) the fear of the people during the Pannonian revolt was as much about the onset of famine than on the military defeats occurring in the north.

<sup>105</sup> Suet. *Aug.* 23.1: ... *excubias per urbem indixit, ne quis tumultus existeret.*

<sup>106</sup> 56.23.4: ἐπειδὴ τε συχνοὶ ἐν τῇ Ῥώμῃ καὶ Γαλάται καὶ Κελτοί, οἱ μὲν ἄλλως ἐπιδημοῦντες οἱ δὲ καὶ ἐν τῷ δορυφορικῷ στρατευόμενοι, ἦσαν, ἐφοβήθη μὴ τι νεοχμῶσσωσι, καὶ τούτους μὲν ἐς νήσους τινὰς ἀπέστειλε, τοῖς δ' ἀόπλοις ἐκχωπήσαι τῆς πόλεως προσέταξε, “And since there were a large number of Gauls and Celts in Rome, some were living there, others were serving in the praetorian guard, he was afraid that they would start a revolution, and so sent them to certain islands, and he ordered those who were unarmed to depart the city.”

<sup>107</sup> 56.24.1: ... καὶ οὐτ' ἄλλο τι τῶν νομιζομένων ἐγένετο οὔθ' αἱ πανηγύρεις ἐωρτάσθησαν·

the suspension of public business ensured quiet streets and limited the chance of panic, revolt, or riot from spreading throughout the city. Although none of our sources specifically use the term, Augustus effectively issued an *iustitium*, the implementation of which had been performed during the republican period to quell panic. In this case however, there was no evidence of panic occurring; Augustus, in fact, preemptively ordered the *iustitium*.<sup>108</sup> Nevertheless, the emperor followed the procedure developed during the Republican period to deal with military disasters.<sup>109</sup> As noted above, extraordinary levies were frequently called in times of public disaster.

The emperor also considered the recruitment of military reinforcements. But as Dio Cassius notes, Augustus had trouble with this recruitment. Apparently there were no Roman citizens of military age left who could be called upon to serve. When no one could be found to volunteer for service, the emperor resorted to a type of lottery. When the drawing of lots (which was augmented by the threat of financial retribution and disenfranchisement) failed, Augustus apparently resorted to executing some of those who refused to enroll. In the end Augustus conscripted veterans (who had already completed their military service) and freedmen as reinforcements.<sup>110</sup> Military conscription

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<sup>108</sup> Knepe (1994): 74-5 suggests that Augustus' measures may actually have been responsible for limiting the panic in the city. While this is possible, it rests on the assumption that the civilian population in Rome would have panicked when they heard the news of the defeat; an assumption for which we have no solid evidence.

<sup>109</sup> There are less details for the aftermath of the Pannonian rebellion in 6 CE, but it is possible that Augustus reacted in the same way. According to Dio Cassius (55.31.2), in dealing with that defeat, the emperor postponed a traditional review of the knights. This review, which took place on 15 July, was likely revived by Augustus; for which see Scullard (1981): 164-5.

<sup>110</sup> 56.23.2-3: ... καὶ ἐπειδὴ μηδεὶς τῶν τὴν στρατεύσιμον ἡλικίαν ἔχόντων καταλεχθῆναι ἠθέλησεν, ἐκλήρωσεν αὐτούς, καὶ τῶν μὲν μηδέπω πέντε καὶ τριάκοντα ἔτη γεγονότων τὸν πέμπτον, τῶν δὲ πρεσβυτέρων τὸν δέκατον αἰεὶ λαχόντα τὴν τε οὐσίαν ἀφείλετο καὶ ἠτίμωσε. καὶ τέλος, ὡς καὶ πάνυ πολλοὶ οὐδ' οὕτω τι αὐτοῦ προετίμων, ἀπέκτεινέ τινας. ἀποκληρώσας δὲ ἔκ τε τῶν ἐστρατευμένων ἤδη καὶ ἐκ τῶν ἐξελευθέρων ὅσους ἠδυνήθη, κατέλεξε, καὶ εὐθύς σπουδῆ μετὰ τοῦ Τιβερίου εἰς τὴν Γερμανίαν ἔπεμψεν, "... and when no one of military age was willing to be



succeeded after Cannae – some Romans (those who had surrendered at Cannae) even begged to be allowed to rejoin the fighting. All, or at least most, recognized the threat to Rome and the need to fight. Augustus, on the other hand, had a difficult time raising troops in the aftermath of the *clades Variana*, when he had to threaten men, and apparently even kill some, to convince them to join. If the purpose of the extraordinary levy was as much about creating a sense of community as it was about dealing with a military reality, than Augustus failed. The citizens of Rome were not pleased to be called upon to serve and Augustus was forced to recall veterans and enroll freedmen. Once again, foreign policy and military losses were the responsibility of the emperor, not of Romans.

Finally Augustus considered the role of the gods in the catastrophe. Dio suggests that the emperor had determined that the *clades Variana* was the result of some sort of divine wrath; a conclusion justified by the emergence of various portents occurring both before and after the defeat.<sup>111</sup> Dio's account of what precisely the emperor did to appease the gods is lost.<sup>112</sup> According to Suetonius, meanwhile, the emperor ordered games in honor of Jupiter Optimus Maximus on the condition that the state recovered from the

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enrolled, he appointed them by lot, and by lot he disenfranchised and took away the property of a fifth of those men not yet thirty five years old, and a tenth of those men older than that. Finally, as a great many still did not listen to him, he killed some of them. Choosing by lot as many as he could from those who already completed their military service and from those freedmen, he enrolled them, and immediately sent them with Tiberius to Germany.”

<sup>111</sup> 56.24.2: τό τε γὰρ πάθος οὐκ ἄνευ δαιμονίου τινὸς ὀργῆς καὶ μέγα οὕτω καὶ ἀθρόον ἐδόκει οἱ γεγονέναι, “For so great and sudden a disaster could not have happened without the wrath of some divinity.” Dio recounts a number of omens which disturbed Augustus. These include: a temple of Mars being struck by lightning, a plague of locusts which were eaten up by birds, the collapse of the Alpine peaks followed by columns of fire, fiery skies and the appearance of comets, bee infestations in the camps, the turning of a statue of victory so that it faced Rome rather than Germany, panicked battle for the eagles in a camp which the soldiers thought had been attacked.

<sup>112</sup> The text tantalizingly breaks off in mid-sentence: Τούτων τε οὖν ἕνεκα καὶ ὅτι καὶ ..., “And so, because of these things and also because ... “

terrible defeat.<sup>113</sup> In his work on prodigies in the Roman Republic, Rosenberger concluded that during the republican period, prodigies indicated the condition of the entire state; increasingly during the late Republic individuals began to use such prodigies for purely political reasons. Finally, during the imperial period prodigies most often refer to the emperor and not the state.<sup>114</sup> Although Rosenberger nowhere discusses the various prodigies which preceded or followed the *clades Variana* his conclusion that during the imperial period prodigies came to be associated solely with the emperor suits the argument that military defeat was now the sole responsibility of the emperor.<sup>115</sup>

The emperor, then, responded to the *clades Variana*, in the exact same way his republican predecessors would have. After great republican era defeats, such as Cannae, there was in Rome an environment of fear and panic which was a pre-requisite for the various measures implemented in response to the defeat. But after the *clades Variana* the pre-requisite environment, panic and fear among the populace, did not exist on any significant level except in the mind of the emperor. There is no better evidence of this fact than the juxtaposition of two vivid narrative descriptions: the one from Livy depicting the senate and Roman people crowding the Forum (the public space) in Rome and loudly lamenting as a community the defeat at Cannae; the other, the image presented by Suetonius of an aged emperor wandering alone the halls of his palace (high above the public space of the Roman Forum) and for months after the defeat, with

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<sup>113</sup> *Aug. 23.2: Vovit et magnos ludos Iovi Optimo Maximo, si res p. in meliorem statum vertisset.* “He also vowed great games to Jupiter Optimus Maximus, if the Republic might be turned towards a better condition.”

<sup>114</sup> (1998): 233-240.

<sup>115</sup> This conclusion may hinder Rosenberger's argument that Corbeill, in his 1998 BMCR review, described as “convincingly demonstrat[ing] how Rome's first emperor successfully harnessed prodigies for his own purposes.”

unkempt hair and beard, slamming his head against some random door, and crying out, “Quintilius Varus, give back the legions.”<sup>116</sup>

Over a century ago Shuckburgh suggested that “Perhaps [Suetonius' story] is the picturesque imagination of anecdote mongers. Though alarmed for the possible consequences both at home and in the provinces, [Augustus] acted with spirit and energy.”<sup>117</sup> Indeed both Dio Cassius and Suetonius introduce their most ignominious depictions of the emperor with qualifiers such as “they say” or “as some say.”<sup>118</sup> We might add now that the emperor also followed republican tradition. Regardless of whether or not Augustus actually reacted with such theatrics, the description of the defeated emperor remained popular. For those emperors who followed Augustus, a new way of dealing with defeats had to be developed.

### 3.3.2 Post Augustan Reactions and Responses to Defeat

If the tarnished image of Augustus was the most visible and memorable result of the *clades Variana*, then perhaps the most far-reaching (beyond any aspects of foreign

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<sup>116</sup> *Adeo denique consternatum ferunt, ut per continuos menses barba capilloque summisso caput interdum foribus illideret, vociferans: Quintili Vare, legiones redde!* “Finally they say that he was so greatly dismayed, that for several months after, not cutting his beard and hair, he would from time to time smash his head against a door shouting ‘Quintilius Varus, give back the legions!’” Modern translators almost always add the personal and possessive pronouns: thus, Gruen (1996): 185: “Varus, give me back my legions!” or in German Böckmann (2007): 100: “Varus, Varus! Gib mir meine Legionen weider!”; and Crommelin (1995): 1: “Quintilius Varus, gib mir meine Legionen wieder!” While Latin commonly leaves out such “small words” it may be worth exploring whether or not the fact that they were missing indicates something more: If the quotation is correct, that is, if Augustus said only *legiones redde*, it may reflect an understanding that the Roman legions still belonged to the community, that they were not yet his. That the legions belonged to Augustus, that they were his responsibility, is reflected in our modern translations, but not necessarily in the Latin. Augustus may not have assumed that they were his legions.

<sup>117</sup> (1903): 188. Gruen (1996): 185 offers a similar argument.

<sup>118</sup> Suet. *Aug.* 23.1 ... *ferunt* ...; Dio Cass. 56.23.1: ... ὡς τινές φασι ...

policy) was the need of Rome's future emperor's to negotiate a new way of dealing with defeats. For the emperors who followed Augustus could no longer respond to the defeats in the same way that their republican ancestors had made traditional.

For example, the reaction of Tiberius to losses sustained in the revolt in Gaul led by Sacrovir in 21 C.E. differed significantly from that of Augustus.<sup>119</sup> When news of the revolt first reached Rome, rumors that Gaul and Germany were in alliance and that Spain was very close to revolting as well inflated the seriousness of the danger. Tacitus noted that all “good men” genuinely concerned themselves for the safety of the state. This might be seen as a very traditional republican reaction, when Romans reacted and responded to defeats as a community. But, ever attuned to political intricacies, Tacitus also reported that many men were excited for the pending revolution and the chance to embarrass and taunt the emperor. It is clear that the community of Romans that responded to defeat as a group no longer existed. If the revolt was as serious as rumored, then in the republican manner, or in the manner of Augustus, Tiberius should have shut down the city with an *iustitium*, organized an emergency levy of troops, and assuaged the anger of the gods. Rather, the unaffected Tiberius ignored the pleas and rumors in Rome. In fact, if we are to believe Tacitus, the emperor even more “zealously put on a feeling of unconcern.” He allowed his commanders and his army in the field to respond. His only

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<sup>119</sup> Tac. Ann. 3.44: *Optumus quisque rei publicae cura maerebat: multi odio praesentium et cupidine mutationis suis quoque periculis laetabantur increpabantque Tiberium quod in tanto rerum motu libellis accusatorum insumeret operam. ... Tanto impensius in securitatem compositus, neque loco neque vultu mutato, sed ut solitum per illos dies egit, altitudine animi, an compererat modica esse et vulgatis leviora,* “ All the best men mourned with their concern for the state: many, with hatred of the present (situation) and with a desire for change were delighted even by the dangers to themselves and mocked Tiberius because, in such great disturbance of affairs, he was applying his effort to the documents of accusers. ... He all the more zealously put on a feeling of unconcern, and changed neither his location nor his expressions, but went through those days as normal, with the loftiness of his spirit, or because he knew that it was a moderate affair and lighter than reported.”

message to the senate came at the termination of the whole affair when he announced simultaneously the outbreak of the revolt and its conclusion.

In another example, this time after the Frisians killed some 1,300 Roman soldiers, we are told that Tiberius hid the damage, because he did not want to give any commander the opportunity to gain glory in the war.<sup>120</sup> While this does suggest that there was an expectation that the Roman emperor seek revenge for military defeats, the important point is that it was Tiberius' choice to hide the loss and his choice to seek revenge. In any case, on this occasion the senate, so concerned with their own intrigues, barely made a fuss. War was the emperor's responsibility.

The historian Josephus described the emperor Nero as privately alarmed and frightened when he heard about the Jewish revolt in 66 C.E.<sup>121</sup> Nevertheless, in public Nero "was arrogant and very angry." Evidently, according to Josephus, Nero believed that since he was responsible for the empire, he should regard haughtily such misfortunes and that he should appear to have a soul above all dangers. Like Tiberius, Nero recognized that war was his responsibility.

Military losses during the empire did not affect the situation in Rome unless and until the emperor recognized their impact. Military losses were, and had always been, a source of embarrassment. The emperors who followed Augustus therefore did their best

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<sup>120</sup> Tac. *Ann.* 4.74: *Clarum inde inter Germanos Frisium nomen, dissimulante Tiberio damna ne cui bellum permitteret*, "Thereafter the name of the Frisians was famous among the Germans, with Tiberius disguising the losses so that he would not have to entrust anyone with the war."

<sup>121</sup> Jos. *BJ* 3.1.1-3: [1] Νέρωνι δ' ὡς ἡγγέλη τὰ κατὰ τὴν Ἰουδαίαν πταίσματα, λεληθυῖα μὲν ὡς εἰκὸς ἔκπληξις ἐμπίπτει καὶ δέος, φανερώς δ' ὑπερηφάνει καὶ προσωρηίζετο, [2] ... πρέπειν δ' ἡγούμενος ἑαυτῷ διὰ τὸν ὄγκον τῆς ἡγεμονίας κατασοβαρεύεσθαι τῶν σκυθρωπῶν καὶ δοκεῖν δεινοῦ παντὸς ἐπάνω τὴν ψυχὴν ἔχειν, "When the news of the defeat in Judaea was announced, secret consternation and fear, as was natural, fell upon Nero, but publically, he was arrogant and very angry, ... and on account of the burden of empire he thought that it was suitable for him to regard haughtily such misfortunes and to appear to have a soul above all dangers."

to promote an attitude of unconcern (or outright dissimulation) when it came to military losses – or at least when it came to relating those losses to the citizens of Rome. Unlike in the citizen militia of the Republic, during the empire, such losses could be hidden, especially as fewer and fewer citizens from the city of Rome were enrolled in the army.

In the long term this attitude towards defeat may be linked to the development of the idea that Roman emperors' were invincible. Despite the loss of multiple legions along the banks of the Danube River in the 80s C.E., the poet Martial acclaimed the emperor Domitian *invictus*.<sup>122</sup> Likewise, the senator Pliny, perhaps with a bit more veracity in the year 100 C.E., referred to Trajan as the “invincible emperor.”<sup>123</sup> A decade or so later and Pliny may have had to change his opinion. Eventually, by the late second century, the practice was institutionalized. Roman emperors from Commodus on commonly took as one of their cognomina the title *Invictus*.<sup>124</sup> Evidently *Imperator*, *Caesar* and *Augustus* no longer sufficed. In the end, it is little surprise that the emperors of Rome had to negotiate a new way of dealing with defeat. The safety and security of the state were their responsibility.

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<sup>122</sup> Martial 7.6.7-8: *Rursus, io, magnos clamat tibi Roma triumphos, / invictusque tua, Caesar, in urbe sonas*, “Hooray, Rome again applauds your great triumphs and, Caesar, (the title) Invincible is heard within your city.”

<sup>123</sup> Plin. *Pan.* 8.2: *Allata erat ex Pannonia laurea, id agentibus diis, ut invicti imperatoris exortum victoriae insigne decoraret*, “Laurels were brought from Pannonia at the urging of the gods, as the symbol of victory which would glorify the emergence of an invincible emperor.”

<sup>124</sup> *ILS* 440: *Imp. Caes. L. Aelio Aurelio Commodo ... Felici Invicto Romano Herculi ...* For the use of the titles *Victor* and *Invictus* by Romans, see Weinstock (1957).

### 3.4 Conclusion

Our written sources for the imperial period include fewer detailed aftermath narratives than those of the republican period. One reason for this may be a reflection of the more peaceful reality of the first two centuries C.E. The *pax Romana* was only threatened on the faraway and barely imaginable frontiers of the empire. But such peace should not be overemphasized. There were still wars, sometimes severe ones; and there were still losses. So another reason for there being fewer aftermath narratives in the imperial period should be considered: perhaps paradoxically, the limited number of detailed aftermath narratives for the imperial period may reflect the same message as seen in those examples that do exist and are discussed above. If the emperor alone was responsible, if military losses were his losses and not Rome's, then it should come as no surprise that notices of such losses appear less frequently in the sources. It may even be that modern historians are unaware of some significant military defeats because our sources did not report them. Now whether the source had a choice in the matter must remain an open question. Could it be by choice that a source, not wanting to embarrass an emperor, neglected to include a military defeat?<sup>125</sup> On the other hand, the possibility that the emperors became so effective at hiding military losses that no news of them ever emerged for a source to even know cannot be ignored. After all, no investigative journalism existed to challenge imperial authority and story. Whether by the choice of the author, or the dissimulation of the emperor, the fewer number of such examples in the

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<sup>125</sup> On this point see Cheung's (1998) article, in which it is concluded that even Tacitus may have fallen victim (or was willingly complicit) in helping emperors hide their losses.

discourse indicates the growing reality that warfare was no longer a major concern of the people in Rome.

This new reality created a sort of feedback loop. The people grew less interested in military affairs because the emperor had taken over complete control of them. As a result, when something unfortunate happened to his soldiers, the people would assume he was responsible. So the emperor hid such losses. The result of this was a growing chasm between civilian-military relations. This gulf is illustrated by a number of sources, not the least of them is Juvenal's *Sixteenth Satire* and Septimius Severus' dying words to his sons: "enrich the army, despise everyone else."<sup>126</sup> Of course, this divide only applies to bad news. Military victory and triumphal processions could send an entirely different message. Thus, when there was no hiding the existence of a war, some emperors chose to celebrate triumphs even if they did not deserve them.<sup>127</sup>

By the end of the republican period a discourse describing Roman reactions and responses to defeat had developed. Terror and panic resulted from a terrible defeat. Roman magistrates, sometimes more quickly than other times, organized a series of measures in response to these paralyzing emotions. These actions were all aimed at recreating a sense of community shattered by defeat. During the republican period, this discourse became pervasive. Augustus, faced with his own significant defeat, attempted to deal with the reality of the Varian disaster according to the precepts of this accepted and expected discourse. So he responded in the exact same way to the defeat in Germany as, for example, Fabius Maximus did after Cannae. But the discourse relating to war and

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<sup>126</sup> Dio Cass. 77.15.2: ὁμονοεῖτε, τοὺς στρατιώτας πλουτίζετε, τῶν ἄλλων πάντων κατφρονεῖτε, "Live in harmony, enrich the soldiers, despise everyone else."

<sup>127</sup> Beard (2007): *passim*, but note the category in her index p. 434: "Triumph-like ceremonies".



the reality are in constant tension and never perfectly match. In this case, the discourse helped determine how Augustus responded; but the reality no longer matched this discourse. Unlike after Cannae, the aftermath of the *clades Variana* did not leave Romans terrified or panicked. Furthermore, a citizen militia no longer protected Rome; the city now had a professional army, responsible to the emperor alone. This new reality meant that the previous discourse, which helped create a sense of community, was no longer necessary. New cultural expectations, ones more accurately reflecting the new reality, needed to be created. In the next chapter, which begins a discussion on the memory and commemoration of defeats, we shall see how this new discourse developed in the imperial period and especially in the material record.

## Chapter Four

### The Memory and Commemoration of Roman War Losses

#### *1. Introduction*

So far this dissertation has considered the treatment of casualties of war both during and immediately following battle (Chapter One), the reactions and responses of Roman soldiers and generals to defeat and casualties of war (Chapter Two), and the initial reactions and responses of Roman civilians and magistrates to the news of military losses (Chapter Three). We now turn to consider how defeats and casualties of war were remembered and commemorated in the longer term, after the immediate chaos had been quelled.

In recent years, historians of ancient Rome have begun to produce a number of works on memory and commemoration in Roman society.<sup>1</sup> The memory of Roman warfare has not been completely ignored, but has suffered from a focus almost solely on the celebration of victory; note, for example, that Welch's and Dillon's recent *The Representations of War in Ancient Rome* includes some ten articles, all of which are

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<sup>1</sup> See, for example, Hölscher (2003), Gowing (2005), Flower (2006), and Carroll (2006).

focused on Roman victory and triumph.<sup>2</sup> Yet the memories associated with defeat and the commemorations of the losses suffered in war can be as important, if not more important, to a society's success. Mattern, for example, has briefly argued that the collective memory of defeat was used as motivation and a justification for wars of revenge.<sup>3</sup> Hope, meanwhile, has considered Roman war memorials but not to the degree explored here, and often with specific reference to monuments of individual soldiers.<sup>4</sup> In a forthcoming article, Cooley argues that Romans generally did not remember the individual war dead; they preferred instead to treat such military defeats as a communal experience, so that death in war was seen as part of the Roman's duty. This conclusion seems to match what we have seen so far. For Romans, death in war was simply a reality of life, and therefore it was not something to be exaggerated.

“The history of memory,” wrote French historian Henry Rousso, is

the study of the evolution of various social practices and, more specifically, of the form and content of social practices whose purpose or effect is the representation of the past and the perpetuation of its memory within a particular group of the society as a whole.<sup>5</sup>

Memory, therefore, is collective in its purpose, but not always in its reality. Social practices, whether they be ceremonies, national histories, or monuments made of stone,

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<sup>2</sup> (2006). Chapter titles include: “The transformation of victory into power”, “Siege warfare in Livy”, “Roman aesthetics and the spoils of Syracuse”, “Domi Militiaequae: Roman domestic aesthetics and war booty in the Republic”, “The origins of the Roman Scaenae Frons and the architecture of triumphal games in the second century BC”, “The bringer of victory: imagery and institutions at the advent of Empire”, “Conquest and desire: Roman Victoria in public and provincial sculpture”, “Women on the columns of Trajan and Marcus and the visual language of Roman victory”, “Battle imagery and politics on the Severan arch in the Roman Forum”, and “Reading in the narrative literature of Roman courage”.

