Leadership in Times of Civil War:

The Case of Marcus Aemilius Lepidus

Nicole Alexandra Duncan

Department of Classics and Ancient History

Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences

The University of Sydney

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Abstract

What might it look like to behave 'correctly' in civil war? This question unsurprisingly preoccupied every citizen engaged in political life in late republican and triumviral Rome. To some, the primary concern was survival, for others peace, while others still sought honours and power. In the chaos of the 40s and 30s, both individual politicians and the community had to judge, justify, and reevaluate appropriate behaviour at all stages of civil conflict, including points of potential reignition and shaky aftermath. Experimentation was rife. This thesis seeks to emphasise the development of a new specialised model for leadership, one that was amorphous and problematic, and that remains under appreciated in the modern scholarship: that of the ideal civil war leader. To do this I take as my central case study the regularly sidelined Marcus Aemilius Lepidus, a political player and general of whom a series of intriguing glimpses are caught but often neglected in favour of those more charismatic and ultimately impactful leaders. 'Leader', though, need not be conflated with 'aspirant to sole rule'. I refocus on Lepidus' unique circumstances, how he negotiated these circumstances, and especially how his contemporaries chose to represent and respond to his negotiation of them to shed new light on the discourses of leadership that surfaced during periods of upheaval.

Through a series of glimpses, I show that Lepidus was a useful figure through which to test often uncomfortable ideas. I argue that he relentlessly transgressed, blurred, and overlapped boundaries. As a result, he exposed a number of tensions deeply embedded within the community, including concerns over the possibility of victory through non-violence as a means of definitively ending civil war; the appropriate avenues to express praise, blame, and protest; the articulation of relationships to power; the impact of social and familial legacies on community expectations; and, crucially, the ability to exist in a space of contradiction. Together, this rich tapestry of moments from Lepidus' career illustrates the ways he challenged and informed the tumultuous negotiation of contemporary expressions about the ideal civil war leader.

Statement of Originality

This is to certify that the content of this thesis is my own work. This thesis has not been submitted for any other degree or purpose.

I certify that the intellectual content of this thesis is the product of my own work, and that all assistance received in preparing this thesis and all sources have been acknowledged.

Nicole Alexandra Duncan

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During the preparation of the thesis the author used Copilot for the purpose of minor text enhancement. The use of this generative AI tool was limited to the proofreading of the occasional sentence. The author confirms that where text was modified by generative AI, the content was reviewed for possible errors, inaccuracies, and bias. The author takes full responsibility for the submitted thesis and ensures the work is their own and has used generative AI within the parameters of use (refer to the University of Sydney generative AI guide for researchers)."

Abbreviations

In this thesis, I have used the abbreviations listed by the Oxford Classical Dictionary, 4th edition, as well as the following:

Nep. *Pel.*	Nepos, Life of Pelopidas
OLD	The Oxford Latin Dictionary

Introduction

> Non est omittenda in picturae mentione celebris circa Lepidum fabula, siquidem in triumviratu quodam loco deductus a magistratibus in nemorosum hospitium minaciter cum iis postero die expostulavit somnum ademptum sibi volucrum concentu; at illi draconem in longissima membrana depictum circumdedere luco, eoque terrore aves tunc siluisse narratur et postea posse compesci.
>
> In speaking of painting one must not omit the famous story about Lepidus. During his Triumvirate, when entertained by the magistrates of a certain place, he was given lodging in a house buried in trees; and the next day he complained to them in threatening language that he had been robbed of sleep by the singing of the birds; however the authorities had a picture of a large snake made on an extremely long strip of parchment and fixed it up round the wood, and the story goes that this at once frightened the birds into silence, and that subsequently it was possible to keep them in check.
>
> Plin. *HN* 35.121[1]

This thesis is not a biography of Lepidus. Nor is it an attempt to convince readers that he ought, on the whole, to be viewed any more favourably by posterity than he already is. It is also not an attempt to explain the demise of the Roman republic through an assessment of its leaders. It is a project which grew from sideways glances and lost moments as I attempted to grasp the complexities faced by leading figures as they wrestled with the notion of behaving well or 'correctly' during the shifting phases of civil war. At the same time, I hope to push back against approaches that have examined aspects of late republican leadership—*auctoritas*, *potestas*, and legitimacy—by taking Augustus' principate as a starting point and working backwards to determine its origins and its influences.[2] These approaches often conflate 'leader' with 'aspirant to sole rule'. In doing so, they diminish the contemporary character of the many other experiments that were taking place to situate individuals within a community besieged by

[1] trans. Rackham (1952).

[2] Examples of this approach include: Lange (2009), Rich (2012), Syme (1939), and Zanker (1988). Gruen (1974), 1-2, warns against ransacking the late republic for 'symptoms of decline and signposts for the future'.

internecine conflict. Experimentation was indeed rife.[3] In the chaos of the 40s and 30s, individuals and communities had to judge, justify, and reevaluate behaviour appropriate at *all* stages of civil conflict, including points of potential reignition and its shaky aftermath.[4] Meanwhile, the community and its constituent groups were developing their own expectations and demands, fashioning language with which to evaluate their leaders—to praise and to blame. One aim of this thesis then is to reclaim, as much as is possible, the contemporary experience of negotiating these questions. A negotiation from which a novel and specialised model of leadership cautiously emerged, one that was amorphous and problematic, and that remains under appreciated in the modern scholarship: that of the ideal *civil war* leader.

Marcus Aemilius Lepidus—a marked yet surprisingly nebulous figure—arose quite by accident as the perfect case study to tether these otherwise sprawling questions about late republican leadership. Again and again major narratives both ancient and modern have him hovering around the edges of more memorable men: first Julius Caesar, then Marcus Antonius, and finally, the Young Caesar. When Nepos wrote in the 30s about Atticus' skill in maintaining high-profile friendships during turbulent times, no explicit mention of Lepidus was made. Ultimately, it was two men, Antonius and the Young Caesar, who 'each desired to be the *princeps*, not only of the city of Rome, but of the whole world'.[5] Lepidus' failure as a viable candidate as rivalries came to a head rendered him disposable and uninteresting to many, especially in the historiography of the centuries that followed. Although he survived the civil wars (which was no mean feat), his political capital was devastated. He was banished to Circei

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[3] A wide range of scholarship is devoted to this idea, with some studies tracking the motives and actions of key individuals and/or groups, while others acknowledge the influence of thinkers and writers. For example: Rawson (1975), *passim* esp. 148-149, considers this kind of experimentation against a background of Greek and Roman attitudes and their moments of overlap, suggesting Caesar did not simply pick from the existing models of leadership available to him (for example 'king' or 'consul'), but capitalised on ideas familiar to the community and fashioned something new; Vanderbroeck (1987), explores how leadership was reshaped to mobilise collective behaviour; Arena (2007), *passim* esp. 58, 68, 71-73, argues that Cicero introduced a new ethical dimension for those engaging with *libertas* and *dominatus* which compelled individuals to prioritise their *own* moral judgement; Cornwell (2020a), *passim* esp. 167, demonstrates how the presumptuousness of leading figures led them to co-opt ideals such as *concordia*, thus transferring it away from its traditional owners, the *civitas;* Lobur (2021), *passim* esp. 89, rehabilitates the ambitions of Cornelius Nepos, who he argues, '*adapted* existing material to shape understandings of legitimate and illegitimate power which sought to creat[e] (and circumscrib[e]) new possibilities for political authority'; also the volume by Frolov and Burden-Strevens (2020).

[4] All dates are BC unless otherwise specified.

[5] Nep. *Att.* 20, trans. Rolfe (1929). On the date of composition and publication, see Millar (1988).

and allegedly became the joke of the senate, subjected to jeering and insults when he was ordered to return to Rome at the behest of Augustus.[6]

And yet Lepidus, this perpetual historical footnote, not only bore witness to, but was intimately involved in, many of the political and military quandaries of the late republic's troubled years. Most crucially, his ascendancy was shaped by ongoing dialogue with remembered, unfolding, or looming civil conflict. In this respect his career as a statesman and a general is far more fascinating than is often acknowledged. From 49 to 36 he held an essentially unbroken chain of commands.[7] He spent over half that time in one extraordinary magistracy or another and enjoyed the height of power in Rome. This was clearly an individual who knew something about holding on to power, even at a time when such a task was slippery business.

Despite this, the current bibliography is scant. Not many have ventured away from the more charismatic, innovative, and well-documented figures like Antonius, Brutus and the future Augustus in favour of a man who one contemporary famously described as '*ventosissimus*'.[8] Cicero's correspondence is filled with similar criticisms and later sources are, on the whole, no more lenient in their assessment, with one late antique work effortlessly alluding to a historical *Lepidum malum*.[9] Coupled with Syme's booming characterisation of him as a cipher—a flimsy, incompetent, and yet calamitous man—it is perhaps unsurprising that Lepidus blurs into obscurity, occasionally acknowledged but otherwise fairly dormant.[10]

Attempts have been made at 'rehabilitation'. Notably, the 1970s and 1990s saw Weigel and Hayne challenging what they perceived as hostile bias in the sources, a bias they argued had

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[6] On his exile see Suet. *Aug.* 16 and Oros. 6.18.32, cf. Cass. Dio 49.12.3-4. On his subjection to mockery see Cass. Dio 54.15.4-5 and 54.15.6-7 with Suet. *Aug.* 54 for one senator's objections. His son's conspiracy (with his wife's apparent complicity) against the Young Caesar would not have helped matters; see Vell. Pat. 2.88, Livy *Per.* 133, Suet. *Aug.* 19, App. *B Civ.* 4.50.

[7] Welch (1995), 443, draws attention to this detail for the years 49-44, this may be extended to include up to 36, see Broughton (1951), 256-400. His positions included: praetor, proconsul (over a number of years, the first time notably prior to his position as consul), consul (twice), *magister equitum* (over a number of years, possibly perpetual) *pontifex maximus* and *triumviri rei publicae constituendae*.

[8] The assessment of D. Brutus at Cic. *Fam.* 11.9.1 [SB 380].

[9] Rut. Namat. 1.312.

[10] For this assessment, see Syme (1939), 166, 179-80, 511 and (1964), 123, 220. Lepidus' perfidy is also a recurring theme, perhaps as a precursor to his calamitous quality. For a summary of the historical and popular (or better, not so popular) legacy of Lepidus, see Weigel (1992), 101-37, esp. 134ff. for the more recent reassessments of his character and political activity; also Allély (2004), 11-14.

been unfairly perpetuated to the present day.[11] Others, such as Welch and Allély, writing in the mid 1990s and early 2000s respectively, sensibly adopt a more cautious stance toward an overly forceful rehabilitative agenda aimed at 'absolving' Lepidus of various 'unfair' charges.[12] This approach suggests that sparking renewed scholarly interest need not depend on this kind of reset. Indeed, Welch further emphasises that dismissing expressions of contempt risks obscuring more compelling questions about the state of senatorial discontent with Caesar following his death.[13] This thesis is not an attempt to transform Lepidus into a more palatable personality, but it does represent a long overdue reminder that refocusing on this neglected individual repeatedly at the center of affairs might be able to provide fresh insights into the difficulties of appropriately negotiating crisis in Rome. In this sense it aims to fill a gap on the scholarship of Lepidus. A recent chapter by Osgood and Niederwieser (2020) has hinted at the fruitfulness of this endeavour through an exploration of the strategies mobilised by Lepidus and his brother, among others, to reintegrate their families into the community after being perceived as having landed on the 'wrong' side of the civil war.[14] But it also seeks to contribute a more nuanced picture of the tensions inherent in the concept of civil war leadership, including the challenges arising from position, decision (at times, indecision), and the strategies of response and representation that emerged to both elucidate and problematise the chaotic world Romans faced.

Part of the curious delight in resituating Lepidus at the nexus of leadership discourse lies in the almost idiosyncratic manner that he emerges in the sources. He surfaces in glimpses, small challenges to our prevailing understanding of the man. Many anecdotes, even within dedicated treatments of Lepidus, and the ancient texts themselves, are left unquestioned and underutilised. Hidden away in the great compiler Pliny the Elder's books on art, our introduction's epigraph is one such occurrence. Although slightly further removed from the

[11] Weigel (1974) and (1992), and Hayne (1971) and (1974b). Gowing (1992b) confronts bias with specific reference to the so-called *laudatio Turiae*. Evans (1990) makes general statements of this kind and presents a case for strong political acumen during his term as *monetalis*. Other scholarship on Lepidus includes those referenced below, in addition to: Badian (1991) and Hayne (1974a) on the triumvirate and its aftermath; Allély (2008) considers being the child of a *hostis*; Simpson (2006) and Ridley (2005) focus on his position as *pontifex maximus*; Hayne (1972a) and (1973), and Wiseman (1998) on his brother Paullus, his descendants, and the Aemilii more generally.

[12] In the most recent dedicated biography of Lepidus, Allély (2004), 14, stresses a desire to assemble 'une image plus conforme à la réalité' and to faithfully 'reconstruct' and 'analyse' his activities. Welch (1995), 443-445, is more explicit in denouncing strict rehabilitation.

[13] Welch (1995), 454. Mitchell (2019), 181, makes a similar argument with regards to L. Munatius Plancus.

[14] In the wake of their father's *hostis* declaration and failed revolution against the Sullan settlement.

primary material on which I concentrate, this strange tale, preserved within a century of its occurrence, is clearly intimated to have been widely well known: the '*celebris circa Lepidum fabula*' could not, by any self-respecting compiler, be omitted.[15] Beyond its encyclopaedic role as an example of painting's potential for verisimilitude and the irony of applying art to nature, it seems unlikely that this alone precipitated its enduring fame. Lepidus, after all, remains attached to the story.[16] The suspicion arises that this tale garnered popularity for its pointed depiction of the triumvir. In it he appears humorously at odds with his environment: discomforted, petty, and offering no solutions himself, yet menacingly demanding that action be taken by his host. Lepidus' strategy of communication clearly evokes concerns over the state of Rome's leadership, strengthened further by the anecdote's signalling of the triumviral years. The verb *expostulo,* which can also convey a sense of moral protest, is perverted through the means of delivery, here with the adverb *minaciter.*[17] A grievance calling on justice but enacted through coercive means typifies the subversive quality of leaders whom the Roman people had learnt to detest. The result, too, was fear and oppression: the birds were terrified and compelled to maintain their silence.[18] The snake, with its multitude of symbolic meanings in antiquity, evoked narcissistic self-preservation, but more importantly, it clues us in to a fundamental challenge Lepidus poses: the confusion of categories and the broader anxiety about boundaries.[19]

While perhaps more quaint than many of the glimpses this thesis explores, the above example succinctly illustrates the guiding principle of my methodological approach. It responds most faithfully to the manner in which Lepidus was captured by contemporary and near-contemporary material, while also facilitating a richer picture than a standard narrative account can provide. That being said, I still follow a roughly chronological structure to ensure that the increasingly frenetic world which Lepidus, and those responding to him, had to negotiate is not unduly obscured. The scope of this project is restricted, and so the inclusion of glimpses has been necessarily selective. I have chosen those most rooted in the contemporary

[15] Pliny rarely uses this construction to express fame, which suggests it is not here meant merely as rhetorical flourish. Lepidus' depiction in this anecdote has not to my knowledge been interrogated before.

[16] On the irony in the context of Pliny's discussion of Roman landscape painting see Isager (1991), 131-134.

[17] OLD s.v. *expostulo* 1.

[18] OLD s.v. *terror* and *compesco* 4 and 5.

[19] On the snake in antiquity see Bartsch (1998), 32-34 and Slater (1961), 91. An omen involving a snake coiled around a blade and a wolf in his tent would later be recorded in Cass. Dio 47.1.2 as foretelling Lepidus' rise to power, and his downfall.

material, which dwell in the chaos and, I feel, best illustrate the complex range of problems the community faced. Certain intriguing aspects of Lepidus' leadership presence, such as his role as *pontifex maximus,* have unfortunately not been addressed here but are certainly deserving of more thorough investigation. Osgood's estimable 2006 monograph, *Caesar's Legacy: Civil War and the Emergence of the Roman Empire*, has been a great source of inspiration for this project, both in its fearlessness to delve into the tangled and chaotic world of civil war and its ability to uncover lost voices and succinctly weave together coherent vignettes from fragments of information.

This thesis explores the ways in which Lepidus—his attitudes and actions, their depictions, and the community's responses—challenged and informed the tumultuous negotiation of the ideal civil war leader. It argues that, even if not strictly innovative himself or regularly exercising the kind of initiative typically associated with leadership, the unique nexus of competing forces within which he found himself made him the perfect conduit through which to test ideas. Several significant 'firsts' within the context of civil war are attached to him, acts that complicate the very categories of praise and protest, yet they remain largely overlooked in the scholarship.

He transgresses boundaries, blurs, and overlaps them.

He is uncomfortable in so many ways.

He is often easier to ignore than to account for.

But this, too, describes the monstrosity of *bellum civile*. And this is why refocusing on Marcus Aemilius Lepidus can enrich our understanding of the difficulties faced by leaders during the crises of Rome's late republican and triumviral years.

Chapter one, 'The Good Victor and the Ideal General', acts as an extended introduction and eases the reader into the thought-world of the late republic. It traces important developments in Rome's burgeoning political philosophy, with particular emphasis on newly articulated ideals of leadership. More specifically, it considers innovations surrounding the concept of the ideal general, primarily promoted by the formidable Pompeius Magnus and Cicero's speech *De lege Manilia* (*De imperio Cn. Pompei*). A careful infusion of Hellenistic concepts and frameworks further helped Roman thinkers tease out the spectrum of leadership, with particular attention

to what constituted autocratic or despotic behaviour, and where the line was drawn between statesman and general. I also discuss how, in the wake of Sulla, the purview of leadership during civil war extended beyond battlefield command and into the negotiation of a post-conflict environment.

In my second chapter, 'Crisis Management and the Avoidance of Arms', I explore the difficulties posed by the idea that civil war might be won without bloodshed. For Lepidus, this becomes a significant and recurring theme which underpins subsequent arguments in this thesis; as such, I devote more time to setting up this idea. This chapter then analyses two illuminating yet underexplored instances in which Lepidus' leadership was unexpectedly singled out, and which saw him awarded traditionally martial honours for non-violent and peacekeeping efforts during civil war. I argue that the account recorded in the *Bellum Alexandrinum* that details his de-escalation of conflict in Spain and the honours proposed by Cicero in his *Fifth Philippic* primarily for his peace negotiation with Sextus Pompeius, expose deep apprehensions over the viability of these methods in securing a definitive conclusion to civil strife. At the same time, I show how attempts to compress the statesman and the general, and the boundaries between conflict and post-conflict, exerted pressure on the language of praise and the ways in which hopefulness for the future could be articulated.

My third chapter, 'Working with Tyrants and Aspiring Autocrats', considers the numerous threads connecting Lepidus with the idea of one-man rule and the tensions exposed in the notion of 'serving the times'. I contend that he was subject to more forces than are typically recognised, which heightened the expectations placed on him by the community and encouraged the subsequent need to carefully situate him vis-a-vis autocracy, tyranny and similar forms of power. To do this, I consider some aspects of his family history and closely examine his role as *magister equitum* and the various allusions this position invoked within the Roman imaginary. I then explore the differing accounts of Lepidus' reactions during the infamous Lupercalia episode that surfaced after Caesar's death.

Chapter four, 'Both Master and Slave', picks up numerous threads raised in the previous chapters and further advances the idea that Lepidus uncomfortably embodied a constellation of paradoxical positions. He was at the same time *pius* and *impius*, sane and mad, a peace-advocate and a bringer of war; he was both master and slave. I analyse various instances that

see these tensions surface, including Lepidus' attitude towards the tyrannicides, his letter to the senate justifying his alliance with Antonius, selected excerpts from Cicero's correspondence, and allusions to his father captured in Cicero and Sallust. These boundaries challenged by Lepidus could be spatial too, as is indicated by his activity following the Ides and his later depiction in the so-called *laudatio Turiae*. His capacity as a leader was undergoing constant scrutiny, and in contrast to earlier configurations of praise, in a striking episode of self-harm by Lepidus' legate Juventius Laterensis, we see a more aggressive language of blame and protest starting to emerge. This is further echoed by Lepidus' supposed tyrannical transformation in the months preceding, then well into triumviral Rome. As shifts in the rhetoric of leadership tended toward more binary oppositions, I show that less room was made to adequately accommodate the true amorphous complexity of the civil war leader.

1

The Good Victor and the Ideal General

An introduction to Roman reflections on leadership

Fuit autem dux Cassius melior, quanto vir Brutus: e quibus Brutum amicum habere malles, inimicum magis timeres Cassium; in altero maior vis, in altero virtus: qui si vicissent, quantum rei publicae interfuit Caesarem potius habere quam Antonium principem, tantum retulisset habere Brutum quam Cassium.

Cassius was as much a better leader as Brutus was a man; you would have found Brutus preferable as a friend, Cassius more terrifying as a foe; in the one was greater violence, in the other, virtue. And if they had won? Just as it mattered to the commonwealth to have Caesar as its princeps rather than Antony, so it would have been equally important to have Brutus, not Cassius.

Vell. Pat. 2.72.2[1]

This tantalising cluster of counterfactuals closes Velleius' section on the immediate aftermath of Philippi. As an epitaph to Brutus, it is certainly complimentary, positioning him as Augustus' parallel in a side-shadowed reality.[2] Yet it is telling that the use of counterfactuals here does not genuinely attempt to capture the full range of alternatives available—or at least championed—at this time.[3] Instead, the passage is tactfully structured to emphasise the

[1] trans. Woodman (2025).

[2] On its function as an epitaph, see Woodman (1983), 170-174.

[3] For example, Woodman (1983), 174, highlights the conspicuous absence of *libertas*.

inevitability of one-man rule: in whatever permutation of victories, a *princeps* would emerge, since this would be in the state's best interest.[4] Beyond the general support this lends to the continuation of Augustan reform under Tiberius, this implicit assumption redirects focus towards a candidate's capacity for leadership. It is by this (deceivingly simple) criteria that an individual's fitness could be judged and measured.[5] For Velleius, it was also crucial that such appraisals encompassed behaviour both during and after conflict; the idea of the 'good' victor held particular resonance for him.[6] So while Cassius (and presumably Antonius) might have possessed attributes that were acceptable, even praiseworthy, during times of war, effectively navigating crisis required skills that transcended the formal cessation of combat. Managing the aftermath sensitively was essential if the ultimate goal was to establish and maintain civic harmony. If the instability of the Sullan settlement taught Romans anything, it was this.[7]

But the skills and attributes which informed one's capacity to lead were not clear-cut. The smattering of comparative constructions in the excerpt above signal contrast only in degree.[8] In most cases, the more desirable attributes were those able to control or temper the others, or were themselves associated with more stable foundations for community cohesion.[9] But the 'pairings' here do not quite mirror each other; there is a gap, for example, between being a good friend to your friends and being good at being feared by your enemies.[10] Velleius situates each attribute on a sliding scale, hinting that a leader must thoughtfully balance them *all*—*dux* and *vir*, fear and friendship, *vis* and *virtus*—even if some offer stronger tools for rebuilding the community after conflict than others.[11] He is concerned not with possession of the most power or its constitutional legitimation, but rather with the sense that to be the foremost citizen

[4] Cowan (2019), 253, Woodman (1983), 174, and Rawson (1991), 493-494, recognise the underlying assumption of the principate, cf. Yakobson (2019), 286.

[5] Cowan (2019), 253.

[6] For Velleius' preoccupation on managing civil conflict 'correctly' see Cowan (2019), *passim* esp. 242, 258.

[7] On the inherent instability following these years, see Rosenblitt (2019), *passim* and esp. 79 for the observation that a 'significant' weakness of the settlement was the absence of a 'moderate path' for those seeking redress—hence the tumultuous events of Lepidus' father. See also Flower (2006), 86–98, on the impact of Sulla on Roman traditions of memory.

[8] Constructions include: *melior…quanto, malles…magis timeres, in altero…in altero, quantum…tantum, potius…quam* and *quam*.

[9] Such as ruling with kindness rather than fear, cf. Sall. *Cat.* 9.5 (on previous Roman custom) and Joseph. *BJ* 1.153 (describing Pompeius' behaviour as a 'good general').

[10] cf. Cic. *Att.* 8.1.4 [SB 151] and 8.9a.1 [SB 160].

