SINGLE COMBAT AND THE *AENEID*

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I. SINGLE COMBAT IN THE AGE OF AUGUSTUS

Rome possessed not one, but two distinct traditions of single combat. As Stephen Oakley has brought to our attention (1985.392–93; cf. 397), formal battlefield monomachy (or *spolia provocatoria*) needs to be quite sharply distinguished from Rome's "second" tradition, the battlefield feats that allowed a combatant to dedicate *spolia opima*. Where formal battlefield duels required the announcement and acceptance of a challenge between adversaries (as with the cases of T. Manlius Torquatus and his ill-starred son),[1] *spolia opima* feats were achieved in a more adventitious manner. A Roman combatant who slew an enemy *dux* (commander or king) in a man-to-man clash during the course of a pitched battle earned this incomparable distinction only if the encounter lacked the formalities involved in a regular duel. He literally had to slay his opponent in the heat of battle rather than during an arranged monomachy between two opposed champions. The victorious Roman combatant then stripped the panoply off his opponent and dedicated it within the religious precincts of Rome to a member of the so-called archaic triad (i.e., Jupiter Feretrius, Mars, and Janus Quirinus). The dedication ceremony itself involved placing this religious offering upon a

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1 Liv. 7.9.6–10.4, 8.7.1–22: see Oakley 1985.393–94 and his notes 11 and 17. Cf. Goldsworthy 1996.265–76, Lendon 2005.172–92 et seq., and Cowan 2007.102–83 for further analysis of Rome's dueling tradition.

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length or assembly of sacred holm-oak (the *feretrum*) and then consecrating the prize within the appropriate god's shrine.[2] A number of scholars have argued that in its associated purificatory rites, the dedication ceremony for *spolia opima* actually gave rise to the triumph.[3] While our canonical *spolia opima* honorands (Romulus, A. Cornelius Cossus, and M. Claudius Marcellus) are all remembered as having dedicated their captured enemy panoplies to Jupiter Feretrius, there were, apparently, also lesser distinctions or gradations of this award based upon the status of the Roman combatant who performed the feat. As Yvon Garlan points out: "There were three types of spoils: the first offered to Jupiter Feretrius, the second to Mars, the third to Janus Quirinus, accompanied by the sacrifice respectively of a bull, *solitaurilia* (presumably a boar, a ram, and a bull), and a lamb."[4]

This tripartite gradation of *spolia opima* honours is supported by a series of passages in Festus (202–04L) that are, however, somewhat less than clear on the precise distinctions of rank or status between Roman combatants that determined whom the dedicant deity was to be. This is Festus's clearest statement (204.4): "M. Varro ait opima spolia esse, etiam si manipularis miles detraxerit, dummodo duci hostium," "M. Varro says that *spolia opima* can be such, even if a common soldier has stripped them off, provided it is from the enemy leader."

Notwithstanding the testimony of Festus, we know of no "junior" Roman combatants who earned the right to dedicate these "lesser" panoplies (i.e., *secunda* or *tertia*), and the subsequent rarity of this award has contributed to a great deal of modern debate over the significance of the *spolia opima* tradition. In 1906, H. Dessau drew the initial and critical link that fuelled this debate (see pp. 144–45 esp.) when he revealed a set of connections between a highly unusual Livian passage (4.20) and an apparent "archaeological discovery" made by Caesar's heir, Octavian. Livy reports to us that Octavian claimed that the inscribed *spolia opima* corselet dedicated by A. Cornelius Cossus (in 437/6)—unearthed some four hundred years later in the dilapidated temple of Jupiter Feretrius—proved that only a consul

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2 On the *spolia opima* / archaic triad relationship, see Versnel 1970.306–13, Dumézil 1970.141–273 et seq.

3 Picard 1957.124ff. and 130–33, Versnel 1970.304–13 et seq., Scullard 1981.213.

4 Garlan 1975.65: cf. Plut. *Marc*. 8, Fest. 189L. See also Maxfield 1981.58–59, 104 and Versnel 1970.307–09, who agree entirely with the validity of these tripartite distinctions (Versnel 1970.308): "The *spolia prima* were captured by the supreme commander, the *secunda* by an officer, and the *tertia* by a private soldier."

operating under his own auspices could offer up such a prize. Cossus was apparently a *tribunus militum* in 437 and, hence, not authorized by consular auspices (his consular year and triumph are to be dated to 428),[5] although Livy felt compelled to make this amendment to satisfy the new propagator of historical authority. However, in subsequent passages, Livy "jumbles" Cossus's later titles (consul, military tribune with consular powers, city prefect, and *magister equitum*) to register his dissent at having to concede to this deception.[6] The consular amendment of the later passages also casts significant doubts upon the initial Livian assertion (4.20.6) that *spolia opima* were only validly won when "taken by the Roman supreme commander from the supreme commander of the enemy." Further complicating this matter, and somewhat like the later case of M. Valerius Maximianus (see below), Cossus's accomplishment as a *tribunus militum* seems technically to have qualified as *spolia opima secunda* (and, thus, should have been dedicated to Mars), as it was fought under the auspices of a higher magistrate. Quite possibly, it was the new "Augustan ruling" that distorted Livy's "revision." It is most important to remember here that all the testimonia we possess concerning *spolia opima* eligibility date from the (controversial) Augustan and post-Augustan eras.

Octavian's highly contentious claim actually had major repercussions for events transpiring in Livy's day. M. Licinius Crassus (cos. 30), grandson of the enormously wealthy *triumvir* of the same name and of a distinguished family lineage, had personally slain a Bastarnae chieftain or king by the name of Deldo in 29 and requested the right to dedicate his captured panoply as *spolia opima* to Jupiter Feretrius.[7] Although Livy was forced to deny the testimony of all the earlier annalists (and his own chronological deductions), the new Augustan *exemplum* that he recorded effectively robbed Crassus of his remarkable honour, as his proconsular status

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5 Broughton 1951.59 and 65 dates Cossus's military tribuneship (and *spolia opima* dedication) to 437 and his consulship (and triumph) to 428; he also touches upon the many dating controversies surrounding the *spoliator*. The now-lacunose *Fasti Triumphales* lists a M. Valerius Lactuca Maximus triumphing in the year 437/6, which suggests that Cossus's "true" entry (i.e., in 428) may have escaped "doctoring" by Augustan agents—see Degrassi 1954.93. (All dates in this paper are B.C.E. unless otherwise indicated.)

6 Liv. 4.30–32. See Miles 1995.40–47 (on Livy's attitude to Augustus's duplicity), Versnel 1970.307: "In this matter, however, Augustus's honesty is questioned."

7 Dio 51.24.4. See, best, on Crassus's distinguished military career, Gerding 2002.116–27 and 2004.133–40 et seq.

was somehow deemed "religiously deficient." Crassus had also recovered Roman military standards lost to the Bastarnae by the uncle (C. Antony, cos. 63) of his former ally Marc Antony, although, like his frustrated *spolia opima* dedication, he was again denied the right to consecrate this reclaimed *spolia*. Further humiliated by being stripped of his imperatorial salutation, Crassus was then, as Ronald Syme puts it, "granted the bare distinction of a triumph when a convenient interval had elapsed (July, 27 B.C.), after which he disappears completely from history."[8]

While many other scholars have since weighed into this *spolia opima* controversy,[9] Henrik Gerding reminds us that Crassus's remarkable single combat feat—unrivalled for almost two hundred years—may well have had profound implications for the radical new politics of Octavian/Augustus in 27:

> The princeps could not allow a successful general, springing from the most renowned and politically prominent families, to enter Rome as a new Romulus. Thus, Augustus had a personal interest in depriving Crassus of his award. By eliminating Cossus as an important precedent, the nature of Crassus' command could be questioned: as proconsul he did not fulfil the prerequisites for the *spolia opima* . . . The accomplishments of Crassus must have caused his "superior" some embarrassment, reminding the Roman people of the *spolia opima* that Augustus could not win for himself.[10]

Furthermore, as Valerie Maxfield points out in her appraisal of Crassus's fate, there are many inconsistencies evident in Octavian's manipulation of events:

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8 Syme 1939.309. See Dio 51.25.2 on Augustus's theft of Crassus's salutation (and *supplicatio*?) and the inscriptions attesting to Crassus's provincial imperatorial salutation: *ILS* 8810 = *IG* II/III 4118 (Athens); *BCH* 50 (1926), 441–42 no. 78 = *AE* (1928), 44 (Thespiae). Cf. Gerding 2004.136 and n. 39 on the inscriptions.

9 See Rich 1996.85–92 for a summary of this "century of debate." Flower 2000, Gerding 2002 and 2004 should now be added to this catalogue as major contributors.

10 Gerding 2004.138 (reiterating Dessau's stance), 145. Plutarch *Ant*. 62 informs us that Marc Antony apparently challenged Octavian to a duel just prior to Actium. Octavian appears to have declined the offer.