<sup>3</sup> Mattern (2003); on this point in general see also Knepppe (1994) and the Introduction of this dissertation.

<sup>4</sup> See Hope (2003a) and (2003b).

<sup>5</sup> Rousso (1991): 3.

can produce a variety of feelings in various audiences. In short, those elements or entities which produce or help fix a memory, are not static. In a more theoretical sense, Nora has called these elements and entities *lieux de mémoire*, or “realms of memory.”<sup>6</sup> These realms of memory change over time and can have different meanings, but they remain evocative and powerful.

This chapter is organized based on a selection of these realms of memory. A discussion of the Roman battlefields as sites of memory is followed by the consideration of Roman ceremonies in commemoration of their military losses. A section on the Roman calendar is followed by a review of some of Rome's most important war memorials. Finally a discussion of a war memorial far from Rome illustrates that the message of Roman success and failure in war could be very different depending on the location and intended audience of the monument.

#### *4.2 Battlefields*

Romans were accustomed to identifying particular locations with the names of those who had suffered there. So a southern Italian promontory came to be named after Aeneas' unfortunate helmsman Palinurus, and an inlet near Cumae was recognized by the name of Aeneas' trumpeter Misenus. While neither Palinurus nor Misenus died in battle – they both drowned during their sea voyages – there is evidence that a defeated general

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<sup>6</sup> (1996): xvii: Nora's definition, given, one senses, almost under duress, makes every attempt to illustrate the vagueness of the idea: “If the expression *lieu de mémoire* must have an official definition, it should be this: a *lieu de mémoire* is any significant entity, whether material or non-material in nature, which by dint of human will or the work of time has become a symbolic element of the memorial heritage of any community (in this case, the French community).”

could be forever linked with the geographical location of his loss. In 186 B.C.E. the consul Quintus Marcius Philippus led a large army against the Apuani, a tribe from Liguria in northwestern Italy. In the previous year the consul Gaius Flaminius had conquered the Apuani,<sup>7</sup> so Marcius probably expected an easy victory for his troops who were preparing to be deployed to the Spanish provinces. The Apuani had different plans. They lured Marcius' forces into one of the narrow mountain passes common in the region and ambushed them. When the slaughter was over, the Apuani had killed some 4,000 men, and had captured the standards of three Roman legions and eleven allied contingents. Marcius managed to lead his remaining forces out of the trap. Once they were safe, he dispersed the survivors throughout northern Etruria in an effort to hide his losses. His ploy failed, and according to Livy the pass in which he was ambushed became known as the "Marcian Pass."<sup>8</sup> Marcius and his defeat, therefore, were forever memorialized in the Roman geographic consciousness.

In a similar way, though perhaps less surprising, significant military defeats came to be remembered by their geographical location. The noun *Cannae*, for example, could signal nothing but terrible disaster. Indeed Jaeger has noted that in Livy, and presumably for Romans in general, "*Cannae*" often designated a new era in their history.<sup>9</sup> The association of military defeats with a particular geographic location is not something unique to the Romans. The Greeks, to offer another ancient example, had Marathon,

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<sup>7</sup> Livy 39.2.1-11.

<sup>8</sup> Livy 39.20.10: *saltus Marcius*. The location of the battle is unknown, and the pass is not included in the gazetteer of the BAAtlas.

<sup>9</sup> Jaeger (1997): 99 offers a number of examples in a footnote (n. 14): "For *post Cannensem cladem*, see, e.g., [Livy] 23.4.6, 23.30.11, 23.30.19, 23.35.1, 24.18.3, 24.45.2, 26.41.13, 27.1.4, 27.2.2. Cf. *post fugam Cannensem*, 25.6.7; *post Cannensem pugnam*, 26.7.3; and even *ante Cannensem cladem*, 23.5.9."

Thermopylae, and Plataea. More modern battlefields are also sources of distinct memory; Hastings, Waterloo, Verdun, or even Fallujah. Sometimes other geographical entities, such as rivers or lakes were the site of the memory – thus the battle of Lake Trasimene.<sup>10</sup> Thus, the name of a particular battlefield conjures particular powerful and long lasting memories.

Indeed it appears that some ancients believed the battlefields themselves, and not simply their names, could conjure powerful memories and affect the morale of the army. Livy, for example, described how in 380 B.C.E., a decade (by his reckoning) after the Gauls defeated the Romans at the Allia River and sacked the city, a Roman army returned to the same battlefield. The Praenestini, a regular enemy of the Romans at the time, had pitched camp at the Allia River and, according to Livy, boasted that they took a position fatal to the Romans because the land around the Allia was a “memorial to so great a defeat.”<sup>11</sup> The enemy expected that the Romans would have to fight two enemies: the Praenestini themselves and the ghosts of “ruthless Gauls,” whose strange-sounding voices would still fill Roman ears.<sup>12</sup> Livy suggests that the Romans were filled with an altogether different feeling and that the enemy hopes were, in fact, “useless,” or in vain.<sup>13</sup> Rather than depress Roman courage, the “place notorious for the memory of the disaster would inspire [the Romans] to destroy the memory of the disgrace rather than make them

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<sup>10</sup> Livy 22.7.1: *Haec est nobilis ad Trasumennum pugna atque inter paucas memorata populi Romani clades*, “This is the famous battle at Trasimene, and remembered among the few disasters of the Roman people.”

<sup>11</sup> Livy 6.28.6: *monumentum tantae cladis*.

<sup>12</sup> Livy 6.28.6: *Species profecto iis ibi truces Gallorum sonumque vocis in oculis atque auribus fore*, “in that place there would surely be fierce images of the Gauls before their eyes and the sound of their voice in their ears.”

<sup>13</sup> Livy 6.28.7: *Has inanium rerum inanes ipsas volventes cogitationes fortunae loci delegaverant spes suas*, “Reflecting upon these useless thoughts of worthless expectation, they had entrusted their hopes to the fortune of the place.”

afraid that any particular ground was not right for their victory.”<sup>14</sup> According to Livy, rather than being a place of shame, the Romans saw the battlefield as a site where victory could replace defeat.

Whether or not this battle at the Allia ever took place, Livy’s comments about the re-consecration of the battlefield reflected the attitudes of Roman generals in the late republican and early imperial periods. Caesar, for example, chased Pharnaces to Zela, a place once made famous by Mithridates’ (Pharnaces’ father’s) annihilation of a Roman army led by Triarius in 67 B.C.E.<sup>15</sup> While Pompey assumed responsibility (some three years later) for burying those dead soldiers, it was Caesar who forever replaced the memory of Zela as a place of defeat with a memory of it as a place of victory. Evidently, the memory of the defeat at Zela dismayed neither Caesar nor his army. Though Caesar would take all the credit, in truth the entire army came, saw, and conquered. Zela had been transformed into a memory of a great Roman victory.

In a similar way the delayed burials of the Roman war dead at the Teutoburg Forest and near Rhandea in Armenia offered Germanicus and Corbulo the opportunity to contrast their success with previous failure.<sup>16</sup> In the former case, far from making the Roman soldiers “slow to battle and fearful of the enemy,” Germanicus’ detour through the Teutoburg Forest produced the exact opposite reaction. According to Tacitus, while burying the dead, the soldiers were confronted by a mixture of “grief and anger,” but, as

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<sup>14</sup> Livy 6.28.8: *locum insignem memoria cladis inritaturum se potius ad delendam memoriam dedecoris, quam ut timorem faciat, ne qua terra sit nefasta Victoria suae.*

<sup>15</sup> Caes. *Alex.* 71-2.

<sup>16</sup> For more on the burial see Chapter 1.3.

they continued with their solemn task “their anger at the enemy increased.”<sup>17</sup> The soldiers would have every opportunity to sate their anger in the campaigns led by Germanicus into German territory over the next two years. Corbulo, meanwhile, “did not avoid the place, so that his glory would be raised by the dissimilarity of his fortune [to that of Paetus].”<sup>18</sup> Once again, the battlefield on which the Romans had suffered a defeat, the site of a cruel memory, proved to be the staging ground for the replacement of that memory with a victory.

For Romans, returning to a notorious battlefield where they once lost could be an opportunity to wipe out the disgrace of a defeat. There was a particular discourse about war prevalent at Rome that praised the fact that while the Romans had been defeated in many battles, they had never lost a war.<sup>19</sup> The recognition of the battlefield as a place of transformation, rather than a location of fear or reverence corroborates this ideal; as we shall see later, it also helps explain why Romans almost never constructed war memorials for their war dead. In the hyper-competitive atmosphere of the Roman world, the chance to replace the memory of a military defeat with that of a military victory was welcomed opportunity to rise above one's peers. It is even likely that this competition, so common among the elite, also inspired the men asked to fight on battlefields once trod by their comrades. Far from demoralizing Romans, battlefields, when they happened to come upon them again, served as sites of inspiration.

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<sup>17</sup> Tac. *Ann.* 1.62: *aucta in hostem ira, maesti simul et infensi condebant.*

<sup>18</sup> Tac. *Ann.* 15.28.1-3: ... *Corbuloni non vitatus, ut dissimilitudo fortunae gloriam auget.*

<sup>19</sup> Lucilius, 26. 708-9: *ut Romanus populus victus vei, superatus proeliis saepe est multis, bello vero numquam, in quo sunt omnia*, “as the Roman people has been conquered by force, and has often been defeated in many battles, but never in war, in which everything lies.” For a discussion about the difference in war terminology see Rosenberger (1992).



Despite the above examples of Roman armies returning to former battlefields, it is difficult to know how often (if ever) Roman civilians visited the sites of either their victories or defeats. The construction of stone victory monuments suggests that some visitation may have occurred, but who was doing the visiting is pure guesswork. No doubt the difficulties and the costs of travel would limit the number of battlefield tourists. It is arguable whether or not a citizen from Rome would travel all the way to Teutoburg, or to Zela, or even to Cannae, to visit the scene of death of their loved one. Nevertheless a passage in Pliny's *Panegyricus* suggests that some Romans evidently did tour famous battlefields. While praising Trajan's military career, Pliny wrote:

Therefore the time will come when the coming generations will be eager to visit and to bring their descendants to see, the field which was soaked in your sweat, the trees and rocks which protected your rests and sleep, and even the shelter which you, as a great guest, settled in, just as the sacred footprints of great generals were once shown to you in the same places.<sup>20</sup>

This passage suggests that battlefield tourism was not uncommon in the Roman world, at least by the time of Pliny. But the nature of the *Panegyricus*, designed to laud the emperor Trajan, should elicit at least some concern about its reliability. It is, in the end, impossible to say with any certainty how often Roman civilians toured the battlefields of their past.<sup>21</sup> More often such visits must have been a result of the accident of fortune or based on the whim (or desires) of the commander. From these battlefields we now return

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<sup>20</sup> 15.4: *Venit ergo tempus quo posteri visere visendumque tradere minoribus suis gestient, quis sudores tuos hauserit campus, quae refectioes tuas arbores, quae somnum saxa praetexerint, quod denique tectum magnus hospes impleveris, ut tunc ipsi ingentium ducum sacra vestigia isdem in locis monstrabantur.*

<sup>21</sup> There is a worthwhile comparison to be made here with the various methodologies of the ancient historians. Some, such as Polybius or Plutarch thought that visiting the battlefield was important.

to Rome and consider whether or not Romans performed any sort of ceremony in commemoration of military defeats and casualties of war.

### *4.3 Ceremonies Commemorating the Dead*

In Chapter Three, we outlined the procedures Romans followed in the immediate aftermath of military losses. It is now time to consider if Romans commemorated these losses with any sort of ceremony or ritual practice. While it was common to celebrate great and important victories with a triumph, a military parade through the streets of Rome,<sup>22</sup> it appears that there was no official state ceremony or ritual performed at Rome that memorialized or commemorated Roman military defeats or the Roman war dead.<sup>23</sup> In fact, if Roman casualties proved significant enough, even in the greatest of victories, the traditional celebration of Roman victory could be postponed, refused, or even declined.

It appears that there was a tradition in Rome suggesting that triumphs should not occur if there were significant casualties. According to Livy, in 480 B.C.E., after defeating the Veientes and Etruscans, the senate offered the consul Marcus Fabius Vibulanus a triumph in celebration of his victory. The battle had been bloody and the other consul, Gnaeus Manlius as well as Vibulanus' brother, Quintus Fabius, were killed. Vibulanus declined the triumph because of these losses. Livy imagined his explanation for refusing the triumph as the following:

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<sup>22</sup> For the Roman triumph see Beard (2007), Pittenger (2008), and Östenberg (2009).

<sup>23</sup> The one exception was perhaps the institution of “black day” on the calendar. For which, see below, pages 164-166.

... if the army could triumph without its imperator, he responded that he would easily allow it on account of their excellent service in the war; but he, with his family mourning the death of his brother Quintus Fabius, and with the republic partially orphaned by the loss of the other consul, would not accept a laurel crown deformed by public and private grief.<sup>24</sup>

Livy then praised Vibulanus' decision by concluding that “the declined triumph was more famous than every triumph celebrated.”<sup>25</sup> Although this refusal suggests that Romans should not celebrate victories when they had suffered casualties, it is important to recognize the specific type of casualty suffered in this case. Vibulanus makes no mention of the regular soldiers who died. His reasons for declining the triumph rest on the loss of his brother and of the consul – two members of the elite. This point may reflect the practice, common in our sources, of recording the deaths of only high ranking officers and members of the elite.<sup>26</sup> For evidence of the declining or refusal of a triumph on account of the loss of regular soldiers we must turn elsewhere.

Other evidence suggests that the deaths of too many rank-and-file soldiers could also negate the possibility of celebrating a triumph. Valerius Maximus, in a section on the triumphal laws, or *ius triumphale*, stated that a general must kill at least 5,000 of the enemy in order to be eligible for the celebration. Valerius Maximus is the only source for this specific number, unless we include the evidence provided by the fifth century C.E. Christian writer Orosius, who recorded that Appius Claudius Pulcher wanted to celebrate

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<sup>24</sup> Livy 2.47.10: *Itaque consul decernente senatu triumphum, si exercitus sine imperatore triumphare possit, pro eximia eo bello opera facile passurum respondit; se, familia funesta Q. Fabi fratris morte, re publica ex parte orba, consule altero amisso, publico privatoque deformem luctu lauream non accepturum.*

<sup>25</sup> Livy 2.47.11: *Omni acto triumpho depositus triumphus clarior fuit.*

<sup>26</sup> For more such examples see Chapter 5.2.3.

a triumph in 143 B.C.E. on the basis of his killing 5,000 of the enemy. Unfortunately for Pulcher's triumphal ambitions, before he killed 5,000 enemy soldiers, he had lost 5,000 Romans.<sup>27</sup> Beard is not very confident in the validity of this so-called “5,000-dead rule” since it is only ever mentioned in Valerius and Orosius.<sup>28</sup> Pittenger, meanwhile, has sensibly suggested that all this talk about specific numbers is problematic because the numbers themselves were exaggerated or diminished in the senatorial debates over whether or not to allow a triumph to proceed.<sup>29</sup> Regardless of the accuracy of the numbers, the debates themselves suggest that Romans recognized that it was not *right* to celebrate a victory when the state suffered severe losses. Whether the motive for such a limitation was genuine sympathy for those who had lost loved ones, or the result of the competitive gamesmanship of the ultra-competitive elite is unknown. Probably a bit of both.

Another law, also recorded by Valerius Maximus, further shows that Romans were determined to know the extent of their losses. This second law was evidently passed in 62 B.C.E., during the tribunate of Lucius Marius and Marcus Cato. The law required all returning generals to swear an oath confirming the number of both enemy killed and Roman casualties. Beard is again worried about the implications of this law, if it ever existed.<sup>30</sup> Nevertheless, she admits that the “law certainly reflects the general concern

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<sup>27</sup> Oros. 5.4.7.

<sup>28</sup> Beard (2007): 209-210. As a reliable source, Orosius is frequently problematic. I plan to write a study on Orosius in the future.

<sup>29</sup> Pittenger (2008). See especially her *Chapter Five: Body Counts; or, Who Killed Whom*, 104 - 114.

<sup>30</sup> Beard (2007): 210: “But [the law] is entirely unattested anywhere else, never appealed to, and raises a host of tricky questions. Where was this swearing supposed to take place, inside or outside the

about false reporting evident in the discussions at the time ...” Why it was necessary to pass such a law in 62 B.C.E. is a mystery. Perhaps it was political maneuvering; Pompey had just destroyed the Mediterranean's pirate problem and had defeated Mithridates; two massive achievements, but neither one resulted in massive number of enemy dead.<sup>31</sup> The law may have been designed to limit Pompey's pride. Whatever the reason, the law illustrates that Romans wanted a record of their losses. The motive for these laws, and indeed these triumphal debates, may have been political, but the fact that casualty figures were understood to be a justifiable excuse for cancelling a triumph suggests that such losses were not taken lightly by the Roman people. Certainly, in the republican period, the discourse surrounding the Roman triumph argued that it was not right for Romans to triumph over their own dead. Nevertheless, in reality, competitive politics overpowered this discourse and some generals, such as the Appius Claudius Pulcher mentioned above, celebrated triumphs at their own expense.<sup>32</sup>

In the very early imperial period the pattern of declining triumphs in the face of military losses continued. Tiberius, the adopted son and heir of Augustus, had a triumph for his victories over the Pannonians and Dalmatians postponed by the disaster suffered by Varus and his three legions in Germany.<sup>33</sup> But as was the case with the Roman response to defeat discussed in Chapter Three, the new system of government ushered in

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*pomerium*? And if it was a law passed by Cato, is it not strange that neither he nor Cicero made even passing allusion to it in their exchanges over Cicero's triumph?”

<sup>31</sup> For more on Pompey's achievements and the political situation in Rome see Southern (2002) and Seager (2002).

<sup>32</sup> As evidence of the competitive nature of winning triumphs, it is worth noting the examples of Roman generals celebrating triumphs even though they were denied. Appius Claudius Pulcher for example, celebrated a triumph, despite its being denied. See Beard (2007): 203-204.

<sup>33</sup> Vell. Pat. 2.121.2.

changes in how defeat was dealt with in the city of Rome. After Augustus, Roman Emperors began to celebrate triumphs under all sorts of dubious circumstances. Nero celebrated his victory over Tiridates in 66 C.E. – a mere diplomatic victory won by Corbulo after the embarrassing defeat of Caesennius Paetus. For no good military reason, Caligula held a “triumph” at Baiae in 39 C.E.<sup>34</sup> Perhaps the most daring examples came from the emperor Domitian.

Domitian’s armies suffered serious setbacks along the Danubian frontier in the mid to late 80s C.E. Oppius Sabinus, the governor of Moesia, fell with his army in 85 C.E.<sup>35</sup> The following year, in 86 C.E., the prefect Cornelius Fuscus lost another army and his own life.<sup>36</sup> After these losses, Domitian sent Tettius Julianus to the Danube.<sup>37</sup> In 88 C.E. Tettius was responsible for a great victory at Tapae.<sup>38</sup> It appears that this victory, while restoring Roman honor, returned little more than the status quo. Decebalus, the Dacian chief, suffered difficulties, but so too had Domitian, and in consequence he instigated a peace treaty. Dio Cassius also states that this truce cost Domitian more than the lives of his soldiers, since he also gave Decebalus money and engineers and agreed to keep paying this tribute indefinitely.<sup>39</sup> For the gratification of his own army, Domitian offered the Roman soldiers honors and money.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> For these and other examples see Beard (2007): 266-272.

<sup>35</sup> Jord. *Get.* 13.76.

<sup>36</sup> Jord. *Get.* 13.76 and Dio Cass. 68.9.3. The Romans also suffered a significant defeat in 92 C.E. when the Sarmatians attacked (Suet. *Dom.* 6).

<sup>37</sup> Suet. *Dom.* 6 and Dio Cassius 67.10.1

<sup>38</sup> Dio Cassius 67.10.1

<sup>39</sup> Dio Cassius 67.7.4.

<sup>40</sup> Dio Cassius 67.7.3.

Despite the severity of the wars and the innumerable losses, Domitian treated the events that occurred along the Danube as a great Roman victory. He therefore celebrated triumphs for his Dacian successes.<sup>41</sup> This is not at all surprising because it had become a fact of empire that the emperor never lost a battle. While victories were the emperor's responsibility, emperors also generally blamed military catastrophes on their commanders.<sup>42</sup> As noted in Chapter Three, military defeats were a danger to the security of the state and the emperor. A substantial portion of imperial loyalty resulted from imperial propaganda.<sup>43</sup> Domitian's triumphs held the same purpose. Losses were ignored or covered up (or at least were attempted to be covered up), and triumphs were celebrated. After Domitian's end, hostile sources characterized the triumphs he celebrated as complete charades. Dio Cassius reported that the 'crowd' recognized that Domitian's triumph was rather a funeral banquet for those who had died in Dacia and in Rome.<sup>44</sup> Orosius was more to the point: Domitian had triumphed over his own legions.<sup>45</sup> The republican discourse regarding the limitations surrounding the celebration of a triumph evidently continued. But the realities of imperial rule challenged that discourse. Despite

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<sup>41</sup> Oros. 7.10; Suet. *Dom.* 6.

<sup>42</sup> For a detailed discussion see Cheng (1998).

<sup>43</sup> There is a late imperial cognate, that illustrates that the process was not limited to Domitian. Following the battle of Adrianople in 378 CE, and after achieving only moderate successes, both Gratian and Theodosius celebrated triumphs. As Lenski concluded: "the emperors felt the need to glorify publicly their military achievements in order to counteract the ill effects of the Adrianople catastrophe." Lenski (1997): 140.

<sup>44</sup> Dio Cassius 67.9.6: Ὁ μὲν οὖν Δομιτιανὸς τοιαῦτα νικητήρια, ἢ ὥς γε ὁ ὄμιλος ἔλεγε, τοιούτους ἑναγισμοὺς ἐπὶ τε τοῖς ἐν τῇ Δακίᾳ καὶ ἐπὶ τοῖς ἐν τῇ Ῥώμῃ τεθνηκόσιν ἐποίησε, "And so, such was the triumph of Domitian, or as the crowd said, such were the funeral celebrations he held for those who had died in Dacia and Rome. Tacitus (*Agr.* 39), meanwhile, described Domitian's "mock triumph" (*falsum triumphum*) over the Germans, and Suetonius noted that *post varia proelia duplicem triumphum egit*, "after various battles he held a double triumph."