[11] Velleius qualifies (2.72.1) that the murder of Caesar stripped Brutus of all these virtuous qualities; cf. Hor. *Carm.* 2.7. See Steel (2011) on the tension between an individual's virtues and the outcomes of their actions throughout Velleius' narrative.

requires the careful negotiation of diverse and often competing qualities. The accumulative effect is that assigning a strict binary of 'good' versus 'bad' leader becomes difficult.[12]

Ambiguities of this kind are not uncommon in the sources produced both during the uncertainty of civil war and in its aftermath, when coherence of otherwise discordant narratives was being sought. Even an abhorrent figure like the tyrant, for example, might at times invite further nuance and be recognised for his capacity to rule justly, benevolently, or with clemency.[13] When managing uncomfortable or contested topics these ambiguities could prove especially useful.[14] In the rapidly changing environment of civil war, strategically ambiguous language could be deployed just as readily to heal the community's past traumas as to confuse or advance individual agendas, thereby facilitating experimental practices. While Velleius' schema above does hint at the possibility of preferred attributes that could recur, it stops short of prescribing a fixed model of leadership and encourages the judgement of individuals on a case-by-case basis. A key component of this assessment is conducted in relation to one's peers.[15]

The ability of the existing pool of candidates to influence how achievement could be articulated is also demonstrated explicitly and to great effect in Cicero's *De lege Manilia* (henceforth, *De imperio Cn. Pompei*). This speech, delivered at a *contio* in 66 as an endorsement of Pompeius' extraordinary command, was, as far at the sources indicate, the first time the notion of the 'ideal general' was pointedly sketched for a Roman audience.[16] In it, previous generals are extolled, yet as Blösel argues, an undercurrent of the speech's inquisitive momentum is critical

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[12] cf. Vell. Pat. 2.49.1 with Yakobson (2019), 276-278, who notes the coy way Velleius insinuates that Pompeius' cause was *better* than Caesar's.

[13] Cicero in *Rep.* 1.50 refers to the *clemens tyrannus*, and in a letter in early 49 (*Att.* 7.20.2 [SB 144]) draws a contrast between Phalaris and Pisistratus, the latter who might be considered the *exemplum bonum* of tyrants (see Arist. *Ath. Pol.* 16.2). Nepos in *Milt.* 8 contemplates the idea of a *iustus tyrannus*.

[14] On the politics of ambiguity in oratory, see Dugan (2013).

[15] For Velleius, this was part of the problem as there was no appropriate mechanism to manage this competition, see Steel (2011), 276-277. Lobur (2008), 13, links the idea of outperformance and *consensus*.

[16] For the terms and scope of the *lex Manilia* see Cic. *Leg. Man. passim,* Vell. Pat. 2.31.2-3, Plut. *Vit. Pomp*. 25.2, 30.1-2, 45.2, App. *Mith.* 94-95, Cass. Dio 36.42.4. For the contemporary debate see Steel (2001), 114-130. Devillers (2005), 366, emphasises the novelty of a 'théorie du bon général'. Morrell (2017), 57-61, and Gruber (1988), focus on the novelty of familiarising Romans with typically Hellenistic modes of thought.

of the senators and the current lack of viable alternatives amongst the *nobiles*.[17] It is in actively appreciating the deficit of other contemporaries—and not always any special or extraordinary quality of his own—that Pompeius is made to shine through.[18] This way of conceiving the best or the ideal, as a direct product of a particular moment in time, challenges the very possibility of establishing a universal and enduring model.[19] Even here, outside the added complexities introduced by civil war and the intensified scrutiny it invites, the ideal resists taking a definitive shape.

The innovative project being undertaken by Cicero's speech cannot be overstated. Rather than simply collating an expected list of criteria which might be inferred from other forms of literature, oratory, or commemorative arts and favourably comparing Pompeius' achievements against them, Cicero took advantage of the genre to systematically explore a novel direction.[20] Indeed, a notable feature of the speech is its framing of qualification for extraordinary command as requiring a more holistic approach to leadership. Pompeius' singular suitability for the command thus lies in his dual possession of qualities attributed to both the *vir fortis* and the *vir innocens*.[21] Strikingly, the moral virtues attached to the latter—especially *temperantia* (and *continentia*), *mansuetudo*, *humanitas*, *innocentia*, and *fides*—are elevated alongside, and even above the martial virtues of the former—for example, *labor*, *fortitudo*, *industria*, *celeritas*, and *consilium*.[22] There are also instances where martial qualities are improved by ethical ones.[23] The incorporation of the *virtutes animi* challenged the existing prerequisites for military success and asked the audience to expand their imagined image of the

[17] Blösel (2019), 142-144, stresses the 'highly popular character' of the speech, against commentators who emphasise a conciliatory tone. Cic. *Leg. Man.* 6-10, recalls the nature of the wars against Mithradates (and his allies) and how Sulla and Murena although '*duo fortissimi viri et summi imperatores*' left the work undone. Other exemplary 'greats', for the purpose of more general comparison, are not introduced until section 47. L. Lucullus, the previous major *imperium* holder in the reignition of these wars, has his accomplishments and setbacks discussed in detail (5, 10, 20-26), while his failed successor, M. Glabrio, is passed over briefly (5, 26).

[18] See, for example, Cic. *Leg. Man. 27,* 36, 40, 67.

[19] Although at this moment, Pompeius is the archetype of the model Cicero sets up, see Steel (2001), 131.

[20] On the genre facilitating a systematic approach see Plöger (1975), 318-319.

[21] Cic. *Leg. Man. 27.*

[22] On these virtues within the speech, see especially Morrell (2017), *passim* esp. 58 and Gruber (1988); also Steel (2001), 132-3 and Fears (1981a) 797. It is worth noting that a moral thread had underpinned the persecution of generals from the second century, see Rosenstein (1990), 114-152, who traces this development as part of the aristocratic ethos. See Gruber (1988), 244-245, for a visual breakdown of the structure of the speech. Plöger (1975), 18-39, 326, isolates each quality to build a framework for the comparative analysis of ideal generals, although the novelty of incorporating moral qualities receives less attention.

[23] For example, his *celeritas* was enhanced by the absence of *avaritia* and *libido,* among other self-serving instincts; Cic. *Leg. Man.* 40.

capable general.[24] To that end, Cicero presses at the idea that these reevaluations of the *summus imperator* should take cues from the familiar Roman model of the 'good governor'.[25] Supplementing this framework, however, is Hellenistic thinking about the ideal *ruler,* which introduces, possibly for the first time, virtues like *temperantia* and *humanitas*.[26]

Expanding and adapting the vocabulary of military leadership (ie. traits required for success) was not advanced by Cicero's efforts alone. Morrell convincingly demonstrates how the portrait crafted by Cicero aligned with Pompeius' self-representation at the time, notably his attitude towards empire as he worked to construct a model of ethical imperialism.[27] As a result, the more holistic consideration of the capable general is matched by a similarly holistic representation of those imagined to be driving or affected by the decision, including Rome's allies and her enemies. Not only is the essential role of the Roman people in conferring the appointment repeatedly stressed—and by extension their own contribution (via Pompeius) to the *conservandam atque amplificandam* of the *res publica*—but Cicero also emphasises qualities such as his approachability, his *facilitas* in hearing the complaints of provincials regarding wrongs committed by others, and his *fides,* judged *sanctissima* by enemies of all races, who would endure logistical difficulties in order to send envoys to him above all others.[28] The scope for measuring success is thus exponentially widened, as the audiences consulted (or at least considered) for comprehensive assessment become increasingly numerous and diverse.[29] The ideal commander is being asked to represent far more than military competence, both from within his own community and without.[30]

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[24] Cic. *Leg. Man.* 29. The *virtutes animi* are so named in section 64.

[25] Morrell (2017), 58. The good governor is explored in Cic. *QFr.* 1.1 [SB 1].

[26] See Gruber (1988), for the specific ways in which Hellenistic thinking informed the content of the speech, and esp. 250-251 and 258 for the suggestion that the speech represented the first time some of these ideas 'hit the mainstream in Rome' (to borrow Morrell's phrasing (2017), 60); *temperantia* in particular was a novelty. Gruber also demonstrates the influence of Xenophon's *Cyropaedia*, see 254-258 and the discussion below. Fears (1981a) 797-800, notes the speech's potential as a source on Hellenistic royal panegyrics.

[27] Morrell (2017), 57-61, 70-72, 96-97; Cicero may have received a brief from Pompeius or his associates.

[28] Cic. *Leg. Man.* 41, 42, 46, 48-49.

[29] Notably, and in contrast with later authors addressing similar themes, the dynamic between commander and troops is left largely unexplored aside from occasional references to army discipline as an extension of the general's self-control. For a summary of ideal characteristics in specialist literature and historiography, see Plöger (1975), 318–334.

[30] Cicero also implies that the kind of general he describes would help alleviate existing disaffection among foreign peoples toward Roman rule. On this, see Morrell (2017), 60–61.

The experimental introduction of these essential characteristics should not be dismissed as incidental. The careful construction of the ideal is not a mirage destined exclusively to serve some short term, politically expedient agenda. Scholars often hasten to point out that Cicero's contribution was 'hardly necessary' for the successful passage of the law, as the proposal already possessed virtually unstoppable momentum—even with the handful of senatorial detractors.[31] This observation is readily accompanied by an enumeration of opportunities created for Cicero's personal and political ambition, for example, those amplified by his cultivation of goodwill among the tribunate, the people, members of the equestrian order, and Pompeius himself.[32] Courting these parties are all reasonable provocations to mount the *rostra*, while the existing popularity of the measure would ensure that the *contio* (and Cicero's efforts) would be remembered favourably.[33] So reasonable, in fact, were these motives that Cicero concludes his speech by explicitly denouncing them: he claims to have eschewed personal interest and even safety so that he may act *rei publicae causa*.[34] It was this cause which, in the *exordium*, Cicero claimed made his debut before the popular assembly imperative—the oratorical skills he had been cultivating were now sufficiently honed to do justice to the subject at hand, and were at this moment reinforced by the appropriate degree of *auctoritas*.[35] A familiar approach in the scholarship is to closely analyse the use of epideictic rhetoric—including the panegyrical treatment of Pompeius, which Cicero himself explicitly acknowledges two decades later—but this tends to overshadow the substantive intellectual contributions he was making to evolving expectations of leadership.[36]

Cicero could have, through more traditional means, focused primarily on military and strategic aptitude, and the presentation of a 'good' man incapable of abusing his powers. All this he

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[31] Steel (2013), 162; see also Berry (2011), 102, 106-108, 126, Morstein-Marx (2004), 182-183, Steel (2001), 117, 173-174, Vasaly (2013), 147-148, and Zetzel (2009), 73, 96. Four consulars had already spoken in favour of the proposal (Cic. *Leg. Man.* 68) and the arguments of Hortensius and Catulus, two prominent detractors, are countered in turn (51-53, 56, 61-63, 66); see Steel (2001), 114-154 and Morstein-Marx (2004), 179-186 for further analysis on issues arising from the constitutional debate of both this law and the earlier *lex Gabinia*; also Straumann (2016), 105-117. cf. Cass. Dio 36.42. The law was passed unanimously by the tribes (Plut. *Vit. Pomp.* 30).

[32] This was Cicero's first speech delivered in front of the popular assembly (*Leg. Man.* 1-3). On the strong *popularis* slant see Blösel (2019), 142-144 and Tan (2008), 187, and for the argument that it was cleverly not too *popularis* see Steel (2001), 176-179. For Cicero's advocacy of equestrians see Lintott (2008), 429-430 and Berry (2003). For different views on the audience profile, compare for example, Mouritsen (2022), 35-57, 72-73 and Tan (2008), 172-180.

[33] For the importance of being involved in a 'successful' event see Mouritsen (2013), 77-80.

[34] Cic. *Leg. Man.* 69-71.

[35] Cic. *Leg. Man.* 1-3.

[36] Cic. *Orat.* 102.

does, but not without recourse to more contentious and philosophically stimulating ideas.[37] It is especially relevant here to consider Cicero's decision to publish and disseminate a written version of his *contional* performance. What is known about the political speeches he delivered during this stage of his public career suggests he published approximately half of them.[38] Over the four decades of his career, this statistic fluctuates, with the percentage of published political speeches ranging from the high twenties (in the 50s) to the high seventies (in the 40s). In both cases, the number of speeches delivered was similar (twenty-one to twenty-two). Together, these figures point to two insights that, while intuitive, are nonetheless important to recognise: first, that strategic deliberation shaped decisions around the publication or non-publication of speeches; and second, that the intellectual climate which encouraged, or received, their arguments was constantly changing. To press beyond the ephemeral nature of the speech act and instead record (albeit a version of) one's words for posterity was, in the case of *contiones*, becoming increasingly common.[39] If, as Mouritsen argues, this signals a breakdown of what was traditionally understood as a more collaborative form of engagement, it simultaneously punctuates its political saliency: these were words that wanted, or needed, to be remembered.[40] Advancing ideas that fostered a more robust desire for political philosophy fits squarely in this category worthy rhetorical permanence.[41] This, more than any exclusively self-serving motivations, surely encouraged the publication of *De imperio Cn. Pompei*.[42] As such, it is important to acknowledge that this public-facing exploration of leadership was not preserved through accident, but as part of an active collective project still grappling with a degree of mistrust in the conferral of extraordinary commands—particularly in the aftermath of the sweeping authority granted to Marius and Sulla. Pompeius' own involvement in earlier civil conflict is handled in a delicate but often strained manner.[43]

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[37] See further discussion below.

[38] See Table I in Crawford (1984), 12. The 60s saw the highest quantity of political speeches, but the percentage published was less than his forensic speeches.

[39] See Mouritsen (2013), *passim* esp. 63-67, 80-82, on the publishing behaviours of *contional* texts.

[40] Mouritsen (2013), *passim* esp. 83, calls the textual *contio* a 'virtual meeting place for the political public'.

[41] On the uptake in political philosophy, especially during the 50s and 40s, see, for example, Rawson (1985) and Griffin (1989), and more recently, Baraz (2012) and Volk (2021). Despite engaging with Greek ideals of leadership, *De imperio Cn. Pompei* is only rarely, and often cursorily, addressed in these treatments.

[42] Although as a *novus homo* hoping to one day be consul there were certainly advantages to distributing a work that might boost his popularity or parade his rhetorical skill.

[43] On Cicero's strategy, see Steel (2001), 143-147.

A few years earlier in 71, Pompeius delivered his own first *contional* speech which communicated to the people his willing transition from a military commander of questionable legality, to a law-abiding and regularly functioning statesman engaged appropriately with civic affairs.[44] Later, in a letter intended for a wider audience, but to his brother, on good leadership, Cicero would remark that the *contio* (and not, as might be expected, the *comitia*) functioned as one of the bulwarks against tyranny.[45] The venue itself then, which represented the freedoms secured by republican governance, would have reinforced the idea that the ideal general which took cues from the more controversial ideal Hellenistic ruler, was far removed from the threat of autocratic ambition. Bolstering this further is Steel's observation that *De imperio Cn. Pompei* does not, in fact, function as a deliberative speech ought. Instead, from the onset, it works with the assumption that Pompeius' cause *is* the people's cause.[46] The upshot of this is that by virtue of possessing the attributes of the ideal general, in addition to his inordinate popularity, he in turn validates them.

For Cicero, who would go on to develop, articulate, contextualise, and lament variations on the theme of leadership across a variety of genres in the coming years, the groundwork laid in *De imperio Cn. Pompei* would prove informative. The dearth of Roman conceptual probing about their own social and political organisation was only just starting to be filled out, crucially with the help of analytical tools from their Greek counterparts.[47] Even related military texts of a more technical nature were composed as *Tactica* in the Greek tradition.[48] But whereas these were primarily concerned with the most effective execution of drills or tactical manoeuvres, it was the evolving dynamics—for example, of power, accountability, national pride—between military leadership and the body politic which repeatedly sparked practical and imaginative debate throughout the first century. *De imperio Cn. Pompei* in particular is noted

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[44] van der Blom (2017), 330-331.

[45] Cic. *QFr.* 1.1.22 [SB 1]. For the privileging of the *contio* see Mouritsen (2013), 68. Cicero's remark is a comment on the necessity of free speech, which in a later treatise on oratory, he would link to the foundation of the republic, again, in fundamental opposition to tyrannical modes of ruling, see Cic. *Brut.* 53, cf. 6.

[46] Steel (2001), 132, 176.

[47] See n.41 above. Flaig (2011), 68-69, summarising and expanding on Meier, attributes the absence of political philosophy in Rome to its lack of programmatic politics. Gotter (2008), 214, 218-219, emphasises the importance of Greek political theory in making it possible for Romans to think about alternatives.

[48] These works of military science were being undertaken by both Greek and Roman contemporaries. Earlier handbooks did exist, such as Cato the Elder's now fragmentary volume *De Re Militari* from the second century. There is evidence of other works produced during the first century, with demand increasing during the 60s-50s in response to the Parthian threat. For an overview of the Roman production at this time and the responsiveness to the current military climate see Dahm (2020).

by scholars for its 'bridging' quality, which involved normalising the idea that certain virtues could be successfully channeled through, and wielded by, a charismatic individual *on behalf* of the *res publica*.[49] Metaphors of light diminished and returned are employed to support this idea, closely linking the consequences of conduct beyond the battlefield to a vision of just rule grounded in *temperantia*.[50] The starting point for Roman thinkers however was necessarily, and at times, proudly, Greek.

Interactions between generals and statesmen in all guises and their polity had a rich legacy of thoughtful contemplation. Yet in shaping a model of ideal rule, Xenophon's corpus—especially the *Cyropaedia*—appears to have held a particular resonance with Roman audiences. Cicero himself boasts of an avid familiarity with the *Cyropaedia,* and when references surface in his correspondence, their casual deployment suggest a shared acquaintance with its themes.[51] Caesar too, was reportedly familiar with the text—further evidence of its reach among Cicero's contemporaries.[52] Earlier still, two great exemplars of the second century, Cato the Elder and Scipio Aemilianus, are recorded by Cicero to have championed Xenophon's utility, underscoring the enduring appeal of his vision of leadership.[53] For the *De imperio Cn. Pompei*, Gruber persuasively shows how the *Cyropaedia*, though never explicitly cited, lurks beneath the surface. Important to this implicit engagement is Xenophon's favourable distinction between his ideal as φύσει βασιλεύς, a born ruler, and the quasi-divine status characteristic of the traditional Hellenistic ideal of kingship.[54] Other works draw not only from its content, but as noted above, encourage the reader to engage directly with the material.[55] It speaks to the calibre and enduring relevance of the text that, even without mediation, this 'mirror for princes' is still recommended for serious perusal. Importantly, the model of Cyrus is invoked not only in relation to military acumen or the ambiguous figure of the general-turned-ruler, but also in contexts where leadership must be exercised entirely apart from warfare. This is the case when Cicero calls upon its guidance in advising his brother Quintus on his governorship

[49] Lobur (2008), 239 n.91, Gruber (1988), 258, Fears (1981a), 799-800 and (1981b) 882-883. This step is often viewed in relation to the later acceptability of the principate.
[50] Cic. *Leg. Man.* 41. On the *lux/lumina* metaphor see Welch (2005), 320-321, in particular for the idea that Rome must be deserving by exercising *imperium* based on justice.
[51] For example: Cic. *Fam.* 9.25 [SB 114], *Att.* 2.3.2 [SB 23], *QFr.* 1.1.23 [SB 1].
[52] Suet. *Iul.* 87.
[53] See Cato as interlocutor in Cic. *Sen.* 59; and Cic. *QFr.* 1.1.23 [SB 1] and *Tusc.* 2.62 on the *Cyropaedia* always being within Scipio's reach.
[54] Gruber (1988), 254-258.
[55] These include: Cic. *Sen.* 30, 59, 79-81, *Leg.* 2.56, *Brut.* 112, *Fin.* 2.92, *Tusc.* 2.69, 5.99, *Rep.* 1.43-44.

in Asia.[56] In this instance, the exemplary qualities of Cyrus' life and education are cached within those of Scipio's, an *exemplum* Cicero was fond of deploying.[57] Recalling Scipio's relationship with the text not only fortifies its intellectual and practical value, but the *constant* companionship of his copy hints at its ubiquitous applicability across the entire scope of a public *Roman* career. As van der Blom points out, Cicero primarily valued Scipio within his repertoire of stock exempla as a distinguished politician—a role that became especially prominent after 55 BCE, following his portrayal as a great statesman in *De re publica*.[58] Still, his martial preeminence was a crucial guarantor of his legacy, and it is in his capacity as a commander that he is mentioned in *De imperio Cn. Pompei*.[59]

Scipio's on-hand guidance, the *Cyropaedia,* is a fictive biography of Cyrus the Great of Persia. Its investigative premise aimed to uncover the kind of exceptional individual it took to cultivate the obedience of a sprawling empire populated by inherently conspiratorial subjects. It assumed the inevitability of political instability and sought to demonstrate the solution achievable through effective leadership.[60] This model of rule encompassed the betterment of oneself (ie. the leader) as well as the community (ie. the followers) under the leader's charge. One scholar has distilled the qualifying characteristics of Cyrus's leadership into three essential virtues: a love of humanity, a love of learning, and a love of honour.[61] While the commander often serves as a crucial point of departure—the 'good general' remains a preoccupation—a centralising thread of Xenophon's thinking 'concerns the stable and successful management of human communities in general'.[62] Scipio's actions might well endorse the broad scope of Xenophon's insights, yet it is the *transferability* of a unified set of attributes and behavioural expectations across diverse spheres of action that Xenophon strives to pin down. In the Roman context, it is

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[56] See Cic. *QFr.* 1.1.23 [SB 1], which speaks more broadly of the portrait of a just ruler (*effigiem iusti imperi*).

[57] Also known as the younger Africanus. In his speech against Verres, Cicero claims that Scipio's service to the state was so exemplary that he ought to be entrusted to all citizens, not just to a single family; *Verr.* 2.4.81.

[58] van der Blom (2010), 108, 230-232, 273-274.

[59] Cic. *Leg. Man.* 47, 60. The later military manual of Frontinus included Scipio's exploits in number of examples. What is known of his statue's *elogium* in the Augustan forum suggests a focus on his military success and the award of the siege crown; see Pliny *NH* 22.13 and Geiger (2008), 152-153. For later equivalences between Pompeius and Scipio see, Cic. *QFr.* 2.3.3 and *Fam.* 5.7.3 [SB 3], with Lintott (2008), 153 and van der Blom (2010), 273-275.

[60] Such aims are explicitly stated in the preface; Xen. *Cyr.* 1.1.1-5. On the application of Xenophon's Socratic model of leadership on this text see Gray (2011), 24-30, and more broadly on the idea of 'virtue monarchy' see the analysis at Atack (2019), 134-145.

[61] Ferrario (2016), 76, citing Sandridge (2012).

[62] Buxton (2017), 330; also, Gray (2011), 7-24.

this ability to slide easily between roles, be that general, statesman, soldier, or administrator, that can be both desired and feared. Cicero treads carefully, but not demurely. In delineating the ideal general, he strategically aligns frameworks of expectation with distinct languages of praise, tailored respectively to Roman and Eastern (or heavily Hellenised) perspectives—a crucial move given where the command at stake is destined to take him.[63] The upshot is that localised limitations are conspicuously imposed on certain foreign ideas, but at the same time, through what Gildenhard terms 'suggestive ambiguities', the audience is subtly invited to entertain modified versions of previously unacceptable concepts.[64] What remains is a hybridisation of republican and autocratic sensibilities in the conception of the ideal military leader, but, as it is tethered to imperial objectives it appears to primarily serve a greater (Roman) good.

To return to the forces underpinning Cicero's desire to establish communal faith in this hybridised model of leadership, it is vital to recall the dislocation wrought by the civil wars of the 80s and its subsequent perpetuation in social memory. Even though the command specified by the *lex Manilia*—the war against Mithradates and Tigranes—was set to deal with an external threat, and 66 (although unknown at the time) could be considered an inter-(civil)war period, Cicero's strategy might be understood as engaging with patterns of thought belonging to a 'civil war mentality'. Osgood uses the phrase as a way to denote the pervading mindset of groups and individuals experiencing civil war. It helpfully captures all the inherent uncertainty, including concerns over legitimacy, in addition to representing a way of engaging with the world that was difficult to completely quell.[65] In Cicero's description of Pompeius, we can see this mentality in the preoccupation with defining post-conflict responsibilities (which extends to include provincial governance) and elaborating on their outcomes. Much of what the newly introduced moral vocabulary seeks to accomplish is the mediation of relationships through the regulation of behavioural patterns, while simultaneously promoting an attractive framework for the cultivation of personal excellence. How Romans were inclined to interact with overpowered foes no longer remained a concern safely isolated within the realm of foreign policy. Qualities such as kindness (*humanitas*), clemency (*mansuetudo*), and self-control

[63] On Cicero's strategy of 'focalisation' within the speech, particularly regarding Pompeius' relationship with the divine or supernatural, see Gildenhard (2011), 257-272. In his letter to Quintus (Cic. *QFr.* 1.1.7, 19, 33 [SB 1]) on the good governor, Cicero again considers the Greek perspective and uses it to incorporate the image of a leader sent from the heavens.

[64] Gildenhard (2011), 266-271; especially on the semantic range of *divinus* and the co-opting of Sullan *felicitas*.

[65] Osgood (2015), *passim* esp. 1684, 1689.

(*temperantia/continentia*)—particularly the absence of greed (*avaritia*), the driving compulsion behind the confiscation of goods—were coveted by the Roman people as their *imperatores* turned on each other and paved the way for their transference of status from victor to vanquished.