> Crassus was allowed to celebrate a triumph (though not until 27 B.C.) which, if he was not fighting *auspiciis suis*—the ostensible reason for his being denied the *spolia opima*—he should not have done. He was, moreover, refused the title *imperator*, Octavian taking the imperatorial salutation for the victory. As Syme has so cogently argued, the real danger to Octavian, particularly prior to 27 B.C., came from the proconsuls, men with the power and prestige to foil his plans. He could not allow one of them, Crassus, to rival—indeed to outshine—him in military glory by winning a distinction which had, throughout the history of Rome, fallen to but three men, Romulus, Cornelius Cossus and Claudius Marcellus. Thus the permission to dedicate the *spolia opima* to Jupiter Feretrius was denied to Crassus, although in common with other generals of the period, he was allowed to triumph. A reward for military success was called for, but one not so rare as to raise the recipient above Octavian himself. A triumph was granted, imperatorial salutation denied.[11]

Before disappearing into the field for some two years (c. 27–25), Octavian instigated a series of dramatic reforms. He adopted the religious appellation Augustus (his very title was derived from Rome's augural or consular *auspicium* rites), ensured that proconsular governors were effectively stripped of their armies, and "invented" the tokenistic *ornamenta triumphalia* to replace the full ceremonial triumph that had been so ardently pursued by Rome's élite for centuries.[12] By 19, the full triumph was denied completely to those outside the imperial family[13] and, in another counter-republican masterstroke, he would further deny potential rivals any access to the greatest of republican distinctions by suppressing the cult of Jupiter Feretrius. As L. A. Springer informs us, Augustus "sought to transfer the

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11 Maxfield 1981.104. Cf. Versnel 1970.307 on the issue of fighting *auspiciis suis*.

12 Suet. *divi Aug*. 7.6–9 (on Augustus's sacral title); Syme 1939.310, 313ff., and 326–27 (on provincial/senatorial armies); Maxfield 1981.104–06 and Beard 2007.274–75, 295–302 (on the *ornamenta triumphalia*).

13 Develin 1978, Hickson 1991. Cf. Beard 2007.295–305, who now suggests—on the evidence of the *Fasti Barberiniani*—that the "last non-imperial" triumph may have been held as early as 21.

functions of Jupiter Feretrius to Mars Ultor, and in this he was successful, for we hear no more about the cult after 20 B.C."[14]

The senate endorsed a series of Augustan decrees in 20, with one of these stipulating that a temple to Mars Ultor was to be erected on the Capitol "in imitation of that of Jupiter Feretrius" (Dio 54.8.2). Not only was the location of the new temple to this "imperial" Mars unprecedented (they were always previously built outside the *pomerium*), but this suppression or replacement of Jupiter Feretrius had recognizable socio-political and familial implications for Augustus and his successors. Augustus's adoptive father (Caesar) had requested the right to dedicate *spolia opima* in 45/44, minting a vast coin series to advertise his intentions, although his assassination curtailed this attempt to scale the peak of republican glory.[15] Similarly, Augustus's stepson and designated heir Drusus continued to demonstrate his own "republican sympathies" by recklessly scouring the battlefield for Germanic leaders to slay in his quest for *spolia opima*.[16] In the last actual reference we find to the temple of Jupiter Feretrius (c. 9), Augustus would lay a laurel wreath in the shrine—"against all custom," as Dio 55.5.1 has it—to commemorate Drusus's death. Like Caesar, Drusus died under controversial circumstances.[17] Augustus had also assumed the sacerdotal regalia of a *fetialis* (priest of Jupiter Feretrius) in 32 for his ritual declaration

14 Springer 1954–55.32. There appear to have been two temples erected to this deity (the first, a Capitoline *tholos*, was dedicated 12th May, 20), as a series of coins minted c. 19–18 depict a small circular temple with the Parthian standards already consecrated within it—see Hill 1989.27 and coin n. 36.

15 Dio 44.4.3. Contra Syme 1979.419, who doubted the authenticity of Dio's claim, although he did not take into account the numismatic evidence. See Kent 1978.17 (plate 24, n. 88), a gold *aureus* dated to 50–49 depicting a bust of Pietas on the obverse and a Gallic panoply mounted on a tree trunk on the reverse, with Caesar's name also clearly inscribed. Cf. Grueber 1910.505–07 and n. 1, who points out that this massive propagandistic issue—the motif also extended to issues of silver *denarii* and *quinarii*—was distributed to Caesar's troops soon after Pompey's flight from Rome. Grueber also makes an emphatic identification of the depicted Gallic warrior as Vercingetorix. Sydenham 1952.167–69 (plate 27) dates the earliest issue to 50, identifies the deity as either Pietas or Venus, and further identifies Vercingetorix at the foot of the *spolia* assembly. On another *spolia opima* coin of this time (minted by a distant relative of the Marcelli), which depicts M. Claudius Marcellus before the temple of Jupiter Feretrius, see Flower 2000.47.

16 Suet. *Claud*. 1.4. Cf. Rich 1999, although his whole line of analysis appears flawed. See Chaplin 2000.189, n. 91 and Gerding 2004.139 on Rich's arguments as "somewhat far-fetched."

17 Rich 1999.544ff. Contra Levick 1976.34, who argues that Drusus was directly challenging Augustus by pursuing this most controversial honour.

of hostilities against Cleopatra and Marc Antony; as this priesthood and its fetial lore are not referred to in the literature as a "revived tradition," Octavian clearly placed ongoing ceremonial importance upon such rites.[18] It may well have been in this guise that he also made his later "mock" *spolia opima* dedication within the new shrine to Mars of the Roman military standards (lost by the triumviral M. Licinius Crassus and, later, by Marc Antony) he claimed to have recovered from the Parthians in 20 (Dio 54.8.1–3). From this point in time onwards, no known imperial ruler, *legatus,* or common soldier ever again acquired the right to dedicate "true" *spolia opima*.

We also know from a passing remark made by Minucius Felix that by the early third century C.E. one manifestation of Rome's chief deity was referred to—at least by a vitriolic Christian apologist—as the "offended Jupiter."[19] Minucius further implies that Jupiter Feretrius was also "no longer approached" with his customary offering or that he was now adorned with a *corona* instead of *spolia opima* (23.6–7: "et cum Feretrius corona induitur"). The temple of Rome's oldest god had been restored by Octavian in the 30s during his massive (and so-called) "religious revival," although Jupiter Feretrius no longer seems to have played any part in the greatest of Romulan traditions.

We gain a further sense of this suppression or "offending" of Jupiter Feretrius when we examine the career of M. Valerius Maximianus, one of the most accomplished of imperial legates, who served under Marcus Aurelius, Verus, and Commodus. Maximianus personally slew a Germanic king called Valao in single or man-to-man combat, thereby technically earning the right to dedicate *spolia opima*, although he only received much lesser

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18 Dio 50.4.4–5; cf. Aug. *RG* 7, Flower 2000.49. See, for instance, on the evolving nature of the *fetiales*, Wiedemann 1986, Watson 1993. Cf. Springer 1954–55, who more plausibly connected the identity and functions of this priesthood to their tutelary god and, subsequently, characterized the sodality in suitably martial terms. Wiedemann and Watson remain oddly wed to the debunked theory of Rome's "defensive imperialism" in their assessments, with an inevitable "pacification" of the priesthood. On the *fetiales* operating far later than generally supposed, see Oost 1954, Broughton 1987. Moreover, there is absolutely no evidence which suggests that *fetiales* could be used by one Roman force against another—which accounts for their apparent "disappearance" during the final (civil war infested) century of the republic after their last known, "pre-imperial" deployments (in 137, 111, 39, and against Cleopatra in 32).

19 Min. Fel. 7.3 (*offensi Iovis*): a remark made in the context of the revival of his games (Ludi Capitolini). Cf. Scullard 1981.194–95, who argues that these private games were pre-republican and could only have been held in honour of the earliest manifestation of Jupiter (i.e., Feretrius).

rewards. Marcus Aurelius—who was also a *fetialis*—publicly praised the *legatus*, although no mention is made of a *spolia opima* dedication in the relevant honorific inscription (or any others that marked his career):[20]

> ab imp. Antonio Aug. coram laudato et equo et phaleris et armis donato quod manu sua ducem Naristarum Valaonem interemisset.
>
> *Imperator* Antoninus Augustus commended him in front of an assembly, and he received the donatives of a horse, *phalerae,* and arms because he slew without mercy and by his own hand Valao, leader of the Naristae.

Hence, like the full ceremonial triumph and certain other military distinctions,[21] the *spolia opima* rite—Rome's oldest and most prized religio-military honour—seems to have literally disappeared during the age of Augustus. Certainly, Augustus's professionalization of the legions must have played a significant, if not corresponding or precipitating, role in these affairs, as professional armies do not fight for glory (Keegan 1999. xi and 51–52). By suppressing or transmogrifying the most conspicuously glorifying of religio-military awards, Augustus ensured that "imperial" *legati* and their men fought their campaigns only as a duty to his office. The battlefield *imagnifer*, another imperial innovation, would even carry a portrait bust of the *princeps* onto the field to remind his men of the autocratic Genius who presided over victory, while the semi-divine military dictator covetously guarded all access to his true power base. According to Syme (1939.2, 404):

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20 See Maxfield 1981.59 and *AE* (1956) 124. Cf. Southern 2006.9 for a discussion of Maximianus's career and the full range of inscriptions—*CIL* 3.1122, *CIL* 8.2621, 2698 = 18247, 2749, 4234, 4600, and *CIL* 3.13439 = *ILS* 9122—that attest to his achievements. Maxfield 1981.59 notes that this single combat victory technically qualified as *spolia opima secunda*, although it was not treated as such.