<sup>45</sup> Oros. 7.10: *Domitianus ...de extinctis legionibus triumphavit*, "Domitian ... triumphed over his defeated legions."

the complaints of some Romans, it is difficult to know for sure whether or not civilians concerned themselves at all with these dubious triumphs, or, as seems more likely, if admittedly cynical, they simply enjoyed the party, bread, and circuses offered by their emperor.

Finally, there is evidence of a ceremony for the war dead taking place outside of Rome. According to Dio Cassius, after suffering severe losses near Tapae in Dacia, the emperor Trajan not only ordered that a monument be built to commemorate those who had died, but he also instructed that yearly celebrations be made at the site of the monument in honor of the dead.<sup>46</sup> It is impossible to know for sure whether or not similar ceremonies took place among other Roman armies in other periods. As with other aspects of military defeats, the expectations among civilians in the city of Rome differed from those of soldiers on the battlefield. During the republican period it would be difficult to separate the camp from the city, but during the imperial period, as we have already noted, the soldiers on the frontier and the civilians in Rome were not at all connected. They lived in completely different worlds; therefore, it should come as no surprise that they required completely different responses to the costs of war.

#### *4.4 The Roman Calendar*

The single exception to the general rule that Romans did not commemorate or ritually memorialize their war losses in the city of Rome may be the fact that they did remember the anniversary of some significant defeats. Chief among these was 18 July.

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<sup>46</sup> Dio Cass. 68.8.2.



Our Roman sources remembered that on that day in the early fifth century B.C.E. at the Cremera River, not far from Rome, the 306 members of the Fabii – reportedly all but one member of the gens – were killed by an army from the Etruscan town of Veii. That day, it so happened, was also the day when the Gauls defeated the Romans at the Allia River in the early fourth century B.C.E.; or at least it was also remembered as the same day. Oddly, despite the fact that the day of the year was so perfectly remembered, the precise years in which these events took place were debated.<sup>47</sup> In any case, this day was recognized by the Romans as a *dies ater*, or black day; such days were generally thought to be unlucky.<sup>48</sup>

Although it is the best known, 18 July was not the only such “black day” on the Roman calendar. Aulus Gellius, for example, suggests that the reason many people found the fourth day before the *Kalends*, *Nones* and *Ides* bad luck was because the defeat of Cannae occurred on the fourth day before the Nones of August (2 August 216 B.C.E.).<sup>49</sup> While they may have found the day to be bad luck there is no evidence to suggest that they performed any particular commemoration of military losses on such days.<sup>50</sup> As Scullard concluded about 18 July: “How many educated Romans ... recalled the day when it came around each year, we cannot tell.”

Finally, it is worth noting that, if the date of a military defeat was remembered, such calendar days could be seen as an opportunity to transform the dark memory of

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<sup>47</sup> The chronology of this time period is all mixed up, with Livy and Dionysius of Halicarnassus generally providing competing versions. For the various problems of chronology regarding these dates see Grafton (1988).

<sup>48</sup> Scullard (1981): 166.

<sup>49</sup> 5.17.5 and see Grafton (1988): 15.

<sup>50</sup> *contra* Cooley (forthcoming).

defeat into a memory of victory. Plutarch notes that when Lucullus was preparing to battle Tigranes and the Armenians in 69 B.C.E., one of his lieutenants informed him that he was doing so on a so-called “black day”.<sup>51</sup> Apparently, on that particular day, in 105 B.C.E. the Cimbri destroyed Caepio's army near Arausio; a massive defeat where as many as 80,000 Romans soldiers and auxiliaries were said to have been killed.<sup>52</sup> Lucullus, unconcerned, boldly predicted that he would make it a happy day after his victory. Such a recognition that the association of a day with a particularly terrible defeat could be overcome by a great victory is similar to the idea that Romans could rehabilitate battlefields famous for defeats. According to reports, Lucullus did indeed win a great victory: 100,000 of the enemy were killed, while the Romans lost only five and had only 100 wounded. Although the enormity of these casualty figures belie their validity, they illustrate again the competitive nature of the Roman elite and the Roman army. So the dates of military defeats were as much items of superstition as commemoration. They also provided an opportunity for Romans to replace a memory of defeat and loss with a memory of victory. A similar message can be seen regarding the Roman war monuments.

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<sup>51</sup> Plut. *Luc.* 27.7: μελάινος. Cooley (forthcoming) concludes: “Finally, we can see that such anniversaries continued to weigh upon Roman sensibilities in an example of the ill fortune associated with a day being reversed by a later success. 6<sup>th</sup> October marked the date of a defeat at Arausio (modern Orange) in 105 B.C.E., but in 69 B.C.E. the general Lucullus vowed to change the luck of the day, and did so, winning a battle against Tigranes in Armenia.” Cooley does not recognize that Lucullus had to be reminded of the date. We might wonder therefore how well remembered such days were.

<sup>52</sup> Liv. *Peri.* 67, quoting Valerius Antias, also claims that 40,000 servants and camp followers were killed. Granius Licinianus 33.12 suggests 70,000.

#### 4.5 Monuments

In peacetime, individual Romans (if they could afford it) commonly constructed elaborate memorials to the memory of their family members who had died. Oftentimes, wealthy Romans set aside funds for the construction of their own elaborate tombs. These memorials were designed to perpetuate the memory of the dead as well as honor their achievements.<sup>53</sup> As noted in Chapter One, Roman soldiers, especially during the imperial period, expected and could afford burial in peacetime. Indeed, the professional army organized burial clubs to ensure proper burial after death. There are a number of examples of cemeteries located next to military camps where monuments memorialized the dead.<sup>54</sup> Burial and memorials in the aftermath of battle may also have been set up by private individuals. In a well-known example, Publius Caelius set up a cenotaph for the bones of his brother Marcus who had been killed in the Varian War and whose body had not been recovered.<sup>55</sup> By their very nature, these monuments were public memorials designed to be read and seen by any number of random individuals. Nevertheless, they were also intensely private, designed by family and friends and reflecting the survivors' own memories and grief. While these private commemorations were important to the social history of the Roman empire, and while a reflection of the relationship between family members, our concern here is not with them but with public and communal war

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<sup>53</sup> For such memorials in general see Carroll (2006).

<sup>54</sup> See Hope (2003a) and (2003b).

<sup>55</sup> *ILS 2244: ... (ce)cidit bello Variano. Ossa (i)nferre licebit*, "he died in the Varian War. His bones may be interred here."

memorials; in short, we are to examine those memorials set up by the state, or by individual actors acting on behalf of the state.

Alan Borg has traced the development of the war monument from antiquity to the twentieth century. He concluded that “A characteristic of ancient war memorials is that they commemorate war itself, and specifically victory, rather than recording the loss and suffering of individuals. Modern memorials on the other hand are much more concerned with the sacrifices of war, with the loss of young life in the defense of freedom.”<sup>56</sup> Statistically Borg’s conclusion may be correct, most ancient war memorials do celebrate victory. He never really explains why this might be the case. Furthermore, it is worth noting the difference between a war monument and a war memorial. Monuments praise victory, memorials honor the price paid for that victory. Hölscher, meanwhile, has argued that because of the professionalization of the army in the imperial period, there was little care or concern for commemorating the fallen war dead.<sup>57</sup> This is true, as argued in the previous chapter, to the extent that the attachment between civilian and soldier had been broken, but it remains to be seen whether or not this conclusion reflects attitudes within the military itself. The development of military cemeteries, even if they were largely private enterprises, may suggest that the army did have concern for its dead members.

Cooley, in a forthcoming publication, argues that the lack of public war memorials need not reflect an undervaluing of those who had died; rather “the lack of memorials may reflect a distinctive attitude to public duty and service on the part of the

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<sup>56</sup> Borg (1991): x.

<sup>57</sup> (2003): 14.

Romans.”<sup>58</sup> At the heart of her argument is the point that rather than honor the war dead individually, Romans viewed every defeat in the collective. Romans had to move forward and deal with defeats as a community – this usually meant garnering revenge. There was, therefore, little point in honoring the war dead individually (or, apparently, even collectively). There is much to admire in this sort of argument; indeed the previous chapter argued that in the aftermath of defeat Romans sought to respond communally. Nevertheless one wonders why public duty and service negate individual honors; especially when the Romans seemed quite happy to present individual honors to their soldiers for bravery and success. Furthermore, as we shall see in the next chapter, another discourse of Roman defeat, the historical narrative, had no problem recounting Roman defeats and even honoring individual soldiers.

#### *4.5.1 The Republican Period*

The city of Rome was filled with monuments to martial success. Unfortunately, the ravages of time have left few of these monuments standing. Some are known only from inscriptions or textual references; this is especially true of the republican period. During that time, Roman commanders were individually responsible for the creation of monuments (most commonly temples) paid for with the spoils of war. These monuments were as much about the commemoration of the victory of the Roman state as they were vehicles of personal propaganda.<sup>59</sup> Cicero is quite clear, that by the mid-first century

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<sup>58</sup> (forthcoming).

<sup>59</sup> Pietilä-Castrén (1987): 16. Though note that temples could also be vowed to divinities “which guarded the soldiers and troops” (Pietilä-Castrén (1987): 163).

B.C.E., no Roman army, however severe the losses sustained, had been honored with a memorial of their sacrifice.<sup>60</sup> He, in fact, suggested that the first such memorial ought to be constructed for those brave soldiers who died fighting Antony at in 43 B.C.E. There is no evidence of how the citizens of Rome reacted to the suggestion, nor is there any evidence that the memorial was ever constructed.<sup>61</sup> Sordi is no doubt correct to find Greek influence behind Cicero's suggestion. The Greeks and especially the Athenians did not shy away from the memory of their war dead, nor their commemoration.<sup>62</sup> Cooley's argument that Cicero wanted to build the monument more as a reminder of Antony's tyranny than as a memorial to the war dead is well made, although surely the audience would still have recognized it as a commemoration of the dead.<sup>63</sup> So, in the republican period, specific war memorials that honored those who died in war were not very common.

The lack of memorials for the Roman war dead should not suggest that the Romans simply did not care about their losses. As noted in Chapter Two, Roman soldiers could be variously affected by the deaths of their comrades. Just as the triumph could be declined or rejected as a result of severe losses, it is possible that some republican war memorials recognized that Roman victory had come at great cost. Pietilä-Castrén has catalogued victory monuments – almost all temples – constructed during the period of the three Punic Wars. Although it is clear that these temples were designed as victory

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<sup>60</sup> Cic. *Phil.* 14. 31-3.

<sup>61</sup> Dio Cass. 46.38.2 does say that a public burial was given those soldiers who died, but he makes no mention of location or the memorial. In general the burial of soldiers after battle could be considered to be a burial at state expense.

<sup>62</sup> Sordi (1990): 173-4. See Pericles' funeral oration and Thucydides' description of the state burial, complete with a coffin for the unknown or lost remains of the dead (2.34-46). See also Hope (2003).

<sup>63</sup> (forthcoming).

monuments, her conclusions suggest that it is possible that some temples were dedicated with specific reference to casualties of war. A temple to Juturna, a nymph and a goddess of healing, was vowed by C. Lutatius Catulus (consul in 242 B.C.E.). According to Pietilä-Castrén, Catulus may have been wounded in the battle, and if so, “he may have remembered the healing power of the spring of Juturna.”<sup>64</sup> We cannot know for sure, but it is easy to imagine wounded soldiers, or family members of those who had been killed, making offerings at the temple of Juturna. Other temples, one dedicated to Juno Sospita and others to Diana, and Juno Regina, were evidently devoted as “protectors of troops.”<sup>65</sup> Our sources do not record any Roman casualties in the battle narratives in which these temples were vowed. Nevertheless, it is certainly possible that these temples were devoted with the health and well-being of the soldiers in mind. The fact the troops needed a temple in honor of their “protection” suggests (obviously) that they were in fact in need of protection. So, although we ought not to challenge Cicero’s assertion that no memorial had ever been devoted to Roman soldiers, it appears likely that some monuments (or temples) were devoted *for* the well-being of Rome’s warriors. In this sense, it appears that Romans did recognize the potential sacrifices made by their soldiers.

#### *4.5.2 The Imperial Period*

There is much better preserved evidence of war memorials during the imperial period. So far, we have seen that during the imperial period, the willingness to recognize

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<sup>64</sup> Pietilä-Castrén (1987): 48.

<sup>65</sup> Pietilä-Castrén (1987): 160.

the human cost of Rome's Empire was severely limited. Defeats were ignored or hidden, and triumphs were celebrated despite Roman defeats. Although they properly commemorate a victory, the Arch of Claudius, and the columns of Trajan and Marcus Aurelius further corroborate this conclusion.

#### 4.5.2.1 Claudius' British Victory Arch<sup>66</sup>

Claudius' victory in Britain was the military highlight of his reign.<sup>67</sup> It was praised throughout the empire, and commemorated on at least three separate arches (one in Gaul, one at Cyzicus in Mysia, and one in Rome) and on an elaborate relief as part of the Sebasteion of Aphrodisias.<sup>68</sup> The arch in Rome was constructed as part of the Aqua Virgo, an aqueduct which crossed the Via Lata, a subsidiary road (which cut through the Campus Martius) of the great northern thoroughfare, the Via Flaminia. Although most of the arch has been lost, portions of its dedicatory inscription have survived. The largest most complete piece is imbedded into the wall in the Museo Nuovo of the Palazzo dei Conservatori on the Capitoline Hill in Rome. It reads:

1      TI. CLAV  
         AVG  
         PONTIFIC  
         COS. V. IM  
5      SENATUS. POPV  
         REGES. BRIT  
         VLLA. IAC  
         GENTESQ.

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<sup>66</sup> *LTUR* vol. 1, 85-6. Barrett (1991) provides a detailed analysis of the inscription and offers a reconstruction of the arch. For a review of Barrett's conclusions see Fasolini (2006).

<sup>67</sup> See Levick (1990): 137-148 for details about the war.

<sup>68</sup> Dio Cass. 60.22.1. Levick (1990): 144 and Barrett (1991).



Other small fragments exist and various attempts have been made to restore the lost sections, but not without controversy nor with complete satisfaction.<sup>69</sup> The first two lines identify the emperor by his nomen, Claudius, his praenomen Tiberius and one of his cognomina, Augustus. Other cognomina and filiations would have filled out these lines. The next two lines offer some of his varied titles and offices. PONTIFIC refers to his service as pontiff, and COS V indicates that Claudius had, at the time of the inscription, been consul five times. The inscription also confirms that Claudius carried the title of imperator (IM). Other offices, including his tribunician power, would have filled out the rest of lines three and four. The fifth line indicates the dedicator of the arch: the Senate and People of Rome. Because of the programmatic nature of Latin epigraphy, these first five lines have produced only minor problems. It is the remaining four lines that have created the most controversy. The general sense of the various proposals (neatly reviewed by Barrett) is that Claudius was the first to bring under Roman authority some (possibly eleven) kings of the Britons, who were conquered, or taken, without loss.

Our main focus here is the phrase restored as (*sine*) *ulla iac(tura)*, “without any losses.” Scholars have suggested various explanations for its meaning. Barrett correctly recognized parallels in Claudius’ use of the phrase and the descriptions of his British victory by later sources. Suetonius wrote that Claudius conquered part of Britain “without

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<sup>69</sup> For the other fragments and a reconstruction see Barrett (1991): 10-15 who provides a detailed analysis and criticism of past attempted reconstructions. The existing fragments help fill out the first five lines of the inscription. Unfortunately, no fragments exist that clarify the final four lines.

battle or bloodshed.”<sup>70</sup> Josephus meanwhile gave all the credit for the British success to Vespasian.<sup>71</sup> About these conclusions, Barrett wrote,

For a hostile source to imply that Claudius fought a bogus military campaign and that there was no loss of life in those phases where he took part is not especially surprising. For Claudius to have claimed this himself, on a victory arch, would on the surface seem designed to invite ridicule and to cheapen his own successes by downgrading the odds he faced.<sup>72</sup>

Technically Claudius did not claim his bloodless victory himself, the arch is clearly dedicated by the Senate and People of Rome. Nevertheless, such a building project must have had imperial permission. To justify the use of the phrase *sine ulla iactura* Barrett argued that the words meant that the emperor had won “some sort of diplomatic triumph” and that Suetonius and Josephus (or their source(s)) deliberately misrepresented Claudius “to make him look foolish.”<sup>73</sup> Dio Cassius meanwhile provides a more positive tradition which allows for Barrett’s interpretation that this was a diplomatic victory. He suggested that after Claudius crossed over to Britain, the emperor won over numerous tribes “in some cases by capitulation, in others by force.”<sup>74</sup>

Barrett had already corrected multiple other suggested explanations for the line: that the phrase indicated that no naval losses were suffered on the Channel crossing, or

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<sup>70</sup> Suet. *Claud.* 17.2: *sine ulla proelio aut sanguine ...*

<sup>71</sup> Jos. *BJ.* 3.4.

<sup>72</sup> Barrett (1991): 14. There is evidence that some Romans exaggerated the odds they faced to enhance their glory. Aulus Didius, for example, who had arrived in Britain before Claudius exaggerated reports of the situation because he thought he would secure additional glory for his success against such odds (Tac. *Ann.* 12.40).

<sup>73</sup> Barrett (1991): 14-15.

<sup>74</sup> Dio Cassius 60.21.4: ... τοὺς μὲν ὁμολογίᾳ τοὺς δὲ καὶ βίᾳ ..., “... some by surrender and some by force ...”

that *sine ulla iactura* should be translated as “no serious losses,” or that Claudius was following a pattern set by Julius Caesar who used a similar (but not identical) phrase to indicate that he conquered without loss of honor, rather than the correct translation of “without any loss (of men).”<sup>75</sup> Some of these misinterpretations continued even after the publication of Barrett’s article. Green agreed with the idea that Claudius was defending Roman honor and that “[t]he pedantic mind of Claudius may have seen an occasion to use an outdated phrase quite deliberately as an acknowledgement to his distinguished forbearer [meaning Julius Caesar].”<sup>76</sup> We will return to the question of whether or not this phrase was outdated in the next chapter, but for now it is necessary to search for the source of the phrase in a more suitable model – Claudius’ teacher rather than his adoptive great-grandfather whom he never met.

In his descriptions of arguments debating the celebration of a triumph Livy often used phrases similar to *sine ulla iactura*.<sup>77</sup> Because triumphs were rewarded based on merit and success, the specific circumstances of the victory could often determine whether or not a triumph was granted. Ancient sources confirm that casualty figures played a role in the determination of a triumph. As noted earlier, Valerius Maximus recorded a rule that 5,000 of the enemy had to be killed, and that in 62 B.C.E. a law was passed in which all Roman generals returning from campaigns had to swear to the accuracy of their casualty figures.<sup>78</sup> Similarly, it was expected that Roman casualties be

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<sup>75</sup> Barrett (1991): 14: The shipwreck and “no serious loss” translation were suggested by Dudley (1959): 12 and (1965): 185-6. The suggestion that it meant “no loss of honour” is from Webster (1980 reprint 1999): 170 who cites Caes. *BC* 1.9.3; 1.32.4.

<sup>76</sup> Green (1995): 630.

<sup>77</sup> See Beard (2008) and Pettinger (2009): 110-112

<sup>78</sup> Val. Max. 2.8.1.

kept to a minimum. In the narratives of Roman warfare, this characteristic is usually indicated with some form of the word *incruentum*, or bloodless.<sup>79</sup> We will return to this very specific and intriguing discourse in the next chapter.

Livy, on at least two occasions also used similar wording to that found on the arch. The historian recorded the debate in which the consul of 189 B.C.E. Gnaeus Manlius argued that he deserved a triumph for his victory over Antiochus in Asia Minor. In his argument Manlius rhetorically asked the senate if they would deny him and his army a triumph after they “had conquered so great a nation without any soldiers having been lost, (*sine ulla militum iactura*).”<sup>80</sup> On another occasion, Livy described the mixed success of Fulvius Flaccus, the praetor of 182 B.C.E. Although he succeeded in killing a reported 17,000 Celtiberians, according to Livy the “victory was not without any soldiers having been lost”, (*Victoria non sine iactura militum fuit*).<sup>81</sup> In an inscription, where space was at a premium, *milites*, could be easily dropped. Livy, Suetonius reports, supported Claudius’ pursuit of the writing of history. Rather than look to Caesar or some other Roman for the inspiration of Claudius’ proud comment, it is better to consider the role of his inspirational teacher and Roman republican precedent in general.<sup>82</sup>

While Claudius’ use of the phrase *sine ulla iactura* could mean that he was referring to a diplomatic victory (as Barrett suggests) it seems better to recognize it for

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<sup>79</sup> See examples in Pettinger (2009): 110-112 and Chapter 5.3.

<sup>80</sup> Livy 38.48.15: *quod tantam nationem sine ulla militum iactura devicimus*, “we conquered so great a nation without any soldiers having been lost.” Manlius was only trying to make a point. He did lose some soldiers, one of which, Quintus Minucius, who was *talem civem*, “such a good citizen”, died of his wounds (Livy 38.49.9).

<sup>81</sup> Livy 40.40.12.

<sup>82</sup> For Livy’s encouragement of Claudius pursuit of history see Suet. *Claud.* 41.1.

what it was: a boast that he won a war without losing a single Roman soldier. However modern scholars may wish to understand it, a military victory in which no Romans died is how the citizens of Rome, the initial and most important audience of the monument would likely have understood the phrase.<sup>83</sup> As we shall see in the next chapter, great glory was conferred on those Roman generals who conquered without shedding any Roman blood. Suetonius and Josephus may have been clever enough to mock Claudius' claim, but the emperor followed a genuine and enduring tradition. Still, such mockery illustrates an important point: they suggest that what Claudius was promoting was not true. So, either he was not fully responsible for the victory, or that indeed victory was achieved with some losses. In this sense, Claudius' arch is another example of an emperor trying to hide any losses from the citizens of Rome. The literary evidence for Claudius' invasion of Britain, even if it were designed to mock, does not contradict the arch.

#### 4.5.2.2 *Columns of Trajan and Marcus*<sup>84</sup>

Two final monuments, the columns of Trajan and Marcus Aurelius, can be considered together.<sup>85</sup> The dedication for Trajan's column occurred in 113 C.E., some

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<sup>83</sup> Barrett (1991): 15 may be giving Claudius too much credit. He suggests that Claudius recognized that the growing empire would have to incorporate those it conquered (as he argued for the Gauls in the famous speech of 48 CE). By understanding the victory *sine ulla iactura* as a diplomatic victory, Barrett suggests that Claudius was laying the foundation for Roman acceptance of the incorporation of the Britons into Roman society.