As has often been observed, *De imperio Cn. Pompei* contains the first attestation of the troubling '*bellum civile*'.[66] This novel collocation may have first emerged in the 80s, gained recognisability, if not widespread usage, by the 60s as a retrospective reference to that earlier period, to ultimately became a staple of the political lexicon by the 40s.[67] Its use within the speech points to Pompeius' qualification through a breadth of experience, that is, he has been educated through participation (and success) in wars of all kinds including those both geographically (African, Transalpine, Spanish) and constituently (civil, slave, naval) diverse.[68] The suggestion is that the echo of civil war (and Sulla as one of its representatives) overtly permeates the speech only insofar as it is strictly necessary for the argument or impossible to ignore from a historical vantage.[69] Dealing sensitively with a topic which tapped into a still-active trauma and trying to minimise potential triggers was a prudent strategy for a community still dealing emotionally and legislatively with the consequences of Sullan actions.[70] Yet all this scholarly emphasis on the manifestations of strategic rhetorical decision-making—how to describe the war, why action is necessary, what kind of *imperator* is demanded by these conditions—especially the ways Cicero minimises dangerous recollections of the civil wars, loses sight of the debt this kind of conceptual reorganisation owes to the military leaders of the 80s.

The successes and failures of these very tangible models were still in the process of being judged, measured, and categorised by their peers as well as the wider community. Unprecedented manifestations of political ambition, once realised, created gaps for other

[66] On this observation, the concept, and the naming of 'civil war' see Arena (2020) and van der Blom (2019), also the discussions at Lowrie and Vinken (2022), 9-46, and Armitage (2017), 31-58.

[67] See Arena (2020), 104-105 esp. n.11 and 12.

[68] Cic. *Leg. Man.* 28. van der Blom (2019), 119-121, analyses the function of the term *bellum civile* within Cicero's argument; cf. Seidl Steed (2008), 240-243, for a similar approach which instead foregrounds the Sulla-Pompeius connection. Steel (2001), 140-147, considers Cicero's strategy of 'white-washing'.

[69] van der Blom (2019), 120-121, in particular stresses '*bellum civile*'s' usage only when no other alternative could reasonably be used and suggests that Cicero might have hoped it would be forgotten among Pompeius' other achievements. See also Seidl Steed (2008), 240.

[70] van der Blom (2019), 121 and Steel (2001), 147 also note the trigger risk. For a summary of the legislative response from 70 onwards see Eckert (2020), 96-97. On trauma and instability see esp. Rosenblitt (2019); also, n.43 above.

analogous powers to assert themselves, now legitimised by precedent.[71] The desire to articulate a broadly acceptable version of this model—both as an ideal and in the concrete example of Pompeius—should itself be understood as an artefact of civil war.[72] This dimension, rooted in the need to reconcile fractured political identities and restore communal trust, is not drawn out nearly enough. It would not have been lost on contemporaries that this specific command was commensurate with that whose deprivation (at least in part) had compelled Sulla's era-defining march on Rome in 88. Moreover, it was upon return from the Mithridatic war in 83-2 that internecine violence erupted once again, but this time extending beyond the battlefield in a programme of post-war terror. This included the introduction of proscriptions and, according to Appian, the coerced ratification of Sulla's appointment as dictator—an extraordinary magistracy previously mobilised during, and not after, conflict—now with unprecedented powers and an unspecified term limit.[73] Under this leadership, fourteen percent of all Roman citizens lost their lives.[74] Survival did not guarantee a reprieve; many found themselves displaced, punished, and stripped of certain rights and privileges. The toll on individuals, families, and entire communities was immense. It is perhaps unsurprising then that heated debate took place in early 62 over the proposed recall of Pompeius and his army to quell the machinations of Catiline.[75] Pompeius, it seems, was himself attuned to the creeping suspicions of a society still enmeshed within a process of mending and was inclined to dispel any latent fears with the promise of *otium* in the spring of 62.[76] Not only words, but actions were directed towards this end. In a marked departure from previous practice, where he had typically retained his army's presence, Pompeius instead chose to demobilise his troops upon arrival in Brundisium.[77] Once the collective imagination could conceive of the possibility of *bellum civile,* it seemed unable to forget it.

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[71] Precedents could also be deployed in a strangely circular fashion; see Cic. *Leg. Man.* 62-63, for the idea that Pompeius set his own precedent of breaking precedents.

[72] This was a generation learning how to lead again; cf. Pompeius' request that Varro prepare a manual on senatorial procedures and other civic responsibilities (Gell. *NA* 14.7).

[73] App. *B Civ.* 1.99. Osgood (2015), 1686, notes this detail on the dictatorship.

[74] Eckert (2020), 87.

[75] Between Metellus Nepos and Cato; Nepos' aggressive attempts to circumvent Cato's veto led to his suspension. See Seager (2002), 72-74 and n.85, for a summary of the situation with further references.

[76] Cic. *Fam.* 5.7.1 [SB 3]. See Gruen (1970), *passim* esp. 237-239*,* and Seager (2002), 75-76, for the argument that Pompeius was indeed soothing fears regarding the reprisal of internal factional strife. Mitchell (1975) maintains such a communication refers to Pompeius' achievements abroad; Seager dismisses this attempt to refute Gruen, see n.3.

[77] On this see Seager (2002), 75-76 and Seidl Steed (2008), 243, with references.

In their discussion on memory sanctions, Flower attributes the paradox of the proscription lists —the public display of names marked for erasure—to what is termed 'Sulla's special ideology of revenge'.[78] This is situated within a broader trend of highly adaptable modes of self-promotion, deployed across various media, and often achieved at the expense of others. Recent history was being manipulated to legitimate certain courses of action and to celebrate the ascendance of certain individuals.[79] To this end, post-war terror prevailed over efforts to promote social cohesion, that is, the past-present was prioritised over the present-future. Given the attention it would receive in later decades, in addition to its novelty at the time, it is striking that the negotiation of memory pertaining to the *phenomenon* of civil war did not feature more centrally within contemporary discourse.[80] As Osgood argues, it is the constructive and communal framing of this memory by the victor that truly allows civil war to find its conclusion.[81] This was emphatically not the case with Sulla. The memory of the man himself also never found the cultural resolution it required. Interested parties, namely those who had benefitted from his settlement, found ways to impede this process.[82] Rosenblitt has rendered vividly the trauma and lack of social cohesion which characterised Rome in the wake of Sulla.[83] Clearly, the boundaries of this conflict were not absolute. Certain patterns of behaviour would continue to have troubling resonances, and to mitigate them, Cicero's praise of Pompeius did not ignore the possible political consequences of military action, but rather emphasises to whom responsibility is owed by the commander. This was advice in the form of praise.[84] All this is not to suggest that Cicero presaged the outbreak of renewed civil wars in which Pompeius would play a significant role, nor that he was warning an audience already anticipating such a development. But for someone empowered to declare states of war and peace, of friendship and enmity with Rome, on behalf of the state and without recourse to anything but his own judgement, the necessity for him to embody an acceptable ideal was paramount.

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[78] On this and the next point, see Flower (2006), 87-98.

[79] It was not only Sulla who utilised such tactics, Marius, for example, also displayed the heads of prominent enemies in the Forum.

[80] History writing, for example, could be dangerous, see Hor. *Carm.* 2.1.

[81] Osgood (2015).

[82] Rosenblitt (2019), 144.

[83] Rosenblitt (2019).

[84] On this kind of 'disguised exhortation' to handle power justly that would later be taken up by writers like Seneca and Pliny, see Vasaly (2013), 107-108. cf. Arist. *Rh.* 1.9.1368a on the orator's normative use of praise.

Crucially, the *ad hoc* nature of this portrait did not stifle its longevity. Cicero's portrait of the ideal commander became an important touchstone and benchmark. Welch has suggested that Caesar's self-presentation as a leader, since the publication of his later *Gallic Wars*, was shaped in response to the popularity and reputation of Pompeius and that it had proved necessary for him to tackle Cicero's sketch of the ideal.[85] Similarly, Goldsworthy explores how Caesar, in his *Civil War* commentaries, thoughtfully constructed the picture of a great, and importantly, specifically *Roman*, general, framing Pompeius as otherwise.[86] The ongoing salience of this collection of ideas indicates a degree of success in addressing some of the wider community's key concerns. Their adaptability to the rapidly changing circumstances faced by Romans served leaders well in their efforts to foster long-term preeminence. Yet this very flexibility also enabled multiple, and often competing, readings and re-readings of the same behaviours. Charges of aspiring to more subversive forms of authority, particularly those intimately connected to military achievement such as autocratic control through tyranny, could be called upon to render actions or attitudes as illegitimate.[87] Drawing up the ideal was a way of articulating how autocrat-like powers might not descend into tyranny. The very necessity of this process arose from the tensions introduced through attempts to reconcile a Greek, abstract conception of power with a traditional Roman understanding of political roles, roles whose ability to exert influence was highly context specific.[88] As a result, Roman audiences required a more comprehensive account of what 'not tyranny' looked liked and how this aligned with expectations of the general as opposed to the statesman. Just being 'good' was not enough, and a process of definition with both explicit and implicit recourse to negative qualities was a way of acknowledging the realities of a post-civil war situation and the expanded conception of political possibility following an extraordinary command. At the same time, it is equally important to recognise that exemplary qualities were retrievable for the most contentious of leading figures.

The legacy of Sulla is an instructive example.[89] His own form of autocracy, which included a model for abdication, had a prolonged and traumatically destabilising effect on the community,

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[85] Welch (1998), 85-86.

[86] Goldsworthy (1998), *passim* esp. 194-195, 211-212.

[87] This kind of invective will be explored in more detail in later chapters. Much scholarship has been devoted to this topic: see, for example, Dunkle (1967), Erskine (1991), Arena (2007), and Baraz (2018).

[88] On the fundamental differences between Greek and Roman concepts of 'power' see Gotter (2008), *passim* esp. 199-201, 203, 218, 220-221.

[89] cf. Velleius' treatment of Brutus noted above.

persisting until it was superseded by Caesar's own autocratic practices.[90] These scars, however, were by no means homogenous and remained highly mutable. Many of the next generation's leaders and thinkers were undoubtedly shaped by their own intimate and distinctive experiences of these years, even if they were not physically present in Rome at the time. Pompeius, Caesar, Cicero, Lepidus, Cornelius Nepos, and Sallust were each at formative stages of childhood or young adulthood. During the 80s, Pompeius, Cicero and Nepos were in their late teens to early twenties, while Caesar was only a few year years younger. Lepidus and Sallust were in their early teens during the following decade, and Antonius was just a young child.

Sulla was a dominating force whose influence was strikingly diffuse.[91] His 'successes' traversed the key spheres of Roman activity—*domi* and *militiae*—in what might be described as a more holistic approach to leadership. Perhaps more aptly this could be described as a desire for holistic control. In the final line of his biography, Plutarch records the inscription found on Sulla's funerary monument, one which Sulla reportedly authored himself:

> …οὗ κεφάλαιόν ἐστιν ὡς οὔτε τῶν φίλων τις αὐτὸν εὖ ποιῶν οὔτε τῶν ἐχθρῶν κακῶς ὑπερεβάλετο.
>
> …and the substance of it is, that no friend ever surpassed him in kindness, and no enemy in doing harm.[92]

The autobiographical quality of this inscription hints at his earlier contributions to the genre.[93] But whereas his memoirs focused more readily on justification and personal accessibility, that is, by elaborating on agency beyond his own while permitting readers insight into his own emotional experiences of civil war, this epitaph is intentionally provocative.[94] Sulla's boast claims for posterity his unchallenged superiority in qualities grounded by moral concerns.[95] And yet, the attitude stands in marked contrast to Velleius' concerns with which this chapter began. Here it is the best of both extremes which are put forward as a measure of success even

[90] Rosenblitt (2019), *passim*, esp. 1-14, 81.
[91] On this point, see especially the contributions in the recent volume edited by Eckert and Thein (2020).
[92] Plut. *Vit. Sull.* 38, trans. Perrin (1916), with modification.
[93] On Sulla's innovative, vivid, and believable narrative strategies see Flower (2015). For other contemporaries engaging in autobiographical writing to justify actions during civil war see Flower (2023). On the development of the genre more generally, see the recent collection edited by Smith and Powell (2009), with further references.
[94] Flower (2015), *passim* esp. 215, 217.
[95] Dowling (2000), 339-340, reminds us that this attitude also reflects 'the conservative Roman belief about the duties and rights of a good man'.

if one of those extremes evokes terrible violence, which anyone viewing the inscription would know was directed even at Roman citizens—scales or spectrums have no place here.[96]

Sulla naturally became a point of reference during the subsequent civil wars, and a point of contention. As an *exemplum,* it seems, he could also prove a point of confusion. In early 49, Cicero's response to Pompeius' reported refrain '*Sulla potuit, ego non potero?*' is one of deep and agitated concern—expressed at length in his correspondence with Atticus.[97] The letter outlines his fears of an escalating atmosphere of terror and the revival of the proscriptions.[98] This could not be further from the ideal of *De imperio Cn. Pompei.* The circulation of such a rhetorical question during these critical preliminary stages of civil war suggests that, for Pompeius, the utterance encoded a notion which was decidedly positive: military brilliance.[99] Seidl Steed has posited that such a disjunct in understanding, even among individuals who know each other well, originates from the influence of divergent social forces that condition people within distinct primary realms of operation.[100] Whereas Pompeius, most at home in the field, sought to emulate the general, Cicero and others within Roman civic society feared the return of the dictator.[101] More than that, this misunderstanding underscores not only the inconsistent approach but, more precisely, the contested expectations regarding what the scope of civil war leadership ought to encompass, especially when confronted with its imminent reality.

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[96] cf. Cass. Dio 33.109.12-13, who describes Sulla's quest for greatness as so insatiable that he would be inferior to no-one, even in blood-guilt.

[97] Cic. *Att.* 9.10.2 [SB 177].

[98] Cic. *Att.* 9.10.6 [SB 177]. His fear of imitation is so great that he creates the verbs *sullaturit* and *proscripturit* to emphasise Pompeius' desire to imitate Sulla.

[99] In a similar vein, the exploitation of imagery associated with a figure like Alexander the Great had to be handled with great care. Though he may have been a military marvel, his deficiencies in statesmanship rendered him, as Pollini (2012), 175, aptly dubs, 'a double-edged sword'. Steel (2001), 154-156, analyses Cicero's strategy in *De imperio Cn. Pompei* which pointedly avoids fashioning Pompeius in the image of Alexander.

[100] Seidl Steed (2008), 1-2.

[101] Seidl Steed (2008), 2, 245-246.

2

Crisis Management and the Avoidance of Arms

Alternative ways to 'lead' in civil war

Ponit ad Uliam castra Lepidus neque habet a Marcello quicquam divisi. Ne pugnetur interdicit; ad exeundum Cassium invitat fidemque suam in re omni interponit.

Lepidus pitched his camp near Ulia, in complete accord with Marcellus. He refused to allow any fighting, invited Cassius to come out, and pledged his word to every offer he made.

BAlex. 63[1]

A vision of charm, charisma, and battlefield prowess is decidedly absent among the sources describing Lepidus' military activity in the years prior to the formation of the triumvirate. Instead, a sustained flair for negotiation and careful deliberation over the movement and coordination of armed forces quietly questions an alternative approach to civil war. The response though, was far from quiet, and Lepidus' actions ultimately became ideal test cases for assigning praise within the context of civil war.

[1] trans. Way (1955).

This chapter examines some of the issues that arise when a civil war general chooses a non-violent path to victory. I argue that this strategy of crisis management, projected as an attempt to control chaos and subdue fear, exposes a number of tensions deeply embedded within the community. There is a gulf between an idealised common cause—that which mediation, reconciliation, and less bloodshed can achieve—and the reality of definitively concluding and appropriately commemorating civil war. Our first glimpse of Lepidus represents one of the only occasions our sources depict him in the field. However, this episode in the *Bellum Alexandrinum* marginalises depictions of battle in favour of heavily politicised concerns, and reveals much about the expectations placed on Lepidus' leadership by diverse and representative parties. Ultimately it problematises the approach, praising its intent but questioning its viability. The second glimpse considers the disjunct created through the award of military honours—outlined in Cicero's *Fifth Philippic*—as a way to praise diplomatic efforts. Cicero's strategy is to begin articulating the ideal civil war leader, deliberately echoing elements of the ideal general. The proposal of a gilt equestrian statue in the Forum, opens up a vast web of associations, and even a subtle threat, which further attempts to define good behaviour in contrast to autocratic intentions.

To better frame pre-triumviral Lepidus as a conduit of these concerns, and lay the groundwork for ideas surfacing in later chapters, I will begin by examining the range of non-violent stances individuals were exploring during this period. That such a range existed, full of careful and deliberate nuance, is crucial not only to our understanding of agency during moments of civic upheaval, but also to the kaleidoscopic tensions between expectation and reality—for oneself, one's kin, one's class, one's country. This, in turn, reinforces the experimental nature of exemplary models and their moral evaluation. For some, this stance involved attempts to distance themselves from complicity with the idea of civil war itself. Others sought ways to provide broad-based support without personally entering the fray, while others still took to the battlefield wishing to privilege mediation and the preservation of life. Meanwhile, each variation was confronted with the decision of how, or even if, a declaration of loyalty should be made to a particular commander, ideal, or constitutional arrangement.

> …sanguine civili rem conflant divitiasque
> conduplicant avidi, caedem caede accumulantes,
> crudeles gaudent in tristi funere fratris
> et consanguineum mensas odere timentque.
>
> They procure wealth by civil bloodshed and greedily double riches, piling up murder upon murder; being cruel they rejoice at the mournful death of a brother and they hate and fear the hospitality of their kin.
>
> Lucr. 3.70-73[2]

If the 80s had instilled anything in the citizens of Rome, it was that fear of violence extended beyond the battlefield.[3] This was a line many were uncomfortable to see blurred. Writing in the decade preceding the ignition of conflict between Caesar and Pompeius, Lucretius, in his didactic poem of Epicurean philosophy, condemns the monstrosity of civil war, framing it as a symptom of deeper philosophical illness. Fear of death is understood to feed the vices that can bring about civil war, but it is *invidia* and the contest *ad summum succedere honorem* that pushes men to destroy powerful individuals once held in fear.[4] For Lucretius, fear is a highly effective controlling mechanism and those who wield it in this way are painted as oppressive institutions with false claims to authority.[5] Although reflecting here on political communities more generally, it is clear that the potency of such controls would only increase exponentially during periods of internal turmoil. More worryingly, commanding fear was no longer the sole prerogative of bickering leaders; during civil war, and notably the proscriptions, every individual could lay claim to it.

As we have seen, a number of the novel virtues expected of the ideal general advocated by Cicero incorporate elements of self-discipline meant to dispel fear and encourage general stability.[6] In the context of civil war these qualities might extend to the decision making over if

[2] trans. McConnell (2012).

[3] The memory of the Sullan proscriptions served as a constant reminder that violence could easily enter the city and civilian life. Mitchell (2023), 36, points out the paradox of these lists seemingly offering clarity and justification while arbitrarily condemning individuals outside of its stated scope.

[4] Lucr. 3.59-93, 5.1117-1150. Freedom from fear is a core concern of Epicurean philosophy. It is instructive to observe how Lucretius incorporates the spectre of civil war (whose threat may have been looming) into his adaptation of Greek thought for a Roman audience. For Lucretius' treatment of civil war and possible dates of composition, see McConnell (2012) and Volk (2010). For the challenges of translating Epicureanism into a Roman context, see Hammer (2014), 93–96, 107–137, and 143–144. For a sense of how Lucretius' views fit amongst contemporaries such as Varro and Sallust, see Wiseman (2010).

[5] This includes, for example, religious institutions. Hammer (2014), *passim* esp. 96, 129-130, 133-137, discusses Lucretius' 'poetics of power', with further references.

[6] For example, *temperantia*, *continentia*, and *mansuetudo; innocentia* and *fides* require discipline to be effective.

and when violent action—and thereby the spilling of Roman blood—needed to take place. Blood spilt in pursuit of victory would leave no-one unscathed, and these wounds were by their very nature self-afflicting. The visceral and pollutive imagery of bloodshed—that of citizen, friend, kin—would be called upon again and again to lament the horrors of past civil war or, more ominously, to act as a warning if conflict seemed imminent.[7] By extension, perceived enthusiasm to engage in or incite the killing of members of one's own community, such as that Lucretius also describes, became a key evaluative criteria for the effectiveness, or even *Roman*-ness, of models of civil war leadership.[8]

In the decades following, Cato's suicide following news of Caesar's success in 46 could readily be recalled as an *exemplum* of bravery and Stoic fortitude in the face of unacceptable autocratic ambition:[9]

> M. Cato, solus maximum vivendi moriendique exemplum, mori maluit quam rogare…et illas usque ad ultimum diem <u>puras a civili sanguine</u> manus in pectus sacerrimum armavit.
>
> Cato, in himself the finest model of how to live and how to die, preferred death to begging… he put into those hands, <u>clean to the last of Roman blood</u>, a sword to plunge into his hallowed breast.[10]

Tied closely here to the idea of ultimate freedom from despotic slavery is that of freedom from the blood-guilt that plagued many commanders during this period. The cleanliness of Cato's hands is key to the emotive force of the passage and, it seems, prepares him for a divinely sanctioned death.[11] As praiseworthy of an individual's conviction as this might be, the focus remains just that, on the *individual*. There is no sense that choosing a path of non-violence might itself serve as a viable strategy for ending civil war, or that it could represent a victory for the community rather than the self.[12] Of course, it must be acknowledged that such considerations lie beyond the remit of this particular declamatory deliberation, which reflects

[7] See section epigraph, also Pope (2016) for further examples throughout *De Rerum Natura*, especially regarding omens. Many dire references to civic bloodshed occur following the Caesarian and triumviral wars, for example, Sall. *Cat.* 61, Verg. *G.* 1.489-497, Hor. *Epod.* 7, Val. Max. 5.5.4, and Luc. 4.788-792.

[8] See Slingsby (2023), 63-104, for an exploration of the use of non-Roman parallels by the Julio-Claudians to pass judgment on historical leaders, namely the negative equation of commanders involved in civil bloodshed and foreign kings and despots.

[9] For a good summary of Cato's life and reception in addition to his biography by Plutarch, see Jacobs (2017), 389-414.

[10] Sen. *Suas.* 6.2, trans. Winterbottom (1974).

[11] The ideal of heroic or political suicide will be dealt with in more detail in chapter four.

[12] cf. Plut. *Vit. Cat. Min.* 2.3-4 which records the tale of a teenage Cato offering to slay Sulla to free his community.

Cicero's possible responses to Antonius rather than the conduct of commanders more broadly.[13] Even so, the above passage hints at the cultural value of restraint in the avoidance of violence, one which stands in marked contrast to despotic sensibilities. For Lepidus, as we shall later see, the avoidance of bloodshed becomes a defining pillar of his identity as a civil war leader, and later, during the triumviral years, serves to underscore the monstrous nature of his supposed transformation.

Strategies to Avoid Violence

> ...Epaminondas, quam diu facta est caedes civium, domo se tenuit, quod neque malos defendere volebat neque impugnare, ne manus suorum sanguine cruentaret; namque omnem civilem victoriam funestam putabat.
>
> ...so long as the citizens were being slain Epaminondas remained in his house, since he was unwilling either to aid the traitors or to fight against them, from reluctance to stain his hands with the blood of his countrymen; for he thought that every victory won in a civil war was pernicious.
>
> Nep. *Epam.* 10.3[14]

Avoiding violence, or as Nepos elegantly framed Atticus' attitude, 'the waves of civic strife', was not a path available to many.[15] Assuming a position of political neutrality was one possibility, although defining 'neutrality' itself was an iterative process. In the absence of any technical vocabulary, individuals sought out terms and phrases from everyday speech capable of delineating potential responses to concrete situations.[16] Contrasting this line of enquiry was the well-known notion from Greek thought, distilled in Solon's law on neutrality, that good men and citizens are obliged to act when their city is beset by *stasis*.[17] Neutrality then should not be understood as a baseline behaviour, but a stance which required clarification and justification.[18] As Mitchell has recently shown, the reality of declaring neutrality involved

[13] For an analysis of this excerpt's role in the *Suasoriae* and further commentary, see Feddern (2013), 381-385 and 389.

[14] trans. Rolfe (1929).

[15] Nep. *Att.* 6.1.

[16] These included: *neutro castra*, *neutra partium*, *medium*, *quies*, *abesse*, *exsilium*. See Mitchell (2023), 31-34 and 59-61, on needing to embrace the multiplicity of definitions for neutrality in civil war.

[17] For Solon's law on neutrality, see Leão & Rhodes (2015), 59–66, with discussion and bibliography. Educated Romans exhibited not only knowledge of these laws but a desire to engage with their ideas, see for example: Cic. *Att.* 10.1.2 [SB 190] (Cicero explicitly references the law during deliberations over his own course of action in early 49); Gell. *NA* 2.12 (later, in the 2nd century AD, Gellius explains the law's merit despite its initial appearance as unfair and unjust); Livy 3.31 (recounts how Solon's laws were sought out by Rome during a period of internal struggle to assist in drafting their own laws, what was to become The Twelve Tables).