21 See Connolly 1981.245–46 on the *vallaris*, *muralis*, *navalis,* and *obsidionalis* crowns all having become purely ornamental or no longer awarded during the empire. Cf. Maxfield 1981.62–63 on the sharp distinction between the merit-based military award system of the republic and the situation under the empire where: "Rank determined to a large extent the composition of any reward received."

> The new dispensation, or "novus status," was the work of fraud and bloodshed, based upon the seizure of power and redistribution of property by a revolutionary leader . . . Military glory was jealously engrossed by the Princeps and his family. The soldiers were his own clients—it was treason to tamper with them. Hence constant alarm if generals by good arts or bad acquired popularity with the troops, and in time even an edict forbidding senators to admit soldiers to their morning receptions. For the senator no hope or monument of fame was left.

In line with this radical disjunction between republic and empire, we find that—like the *spolia opima* single combat tradition—battlefield duelling also virtually disappears. Where, according to our existing surveys, a high incidence is recorded by republican historians like Livy (M. Servilius Geminus Pulex alone claimed to have fought no less than twenty-three),[22] there are only two known cases throughout the entire imperial age. Moreover, one of these is highly questionable and the other is a particularly poor or desultory reflection upon Roman *virtus*.[23] Again, Augustus's dismantling of a glory-driven citizen militia in favour of his professional fighting forces must have played a major part here, as "primitive" single combat is to be associated with a values complex that is predicated upon individual glory.[24] Sallust's precise definition of the behaviour of his countrymen in combat highlights this fervour for glory, while the foreign observer Polybius had maintained in his day that "many Romans have willingly fought in single

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22 See Oakley 1985 and Wiedemann 1996 for frequency estimates; Liv. 45.39.16 on Pulex (although not a single one of these is depicted narratologically). Livy's exemplary treatment of other monomachists (e.g., Torquatus and Corvus) suggests that he was not attempting to chronicle all known single combat victors—or victories—but simply to "re-present" the most important in line with his rhetorical or didactic agenda. See Feldherr 1998.82–111 et seq. and Chaplin 2000 on Livy's pronounced interest in exemplification.

23 Oakley 1985.410 mentions one (Jos. *Bell. Iud*. 6.168–76) in his Addendum. This case is a quite pathetic reflection of imperial Roman manhood, as the professional soldier was coerced into combat and slain by his opponent, who, in turn, had to be killed by a centurion's bowshot. Wiedemann 1996.98 claims to have identified another (Tac. *Ann*. 3.21.3), although see Maxfield 1981.65, 70, and 84–85, who had previously analyzed this case and concluded that while M. Helvius Rufus received ancient single combat awards, no actual single combat was fought. The last known republican duel took place in 45 (Oakley 1985.396).

24 See Oakley 1985. Cf. Glück 1964.26–31, Rawlings 1996.86–90 et seq.

combat to decide the outcome of a whole battle, many have chosen certain death."[25] Valerie Maxfield also reveals in her intensive study of the *dona militaria* that, during the meritocratic republic, quite a number of Rome's formal military distinctions were awarded to single combat victors of any rank: the *hasta pura*, infantry *phiale* or *patella,* and cavalry *phalerae* all conform to this pattern.[26]

Many of Rome's Western foes had also institutionalised this manner of glorifying individuated or "heroic" combat prowess—unlike, it should be noted, the more "civilized" Greeks, Macedonians, and Carthaginians[27]—and the effective demise of both Roman single combat traditions during the first principate raises many questions about the systemic reforms instigated by Augustus and the true nature of the new state (and army) that he formed. In the next section of this paper, we will attempt to respond to some of these questions by closely examining the evidence provided by Vergil as to the fate of Rome's vanishing single combat traditions.

II. VERGIL AND THE *SPOLIA OPIMA*

In her recent analysis of the *spolia opima* tradition, Harriet Flower raises a number of objections to the authenticity and significance of Rome's monomachy rites. Flower argues that Crassus's *spolia opima* feat played no part in the "constitutional settlement" of 27 because of certain timing discrepancies, although she overlooks the fact that news of his victory had some two years to circulate back to Rome before Octavian's panicked reaction.[28] She also casts serious doubts upon the veracity of the *spolia*

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25 Sall. *BC* 7.5–6, Pol. 6.54.4. Both authors are clearly reminding us of the republic's "glory economy." See on glory as *the* driving force of republican imperialism, Harris 1979.17–47 et seq.

26 Maxfield 1981.62: "According to Polybius it [i.e., the *hasta pura*] was originally awarded to a man who wounded or slew an enemy in a single combat which had been entered into voluntarily. By the time that he wrote, the practice had changed so that the man who slew an enemy received a . . . *patella* if in the infantry . . . *phalerae* if in the cavalry."

27 See Dawson 1996.114 and Rawlings 1996; cf. p. 87: "It is perhaps paradoxical that the Roman nobility should hold to the same concepts of prestige as their tribal adversaries." Unlike their Western counterparts, the more "refined" or egalitarian Greeks, Macedonians, and Carthaginians possessed no detectable traditions of single combat in the historical period and were deficient in the *nomoi* which encouraged and rewarded the quest for individual glory.

28 Flower 2000.49–50. Contra Gerding 2004.141: "From 28 B.C. to 23 B.C., Augustus took every conceivable measure in order to prevent a similar incident to occur again."

opima dedications of both Romulus and Cossus to support her general (i.e., "invented tradition") theory; obviations that also work to sideline much by way of distinctions between Rome's parallel single combat traditions.[29] Again, she has chosen not to evaluate the attempts of those Romans who sought to win and dedicate *spolia opima* but were thwarted (or perished) in the attempt. Beyond Caesar, Crassus, and Drusus, we may add here the liberator Brutus, the attempts of some four Roman officers at the Battle of Lake Regillus, as well as the cases of Q. Fabius Ambustus, Q. Aulius Cerretanus, T. Quinctius Crispinus, M. Aquillius, and the encounter between M. Lamponius and P. Licinius Crassus.[30] Moreover, Flower focuses only limited attention upon the vital religious significance of the full *spolia opima* ceremony[31] and in her attempts to portray Marcellus as the only historically verifiable or "true" *spolia opima* dedicant, she appears to contradict herself: "Presumably he [i.e., Marcellus] cannot have presented himself as the first dedicator of the *spolia opima*, but rather as an exceptional warrior whose valour equalled the feats of Rome's earliest heroes, notably the founding father Romulus."[32]

While many of Flower's theoretical contentions are provocative, especially her operating premise that rites like *spolia opima* and the *devotio* are inauthentic, invented traditions that somehow managed to emerge from within the confines of a deeply traditional martial society,[33] her paper is particularly notable in one respect. She, quite astutely, draws our attention to the great interest displayed by Vergil in the *spolia opima* tradition. Despite the constraints of Flower's investigation, this *spolia opima* theme can be seen to operate as a highly revealing strand connecting key sequences in

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29 Flower 2000.41–46. Cf. also p. 33, n. 3; p. 40, n. 32; p. 50.

30 See Oakley 1985.397 on a number of these cases (with references). Cf. p. 398.

31 Cf. Versnel 1970.304–05 (on the religious significance of the associated *dona militaria* awards): "The insignia of meritorious soldiers, the *hasta pura*, the medal, particularly the various wreaths, were originally—there is not the slightest doubt about this—not marks of distinction, but talismans with magic effects, either blessing, cathartic or apotropaeic."

32 Flower 2000.43. If Marcellus—who is "the only secure and historically-attested example," according to Flower (pp. 35, 59)—was not the first *spolia opima* dedicant, then who was?

33 See Flower 2000.59 and n. 140 where she claims that: "A similar argument could also be made for the institution of the *devotio*, which is attested only for two or three members of the Decius family." Contra Liv. 8.10.11–12, who explicitly informs us that "any citizen" could be devoted. See further on this Feldherr 1998.93 and Kyle 1998.37 on surrogates and effigies for Roman sacrificial rites.

the last seven books of Vergil's epic. As Flower informs us of this "repeated but elusive and complex theme":

> The young Pallas, commander of his own separate contingent, hopes and prays to win *spolia opima* from his single combat with Turnus (10.449–50, 462–63). Before Pallas' departure, his father Evander had told him of his own triple victory and triple spoils of armor taken from King Erulus of Praeneste (8.566–67). When Turnus prevails, he makes the fatal mistake of wearing Pallas' *balteus* instead of dedicating it to a god (10.495–505). Similarly, Mezentius, the Etruscan leader, vows Aeneas' armor as spoils for his son Lausus to wear (10.773–76, 862–63). By contrast, Aeneas returns Lausus' body with its armor (10.825–32), and then kills his father Mezentius (10.867–908). Mezentius' armor, when dedicated to an unnamed god, provides a powerful prototype for *spolia opima* in the opening scene of Book 11 (11.5–13). The Volscian leader Camilla dies in search of golden spoils, but her protectress Diana ensures that her body and armor are transported from the battlefield intact (11.593–94, 768ff., 778–82).[34]

As Flower indicates, this prominent *spolia opima* theme is played upon repeatedly in the latter half of a poem that is peppered with single combat encounters. Of course, these heroic clashes can be thought of as a "formalist" reflection of similar scenes in the *Iliad*, although if we recall that republican Rome possessed active single combat traditions and that the issue of *spolia opima* was of great importance in Vergil's day, then the poet's interest in this matter would appear to be more than just literary.[35] From the beginning of Book 6, when Aeneas and his men first alight upon

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34 Flower 2000.54–55. Cleary 1982, Putnam 1985, Woodman 1989, and Harrison 1989 had previously considered aspects of Vergil's *spolia opima* treatment, though not in a systematic fashion.