<sup>84</sup> For Trajan's column see Davies (2000), Coarelli (2000), and Lepper and Frere (1988). For Marcus' column see Coarelli (2008); Beckmann (2001), (2006) and his forthcoming book from UNC Press.

four years before his death. It still stands in the mostly ruined Forum of Trajan. The square base is adorned with a dedicatory inscription, and a relief of various weapons and victory trophies. These would have been at eye level and clearly set out the column as a victory monument. The column is adorned with an elaborate frieze which spirals upwards from left to right and illustrates Trajan's victory over the Dacians, whom he conquered in two wars from 101 – 102 C.E. and from 105 – 106 C.E.

Just up the modern Via del Corso from Trajan's column is the column of Marcus Aurelius. Like Trajan's column, an elaborate frieze covers the column. The specific campaign depicted on Marcus' column has long been debated, though certain elements – such as the so-called 'Rain Miracle' of 172 C.E. – are confirmed by literary sources.<sup>86</sup> It is beyond doubt that the monument depicts one or more of the campaigns occurring in Germany between 170 CE and 180 C.E. when Marcus died.<sup>87</sup> Nevertheless, despite their similarities the columns do differ; this is especially the case in the nature of the friezes themselves. The characters in the frieze on Marcus' column are more defined and more deeply engraved than those found on Trajan's column. The characters and events are also less cluttered on Marcus' column. The actions depicted on Marcus' column are decidedly more violent than those depicted on Trajan's.<sup>88</sup> Coarelli recently offered the following explanation for this fact:

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<sup>85</sup> (2008): 9; Coarelli has called Marcus' column "la gemella" (the twin) of Trajan's. See also Beckmann (forthcoming) who compares the two monuments and illustrates the influence Trajan's had on that of Marcus.

<sup>86</sup> See Dio Cass. 71.8-10.

<sup>87</sup> Coarelli (2009): 47 describes the various possibilities. It is not our purpose here to determine the date specifically.

<sup>88</sup> In particular, see Beckmann (forthcoming), especially chapters 8 and 9.

The former [Trajan's] is an illustration of self-assured, triumphant imperialism, which can allow itself the luxury of understanding and pardoning its enemies once crushed and defeated. The second [Marcus'] expresses the spiritual situation of an empire in crisis, fully aware of its weakness and its fragility, which is therefore inclined to exercise a blind and indiscriminate violence, and which identifies in each enemy the empire of evil.<sup>89</sup>

Coarelli's conclusion is determined by the apparent terror felt throughout Italy at losses suffered along the Rhine which prompted Marcus' German wars.<sup>90</sup> He may be correct that the violence suffered by the northern Italians justified the increased depiction of violence on the column. In essence, the violent measures depicted on the column are acts of vengeance.<sup>91</sup> But it is worth remembering that Trajan's actions in Dacia were also acts of revenge too and that Trajan's wars might better be described as an annihilation (or worse, genocide) of the Dacian people and transplantation of Roman citizens. Beckmann has argued that the violence of Marcus' column was part of a long Roman tradition of severely punishing those who had rebelled against Rome.<sup>92</sup> Thus the main difference between the depiction of war on Trajan's column and the depiction of war on Marcus' was not some change in artistic styles, but rather a reflection that the former was a war of choice, while the latter was a war of necessity.

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<sup>89</sup> Coarelli (2009): 68-9 – I have made some minor corrections to the English translation. Coarelli described the crisis on page 67: “The inhabitants of Italy and Rome were particularly affected [by attacks of German tribes into northern Italy]: having enjoyed a very long period of security, safe from any external attack, they had now witnessed the violation of their Italic soil, the conquest and sacking of cities and the massacre of their inhabitants. ... [Italy], the center of power, until now seen as untouchable, had been shown vulnerable.”

<sup>90</sup> Coarelli (2009): 67-8.

<sup>91</sup> Though the most vicious actions are depicted as being taken by auxiliaries and not Roman legionaries.

<sup>92</sup> (forthcoming) Chapter 9.

Whatever their differences in the depiction of Roman violence, both monuments share a similar avoidance of a particular type of violence. On neither Trajan's nor Marcus' column are any dead Roman depicted.<sup>93</sup> Despite this fact, the literary sources refer to substantial losses suffered by the Romans during these campaigns. According to Dio Cassius (or rather Xiphilinus) one battle, near Tapae in Dacia, was particularly bloody. The emperor was forced to tear his own clothes in order to restock a dwindling supply of bandages. In the aftermath of the battle the emperor had his war dead buried, ordered a monument built to their memory, and the performance of annual funeral rites.<sup>94</sup> Trajan's column does have a scene where soldiers are evidently being bandaged, but the burial is nowhere depicted or even hinted at. The evidence for the German wars fought by Marcus is not as specifically violent, though losses are mentioned. Prior to Marcus' campaigns, the Germans crossed the Rhine River, and after reaching northern Italy they inflicted severe losses on the Romans of that area.<sup>95</sup> During Marcus' war with the Iazyges, Dio informs us, the Romans suffered great harm.<sup>96</sup> So the column as a war monument was illustrative of the success of the Roman army, and not any of its losses or failures. Both wars, however, the Dacian and the German, were wars of revenge, fought as responses to severe Roman losses.

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<sup>93</sup> Though note Coarelli's (2009): 214 comment about the column of Marcus: "In contrast to the Column of Trajan, Roman soldiers hit by the enemy are never portrayed." Cooley (forthcoming) also notes the famous torture scene on the column of Trajan as well as the depiction of severed heads on pikes surrounding the Dacian fortress ("presumably trophies of unfortunate Roman soldiers"). But it is difficult to make the case that any viewer of either monument would recognize anything but Roman power and prestige.

<sup>94</sup> Dio Cass. 68.8.2.

<sup>95</sup> Dio Cass. 71.3.2; and see Beckmann (Introduction) for a brief review of the events.

<sup>96</sup> Dio Cass. 71.16.2: ... μεγάλα τοὺς Ῥωμαίους κακὰ ἔδρασαν, ... "... they did the Romans great harm."



The two columns are similar to Claudius' British Victory Arch. The inclusion of these three (victory) monuments may at first seem odd in a dissertation about defeat and military loss. Their importance lies in what they do not depict, and, in fact, go out of their way to ignore or disprove. None of these monuments portrays Roman war casualties. On the one hand they should not be faulted for this fact. They are, after all, monuments to success. On the other hand, this decision to mask the reality of war in this particular form of discourse was not inconsequential. The war monuments in the city of Rome promoted a memory of war in which victory came without cost. As we saw in Chapter Three, part of the reason for this discourse was the increased power of the emperor. Far from Rome, on the Roman frontier, where Roman soldiers stood guard over the empire, and fought and died for the empire, a different story could be told.

#### *4.5.2.3 Adamclisi: A Memorial of Power*

Far from the center of the empire, on the Roman frontier, attitudes towards defeat and military loss could be very different. Three large monuments, discovered at Adamclisi, in the Dobrudja region in modern Romania, commemorate Roman military actions taken along the Danube River during the late first and early second centuries C.E., when the emperors Domitian and Trajan both fought fierce wars. As a group they present an intriguing illustration of how certain Romans dealt with defeat and casualties of war. They also illustrate that there was no such thing as a single and complete collective memory.

The most famous of the Adamclisi monuments is the so-called Tropaeum Traiani, a cylindrically shaped monument about 100 feet (30 meters) in diameter.<sup>97</sup> It is roughly the size and shape of Augustus' Mausoleum in Rome.<sup>98</sup> The walls around the side are decorated with fifty-four metopes which depict various scenes of war. At the very top of the monument sits a victory trophy carved from stone and adorned with the engraved arms and armor of the defeated enemy. A reconstructed inscription indicates that the monument was originally dedicated to *Mars Ultor*, Mars the Avenger, and erected under the auspices of Trajan in 107/108 C.E..<sup>99</sup> This monument was built to commemorate the successful defeat of the peoples who threatened Roman interests from north of the Danube. Like Trajan's column in Rome, the metopes on this Tropaeum do not depict any dead Romans.<sup>100</sup>

A second (but earlier) cylindrical monument was located about 130 meters northeast of Trajan's trophy. Although it has not been reconstructed, at 125 feet (38 meters) in diameter, its archaeological footprint is larger. At its discovery it was suggested that this was a watchtower, or perhaps a tomb.<sup>101</sup> Later scholars suggested that it was a trophy, one that foreshadowed the style and shape of the more famous monument constructed by Trajan in 107/108 C.E. Unfortunately the near total loss of this larger monument means that dating it is nearly impossible. Some scholars have suggested that

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<sup>97</sup> Richmond (1967):29; MacKendrick (1975): 95; Bennett (2001): 102.

<sup>98</sup> *LTUR* vol. 3, 234-239.

<sup>99</sup> *CIL* 03, 12467 = *AE* 1996, 01355 and see Bennett (2001): 102.

<sup>100</sup> Rossi (1971): 62 suggested that metope XXXIV actually depicts a rotting Roman corpse, but this is uncertain.

<sup>101</sup> Cichorius (1904): 19 suggested watchtower and quotes Tocilescu that it was a tomb. Richmond (1967): 29 suggested that it was a mausoleum, but Poulter (1986): 525 discovered that only ox-bones were ever found inside the excavation.

Trajan constructed it after completing his first Dacian campaign;<sup>102</sup> others have suggested that Domitian dedicated it in 89 C.E. after a victory in the area.<sup>103</sup> In either case, Trajan's monument from 107/108 C.E. is likely a copy of this original.

About 250 meters west of these two cylindrical monuments excavators found another structure. This third monument had a square foundation that faced the more northern cylindrical monument and was made of the same type of limestone.<sup>104</sup> It therefore appears to have been constructed in conjunction with the earlier cylindrical monument as a sort of memorial complex. From the remaining architectural fragments scholars have determined that the monument measured about 12 meters square and about 6 meters high. It was, therefore, similar in size and shape to the Ara Pacis in Rome.<sup>105</sup> Only fragments of this monument remain; most of it is lost to the wear of two millennia or to the efficient craftsmen of later buildings.<sup>106</sup> But from the few existing remains comes a striking surprise: unlike Augustus' altar of peace, or the column or Tropaeum of Trajan which were decorated with elaborate friezes, inscriptions covered the altar at Adamclisi. A large dedicatory inscription presumably graced the top of the altar. Unfortunately, the one item that would securely date the monument, the imperial

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<sup>102</sup> Poulter (1986): 525.

<sup>103</sup> Stefan (2005): 442-444.

<sup>104</sup> Poulter (1986): 525.

<sup>105</sup> Stefan (2005): 437 wrote that the walls were 12.42 meters long and 4.5 meters high. But note also Cichorius (1904): 19, "dessen Seiten gegen 12 Meter breit sind, in einer Höhe von mehreren Metern empor" and Dorutiu (1961): 345: length of 11.67 m and a height of 6m. This building was then raised on a base of five (Dorutiu (1961): 345) or six steps (Cichorius (1904): 19). The Ara Pacis was not a perfect square. Its walls are 11.62 by 10.53 meters. It is about 6.1 meters tall. See also *LTUR* vol. 4, 70-74.

<sup>106</sup> Dorutiu (1961): 346: "C. Cichorius assumed that there had been three superposed files of 12 slabs each, on each side of the building. Only five slabs and a block-fragment from the east side, one slab from the north side and some smaller fragments were preserved. They had been discovered either on the spot, or later on, during excavations at the Tropaeum Traiani stronghold."

titulature, is almost completely lost. Below this, and on all four sides, were recorded the names of perhaps as many as 3,800 Roman soldiers who, according to the fragmented dedicatory inscription, died fighting *pro re. p.*, “for the republic.”<sup>107</sup>

The fragments of the inscription which remain commemorate soldiers of a variety of ranks, including at least five *signiferi* (standard bearers) and three *imaginiferi* (soldiers who carried the image of the emperor in battle).<sup>108</sup> Other fragments indicate a list of names divided up by various units. Different sides of the monument contain inscriptions of the names of Roman legionaries and auxiliaries, and on one of the tablets the name of at least one unit, “Cohort II Batavia,” separated the list of auxiliary soldiers. This organizational system indicates that all of the soldiers were likely listed under a specific unit heading. Along with their *tria nomina*, the *patria* (or place of origin) of each soldier was also included.

As noted above, such collective or state memorials which specifically commemorated the Roman war dead were at best rare throughout all of Roman history. Cicero’s suggestion to build a monument was evidently unique and in any case never constructed.<sup>109</sup> This lack of commemoration appears to have continued throughout the remainder of the first century B.C.E. and for most the first century C.E. Hope is surely correct that the *tumulus* erected by Germanicus in 15 C.E. for the Varian dead should not be interpreted as a war memorial in the modern sense of the term.<sup>110</sup> This ‘monument’ was ephemeral: the Germans destroyed it a year after it was first set up, and when

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<sup>107</sup> *CIL* III, 14214. For the calculation see Cichorius (1904): 30.

<sup>108</sup> *ILS* 9107.

<sup>109</sup> See above page 157-7.

<sup>110</sup> Hope (2003): 91. See also Clementoni (1990): 197-206.

Germanicus returned to the area he saw no reason to rebuild it.<sup>111</sup> The monument at Adamclisi is then the only such memorial of the war dead in the Roman world that we know of.

The proper dating of the memorial at Adamclisi has puzzled scholars for over a century,<sup>112</sup> though it is reasonably clear that the monument belongs to the reign of either Domitian or Trajan.<sup>113</sup> If it is Trajanic, then it commemorates lives lost in one of his two successful campaigns.<sup>114</sup> If it belongs to the reign of Domitian then it more likely commemorates some terrible defeat. Indeed Domitian suffered a number of defeats in the area. Oppius Sabinus, the governor of Moesia, fell with his army in 85 C.E.; the prefect Cornelius Fuscus, and his legionary army were lost in 86 C.E.; the Sarmatians handed the Romans another significant defeat in 92 C.E.<sup>115</sup> Any one of these, or one still unattested,<sup>116</sup> could provide a suitable occasion for the creation of this monument. It is difficult (if not impossible) to say with absolute certainty under what circumstances the monument was constructed, or in which battle the Romans commemorated on the altar at Adamclisi lost their lives. If it was created in the aftermath of a Domitianic defeat then it is particularly interesting as an example of a monument which commemorated a defeat. Unfortunately this is difficult to prove. In any case, even if it was constructed after a

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<sup>111</sup> He did, however, rebuild the altar to his father and had his army parade (*decucurrit*) in Drusus' honour, Tac. *Ann.* 2.7.

<sup>112</sup> The *CIL* edition and Cichorius (1904) offer competing versions.

<sup>113</sup> Dorutiu (1961): 349.

<sup>114</sup> Both the First (101-2) and Second (105-6) Dacian Wars were successful in achieving their goals.

<sup>115</sup> Sabinus, Stefan (2005): 438, Jordanes *Getica* XIII, 76; Fuscus, Jordanes *Getica* XIII, 76 and Dio Cassius 68.9.3; Suet. *Dom.* 6.

<sup>116</sup> Lepper and Frere (1988): 304.

Trajanic victory in which heavy losses were sustained, it is clear that this memorial, unlike all the monuments discussed so far in this chapter, actually commemorated the severe costs suffered by the Romans in their imperial endeavors.<sup>117</sup>

For those who died, the Adamclisi memorial offered a commemoration not usually offered to Roman soldiers. The hundreds of thousands of inscribed epitaphs found throughout the Roman Empire attest the general Roman desire to be remembered (if it was affordable).<sup>118</sup> It is true that soldiers, in joining the army, essentially accepted the possibility that they may never receive even the most basic funeral rite – a proper burial.<sup>119</sup> Death in battle meant anonymous burial in a mass grave; remembrance was unlikely even if the soldiers somehow distinguished themselves. Tacitus, for example, described the actions of two brave Flavian soldiers who were among the besieged at Cremona in 69 C.E. The two snuck outside the walls and sabotaged one of the Vitellian siege engines, but were then immediately killed. Tacitus could only recount their actions; their names were lost forever.<sup>120</sup> The names on the Adamclisi monument commemorated those who had died and offered them the memory which was usually denied soldiers. Yet memorials are as much (if not more) for the living than the dead.

On account of its location on the frontier of the Roman Empire, the Adamclisi memorial must have been seen by few Roman civilians, though they may certainly have heard of its construction. For this reason, the audience most affected by the monument

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<sup>117</sup> Stefan (2005) has recently argued in favour of a Domitianic date.

<sup>118</sup> See the recent work by Carroll (2006), especially the chapter on ‘Memory and Commemoration’ (pages 30-58).

<sup>119</sup> See Chapter 1.3.

<sup>120</sup> *Hist.* 3.23: *Statim confossi sunt eoque intercidere nomina*, “They were immediately killed and for that reason their names were forgotten.” Note that exceptions did exist. Caesar found, buried and commemorated the body of Crassinus after the battle of Pharsalus, (see Chapter 1.3.5).

would have been that group which was consistently located along the frontier: those Roman soldiers who survived and found themselves stationed along the Danube River. It is in the context of this audience that we should search for the meaning of this monument.

The memorial at Adamclisi was as much about commemorating the war dead as it was about raising morale of those who survived. First and foremost, its construction illustrated to the soldiers who fought so tirelessly along Rome's most dangerous frontier that they would not be forgotten, that at least some record of their sacrifice would exist long after they perished. The monument was a signal to the survivors that their emperor cared for them.

But the memorial, and specifically the listing of the names and origins on the monument, must also have had another important consequence. The funerary altar at Adamclisi lists both the name and the origin of every one of the soldiers, both legionary and auxiliary, commemorated on the monument. Below the dedication on the funerary altar the names were listed in column after column in the following way:<sup>121</sup>

L. VARERIVS SACER VIEN  
L. GAVILLIVS PRIMUS AGRP  
L. VALERIVS LVNARIS IVVAV  
G. OCTAVIVS SECVND FORIVL  
SEX. ....IVS CLEMEN CEME  
L. IVLIVS ...LOLLIVS AGRI  
T. FLAVIVS FAVSTVS NICI  
C. VALERIVS SECVND CELE  
C. BILLIVS .....CAT DERT  
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The list of names is intriguing and powerful. It immediately illustrates the sacrifice of the Roman soldiers and elicits a powerful emotional response as the viewer considers just who Lucius Valerius Sacer and his fellow soldiers were. The size of the monument, as

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<sup>121</sup> *CIL* III 14214.

noted above, may have limited the viewer's ability to read every name, but in general the point was made; thousands of Romans, real men with real names, had died. Nevertheless, the real power of this monument comes not from the list of names, intriguing though they may be, but from the list of origins accompanying those names. It cannot be that the only reason for the inclusion of the origins was that the inscribers had enough room to include them. Another reason must be sought.

Most of the funerary altar at Adamclisi is lost. Of the possible 3,800 origins that once covered the entire structure only the abbreviations of fifty-two remain.<sup>122</sup> Many of these are difficult to decipher because of the various possibilities an abbreviation presents. For example, the abbreviation NICI could possibly refer to Nicia in what is now Macedonia or Nicivibus in modern Algeria. Or it might indicate an inconsistency in spelling and refer to Nicaea in Turkey. Whatever it refers to, NICI was somewhere far from Rome. This is the case for many of the origins – in fact, there are only two soldiers listed from Rome. Thirteen appear to come from Col. Claudia Ara Agrippinensium in modern Germany. There are references to a single soldier from Britain, one from Africa, at least three from Spain, at least two from Asia Minor, and a number from Italy and the Balkan provinces.<sup>123</sup> These soldiers who died for the Republic in Moesia came from a wide variety of places throughout the Roman Empire. The inclusion of the various origins of the soldiers therefore indicates the vast extent of the Roman Empire.

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<sup>122</sup> I have followed the drawing in *CIL* III 12412 and the pictures and drawings offered by E. Dorutiu (1961). I have made my own determinations as to what each abbreviation refers to and in some cases I differ from Dorutiu.

<sup>123</sup> BRITannia, AFER, two from Lusitania and one from Lucensium, Isinda and Caesarea, Noricum (Celeia and Iuvavum).



Various other commemorative works send this same message. A trophy at La Turbie lists all of the tribes conquered (*gentes Alpinae devictae*) under the auspices of the emperor Augustus.<sup>124</sup> It is not necessary to conclude that a Roman, having traveled from Rome to Tropaeum Augusti, would recognize and visually interpret on his own where each and every one of these tribes was located. The variety and sheer size of the list itself illustrates the extent of Roman power and control. In a similar way the placards listing the names of *gentes* conquered by Augustus and carried in his funeral reflected Roman hegemony.<sup>125</sup> This is the same message as – argued Nicolet – was seen in sections of the *Res Gestae* listing peoples and places many Romans would have never heard of.<sup>126</sup> The friezes of the various ethnicities at the Sebasteion at Aphrodisias are yet more examples of an attempt to represent Roman power irrespective of an individual's ability to create mentally a map of the Roman world.<sup>127</sup> The fragmented remains of a tribunal located in Rome lists (in a way similar to the Adamclisi memorial) the names and origins of Roman soldiers who came from various places throughout the empire.<sup>128</sup> A final, and much later example is the famed Peutinger Map, which Talbert has recently argued is a representation of Roman power rather than a practical map.<sup>129</sup> Just like all of these

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<sup>124</sup> *CIL* V 7817 and described by Plin. *NH* 3.136 – 137.

<sup>125</sup> Tac. *Ann.* 1.8 for the funeral of Augustus.

<sup>126</sup> Nicolet (1988): 20, and noted by Talbert (1989): 1351.

<sup>127</sup> See especially Smith (1988).

<sup>128</sup> *ILS* 9081. The tribunal is dated to 168 CE and includes the *tria nomina* or *patria* of at least twelve soldiers. The soldiers commemorated on the *tribunal* came from different places throughout the empire: two from Patavium, and one each from Bononia, Fidentia, Tarquinia, Capua, Nepet and Mediolanum in Italy; one from Berua in Raetia and one from Philippi in Greece. The two abbreviations COS., as suggested by Dessau in his commentary on the inscription, may indicate that a consul was once listed, or may indicate two more soldiers from the Italian colony of Cosa.

<sup>129</sup> Talbert (forthcoming).

monuments, the funerary altar at Adamclisi, asserts monumentally the supremacy of Rome and the extent of the Roman hegemony.<sup>130</sup> Thus, while it does memorialize the war dead individually, it is also suggestive of Roman power even, perhaps, after a defeat. In this sense it has the same meaning as the arch of Claudius, or the columns of Trajan or Marcus. The Adamclisi memorial just goes about presenting the message in a very different way.