[18] This is especially apparent given the tendency of both Pompeius and Caesar to regard as *hostes* those who did not join their cause, and as partisans those who failed to openly declare against the other. See Mitchell (2023), 37-8, for discussion and references.

reconciling competing views, with lines drawn, redrawn, and carefully calculated. Strategies of hesitancy were not uncommon, serving as a deliberate policy to better assess the unfolding situation, including the reactions of one's peers.[19] Far from a position of detachment and safety, neutrality was embedded within a web of permissions and negotiations with one or multiple factions, and often represented a position just as fraught as those in the centre of the fray. Moreover, it relied on financial security, pre-established private networks, and the keen ability to navigate or exploit these effectively, all in accordance with the expectations attached to an individual's public standing. It required adept and delicate handling.

Nepos' biography of Atticus, composed for readers in the 30s, had to confront, unabashedly, the realities of a Roman experience of chronic civil war. In it he celebrates Atticus' ability not only to survive but to flourish through an adoption of 'dedicated neutrality'.[20] Praise appears to come from all sides—and strikingly, from some of the century's most controversial and, even at the time, opposing figures.[21] Most importantly, Nepos stresses, he was able to determine for himself the right course of action, unaffected by external criteria for praise.[22] Nepos sketches something of a paradox.[23] Atticus' rejection of traditionally prized pathways to virtue is the key to his exemplary status: he embodies a new set of values not rooted in traditional *dignitas* but nevertheless deserving of it all the same.[24] But at the same time as he appears to reinforce a necessary delineation between public functions, private *officium*, and profit, the 'dedicated' way he chooses to operate during the civil wars inevitably blurs the line between private actions and their political ramifications.[25] Despite appeals to loftier virtues which hone an image of transcendence from political squabbling and ferocity, his behaviour carefully carves out a space

[19] For this and the following point, see Mitchell (2023). See Millar (1988), 53-54, for the argument that the neutrality of Atticus and many others 'only served to smooth the path to monarchy'.

[20] For this model type, see Havener (2023), 211-213. A reimagining of the *gubernator* metaphor (Nep. *Att.* 10.6) allows Atticus to prioritise the safety on his own ship. For more on the life of Atticus both within and outside of the text, see especially Millar (1988), Welch (1996), and Volk (2021), 104-110. On the relationship between Nepos and Atticus, see Lobur (2021), 98-105.

[21] These figures include: Marius (*Att.* 2.3-4), Sulla (*Att.* 4.1-2, 16.1), Caesar (*Att.* 7.3), Pompeius (*Att.* 7.1), Brutus (*Att.* 8, 16.1), Antonius (*Att.* 9.2-3, 10, 20.4-5), and Octavian (*Att.* 20.1-4).

[22] Nep. *Att.* 9.7.

[23] See Lobur (2008), 87. Nepos opens with Atticus' longstanding retention of *equestris dignitas* (*Att.* 1.1), a provocative phrase. Millar (1988), 41, points out the striking use of *dignitas* to denote personal status unrelated to public office, see also Osgood (2006), 222-223.

[24] These new ideas were potent. See Lobur (2008), 81-85, for the argument that Antonius and Octavian attempted to mirror aspects of this behaviour.

[25] Millar (1988), 42-44, discusses Nepos' emphasis on the virtue accrued through opportunities presented and not taken up as a refusal to benefit from the common blurring of domains. In a letter to Atticus (*Att.* 4.6.1-2 [SB 83]), Cicero bemoans his friend's freedom to wield political power without the restraints of office that he himself was subject to.

very much *within* the confines of civil war, and consequently does not directly broach the large-scale resolution of conflict for the *res publica*.

Lurking in the background of each of Atticus' successes is the charge of 'time-serving'. Indeed, Nepos is compelled to refute such claims repeatedly.[26] The idea of being at the mercy of the times or being a 'slave to the times' features potently in civil war rhetoric and often sets out to denote the relationship between an individual and autocratic power. As a criticism, it is tied to ideas about survival, non-commitment, opportunism, and acquiescence, although it could also be used to exculpate by recognising the impossibility in certain situations to exert one's own judgement.[27] Like much civil war rhetoric it contains complex and contradictory meanings which rely heavily on context to assess. Many were subject to its calculated deployment, including, importantly, Lepidus. In the case of Nepos' Atticus, we begin to see the shape of the moral argument which could be made for the survivor.[28] Ultimately though, as with Cato discussed above, the Atticus *exemplum* draws attention to the scope for individual agency, a path not without its difficulties, and not immune to criticism. Avoiding bloodshed was an upshot of his approach but not an explicitly defining feature of his non-participation.[29]

A striking variation on non-participation emerges in another biography of Nepos', this one in his collection of *Foreign Generals*. These biographies, despite their use of Greek history, have been duly recognised by scholars for their use of exemplarity to comment upon and encourage readers to think through contemporary Roman politics.[30] The moment captured in this section's epigraph perfectly distils the anxieties no doubt experienced by many leaders during the 30s, paired with the bitterness of its impossible realisation. During the closing sections of Nepos' account, Epaminondas, the truth-loving, eloquent, and selfless Theban commander, is abruptly confronted with civil war. His response is to adamantly hold his ground at home and refuse to fight. His reaction is remarkably similar to Atticus' initial approach in the 80s which saw him remove himself to Athens, and then again in 49 when he remained sequestered at home, all to avoid becoming tangled in the ugliness of civil war.[31] However unlike the

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[26] Nep. *Att.* 6.5, 9.6-7, 10.5, 11.3-4, 12.2, 15.3.

[27] For the argument that this idea was more nuanced than English 'time-server' captures and an exploration of the idea's development in the discourse of the 40s to 20s, see Mitchell (2019).

[28] Mitchell (2019), 171.

[29] His aversion to taking up arms is noted only once (Nep. *Att.* 4.2).

[30] See, for example, Lobur (2021), Slingsby (2019), Skufca (2018), Stem (2009/2010) and (2012), and Dionisotti (1988).

[31] Nep. *Att.* 2.2, 7. See also Cic. *Att.* 7.12.6 [SB 135], 8.2.3 [SB 152], and 8.1.1.7 [SB 161].

equestrian, as an esteemed general Epaminondas was subject to a vastly different set of expectations, especially when the need for combat crept into view. Nepos alone records this abstention on Epaminondas' part, from which he desists only after the reshuffling of combatants allow the fighting to be classified as against a foreign enemy.[32] Such a factual intervention is highly suggestive of the emotional weight of its contents for triumviral readers. Meanwhile, within the *Life*, the placement of the episode is subsequent even to the death its of its subject—these final musings are no doubt designed to leave an impression.

Yet the nature of this impression is left intentionally allusive. Nepos avoids explicitly evaluating Epaminondas' passive behaviour, in fact, it is not until the subsequent *Life of Pelopidas* that the reader is properly oriented. Despite much of the renown for Thebes' ultimate ascension going to Epaminondas, it was the city's *second* citizen, Pelopidas, who, fighting against his own countrymen (albeit those who had aided their Spartan oppressors), paved the way for liberation from tyranny.[33] Praise is thus due to the individual who had the foresight to understand the necessity of civic violence in order to achieve a greater good. At the same time, the earlier *Life* does not disregard the degree of moral complication unsympathetically. Epaminondas' justification for his unwillingness to pick a side repetitively invokes imagery of bloodshed and slaughter with a precision that emphasises the tragedy of such acts directed internally within a community.[34] He identifies those involved as *malos*, but even that is not a sufficient excuse to exercise violence against them.

Every victory, *omnem victoriam,* Epaminondas claims, was grievous.[35] In addition to hinting at unease over the cycles of violence, the very substance of victory itself is called into question. The notion of a bloodless victory, tellingly, is not even entertained. Epaminondas simply does not fight. And yet his later success stands uncomfortably on the shoulders of others willing to sully their hands. In any case, where the decision to become embroiled in violence is concerned, comparing Nepos' biographies of Atticus, Epaminondas, and Pelopidas, sheds light on the tensions which prevailed regarding action and inaction for leading figures during civil war. Atticus' *quies* might be praised, but for statesmen and generals this is not presented as a viable path: Epaminondas' desire to remain *quietly* at home, in the biography of Pelopidas, is directly

[32] For the initial observation see Dionisotti (1988), 45.

[33] Nep. *Pel.* 4. For Nepos' evaluation of this episode and the links between the two biographies, see Havener (2023), 210 and Stem (2012), 194-198.

[34] OLD s.v. *caedo* 3, *sanguis* 1, 2, *cruento* 1b, and *funestus* 2, 3.

[35] OCD s.v. *funestus* 3, but see also 2 for the sense of 'ceremonially polluted'.

contrasted against praise for the latter's willingness to fight.[36] The points at which action during and attitude toward civil war meet or diverge are constantly complicated by a range of competing drives and expectations. This in turn requires the continual (re)negotiation of what is acceptable within an unacceptable situation. Participation in the violence was for some a clear marker of complicity, but its utility in forcing some kind of conclusion is difficult to ignore.

Another path sought to change the nature of the battlefield entirely by promoting strategies that embraced unity and privileged the moral qualities of the ideal general. It is most firmly within this tradition that we may situate the later actions of Lepidus. In the opening moves of 49 Caesar famously vowed to change the shape of victory in civil war:

> temptemus hoc modo si possimus omnium voluntates recuperare et diuturna victoria uti, quoniam reliqui crudelitate odium effugere non potuerunt neque victoriam diutius tenere praeter unum L. Sullam, quem imitaturus non sum. haec nova sit ratio vincendi ut misericordia et liberalitate nos muniamus.
>
> Let us try whether by this means we can win back the good will of all and enjoy a lasting victory, seeing that others have not managed by cruelty to escape hatred or to make their victories endure, except only L. Sulla, whom I do not propose to imitate. Let this be a new policy for achieving victory, to make mercy and generosity our shield.[37]

He declared that in rejecting the cruelties of the Sullan model and instead championing mercy and generosity, everyone might benefit from a 'lasting victory'. The promise is clear: that a permanent and widespread protection from violence, both on and off the battlefield, was indeed possible. By stressing the idea of political will in *voluntas*, he also attempts to align this position with a more 'ordinary' course, one which minimises the extraordinary military aspect of the conflict.[38] In this case, surrender following siege was a relatively bloodless affair, providing him with an appropriate platform to ease the concerns of Italy.[39] Yet the letter is still saturated with the language of conquest, thus struggling to reconcile itself with the aspirational camaraderie of the message.[40] It has even been argued that *misericordia* here represents a kind of 'symbolic violence', merely *displacing* harsher forms of military conquest.[41] The reception

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[36] Nep. *Pel.* 4.1, cf. *Att.* 7.3.

[37] Cic. Att. 9.7C [SB 174C], trans. Shackleton Bailey (1999a) with minor amendments from Cornwell (2024).

[38] Zucchetti (2024), 46, who also notes a concern about Caesar's position post-conflict.

[39] The letter was clearly intended for circulation.

[40] *Victoria* and *vinco* feature prominently. The militaristic tone is then punctuated by the concluding figurative use of *muniamus*, see OLD s.v. *munio* 1, 2, 4.

[41] Roller (2001), 183-5.

and intention of what would become known as *Clementia Caesaris* has undergone much debate among scholars, and I believe, with Konstan, that *clementia* was not morally insidious.[42] In any case, attempts to make the resolution of civil war more palatable, were clearly plagued by tensions exacerbated through the available language.

One final episode searching for victory by eschewing violence is worth visiting before turning to Lepidus. Like his later confrontation, it too took place in Spain. Occurring in the months following the letter just discussed, the episode is given a substantial treatment in Caesar's *Commentarii de Bello Civili*, and has been noted by scholars for its allegorical significance in sketching the character of the civil war more broadly.[43] In the lead up to the anticipated final stages of the Ilerdan campaign, Caesar is repeatedly shown to desire closure and resolution, a marked contrast to allegations that the Pompeians were attempting to prolong the war.[44] So it is at a decisive moment for the campaign, when he was being demanded *ex omnibus partibus* to engage, that readers are instead granted intimate access to Caesar's own hopes for resolving the situation without bloodshed:[45]

> 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?…praesertim cum non minus esset imperatoris consilio superare quam gladio. Movebatur etiam misericordia civium quos interficiendos videbat, quibus salvis atque incolumibus rem obtinere malebat. Hoc consilium Caesaris plerisque non probabatur. Milites vero palam inter se loquebantur: quoniam talis occasio victoriae dimitteretur, etiam cum vellet Caesar sese non esse pugnaturos.
>
> Caesar had conceived the hope that he would be able to finish the business without fighting or shedding his men's blood, since he had cut off the enemy from their food supply. "Even if the battle goes well, why should I lose any of my men?…Especially since a strategic victory is as appropriate to a general as a military victory." He was also moved by pity for the fellow citizens who he saw would inevitably be killed; he wanted instead to accomplish his goal with them safe and sound. Most people did

[42] Konstan (2005), *passim* esp. 341, 371 and n.7. Related vocabulary included: *humanitas*, *ignoscere*, *indulgentia*, *lenitas*, *mansuetudo*, *misericordia*, *moderatio*, and *parcere*. On Caesar and the development of *clementia*, see especially, Dowling (2006), Griffin (2003), Konstan (2005), Weinstock (1971), 233-242, and Wirszubski (1950), 150-153; also, Braund (2009), 32-5, Roller (2001), 182-185, Stevenson (2014), 139-148 and Tuori (2016) 25-43 and 60-67. See Fears (1981b), 849, 869 on its introduction to the state cult of virtues. For the decree of the senate, see App. *B Civ.* 2.106, Cass. Dio 44.6.4 and Plut. *Vit. Caes*. 57.4. See also RRC 480/21.

[43] Batstone and Damon (2006), 76. Grillo (2012), 78-91 and 103-105, notes the importance of the episode in developing the character of Caesar's leniency, but notes the strategy in portraying a fractured community, so that he might restore it.

[44] For closure, see Caes. *BCiv.* 1.68.3, 72.1, 74.4, 84.1, 87.5. For his adversaries wishing to prolong the war, see *BCiv.* 1.61.4, 64.2, 76.5. For a detailed structural and thematic discussion, see Batstone and Damon (2006), 75-84.

[45] Caes. *BCiv.* 1.71.1-2.

> not approve of Caesar's strategy. Indeed the soldiers said openly among themselves that they would not fight, not even when Caesar wanted them to, since he was throwing away such an occasion for victory.[46]

The most striking element of this passage is the way Caesar chooses to go on the defensive. Autobiographical artefacts often deal with justificatory content, but here readers are faced with an unexpected reversal: Caesar is required to justify why he wants to conclude civil war without recourse to violence or cruelty.

This justification was an important part of his commentary's broader communicative strategy, but within the context of the episode itself what is most extraordinary is the resistance of his soldiers—to the extent that they threaten disobedience.[47] This willingness to fight becomes even more shocking as a result of Caesar's designation of the enemy as *civis*—a choice of vocabulary unseen in forty sections of narrative.[48] The clash of *domi* and *militae*, of citizen and soldier, serves both to emphasise the stakes and point to the unique problems faced by leaders in this war. Caesar's reasoning to his men is that strategy is just as crucial for an *imperator* as the sword. The word he uses for the former, *consilium*, is typical of martial virtue; the latter use of *ferrum,* while loosely tied to the idea of physical prowess captured in ideas such as *labor* and *fortitudo,* strips back the breadth of positive associations in favour of a simplified idea: violence and combat.[49] Except for his private experience of *misericordia*, which, subordinated in indirect speech we glimpse ideal general's *humanitas*, the grounds for Caesar's argument remain firmly within the bounds of familiar martial language.[50] Avoiding violence and bloodshed is predominately pitched as a practical measure.

The picture quickly changes, when, in the absence of the Pompeian leaders Petreius and Afranius, the 'enemy' soldiers emerge to negotiate their own safety and give thanks for being relieved of their fear.[51] The notion of any difference between the men is briskly erased as they lament the circumstances which pitch them against one another. Pervading this scene of reconciliation are a mixture of terms denoting personal connection and community: *notus*, *municeps*, *necessarius*, *consanguineus*, *suus* and *hospes*.

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[46] Caes. *BCiv*. 1.72.1-4, trans. Damon (2016).

[47] On Caesar's strategies of communication, see Zucchetti (2024), *passim* and esp. 50, n.19 for bibliography on the scholarly debate regarding composition and publication.

[48] Batstone and Damon (2006), 78.

[49] See chapter one for this list of virtues. OLD s.v. *ferrum* 5 for 'the sword' as representative of fighting.

[50] TLL s.v. *misericordia* I.3, especially considered alongside Caesar's earlier pairing with *liberalitas*; see also OLD s.v. *liberalitas* 1.

[51] This, and the following paragraph, summarises Caes. *BCiv.* 1.74.

Ultimately:

> …una castra iam facta ex binis viderentur.
>
> …the two camps seemed to have become one.
>
> Erant plena laetitia et gratulatione omnia, eorum qui tanta pericula vitasse et eorum qui sine vulnere tantas res confecisse videbantur. Magnumque fructum suae pristinae lenitatis omnium iudicio Caesar ferebat, consiliumque eius a cunctis probabatur.
>
> Everything was full of joy and thanksgiving on both sides: the one saw themselves as having escaped great danger, the other as having achieved a great success without bloodshed. In everyone's opinion Caesar was winning great credit for his former clemency, and his strategy had everyone's approval.[52]

The previous dismay of those within Caesar's camp, driven by a desire to pursue a traditional victory, is swiftly forgotten amidst the celebrations. Caesar's initially controversial modification of victory is now met with complete approval. Although readers are reminded in the echoed phrasing of *sine vulnere*, now used as praise not two sections after its rebuffed proposal, of the immense contradictions in attitude regarding civil war.

But the tale does not end there. On the cusp of peace, the Pompeian commanders return, and the situation is abruptly and violently reversed.[53] It was the introduction of fear and cruelty that were key in precipitating this result.[54] Now, the cessation of war which was framed as both possible and desirable, is suddenly suspended.[55] Further manoeuvring and fighting takes place until the Pompeian leaders finally capitulate, at which point their forces are disbanded and the soldiers treated favourably. Caesar concludes his first book depicting an organised and agreeable outcome, even arbitrating disputes among the soldiers as they arise. Ultimately, the emphasis is in solidifying faith in the successful and charismatic leader. This episode simply exists as a test-case for his leniency, of which a policy of non-violence exercises influence, but is not necessarily the primary driver of the encounter. Clemency or leniency can just as easily be dispensed after violent defeat.

It is clear that attempts to eschew violence during civil war trigger complex and often contradictory sets of responses. At its very core the prospect of being victorious *over* other citizens is deeply challenging, even as the shape and attainments of *victoria* are being pulled in

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[52] Caes. *BCiv*. 1.74.4 and 7, trans. Damon (2016).
[53] Although Afranius was willing to concede. The narrative continues at Caes. *BCiv.* 1.75-87.
[54] Caes. *BCiv.* 1.76.5.
[55] Batstone and Damon (2006), 78-79.

multiple directions. The presentation of how, when, and why, leaders propel or stall events, become key factors in assessing the merits and failures of experimental portraits of ideal civil war leadership. So far I have only explored informal expressions of reproach and praise, but it is in the development of formal strategies of recognition, of which Lepidus is an integral part, that a number a difficulties begin to coalesce in earnest. Marcus Lepidus is not the charismatic Caesar. The way he interacts with the same problems, while indebted to his close friend, must necessarily be unique.

Lepidus De-escalating Conflict in Spain

> καὶ ἐπανελθόντα ἐπινικίοις, μήτε τινὰς νικήσαντα μήτ᾽ ἀρχὴν μαχεσάμενόν τισιν, ἐτίμησε, πρόφασιν ὅτι τοῖς ὑπό τε τοῦ Λογγίνου καὶ ὑπὸ τοῦ Μαρκέλλου πραχθεῖσι παρεγένετο.
>
> …and upon his return he had honoured him with a triumph, although Lepidus had conquered no foes nor so much as fought with any, the pretext being that he had been present at the exploits of Longinus and of Marcellus.
>
> Cass. Dio 43.2[56]

Something extraordinary occurred in Spain in 47, or, more accurately, was elevated to such status through a very special form of recognition: a triumph. The *first* triumph not only of these renewed civil wars but to occur at all during civil war.[57] Granted by Caesar as dictator, Lepidus' triumph *ex Hispania* is often overlooked.[58] Setting aside the significance of this inaugural instance, what is more striking is the nature of the action that precipitated it: through mediation, Lepidus thwarted the threat of escalating violence and orchestrated a resolution to civil conflict. After over two years of bitter civil war, Caesar's refrain of 'lasting victory' must have been losing its edge. It was perhaps the resonance of Lepidus' actions with those of Caesar's earlier (discussed above) that in part prompted the proposed honours. Through the award of a triumph Caesar emphasised both the *decisiveness* of the 'battle' and his continued

[56] trans. Cary and Foster (1916).

[57] See Appendix in Rich (2014), 244-52, for a reconstructed triumphal list; esp. nos. 262. On late republican triumphs, in particular those granted during of civil war, see Lange (2016) and (2013), Havener (2014), and Östenberg (2014).

[58] Certainly in modern treatments of the period. Even Lepidus' biographers, Weigel (1992) and Allély (2004), fail to linger on this honour and its magnitude. Although Allély (2004), 46-47, briefly speculates on Caesar's prerogative as dictator to award triumphs, it is ultimately, though unconvincingly, concluded, that Lepidus must have performed some other significant military action that resulted in him being hailed *imperator.* In his work on triumphs, Lange (2016), 40, 66, mentions it only in passing. Of comparable events, the scholarship tends to focus on the hybrid ovation-festival of Caesar in 44 or the later ovations of Antonius and Octavian in 40 for making peace between themselves. With the missing lines of the *Fasti Triumphales* for the years between 54-45, it is through Cass. Dio 43.1-3 that we know of Lepidus' first triumph.

support of ending conflict, where possible, without bloodshed. A welcome reminder, no doubt, for the community, and a hopeful message for the future.

An *ovatio*, akin to those celebrated a few years later by Caesar, Antonius, and Octavian, might have seemed more fitting in this context.[59] Certainly, as Cassius Dio mockingly recalls, Lepidus' achievement proved deficient against the traditional criteria for a full triumph.[60] But such 'traditional criteria' were problematised within civil war. The degree of flexibility for triumphal traditions to accommodate civil war, and to what level of success, has been debated.[61] Although even the usual difficulties posed by how to depict the enemy in one's procession does not surface here, the driving praise of Lepidus' was precisely that there was no 'defeat' in the usual sense. Unfortunately, no sources survive which detail what must have been a markedly unconventional, and likely provocative, triumph.[62] Triumphs, although providing recognition of individual glory and achievement, were not built to commemorate *pax* through any means, combat or otherwise. Indeed, Sumi stresses that *no* Roman rituals were designed for this purpose.[63] Yet, as suggested above, they were an important marker of closure, and in the age of civil wars, could aid the community in making sense of their experiences. As a result, they became a functional component in putting an end to the 'civil war mentality'.[64]

While details of the subsequent triumph may be lost to us, the events in Spain are a little less obscured. The 'Cassius affair' Cicero disparagingly called it, and the preceding troubles, in a contemporary letter to Atticus of mid 47.[65] He understood it as just one setback amongst many for Caesar, which taken together diminished Cicero's hope of forthcoming peace. In this context, Cicero seized upon the disastrous individual at the apparent centre of unrest in Spain to champion his general political pessimism. The later extant evidence is likewise chiefly concerned with Cassius's detestable character. His *avaritia, crudelitas,* and *furor* not only

[59] On ovations and in particular their link to bloodless victories, see Rich (2014), *passim* esp. 213-5, 238 and Sumi (2005), 30-31, 65, 67-69, 196. The ovations of Caesar, Antonius, and Octavian (nos. 270, 275, 276 in Rich (2014)) required no preceding war.

[60] Cass. Dio 43.1 credits Lepidus only with being 'present' (LSJ s.v. παραγίγνομαι 1); Weigel (1992), 144 n.36, notes the mocking tone.

[61] For the conventional view that triumphs could not be awarded for civil war, and his refutation of this position see Lange (2013), with further references. See also, Lange (2016) and Östenberg (2014).

[62] The triumph likely took place in late 47 given Lepidus' consulship with Caesar the following year; see Beard (2007), 280, on this pattern generally and the important resonance between triumphal symbolism and political and social power.

[63] Sumi (2005), 196.

[64] See Osgood (2015), *passim*, for the elaboration of this idea.

[65] Cic. *Att.* 11.16.1 [SB 227]. For its disparaging use see OLD s.v. *negotium* 12b. Concerns over Spain had been raised previously (*Att.* 11.10.1 [SB 221]).

captured the imaginations of moralising commentators, but in historiography were often explored in association with Caesar's own preeminence, especially his ongoing project of self-promotion. The cast of characters and their varying degrees of culpability furnished later authors with a multitude of ways to critique this discordant period of Rome's history—each a vessel rich in thematic potential.[66] All this richness was, however, firmly grounded in the contested discussions circulating throughout the 40s. This is made abundantly clear by the contemporary *Bellum Alexandrinum*, a text that contains the most detailed surviving treatment of events in Spain and, unlike later accounts, showcases Lepidus' decisive intervention.[67] Woven carefully—at times pointedly—throughout the narrative, a host of thorny issues are proffered to the reader. These often involve key groups, such as troops and civilian communities, their desires, influence, and the obligations of leading figures toward them, as well as more abstract concerns, including the complexities surrounding the notion of a 'cause' and the fundamental nature of civil disputes more broadly. Importantly for this chapter, the text also explores the appropriate behaviour of generals and the potential to resolve conflict non-violently.