35 See Camps 1969.136, who points out that the final three books of the *Aeneid*, wherein the actual *spolia opima* clashes occur between Vergilian heroes and which Camps describes as Vergil's "most 'epic' part of all his story to the mind of his age," that, "it is possible therefore that these last books with their tale of war had a significance for the poet and his readers that the modern reader misses."

Italic shores, this supra-literary claim appears substantially reinforced. Aeneas enters Diana's sacred grove (which carried its own monomachy resonances)[36] and then proceeds into the Underworld where this *topos* of *spolia opima*—along with other single combat distinctions—quickly gains our attention. Anchises recounts to his son the "future" glory of Rome in their chthonic setting and, in so doing, immediately highlights the founding ancestral line, their military accomplishments, and their distinctive combat awards. Silvius, the first "Trojan" to bear Italic blood, is depicted as a young warrior resting upon a "headless spear" or *hasta pura* (6.760). His descendants are distinguished by their *coronae civicae* (6.772), and M. Claudius Marcellus is depicted as adorned with his *spolia opima* (6.855). All of Rome's noteworthy warriors or leaders fall between the bracketing depictions of Silvius and the elder Marcellus, and the famous fugue of Rome's martial destiny directly precedes the representation of Marcellus (6.847–53). This has the effect of drawing further attention to Vergil's depiction of the iconic *spoliator*. Hence Marcellus is particularly conspicuous in this array of heroes, referred to by the poet as towering "triumphant over all" (6.856). His deathly companion, Augustus's ill-fated son-in-law who carried the bloodline of the *spoliator* (6.860–85), only reinforces the centrality of Marcellus's Underworld depiction.

A number of things are anomalous or striking, though, in Vergil's account of the preeminent warriors of Rome's past/future. If we acknowledge the ambiguous standing of *coronae civicae* during the age of Augustus, then all three combat awards referred to in the Underworld parade of heroes were at least partially bestowed for victories in man-to-man or single combats.[37] They were also, as H. S. Versnel has established, sacralized benefactions that brought great individual glory to the recipient and possibly forged some sort of identification between the honorand and Rome's martial pantheon (cf. note 31 above). However, when Romulus, the first *spolia opima* victor, is eulogized (6.777ff.), no mention is made of his supreme combat spoils. Similarly, the other historically attested *spoliator*, A. Cornelius Cossus, also gains mention in the Underworld (6.841), although again no reference is made to his *spolia opima* distinction.

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36 Strabo 5.3.12, Paus. 2.27.4. Cf. notes 41 and 42 below.

37 While most commentators hold that the *corona civica* (an award that both Caesar and Augustus acquired) was bestowed only for "saving the life of a fellow citizen," the elder Pliny (*NH* 16.12–13; cf. 16.19) suggests that it may also have been a "surrogate" monomachy prize for taking the life of an enemy.

The most arresting discrepancy in this catalogue of heroes is, undoubtedly, the depiction of the elder Marcellus. We know from Plutarch's biography (and a number of other sources) that Marcellus had dedicated his *spolia opima* to Jupiter Feretrius after his glorious triumphal parade.[38] Vergil expressly informs us, though, that the great *spoliator* dedicated his captured arms not to Jupiter Feretrius, but to Father Quirinus (6.859: "tertiaque arma patri suspendet capta Quirino"). In his commentary on the *Aeneid*, Servius repeats Vergil's glaring "mistake" in attributing this dedication to Janus Quirinus, although, as Versnel asserts: "The only explanation from antiquity (Serv. *Aen.* 6, 859) is decidedly incorrect, since Servius, who on this subject follows in the footsteps of Vergil, thinks that the three kinds of *spolia* refer to the three different *spolia* captured in the course of history."[39]

Vergil also refers to this dedication as having been made "for the third time," and while this appears sequentially accurate (Romulus and Cossus having also been depicted), there are further problems with this comment. If the line of interpretation adopted by scholars like Yvon Garlan and Georges Dumézil as to the functionally distinguished role of the archaic dedicant deities may be considered sound (cf. notes 2 and 4 above), then Janus Quirinus was the recipient of *spolia opima tertia*, not the singular distinction of *spolia opima prima*. If we also recall that M. Licinius Crassus acquired the right to dedicate *spolia opima prima* in Vergil's day—and that Caesar and Drusus also pursued the award—then the poet cannot be taken to have simply "capped" the divine trinity who accepted these prizes (i.e., Romulus to Jupiter Feretrius, Cossus to Mars, and Marcellus to Quirinus). The historical reality of Crassus's single combat victory makes this idea that the *spolia opima* distinction was restricted to only three occasions (and their corresponding three deities) distinctly implausible. Moreover, as with the case of Aeneas's dedication of Mezentius's panoply (11.5–13) to an oddly "unnamed god"—as Harriet Flower notes (2000.54)—there is not a single direct reference to Jupiter Feretrius, the premier god of single combat, in Book 6 nor throughout Vergil's epic. When Aeneas finally emerges from the Underworld through the appropriately false-visioned Gate of Ivory, subsequent events appear to take an even stranger turn.

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38 Plut. *Marc.* 6–8. Cf. Prop. 4.10.39–45, Val. Max. 3.2.5.

39 Versnel 1970.308. Cf. Maxfield 1981.59, who agrees that Servius has erred. See further Butler 1919, who had earlier provided us with a comprehensive, if brief, assessment of the evidence pertaining to Vergil's "erroneous" depiction of Marcellus's *spolia opima* dedication to Pater Quirinus.

If we turn to Book 10, the single combat fought between Pallas (*dux* of his own Arcadian contingent)[40] and the mighty Halaesus (leader of the Auruncans) provides us with our first major set of battle anomalies. Oddly, Pallas offers a pre-battle prayer to Father Tiber (10.420–23), although he is clearly questing for *spolia opima* as no formal challenge is announced before the clash:

> quem sic Pallas petit ante precatus:
> "da nunc, Thybri pater, ferro, quod missile libro,
> fortunam atque viam duri per pectus Halaesi.
> haec arma exuviasque viri tua quercus habebit."
>
> Pallas attacks him, praying first:
> "Now, Father Tiber, grant the spear I'm about to hurl
> a lucky path through rugged Halaesus' chest—
> I'll strip him of weapons, hang them on your oak."

Father Tiber would seem a very unusual dedicant deity to be offered this entreaty as he was neither a *spolia opima* god nor, as a river-entity, was the oak (or oaken *feretrum* upon which Halaesus's *spolia* were apparently to be hung) held sacred to him.[41]

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40 See Harrison 1989.413, who refutes any suggestions that Pallas is not an independent commander (cf. also Flower 2000.54 on Pallas's sovereign status). He argues that not only does his father Evander deliberately appoint him *dux* of the Arcadian forces (8.518–19), but Pallas was to contribute under "his own name" (*suo . . . nomine*) a further 200 cavalry, thereby doubling the size of the Arcadian contingent. The vitally important declaration of the *haruspex* (*Aen*. 8.498ff.) that "no man of Italy" could lead these forces (after receiving crown, insignia, and scepter of the treaty envoys), may also have much to do with the nature and function of Jupiter Feretrius and his *fetiales* discussed in notes 18, 19, and 48 of this paper. Cf. further *Aen*. 9.52 where Turnus launches a spear to signal the opening of hostilities and Servius's (*ad Aen*. 9.52) subsequent discussion of the "ritual evolution" of the *ius fetiale*.

41 On the oak (or holm-oak) only being held sacred to the chief deity, see Springer 1954–55.28 and 30. Cf. Plin. *NH* 12.3: "The Italian holm-oak is sacred to Jupiter, the laurel to Apollo, the olive to Minerva, the myrtle to Venus, and the poplar to Hercules." A similarly mistaken oak attribution also appears to take place with the Golden Bough: Vergil informs us at 6.138 that this mystical device is "sacred to Juno of the Underworld" (*Iunoni infernae . . . sacer*), although at 6.203ff., the living branch (not mistletoe, to which it is only compared) is plucked from a holm-oak that can only have been sacred to Jupiter Feretrius. Butler 1920.113 argues that this peculiar Juno is unique to Vergil; she is now more commonly identified as Proserpina. The Bough also evokes something of the *feretrum* upon

This state of divine disorder is only compounded in the next clash between Pallas and Turnus. Immediately following the slaying of Halaesus, Pallas's attention is drawn to the imperious Turnus—who reviles him across the field—and the Arcadian's *spolia opima* intent is again proclaimed (10.449–51):

> aut spoliis ego iam raptis laudabor opimis
> aut leto insigni; sorti pater aequus utrique est.
> tolle minas.
>
> Now's my time to win some glory, either for stripping
> off a wealth of spoils or dying a noble death—
> my father can stand up under either fate.
> Enough of your threats.