In a chapter on the Roman census, Nicolet wrote that “it was not sufficient to know the approximate extent and limits within the oikoumene of the world that [the Romans] had to govern – they had actually to take possession of it.”<sup>131</sup> He then described how the institution of the census was one way the Romans came to possess their empire and, in effect, the citizens of their empire. If he is correct that it was necessary for Rome ‘to possess’ the empire, then the Adamclisi monument (along with those monuments and ceremonies described above) is a perfect example of the accomplishment of that goal. Even though it is unique, there is no better example of possession, loyalty, strength and power than a monument located along the frontier of the empire that lists soldiers from throughout that empire, all of whom had died for the Roman *res publica*. Paradoxically, though the funerary altar at Adamclisi was located on a frontier, on a limit of the empire, it still demonstrated perfectly what Vergil had called the *imperium sine fine*.<sup>132</sup>

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<sup>130</sup> Or as Talbert (1989): 1351 describes it: all assert “Roman dominance of the inhabited world.”

<sup>131</sup> Nicolet (1991): 123.

<sup>132</sup> Vergil, *Aen.* 1. 279.

#### 4.6 Conclusion

This chapter considered various *lieux de mémoire*, including battlefields, calendars, ceremonies, and war memorials in both the city of Rome and along the Danubian frontier. It is clear that a collective memory of a defeat or of casualties of war did not always exist. Certain memories were promoted and sometimes even expected, but that does not make them collective; if anything the memory of Roman warfare was varied at best.

The battlefields of the Roman world were rarely places of long term commemoration or tourism as they are today, or as some were in the ancient Greek world.<sup>133</sup> Some (both Romans and Roman enemies) thought that the battlefields of defeated armies were sources of emotional distress. Nevertheless, the evidence suggests rather that armies were motivated by the chance to replace the memory of a defeat with one of victory. The Roman calendar during the republican period commemorated Roman disasters, but this commemoration does not mean that all Romans shared the same memory. Once again, some Romans sought to exchange the memory of the day of a defeat with one of victory. An explanation for this is surely found in the intense competitive nature of Roman politics.

Meanwhile, war memorials located in Rome and constructed in the imperial period suggest that Roman warfare was for the most part bloodless and without cost. This conclusion suits the judgment reached in the previous chapter: that during the imperial period, Roman emperors saw no reason to illustrate to Roman citizens the severe human

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<sup>133</sup> Hanson (1989): 202-204.

cost of Roman hegemony over the Mediterranean world and far beyond. Admitting such losses could be detrimental to the emperor's position. Along the frontier, specifically at Adamclisi, the opposite was true, and this is because the audience along the frontier was specifically and intimately aware of the costs associated with empire. There was no hiding it there. These soldiers knew the price they were being asked to pay. Still, the Romans created a monument that offered multiple meanings, including the honoring of the dead and the promotion of Roman power.

The memory and commemoration of war was (and continues to be) political in nature. The physical memorials to Roman warfare, whether they are geographical locations such as battlefields, or monuments constructed of stone, represent various discourses about Roman warfare. These discourses were constructed for and suited a specific audience. That audience was never the entirety of the Roman people. War memorials are ambiguous and the reason for this is clear: those responsible for the construction of the monument and a variety of viewers all understand the meaning of the monument in different ways because each one "interprets history differently."<sup>134</sup> The altar at Adamclisi recognized the price of the Roman Empire, while at the same time providing a specific example of its extent; most other Roman monuments did not. For the citizens of the city of Rome, the various monuments which adorned the city did not depict the harsh reality of war. Yet paradoxically the men who wrote the history of Rome's Empire (Sallust, Caesar, Livy, Tacitus among others) did not hesitate to recount just how much Roman blood the "empire without end" cost. Their works, the subject of the next chapter, are also *lieux de mémoire*.

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<sup>134</sup> Mayo (1988):73.

## Chapter Five

### The Discourse and Reality of Casualty Figures in the Ancient Roman Historians

#### *5.1 Introduction*

Underpinning this dissertation has been the connection between the discourse and the reality of the aftermath of warfare in the Roman world. The first three chapters – while recognizing the effect the discourse of war had on the reality of warfare – mostly considered the reality of that aftermath. The fourth chapter explored how the Romans commemorated their military losses with memorials and monuments; an investigation which focused primarily on various visual discourses of war. This final chapter examines another specific discourse, namely the written discourse, specifically those prose writers who wrote the history of the Romans.<sup>1</sup> Since these sources were written by elite Romans (or Greeks), they present a distinct version of the reality of war. Nevertheless, Roman elites commanded Roman armies, and so it was the discourse of the elite that would most affect how Roman armies would fight. This is especially true in a society as competitive as Roman society.

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<sup>1</sup> I have included among these writers Julius Caesar. Although he is not an historian like Tacitus or Livy, he does help reflect and (to an even greater extent than Tacitus or Livy) create the discourse.

This chapter is divided into two main sections based on two specific literary traditions, or discourses, found in the sources. The first section considers the common practice of including numbers in the aftermath narratives of Roman battles. The second section analyzes the frequent occurrence of the notion of the “bloodless victory” found in the sources. Both of these discourses are widespread and both influenced how Roman generals commanded their armies.

### 5.2 (Re)Counting the War Dead

Livy recorded the human cost of the battle of Cannae fought between the Romans and Carthaginians in 216 B.C.E.:

It is said that 45,500 infantry, 2,700 cavalry were killed, and that these were nearly equal part citizen and ally; among these were both of the consuls' quaestors, Lucius Atilius and Lucius Furius Bibaculus, and twenty-nine tribunes of the soldiers, some being of consular rank, some of praetorian and some aedilician – among those mentioned were Gnaeus Servilius Geminus and Marcus Minucius, who was Master of the Horse the year before, and consul several years before – furthermore, there were eighty senators, or those who held magistracies which gave them the right to be elected into the senate and who had volunteered to serve as soldiers in the legions. It is said that there were 3,000 infantry and 1,500 cavalry captured in the battle.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Livy 22.49.15-18: *Quadragesima quinque milia quingenti pedites, duo milia septingenti equites et tantadem prope civium sociorumque pars caesi dicuntur; in his ambo consulum quaestores, L. Atilius et L. Furius Bibaculus, et undetriginta tribuni militum, consulares quidam praetoriarum et aedilicium - inter eos Cn. Servilium Geminum et M. Minucium numerant, qui magister equitum priore anno, aliquot annis ante consul fuerat, - octoginta praeterea aut senatores aut qui eos magistratus gessissent unde in senatum legi deberent cum sua voluntate milites in legionibus facti essent. Capta eo proelio tria milia peditum et equites mille et quingenti dicuntur.*

The initial figures in this description are rounded estimates of the total Roman losses. The fact that other sources offer different (though still rounded) figures illustrates the difficulty in determining accurately the number of losses in a defeat as large as Cannae.<sup>3</sup> But Livy is also quite specific in this description. He names the quaestors who were killed and he precisely numbers the tribunes lost and mentions the various ranks from which they came. Livy also names a former consul and *magister equitum*, and calculates that eighty members of the senatorial order were killed. This passage then illustrates two interconnected characteristics of how Roman sources recounted casualty figures. First, it is clear that there was a variety of ways in which the sources could describe these losses; these descriptions could range from indefinite estimations to specific records. Second, this assortment of methods for recounting casualty figures meant that some Romans were worth remembering in more detail than others. Although the aftermath narrative for the battle of Cannae is particularly detailed (a point which can also be seen in the discussion in Chapter Three), it nevertheless offers a general framework for how Romans recorded their casualties of war.

Although not every aftermath narrative is as detailed as Livy's version for Cannae, casualty figures are often (though not always) found in the aftermath narratives of Roman battles. Modern historians have generally criticized the reliability of such figures found in the ancient sources.<sup>4</sup> Brunt offered this basic, if understated, comment: "Of the numerical data transmitted by ancient writers casualty figures are perhaps the least reliable."<sup>5</sup> He

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<sup>3</sup> For a review of the casualty figures in other sources see Goldsworthy (2001): 193-195.

<sup>4</sup> For casualty figures in the Roman context, see Brunt (1971): 694-697; Campbell (2002): 68-70; and Pittenger (2008): 104; for casualty figures in a Greek context, see Rubincam (1991).

<sup>5</sup> Brunt (1971): 694.

then suggested reasons for such inaccuracies. First, generals often estimated the number of casualties, and this was never an exact science. According to Brunt, such estimations did not take into account those soldiers taken prisoner, or those who deserted or simply returned home on their own accord.<sup>6</sup> Second, a deceptive general might attempt to minimize his own losses in an effort to maximize the glory of his victory. The same general, for the same reason, might also increase the estimate of the number of enemy losses. After all, Roman martial culture rewarded such creativity with the prestige of a triumph. Indeed, the inflation of casualty figures as part of the competition to win triumphs is precisely the argument Pittenger makes in her recent examination of triumphal debates in Livy.<sup>7</sup> While the political debates for a triumph may explain some of the more elaborate discrepancies in Roman versus enemy killed – a topic to which we will return later – they do not explain the frequent inclusion of casualty figures when no triumphal debate took place, as, for instance, when the casualties (both for and against the Romans) had no relationship to the awarding of a triumph. Furthermore, it is not only the modern scientific scholar who has a problem with the reliability of casualty figures found in the ancient sources.

Although he is not alone in his criticism, Livy, more than any other source, often complained about the reliability of his sources. His favorite target was the first century B.C.E. annalist Valerius Antias, who, in an assessment both generous and acerbic, Livy

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<sup>6</sup> This would have been particularly likely during the early and middle republican period of which Brunt was concerned.

<sup>7</sup> Pittenger (2008): 114: “The conventional presence of casualty statistics and other quantitative elements in battle descriptions may be traced to the rhetorical context of triumph debates.”



thought was partial to great exaggerations.<sup>8</sup> Though frequently specific with his displeasure with Antias, Livy commented in general terms as well. While describing the results of the battle of Lake Trasimene – one of Rome’s most significant defeats in the Second Punic War – Livy noted that many writers were all too prone to exaggeration.<sup>9</sup> Livy, in the spirit of self-justification, proclaimed that he followed the casualty figures offered by Fabius Pictor, an author who lived through the war and wrote the first Roman history, albeit in Greek. A similar sort of complaint about the boastful exaggeration of numbers is found in Dio Cassius. While describing a triumph celebrated by Julius Caesar, Dio justified his decision not to include the number of gladiatorial combats because, in his opinion, “all such [numbers] are always exaggerated up to a greater number.”<sup>10</sup> Despite the recognition that many of their own sources were unreliable, in most cases the Roman writers still included the casualty figures, and more often than not they did so without complaint. The inclusion of casualty figures – and even the complaints made by our sources about the reliability of casualty figures – indicates an understanding and expectation that the costs of war should be calculated and recounted. This calculation is necessary regardless of whether or not a general may have been in a position to receive a triumph.

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<sup>8</sup> Livy 33.10.8: ... *qui credat omnium rerum immodice numerum augenti* ..., “who extravagantly exaggerates numbers of all kinds.” Pittenger (2008): 104 mentions Livy’s (and modern scholars’) tendency to complain about Valerius Antias. She argues that the exaggerations pre-date the annalists, who were often the main sources for the early republican period, and that the origin of exaggerations ought to be sought in the triumphal debates of the early and middle republic. I have no qualms with her argument, which I generally consider to be correct. My concern is the broader meaning of including such figures, not their origin.

<sup>9</sup> Livy 22.7.3-4: *Multiplex caedes utrimque facta traditur ab aliis*, “Some authors multiplied the losses on both sides.”

<sup>10</sup> Dio Cass. 43.22.4: πάντα γὰρ τὰ τοιαῦτα ἐπὶ τὸ μείζον ἀεὶ κομποῦται.

### 5.2.1 The Importance of Casualty Figures

Casualty numbers mattered to the ancient Romans. Knowledge of the specific number of casualties in battle could determine the victor, a notion that the ancient divinities appear to have reinforced. After being expelled from the city in 509 B.C.E., Tarquinius, the last king of the Romans, led an army of Etruscans and soldiers from Tarquinii and Veii against his former subjects in an attempt to re-establish the monarchy in Rome. When the opposing forces met, the ensuing battle was a bloody and gruesome affair on both sides, and no clear victor emerged. Nevertheless, Tarquinius and his Etruscan army fled the battlefield – a sure admittance of defeat.<sup>11</sup> Livy, however, added another (unbelievable) detail in his description of the battle. After the battle, amidst the groans of the wounded and dying, a voice, supposedly of the deity Silvanus (who inhabited the nearby woods), announced that Tarquinius' army had lost “one more” man than the Romans. The difference of a single casualty meant that the Romans had “conquered in the war.”<sup>12</sup> In this case, whatever the specific numbers, the difference of a single casualty mattered. The whole story might be considered a mythical anomaly if not for a similar, more politically charged event, described by Livy in his narrative of the Second Punic War.

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<sup>11</sup> Livy 2.7.1.

<sup>12</sup> Livy 2.7.2: *uno plus Tuscorum cecidisse in acie; vincere bello Romanum*. The story is also found in Val. Max. 1.8.5; Dion. Hal. 5.16 (though here Silvanus is replaced with Faunus); and Plut. *Publ.* 9. For the role of Silvanus in the Roman Pantheon see Dorsey (1992), and especially page 35 for specific reference to the episode here discussed. Dorsey is concerned with whether or not Silvanus had prophetic abilities (of which, this battle narrative seems to be the only sure evidence). Regardless of whether Silvanus was a prophet, or whether Livy used him improperly in this story, the fact that a Roman deity determined that a single casualty was enough to determine victory is pertinent.

In 218 B.C.E., shortly after shocking the entire Mediterranean by crossing the Alps, Hannibal began to harass the Gauls who inhabited the area between the Trebia and Po rivers. Distressed by the Carthaginian plundering, the Gauls asked the Roman consuls for assistance. The two consuls, Publius Cornelius Scipio and Tiberius Sempronius, debated about whether or not to help the Gauls.<sup>13</sup> Against the advice of Scipio, Sempronius sent a detachment of his own forces to protect them. After engaging the Carthaginians, the Romans had some early success, but when enemy reinforcements arrived, the battle became even and the outcome uncertain. In the end, Livy reported that because the enemy had lost more men, “the judgment of victory was for the Romans.”<sup>14</sup> Here the historian probably reflected a report by Sempronius, who found a way to claim victory after the disagreement with his colleague on whether or not to send any forces at all. The *fama victoriae* would justify Sempronius' decision at the expense of Scipio.<sup>15</sup>

In both the above examples, Livy was less concerned with the specific number of dead than he was with the fact that at the end of the battle the enemy dead outnumbered the Roman dead. Whatever actually happened in 509 B.C.E. and in 218 B.C.E. is important for the reality and the narrative of history. But regardless of that reality and of the accuracy or inaccuracy of Livy's narrative, it remains true that whatever did actually happen, by the late first century B.C.E. such calculations were an expected and

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<sup>13</sup> Livy 21.52.7-8: Scipio remained suspicious of the Gauls, and liked neither the timing nor the occasion of the proposed battle. Sempronius, meanwhile, held that allies needed to see that the Romans would support them. I am unaware of any work tracing the strategic and tactical debates of Roman generals in the field.

<sup>14</sup> Livy 21.52.11: *cumque ad extremum aequassent certamen, maior tamen hostium numerus cecidisset, penes Romanos fama victoriae fuit*, “and since, at the end the contest was about equal, but a greater number of the enemy were dead, the judgment of victory belonged to the Romans.”

<sup>15</sup> It is worth noting that Sempronius' decisions were always less conservative than his colleague. See, for example, Livy 22.59.1-10.

acceptable part of the Roman discourse of the aftermath of battle, and therefore an accepted indication of Roman success in war.

Indeed, numbers also mattered for the determination of one of Rome's most important military ceremonies. A Roman general needed to kill at least 5,000 of the enemy, *and* limit his own losses in order to be voted a triumph. While the historical existence of this so-called 5,000 rule may be doubted,<sup>16</sup> the idea that the awarding of a triumph was based on the proportion of enemy killed compared to casualties sustained should not be doubted.<sup>17</sup> In a society so dominated by competition, the glory of such a reward could surely provoke exaggerated estimates of casualties by glory-seeking generals.

### 5.2.2 Counting the Dead

There is evidence to suggest that Roman generals did attempt to count their war dead. After the battle of Dyrrachium, Caesar referred to the “calculation” of the number of the dead, both Roman and enemy.<sup>18</sup> Livy meanwhile, when he made any mention of counting the war dead, seems to have relied on some version of the verb *recenseo*, to enumerate. So, he describes the Volsci “enumerating” the number of men they lost

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<sup>16</sup> For which see Beard (2007): 209-210. See Orosius 5.4.7, who recorded the exploits of Appius Claudius Pulcher and his loss of 5,000 of his own men, his defeat of 5,000 of the Salassian Gauls, his denial of a triumph and his subsequent celebration of a triumph at his own expense.

<sup>17</sup> For which see Pittenger's (2008): 104-114 chapter “Body Counts; or, Who Killed Whom”.

<sup>18</sup> Caes. *BC* 3.53: *Ita uno die VI preliis factis, tribus ad Dyrrachium, tribus ad munitiones, cum horum omnium ratio haberetur ...*, “And so, after six battles were completed in one day, three at Dyrrachium and three at the camps, when a calculation of all was completed ...”

against the Romans in a battle in 341 B.C.E.<sup>19</sup> Likewise, Livy records that a Roman consul “enumerated” his losses in the course of a two day battle.<sup>20</sup> During the imperial period, the obsessive bookkeeping of the Roman army often indicated losses suffered by the army, and even those soldiers that were wounded.<sup>21</sup> But whatever official counts were deemed necessary for Roman generals, the historians themselves may also be responsible for some of the exaggerations and rounded figures. Plutarch, for example, seemed to relish the opportunity to imbue his biographies with imagery rather than calculation. So, according to Plutarch, even in his own day (c. 46 – 120 C.E.), the severity of Sulla's attack on the city of Athens during the first Mithridatic War (89 – 85 B.C.E.) was recalled, not by the number of dead bodies, but by the space in the city that was covered with blood.<sup>22</sup>

Such estimations may explain the all too common instance of rounded (and often high) casualty figures.<sup>23</sup> But it is worth noting that when Livy (at least) refers to the number of standards lost (or won from the enemy) that number is often specific and precise.<sup>24</sup> In such cases, specificity may also be found in the casualty figures themselves.

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<sup>19</sup> Livy 8.1.5: *Volsci recensentibus quos viros in acie amisissent* ..., “After the Volsci reckoned up those men who they had lost in the line ...”

<sup>20</sup> Livy 10.36.15: *recensente consule* ...

<sup>21</sup> For a brief discussion (and citations) on the yearly reports, called *pridianum*, see Chapter 1.3.3.

<sup>22</sup> Plut. *Sull.* 14.3: ... ὥστε ἀριθμὸν μηδένα γενέσθαι τῶν ἀποσφαγέντων, ἀλλὰ τῷ τοπω τοῦ ρύεντος αἵματος ἔτι νῦν μετρεῖσθαι τὸ πλῆθος, “... there was no counting of those who were slaughtered, but still now the number of dead are measured by the space that was covered in blood.”

<sup>23</sup> For example, Livy 9.31.16 (20,000 enemy dead); App. Pref. 11 (20,000, 40,000, 50,000 Roman dead) App. 4. Epi. 3 (800,000 Roman dead); Dio Cass. 62.1.1-2 (80,000 Roman dead in Britain); Dio Cass. 63.10.3 (40,000 dead at Cremona in 69 CE); Vell. Pat. 2.15.3 (300,000 Roman dead in the Social War); Tac. *Agr.* 29.4 (40,000 Britons killed).

<sup>24</sup> See, for example, Livy 24.42.4-8 (fifty-seven and then fifty-eight); Livy 26.6.8-9 (fifteen from the Carthaginians and eighteen from the Capuans).

So in a defeat of the Samnites, the Romans captured ninety-seven standards, killed 20,340 of the enemy and took 3,870.<sup>25</sup> Still, it is far more common to find a rounded estimate of the war dead. Specifics are often left, as in the case of Livy's aftermath narrative of the battle of Cannae, to the commemoration of individuals of particular rank.

### 5.2.3 Ranking the Dead

Our sources often determine the extent of a defeat by specifically referring to the number of Romans of specific ranks that were lost. While describing an engagement between the Romans and Carthaginians in the immediate aftermath of the Roman defeat at the Trebia River, Livy concluded that the "loss to the Romans was greater than the number indicated [about 600], because it included several from the equestrian order, five tribunes of the soldiers and three prefects of the allies."<sup>26</sup> Indeed, such losses could make a defeat even worse than it actually was in reality. While describing a Roman victory in

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<sup>25</sup> Livy 10.42.4.

<sup>26</sup> Livy 21.59.9: ... *sed maior Romanis quam pro numero iactura fuit, quia equestris ordinis aliquot et tribuni militum quinque et praefecti sociorum tres sunt interfecti*. This whole engagement likely did not occur. Polybius makes no mention of it (see the Loeb note for the passage, page 178). For other Livian examples see 7.8.7 (*aliquot equites Romani cecidere*, "a number of Roman equites died"); 9.28.7-8 (... *amissos quosdam equestris ordinis tribunosque militum atque unum legatum, et quod insigne maxime fuit, consulis ipsius volnus*, "... they had lost a certain number from the equestrian order and tribunes of the soldiers and one legate, and that which was most conspicuous, the consul himself was wounded"; 22.49.15-18 (in which Livy describes the losses suffered at Cannae, names the quaestors who died, Lucius Atilius and Lucius Furius Bibaculus, and numbers (and names some of) the twenty-nine tribunes, and eighty senators who were lost; 27.12.16 (... *in iis quattuor Romani centuriones, duo tribuni militum, M. Licinius et M. Helvius*, "among them were four Roman centurions and two tribunes of the soldiers, Marcus Licinius and Marcus Helvius"; 27.27.7-9 in which passage the wounding of Marcellus is recorded as well as the deaths of Aulus Manlius, a tribune of the soldiers, and Manius Aulius, one of the prefects; 35.5.13-14 (lists the deaths of thirty-three centurions, four *praefecti socium*, and three tribunes of the soldiers, who are named, Marcus Genucius and Quintus and Marcus Marcius. That some of these phrases (such as 9.38.8) may suggest "annalistic invention" as Oakley (1997): 488 suggests does not take away from the fact that this was a promoted discourse, and that this discourse must have had an effect on the reality of Roman warfare. In fact, if they do reflect an annalistic invention, all the better, because it would illustrate the prevalence of the discourse.