The *Bellum Alexandrinum* is an intriguing text which has received little scholarly attention. Although commonly regarded as a continuation of Caesar's *Commentarius* on the civil war, it lacks the appeal of the leader's own voice and the insight this might offer into his internal logic and modes of self-presentation. Interest in the 'sequel' tends to focus on either its potential to supplement key chronological information (attaching individuals, groups and strategies to the

[66] Cassius Dio scatters his recollection of events in Spain across 42.15-6, 43.1 and 29-30 using them as a platform to critique the complexities of responding appropriately to civil war, leaders, and the people alike, reminding readers of a community 'vexed' (ἀχθόμενοι) by their inconsistent experience of leadership. For this theme as the very reason for its inclusion, see Scott (2019). Fragments of Book 112 (fr. 37-9 W.), and the previous book's summary at *Per.* 111, suggest Livy's history did cover the conflict, preserving mentions of Cassius and King Bogud, in particular, the former's vices. The greed of Cassius became a thing of infamy, with Valerius Maximus choosing to include him in his section *De Avaritia* (4.4.2). Appian does not include an account of the difficulties in Spain.

[67] The Spanish commentary represents the second longest continuous narrative contained within the text. After the details of the eponymous Alexandrian war are adequately dispatched, the military commentary pivots away from Caesar to feature concurrent arenas of the war. Regions covered include: Egypt (*BAlex.* 1-33), the Eastern provinces (*BAlex.* 34-41, 65-78), Illyria (*BAlex.* 42-47), and Spain (*BAlex.* 48-64).

various sites of confrontation), or as a puzzle of shadowy authorship.[68] In a similar fashion to the *Bellum Civile,* from which it draws several cues, the *Bellum Alexandrinum* appears less concerned with posterity than with shaping the immediate political climate.[69] This is signalled by the latter project's accelerated realisation between March 44 and April 43, the urgency of which (undoubtedly driven by the turmoil following Caesar's assassination) infused politically and emotionally resonant themes from recent history with a freshly poignant vibrancy.[70] From a historian's perspective such vibrancy is further magnified by the idiosyncratic compilation of discrete eyewitness reports.[71] Despite a definite editorial presence, the text's modest origins emerge through noticeable discrepancies in style, focus, and level of detail.[72] One consequence of minimal editorial intervention is the rare privilege of deeper engagement with the lived experience of combatants during these campaigns, including their attitudes towards the varied kinds of leadership which prevailed.

A striking feature of the Spanish narrative is indeed the sheer abundance of leadership types which manifest, overlap, and compete for supremacy. Among others, the report configures governors, generals, tyrants, foreign kings, native rebels, provincial champions, and ultimately, mediators, or more precisely, figures keeping the peace. While this impressive list capitalises on familiar tropes, it does not, crucially, solely default to a static usage. Instead it probes and reformulates, particularly in response to the dynamics of their interactions. The stakes here are only emphasised by the marked increase in emotionally heightened and ethically evaluative language, an observation which also indicates the narrator's intimate involvement with the action.[73] Fortunately, the report resists a narrow conception of these events. Multiple

[68] Cluett (2003), an exception to this trend, probes the *Bellum Alexandrinum* alongside the *Bellum Africum* and *Hispaniense* for insights into contemporary political attitudes; see also 119-20 for references to the existing scholarship. More recently, Gaertner and Hausburg (2013) take a novel approach, investigating narrative technique with a focus on its broader historiographical positioning; see also footnotes on 13 for additional bibliography. On the subject of authorship it is posited that an initial draft by Caesar was used as a basis for the earlier sections (1-21), and that while it is likely the final draft was overseen by Hirtius, Gaertner and Hausburg (2013), 94-154, stress the notion of a 'heterogenous patchwork'.

[69] For the argument applied to the *Bellum Civile,* see Gotter (2023), and for the *Bellum Alexandrinum,* Gaertner and Hausburg (2013), 117-118, 121, 165.

[70] Gaertner and Hausburg (2013), 24, 161-162 note the text's ability to intervene on Caesar's behalf in the 'war of words' following his death.

[71] On the source material, see Cluett (2003), 121 and Gaertner and Hausburg (2013), 90-93.

[72] Gaertner and Hausburg (2013) discuss throughout evidence for heterogeneity; n.68 above. For their discussion on historiographical method see 144-154.

[73] The case for personal experience is also made by appealing to the specificity of details both of provincial workings and military matters. The shift in language, particularly when compared to Caesar's example, is stark here, but is also more common in the later sections of the *Bellum Alexandrinum;* see Gaertner and Hausburg (2013), 88-95.

perspectives are layered and interwoven, often searching, but also pointedly signalling the diversity of motives and expectations that both generate and coalesce in reaction to civil war. Moments of invited conjecture, often accompanied with speculative guesswork, reports of hidden intentions, and even alternatives drawn out by the actors themselves, all further draw attention to the ample scope for thought and action and the innate desire to uncover these.[74] At the same time, this device acknowledges the unknowability that ultimately exists when operating within the contested space of civil war narratives.

In the wake of suddenly and violently losing Pompeius, a primary figure within Rome's novel and evolving configuration of powerful individuals, the mental landscape was again forced to confront the unknown. Renewed fears of further political and interpersonal destabilisation meant renewed concerns over competing responses to conflict. Appropriate models needed to be reconsidered and reevaluated against a new set of circumstances, but not without linking behaviour to past conduct. These discussions, both formal and informal, tended to be mindful of individuals whose political position and pool of available resources and connections were considerable at the time. Naturally, the failures of various Caesarian supporters were drawing increased attention. It was important then to explore how someone like Lepidus might be configured against other candidate types, including, at the time of compilation, the ever increasing omnipresence of Antonius.

In brief, the main events proceed as follows.[75] Reacting to reported unrest stirred by native troops, the reviled propraetor of Further Spain, Q. Cassius Longinus, dispatched his quaestor M. Claudius Marcellus Aeserninus to de-escalate the situation. Instead, Marcellus joined the troops gathering around Corduba—whose citizens gave their full and emphatic support—and took over their leadership from the Spanish Thorius, the legions hailing him as praetor.[76]

[74] Compare for example the presentation of Marcellus (*BAlex*. 57), Thorius (58), and Cassius (63).
[75] Summary of *BAlex*. 57-64. The sections leading up to this (48-56) begin developing the negative portrait of Cassius which continues throughout, including a detailed account of an assassination attempt orchestrated by disgruntled provincials. Tensions were pre-existing, traced back to his installation by Pompeius as quaestor and a previous attempt on his life. This facilitated his depiction as the subject of often open hatred. *Odium* reappears to the point of excess and underscores almost all of his interactions. He is hated by: the province/provincials, *BAlex*. 48 (x2), 50 (x2), 53, 59; friends (*familiares*), 50; troops/ conscripts 53, 56. At no point is he awarded redeeming virtues, although cf. Caesar's speech elsewhere (*BHisp*. 42) condemning the provincials for attempting to kill a sacrosanct magistrate. Welch (1995), 450-451, suggests that narratively blaming Cassius' character for all that went wrong in Spain aided in hiding the fact that Spain was a still a Pompeian stronghold.
[76] Presumably to help legitimate their actions. Müller (2021), 129-130, interprets this as a narrowing of ideological scope, framing the conflict as a merely regional dispute with a governor. I would suggest, however, that these actions rather intensify the complexity of how people and ideas were organised during the civil war.

Cassius, outraged, sent dispatches to King Bogud of Northern Africa, and Lepidus, who at this time was proconsul in Hither Spain, demanding immediate support. He then, in a hideous (*deformitas*) and outrageous (*indignitas*) manner, launched an attack on Corduba and its surrounds. Even so, Marcellus remained hesitant to engage, wary of the repercussions such losses might have entailed for Caesar—affecting both *victoris et victi* alike. Nevertheless, lines were drawn, but confrontation was stalled due to difficult terrain. Strategic manoeuvring and field works commenced, but it was upon the arrival of King Bogud that skirmishes were to begin in earnest. *Fortuna* favoured neither side, with victory oscillating between the two.[77] Finally, Lepidus arrives with a large force and, espousing a policy of non-violence, prohibits further fighting and sets about organising a peaceful settlement, despite Cassius' resistant attitude. When much to everyone's surprise—Cassius' complicity is questioned—Bogud attacks, battle commences, but fortunately Lepidus' intervention concludes hostilities swiftly. Cassius retreats and, after relinquishing his troops, escapes—determined to avoid contact with Lepidus, the newly appointed provincial governor Trebonius, or Marcellus—but ultimately drowns in the Ebro while fleeing during a storm.

What this brief summary fails to capture is the frenzied layering of anxieties, fears, and expectations which noticeably quieten only once Lepidus arrives on the scene. Up to this point, the diverse and overcrowded cast of politically active characters—leaders, troops, and civilians (men, matrons, *and* youths)—resulted in a cacophony of action, intention, and feeling: emotions ran high, distrust lingered, plots failed, power-plays thwarted, political causes exchanged, and motives interrogated. The narrative builds to the ultimate point of crisis, *civilis dissensio,* the proxy for *bellum civile* notably favoured by Caesar.[78] Yet in a strange twist, which involved men rebranding their shields, both armies come to face each other having declared for Caesar.[79] In stark contrast to the flurry of activity and lengthy descriptions of

[77] Gaertner and Hausburg (2013), 110-6, discuss the shift in usage of *fortuna* between the *Bellum Gallicum, Bellum Civile,* and various sections of the *Bellum Alexandrinum*. It progressively moves away from the rational to an unpredictable quasi-divine force shaping events.

[78] See Arena (2020), 111, on Caesar's preference for *civilis dissensio* over *bellum civile*. During his assessment of Marcellus, Dio (42.15.4-5) suggests Cassius desired to incite political revolution (νεωτερίζω). It is telling for the legacy of the incident that Dio uses it to transition into a broader discussion on the Roman public's perception of the Pompeians versus the Caesareans and the fear and confusion this rivalry entailed.

[79] Pompeius' name was carved and then removed from the troop's shields, see *BAlex*. 58-59. See Cass. Dio 42.15.5 for the way this action contributed to a negative depiction of the steadfastness of Marcellus' allegiances.

earlier developments, the model of leadership introduced through Lepidus appears concise and controlled. It is worth reproducing the section in full:

> Interim Lepidus ex citeriore provincia cum cohortibus legionariis XXXV magnoque numero equitum et reliquorum auxiliorum venit ea mente Uliam, ut sine ullo studio contentiones Cassi Marcellique componeret. Huic venienti sine dubitatione Marcellus se credit atque offert; Cassius contra suis se tenet praesidiis, sive eo quod plus sibi iuris deberi quam Marcello existimabat, sive eo quod ne praeoccupatus animus Lepidi esset obsequio adversarii verebatur. Ponit ad Uliam castra Lepidus neque habet a Marcello quicquam divisi. Ne pugnetur interdicit; ad exeundum Cassium invitat fidemque suam in re omni interponit. Cum diu dubitasset Cassius quid sibi faciendum quidve Lepido esset credendum, neque ullum exitum consili sui reperiret si permaneret in sententia, postulat uti munitiones disicerentur sibique liber exitus daretur. Non tantum indutiis factis sed prope iam pace constituta opera cum complanarent custodiaeque munitionum essent deductae, auxilia regis in id castellum Marcelli quod proximum erat regis castris, neque opinantibus omnibus—si tamen in omnibus fuit Cassius: nam de huius conscientia dubitabatur—, impetum fecerunt complurisque ibi milites oppresserunt. …
>
> Meanwhile Lepidus came to Ulia from the nearer province with thirty-five legionary cohorts and a large number of cavalry and other auxiliary troops, his object being to resolve, quite impartially, the dispute between Cassius and Marcellus. On his arrival Marcellus without hesitation put himself confidently into Lepidus' hands. Cassius, on the other hand, remained within his own defences, either because he thought that a greater measure of justice was due to himself than to Marcellus, or else because he was afraid that Lepidus' attitude might have been biased by the deference shewn him by his opponent. Lepidus pitched his camp near Ulia, in complete accord with Marcellus. He refused to allow any fighting, invited Cassius to come out, and pledged his word to every offer he made. For a long time Cassius was in doubt as to what he should do or what confidence he should place in Lepidus; but as he could find no solution to his policy if he remained steadfast in his decision, he demanded that the entrenchments should be demolished and that he himself should be granted leave to depart unmolested. Not only had a truce been made, but by now a peaceful settlement had been all but arranged, and they were dismantling the fieldworks and the sentries manning the entrenchments had been withdrawn, when, though nobody expected it—if indeed nobody included Cassius, for there was some doubt as to his complicity—the king's auxiliary forces launched an attack upon the stronghold of Marcellus nearest the king's camp, and overpowered a number of troops in it.[80]

Lepidus' behaviour clearly diverged from what Cassius had anticipated when he called for his aid. Instead of lending immediate military support as King Bogud had, Lepidus emphatically forbids (*interdico*) any fighting and resolves to settle the dispute *sine ullo studio*, without any partisan spirit at all.[81] In a single line the narrator emphasises Lepidus' ability to contribute militarily (by quantifying his forces, which were a great deal more than the number supplied by Bogud) while indicating a strong preference to avoid battle and pursue reconciliation. The verb *compono* stresses the latter point, desiring a 'coming to terms', that is, Lepidus' goal is to

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[80] *BAlex*. 63, trans. Way (1955).

[81] For *studio* as 'partisan spirit or expression of it' see OLD s.v. *studium* 6.

mediate.[82] Yet Cassius' subsequent dilemma about yielding to Lepidus' judgement echoes the language of arbitration. Recent scholarship has stressed the differentiation of the two; in short, mediation required a facilitator, arbitration an umpire.[83] The blurring here of the two perhaps reflects the dissonance between historical reality and present needs: Lepidus' political seniority and close ties with Caesar would have made him an ideal arbiter, although promoting strategies of negotiation would be more applicable in the adversarial circumstances following Caesar's death.

Either strategy of non-violent dispute resolution, however, relies on the principle of impartial conduct, indeed, to some extent, it is embedded in the very conception of these roles. Although not absolutely necessary, a version of political neutrality could be valued here. The construction *sine ullo studio* is striking, as this modification of *studium* to convey a sense of impartiality is uncommon in extant Latin, and even rarer beyond strictly judicial contexts.[84] The closest contextual usage can be found in Livy during an open debate about the status of war and peace, albeit from the perspective of Syracusans considering their relationship with Rome versus Carthage.[85] Beyond the strategic importance of this outcome, the stakes are conceptualised in terms of Syracuse's internal cohesion: failure to reach consensus would risk inviting civil war. Avoiding this bloody (*atrox*) outcome demanded a distinctive persuasive force in the arguments. Here, a speaker's views were deemed to have more *auctoritas* when delivered with less *studium*. The parallel with Lepidus' situation is not exact, but an important similarity surfaces in the use of impartiality to facilitate agreement and avoid the savagery of civic bloodshed. Within the context of real or potential internecine warfare, individuals operating with little to no partisan spirit are understood as vital to the protection of the community throughout the process of conflict resolution.

Meanwhile, the Livian example also helps clarify the audience's expected positive evaluation of this type of response, emphasising its conferral of *auctoritas*. This is important as Lepidus' approach in Spain could have been considered to be in bad faith: Cassius had called for his assistance, and despite renderings of his tyrannical behaviour, he had not acted illegally in any

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[82] OLD s.v. *compono* 15a, b.
[83] Rosillo-López (2020), 154, 159-160, 166-167.
[84] Examples are limited to: Cic. *Flac.* 21, *Dom.* 131, *Off.* 2.20, Livy 24.28.8, and the famous opening of Tacitus' in *Ann.* 1.1.
[85] Livy 24.28, describing events in 214.

way.[86] On the other hand, Marcellus' behaviour was a bit more problematic.[87] The *Bellum Alexandrinum* focuses on his admirable intentions, whereas Dio's much later and scathing account—accusing him of disingenuous neutrality, of playing a double game—hints at the tone of backlash possible from certain quarters.[88] Despite this, Lepidus' intervention is depicted favourably. His initial attempts to avoid battle are met with a success which contrasts Marcellus' strained attempts at the same. Furthermore, his clearsighted and fair approach is reinforced by the lack of appeal to Caesar's cause—a striking omission when set against the explicit and repeated invocation of Caesar's name to justify the actions of nearly all other major figures.[89] The initial hesitancy of the tyrannical governor to submit to Lepidus, contrasted with the provincial champion's willingness, further affirms the virtue of Lepidus' chosen stance. Throughout, the character of Lepidus remains firmly in control, steadfast in the face of resistance until the peace settlement is secured. When the (probably encouraged) foreign king disrupts the balance by attacking Marcellus' troops Lepidus swiftly responds:

> …Quod nisi celeriter indignatione et auxilio Lepidi proelium esset diremptum, maior calamitas esset accepta.
>
> …And had not Lepidus in righteous anger promptly lent his assistance to break up that fray, a greater disaster would have been sustained.[90]

Even during this explosive moment when the model-mediator is forced to enter battle, the language maintains the preference for non-violence. Lepidus does not attack or vanquish, but rather intervenes to *separate* the combatants, in doing so he reiterates the executive nature of his control and his desire to *settle* the hostilities and the dispute they represented.[91] His militant action is thus carefully depicted as an appropriate extension of his initial stance. Although not without the support of the typically martial *celeritas*—even here the audience is being asked to recall and modify their understanding of the virtues and achievements of the ideal general.

Most importantly, Lepidus' compulsion to act stems from a position of moral integrity. *Indignatio* captures the type of anger appropriate to broken faith, or any reckless inversion of

[86] Although his earlier (*BAlex*. 56) confused response to the death of Pompeius hinted at his disregard for the proper functioning of the *res publica*. Welch (1995), 449 notes the lack of technical illegality.

[87] Lepidus' father had in fact acted comparably in Etruria in the 70s. This will be discussed in further detail in the following chapters.

[88] *BAlex*. 56-60, Cass. Dio 42.15-16. Dio also records Caesar's banishment of Marcellus, noting his later restoration and honour.

[89] Except for King Bogud.

[90] *BAlex*. 63, trans. Way (1955).

[91] For the two senses of the verb see OLD s.v. *dirimo* 2 'to separate from physical contact' and 4b 'to impose a decision on (a dispute or similar), settle'.

expected behaviour. It signals an affront to community values, values that, in this instance, Lepidus is portrayed as defending in response to an unequivocal wrong.[92] The powerfully emotive capital this builds is heightened still further by the use of a 'near miss' counterfactual. This imagined alternate scenario, devoid of a commander in the mould of Lepidus, would have witnessed a far greater calamity. Deploying this counterfactual, then, serves to underscore both the fragility of the situation and the ability of a leader like Lepidus to positively shape the outcome of events. A deft nod of encouragement no doubt, to the post-assassination Lepidus whose recent actions had curbed further outbreak of violence in the city, in addition to his ongoing role in maintaining stability within Rome. This critical skillset had been put to test during his years in Spain, where he held the more challenging of the two provinces against strong Pompeian loyalties. He ultimately proved to be the only Caesarian pro-magistrate able to sustain a semblance of order in Spain during the forties.[93] Despite Lepidus' best efforts to bring the neighbouring province into line, calamity, although reduced, still ensued.

So while it is clear that the editor of the *Bellum Alexandrinum* found much to be admired in Lepidus' decisive handling of a state of civil dissension through the prioritisation of negotiation and non-violence, the degree to which this model of leadership could be viewed as a success remains ambiguous. As a response to certain kinds of individual—the tyrannical governor and foreign king—some of the deficiencies are clear. Cassius is depicted in extended deliberation over not only his acceptance of Lepidus' demands but the very acknowledgement of him as a trustworthy arbiter-mediator. The result is that Cassius only capitulates after he has mentally exhausted all alternative courses of action. Upon request, as part of the peace agreement, Lepidus concedes that Cassius be allowed to leave freely and without penalty. This kind of clemency echoes the publicised practice of Caesar, and within the narrative sharply contrasts Cassius' earlier perversion of the virtue with a decision to 'forgive' his own would-be assassins for monetary gain.[94] The uncomfortable fact is that this false clemency of Cassius' holds, whereas Lepidus' genuine offer for the sake of *pax* succumbs quickly and unexpectedly to the infidelity of others. Further violence may have been swiftly circumvented, but the narrative shifts the ultimate resolution of hostilities outside of the battlefield and outside of Lepidus' control. In the end, Cassius' flight and determined avoidance of Lepidus, Marcellus and

[92] OLD s.v. *indignatio* 1.
[93] Welch (1995), 450 n.39, 452.
[94] *BAlex*. 55. Men slated for execution were given the chance to buy their freedom. See Müller (2021), 126, on the comparison with Caesar's *clementia*.

Cassius' successor Trebonius, sees him punished by no man or law, but the unpredictable forces of the natural world.[95] It is clear Lepidus' earlier efforts served only as a mock closure. The section in Spain concludes with Cassius deciding that he faced no greater risk setting out in the storm than he would in the hands of those pursing him.

Demersa nave periit. With very little flourish his life is brought to an end. In reality, the compact depiction of Cassius' defeat, flight, and demise likely obscures a more formal removal from the province, facilitated by Lepidus, and one that involved the organisation and housing of troops, as well as the need for firm oversight of Marcellus.[96] The conscious move to minimise the ongoing role of Lepidus and refocus on Cassius—his humiliation through revolt under his leadership and his apparent greed in seeking to escape with the earnings of his provincial mismanagement intact—effectively undercuts any acclaim for the avoidance of violence and the preservation of life. While the readers are encouraged to read Lepidus' attitudes and actions in a positive light, acknowledgment of their cumulative impact remains muted, with minimal effort taken to situate them explicitly within the broader context of the civil war. No space is made to mention his triumph.[97]

Unlike the scenes of relief and celebration captured in stirring detail in Caesar's account discussed earlier in the chapter, the narrative of the *Bellum Alexandrinum* remains glaringly silent on this front. The omission is striking given the origins of hostilities were so deeply rooted in the emotionally charged wills of the troops and provincials.[98] The notably vocal articulation of community expectations steadily diminishes toward the final sections. Lepidus is not seen directly interacting with them at all, as the report shifts to focus exclusively on the cast of commanders and their attempts to negotiate their positions in respect to one another. Even at the cessation of conflict, its practical dismantling, and the subsequent death of the primary offending individual, readers are afforded no insight into the broader emotional landscape of those involved. Likewise, although Lepidus is portrayed as preserving lives and encouraging reconciliation, his underlying motivations remain clouded by a persistent shadow of apathy. Strict impartiality, while understood in this context as a virtue, does undercut a leader's ability to foster a strongly charismatic portrait. 'Charismatic authority', after all, is not a personal

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[95] *BAlex*. 64.
[96] Welch (1995), 452. The fate of Bogud and Thorius is not mentioned, nor explicitly the ramifications for Marcellus, of which see n.88 above.
[97] Although constraints of the genre, rather than deliberate neglect, may have influenced this outcome.
[98] *BAlex*. 58-59.

quality but a relational construct enabled by the willingness of people to follow a leader.[99] Outside of traditional military engagement, the role of this type of charisma is difficult to pin down. For an individual actively avoiding combat and seeking peace, the need to inspire broad-based *loyalty* is not a critical factor of their success. Subordinates are required to be disciplined, but there is a distinct shift when the expectation does not include regularly risking one's life. There is no sense that Lepidus is attempting to balance the two, and his policy of mediation in response to conflict appears to be his primary pursuit. The result is a very solitary picture of a leader. The silencing of everyone around him is troubling. This hints at a failure to tackle directly the concerns of the now-silent parties, fostering the impression that no secure resolution of the root causes of civil dissension was achieved, at least not through mediation. Alternatively, the active repression of these issues in the penultimate moments of the narrative may reflect a broader disillusionment with their perceived significance, particularly when more pragmatic measures are employed to resolve the crisis.

Together, these silences, omissions, and mock closures become deliberate instruments of ambiguity. The mood reflects the cascade of tensions laid bare at the time of publication: a mixture of indignation, fear and hope. Portraits of infallibility are proffered up for reexamination and the promise of peace treated with caution.[100] Even with its hints of optimism, uncertainty cannot help but pervade the report. With the threat of renewed civil strife, belief in the ability to securely delineate periods of conflict and post-conflict was waning. Many would be unsure about the ability of any leadership type to bring a definitive end to civil war. The outlook would have been bleak, and faith in modes of reconciliation such as Cicero's amnesty for the 'tyrannicides' were being tested to the extreme.[101] So despite the promotion of Lepidus' behaviour as an appropriate response to conflict the visible threads of skepticism make it difficult to determine how ordinary Romans perceived the strategy's overall success in dealing with civil war.