Presiding over this *aristeia* is Hercules, who may—like Diana—have held some functional relationship to Rome's single combat traditions, although neither Hercules nor Diana was a *spolia opima* deity.[42] Again, we find an inappropriate deity associated with *spolia opima*-style combat. Hercules' sympathies clearly rest with Pallas before the fateful encounter with Turnus, although the youthful Arcadian's fate is tragically predetermined. Pallas calls upon the "family friend" in the following manner (10.459–63):

> per patris hospitium et mensas, quas advena
> adisti,

---

which *spolia opima* were suspended (cf. *Aen*. 6.635–36, where it is ritualistically erected), although both Ogilvie 1965.70–71 and Flower 2000.42 question this sort of identification. Contra Frazer 1922.3–4 and 917ff., who always maintained—in line with Servius (*ad Aen*. 6.136) and Roman public opinion—that this "Wand of Destiny" was causally related to the "bough-plucking" single combat rites fought in honour of Diana Nemorensis. We should also note here that the Romans' meticulous attention to cultic punctilio (see Val. Max. 1.1.1–21 et seq.; Turcan 2000.2–3 et seq.)—only reinforced by the highly formalized *indigitamenta* system—leaves any possibility that Vergil just "haphazardly" selected deities like Father Tiber for his *spolia opima* depictions highly improbable.

42 Diana had single combat rites held in her sacred grove, and Hercules, like Diana, was a deity of the Roman arena. On Hercules' role as an arena deity, see Wiedemann 1992.178–79 and Ogilvie 1965.71 on the extant epigraphic record of Hercules' supposed *spolia opima* dedication (*ILS* 340I). Cf. Frazer 1922 for the most famous exposition of Diana's combative rites. Cf. Mart. *de Spec*. 12, 13, and 27 for references to both deities in the arena and Welch 1994.72, 76 on the absolute dominance—if not exclusivity—of single combat encounters between trained gladiators (at least until the time of Caesar).

> te precor, Alcide, coeptis ingentibus adsis.
> cernat semineci sibi me rapere arma cruenta
> victoremque ferant morientia lumina Turni.
>
> Hercules,
> by my father's board, the welcome you met as a stranger,
> I beg you, stand by the great task I'm tackling now.
> May Turnus see me stripping the bloody armor off his body,
> bear the sight of his conqueror—eyes dulled in death!

Turnus defeats and slays Pallas and quickly removes his ornately engraved sword belt as a token of his victory (10.495ff.). He then "exults" over his *spolia opima* and "glories in their winning" (10.500). This act of removing a warrior's *balteus* also possessed deep significance for Roman fighting men as—like the humiliation of having to pass beneath the yoke—it symbolized a deprivation of *honos* and *dignitas*.[43] The Rutulian king announces no recipient god for his *spolia opima*, although, like the *spoliator* Marcellus in Vergil's Underworld depiction, he takes to wearing it as a battle memento. As Harriet Flower points out, Turnus's failure to vow or consecrate his *spolia opima* to a suitable god also presages his fate: "When Turnus prevails, he makes the fatal mistake of wearing Pallas' *balteus* instead of dedicating it to a god (10.495–505)."[44] Vergil's authorial voice ominously foretells Turnus's end for this sacrilegious deed (10.503–05):

> Turno tempus erit, magno cum optaverit emptum
> intactum Pallanta, et cum spolia ista diemque
> orderit.

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43 On "belt-stripping," Salmon 1967.109, Goldsworthy 2003.269. On the yoke, Goldsworthy 2003.132: "The precise origins of this archaic ritual are unknown, but it clearly implied a loss of warrior status." See further Verg. *Aen*. 9.359–66 et seq., where the sword belt of King Rhamnes is taken and worn as a trophy by the Trojan Euryalus after Rhamnes is brutally slain in his sleep. Euryalus pays the ultimate price for this "parody" of a *spolia opima* feat: he is slain by a band of vengeful Rutulians who then impale his head upon a spear.

44 Flower 2000.54. Cf. Prop. 4.10.39–41 on *spolia opima* not necessarily representing the full panoply of a defeated enemy leader. Propertius informs us that Marcellus brought only the shield (*parma*) of the Belgic chief Viridomarus back to Rome as his offering.

Yes,
the time will come when Turnus would give his all
to have Pallas whole, intact,
when all this spoil, this very day he'll loath.

As with the depiction of the Underworld heroes, there are many incongruous features contained in these clashes between the Auruncan, the Arcadian, and the Rutulian champions; we will consider them in a cumulative manner in the concluding section of this paper. One further set of single combat anomalies needs to be considered here before we turn to the encounters between Turnus and Aeneas in Books 11 and 12. At the end of Book 10 and the beginning of Book 11, Aeneas confronts, defeats, strips, and then promptly dedicates the spoils of the Etruscan king Mezentius (10.873ff.). Mezentius, too, had called for the spoils (and head) of Aeneas, and beseeched Apollo—yet another inappropriate *spolia opima* deity—to "commence" the combat (10.861ff., 875–76). This portrayal, again, is only further complicated by Mezentius's attempt to turn his son into a living *spolia opima* tropaeum, having promised the spoils he hoped to take from Aeneas as a costume for Lausus to wear (10.773–76). The valiant Lausus subsequently tries to protect his wounded father, falls to Aeneas's sword, and, in a moment of strange magnanimity, has his corpse carried off the battlefield by the Trojan *rex* with armor untouched (10.794ff.).[45] After slaying the vengeance-maddened but doomed (10.739–41) Etruscan leader, Aeneas announces that (11.15–16):

haec sunt spolia et de rege superbo
primitiae manibusque meis Mezentius hic est.

These are the spoils stripped from a proud king,
our first fruits of battle, this is Mezentius,
the work of my right hand!

---

45 A not entirely dissimilar fate befalls Camilla. Although she, too, seeks to fasten Phrygian arms to a temple door or to adorn herself in captured golden *spolia*, she succumbs to the spear of Arruns (who calls upon Apollo) and, as Flower 2000.55 points out, "Her protectress Diana ensures that her body and armor are transported from the battlefield intact (11.593–94, 768ff., 778–82)." While Camilla clearly craves the glory of becoming a distinguished *spoliatrix*, the deities protecting—or "presiding over"—her frenzied combat attempts are not in any way connected to the *spolia opima* tradition: i.e., Diana, Opis, and Trivia. Feeney 1991.145–46 and 156 argues that it is Jupiter Optimus Maximus who has orchestrated Camilla's death, although this is debatable.

We are also provided with a particularly explicit set of instructions for the dedication ceremony of *spolia opima prima* (11.5–11), although, yet again, no direct mention is made of Jupiter Feretrius (or any other expressly named dedicant deity):[46]

> ingentem quercum decisis undique ramis
> constituit tumulo fulgentiaque induit arma,
> Mezenti ducis exuvias, tibi, magne, tropaeum,
> bellipotens; aptat rorantis sanguine cristas
> telaque trunca viri, et bis sex thoraca petitum
> perfossumque locis, clipeumque ex aere sinistrae
> subligat atque ensem collo suspendit eburnum.
>
> An enormous oak, its branches lopped and trunk laid bare,
> he stakes on a mound and decks with the burnished arms
> he stripped from Mezentius, that strong captain:
> a trophy to you, Mars [sic], the great god of war.
> Aeneas fixes the crests still dripping blood,
> the enemy's splintered spears and breastplate
> battered hard and pierced in a dozen places.
> Fast to the left hand he straps the brazen shield
> and down from the neck he hangs the ivory-hilted
> sword.

Once again this battlefield consecration strikes the reader as inappropriate since Roman custom dictated that *spolia opima* were to be dedicated within the shrines of her relevant gods. It could be argued here that, before the time of Romulus, such shrines (or the archaic triad) did not actually exist, although several factors weigh against such a determination. Vergil makes explicit mention of Mars and Janus (and his temple gates: 7.601–15 et seq.; cf. 1.293–96) within the epic and a subtle passing reference to Jupiter Feretrius in Book 12 (see below); the frequent segue from most ancient past to contemporary events renders Vergil's poetic world both timeless and fully formed; while, finally, the very concept of *spolia opima*

46 Ovid *Fasti* 4.877–900 identifies the dedicant deity as Jove, although with characteristic mischievousness, he claims that Mezentius and Aeneas fought over a wine offering (whence the *Vinalia*).

is indelibly associated with Romulus and should not even rightfully exist in the founding-time that Vergil portrays without a conscious or deliberate retrojection of the nature and significance of this distinction.[47] Moreover, Vergil had previously made a clear reference to the *spolia opima* dedication of Marcellus in the Underworld tableau, even if he strangely confused the dedicant deity. He also performed a kindred type of literary sleight-of-hand by attributing such awards as the *hasta pura* and *corona civica* to Rome's earliest heroes at a time when the formal *dona militaria* could not possibly have existed.