Spain in 185 B.C.E., Livy states that about 600 Romans were killed, but that “the loss of five tribunes of the soldiers and a few Roman *equites* gave the appearance of an especially bloody victory.”<sup>27</sup> Such examples of specifying the rank and names of those lost are not limited to Livy. Appian, for example, recalls that when Mithridates defeated the army of Triarius in 67 B.C.E., there were found among the dead some twenty-four tribunes and 150 centurions. Regarding these losses, Appian concluded that “so great a number of officers had rarely fallen in a single Roman defeat.”<sup>28</sup> Tacitus, meanwhile, recounted the deaths of a camp prefect, eight centurions, and the some of the most daring men in an attack on a Roman camp in Britain.<sup>29</sup> Even the death of a single centurion merited a mention. In Tacitus' recollection of Caesennius Paetus awaiting relief from Corbulo at Rhandaia (the details are discussed in Chapter Four), the historian recalled the death of a single centurion, along with a few other soldiers.<sup>30</sup> Julius Caesar, appears to have been particularly concerned with recording the loss of ranked individuals.<sup>31</sup> The

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<sup>27</sup> Livy 39.31.6: *Tribuni militum quinque amissi et pauci equites romani cruentae maxime victoriae speciem fecerunt*. The passage is discussed in Briscoe (2008): 328, who recognizes that it is the “loss of the tribunes that L. regards as significant.”

<sup>28</sup> App. 12(*Mith.*).13.89: ὅσον ἡγεμόνων πλῆθος οὐ ῥαδίως συνέπεσε Ῥωμαίοις ἐν ἡττῇ μιᾷ. Plutarch (*Luc.* 35), probably using the same source as Appian, recorded the same story, but without the comment.

<sup>29</sup> Tac. *Ann.* 12.38: *praefectus tamen et octo centuriones ac promptissimus quisque e manipulis cecidere*, “however the praefect and eight centurions and the most visible men of the maniples died.”

<sup>30</sup> Tac. *Ann.* 15.10: *Deinde amisso centurione et paucis militibus, quos visendis hostium copiis praemiserat, trepidus remeavit*, “then, after the loss of one centurion and a few soldiers, whom he had sent forward to see the forces of the enemy, he retreated in trepidation.”

<sup>31</sup> *BG* 2.25: all the centurions of the 4<sup>th</sup> cohort; the standard bearer; and almost all the centurions of other cohorts were wounded or killed (including the chief centurion, Publius Sextius Baculus. *BG* 5.15: tribune Quintus Laberius Drusus, killed in an otherwise minor skirmish. *BG* 5.35: severely wounded (likely died) - chief centurion, Titus Balventius (both thighs pierced); Quintus Lucanius, another chief centurion also killed (defending his son); legate Lucius Cotta (hit in the face by a sling).

identification of such losses no doubt reflects the tendency of our sources to focus on the lives of the elite, rather than the masses of Roman soldiers.

#### 5.2.4 *Disproportional Casualty Ratios*

Some ancient sources appear to have exaggerated the difference between enemy and Roman dead to such an extent that their reliability must be questioned. Appian, a second century C.E. Greek from Alexandria, wrote a history of Rome; a work he divided into the geographical regions in which Rome had fought wars and won an empire.<sup>32</sup> On multiple occasions, he described vast difference between Roman and enemy war dead. In one example, Appian reported that in 121 B.C.E. a Roman army led by Fabius Maximus Aemilianus killed 120,000 Gauls, while losing only fifteen Romans.<sup>33</sup> In another example, this time describing the results of the battle of Chaeronea in 86 B.C.E. between Roman forces led by Lucius Cornelius Sulla and the army of Mithridates, Appian reported that the Romans killed 110,000 of the enemy. The Romans had first thought that they had lost fifteen men, but (thank the gods!) two of these supposedly lost soldiers

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<sup>32</sup> With the exception of his history of the civil wars of the first century B.C.E., Appian is not a very well studied source. Part of the reason for this is modern antipathy; for example, note the self-fulfilling prophesy of Mellor (1998): 61: “Appian adapted his sources without much analysis, so his history is only useful where he preserves material when other sources are lacking.” Detailed discussions of Appian do exist however, especially in *ANRW* 34.1 (1993).

<sup>33</sup> App. 4 (*Gall.*):2: πρὸ δὲ τοῦ Μαρίου καὶ Φάβιος Μάξιμος ὁ Αἰμιλιανός, ὀλίγην κομιδῆ στρατιὰν ἔχων, ἐπολέμησε τοῖς Κελτοῖς, καὶ δώδεκα μυριάδας αὐτῶν ἐν μιᾷ μάχῃ κατέκτανε, πεντεκαίδεκα μόνους τῶν ἰδίων ἀποβαλὼν, “Even before Marius, Fabius Maximus Aemilianus, having quite a small army, made war with the Gauls, and killed 120,000 of them in one battle, while losing only 15 of his own men. “Fabius received the name Allobrogicus, the conqueror of the Allobroges, for the staggering imbalance of his victory.



reappeared later.<sup>34</sup> Plutarch, another Greek author of the second century C.E., offered a similar discrepancy when describing Lucullus' battle with Tigranes in 69 B.C.E. In this case the Romans killed more than 100,000 of the enemy, while losing only five of their own men.<sup>35</sup> Although it is impossible to know for certain, the immense difference between enemy and Roman killed raises concerns about the accuracy of the figures. Exaggerating the ratio of Romans lost to enemy killed was one way to illustrate Roman dominance. As noted above, such exaggerations must not have been uncommon in the ultra competitive world of Roman politics. It is probably no accident that the above examples all refer to Roman generals active during a period of heightened political rivalry.

While it may be difficult to believe that such figures are accurate, they nevertheless are historically important not because they offer a true account of casualties inflicted and sustained, but because their very inclusion in the sources illustrates a specific and powerful discourse about Roman warfare. The disproportional ratios help determine Roman attitudes and expectations about how wars should be fought as well as indicating what constituted martial success. In this way, such ratios set a standard for success to which all Roman generals had to confirm. The improbability of achieving such

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<sup>34</sup> App. 12(*Mith.*).6.45: ... οὐ πολὺ πλείους μυρίων ἐκ δώδεκα μυριάδων γενόμενοι. Ῥωμαίων δὲ ἔδοξαν μὲν ἀποθανεῖν πεντεκαίδεκα ἄνδρες, δύο δ' αὐτῶν ἐπανήλθον, "... not more than 10,000 of the 120,000 were left. It was thought that fifteen of the Romans had died, but two of these returned." Other examples exist in Appian, but are less extreme: 30,000 - 100 (App. 8(*Pun.*).4.23); 10,000 - 75 (plus 300 allies) (App. 8(*Pun.*). 5.26). Note also how such figures illustrate Appian's tendency towards rounded figures. See, for example, App. Pref. 11 where he recalls that 20,000, 40,000 or 50,000 Romans were killed in a single day.

<sup>35</sup> Plut. *Luc.* 28.6: λέγεται δὲ τῶν μὲν πεζῶν ὑπὲρ δέκα μυριάδας διαφθαρῆναι, τῶν δ' ἰππέων ὀλίγους παντάπασι διαφυγεῖν. Ῥωμαίων δ' ἑκατὸν ἐτρώθησαν, ἔπεσον δὲ πέντε, "It is said that 100,000 of the enemy infantry were destroyed, and of the cavalry, a few in total escaped. One hundred of the Romans were wounded, and five died."

a success rate was less a problem of inflicting and limiting casualties as it was one of perception and propaganda. Thus, Roman success was often less about the reality of warfare than it was about the discourse.

Whether the ratios are accurate or not, they provide staggering testimony of the destructive power of the Roman army.<sup>36</sup> They also illustrate a source's desire to praise the Roman war machine. Indeed, the examples from Appian support the conclusion that he was wholly impressed by Roman success and vigorously promoted it.<sup>37</sup> Since the above examples come from Appian and Plutarch, it is tempting to think that only Greek sources presented such irrational ratios,<sup>38</sup> but a common discourse which promotes a similar message appears in many Latin texts; but with one important difference. Whereas Appian and Plutarch recorded minimal Roman casualties against staggering totals of enemy dead, many Latin (and indeed Greek) sources reduced the Roman losses to zero. Such a victory was commonly called an *incruenta victoria*, "a bloodless victory".

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<sup>36</sup> The ratios also recall Josephus' famous dictum (*BJ* 3.75) that Roman training was a bloodless battle, and that their battles were bloody training sessions.

<sup>37</sup> As Gómez Espelosín (1993): 427 put it: Appian was able to "give expression to his own obsessions: those of a Greek who admired the grandeur of Rome and tried to transmit to other Greeks, who were also Roman subjects, an optimistic and confident vision of the Empire, based on the actual supremacy of the virtues which Appian had noted in his Prologue as the decisive factors in the final victory of Roman arms."

<sup>38</sup> Such ratios are in fact rare in the Latin sources. In his commentary on the civil wars of 49-48 B.C.E. Caesar records ratios of 800 : 2 (3.37); and 2000 : 20 (3.53). These ratios are not nearly as exorbitant as those found in Plutarch or Appian. In the commentary on the African War a ratio of 5,000 : 50 (86) is recorded; while in the commentary on the Spanish War we find a ratio of 30,000 : 1,000 (31). Again, these ratios are not immediately unreasonable, though they may suggest a certain amount of praising exaggeration by Caesar's supporters. Tacitus' (*Agr.* 37) provides another example: 10,000 : 360.

### 5.3 Bloodless Victories

In 84 C.E. Gnaeus Julius Agricola invaded the territory of Caledonia where he met an army of some 30,000 Britons at Mons Graupius.<sup>39</sup> He organized his army so that the main line consisted of some 8,000 auxiliary soldiers. The flanks were protected by nearly 3,000 cavalry. These soldiers, who would bear the brunt of the fighting, were foreigners. The Roman legions meanwhile, made up of Roman citizens, waited in reserve as guardians of the camp. Tacitus explained that Agricola ordered his army in such a way for two reasons: [1] he would have a reserve if his main force was somehow repulsed, and [2] the glory of his victory would be even greater if it came “without the loss of Roman blood.”<sup>40</sup> In the end, the army of Roman auxiliaries defeated the enemy. After the battle, 10,000 Britons were dead; Agricola lost only 360 men. Among the dead was Aulus Atticus, a prefect of a cohort, whom Tacitus records was killed when “the ardor of his youth and the ferocity of his horse carried him into the enemy lines.”<sup>41</sup> If, as seems likely, Aulus was a Roman citizen then the glory of victory must have been at least partially stained with Roman blood.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Tac. *Agr.* 29. The battle may have taken place in 83 AD. The precise location of the battle is unknown (BAtlas Directory Vol. 1, p. 133).

<sup>40</sup> Tac. *Agr.* 35: ... *ingens victoriae decus citra Romanum sanguinem bellandi, et auxilium, si pellerentur.* “there would be great glory for a victory achieved without the loss of Roman blood.” For the phrasing, and in particular the use of *citra*, see Heubner (1984): 103.

<sup>41</sup> Tac. *Agr.* 37: *nostrorum trecenti sexaginta cecidere, in quis Aulus Atticus praefectus cohortis, iuvenili ardore et ferocia equi hostibus inlatus.*

<sup>42</sup> The *praefectus cohortis* was commonly a Roman of equestrian status; this was especially the case during and after the Flavian period, see Keppie (1984): 184.

Agricola's battle formation has elicited frequent discussion.<sup>43</sup> It has been claimed that he used auxiliaries in this battle for purely tactical reasons.<sup>44</sup> While arguing against the now discredited notion that auxiliaries acted as nothing more than “cannon fodder,” Gilliver offers examples of genuine tactical reasons for using lighter-armed auxiliary troops rather than the heavier Roman legionaries. In particular, the terrain of the battlefield often determined a general's decision on troop deployment and tactics.<sup>45</sup> While her argument for the utility and importance of auxiliaries is convincing, her suggestion that “Tacitus may also have felt obliged to provide a 'glorious' explanation for why the legions were not involved in the battle” is provocative and requires further examination. Gilliver is essentially suggesting that Agricola's hope, or rather Tacitus' explanation, was an ephemeral and purely pragmatic conception designed to be used as propaganda. But the very notion itself that Roman generals ought to limit casualties of Roman blood suggests that there existed a cultural attitude, a discourse in fact, that determined how Romans fought war.

Few modern scholars have considered the importance of the notion of the bloodless victory. Indeed, in their commentaries on the first decade of Livy, neither Ogilvie nor Oakley discussed Livy's use of the phrase.<sup>46</sup> Walsh, meanwhile, in his commentary on Book 37, concluded that lines such as ... *cum haud incruenta victoria* ...

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<sup>43</sup> Gilliver (1996): 54-55 reviews the scholarship.

<sup>44</sup> Gilliver (1996): 56: “The simple and most obvious explanation for such a variation in the line of battle is a tactical one.” See also p. 63: “Agricola, then, was probably using his auxiliaries at Mons Graupius for tactical reasons.”

<sup>45</sup> See, in particular, Gilliver (1956): 59.

<sup>46</sup> Ogilvie (1965) and Oakley (1997-2005): 4 vols.

were “staple clichés in such battle accounts.”<sup>47</sup> Pittenger has recently argued that Walsh's conclusion

not only implies that any passage where such elements appear is both unreliable and uninteresting but also misses the point about where the repertoire of stock phrases probably came from and how (or why) it developed. Clichés usually have recognizable historical origins that can help to reveal the mindset of the people who use them.<sup>48</sup>

For Pittenger, these clichés originated in the political debates Roman generals and aristocrats had over the awarding of a triumph.<sup>49</sup> While this is certainly possible, the fact that the notion is repeated so often outside of the context of triumphal debates suggests that its meaning goes beyond that limited sense. The notion of the bloodless victory may owe its origin to triumphal debates, but the fact that it is also an element of the Roman discourse of war animates it with even greater meaning and power because the discourse of war, as we have seen throughout this dissertation, can have an effect on the reality of war.

Harris recently made this connection between the discourse and reality of the bloodless victory in what he called a brief “interlude” to his article “Readings in the Narrative Literature of Roman Courage,” in which he commented on the Roman desire to limit their own casualties suffered in war.<sup>50</sup> He cites Claudius' British Victory Arch, discussed here in Chapter Four, as an example of the notion (which, according to Harris,

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<sup>47</sup> Walsh (1992): 143 (note on Livy 37.16.12). Walsh offers as evidence of the clichéd use of such a concept similar uses in “Sallust, *Jug.* 21.2, *Cat.* 61.7; and Livy 21.29.4, 28.28.9, etc.”

<sup>48</sup> (2008): 111, note 19.

<sup>49</sup> (2008): 111: “... the assessment of gains and losses encapsulated within this formula ties its probable origins to real triumphal debates.”

<sup>50</sup> (2006): 313.

developed gradually) that a good victory was one *sine ulla iactura*, “without any losses.” Harris makes two other points about this concept: [1] that such an idea was “presumably deleterious to aggressive generalship and perhaps to strong morale as well,” and [2] that “[t]he earliest claim of this kind seems to occur, rather predictably in a sense, in Velleius’ account of the campaigns of Tiberius in Germany (ii.97.4): he fought “sine ullo detrimento commisi exercitus.” According to Harris, this claim was “a significant softening from the older Roman attitude towards their own casualties.”<sup>51</sup> Unfortunately he does not describe what this “older attitude” was, but the reader can posit from Harris’ earlier works on Roman imperialism in the middle republican period that he believes that the Romans more willingly accepted the losses of their soldiers.<sup>52</sup> Indeed, Harris has long focused on Roman aggressiveness as a reason for Roman success; a conclusion that has received recent revitalization in works such as Lendon’s (2005) *Soldiers & Ghosts: A History of Battle in Classical Antiquity*.<sup>53</sup> In short, the aggressiveness of the Romans inured them to the loss of Roman life. But the desire to win a bloodless victory complicates those conclusions that focus on unparalleled Roman aggressiveness. Indeed the notion, as Pittenger’s and Walsh’s reference to its existence in Livy suggests, predated Velleius and the imperial period.

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<sup>51</sup> Harris (2006): 313.

<sup>52</sup> See especially Harris (1979).

<sup>53</sup> Although Lendon tempers the aggressiveness of the Romans with a focus on *disciplina*, he still understands the Romans to be fundamentally aggressive. *Disciplina* was a brake, not an impetus. Such a focus on Roman bellicosity has received criticism, in particular by Arthur Eckstein in his *Mediterranean Anarchy, Interstate War, and the Rise of Rome* (2006). See the very useful review by James Quillin of Eckstein’s work in *BMCR* 2009.06.44.

### 5.3.1 The Discourse of Bloodless Victories in the Late Republican Period

However Romans felt about their military losses during the early and middle Republic, there is evidence that the notion of the “bloodless victory” formed part of the Roman discourse of war by the middle of the first century B.C.E. at the latest: that is, nearly a century earlier than Harris suggested. Pittenger noted that the earliest example of the notion of a battle that was *not* a bloodless victory appears to occur in the final passage of Sallust's *Bellum Catilinae*.<sup>54</sup> Sallust described the aftermath of the Roman victory over Catiline's rebels as neither a “joyful nor bloodless victory.”<sup>55</sup> The implication of this epithet is that a good Roman victory was one achieved without bloodshed, in particular, without the loss of Roman life. While the above passage describes the unfortunate outcome of the battle, an earlier passage in the *Bellum Catilinae* suggests that the idea of the bloodless victory was indeed a goal of Roman armies. The blood-soaked battlefield described at the end of the *Bellum Catilinae* represented the fruition of Catiline's exhortation to his troops before the battle. Sallust follows the pattern for the typical pre-battle narrative by having the general, in this case Catiline, speak to his troops. After rallying his men, Catiline ended his speech by telling them that even if Fortune does not see fit to grant them victory, they ought to leave the enemy a “bloody and sorrowful victory.”<sup>56</sup> This exhortation, even more than the description of the aftermath of battle,

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<sup>54</sup> (2008): 111, n. 19.

<sup>55</sup> Sall. *Cat.* 61.7: *Neque tamen exercitus populi Romani laetam aut incruentam victoriam adeptus erat*, “And yet the army of the Roman people had not obtained a joyful or bloodless victory.”

<sup>56</sup> *Cat.* 58.21: *Quod si virtuti vestrae fortuna invidet, cavete inulti animam amittatis, neu capti potius sicuti pecora trucidemini quam virorum more pugnantes cruentam atque luctuosam victoriam hostibus relinquatis*, “But if fortune begrudges your courage, take care that unavenged you do not part with

suggests that the idea of the bloodless victory had entered the Roman discourse of war by at least the time of Sallust.<sup>57</sup>

The *Bellum Catilinae* was probably published in 43 B.C.E., after the assassination of Caesar. Sallust also referred to the idea of a bloodless victory in his *Bellum Jugurthinum*, which was published in 42 B.C.E., after the *Bellum Catilinae*.<sup>58</sup> The inclusion of a similar discourse in the *Bellum Jugurthinum* illustrates that the notion of the bloodless (or in this case bloody) victory was not limited to civil wars, as was the case in the *Bellum Catilinae*. Sallust records that Quintus Caecilius Metellus, the Roman general who was first at war with Jugurtha, changed his tactics because he wanted to limit his own losses suffered even in victory.<sup>59</sup> Gaius Marius later replaced Metellus as commander of the Roman armies in Numidia, at which point he and his army destroyed the Numidian stronghold of Capsa. The destruction included the murder of the entire adult Numidian population of the city despite the fact that that same population had recognized their plight and surrendered. Sallust criticized Marius for this action, noting that it was a “violation of the laws of war.”<sup>60</sup> Despite this violation, Marius nevertheless

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your soul; and do not be captured and cut to pieces as cattle, but fighting in the fashion of heroes you should leave the enemy with a bloody and sorrowful victory.”

<sup>57</sup> It is possible that Sallust means that the senatorial forces would have to kill every last one of Catiline’s followers, and in this sense it would be a very bloody victory, particularly because it was a civil war.

<sup>58</sup> Comber (2009): 2-3; Conte (1994): 234

<sup>59</sup> *BJ* 54.5: *Igitur Metellus ubi videt regis etiam tum animum ferocem esse, bellum renovari, quod nisi ex illius lubidine geri non posset, praeterea iniquum certamen sibi cum hostibus, minore detrimento illos vinci quam suos vincere, statuit non proeliis neque in acie sed alio more bellum gerendum,* “Therefore, when Metellus saw that the spirit of the king was even then courageous, that the war, which could not be waged unless by the pleasure of the king, was being renewed, and that moreover it was an unequal contest with the enemy, since defeat was less detrimental to them than victory was to his men, he decided that the war must be managed, not in battles, nor in formation, but by some other means, ...”

<sup>60</sup> *BJ* 91.7: *Id facinus contra ius belli non avaritia neque scelere consulis admissum, sed quia locus Iugurthae opportunus, nobis aditu difficilis, genus hominum mobile, infidum, ante neque beneficio neque metu coercitum,* “The act against the law of war was not perpetuated by the avarice or wickedness of



received praise for winning the battle without the loss of any of his own men. According to Sallust, the nature of this victory made Marius, who “was already great and famous, even greater and more famous.”<sup>61</sup> Evidently success trumped any sort of natural laws governing war. Clearly, the idea that a general should consider the lives of his own men and try to limit casualties is found in the histories long before Velleius; the notion is also found in the words of one of Rome's most successful generals, whose own accounts of battle pre-date Sallust.

On multiple occasions Julius Caesar, not a general who can be classified as lacking aggressiveness, noted that the threat of significant casualties caused him to rethink his battle plan or to avoid battle altogether. In 53 B.C.E., while conducting operations in the territory of the Eburones (a tribe situated on the western side of the Rhine River, near modern Bonn, Germany), the nature of the enemy positions would have required Caesar to divide his men in smaller groups so that they might clear the forested areas in which the enemy was hiding. Although his men were eager to avenge a previous loss, Caesar decided not to attack the enemy because he did not want to do any damage to his troops.<sup>62</sup> Caesar calculated that any sort of positive result would not be so good as to warrant risking the safety of his men.

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the consul, but because the place presented an advantage to Jugurtha, a difficult approach for us, and a fickle and untrustworthy people, who previously were not restrained by either kindness nor fear.”