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[99] Weber (1980), 140-148, with discussion by Flaig (2011), 72-76, situating the idea within the Roman political systems ability to accomodate the 'great man'.

[100] Caesar's choice of Cassius certainly proved ill-advised.

[101] It must be assumed that Lepidus' truce entailed, at least in part, a tacit agreement to overlook the transgressions of the other.

Peace as Victory

> ...eius opera, virtute, consilio singularique clementia et mansuetudine bellum acerbissimum civile <s>it restinctum...senatum populumque Romanum pro maximis plurimisque in rem publicam M. Lepidi meritis magnam spem in eius virtute, auctoritate, felicitate re<ponere> oti, pacis, concordiae, libertatis...
>
> ...by his activity, courage, judgment, outstanding clemency, and gentle dealing a most bitter civil war has been extinguished...the senate and people of Rome, conscious of Marcus Lepidus' very great and very numerous services to the Republic, place high hope for peace, tranquillity, concord, and liberty in his courage, authority, and good fortune...
>
> Cic. *Phil.* 5.40-41[102]

Lepidus' first triumph may have been extraordinary, but it was not a singular distinction during his career. Nor was it the only time his flair for non-violent interventions was brought to the public's attention. Amid fears over who stood to gain most from Sextus Pompeius' advancement in Spain following the Ides, Lepidus succeeded in securing a peace settlement toward the end of the year.[103] In recognition of his efforts, Antonius proposed a *supplicatio,* which was subsequently ratified by the senate.[104] Increasingly elaborate proposals were to follow, including a triumph voted *in absentia* and the erection of a gilt equestrian statue.[105] In the wake of Caesar's death, the meaning and viability of peace, *pax*, as a workable solution to Rome's political turmoil had become an increasingly central concern, ultimately sparking extensive and often fierce debate.[106] Known to be manipulated for the purposes of political expediency, the term *pax* alone was insufficient to signify a positive outcome or coherent goal. Official pronouncements of praise and honours could help shape public sentiment and offer a framework for interpreting moral ambiguities; yet the conferral of such distinctions was itself subject to contestation.[107]

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[102] trans. Shackleton Bailey (2010a).

[103] For Sextus' political position during this time, see Welch (2012), 130-136.

[104] Cic. *Phil.* 3.20-24.

[105] Cic. *Phil.* 5.40-41, 13.7-9, Vell. Pat. 2.67.4, App. *B Civ*. 4.31. For inscriptional evidence see Degrassi (1947), 86-87, 567 and 342-343 (Fast Barb.). Lepidus at the time was proconsul of Narbonese Gaul and Nearer Spain.

[106] For a detailed exploration of the shifting rhetorical value of *pax*, what it means and how it can be achieved, in particular alongside themes of war and victory, see especially Cornwell (2017), but also (2024) and (2020b).

[107] Brutus, for example, criticises Cicero's lack of restraint in bestowing honours, see Cic. *Ad Brut.* 1.4a [SB 11] and 1.15.3 [SB 23]. Hall (2002), 295, observes that pronouncements of this kind were essential in distinguishing 'good' from 'bad' when constitutionals lines were being blurred. Hölscher (2025), 354, notes the importance of political monuments in a similar vein.

The skill demanded of Lepidus should not be underestimated. Brutus and Cassius were consolidating their power in the East, so Sextus' decision at this precise moment to come to terms with those in charge at Rome is particularly notable.[108] The settlement itself resulted in Sextus relinquishing several, though not all, of his legions, along with two provinces; he was also officially repatriated.[109] This was a live situation, on centre stage, the consequences of which would be sweeping. The practical outcomes were one thing, but it is the response to the *kind* of individual capable of achieving them which is even more instructive in refining our understanding of the civil war leader. Cicero brings these ideas vividly to life, with a fervour not dissimilar to his speech for Pompeius, in his *Fifth Philippic*. Delivered to the Senate in early 43 and later circulated in written form, in his proposal of honours for Lepidus he not only draws up a list of essential qualities but frames them specifically as deserving of admiration in civil war. The nature of the honours too, are striking, and raise compelling questions about appropriate avenues for praise while offering insight into how such expectations may have been evolving.

Cicero's effusive treatment of Lepidus is often explained away as a necessity of political expediency, that is, to keep Lepidus sated.[110] Notes of incredulity accompany what is believed to be the competitive bestowing of increasingly royal-like honours on Lepidus, with Cicero attempting to out-bid Antonius for Lepidus' loyalty.[111] Care must be taken, however, not to dismiss the lavish language as simply in pursuit of that goal, overlooking its potential to build consensus around novel yet appropriate avenues of praise for generals committed to peace. If it were not believable, it could hardly be considered politically expedient. So for his services on behalf of the *res publica* Cicero proposes the most ample honours possible. He asks of those assembled:

> Quid enim, o di immortales, admirabilius omnibus gentibus, quid optatius populo Romano accidere potuit quam, cum bellum civile maximum esset, cuius belli exitum omnes timeremus, sapientia et misericordia id potius exstingui quam armis et ferro rem in discrimen adduci?…periculosissimum civile bellum maximumque humanitate et sapientia sua M. Lepidus ad pacem concordiamque convertit…
>
> What event, by the immortal gods, could have created greater admiration among all nations and what could the Roman people more earnestly have desired to happen

[108] Welch (2012), 135-136, comments on the 'surprising' timing from Sextus' point of view.

[109] See Welch (2012), 135, and Cic. *Phil.* 5.39-40.

[110] On Cicero deploying honours as a way to encourage individuals to manifest certain approved behaviours, see for example Hall (2002), 296-7, Manuwald (2007), 283-284, Weigel (1992), 50-51, and Welch (2012), 144.

[111] Gotter (1996), 139-140.

> than the extinction of a civil war by wisdom and compassion, instead of provoking a crisis by weapons and the sword, just when that war was at its most threatening and we all dreaded its outcome?…Marcus Lepidus by his humanity and wisdom has transformed a very big and dangerous civil war into peace and concord…[112]

Two models of crisis management are situated in contrast: one predicated on weapons and violence, the other grounded in wisdom and compassion. The latter is heralded as widely approved, a move which both heightens the stakes and reassures the audience in the universality of the view. What is made clear is that Lepidus *had* a choice to make, standing at a crossroads he had the capacity and the resources to to engage in conflict if he chose. The language emphatically engages with extreme absolutes, further heightening the irrevocability of Lepidus' decision by invoking the prospect of complete destruction, where existence itself hangs in the balance.[113] His success not only managed to subdue the community's fears rather than provoke them, but exemplified a viable means of *obliterating* civil war, of *transforming* its remnants into a state of peace and concord. Cicero was well acquainted with lauding victory achieved without bloodshed, of prioritising reconciliation and concord. He famously praised himself for resolving the situation with Catiline without recourse to military force, and operating solely within his civilian capacity as consul.[114] It is significant that language familiar in a military context—*dux*, *imperator*, *vinco*, *sedo*—was found either necessary or unavoidable in an attempt to articulate his achievements. In both his *Catilinarian Orations* and *De Imperio Cn. Pompei*, delivered a few years earlier, Cicero demonstrates a growing tendency to hybridise language—blending civic, military, and moral registers—to emphasise the extraordinary qualities of certain individuals and their achievements.

But the cultural and emotional tone of the sixties was a very different beast. By the forties, and the months following Caesar's assassination, leading roles and responsibilities had not only become increasingly blurred but were also open to active reinterpretation. Firmer statements designating good from bad behaviour became increasingly necessary. Amid the tangle of competing agendas and ideologies it was also important to make the pursual of non-violent achievements, such as peace treaties and reconciliations, desirable for those willing to

112 Cic. *Phil.* 5.39-40, trans. Shackleton Bailey (2010a). On amending the text to supply *misericordia*, see Manuwald (2007), 687.

113 For the sense of 'obliteration' or 'annihilation', OLD s.v. *exstinguo* 3. The subsequent section reinforces the idea through language of destruction and extinguishment, OLD s.v. *restinguo* 2b. *Discrimen* in once sense denotes a separating line or space, but also a critical point of decision or 'a situation in which the safety or existence of a thing is at stake', OLD s.v. *discrimen* 1, 4, 5. For Cicero's use of the 'rhetoric of crisis' to depict the *res publica* on the 'brink of destruction' in order to prompt immediate action, see Hall (2002), 283-287.

114 Cic. *Cat.* 2.28, 3.23-26.

orchestrate them, even if Cicero qualified such praise with the caveat that it applied only to eminent individuals of the right sort. In this discrete field of expertise—that is, preserving Pompeius and his sons—Cicero directly and favourably contrasts Lepidus' competence with Caesar's lack thereof.[115] In doing so, he also confronts the apparent spuriousness of Caesar's *clementia* by highlighting Lepidus' singular (*singularis*) and demonstrably effective accomplishment.[116] Importantly, this is not an endorsement for Lepidus to revive a role similar to Caesar. Cicero is explicit regarding Lepidus' hatred of *servitus* and desire for *libertas*, citing his negative response to the attempted crowning of Caesar at the Lupercalia.[117]

Key characteristics of the ideal civil war leader are laid out in Cicero's proposal to the Senate:

> Cum a M. Lepido imperatore, pontifice maximo, saepe numero res <publica> et bene et feliciter gesta sit, populusque Romanus intellexerit ei dominatum regium maxime displicere, cumque eius opera, virtute, consilio singularique clementia et mansuetudine bellum acerbissimum civile <s>it restinctum, Sextusque Pompeius Cn. f. Magnus huius ordinis auctoritate ab armis discesserit et a M. Lepido imperatore, pontifice maximo, summa senatus populique Romani voluntate civitati restitutus sit, senatum populumque Romanum pro maximis plurimisque in rem publicam M. Lepidi meritis magnam spem in eius virtute, auctoritate, felicitate re<ponere> oti, pacis, concordiae, libertatis, eiusque in rem publicam meritorum senatum populumque Romanum memorem fore, eique statuam equestrem inauratam in rostris aut quo alio loco in foro vellet ex huius ordinis sententia statui placere.
>
> Whereas Marcus Lepidus, imperator, pontifex maximus, has on many occasions well and successfully conducted the affairs of the Republic, and the Roman people has perceived that monarchical rule is strongly repugnant to him; and whereas by his activity, courage, judgment, outstanding clemency, and gentle dealing a most bitter civil war has been extinguished, and Sextus Pompeius Magnus, son of Gnaeus, has laid down his arms by the authority of this body and been restored to the community by Marcus Lepidus, imperator, pontifex maximus, with the wholehearted endorsement of the senate and people of Rome: that the senate and people of Rome, conscious of Marcus Lepidus' very great and very numerous services to the Republic, place high hope for peace, tranquillity, concord, and liberty in his courage, authority, and good fortune; and that the senate and people of Rome will be mindful of his outstanding services to the Republic; and that it pleases the senate that by the decision of this body a gilt equestrian statue to him be placed on the Rostra or in any other position in the Forum which he may choose.[118]

To *sapientia*, *misericordia*, *humanitas*, and an earlier *moderatio* attached to his immediate response following Caesar's death, Cicero adds *opera* (devotion), *virtus* (courage), *consilium*

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[115] Cic. *Phil.* 5.39.

[116] Cic. *Phil.* 5.39-40. Sextus would forever be a *clarissimum monumentum clementiae suae* [Lepidus']. For *clementia* within the wording of Cicero's proposal see below.

[117] Cic. *Phil.* 5.38. Lepidus' response at the Lupercalia will be discussed in greater detail in the following chapter.

[118] Cic. *Phil.* 5.40-41, trans. Shackleton Bailey (2010a).

(judgement), *clementia* (clemency), and *mansuetudo* (gentle dealing).[119] This barrage of qualities largely reinforces ground covered previously by Cicero and works to further normalise the appropriateness of moral virtues for generals negotiating civil strife. Nevertheless, and further to the implicit caveats already mentioned, the integration of these qualities still find themselves struggling to contend with traditionally martial ones. In expressing his hopes for the future, Cicero reverts to the later—*virtus*, *auctoritas*, and *felicitas*—subtly alerting his audience to the possibility that the policy of non-violence and negotiation, for which Lepidus is held up as exemplary, may not suffice on its own to secure the lofty ideals of tranquillity, peace, concord, and liberty.[120] This tension is further complicated by the means through which Cicero proposes to commemorate Lepidus' achievement.

Statues need not accompany the award of a triumph. This was a deliberate and highly visual way to signal both the honouree's claim to represent the best interests of the *res publica* and reinforce the sole authority of the Senate in the face of individuals vying for power.[121] The case of Lepidus again hovers around the edges of expectation. Just as his triumphal honours were a non-customary response, so too was the gilt equestrian statue on the Rostra an intriguing manifestation of victory won without (or minimal) arms. Despite its small literary and non-existent physical footprint, this was a significant development.[122] In 158 censors had removed all privately erected civic statues from the forum, keeping only those passed by resolution of the People or the Senate.[123] This purge, which Pliny linked to the curbing of political ambition, would have radically altered the way the urban population perceived the remaining statues, certainly heightening their monumental impact.[124] Not least because new statues of this type were rare. This was an honour which, according to Velleius Paterculus, had been bestowed upon only a handful of individuals over the course of three hundred years, the first of whom was Sulla.[125] This would make Lepidus' honour approximately the fourth of these more recent additions. While the visual presence of his family had been a mainstay in the forum for many years, the honour more closely matched that of his famous ancestor, M. Aemilius Lepidus,

[119] For *moderatio* see Cic. *Phil.* 5.38.

[120] Manuwald (2007), 686, also notes tension with Cicero's current recommendation to pursue arms.

[121] Wallace-Hadrill (1990), 164-166 and Hölscher (2025), 353-354. Cicero (*Phil.* 5.41) emphasises that this is the first such honour granted by a senate acting *soluto et libero*.

[122] Again too, even his biographers do not see fit to pause on its significance, see Weigel (1992), 51, 54 and Allély (2004), 87, 90.

[123] Wallace-Hadrill (1990), 165, sees this event as a reassertion of 'the sovereignty of the people and the common interest in the face of the greed and arrogance of individuals'.

[124] Plin. *HN* 34.30, with Russell (2016), 87-88.

[125] Vell. Pat. 2.61.3.

whose Senate-voted equestrian statue on the Capitoline for his youthful heroics had already been celebrated on the coinage minted by Lepidus in 61.[126] Moreover, Cicero's proposal that the statue be plated in gold represents a relatively rare distinction, one that, in the case of equestrian statues, followed the innovation of Sulla.[127] Typically in bronze or, less frequently, marble, a gilded statue by contrast conveyed elevated social standing and offered a markedly more striking visual presence.[128]

The proposed location was key—enhanced further by the compliment of alternative choice.[129] The Rostra itself, however, was the superior choice. Visibly preeminent, and in one of the most highly trafficked areas in the city, it was a location which could inspire envy.[130] It was also a politically and emotionally charged place. On the one hand, it represented a 'permeable and shifting' boundary, an active threshold between Senate and and People, on the other, it was (and was soon to become again), a focal point for memories of post-war terror and proscriptions, a place where blood flowed, with Roman heads on display.[131] Already present on the Rostra were the recently reinstated equestrian statues of Pompeius Magnus and Sulla Felix, alongside what was likely an equestrian statue of Julius Caesar.[132] In another hopeful bid, a statue of the Young Caesar would be incoming. It is here that Lepidus' statue was placed, among a gallery of leadership potential cut short. The proximity of figures all intimately tied to civil war would undoubtedly ignite a dense web of associations, difficult to disentangle and harder still to ignore. The spectre of despotism looms here. The legacies of

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[126] His family's presence in the forum is discussed in the following chapter. See Weigel (1992), 7-10, 51, for a slightly belaboured point on the impact of Lepidus' great-grandfather's example on his conduct; also Allély (2004), 90, on the significance of recalling this earlier statue. For the deed commemorated by the statue see Val. Max. 3.1.1, and RRC 419/1 for Lepidus' commemorative coinage.

[127] Sulla's was the first gilt equestrian statue according to Cicero (*Phil.* 9.13). Some like Zanker (1988), 4-6 and Stein-Hölkeskamp (2016), 219-220, view this statue as a 'turning point', a monument of exceptional and original nature, others, such as Bustany-Leca (2019), acknowledge a novel combination of elements but do not imagine the statue to be as transgressive as some claim.

[128] For a discussion on material selection see Bergemann (1990), 20-22. cf. Cicero's proposal (*Phil.* 9.13) to commemorate the death of his friend Servius Sulpicius with a bronze statue, on foot, in order to reflect the honouree's modesty.

[129] On the honour in self-selecting a location, see Plin. *HN* 34.25. On the importance of statue placement in public space and the webs of association in the forum, see Bergemann (1990), 15-20, Tanner (2000), 25-26, Russell (2016), 58, 62-63, Stein-Hölkeskamp (2016), 217-219, Hölkeskamp (2016), 169-175, and Hölscher (2025), 353; also Cic. *Deiot.* 34.

[130] Cic. *Deiot.* 34.

[131] On the significance of the threshold and the contest over contional space, see Morstein-Marx (2004), 54-57, and 48-50 for a brief history of statues on the Rostra and the rebuilds of the structure itself. See Russell (2023), on the impact of civil war on civic space, and esp. 125-127 on the Rostra.

[132] A catalogue of which may be found in Bergemann (1990), 159 (Sulla), 160 (Caesar and Pompeius), and 161-163 (Young Caesar).

both Sulla and Caesar had long been entangled with language of this kind, and even Pompeius had not escaped similar criticisms from Cicero.[133] These were all controversial figures who in their own ways fuelled civic frictions. Lepidus' attitudes and actions were, in contrast, being framed as the remedy for such frictions, promoting non-violence at *all* stages of conflict. In particular, his strategy of reconciliation dissolved in a very specific sense the line between conflict and post-conflict, which in turn diminished the concern over the possibility of post-war terror.

Holding honourees to these standards was also an important incentive. Honorific portraiture held a special dual role: it monumentalised praise, but also functioned as a 'gift' that activated expectations of reciprocal exchange.[134] Recent history had shown just how seriously this reciprocity was perceived but also the confusion it could generate. The communicative potential of these material objects was undeniably powerful. This was made starkly apparent when the original statues of Sulla and Pompeius were violently destroyed by the community—an act of symbolic erasure intended to appease the victor, Caesar, following his reported success at Pharsalus.[135] But such action was not unanimously supported. As described by Dio, the crowd was in a state of hesitancy and distress, uncertain of the appropriate or expected behaviour and anxious about the potential consequences should the reports prove false. Eventually, these statues were reinstated by Caesar. Most often this episode and its outcome are recalled during more favorable assessments of Caesar's character, celebrating his *moderatio* and *clementia*, or in variance to Sulla's cruelty. In such readings, the act is framed as an atoning restoration, even a symbolic resurrection.[136] Communication through these monuments was possible across the political spectrum. Importantly, they presented an opportunity to express support or discontent of leaders both active and consigned to memory. Despite Cicero's favorable language the resonances of these destructive actions must cast a shadow of warning over honours of this kind.

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[133] In mid-December of 50 Cicero feared a despot regardless of the victor (*Att.* 7.5.4 [SB 128]). No such aspirations are attributed to Pompeius in the current context. The preceding section (*Phil.* 5.39) describes him as *imperi[o] populi Romani lumen*, while in the forthcoming sections (*Phil.* 5.43-4), the young Caesar is compared favourably to him, despite his contribution to Sulla's kingly rule (*regnare*).

[134] On honorific portraiture as both 'token' and 'gift' and the expectations generated by this exchange relationship see Tanner (2000), 26, 34.

[135] Plut. *Vit. Caes.* 57.4, *Cic.* 40.4, Suet. *Iul.* 75.4, Cass. Dio 42.18.2.

[136] Plut. *Vit. Caes.* 57.4, *Cic.* 40.4. Suet. *Iul.* 75.1-4, Cass. Dio 43.49.2-50.2.

It is certainly possible to read something more sinister or threatening in Cicero's proposal. The hope for the future embedded into the honour's wording is anything but straightforward, paradoxically marked by both hollowness and sincerity. The viability of non-violence to end civil war is also pulled in different directions. The use of typically martial honours as a framework for praise does help in imposing a sense of finality but it also problematises the very notion of what a general ought to be. This tension seems intrinsic to the idea of the ideal civil war leader—a concept inherently unstable, destined to remain in flux. It offers a lens through which to probe at ambiguities, especially when confronted with figures who resist easy categorisation, that compress elements of the statesman and the general without necessarily being a shining example of either. What constituted 'victory' also gets caught somewhere in the middle, but the spectacle of the triumph and monumentality of the equestrian statue must have impressed on regular citizens that victory could be achieved by avoiding citizen bloodshed. And yet these tokens of praise, meant as celebrations of peace and reconciliation, must constantly battle against an instinct to externalise the divide.[137] Each one of Lepidus' honours is to some degree transgressive, claiming victory optimistically, but perhaps too soon. Strategies of non-violence compress the space between conflict and post-conflict, but perhaps too abruptly to allow the proper time to process all the horrors which came before. Transgression though was quickly becoming the new norm, the intentional disruption of boundaries a new end in and of itself, a new measure of 'greatness'.[138]

In the end, Lepidus' statue had a short life. A few months later, it was dismantled not by an emotional mob, but, in an act of repudiation by the Senate upon declaring Lepidus a *hostis*.[139]

* * *

> Ἀγαθῇ τύχῃ προειρήσθω πᾶσι καὶ πάσαις θύειν καὶ εὐωχεῖσθαι τὴν ἡμέραν τὴν παροῦσαν· ὃς δ' ἂν μὴ φαίνηται ταῦτα ποιῶν; ἐν τοῖς προγεγραμμένοις ἔσται.
>
> "To good fortune! Let it be proclaimed to all men and women that they celebrate this day with sacrifices and feasting. Anyone seen not doing this will be put on the list of the proscribed."[140]

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[137] This idea is indebted to the reflections in Lowrie and Vinken (2022), 1-29.

[138] Hölscher (2025), 368, where the pithy observation is also made: 'Norms and laws set limits; overstepping them signified a triumph.'

[139] Cic. *Ad Brut.* 1.15.9 [SB 23] and Cass. Dio 46.51.4.

[140] App. *B Civ.* 4.31, trans. McGing (2020).

Lepidus did not celebrate his second triumph until after the formation of the triumvirate. The legacy of this unusual procession is resoundingly negative. If we are to trust Appian's record of Lepidus' own edict, it is not hard to imagine why.[141] The insidious threat of such arbitrary use of power, could not be further removed from the picture of non-violence and reconciliation explored above. On the contrary, the message of peace as victory has been disfigured and weaponised in pursuit of other ends. Far from alleviating fear, Lepidus harnesses it in order to secure love and respect—a tyrant's familiar paradox. Appian knows better, for this can inspire nothing but a simulacrum, the outward appearance of joy masking a deep hostility.[142]

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[141] Gowing (1992a), 134, notes that the triumph and this edict form 'the centrepiece of his proscription narrative'. A soldier's pun recorded in Velleius (2.67.4) on Lepidus' proscription of his brother joins the subtle chorus of dismay.

[142] App. *B Civ.* 4.31: παραπεμπόντων αὐτὸν ἁπάντων μετὰ σχήματος ἱλαροῦ καὶ γνώμης δυσμενοῦς.

3

Working with Tyrants and Aspiring Autocrats

Navigating power, proximity, and community expectations

…se avertit gemituque et maestitia declaravit quantum haberet odium servitutis, quam populum Romanum liberum cuperet, quam illa quae tulerat temporum magis necessitate quam iudicio tulisset.

…Lepidus turned away and declared by a groan and a sad countenance how much he hated slavery and desired the Roman people to be free, how his tolerance of what he had tolerated had been due to the necessity of the times rather than his own choice.

Cic. *Phil.* 5.38[1]

Collaboration or resistance. The experience of civil war at all levels was shaped by this relentless quandary—even if the luxury of unimpeded choice was at times snatched away. For a rare few, as we have seen, a kind of deferral was possible, a neutrality that demanded its own sacrifices and difficulties. Both in the midsts of chaos and moments of calm these choices situated individuals and groups on the rapidly evolving moral landscape of the times. Close attention was paid to the decisions of others and a process of mapping, (re)configuration, and prediction was essential to survival. The slipperiness of this task was glaringly evident in a

[1] trans. Shackleton Bailey (2010a).

community where the ideal of consensus itself was being challenged, where an assessment of behaviour could take on a radically different cast in light of some contestable fundamental assumptions. Since men like Marius, Sulla, and Cinna uncertainties had lingered: what were the qualities that distinguish a hero from a despot? And by extension: how should other leading figures be expected to respond?