The remainder of Book 11, and then Book 12, continue these discrepancies. After Aeneas mourns Pallas's passing with human sacrifices and a parade of captives carrying tree-trunks adorned with arms (11.29–99), the Trojan *dux* accepts an embassy from the Latins. Carrying wreaths of olive spray (a "Minervan" symbol of peace), they broker a deal with Aeneas in Book 11 that precipitates a formal single combat challenge between the Trojan king and the now maligned Turnus (11.113–15, 11.122 et seq.). Unlike the single combat encounters we have examined up until this point in the Iliadic half of the *Aeneid*, this staged duel is not fought over *spolia opima,* as something of the codified etiquette of a monomachy challenge is announced and the clash is prearranged (11.435–44). The duel proves anticlimactic: Aeneas is winged by an arrow and is forced to withdraw from the battle site (12.317ff.). Aeneas had also made a guarded or cryptic reference to the (aniconic) Jupiter Feretrius and his "synecdochic" scepter immediately prior to this abortive *aristeia* (via a "mirror oath" by Latinus), although, again, this appears incongruous as Jupiter Feretrius had few known associations with a formal duel. However, somewhat like the part he played in the fabled triple monomachy of the Horatii and Curiatii,[48] the god is called upon through his treaty associations (the *fetiales* being his

47 See Harrison 1989.413 for a similar line of argument on the issue of "anachronisms."

48 Liv. 1.23.7–26.4; cf. 1.24.7–8. Like other archaic Roman deities—Mars (as a spear), Janus (as a portal or gates), and Vesta (as a flame)—Jupiter Feretrius was represented in an aniconic fashion. He appears never to have been anthropomorphized or to have acquired a cult statue. His oak, *sceptrum*, casting-spear, and treaty-concluding stone (possibly representative of the meteoric *silex* housed in his shrine) contained the essence of the god. Cf. Ogilvie 1965.70 on the functions of Jupiter Feretrius as a war deity: he points out that the Roman worship of Jupiter in this role was unknown to any other Italic community and was "from the beginning military." Although Latins and Romans both possessed *fetiales* in the earliest or regal period, the treaty god held in common may have been Jupiter Lapis or Latiaris (who was also honoured during the Feriae Latinae)—see Dumézil 1970.179–80, 273–75, Schilling 1979.354ff.

representatives in this capacity) rather than in his formative role as a *spolia opima* deity (12.200–10):

> "audiat haec genitor, qui foedera fulmine sancit.
> tango aras, medios ignis et numina testor:
> nulla dies pacem hanc Italis nec foedera rumpet,
> quo res cumque cadent, nec me vis ulla volentum
> avertet, non, si tellurem effundat in undas,
> diluvio miscens, caelumque in Tartara solvat;
> ut sceptrum hoc" (dextra sceptrum nam forte
> gerebat)
> "numquam fronde levi fundet virgulta nec umbras,
> cum semel in silvis imo de stirpe recisum
> matre caret posuitque comas et bracchia ferro;
> olim arbos, nunc artificis manus aere decoro
> inclusit patribusque dedit gestare Latinis."

> "May the Father hear my oath, his lightning seals all
> pacts!
> My hand on this altar now, I swear by the gods and fires
> that rise between us here, the day will never dawn
> when Italian men break this pact, this peace,
> however fortune falls. No power can bend awry
> my will, not if that power sends the country
> avalanching into the waves, roiling all in floods
> and plunging the heavens into the dark pit of hell.
> Just as surely as this scepter"—raising the scepter
> he chanced to be grasping in his hand—"will never
> sprout new green or scatter shade from its tender leaves,
> now that it's been cut from its trunk's base in the woods,
> cleft from its mother, its limbs and crowning foliage lost
> to the iron axe. A tree, once, that a craftsman's hands
> have sheathed in hammered bronze and given the chiefs
> of Latium's state to wield."

Vergil then channels his audience's attention to the next clash between the two champions, and the final struggle in Book 12 is emphatically a contest for *spolia opima prima*. Not only is a formal single combat challenge lacking in this spontaneous encounter, but the status of the two

combatants clearly qualifies them to win and dedicate these much sought-after spoils. As Harriet Flower recognizes:

> The final climax of the poem when Aeneas kills Turnus, whatever its overall emotional and ethical implications, is a feat clearly synonymous with *spolia opima* (12.938ff.). Virgil, characteristically, both celebrates and also problematizes the winning of *spolia opima* from an enemy leader. Aeneas, therefore, appears as a precursor to Romulus in single combat, one who lives in a heroic world reminiscent both of Homer and of ancient Roman custom.[49]

Republican Romans possessed no tradition of giving quarter on the battlefield (whence, it would seem, the nature of Turnus's end),[50] although when Turnus initially succumbs to Aeneas's spear in their climactic Book 12 encounter, a number of things emerge as significant within the context of our preceding examination of heroic single combat. Stricken by Aeneas's spear cast, Turnus is depicted in a defeated gladiator-like posture, knee bent beneath him, awaiting the victor's decision to award him life or death (12.926ff.). Aeneas wavers in his deliberations until his eyes alight upon the trophy-like *balteus* that Turnus has fatefully worn into battle (12.938ff.). Again, like the elder Marcellus in Book 6, Turnus is portrayed as actually wearing his spoils (upon or across his shoulder); unlike the prize adorning the historical hero, though, Pallas's belt is clearly a form of "undedicated" *spolia opima*. Ultimately enraged by the sight of these spoils stripped from his *contubernalis* that Turnus has brazenly worn into battle, Aeneas's *furor* and *pietas* meld into the final, sacrificial blow that he strikes on behalf of

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49 Flower 2000.55. Cf. Cleary 1982 for another reading of the importance of *spolia* in this final single combat and a valuable identification of all references to spoils throughout the epic; see p. 25: "*Arma virumque cano* . . . the *Aeneid* is the story of a man and his weapons, or more precisely, it is the story of two heroes, Aeneas and Turnus, and how they treat the confiscated weapons, *spolia*, of their enemies. The words with which the poem begins are the two main noun-images with which it ends." See further on *arma* and *virum*—and their relationship to the opening *propositio* and *invocatio*—as "thematic and programmatic of the whole poem," Fredricksmeyer 1984.

50 Verg. *Aen*. 2.354: "One salvation alone remains to the defeated, to hope for none." Cf. *Aen*. 10.575–601 where Aeneas ruthlessly slays Lucagus, who had attempted to beg for his life. See also Kyle 1998.48: "Soldiers—and probably early gladiators—were expected to win or die."

Pallas. This slaying of an "impious" Turnus also represents a type of piacular offering, which carries a further *spolia opima* resonance as certain animals were sacrificed to the archaic triad as part of the full dedication ceremony associated with this honour.

Of primary importance, though, is the fact that Turnus is slain precisely because of his adornment with *spolia opima*. His *coup de grâce* hinges entirely upon his possession (and flaunting) of these spoils, and, after his demise, Vergil's narrative precipitously concludes. Aeneas has now earned the right to dedicate Turnus's panoply as *spolia opima prima* (as he had with Mezentius's panoply) and, conceivably, to reclaim Pallas's *balteus*: no such depiction is, of course, provided or referred to. Like the historical Marcellus (in Plutarch's account),[51] Aeneas had alluded to the dedicant deity for whom the spoils were intended with his guarded Book 12 oath to Jupiter Feretrius. However, the god is denied his religious offering through the device of the epic's incomplete finale.

This climactic, though jarring, ending to the poem also presents Vergil with a problem that no Greek epic poet would seem to have faced. In establishing Aeneas as winner and potential dedicant of *spolia opima prima* within this distinctly Roman martial tradition (the Greeks had no Jupiter Feretrius, *fetiales,* or equivalent to the archaic triad),[52] Vergil has constructed a tale where he is compelled to "invent" a new *spolia opima* honorand. Problematically, no other ancient sources attest to the Trojan having earned this honour.[53] Here Harriet Flower's notion of an invented tradition would seem applicable, since if Vergil had continued his narrative beyond Aeneas's victory, then the proclamation of his feat and accompanying dedication

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51 Plut. *Marc*. 6.6. See also Rothstein 1924.342, Shackleton Bailey 1956.263, and Camps 1965.153 on the importance of expressly calling upon Jupiter Feretrius before such an encounter, thereby giving the deity a functionally intended interest in the (*spolia opima*) outcome.

52 Garlan 1975.62–63 reminds us that while the Greeks possessed a Zeus Tropaios and a Nike Tropaiophoros, these deities received collective, rather than individuated, martial dedications. However, the benefits of fighting "heroically" from the front—so evident in Vergil's battle depictions—are more than apparent from the career of Alexander the Great. At the battles of Issus and Gaugamela, he struck directly for Darius across the field, and as the Persian monarch's nerve snapped on both occasions, the enemy force was demoralized and routed when he fled. A similar result ensued from the monomachy victory of T. Manlius Torquatus, and in all three successful cases of *spolia opima prima* (and *devotio*) acts, the tide of battle turned in favour of the Romans. The Romans glorified, sacralized, and rewarded these deeds for a reason: they produced outstanding military results.

53 Horsfall 1986. Cf. Liv. 1.1–3, Prop. 4.10, Ovid *Met.* 13.623–14.628, Val. Max. 3.2.3–5.

ceremony would have elevated him to the ranks of Romulus, Cossus, and Marcellus. Aeneas had already attained this distinction through his earlier success over Mezentius, further underscoring his status as a *spolia opima* dedicant (although no specific god was named in that case) and compounding Vergil's difficulties in presenting this sort of "fiction."