<sup>61</sup> BJ 92.1-2: *Postquam tantam rem peregit Marius sine ullo suorum incommodo, magnus et clarus antea, maior atque clarior haberi coepit*, “After he won so great a success without loss of his own men, Marius, already great and famous, began to be regarded and greater and more famous.” *Incommodo* derives from the verb *incommodo*, meaning to be inconvenient, to trouble, or to annoy. As a neuter noun the word generally means inconvenience but can also mean loss, as it does here. The genitive *suorum* indicates that we are dealing with a loss of *his* men. Essentially Sallust has replaced the participle *iactura* found in other sources, such as the arch of Claudius, with *suorum incommodo*.

<sup>62</sup> Caes. BG 6.34: ... *quantum diligentia provideri poterat providebatur, ut potius in nocendo aliquid praetermitteretur, etsi omnium animi ad ulciscendum ardebant, quam cum aliquo militum detrimento noceretur*, “as much care was taken as could be taken, that even though the spirits of every one

On another occasion, this time near Avaricum (modern Bourges), the Gauls had established themselves on a low hill that was surrounded by marshland. The Roman soldiers got close to the enemy, but any attempt to advance against them would have had serious repercussions. Caesar understood this and again avoided battle, despite the fact that his soldiers remained eager to fight. According to Caesar, they were demanding a “signal for battle,” but he refused to issue the command. Instead, after describing how great a loss and how many brave men would have to die to achieve victory, he announced that,

when he saw them so prepared in spirit that they would decline no danger for his praise, he deserved to be condemned for the highest injustice, if he did not hold their life dearer than his safety.<sup>63</sup>

Caesar had again recognized the unfavorable conditions of the battlefield and calculated that any positive result, even one that would bring glory to himself, would not be worth the cost. Later, when Caesar was not able to stop his army from advancing at Gergovia, and where he lost some 700 soldiers, he castigated his men and recalled the actions he had taken at Avaricum, where he “had given up a sure victory so that even a small loss in the battle on account of unfavorable ground would not result.”<sup>64</sup> Likewise Appian

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of his troops was burning for vengeance, he preferred to let pass any attempt to injure the enemy, rather than do harm with any loss of his troops.” For similar actions, see Caes. *BG* 5.52, where Caesar avoided pursuing the enemy through woods and marshes; as a result he was able to ensure that his whole force remained unhurt (... *omnibus suis incolumibus copiis* ..., “... with his whole force unhurt ...”). Goldsworthy (1998): 203 concludes that such examples illustrate that “[i]n the *Commentarii* Caesar's campaigns are portrayed as bold, but never reckless.”

<sup>63</sup> Caes. *BG* 7.19: *quanto detrimento et quot virorum fortium morte necesse sit constare victoriam; quos cum sic animo paratos videat, ut nullum pro sua laude periculum recusent, summae se iniquitatis condemnari debere, nisi eorum vitam sua salute habeat cariorem.*

<sup>64</sup> Caes. *BG* 7.52: *Exposuit quid iniquitas loci posset, quid ipse ad Avaricum sensisset, cum sine duce et sine equitatu deprehensis hostibus exploratam victoriam dimisisset, ne parvum modo detrimentum in contentione propter iniquitatem loci accideret,* “He illustrated what could happen on unfavourable ground, and what he himself had considered at Avaricum, when he discovered the enemy without a general

describe how the general Lucullus once tried to ensure the best possible terrain for battle before engaging because he hoped to win a victory “without a fight.”<sup>65</sup> As noted above, Gilliver would see such decisions as being based largely on tactical merits; but we would be wrong to doubt that Caesar and Lucullus were not genuinely concerned for the safety of their own troops. So even if these examples exaggerate their concern, they still illustrate the pressures and expectations faced by Roman generals of the late republican period.

The theme of limiting casualties continues in the minor works attributed to Caesar which describe the various civil wars. Having caught his enemies in the mountains near the Ebro River in Spain, Caesar hoped he could settle the conflict without further fighting or wounding of his own men.<sup>66</sup> Caesar described a similar sentiment among the Gauls, fighting in Aquitania in 56 B.C.E.: while trying to avoid a pitched battle with the Romans, they instead blocked supply routes and therefore tried to force the Romans to surrender. According to Caesar, these Gauls preferred to win “a victory without any bloodshed.”<sup>67</sup> It is no surprise to find a Roman general using the discourse of Roman war

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and without cavalry, he gave up a certain victory, in order that even a small loss in the contest would not be the result of unfavourable ground.”

<sup>65</sup> (*Mith.*) 12.11.72: ... ἀμαχι ...

<sup>66</sup> *Caes. BC 1.72: Caesar in eam spem venerat, se sine pugna et sine vulnere suorum rem conficere posse, quod re frumentaria adversarios interclusisset. Cur etiam secundo proelio aliquos ex suis amitteret? Cur vulnerari pateretur optime de se meritos milites? Cur denique fortunam periclitaretur? Praesertim cum non minus esset imperatoris consilio superare quam gladio,* “Caesar, because he had cut off his enemies from their food supply, had arrived at this hope: that he could accomplish his task without battle and without any of his men being wounded. Why even in a successful battle should he lose any of his own men? Why should he allow his soldiers who had served him so well to be wounded? Why, finally, should he test fortune? Particularly when he would be no less a general to conquer by stratagem than by the sword.”

<sup>67</sup> *Caes. BG 3.24: ... sine ullo vulnere victoria ...*, “a victory without any bloodshed (literally without a wound)...”

to explain enemy maneuvers. It illustrates perfectly that this was how a Roman thought. In civil wars those enemies might also be fellow Romans. In the narrative of the events leading up to the battle of Pharsalus, Pompey is quoted as saying that his forces were so well prepared and organized and his plan was so foolproof that he expected to conclude the war “without danger to the legions and almost without bloodshed.”<sup>68</sup> In hindsight, this comment is ripe with braggadocio and hubris, but in the context of the reality of war it reflects a natural desire of Roman generals, an expectation even.<sup>69</sup> So its inclusion in this situation only further illustrates how important this discourse was to Roman generals and the society in general.

Cicero, another contemporary of Caesar and Sallust, but one who was never a military dynamo, also recognized victory without loss as something to be praised and honored; and he did so in one of his most well-known and widely published speeches. In his Fourteenth Philippic, Cicero praised the success of Aulus Hirtius, the consul who helped defeat Antony at Mutina in 43 B.C.E. Cicero claimed that Hirtius had attacked Antony without the loss of a single man from his own ranks.<sup>70</sup> Cicero was indeed being less than truthful, but the nature of this piece of rhetoric, as an attempt to praise Roman victory over Antony, explains the exaggeration. In any case, the inclusion of the idea of a victory without loss once again suggests that by the mid-first century B.C.E. the notion

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<sup>68</sup> Caes. *BC* 3.86: *Ita sine periculo legionum et paene sine vulnere bellum conficiemus.*

<sup>69</sup> In the context of Pompey’s military career it may even reflect a reality. He fought many a bloody battle in Sicily and Spain, but in his later years he often won victories by renown and showing up. A comparative analysis of Roman generals in the first century B.C.E. and the casualty figures they sustained in individual battles forms the topic of an article I have in preparation.

<sup>70</sup> Cic. *Phil.* 14.36: *... suo exercitu ita incolumi ut ne unum quidem militem desiderarit, ...* “... so that he did not lose a single man from his own force to injury.”

formed a significant part of the Roman discourse on war, and in particular, the Roman discourse on war losses.

It is in this context, in which the discourse of the “bloodless victory” was well known and reported among Rome's elite, that Livy wrote his history of the Romans. The notion of the bloodless victory occurs frequently in Livy.<sup>71</sup> The first appearance of the phrase, in Book Two, describes a Roman victory in which a battle was not even fought. Livy described a battle in which the Roman army charged towards the enemy (the Aequi). The assault so terrified the enemy that they fled without ever engaging the oncoming Romans. Since the Aequi abandoned their position and since no fighting even occurred, the battle was deemed a “bloodless victory.”<sup>72</sup> In this case, then, the bloodless victory symbolized not only a victory in which no Romans were injured or killed, but a victory in which the Romans so dominated their enemy that they won the battle without actually having to fight. In this sense, the bloodless victory epitomized the successful Roman campaign. Victory resulted from illustrating a willingness to fight; reputation would take care of the rest.

The notion of the bloodless victory could also be used in a negative sense, as in a victory may have been won, but it was *not* a bloodless victory. This sense is similar to Catiline's harangue prior to his final battle with the forces of the Roman senate. Livy, in one example from his fourth book, described the emotional outcome of such a victory that was not bloodless. Lucius Sergius Fidenas, the consul of 437 B.C.E., had defeated an

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<sup>71</sup> For its occurrence in Livy see Pittenger (2008): 110-112 (especially notes 18, 19, and 20). The following list is based on Pittenger's version: 2.31.6, 4.17.8, 7.8.7, 9.12.3, 10.29.18, 21.29.4, 27.14.14, 27.49.7, 30.18.14, 31.45.15, 35.5.14, 37.16.12, 38.48.15-16, 39.31.14, 40.32.7, 42.7.10, 42.66.9.

<sup>72</sup> Livy 2.31.4-6: ... *victoria incruenta fuit*.

army from Veii, “but he had not gained a bloodless victory. And so, there was more grief for the citizens lost than there was rejoicing over the defeated enemy.”<sup>73</sup> Livy here described the emotional impact that the loss of Roman soldiers had on Roman citizens even when victory was achieved. The description of citizens grieving the losses suffered even in a victory again suggests that there existed in Rome a desire to limit casualties while at war. While this desire formed part of the discourse on war, it clearly did not represent the reality and furthermore, as we shall see below, it may not have been universally accepted.

Although Livy frequently refers to the notion of the bloodless victory while describing Rome's most ancient past, it is impossible to know for certain when this discourse developed. All that can be said for certain is that by the first century B.C.E., the dominant discourse in Rome promoted the limitation of Roman casualties in warfare. There may be hints of this discourse developing in the mid second century B.C.E. when there appears to be evidence of a Roman reluctance to participate in the wars in Spain.<sup>74</sup> Prior to this period it has been suggested that there was no reluctance, particularly on the part of Rome's elite, to participate in war.<sup>75</sup> It is hard to argue with this assessment, because of our lack of good sources, and because the sources that we do have, generally

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<sup>73</sup> Livy 4.17.8: ... *nec incruentam victoriam rettulit. Maior itaque ex civibus amissis dolor quam laetitia fuis hostibus fuit, ...*

<sup>74</sup> For that reluctance see Harris (1979): 36 (referring to the aristocratic elite) and 41-53 (for the attitudes of the general citizen population). As far as I can tell, the notion of the bloodless victory does not appear in Polybius. There may not even have been a Greek antecedent. For many Greeks, death in war was the ultimate example of citizenship. Unlike the Romans, the Athenians had a state cemetery for their war dead. Common sense might suggest that the Spartans would have been very concerned with limiting their own casualties because of their population issues, but our evidence suggests that they too were honored if killed in battle; furthermore, when a battle had turned against them, the good Spartan was not supposed to flee to fight another day. This does not seem to be the case with the Romans.

<sup>75</sup> Harris (1979): 36.

portray a war-mongering society. On the other hand, our lack of good sources for the third century B.C.E. and prior, ought also to limit our conclusions about the ferocity of the early Romans. It is not beyond the realm of the possible that later sources created a discourse in which Romans of the past always accepted the wars thrust upon them, and always accepted the losses concomitant with these wars.<sup>76</sup> Whenever the notion of the bloodless victory first developed,<sup>77</sup> it is clear that by the mid-first century B.C.E. it formed a significant part of the Roman discourse about war. The fundamental nature of the discourse about war, of anything actually, is that it is constantly in flux as it attempts to deal with the reality which it seeks to both describe and determine.

### *5.3.2 The Realization of the Discourse of the Bloodless Victory in the Imperial Period*

During the imperial period, it appears that the discourse of winning bloodless victories, so prevalent during the end of the republican period, greatly affected how imperial generals tried to fight. Appian noted that the emperor Augustus concerned himself with limiting the losses of his soldiers, and preferred to win victories by “skill rather than daring”.<sup>78</sup> Appian was led to describe the tendencies of Augustus while reviewing the tactics of Fabius Maximus, who was quite content to avoid battle with the

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<sup>76</sup> In an attempt to justify Roman warfare, the sources rarely blame the Romans for initiating a war. Hence the concept of defensive imperialism. For a collection of the various arguments against defensive imperialism, see Champion (2004), especially the general introduction.

<sup>77</sup> Although more work needs to be done, it may be possible to see the beginnings of this attitude during the Second Punic War with the strategy of Fabius Maximus Cunctator. Fabius defended Rome by limiting battle (and therefore casualties) with Hannibal. Unfortunately, we are limited by our sources on this account.

<sup>78</sup> App. (*Hann.*) 7.3.13: μᾶλλον τόλμη ἢ τέχνη ... .

Carthaginian Hannibal unless the conditions were completely in the Roman favor. It may be that Appian's description of Augustus was only his second century perspective looking back on Rome's first emperor, who often appeared to be more cautious and calculating than many of his successors. On the other hand, Rome's first emperor was probably conditioned towards caution less by Fabius than by the widespread discourse of the bloodless victory so prevalent in the latter part of the first century B.C.E. We saw in Chapter Three how the cultural expectations of how to deal with a defeat determined Augustus' reactions to the *clades Variana*, and so it is perhaps no surprise to see the same sort of thing happening here. As with so many other elements of the principate, the imperial heirs did not always follow the Augustan tendency towards caution.

As noted by Harris, Velleius praised the emperor Tiberius (who had also been Velleius' general) for his desire to ensure the safety of his troops and the limitation of his own losses. According to Velleius, Tiberius, who took up the task of pacifying Germany after the death of his brother Drusus in 9 B.C.E., completed the war "without any loss of the army entrusted to him; [a task] which was always a chief concern for [him]."<sup>79</sup> This is not the only instance in which Velleius praised his former commander. The soldier-turned-historian was particularly impressed with Tiberius' treatment of his soldiers and his recognition of the burden they must suffer: "no opportunity for victory seemed to be of any use that would cost him the loss of his soldiers; that which was the safest always seemed to him to be the most glorious."<sup>80</sup> Likewise, when Tiberius took command after

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<sup>79</sup> Vell. Pat. 2.97.4: ... *sine ullo detrimento commissi exercitus, quod praecipue huic duci semper curae fuit, ...*

<sup>80</sup> Vell. Pat. 2.115.5: *quam quod imperatori numquam adeo ulla opportuna visa est victoriae occasio, quam damno amissi pensaret militis semperque visum est gloriosissimum, quod esset tutissimum, ...*



the horrific defeat of Varus in 9 C.E., he crossed into German territory, re-established Roman roads, destroyed German crops, houses, and all those who tried to attack him. He did all of this “with his whole army uninjured,” and so returned to winter quarters “with great glory.”<sup>81</sup> It is perhaps no surprise to find a soldier praising such qualities in his general. Whatever the motives, Tiberius illustrates how a general might try to avoid battle so as to ensure the safety of his army – and in doing so achieve glory.

Another example of an imperial general trying to limit casualties is Gnaeus Domitius Corbulo. According to Tacitus, Corbulo’s army destroyed Trapezus, an Armenian stronghold, in 58 C.E. “without the loss of a single soldier, and with only a few wounded.”<sup>82</sup> In the same campaign, when a band of marauding Mardi, who lived in the mountains of Armenia, attacked Corbulo and his army, the general sent a contingent of allied Iberians against the enemy. These foreign soldiers defeated the enemy and so Corbulo won with only “foreign blood” and therefore his Roman army suffered no losses.<sup>83</sup> As Gilliver would argue, there is a purely tactical reason for Corbulo’s use of the Iberians in the mountainous terrain. The reality of warfare may have called for the unique tactical advantage offered by the Iberian troops. But once again there is present a praiseworthy explanation. The discourse portrayed this as a successful limitation of Roman casualties, not a successful use of a tactical advantage resulting from varied

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<sup>81</sup> Vell. Pat. 2.120.2: *fundit obvios maximaque cum gloria, incolumi omnium, quos transduxerat, numero in hiberna revertitur.*

<sup>82</sup> Tac. Ann. 13.39.4: *nullo milite amisso, paucis admodum vulneratis.*

<sup>83</sup> Tac. Ann. 14.23.3 – 14.24.1: *quos Corbulo immissis Hiberis vastavit hostilemque audaciam externo sanguine ultus est. Ipse exercitusque ut nullis ex proelio damnis, “Corbulo, after sending in the Iberians, destroyed them and avenged the enemy daring with foreign blood. He and the army having suffered no loss from the battle ...”*

personal. This discourse, and ones like it, are as important, if not more important, than tactical considerations in explaining why Romans fought the way that they did.<sup>84</sup>

Corbulo, like Caesar, is not a general one could classify as timid. His desire to ensure the safety of his men was not a result of a lack of aggressiveness; rather it was partly a genuine concern for the welfare of his men, and partly (or mostly) a concern with his own reputation. As a general of the Roman imperial army, limiting the losses suffered by his own legions certainly gained praise.<sup>85</sup> Corbulo, was much less concerned with the lives of the men under the command of his rival Caesennius Piso. In an effort to increase his own renown, he slowly made his way to relieve his fellow Romans who were besieged and beleaguered.<sup>86</sup>

Finally, perhaps the most significant example of the ascendancy of the discourse of bloodless victories appears in the arch of Claudius, on which the emperor's victory over the tribes of Britain is commemorated as occurring *sine ulla iactura*, “without any loss.”<sup>87</sup> This arch was discussed in further detail in the previous chapter, but for now, it is worth re-emphasizing the connection between the inscription and the discourse which had emerged about Roman warfare and the successful Roman general. No one had ever expected Claudius to become emperor. He was not in any sense a military man; but he was a scholar, and a politician; as such he was well attuned to the various discourses

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<sup>84</sup> Indeed the dominant cultural value of a society has a greater effect on how that society fights than any technological or tactical development.

<sup>85</sup> As noted in Chapter Three, in the imperial period war losses were the emperor's responsibility. So the general who could limit these ensured good favor with the emperor. There was, of course, a limit to this favor, as Corbulo tragically discovered. His success eventually led to his enforced suicide.

<sup>86</sup> For more on Corbulo see Chapter 4.2.

<sup>87</sup> *ILS* 216.

surrounding Roman warfare.<sup>88</sup> When it came time to glorify his success in battle he left nothing to chance. His arch illustrates the prevalence of the discourse that the good Roman general would win without losing any Roman troops. The inscription dedicated by the Senate and People of Rome and under the auspices of the Roman emperor illustrates how the discourse had become both an official state ambition and an achievement. As seen in the previous chapter, the cultural construction found in the literary sources was predominantly displayed on many of the monuments of Rome, including the columns of Trajan and Marcus.

### 5.3.3 *Contesting the Discourse*

Despite the widespread nature of the discourse of bloodless victories, as well as its effect on how Roman generals approached battle, it appears that a competing discourse emerged; one perhaps not as widespread or welcomed as the image of dominance associated with a bloodless victory, but one that may have better illustrated the reality of war.

A compelling episode in the history of Dionysius of Halicarnassus may suggest that the discourse to win victories without the loss of Roman soldiers was challenged to some extent. In Book Nine of his *Roman Antiquities* Dionysius described the trial of Servius Servilius, the consul of 476 B.C.E., for losses suffered in battle against the Etruscans.<sup>89</sup> Servilius was accused of incompetence and inexperience because he led his

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<sup>88</sup> For the life of Claudius see Levick (1990).

<sup>89</sup> The account is located at 9.29.1-5.

forces against the enemy encampment without ensuring their safety. According to the accusation, the raid, characterized as “more daring than prudent,” cost a number of Roman soldiers their lives.<sup>90</sup> On the one hand, the trial illustrated another step in the struggle of the orders between the patricians and plebeians,<sup>91</sup> but, the trial also demonstrated Roman attitudes towards their war dead. Both Livy and Dionysius agreed that Servilius vigorously defended himself, but only Dionysius included a version of his speech.

Part of Servilius' argument focused on the Roman attitude towards bloodless victories. After noting Roman success against the Etruscans, Servilius continued:

And so, for what wrong am I liable to you? Unless to conquer your enemies is to wrong you. And if some of the soldiers died while fighting in a successful battle, how has Servilius wronged the people? For no god becomes a guarantor to generals for the lives of all of those who are going into battle, and we do not take up command with conditions and stipulations, such as to conquer all of our enemies and not lose one of our own men. For who, being only a man, would submit to take into their own hands all of the consequences of both his judgment and of his luck? For we always buy our great achievements with great dangers.<sup>92</sup>

Servilius defended his actions by arguing against the cultural discourse which demanded the limitation of Roman casualties in war. The historical veracity of the speech and even the trial itself may rightfully be doubted. It is worth noting that Livy did not offer nearly

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<sup>90</sup> Dion. Hal. 9.28.2: ... θρασύτερον μάλλον ἢ φρονιμώτερον, ...

<sup>91</sup> See Livy 2.52.6-8; Dion. Hal. 9.28.2.

<sup>92</sup> Dion. Hal. 9.29.4-5: τίνος οὖν ἀδικήματος ὑπεύθυνος εἰμι ὑμῖν; εἰ μὴ τὸ νικᾶν τοὺς πολεμίους ἐστὶν ὑμᾶς ἀδικεῖν. εἰ δ' ἀποθανεῖν τισι τῶν στρατιωτῶν κατὰ τὴν μάχην εὐτυχῶς ἀγωνιζομένοις συνέπεσε, τί Σερούλιος τὸν δῆμον ἀδικεῖ; οὐ γὰρ δὴ θεῶν τις ἐγγυητὴς τοῖς στρατηγοῖς τῆς ἀπάντων ψυχῆς τῶν ἀγωνιουμένων γίνεται, οὐδ' ἐπὶ διακειμένοις καὶ ῥητοῖς τὰς ἡγεμονίας παραλαμβάνομεν, ὥσθ' ἀπάντων κρατῆσαι τῶν πολεμίων καὶ μηδένα τῶν ἰδίων ἀποβαλεῖν. τίς γὰρ ἂν ὑπομείνειεν ἄνθρωπος ὧν ἅπαντα καὶ τὰ τῆς γνώμης καὶ τὰ τῆς τύχης εἰς αὐτὸν ἀναλαβεῖν; ἀλλὰ τὰ μεγάλα ἔργα μεγάλων αἰεὶ κινδύνων ὠνούμεθα.

as many details as Dionysius and makes no mention of Servilius' argument against bloodless battles.

Dionysius' inclusion of the speech – and the focus on the impossibility of the bloodless victory – may be explained by the fact that the Greeks saw this Roman discourse as peculiar. While the Greeks saw death in war as something good, the Romans did not necessarily share this mentality.<sup>93</sup> Livy did not refer to the bloodless victory notion in his description of Servilius' trial, yet the notion is found scattered throughout the rest of Livy's work. Nowhere, however, is it specifically challenged or explained. By the time Livy wrote (which was roughly the same time as Dionysius of Halicarnassus), the idea had become a form of the Roman discourse that needed no explanation. Nevertheless, that same discourse could be contested.