Tales of the proscriptions in particular began to reduplicate the concern over collaboration versus resistance onto a more intimate setting: the household or familial unit.[2] Daring and often absurd stories of death and escape were meant to entertain, as much as lament, the disintegration of traditional Roman values. These were stories of loyalty and betrayal in a scheme where proscription (and collaboration with its demands) was uncontroversially bad.[3] But before this, men of rank and status had to carefully negotiate the return of seemingly one-man rule. As a close supporter, and on a number of occasions, colleague of Caesar, we might expect Lepidus' position to be comparably clear-cut. Yet a number of additional pressures exerted—at times divergent—forces on expectations of his behaviour. I contend that these, which included familial legacy and his position as *magister equitum*, should be more seriously considered when evaluating the level of scrutiny he later faced. These glimpses are then followed by a close examination of the accounts of Cicero and Nicolaus of Damascus on Lepidus' behaviour at the Lupercalia when Antonius presented Caesar with a diadem. This episode, which in hindsight became increasingly important for understanding popular reaction to Caesar, provides exciting insights into the perceived need to renegotiate Lepidus' relationship to notions of autocracy and the *res publica*, when the threat of further internal conflict ominously loomed.

[2] For a detailed discussion of these stories and the literature's preoccupation with the notions of collaboration and resistance, see Osgood (2006), 64-81 with further detail in (2002), 85-95.

[3] Welch (2019), 241 n.4, with references, observes how in later accounts sympathy lay overwhelmingly wth the victims.

THE RESPLENDENT AEMILII

> …si meam vitam, studium, diligentiam, fidem superioribus temporibus in re publica administranda quae Lepido digna sunt perspecta habes, ut paria aut eo ampliora reliquo tempore exspectes…
>
> …If in time past my life and endeavour, my diligence and good faith in the conduct of public affairs, have to your knowledge been worthy of the name I bear, I beg you to expect equal or greater things in time to come…
>
> Lepidus writing to Cicero, Cic. *Fam.* 10.34a.2 [SB 400][4]

Lepidus had much to answer for. Far more than is typically acknowledged by scholars of this period. Prior to taking up Caesar's cause, the fabric of Lepidus' (and his elder brother Paullus') social and political reality, had, like many others been caught in the snarls of past civic upheaval. Yet the stakes were higher for these men. As members of a prestigious patrician clan who traced their history to the very foundation of the city, eyes and ears were trained to observe their behaviour and compare their achievements to the outstanding members of their family worthy of remembrance.[5] The epigraph of this section demonstrates just how sensitive Lepidus was to this burden, recalling his family—and more specifically the Lepidi—at a politically fragile moment in late May 43, in order to anchor his attitude firmly within traditional rather than disruptive political norms.[6]

The Aemilii were deeply inscribed into the landscape of Rome, with a dominating presence in the Forum and further building-works and dedications throughout the city and its surrounds. Among these included the Basilica Aemilia and Paulli, a statue on the Capitol, a cluster of monuments on the Campus Martius meriting the long-lasting toponym *Aemiliana*, major roads, and the city's first stone bridge.[7] Such splendour could extend to the *domus* as well. The grandeur of the elder Marcus Aemilius Lepidus' home was a particularly memorable specimen, once considered the finest in Rome.[8] While this was permitted to fade from memory, his

[4] trans. Shackleton Bailey (2001).

[5] For a history of the Aemilian clan see Wiseman (1998), Syme (2016), Weigel (1992), 5-19, and Allély (2004), 15-29.

[6] Shackleton Bailey (1977), 540, notes Lepidus' reference to an objective standard.

[7] For further details and references see especially Wiseman (1998), 112-120, Russell (2016), 92-95, 113-114, Freyberger (2016), and Cadario (2010). The ambitious monumental encircling of the Forum by the Aemilii (and through Paullus' efforts in particular) would rival Caesar's efforts and provide a precedent for Augustus; Wiseman (1998), 110.

[8] Plin. *HN* 36.109-110. Although not without critique, see *HN* 36.49. Elsewhere, Pliny (*HN* 35.12) notes the installation of portrait-shields both in his house and on the Basilica Aemilia, which as Russell (2016), 93-95 emphasises, carefully corresponds public and private space to elevate power and prestige; see also Cadario (2010), 60 and Flower (1996), 75-76. Little is known of our Lepidus' house except that his *imagines* were destroyed when as interrex in 52 his house was besieged, see Cic. *Mil.* 13, and Asc. *Mil.* 33C, 43C with Flower (1996), 194-195, and commentary at Lewis (2007), 238, 248-249.

restoration of the Basilica Aemilia would continue to be celebrated, most notably by his son on coinage issued as mint official in 61.[9] Meanwhile, the monuments surrounding the Forum were dutifully maintained, and in some cases newly constructed, by Paullus.[10] The distinctive *imagines clipeatae* of the Basilica Aemilia, which depicted on the reverse of Lepidus' denarii together with the remaining coins he issued and those of Paullus in 62, both celebrating exemplary ancestors, intended to remind a wide audience of the singular prestige of the Aemilian *gens.*[11] These interventions across both the physical and mental landscapes worked diligently to amplify, and as we will see, mitigate, elements of their family's established contribution to Rome, and indeed to Italy.

One immediate family member in particular needed to be taken delicately into account: the elder Lepidus. The man whose house also adorned with *imagines clipeatae* was the envy of all, rallied what ultimately became violent expressions of political discontent as a direct response to settlement of Sulla.[12] In the end he died ignominiously, in Sardinia, after being declared a *hostis*. The fallout for his family and supporters has only more recently been considered by scholarship in earnest.[13] Shrewd strategies were paramount in responding to the interruption of familial memory cultures, a by-product of being associated with the losing side of civil war.[14] Prominent families attached to the events of 78-79, the so-called *Lepidani* (including, among others, the Aemilii and Junii Bruti), worked aggressively to reintegrate themselves into Roman communal memory by parading their famous ancestors—the Aemilii, 'almost to the point of overkill', by the reckoning of some.[15] If the intensity of this approach reveals anything, it is that the memory of the elder Lepidus and his disruptive stance against Sullan-like power, remained a charged issue requiring *continual* intervention to reconcile it with the current political climate. Sometimes the facade faltered. Well into the forties, as tensions between the

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[9] RRC 419/3a-b. Other years for Lepidus' monyership have been proposed, see Evans (1990), 103 with n.4, and Burden-Strevens (2022), 108.

[10] See Wiseman (1998) on the difficulties surrounding the identification of the various building remains and their correlation with the literary evidence; also, Freyberger (2016).

[11] RRC 415, 419/1-3 with Crawford (1974), 441, 443-444. For the importance of coinage in political messaging, particularly during civil wars, see recently Laignoux (2020), with further references. Burden-Strevens (2022), explores how the post of *triumvir monetalis* could provide an opportunity for young magistrates to exert political leadership, see esp. 103-108 on Lepidus' tenure.

[12] A fuller discussion of these events will follow in the next chapter.

[13] In general, the series of events once dismissed as the tantrum of a single troublemaker are now receiving more serious scholarly consideration as expressions of wider discontent within the Republic. See following chapter for references.

[14] Osgood and Niederwieser (2020), 170.

[15] Osgood and Niederwieser (2020), *passim* esp. 173-176. cf. Evans (1990), 104-105, on Lepidus and Paullus' monyerships, connecting these strategies explicitly to career development.

senate and Antonius were escalating, Cicero's *Thirteenth Philippic* makes subtle (non)reference to the man to situate Lepidus' own behaviour.[16] Sallust, writing in the thirties, breathed new life into this controversial figure, significantly framing his speech as the opening set-piece in his ambitious *Historiae*.

Familial legacy introduced yet another significant thread, one which likewise necessitated careful reconciliation with the charged rhetoric of the day. The Aemilii, historically, were obsessed with kings.[17] This hallmark embedded itself within their self-representation, building projects, and contributions to Rome. A number of examples can be cited to this end. The following instances, notably, all appeared in one guise or another on the coinage minted by or on behalf of Lepidus (or his brother), spanning his career from moneyer to triumvir and thereby reinforcing their enduring relevance. The innovative shielded basilica, briefly noted above and striking in its own right with prominent images of Aemilian ancestors, exploited spatial and architectural resonances with the adjacent Regia, itself a building imbued with strong kingly associations. The interplay was such that the basilica might even be considered an extension of it.[18] Next, was a very specific version of the mytho-historical founding of Rome, notably evoked twice on Lepidus' coinage through the Vestal Aemilia: first, while *triumvir monetalis* and then again on the splendid gold triumviral issue, which saw each triumvir pair his own portrait with that of a famous ancestor.[19] This version, according to Plutarch, claimed an Aemilia, daughter of Aeneas and Lavinia, as the mother of the first king of Rome, Romulus.[20] Finally, the Aemilii sought to commemorate a diverse range of intimate and influential relationships with foreign kings, Lepidus through allusions to his homonymous great grandfather—twice consul, *pontifex maximus*, censor, and *princeps senatus*—and Paullus to the illustrious L. Aemilius Paullus—twice consul and censor.[21] The former had been entrusted by the Senate to act as guardian and tutor for young Ptolemy V Epiphanes in Alexandria; the latter was credited with concluding the Third Macedonian War, which resulted in the defeat and humiliation of king Perseus and the abolition of monarchy in a region that had once been ruled by dominating figures such as Alexander the Great.

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[16] This, and the following point, will be explored in chapter four.

[17] Wiseman (1998), 113.

[18] Wiseman (1998), 108, 113. RRC 419/3.

[19] RRC 419/3 and 494/1. Antonius and the Young Caesar paired themselves with Hercules and Aeneas respectively; see RRC 494/2a-b and 3a-b.

[20] Plut. *Vit. Rom.* 2.3.

[21] RRC 415/1 and 419/2, with commentary and references at Crawford (1974), 441, 444.

Each connection elevated the prestige of the family, reminding the community of their habitual ability to contribute meaningfully to the glory of the *res publica*. Most of these resonances detail a positive, or at least, constructive relationship with sole rulers, particularly when focused inward on Rome's early history. Especially in both the maternal and tutor figures there is a suggestive gesture toward nurture and guidance, a means of influencing kings in Rome's best interest. In contrast, the military tone of Paullus' issue serves as a reminder of the family's connection to the dismantling of monarchical regimes of the calibre of those descending from Alexander the Great.[22] The outline of this idea may carry further weight, it has been suggested that the head of Concordia on the obverse signalled support for Cicero's own decisive measures to dismantle the late Catiline's support base.[23] Some of these lines are tenuous and highly subjective, as Roman attitude to kingship, especially interest in the glamour of foreign kings, remained ambivalent.[24] Yet they remain illustrative, not only of the multiple associations linking Lepidus to one-man rule, but also of the varied responses such associations elicited.

By acknowledging this confluence of ideas which engages a spectrum from violent resistance to thoughtful collaboration, we can begin to appreciate more the thought-world within which Lepidus was operating and the tensions which might later arise when reknitting your family back into communal memory involves reminding them of your infatuation with kings.

Second only to the Dictator: Lepidus as *Magister Equitum*

> M. Aemilius Lepid(us) II mag(ister) eq(uitum) abd(icavit) ut perpet(uo?) [mag(ister) eq(uitum) fieret?–-] | quoad dict(ator) Caesar esset … M. Aemilius Lepidus [desig(natus) in perpet(uum) mag(ister) eq(uitum)]
>
> M. Aemilius Lepidus, magister equitum for the second time, abdicated so that he might become magister equitum in perpetuity | For as long as Caesar was dictator … M. Aemilius Lepidus, designated magister equitum, in perpetuity
>
> Inscription from the *Fasti Privernati*[25]

[22] Note Crawford (1974), 441, on this spurious ancestral claim.

[23] Crawford (1974), 441 and Burden-Strevens (2022), 104-105, the latter who also attributes this coin to Lepidus over his brother. On aspirations to kingship characterising the motives of some of Catiline's supporters, see for example the claim of Publius Cornelius Lentulus Sura in Cic. *Cat.* 3.9.

[24] Although more hostile interpretations were starting to be exploited in the late republic, on these trends see Rawson (1975) and Erskine (1991).

[25] Text, drawing and photographs in Zevi (2016), 292– 293, 295, trans. Jordan (2024), 132 n.75.

It was Lepidus as praetor who enabled—through some tricky political and legal manoeuvring —Caesar's first term as dictator in 49.[26] Caesar made sure to credit him, despite his acquisition of the magistracy otherwise only receiving a brief and perfunctory mention in his commentaries.[27] For Lepidus, this role evidently continued to hold symbolic weight in shaping his public image. Recent epigraphic evidence from Terracina, dated over ten years later during his tenure as triumvir, includes the title of 'praetor', even alongside a host of more prestigious magistracies and acclamations.[28] It was a critical moment that not only smoothed a path for Caesar, but also, for Lepidus, marked the beginning of Lepidus' increasing consolidation of power and prestige.[29]

Lepidus' proximity to burgeoning autocratic-like power was steadfast. By Caesar's fourth dictatorship Lepidus had been named *magister equitum*—an emergency magistracy linked to the dictatorship that provided both military and administrative (civic) auxiliaries and capable of operating with a high degree of independent power—for the second time.[30] The continuation—or perhaps more accurately, reinstatement following Caesar's abdication of his third dictatorship—of this appointment occurred during Lepidus' first term as consul in 46, when he was serving as colleague to the dictator himself.[31] This particular culmination of offices clearly suggests a strong working relationship between the two men and at the very least an acceptance on Lepidus' part of the increasing number of extraordinary offices and honours

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[26] On the introduction of legislation to allow a nomination from a praetor rather than consul, see Weigel (1992), 26-27 and Allély (2004), 41-43, with further references. Welch (1995), 448-500, emphasises Lepidus' *slick* handling of the situation.

[27] Caes. *BCiv.* 2.21.

[28] EDR174186 includes his positions as *pontifex maximus,* consul II, triumvir *iterum*, *magister equitum* III, and praetor, in addition to his three imperatorial acclamations and two triumphs. On dating the inscription to between 37-36 and the suggestive inclusion of his praetorship see Cassieri, Gregori, and Refalo-Bistagne (2019), 510-511, 514-515. More recently Gregori (2021), 10-11, has revised his original hypothesis to include the possibility of a monument erected after Lepidus' death. See also Cassieri and Gregori (2024), 298-300 in addition to the technical analysis of Arcangeli in the appendix; however, cf. n.74, where Vervaet notes preference for the original dating. Vacanti (2021) speculates as to its political value if commissioned by a descendant M.' Aemilius Lepidus under Augustus.

[29] Cass. Dio 41.36 with Welch (1995), 449.

[30] Jordan (2024), provides a compelling and comprehensive discussion on the development and perception of the *magister equitum* as an impressive magistracy that held its own *auspicia* and was endowed with consular *imperium* and *potestas*. As both the dictator's colleague and representative, the potential scope for action was wide-ranging, and one which was most fully realised during the late republic. On the nature and hierarchy of the office's power in relation to others see esp. 20-52. The discussions in Lintott (1999), 109-113, and Konrad (2022), 112-147, are still valuable; each approach the office within a more restricted framework. Some arguments are teased out and expanded in Jordan's work, other key claims are convincingly challenged.

[31] Jordan (2024), 83-88, reviews the practice of combining curule offices with that of the *magister equitum*.

being bestowed upon one man.[32] Early 44 saw Caesar taking up his fifth dictatorship after being granted the right to hold it *perpetuo*, an additional honour in an ever growing list.[33]

A recently published fragment of the *fasti* from Privernum (part of which is included in this section's epigraph) has prompted provocative speculation regarding Lepidus' tenure as *magister equitum*, namely, that it may too have been intended as a perpetual appointment. A pair of mirrored phrases records the abdication of both Caesar as dictator and Lepidus as his *magister equitum* in order that they might take up, in further suggestively mirrored phrases, the positions of *dictator perpetuo* and *magister equitum perpetuo* respectively.[34] The latter position is otherwise wholly unattested, but appears to have been intended to exist concurrently with an additional, regularly termed *magister equitum*, presumably stationed in Rome once Lepidus departed to assume his proconsular command in Gallia Narbonensis and Hispania Citerior. Reconstructions for these additional annual magistracies, attested in both this text and the *Fasti Capitolini*, also remain contentious.[35] Even without accepting such a striking development, Lepidus' occupation of this office alongside the same dictator for three consecutive and extended terms was itself unprecedented. That the appointment was competitive and merited is suggested by Pliny's record of Octavian's disappointment over Caesar's preference of Lepidus for the post— Caesar's belief in Lepidus' capacity to lead during periods of internal conflict is clear.[36]

I am convinced, however, that this novel amendment to the magistracy was indeed intended for Lepidus. The implications of such a permanent role for him would have been immense. Not only would it have irrevocably tied him to the ongoing cacophony of ideological turmoil attached to Caesar's increasing power, but it would have strengthened his connection to the familial portrait he was already promoting. It is also possible, as some have argued, that the new permanence of Lepidus' emergency position provides evidence against Caesar's ultimate aspirations of monarchy, creating instead a kind of unequal diarchy, which in turn diluted any

[32] Lepidus also presided over Caesar's election as sole consul in 45; Cass. Dio 43.33.1.

[33] See Morstein-Marx (2021), 531-539, for a recent and useful discussion of the nature and ancient impression of this title.

[34] Zevi and Cassola (2016), *passim* esp. 296-297, and Zevi (2017), *passim* esp. 11-16. Followed by Ferrary (2017), 1567-1569, Konrad (2022), 113-114, and Cassieri and Gregori (2024), 296-297. Others cast doubt on this reading of the material, see Jordan (2024), 133-134 and Licandro (2020), 340-349.

[35] Zevi (2017), 13-16, constructs a situation where only one additional individual serves, to be followed be another appointed in advance. The OCD entry for 'dictator' suggests three additional magistrates served simultaneously.

[36] Plin. *HN* 7.147.

such potential claim on Caesar's part.[37] Whatever the motivations for this appointment, it is a factor which must be taken into account when considering how Lepidus represented himself—and how others chose to represent him—following the Ides, particularly with regards to the idea of collaboration. In light of the broader arguments of this thesis, it serves as yet another example of how Lepidus stood at odds with what might be considered the regular functioning of the *res publica*.

Lepidus is overwhelmingly characterised as an innocuous vessel for Caesar's will; more generously, he occasionally surfaces as a like-minded junior colleague who shared a sense of what needed to be done. The situation on the ground was fraught, and Caesar was frequently abroad, leaving his colleague to manage affairs in Italy. Historically, the *magister equitum* was conceived as inseparable from the *dictator.* However, in a departure from the magistracy's militaristic origins, there had been a steady expansion in the scope for independent initiative in the domestic sphere, as the duties themselves became less task-oriented and more generalised.[38] The period of time over which the magistrate was left to conduct affairs alone also increased; this was a peculiar novelty of the first century. It was during this phase of development that the magistracy was redesigned as an executive office, and involved tasks ranging from the resettling of veterans, consultations with the Senate, building projects, and keeping the peace.[39] This was a significant shift from earlier, and short term, responsibilities which primarily saw the *magister equitum* operating as a lieutenant or cavalry commander in conjunction with a dictator appointed to deal with an external military threat—although some exceptions include the completion of minor administrative or ritual tasks and a few cases of civil unrest.[40] An important corrective to bear in mind is that these magistracies should not be exclusively understood as indicative of crisis.[41] Nevertheless, the mythology of their inception binds them closely to crisis and internal unrest right at the heart of republicanism itself and the founding of Rome's lauded mixed constitution.[42]

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[37] Zevi (2017), 12. Although as Jordan (2024), 3, 130, 135-136, points out, promoting appointed magistracies that existed outside the electoral *cursus* strengthened Caesar's position by enabling him to distribute such appointments as *beneficia*, while also aligning with a broader trend of magisterial regulation that served to undermine others attempting to follow in his footsteps.

[38] See n.30 above and further Jordan (2024), 67-76.

[39] Jordan (2024), 126-129, 136.

[40] Refer to Table 1 in Jordan (2024), 60, for the tasks of *magistri equitum militiae* between 437–216. Cornell (2015), 111-118, points out the issue of credibility for instances recording civil unrest and stresses the role of dictators as conciliators.

[41] Cornell (2015), 113-122.

[42] See descriptions, for example, in Livy 2.18 and Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 5.61, 63, 70-1 74-76.

Roman historiography intimately tied the genesis of this pair of magistracies to the memory of Rome's last king, the notorious L. Tarquinius Superbus. Some seven to ten years following his deposition, supporters of Tarquin and his regime became sufficiently organised to pose a viable threat to the fledgling republic. Unnervingly for many, in addition to manpower provided by various Latin cities, sympathisers punctuated the senate, and according to Livy, even the serving consuls were regarded with distrust.[43] At the same time, Sabine agitation threatened to spill over into war. Mounting anxiety in the face of political instability led to the ratification of two temporary magistracies with special executive powers, individuals who could act swiftly and directly against the perceived threats. The mythology surrounding the figure of the *magister equitum* was further enriched through a suggestive parallel which traced an antecedent in the regal position of *tribunus celerum*, a cavalry commander closely attached to the king.[44] In one version of the tradition, the last holder of this post was the famous L. Iunius Brutus, who adroitly wielded its power to summon the *comitia centuriata,* expel Tarquin, and effectively disassemble the monarchy, thus clearing the ground for the new republican form of government.[45] While the intention of this correlation sought to describe a hierarchy of power, situating the primary (*rex* or dictator) and secondary (*tribunus celerum* or *magister equitum*) individual within the community, it is worth noting the repetition of this association between a *magister equitum*-like figure and the excision of despotism. At its very core lies a duty to protect from harm and corrupting influences.

These ideas are again reinforced by another famous event of Rome's distant past. In the contested tradition of the fifth century tyrannicide C. Servilius Ahala, one version of events depicts him in his capacity as *magister equitum* slaying the would-be *rex* Sp. Maelius, a private equestrian.[46] The foreknowledge or role of the dictator regarding Ahala's actions varies across accounts.[47] Whilst the historicity of these stories is subject to debate, what is most interesting is the moment in time Romans felt the need to tell and readapt these tales. The tales themselves were products of civil war.[48] Fractious anxieties of the present sought guidance over legitimate and illegitimate behaviours and found solace in stories which could notionally claim that they

[43] Livy 2.18.4.

[44] For a discussion of the poorly-attested *tribunus celerum* see Jordan (2024), 12-17.

[45] Livy 1.59, Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom*. 4.71.6, Serv. at *Aen*. 8.646, *Dig*. 1.2.2.15; cf. Cic. *Rep*. 2.46 with Frolov (2023).

[46] Livy 4.14-15, 6.19.

[47] Either way, Jordan (2024), 68-70, emphasises how responsibility and consequence attach to Ahala.

[48] Lowrie (2010), 172, on Spurius Maelius. Lobur (2019), *passim* esp. 88-89, 98, argues that Nepos' biographical project was attempting something similar, 'retooling' the past to serve present needs.

were firmly rooted in a traditional or an uncontestably 'republican' past.[49] 'Recovering' this past provided a concrete way for the community to try and make sense of the constantly evolving discussions concerned with autocratic power, political violence, and loss of liberty. This could be especially potent in the case of highly accessible *exempla* which became available for diverse use beyond their incarnation in historiography and served as a powerful means of communication by varied members of the community. For example, Quintilian is able to observe how broad familiarity with certain historical individuals like Ahala required only an allusion to be effective in Cicero's forensic oratory.[50] Meanwhile, Marcus Brutus was able to rely on the combined symbolic potential of the likenesses of Iunius Brutus and Ahala on his coinage of the 50s.[51] Even the general public could conceivably invoke Brutus' name in graffiti to prompt the initiative of others.[52]

While the context of civil war readily encouraged multiple versions of historical *exempla* to coexist, it is generally agreed that the attribution of official public positions was a way of legitimating actions initially undertaken as *privatus*.[53] Yet even if these revisions were an anachronistic attempt to legitimise the transfer of power or extrajudicial murder, they must nevertheless have forged a strong connection between the potent rhetoric of safeguarding the *res publica* from individuals seeking to exploit it and the relatively unfamiliar (at least in practical terms) magistracy of *magister equitum*.[54] The new loci of operation within the domestic sphere is especially pertinent. For Lepidus and Antonius, it was within this realm, working remotely from their dictator, that their responsibilities expanded. Meanwhile, Lepidus' repeated, and subsequently perpetual, possession of this preeminent position no doubt strengthened his sense of ownership over the role. The successful phase of experimentation only reinforced Lepidus' own successes. Silence in the source tradition further hints at this, as Rome at least appears free of controversy and complaint during Lepidus' tenure there.

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[49] See Lobur (2019), 89 with helpful references in n.12 on the retrojection of models into myth and history.

[50] Quint. *Inst.* 5.11.15 cites Cic. *Mil.* 8.

[51] Brutus' coin featured both L. Iunius Brutus and C. Servilius Ahala, likely in response to Pompeius' growing power, see RRC 433/2 with Crawford (1974), 455-456.

[52] The graffiti scattered in highly charged locations encouraged Brutus to emulate the deeds of his famous ancestors, see App. *B Civ.* 2.112, Cass. Dio. 44.12-13, Plut. *Vit. Brut.* 9.6-9, *Caes.* 62.7, Suet. *Iul.* 80.3 with Yakobson (2022), 67-70, and Hillard (2013), 112-16.

[53] See Lowrie (2010), 179-180, on Ahala and the Gracchi, with references. Similarly, Frolov (2023), considers the evolution of the Brutus myth.

[54] Until the dictatorship of Sulla and his *magister equitum,* L. Valerius Flaccus, these magistracies had not been used in 120 years.