This should not be thought of as merely idle conjecture, as the *exemplum* of Aeneas's behaviour after his defeat of Mezentius assists us in reconstructing his most likely course of action after the slaying of Turnus. Unlike Turnus, who pays the ultimate price for not consecrating the *spolia opima* he takes from Pallas, pious Aeneas ensures that one unnamed war god is suitably propitiated through his careful erection (and dedication) of Mezentius's panoply upon a *feretrum*. In fact, so rapidly did Aeneas instigate this appropriately pious ceremonial that he failed to procure and consecrate the requisite sacrificial animal (a bull to Jupiter)—yet another curious omission that seems to highlight the role that Turnus actually plays as a sacrificial offering in the final single combat (see 12.101–06, where Turnus's battle frenzy is likened to that of an enraged bull). Further problematizing this scenario, as we have previously noted, is the fact that the earlier consecration of Mezentius's panoply took place on the battlefield, rather than in the shrine to Jupiter Feretrius after the appropriate rites had been performed. Would Vergil have repeated this counter-customary "error"? It might be suggested here, then, that the *Aeneid* terminates at the precise juncture where its enigmatic final scene could not be comfortably reconciled with its uniquely Roman religio-military tradition.

Before turning to the concluding section of this paper, and in the interests of presenting a balanced assessment, there is another, potentially important, possibility contained within Vergil's striking representations of heroic single combat. In common with a number of writers from his era who display an interest in causes and origins, it may be possible that Vergil simply intended to explore a fanciful aetiology of *spolia opima* traditions within the heroic world of the *Aeneid*. In balancing the demands of imaginary heroic exploits and historical fact, the poet's quest for universal or "timeless" truths may have seen him colour the epic with details drawn from the opposing camps of fantasy and reality. Here Aristotle's renowned dictum in the ninth chapter of his *Poetics* suggests its influence.[54] Such considerations do have

54 On the impact of Aristotle's distinctions between history and epic poetry, see Finley 1971.11–12. Cf. White 1978.121–34, who, while acknowledging this Aristotelian distinc-

important ramifications for any "functionalist" or "existential" readings of ideological allusions made within the *Aeneid*, although, as the conclusion to this paper will argue further, Vergil's epic should be read as a product of the concerns of its age. Quarantining a work like the *Aeneid* from its milieu not only suggests certain postmodern tendencies (and is highly counter-intuitive given the many internal references to contemporary events and personages), but also has the effect of transforming even Vergil's self-conscious mythopoeism into little more than an entertaining literary exercise.[55] Hence while it could be argued that religio-military or cultic rites presented in the *Aeneid* are, at best, manipulated to recall issues in the real contemporary world rather than representing a purposive "re-presentation" of reality in "fiction" (that harbours an ulterior and logically consistent motive), several factors do militate against this presupposition.

First, as customary (and revered) religious mediators, epic poets were expected to present an authoritative world of "sacred truths":[56] the misrepresentation of Marcellus's *spolia opima* dedication to Janus Quirinus, like the apparently unnecessary association of deities such as Father Tiber, Hercules, Diana, and Apollo with *spolia opima* combat, clearly undermines Vergil's role in this firmly established tradition. There would seem—at least to my mind—no logical, nor even creative, reason why Vergil would deliberately unsettle his audience's religious sensibilities with such misinformation (especially given the decidedly functionalist orientation of the Roman pantheon), unless he intended an effect that we, his modern readership, have yet to discern.

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tion, actively extends our understanding of the modalities of factual or realistic discourse shared by poets and historians.

55 See Kirk 1974.28: "In short, many tales that implant themselves in a society so strongly as to become traditional have to possess both exceptional narrative power and clear functional relevance to some important aspect of life beyond mere entertainment." Moreover, at Rome, the epic poet could be equally an historian or, like Lucan, directly adapt historical events into an epic, mythological form. See further Camps 1969.95–104, 137–43 and Woodman 1989 on Vergil's historicism; also Feeney 1998.47–75 on the stubbornly rooted notion that only Greek myth is to be considered "primary" (as opposed to the Roman variant, which has traditionally been regarded as "secondary" or lacking in any social function).

56 Even given Plato's notorious attitude towards the suppression of epic poetry in his utopian *polis*, *Republic* 606E is indicative; for Rome, and the impact of the epic poet as "teacher," see Hor. *Epist*. 1.2. Furthermore, modern historians of Roman theology—from Ogilvie 1969.113, 116–18 to Feeney 1998.98, 101, 106, 141–42—continue to embrace Vergil as a trustworthy expositor of the sacred, even where he is engaging with the divine machinery of Homer in the light of Roman belief systems and ritual practices.

Second, the Roman literary tradition of importing significant historical data into a poetic format—begun by Naevius with *fabulae praetextae* like the *Clastidium* and *Romulus vel Lupus*—should remind us that native audiences were long familiar with such representations. It is also notable in this context that these earliest of historical dramas, possibly exerting an influence upon Vergil as Naevius's *Bellum Punicum* certainly did, dealt with, respectively, M. Claudius Marcellus's *spolia opima* victory and probably that achieved by Rome's founder.[57] Such precedents and treatments, it seems reasonable to assume, were sufficiently well known to both Vergil and his audience to encourage relatively little by way of poetic deviation from traditional *exempla* unless contemporary circumstances provoked such revisions. As Moses Finley reminds us: "Myth is not of the nature of fiction . . . but it is a living reality, believed to have once happened."[58]

Third, we must also confront the uncomfortable truth that Vergil's epic was a commissioned work, one that clearly pays some form of homage to Augustus's patronage. How we may judge the poet as a result of this—whether as a willing agent of the new order or as a subversive republican who acted to subtly undermine this regime—is a classic matter of personal interpretation. However, when we turn to the very last poetic treatment that the *spolia opima* issue received (i.e., in Propertius's Book 4), we find that this aetiology of Jupiter Feretrius, and its conventional reordering of the canonical *spolia opima* dedicants, carefully adheres to the new Augustan stance on eligibility for this most coveted of religio-military awards.[59] Put simply, after the ambiguities implicit in the accounts of a Livy and Vergil, Propertius's elegy has, according to S. J. Harrison (1989.411), "closed the account, with no further additions being envisaged—not even from Augustus himself, the new Romulus, and certainly not from any other general." Thus in the final section of this paper an explanation will be advanced that

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57 See Flower 2000.36 on Naevius's *fabulae praetextae* dealing with the theme of *spolia opima* as well as a closely contemporary subject (in the *Clastidium*).

58 Finley 1954.26, citing Bronislaw Malinowski from his *Myth in Primitive Psychology*.

59 Camps 1965.1 dates the publication of Propertius's fourth book to 16. See Harrison 1989.411–12, who argues that Propertius's attention in the penultimate couplet of his elegy—especially reflected in the phrase "sure omen" (4.10.46: *omine . . . certo*)—directly reflects the insistence of Augustus that *spolia opima* could only be won by a commander entering combat under his own auspices. Livy had, most awkwardly, also dealt with this new Augustan ruling (as discussed above), and Vergil, too, according to Harrison 1989.412–14, had to navigate his way around the newfound and strict conditions imposed by Augustus upon the "Crassus case" for *spolia opima* qualification.

attempts to take stock of these "aetiological conundrums" without deviating too greatly from the orthodox standards of inference for measuring poetry against historical realities.

III. CONCLUDING REMARKS

Vergil presents us with a seemingly confused and confusing world of *spolia opima* single combats in the *Aeneid*. Unlike the *Iliad*, the literary prototype for the latter half of the *Aeneid*, where we also encounter many similar single combats, we possess in the Roman instance substantial historical documentation against which we can verify (or contrast) Vergil's presentation. In the "illusory" realm that Aeneas enters into soon after alighting upon Italic shores, much of Vergil's poetic world does not agree with this evidence. Features of the Underworld parade of heroes, the dedicant deities involved—or not involved—in the *spolia opima* tradition, and the strange standing of Aeneas as a *spolia opima* victor do not seem to ring true. It is also a world where, while many heroic combatants pursue the prize, only the semi-divine ancestor of the Julii achieves the lasting distinction of becoming a *spolia opima* honorand. Similarly, in reconfiguring the archaic, pre-Romulan past, Vergil has now indissolubly connected the *spolia opima* with Augustus's Trojan progenitor—thereby providing a "new" charter myth for what eventually became a pivotal religio-military tradition—as well as made his own contribution to the contemporary debate about how pliable that institution had become during the turbulent rule of the first *princeps*. With his narratological dialectic shuttling between past and present, and in a remarkably prophetic way, the poet also seems to have anticipated or signalled the demise of this tradition (for future generations) with his richly nuanced final single combat scene.

If these observations carry conviction for a modern readership, how much more self-evident and poignant must they have been to Vergil's native audience? During the most dislocating socio-political upheaval that Rome had ever experienced, Vergil implies that his countrymen's most revered archaic deity had also been suppressed during Augustus's reign: with this "death" of a god, his fabled religious offering also passes into history. As with the fate of the triumph (which probably derived from the *spolia opima* tradition), this literal suppression of a functionally significant deity—Jupiter Feretrius also being responsible for initiating wars and treaties through his priesthood—raises major questions about Rome's new social order and the role that the *Aeneid* played in tracing the demise of the old.