Indeed, two other stories indicate that for some soldiers the reality of warfare did not match the discourse of the bloodless victory. Despite all of the reference to bloodless victories found in Livy, there is recognition that war, by its very nature is a bloody and gruesome affair, and that the Romans, if they meant to succeed, would have to pay a price for their success. There is no better example of this than in Publius Cornelius Scipio's speech to the assembled Roman armies in Spain after the deaths of his father and uncle in the Second Punic War. Scipio, while trying to improve the demoralized spirits of his men pointed out that “it was somehow the lot assigned to [them] by fate that they should conquer in all the great wars after being defeated.”<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> Edwards (2008): 45.

<sup>94</sup> Livy 26.41.9: *Ea fato quodam data nobis sors est ut magnis omnibus bellis victi vicerimus.*

A similar sentiment is seen in Livy's Alexander digression, where part of Livy's argument about the success of Rome relied on the fact that although the Romans had been defeated in numerous “battles” they had never lost a “war.”<sup>95</sup> Both of these examples share more in common with Servilius’ speech attacking the discourse of the bloodless victory than with that discourse itself. In Scipio’s speech and in the digression, Livy came to the fundamental reality of Roman warfare. War was a bloody and messy business; success was the result of recognizing and accepting this fact.

A similar description of this reality of the warfare is found in Josephus. As a Jewish historian of the Flavian period, he was aware of the cultural discourse and glory associated with bloodless victories. In his description of the siege of Jotapata in 67 C.E. (after which Josephus himself was captured by the Romans) he concluded that the Romans could have boasted about concluding the siege without the loss of any Roman soldiers except for the fact that a single centurion, Antonius, had been killed.<sup>96</sup> Two important conclusions can be reached from this passage: [1] even a foreigner was aware of the Romans cultural attitudes towards bloodless victories, and [2] the death of even a single individual could mar the glory of victory.

While Josephus understood this Roman cultural value, he, like Livy, also appeared to have understood the reality of warfare. After the victory at Jotapata, Vespasian’s army marched toward Gamala, one of the last remaining Jewish

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<sup>95</sup> Livy 9.18.9: ... *populus Romanus etsi nullo bello multis tamen proeliis victus sit*, “Although they have not been conquered in any wars, the Roman people nevertheless have been conquered in many battles.”

<sup>96</sup> Jos. *BJ* 3.333 (7.35): ἀναίμακτον δ’ ἂν ἦν ἀρχῆσαι Ῥωμαίοις τὸ τέλος τῆς πολιορκίας, εἰ μὴ κατὰ τὴν ἄλωσιν εἷς ἔπεσεν τις· ἑκατοντάρχης ἦν Ἀντώνιος, θνήσκει δ’ ἐξ ἐνέδρας. The Romans could have boasted that the siege was bloodless, if one of them had not fallen when they captured it; the centurion Antonius died in an ambush.

strongholds.<sup>97</sup> The city's location on the peak of a high mountain served as natural protection. It was also defended by a large wall and ditches, and the layout of the city's buildings created many narrow streets and passageways in which invaders could be trapped and disoriented. When the siege started, Roman battering rams made quick work of the walls, and Roman soldiers poured in over the rubble. When they first entered the city, the Roman soldiers were bombarded by the inhabitants. Unable to turn back, they rushed forward deeper into the labyrinth-like town. The narrow streets and tall buildings left the Romans in a terrible position. Many of them took refuge in nearby houses. The houses, many of which were more than one story tall collapsed under the weight of so many soldiers being packed into them. As a result "a vast number of Romans were destroyed."<sup>98</sup> As some of the Romans emerged from the rubble, disoriented and injured, the inhabitants of Gamala pelted them with stones and javelins; and even the abandoned weapons of the Roman dead. Some of the Romans managed to escape, but Vespasian, moving deeper into the city, tried to rescue others who were trapped. Under attack, he and the few soldiers with him, covered themselves with their shields and made a slow and difficult retreat out of the city.

According to Josephus, the army of Vespasian had never before suffered such a loss.<sup>99</sup> Vespasian, like Scipio in the Second Punic War, tried to comfort his despondent soldiers. Josephus records Vespasian telling his men:

that they ought to bear manfully common happenings, and consider the nature of war, which never results in a

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<sup>97</sup> Jos. *BJ* 4.1-4(1.1).

<sup>98</sup> Jos. *BJ* 4.25 (1.4): τοῦτο πλείστους διέφθειρε τῶν Ῥωμαίων.

<sup>99</sup> Jos. *BJ* 4.39 (1.6): ... καὶ διότι τέως οὐδαμοῦ τηλικαύτη συμφορᾶ κέχρητο, "and because they had nowhere so far suffered so great a disaster."

bloodless victory, and that fortune is every changing its position. Indeed, while they had killed tens of thousands of the Jews, they had now given a small contribution to the divine power. And that just as it is a sign of foolish people to be excited exceedingly by success, it is also the sign of cowards to cower at setbacks; for the change between both is swift, and the best soldier is the one who is sober when faced with good luck, so that he might even remain in good spirits when suffering setbacks.<sup>100</sup>

Vespasian goes on to blame the terrain and the soldiers own unchecked zeal for the defeat.<sup>101</sup> While the passage probably does not reflect the true words spoken by the future emperor, the speech is a perfect example of how Romans understood the reality of warfare. People, including Romans, died in battle. What differentiated the Romans from all other people was their ability to recover and move on. The interesting point about Vespasian's speech is that it directly confronts the discourse of the bloodless victory by noting that such victories were an impossible standard. The reality of warfare did not match the predominant discourse. It appears that many of Rome's generals and soldiers understood this fact. It nevertheless remains true that the bloodless victory remained a goal of all Roman generals, and an expectation of the elite.

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<sup>100</sup> Jos. *BJ* 4.40-42 (1.6): δεῖν δὲ τὰ κοινὰ λέγων ἀνδρείως φέρειν, τὴν τοῦ πολέμου φύσιν ἐννοοῦντας, ὡς οὐδαμῶς τὸ νικᾶν ἀναιμωτῶς περιγίνεται, παλίμπους δ' ἡ τύχη παρίσταται. τοσαύτας μέντοι μυριάδας Ἰουδαίων ἀνελόντας αὐτοὺς ὀλίγην τῶν δαίμονι δεδωκέναι συμβολήν. εἶναι δ' ὡς περ ἀπειροκάλων τὸ λίαν ἐπαίρεσθαι ταῖς εὐπραγίαις, οὕτως ἀνάνδρων τὸ καταπτῆσαι ἐν τοῖς πταίσμασιν· ὅξεϊα γὰρ ἐν ἀμφοτέροις ἢ μεταβολῇ, κακῆϊνος ἄπριστος ὁ κἂν τοῖς εὐτυχήμασιν νήφων, ἵνα μένη καὶ δι' εὐθυμίας ἀναπαλαίων τὰ σφάλματα. [translation adapted from Thackeray, Loeb, 1928.]

<sup>101</sup> Lendon (2005): 237, for his part, uses this next part of the passage in which Vespasian blames the soldiers over aggressiveness for the defeat.



#### 5.3.4 *The Unintended Consequences of Winning Bloodless Victories*

As noted above, Harris recognized two possible consequences of the desire to win bloodless victories: [1] that such a concept could hinder aggressive generalship, and [2] that such a concept could demoralize the army. Regarding the first of these suggestions, we have seen that many of Rome's most aggressive and successful generals concerned themselves with limiting their own casualties. On the other hand, some of Rome's most aggressive generals, Publius Quinctilius Varus for instance, may have been helped by considering more carefully the safety of their men.

Harris, meanwhile, never clearly explains his second suggested consequence, that the notion of the bloodless victory could demoralize the army. It is hard to understand how a general's concern for the safety of his men would demoralize an army, unless we understand demoralization to mean a lack of aggressiveness. On the other hand, there is good reason to suspect that the Roman *auxilia* would be demoralized by such a cultural imperative; and this demoralization could have significant consequences. As described above in the section on the battle at Mons Graupius, Roman generals would organize their army so that foreign auxiliaries completed the brunt of the fighting. In this way, the battle could be fought and the Roman general could justifiably say that he had lost no Roman citizens. There is good evidence that such a policy eventually wore on the nerves of Rome's foreign military contingents.

In 69 C.E. Gaius Julius Civilis, a Roman auxiliary officer, led a revolt of an alliance of German and Gallic tribes against the Romans. Widespread conscription of the Batavians into the service of the emperor Vitellius' army sparked the revolt. In rousing

both Gallic and German tribes, Civilis commented on how it was the foreign auxiliaries who won Rome's empire. Or as Civilis put it: "the provinces are conquered by the blood of the provincials."<sup>102</sup> The recognition of the provincials' bloodshed offers a direct connection to the traditional cultural imperative to win bloodless victories. According to Civilis, the Roman legions were nothing but "empty names" and were therefore not to be feared.<sup>103</sup> On the one hand, the morale of Rome's legionaries, in terms of their ability to fight has, as Civilis notes, been weakened by the fact that they were no longer fighting, suffering, and dying for Rome. On the other hand, the morale of Rome's *auxilia* diminished greatly precisely because they were doing all of the fighting, suffering and dying. Or at least that is how it could appear to an historian of the early second century C.E. The historical veracity of Civilis' speeches are less important than the fact that a Roman, in this case Tacitus, recognized the possible unintended consequences of the discourse of the winning bloodless victories.

#### 5.4 Conclusion

This chapter first examined some of the ways the ancient sources depicted casualty figures in their texts. The inclusion of such figures was indeed a convention of the genre, but it nevertheless also illustrated that the ancients were more than willing to record the terrible cost in lives that Rome's wars required. It is also true that the

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<sup>102</sup> Tac. *Hist.* 4.17: *provinciarum sanguine provincias vinci.*

<sup>103</sup> Tac. *Hist.* 4.14: *attollerent tantum oculos et inania legionum nomina ne pavescerent. at sibi robur peditum equitumque, consanguineos Germanos, Gallias idem cupientis,* "They should open wide their eyes and not be afraid of the empty names of the legions. But they had a strong infantry and cavalry, and their kinsmen, the Germans and Gauls, who desired the same thing as them."

competitive nature of Roman politics may have affected the reliability of these numbers, particularly those figures that describe a massive difference in the ratio of enemy to Roman killed.

This competitive nature was also reflected in the notion of the bloodless victory, the second major topic discussed in this chapter. Harris' suggestion that the discourse may have hindered aggressiveness and weakened morale needs to be re-interpreted in light of the evidence presented here. The goal of winning bloodless victories did not seem to affect the aggressiveness of Roman generals, at least not in the late republican and early imperial periods. The morale of Roman troops also seems to have survived the notion, precisely because Roman soldiers were offered a different, more realistic discourse which stated that there was no such thing as a bloodless victory. Rome's empire came at a price, and Rome's soldiers knew it, or were reminded of it constantly. In the end, it was the unintended consequences of the discourse that may have had the most effect on Roman warfare and indeed the Roman Empire.

## Conclusion

The empire of the Romans endured in stature and duration through good counsel and good fortune and in the acquisition of which they exceeded everyone else in bravery, endurance, and hard work. They were not elated by successes until they were firmly in power, nor were they depressed by misfortunes, even though they sometimes lost 20,000 men in a single day, 40,000 thousand at some other time, and 50,000 at another time. Although famine, frequent plagues, and civil strife often endangered the city itself, all of these things happening at the same time did not lessen their ambition, until enduring the doubtful struggles and dangers for 700 years they advanced their power to this point and they profited from good fortune which was a result of good counsel.<sup>1</sup>

Appian, who included the above explanation of Roman success in the preface to his history of Rome, was by no means alone in his recognition that the Romans bore disasters of all types, but especially military losses, with greater spirit than most. Polybius understood that even the “most astounding reversals, whenever they are undertaken bravely, often turned into an advantage.”<sup>2</sup> Dionysius of Halicarnassus believed that the constant warfare practiced by the Romans made them accustomed to the toils of war and

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<sup>1</sup> App, *Pref.* 11: Τὰ δὲ Ῥωμαίων μεγέθει τε καὶ χρόνῳ διήνεγκε δι' εὐβουλίαν καὶ εὐτυχίαν ἕς τε τὴν περὶ κτήσιν αὐτῶν ἀρετῇ καὶ φερεπονίᾳ καὶ ταλαιπωρίᾳ πάντας ὑπερῆραν, οὔτε ταῖς εὐπραγίαις ἐπαίρομενοι μέχρι βεβαίως ἐκράτησαν, οὔτε συστελλόμενοι ταῖς συμφοραῖς ὧν γε καὶ δύο μυριάδες ἀνδρῶν ἐνίστε μίᾳς ἡμέρας, καὶ ἑτέρας τέσσαρες, ἀπώλλυντο, καὶ ἄλλης πέντε. καὶ περὶ τῆς πόλεως αὐτῆς πολλάκις ἐκινδύνευον, καὶ λιμοὶ τε καὶ λοιμοὶ συνεχεῖς καὶ στάσεις, ὁμοῦ πάντα ἐπιπίπτοντα, οὐκ ἀπέστησε τῆς φιλοτιμίας, ἕως ἑπτακοσίοις ἔτεσι κακοπαθοῦντες τε καὶ κινδυνεύοντες ἀγχωμάλως τὴν ἀρχὴν ἕς τότε προήγαγον καὶ τῆς εὐτυχίας ὦναντο διὰ τὴν εὐβουλίαν.

<sup>2</sup> Polyb. 3.4.5: ... οὐκ ὀλίγοις δὲ τὰς ἐκπληκτικωτάτας περιπετείας, ὅταν εὐγενῶς αὐτὰς ἀναδέξωνται, πολλάκις εἰς τὴν τοῦ συμφέροντος περιπεπτωκέναι μερίδα, ...

that they therefore always met calamities with a noble spirit.<sup>3</sup> Even the imperial historian Dio Cassius recognized that “it seems that somehow misfortune holds no small portion of benefit because it does not allow men to be senseless nor to be arrogant.”<sup>4</sup> It is perhaps not surprising that the Greek historians of Rome appear to have been especially impressed with the Roman ability to sustain war losses.

Our sources also considered this ability to deal with the costs of war in regards to Rome's enemies. Dio Cassius praised the Dacian king Decebalus because while he knew how to use a victory, he also “knew how to manage a defeat well.”<sup>5</sup> Caesar, on the other hand, offered this critical conclusion about the nature of one of Rome's enemies with which he was most familiar: “For although the spirit of the Gauls is eager and ready to undertake war, their character is soft and unable to endure calamities.”<sup>6</sup> Whether true or not, the implication of Caesar's comment is that unlike the Gauls, the Romans could endure military losses. Many of our ancient sources, then, understood that military losses, and more specifically, how a society responded to such losses, were as important as victories in explaining the success of the Roman Empire. Although contemporaries often commented upon the importance of dealing with the vicissitudes of fortune with spirit and vigor, they were often less interested in describing the specific aspects of this steadfast temper.

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<sup>3</sup> Dion. Hal. 14.10.3: Ῥωμαῖοι δὲ πολλῶν ἐθάδες ὄντες πόνων διὰ τὰς ἀτρύτους καὶ συνεχεῖς στρατείας ἅπαντα τὰ δεινὰ γενναίως διέφερον, “But the Romans, being accustomed to many toils because of their limitless and continuous military campaigns, endured every danger in a noble fashion.”

<sup>4</sup> Dio Cass. 13.55.6: δοκεῖ γάρ πως ἢ κακοπραγία μέρος οὐκ ἐλάχιστον ἔχειν ὠφελίας, ὅτι μήτε ἐχθρονεῖν τοὺς ἀνθρώπους μήτε ἐξυβρίζειν ἑᾶ.

<sup>5</sup> Dio Cass. 67.6.1: ... καλῶς δὲ καὶ ἦτταν διαθέσθαι εἰδώς.

<sup>6</sup> Caes. *BG* 3.19: *Nam ut ad bella suscipienda Gallorum alacer ac promptus est animus, sic mollis ac minime resistens ad calamitates perferendas mens eorum est.*

In broad terms this dissertation has addressed how the Romans dealt with their military losses, both battlefield defeats and casualties of war. Specifically, it has traced the aftermath of military losses from the battlefield and beyond to the commemoration and memory of loss and the lost. The goal has been to illuminate some of the more important ways the Romans reacted to and responded to such losses. It has long been accepted that the Romans survived on account of their ardent persistence; but the actual actions and thoughts that both illustrated and reinforced this perseverance have not received sufficient enough attention. When scholars ask why the Roman army was so successful, more often than not they focus on Roman successes and victories or issues of pure manpower. But inquiring as to how the Romans endured the bloody costs of war sharpens not only our understanding of the nature of Roman warfare, but also our understanding of Roman resolve and indeed Roman history.

Necessity and pragmatism determined much of the Roman response to military losses, at least in reality. On the battlefield, soldiers marched over the corpses of their dead comrades, or even built ramparts out of them. After battle, there may not have been time for proper burial or any burial at all. When news reached Rome of a terrible defeat, and panic spread throughout the city, a simple and practical response developed: send everybody home, create calm and then reinvigorate the spirit of the citizens. But while much of the reality of how Romans dealt with their losses can be explained by simple pragmatism, the cultural record, as might be expected, offers a very different result.

The cultural discourse describing military losses was more often than not designed to fuel the competitive desires of elite Romans. The burial of the war dead is presented in the sources as an opportunity for a general to distinguish himself against the

failure of a fellow member of the elite. Even the location of a battlefield, which we might expect to hold a solemn aura of memory, was less a memorial than it was a challenge to be overcome and transformed into victory; likewise the date of a defeat. Meanwhile, the importance of achieving bloodless victories, so clearly illustrated in many of the war monuments in Rome and so prevalent in the written sources, offered yet another example of a cultural discourse that promoted competition among the elite. And so Roman defeats, because of an ingrained social system of competition, promoted more war.

Although an effort has been made here to be wide-ranging and thorough, it is true that many important and fruitful avenues of study remain to be explored. It would no doubt prove rewarding to extend the chronological limits of this study beyond c. 200 C.E. Such an extension could probe further the changes which occurred in the Roman response to military defeats as the empire changed drastically in the third, fourth, and even fifth centuries. Since this dissertation argues that Roman responses to defeat help explain the success of the Roman Empire, it would be worthwhile to test this conclusion against a period of Roman history where that success was regularly challenged. A vital source in this endeavor would be the history of Ammianus Marcellinus. A study of it as a discourse of war that reflects both how war was fought in the fourth century and in Rome's illustrious past and focusing on how he presented military defeats may suggest new conclusions about warfare in the late empire.

Extending this study beyond 200 C.E. will also require future scholars to confront the effect Christianity had on Roman responses to military losses. How precisely both the individualistic and communal values of Christianity, or the development of new views about the justifications of warfare and about the afterlife, affected warfare in the Roman

world need further study. Central to such a project would be the *Historiarum Adversum Paganos Libri VII*, by the early fifth century Christian author Orosius. He is often considered the poor cousin of Augustine (his mentor), but his work traces all of the military disasters suffered by the Romans in their long history. In so doing, Orosius offers a compelling discourse about the meaning of defeat in a society struggling to come to grips with a change in worldview and power structures.

More might also be said of the philosophical underpinnings behind Roman values and their responses to defeat. Stoicism indeed served as a predominant value system in the ancient world. Certainly this philosophy's emphasis on perseverance and acceptance of both good and bad fortune mirror the Roman response to war losses. But a focus on Stoicism would necessarily involve further investigation into Greek philosophy. Such a study would be welcomed, because it seems clear enough that the Romans dealt with their military losses very differently from the Greeks, or at least the Athenians. Ancient warfare was by no means universal. While this may be a task best left for the expert in Greek and Roman philosophy, there remains an equally vital task for the philologists.

Chief among the philological tasks must be the examination of the discourse concerning military losses portrayed by the Latin poets. I have deliberately avoided a detailed discussion of poetry because of its uniqueness and the difficulties associated with its Greek influence and antecedents. It is nevertheless true that Vergil, Lucan, and Horace, among others, offer important insights into how Romans remembered and presented defeats, and they are among the most well known exemplars of how the Romans thought about defeat. Horace's famous dictum, "It is sweet and proper to die for one's country" is one example of how a Roman discourse about war has found new



meanings throughout history.<sup>7</sup> Its message is rejected in Wilfred Owen's famous poem about World War I, *Dulce et Decorum Est*, where rather than a source of honor, Owen describes the axiom as an "Old Lie." In contrast to Owen, the Latin phrase appears inscribed atop the amphitheater that shades the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Arlington National Cemetery, the final resting place of so many of America's soldiers.<sup>8</sup> Here there is no doubt that the phrase is meant to denote honor and praise. But we are left to wonder precisely what Horace's verse might have meant to the Romans for whom it was written.

Finally, this examination of military losses needs to be considered within a wider historical context and in particular within the study of military history. By its very nature the study of war is often the study of victory. But recent work on themes similar to the ones developed here illustrates the importance of military losses, and in particular, the importance of how a society chooses to deal with such losses.<sup>9</sup> Comparative studies are always welcome, not necessarily because they illustrate how much the Romans may have in common with nineteenth century Americans, or twentieth century Germans or French, but because of how much they may have differed. Every society creates its own methods, in both reality and culture, to deal with loss. It is vitally important to understand that not all societies will react to their military losses in the same way. Victory for one society does not necessarily mean defeat for the other. Both terms are cultural constructions that do not necessarily need to square with reality. So while technology, discipline, social

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<sup>7</sup> Hor. *Carm.* 3.2.12: *Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori.*

<sup>8</sup> For more on Arlington National Cemetery see Bigler (2005).

<sup>9</sup> Notable among these works in Gilpin Faust's *This Republic of Suffering* (2008) which traces how America dealt with defeat and casualties during the Civil War. See also Rousso (1991) and Shivelbusch (2003).

factors and organization, all have their role to play in the explanation of military success and failure so too does the response to military losses.

In the end, many factors contributed to Romans' success on the battlefield: a competitive spirit drilled into them from their youth, a military organization prepared to incorporate and utilize new technologies and even peoples, and a healthy dose of luck. To these must be added a willingness and capability to bear the supreme burden of war and empire. The mythical image of the Roman hydra, so fearsome and irrepressible, was supported by a multitude of actions and ideologies that were constantly being developed, perfected, tested and modified. And so a true paradox remains: for the Romans, military losses actually generated success.

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