Hence we might postulate two very different interpretive strategies. The first could see us adopt a formalist line of enquiry, where we simply acknowledge the *Aeneid* as derivative of its Greek epic prototypes and a sort of melange of Greek and Latin literary influences, with a quotient of suitably archaic or "mythic" Roman beliefs and practices adorning its laudatory Augustan analogues.[60] This approach, of course, privileges "form" (i.e., style, technique, and putative literary influences) over substance, context, and any diachronic historical framework. The second approach, and the one that is preferred here, would have us attempt to make sense of Vergil's fantastical world in the light of events that were unfolding in his era. Thus by setting aside the more abstract interpretive tools of formalism and concentrating instead upon the possibility that "the cultic atmosphere of Vergil's *Aeneid*" is more amenable to a myth-and-ritual exegesis—where the now-confused, if not inchoate, relationship of *spolia opima* rites to their explanatory tales are suitably highlighted—the full weight of the poet's efforts to reconcile Augustus's assault upon this tradition may be rendered more explicable.[61] This attempt to recover meaning from the poetic treatment of a cultural tradition under great contemporary strain will endeavour to press our understanding of Vergil's "epic purpose" in a fresh direction by employing this broadly functionalist method. Along these lines, then, a series of interpretive suggestions will be presented here.

It is an unassailable fact that the issue of *spolia opima* was of pressing significance in Vergil's day. As Harriet Flower surmises: "The *spolia opima* were a subject for poets, historians, and artists, as well as for a noticeable degree of debate in the early years of Augustus's principate. Afterwards they faded from view to become no more than a symbol of the past."[62] Varro, Livy, Propertius, possibly Horace, and certainly Vergil all found the issue of importance.[63] Augustan artisans ensured that the doors

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60 See Feeney 1998.1–11 et seq. for a particularly blistering assault upon Latinist or literary formalism, "the inapplicability of our categories of political/religious" to alien theologies, and the "long-ingrained aestheticising tendency in the study of Roman literature." A less formalist approach would seem both judicious and potentially more revealing.

61 See Feeney 1998.10, 115–36, 141–42 (the highlighted phrase also belongs to Feeney), and Kirk 1974.66–68, 213–53 for a valuable, contrasting assessment of the myth-and-ritual approach in a Greek context.

62 Flower 2000.35. The real issue here, however, would seem to be why and how "they faded from view."

63 Cf. Varro (in Fest. 204L); Liv. 1.10, 4.19–20, 4.30–32; Prop. 4.10; Hor. *Ode* 2.10. On Horace's *Ode*, see Gerding 2004, who now proposes that the mysterious Licinius of this poem is not Murena but M. Licinius Crassus.

to the new temple of Mars Ultor carried an evocative depiction of Romulus shouldering his *spolia opima*; a statue of Romulus carrying his *spolia opima* would also be prominently displayed in the Forum Augustum, where Mars' new temple had been so inappropriately located.[64] In Pompeii, similar *spolia opima* memorials are attested in a number of places (Springer 1954–55.29). Caesar, Crassus, and Drusus all attempted to win and dedicate *spolia opima* during Augustus's lifetime; Caesar may have begun the process of distorting the *spolia opima* criteria, as he seems to have attempted to dedicate the panoply of Vercingetorix (without having engaged him in single combat; cf. note 15 above). Crassus also appears to have played a major part in this distorting process. His unbridled ambition, family lineage, wealth, and distinguished military career clearly precipitated major adjustments to *spolia opima* eligibility and Augustus's subsequent reforms. Although he shared a consulship with Octavian in 30, his uncertain loyalties (he initially joined Pompey's rebel son and then defected from the side of Marc Antony just prior to Actium) and enviable *spolia opima* feat rendered him a dangerous rival. Like Turnus, his fate seems certain. The *spolia opima* issue was omnipresent.

Rome's *littérateurs* all remind us, too, that the award was at least as bound up in Roman religious traditions as in their customary military behaviour. Quite systemically, Augustus dramatically altered (or attacked) both spheres of cultural expression to realize his political aspirations. Completing the process begun by Marius, Augustus professionalised the legions, stripped their commanders of the right to triumph, ensured that the *sacramentum* was sworn only to his person, and personally repatriated retired veterans from his vast patrimony or the new military fund established in C.E. 6.[65] His legates could fight wars only under the auspices of the *princeps*—a tremendous religious reversal, reflected in Augustus's very name, that detrimentally encroached upon the right of potential rivals to triumph or dedicate *spolia opima*. Rome's political life died as Augustus achieved his ambitions. Soon after establishing Rome's very first cult of Pax on the most unlikely of places (the Campus Martius, always a symbolic war site), Augustus would also for the first time in Roman history—as Tacitus so bitterly complained—lay down "the limits of empire" by seducing all

64 Ovid *Fasti* 5.559–66; Rich 1999.546. Cf. Putnam 1985.238 on the extant *elogium* to Romulus, once inscribed on a plaque at his statue base (and referring to his *spolia opima* dedication to Jupiter Feretrius).

65 Goldsworthy 2003.268–72. Cf. Aug. *RG* 15–17.

with the unnatural blandishments of peace.[66] In this age, as Syme has it, of revolutionary "fraud and bloodshed," military glory belonged entirely to the *princeps* and his court.

Faced with this counter-republican onslaught, Vergil responded with very real ambivalence. Cloaking his appraisal in the heroic language and models of Greek epic, the poet's exquisite religious consciousness saw him craft his tale of the founding of Rome in a way that mirrored the chaos of his age. Julian autocrats were achieving god-like status, as the gods of earliest Rome were denied their ancestral influence and function beneath the guise of a traditionalist's religious reformation.[67] In an almost unspeakable act, Jupiter Feretrius—that most Romulan of deities—would be suppressed in Vergil's day, just as he would no longer find a place in an epic that so tragically "celebrated" the glory hunting *virtus* and *pietas* needed to win *spolia opima*. The gods who preside over *spolia opima* combats in the *Aeneid* appear as illusory or disordered as they must have been in Vergil's day, when Augustus's "religious revival"—or, more accurately, revolution[68]—had severed the archaic triad from their most esteemed responsibilities. Not a single deity presiding over, invoked, or involved in *spolia opima* combats and ceremonials within the *Aeneid* bears any "true" correlation to the historically accorded functions of the archaic triad.

Confusion reigns in Vergil's martial epic, just as the poet's contemporaries could only have wondered at what the future held in store within their drastically re-engineered religio-military world. Could a member of the élite (or a common legionary) dare to request the privilege of dedicating *spolia opima* again? How would they "qualify" religiously? To which god,

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66 Tac. *Ann*. 1.1–3; cf. Ovid *Fasti* 1.709–22. The cult of peace was unknown to a people whose communal bond was virtually predicated upon the ideal of constant warfare—see Weinstock 1960.46–52, Harris 1979.10ff., Finley 1985.68, Dawson 1996.159–62; cf. Liv. 1.19.4–5 (the first of his many allusions to the *metus hostilis* complex).

67 Some have suggested (e.g., Dumézil 1970.141ff., Beard, North, and Price 1998.15ff.) that the archaid triad was of no great importance during the republican era, although this would seem very difficult to sustain when its great ancestral standing and full range of functions are considered. Moreover, Dumézil, who conducted our most sustained investigation of this triad, has now been roundly criticized by Beard, North, and Price (1998.14ff.) for his distorting structuralist agenda. See also Syme 1939.405 on the cessation of cultic association and divine honours for aristocrats other than Augustus.

68 In accord with this schism, Garlan 1975.64 reminds us that: "Augustus went so far as to set himself up as the 'trophy' god *par excellence*, who procured victory and to whom monuments of this kind should therefore be dedicated."

or gods, were they to offer up this sacral prize? The once unique status of Jupiter Feretrius as a god of war declarations, treaties, and glorious single combat feats would, we do know, be subsumed by the imperial Mars Ultor.[69] The temple doors of Janus, the final member of the archaic triad, closed an unprecedented three times under Augustus, and strange new gods—Jupiter Dolichenus and Mithras—would come to fill the void left by the symbolic death of Rome's first religio-military trinity.[70] A dark secret of the first principate would seem concealed within the verses of the *Aeneid*, one that may still require much work to decipher.

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69 See Beard, North, and Price 1998.199–201, who point out that all *spolia* and booty taken by commanders operating under Augustus's auspices had to be dedicated within the new shrine to Mars, a setting which "explicitly evoked the emperor's authority." Triumphal buildings, the festivals linked with their erection, and temples dedicated from vows (and *manubiae*) made on the battlefield by Roman *imperatores* ceased entirely for aristocrats other than Augustus: Orlin 1997.198ff., Beard, North, and Price 1998.196–201.

70 Aug. *RG* 13, Liv. 1.19.2–3. Cf. Verg. *Aen*. 7.601–15—contra Hor. *Epist*. 2.1.255, who strangely contradicts Vergil's stance (i.e., that it was peace rather than war trapped within this temple); Ovid *Fasti* 1.121–24 (cf. 1.279–82) has it both ways. See Beard, North, and Price 1998.275 on the Syrian influences acting upon this new Jupiter cult. On Rome's "military Mithraism," see Watson 1969.127ff. See also Fenney 1998.5: "The emphasis on religious decline may be seen as an element of the crisis-atmosphere needed by the new principate to legitimise its continuance."

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