THE LUPERCALIA

> Quis fortunatior Lepido, ut ante dixi, quis eodem sanior? Vidit eius maestitiam atque lacrimas populus Romanus Lupercalibus; vidit quam abiectus, quam confectus esset, cum Caesari diadema imponens Antonius servum se illius quam collegam esse malebat.
>
> As I have already observed, who is more fortunate than Lepidus, who of sounder mind than he? The Roman people saw his distress, his tears, at the Lupercalia, saw how cast down, how crushed he was when Antonius tried to put the diadem on Caesar and preferred to be Caesar's slave than his colleague.
>
> Cic. *Phil.* 13.17[55]

The festival of 44 was a spectacle to remember. Its proximity to both the confirmation of Caesar's perpetual magistracy and his violent death proved a boon to its longevity. Supplementary analysis and keen retrospection heightened the event's contemporary and historical resonance as it searched for meaning in chains of causation or otherwise leveraged the drama to articulate hopes for the future. Accounts of this year's festival are dominated by the allegedly spontaneous and persistent actions of Antonius, who as consul and *Lupercus* attempted to present Caesar with a diadem; Caesar refused.[56] From ancient thinkers to modern scholars, this episode has served as a focal point for deliberation on Caesar's ultimate political ambitions and their complex alignment, both positive and negative, with late Republican attitudes.[57] Attempts to calibrate the popular reception of kingship and the title of *rex* have thoughtfully used this episode to challenge the idea of one-dimensional hatred and instead draw out complex threads of ambivalence.[58]

Lepidus' reaction to the proceedings does not attract nearly as much attention in the ancient material. In fact, it is only in the accounts produced closest to the event that his presence is registered at all.[59] Later sources focus instead on the interactions between three parties: Caesar, Antonius, and 'the people'. For them, Lepidus is likely a redundant detail. In reality, he was the second most powerful magistrate in the *res publica* and carrying the weight of all the kingly

[55] trans. Shackleton Bailey (2010b).

[56] For accounts of the Lupercalia see: Cic. *Phil.* 2.84-87, 3.12, 5.38, 13.17, 31, 41, Liv. *Per.* 116, Nic. Dam. 21.71-75, Vell. Pat. 2.56.4, Plut. *Vit. Caes.* 61, *Ant.* 12, Suet. *Iul.* 79.2-3, App. *B Civ.* 2.109, Cass. Dio 44.11.1-3, 45.30-34, 46.5, 17, 19, Flor. 2.13.91-92, [Aur. Vict.] *De vir. ill.* 85.1.

[57] A hint that from the day itself its significance was understood by Cicero and his correspondent is preserved in Quint. *Inst.* 9.3.61; see North (2008), 146. Weinstock (1971), 331, remarks how this colourful event is 'one of the most discussed…in Caesar's life'.

[58] Essential contributions include Erskine (1991) and Rawson (1975). More recently, Baraz (2018) considers instances of *regnum* in late republican invective and argues for the label's convenient malleability, but takes for granted a broadly accepted negative conception of the idea.

[59] That is, in Cicero and Nicolaus of Damascus, see n.56 above and discussion to follow. Unfortunately we cannot know if he appeared in Livy's extended treatment.

associations already discussed. His behaviour would have been of interest to many. Unsurprisingly, it is Cicero who exploits this fact most aggressively during the uncertain aftermath of the Ides in his famed *Philippics*. As noted in the previous chapter, it is not useful to dismiss Lepidus' portrayal throughout these speeches as simply in service of Cicero's larger rhetorical strategy. Allowances should certainly be made for interpretative embellishment, but this does not preclude further insights being gleaned from his marked inclusion in the controversial episode.[60] It is, after all, not only Cicero but also Nicolaus of Damascus who chooses to detail Lepidus' involvement—both of whom will be discussed further below. It is precisely this exclusive inclusion in the earlier material that reflects just how important it was for contemporary audiences to configure Lepidus' unique position within the narrative of Caesar's power, an imperative that became less pressing in the centuries that followed. Lepidus himself must have played some part in this; there is no reason to suspect that he did not overtly react in some way during the festival. With this, a glimpse into his own self-positioning might be detected. Yet, the desire by others to impose further meaning is more revealing. It points to the expectations placed upon prominent figures to respond to other contentious individuals and ideas.

Cicero made sure the memory of the Lupercalia was never far from his fellow senators' minds. Over the course of his *Philippics,* delivered at a time of great uncertainty, he spoke of the festival and its revelations on multiple occasions.[61] The introduction of Lepidus in the *Fifth Philippic* provokes Cicero's third iteration on the theme. Ultimately this operates as an ideological departure point for the case of Lepidus' honours, but it is worth lingering on how Cicero establishes Lepidus' character and the bearing this has on his relationship with Caesar (then) and Antonius (then and now).[62] The account is brief, yet it conveys a quiet theatricality in its emphasis on otherwise subtle actions:

> Semper ille populum Romanum liberum voluit maximumque signum illo die dedit voluntatis et iudici sui, cum Antonio diadema Caesari imponente se avertit gemituque et maestitia declaravit quantum haberet odium servitutis, quam populum Romanum liberum cuperet, quam illa quae tulerat temporum magis necessitate quam iudicio tulisset.

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[60] Complete invention would be risky in the presence of other eye-witnesses to the event. Related observations are made by Manuwald (2007), 284, and Toher (2016), 309.

[61] Cic. *Phil.* 2.84-87, 3.12, 5.38, 7.1, 10.7, 13.17, 13.31, 13.41. The Lupercalia took place in February of 44. The *Philippics* were delivered over the course of several months from September 44 to April 43, see the convenient table in Hall (2002), 274.

[62] See chapter two for the list of virtues praised in part due to Lepidus' actions at the Lupercalia.

> Lepidus has ever wished the Roman people to be free; and he gave an unmistakable indication of his wishes and judgment that day when Antonius tried to place a diadem on Caesar's head: Lepidus turned away and declared by a groan and a sad countenance how much he hated slavery and desired the Roman people to be free, how his tolerance of what he had tolerated had been due to the necessity of the times rather than his own choice.[63]

An earlier political pamphlet (the undelivered *Second Philippic*) had Cicero recalling the people of the forum uniformly *groaning* in response to Antonius' presentation of the diadem.[64] Amid further lamentation—the poetic *plangor* is used to invoke a strikingly visual and dynamic expression of mourning—he attempted to crown him; only Caesar's refusal lifted the crowd's spirits and garnered applause.[65] In the above retelling of the *Fifth Philippic* Cicero entirely eschews mention of the crowd's reactions. Instead, he frames the particulars of Lepidus' behaviour with a pointed analysis of their significance: his abhorrence of the despotic condition of slavery and Antonius' attempts to realise it. To conclude he offers a generous reading of what some may perceive to be past negligence, a point I will return to. In the first instance Lepidus' emotional response closely mirrors that which Cicero has already attributed to the crowd, he expresses his grief and sorrow both audibly with a groan (*gemitu*) and visually with a sad demeanour (*maestitia*).[66] The repeated usage of *gemitus* is especially potent in this context. It belongs to a Ciceronian pattern in which such responses are regularly attributed to collective entities—typically a crowd, a city, or even Italy itself—as a reaction to unwanted subjugation of one kind or another.[67] In this collective capacity groaning functions not only as a passive expression of dejection but as a proactive call for justice. According to Cicero it is the uncensured expression of *libertas* available to the enslaved *animus*.[68]

But for Cicero's purposes it is clearly not beneficial to paint Lepidus solely as another anonymous dissenting voice, albeit ideologically aligned with the popular sentiment Cicero describes. Throughout the passage Cicero scatters hints of greater agency, introduced through additional verbs *avertere* and *declarare* and words with suggestive verbal qualities such as *voluntas* and *iudicium*. Lepidus, Cicero suggests, was making incisive judgments, ones that

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[63] Cic. *Phil.* 5.38, trans. Shackleton Bailey (2010a).

[64] Cic. *Phil.* 2.85. Again, in *Phil.* 3.31, Antonius attempts to urge *gementem populum Romanum* into slavery.

[65] OLD s.v. *plangor* 2 with TLL s.v. *plangor* 2.a.

[66] OLD s.v. *gemitus* 1 and *maestitia* 2.

[67] It has been used to reflect a collective attitude in times of civic disruption with restricted liberties (Cic. *Sest.* 121-3, *Fam.* 15.15.3 [SB 174]), and in response to greedy or tyrant-like governors (Cic. *Att.* 5.16 [SB 109], *Verr.* 2.1.50, 2.1.76, 2.3.80, 2.5.74).

[68] Cic. *Phil.* 2.64: *…gemitus tamen populi Romani liber fuit.*

serve as a fitting precursor to a leader of the calibre deserving of honours *pro eius egregiis in rem publicam meritis*.[69] The exemplary value of his actions is couched within Cicero's later reiteration—to be included in the wording of the decree itself—that the people perceived and understood his declarations at the Lupercalia, that monarchical rule (*dominatum regium*) was most offensive to him.[70] What was perhaps only hinted at before when Caesar was alive can now be fully realised: now, and hopefully into the future, Lepidus has the opportunity to respond to the *res publica*'s call for justice. In Lepidus' case, this is pursued through his role as an agent of peace, working to put civil conflict to rest—despite the fluidity of the political situation, which, in Cicero's view at the time, required a more aggressive approach.[71]

The passage above, and Cicero's efforts generally regarding Lepidus in the *Fifth Philippic*, is working hard to excuse Lepidus' collaboration with the dictator, and through the strategies already detailed insinuated how even the *magister equitum* knew his limits. The idea of powerlessness as a result of 'the times' echoed a complex of concerns that many Romans faced, and would go on to face in an extreme way under the triumvirate. In the aftermath of Caesar's death though much rhetorical manoeuvring was directed toward justification, and where necessary, exculpation, for both active collaboration and passive compliance through inaction. When, where, and to what degree it was acceptable to *servire temporibus* was highly dependant on one's particular outlook, prospects, personal debts, and crucially, past or present political status.[72] Later attempts to claim such behaviour as either politically discerning or morally imperative struggled to find purchase within the otherwise established grey area in which decision and choice had supposedly been stolen away by fate or other forces beyond an individual's control.[73] Thinking around what it meant to be a good person living through bad times persisted, and this is what Cicero is attempting to claim here for Lepidus, that he is fundamentally a good person, an ideal civil war leader, with all the appropriate moral markers. Yet there is still unresolved tension—perhaps involving a note of skepticism—in Cicero's choice of language. Caesar's 'reign' prohibited Lepidus' ability to exercise his *iudicium*, that is, he had

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[69] Cic. *Phil.* 5.38.

[70] Cic. *Phil.* 5.40: *…populusque Romanus intellexerit ei dominatum regium maxime displicere…*

[71] This part of Cicero's strategy is noted by Sumi (2005), 70. See chapter two for Lepidus as a locus of alternative ways to approach civil war.

[72] On the rhetoric of *servire temporibus* and associated ideas see Mitchell (2019), 163-71, in addition to the discussion of Nepos' Atticus in chapter two. cf. Sen. *Controv.* 9.4.5: *Necessitas magnum humanae inbecillitatis patrocinium est.* Cicero's increasing agitation and distress in responding to charges made against him following Caesar's 'victory' is palpable, see Cic. *Fam.* 9.7.1 [SB 178], 6.12.2 [SB 226].

[73] See for example, Cic. *Phil.* 3.29 and 10.19.

no choice, and bore what he had to bear. But not a moment previously, it was precisely his display of *iudicium*, despite Caesar, that now garners him praise. At any rate, the alacrity with which he breezes past any acknowledgment of Lepidus' close personal and professional relationship with Caesar underscores just how problematic that relationship was—and could still be—if Lepidus were to echo Antonius' increasingly incendiary rhetoric regarding Caesar's murderers.[74]

Cicero needed to tread carefully here in order to avoid alienating the dedicated Caesarean.[75] So despite the flair and extravagance of his general approach, Cicero also takes care to incorporate subtle realignments of Lepidus' relative position. His introduction, for instance, cites Lepidus' longstanding wish for a *populum Romanum liberum*, which subtly enfolds an alternative vision of the *res publica,* one promoted by the self-proclaimed 'Liberators'.[76] This was for his senatorial audience, Lepidus being absent from Rome during this time. Just as the assumptions buried in this kind of rhetoric irked Caesar's devoted friend Gaius Matius in the months following his death, it may likewise be supposed that Lepidus was sharply attuned to the various strategies aimed at publicly, if subtly, buffing away his perceived commitment to Caesar.[77] So Cicero minimises Caesar's presence while maintaining his critique of despotic intentions. He achieves this by shifting the primary relationship to be articulated (and thereby influenced) as that between Lepidus and Antonius.[78] Cicero's omission of Lepidus' position as *magister equitum* works towards this end. It is perhaps even less surprising given that throughout the recently published *Second Philippic*, Cicero had repeatedly stressed Antonius' connection to the dictator in that same role, using his disrespect for the magistracy to underscore his many deficiencies.[79]

[74] On Antonius' messaging as the 'pious avenger' see Welch (2020), 314-319.

[75] See Becker, van der Blom, Egelhaaf-Gaiser and Mortensen (2024), 588-590, for some insightful conclusions as to why Cicero partly failed as a 'transformational leader' trying to foster someone like Lepidus as a satellite leader.

[76] OLD s.v. *liber* 2. Compare Hodgson's (2019) discussion of the idea *libera res publica*, a vision of a kind of free *res* publica, developed as an alternative to the Caesarian position of fighting *over* the *res publica*.

[77] In Cic. *Fam.* 11.28 [SB 349] Matius defends his private grief over Caesar's death and counters that the self-styled *libertatis auctores* were disfiguring the very idea of freedom—both through their tactics of intimidation and in prematurely assuming that Caesar's death was to the public advantage. Some overlap in sentiment is suggested by the fact that Matius reportedly corresponded exclusively with Lepidus the month following the Ides of March (*Att.* 14.1.1 [SB 355]).

[78] Hayne (1971), 110, and Weigel (1992), 38-39, interpret Lepidus' reaction at the Lupercalia as a form of opposition to Antonius. Sumi (2005), 70-2, argues it was a prearranged ploy to work in Caesar's favour, allowing him to publicly declare his disinterest in establishing a monarchy.

[79] Cic. *Phil.* 2.62-63, 71, 76. Hall (2002), 275 n.6, suggests early December 44 as a plausible date for circulation.

Yet Lepidus' prominent figuration in events is precisely due to this special relationship to the dictator. It is tempting to see an undercurrent of the connections drawn earlier between the preservation of the *res publica* and the *magister equitum*. Antonius had already been described as having misused the role, and in a further sleight of hand finds himself grouped alongside famous negative *exempla* who occupied (in the case of Tarquin) or who strove to occupy (such as Maelius) a *dominatus regius*.[80] His actions at the Lupercalia were equated to those who in the past had sought power for themselves, yet the perversity of seeking this on someone else's behalf is not lost, the idea of turning a colleague into a master mocked.[81] This, of course, bleeds seamlessly into Cicero's present accusations: that Antonius is now attempting to establish himself in the guise of a tyrant.[82] For Lepidus, the expectations of his unnamed magistracy may be creeping to the surface, though how tangible these allusions were to the audience remains difficult to determine. In any case, Cicero is certainly framing him as having undergone an awakening of sorts—one marked by an explicit confrontation with the potential threat of *dominatus regius*.

A man possessed with renewed clarity of judgement is far from the figure that can be found in Nicolaus of Damascus' biography of Augustus, likely composed within the two decades following Lepidus' death:[83]

> βοῶντος δὲ τοῦ δήμου ἐπὶ τὴν κεφαλὴν τίθεσθαι καὶ ἐπὶ τοῦτο Λέπιδον καλοῦντος τὸν ἱππάρχην, ὁ μὲν ὤκνει· ἐν τούτῳ δὲ Κάσσιος Λογγῖνος, εἷς τῶν ἐπιβουλευόντων, ὡς δῆθεν εὔνους ὤν, ἵνα καὶ λανθάνειν μᾶλλον δύναιτο, ὑποφθὰς ἀνείλετο τὸ διάδημα καὶ ἐπὶ τὰ γόνατα αὐτοῦ ἔθηκεν.
>
> The people were shouting for him [Licinius] to put it on his head and they were calling on Lepidus, the magister equitum, to put it on him. But while Lepidus hesitated, one of the conspirators, Cassius Longinus, pretending to be well disposed toward Caesar to escape suspicion, anticipated Lepidus and seizing the diadem he placed it on Caesar's knees.[84]

The entire scene as described by Nicolaus involves a dramatically staged processional presentation of the diadem to Caesar and the proactive contribution of many more individuals; Licinius (otherwise unknown), Cassius Longinus, and Publius Servilius Casca each proffer the

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[80] Cic. *Phil.* 2.87. For this characterisation, particularly of Tarquin, see Arena (2007), 70 with n.66.
[81] Cic. *Phil.* 2.85-87.
[82] On the prolific imagery of Antonius-as-tyrant throughout the *Philippics* see Stevenson (2008) and (2009).
[83] The date of composition has been variously placed between the 20s and late into Augustus' principate; for discussion, see Toher (2016), 22-28.
[84] Nic. Dam. 72, trans. Toher (2016).

crown before Antonius eventually places it on Caesar's head.[85] Lepidus' (re)actions hover around the edges. Unlike Cicero who ultimately pursues a positive characterisation of Lepidus in this scenario, Nicolaus is much more ambivalent. The crowd calls upon Lepidus explicitly to intervene, but this crowd is divided in a way Cicero's was not.[86] Once again, Lepidus functions as a mirror of popular sentiment, though this time he is caught between opposing expectations. By those in favour he is summoned (καλοῦντος) in his capacity as *magister equitum* to advance the diadem. No other soul is coaxed in this deliberate manner to participate; noisy exclamations (βοῶντος) of encouragement and support otherwise appear to be the norm, with Antonius responding to similar cries a few lines later.[87] The language directed at Lepidus is pointed and contributes to the strong sense that Lepidus' affirmative action would work to legitimise the proceedings. Instead he stalls. His hesitation offers a pregnant pause in a narrative otherwise rushing forward. The term ὀκνέω is best understood here as a 'shrinking back from' or causing 'scruple,' and is attached to notions of shame or fear from a moral standpoint, although accusations of indolence may also loiter.[88] Such action is cast in sharp relief against that of Cassius, who without any scruple—and even dishonest intent—sets the expectation of what support for Caesar should look like. That he acted in 'haste *before*' (ὑποφθὰς) suggests that he expected Lepidus to eventually proceed the same way.[89]

Where Caesar rejects, politicians hasten, and the people shout, Lepidus pauses—and considers. His behaviour is then promptly forgotten. As a result, it is not entirely clear where the cast of actors, and even Nicolaus himself, stand in an assessment of his response. Much like elements of the Lupercalia itself which evoked liminality, thresholds, and tipping points, Lepidus is left suspended with his decision unmade.[90] This makes him difficult to read and open to a host of interpretations. A case could be made for prudent moral deliberation, confronting, as Matius would later tease out, the difference between Caesar-the-man and Caesar-the-dictator.[91] But even then, 'good' behaviour might involve intervening and removing the diadem from play. Here, unlike in Cicero's account, he is called upon directly to shape events and space is left for

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[85] On the identities of these other participants see Toher (2016), 306-307, 309.

[86] Nic. Dam. 72-3. Toher (2016), 301-302, emphasises the peculiarity of Nicolaus' account within the tradition, especially the contested depiction of popular opinion.

[87] Compare LSJ s.v. καλέω I. 1, 3 with s.v. βοάω I.

[88] LSJ s.v. ὀκνέω I. 1, 3.

[89] LSJ s.v. ὑποφθάνω I.

[90] On these liminal qualities see Brandt (2014) and Vuković (2023), 91-124.

[91] Cic. *Fam.* 11.28 [SB 349].

him to act. We could push this further and observe that the crowd in Nicolaus' version *expected* that as *magister equitum* he should be involved in these charged events. More loosely, the inclusion of his position appears intended to shape the reader's interpretation, whatever form that may take. His hesitation might equally be meant to call into question his competence as a leader in fast-paced and highly-charged situations. More dismissively perhaps, his inaction could be taken as evidence of a slavish submission to the times, his *iudicium* mockingly remaining dormant.

Contemporary audiences were clearly interested in Lepidus' position vis-à-vis the autocrat within narratives of Rome's controversial dalliance with monarchical rule. His appearances may only be brief, but at least in Cicero's case he revisits Lepidus' behaviour more than once in his quest to guide Lepidus' behaviour and further nuance important attitudes of the civil war leader.[92] Drawing attention to these attitudes no doubt evoked the parallel themes which had surfaced through the brothers' aggressive promotion of their family's exemplary past. Together with Lepidus' prominent and perpetual position as the dictator's colleague, this clustering of ideas—about appropriately managing relationships with kings, guiding as well as quashing when the need arose, confronting threats to the *res publica* from bad foreign kings or from adherents of good Roman kings turned tyrant (as in the case of Tarquin and his supporters), and swiftly resolving internal conflict—would have flooded the space between the words, whether spoken or written. Especially in Cicero's case, these needed to be channeled appropriately, and he depicts Lepidus with (although not unqualified) conviction. He is working hard here, which no doubt left him all the more vexed when Lepidus failed to recognise his efforts.[93]

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[92] Cic. *Phil.* 5.38, 13.7. Manuwald (2007), 684, notes the importance of 'attitude' above even achievements within Cicero's scheme for Lepidus' honours.
[93] He expressed his disappointment directly to Lepidus: Cic. *Fam.* 10.27.1 [SB 369].

4

Both Master and Slave

Challenging boundaries and inviting blame

Lepidus, ne quis illum putet male Antonio collegam placuisse, alienae semper dementiae accessio, utriusque collegae mancipium, noster <est> dominus.

In case anyone should suppose he has been an unsatisfactory colleague for Antony, Lepidus, that constant adjunct to the madness of another, that serf of both his colleagues, is now our master.

Sen. *Suas*. 7.6[1]

This piece of declamatory rhetoric sketches the familiar outline of a triumviral Lepidus—derogatory in the extreme. Yet the glimpse itself is surprising: unbidden, Lepidus emerges suddenly and explicitly, pressed into service by the declaimer's argument. The passage is taken from one of two *suasoriae* that provoked careful reassessment of Cicero's death, challenging declaimers to argue under what conditions he might have bargained with Antonius for his life.[2]

[1] trans. Winterbottom (1974).

[2] The themes of the *Sixth* and *Seventh Suasoriae* respectively are: 'Cicero considers whether he should beg Antony for life', and 'Cicero considers whether he should burn his writings as Antony promises him life if he does so'. See Roller (1997), *passim* esp. 115-119, on declamation's role in the popularisation of the death-of-Cicero tradition, in addition to the suggestion that some material preserved by Seneca may have emerged during the triumviral period.

Across both texts the other triumvirs' presence looms heavily, but of Antonius' colleagues it is only Lepidus who is singled out to convince Cicero that death should be preferred.

The declaimer Triarius brazenly exposes the inner dynamics of the triumvirate, deploying irony to suggest that Lepidus' only virtue lay in his willingness to surrender it. For Antonius, he is the ideal 'colleague'—that is, a slave. The pointed use of *mancipium* over the more common *servus* underscores the idea of transactional bondage, flaunting Lepidus' lack of control and his indebtedness to his colleagues for his current political elevation.[3] In apposition to this idea is a reminder of Lepidus' constant proximity to disruptive forces. He is *accessio*—a term that again implies subordination, but also evokes his ongoing role in facilitating, or collaborating with, the madness. That madness, now a familiar referent for the horrors of civil war and the autocratic ambitions of its leaders, had plagued the *res publica* for many years.[4] And yet, Lepidus is *noster dominus*. Concise and damning, this assessment activates the potent rhetoric associated with *libertas*.[5] The perversity of the former truth is the crux of the declaimer's point, the compelling reason for Cicero to reject Antonius' offer.

This example from declamation neatly illustrates the trouble Lepidus posed. There was a contradiction embedded into his characterisation, which this chapter will contend, pervades the contemporary material. In the above instance we are faced with the portrait of a leader who is inexplicably both slave and master. This particular quandary fuelled much of the venom in Cicero's diatribes against Antonius, as he assailed the man's ambition to lead while exposing his slavish devotion to vice.[6] After all, one could not possess the authority to lead if they themselves were unfree. In this sense, Antonius represented the antithesis of *libertas* which Cicero was, at the time, reconfiguring in a way that divorced the concept from the safe keeping of the law and into that of the virtuous individual.[7] Lepidus, however, never quite slipped into the same category as Antonius, as a man enslaved to his passions, even though his actions at times posed a threat to the *res publica*. Instead he draws our attention more firmly to the line,

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[3] OLD s.v. *mancipium* 2-3 and *servus*. Feddern (2013), 504, notes how the *ne*-clause supports the idea of Lepidus' magistracy as a mere political gesture. Gowing (1992a), 141, cites this excerpt as an example of Lepidus as a 'wronged party', despite the portrait being far from sympathetic.

[4] OLD s.v. *accessio* 5. Alongside *dementia*, the terms *furor* and *amentia* are used in this context; for examples relating to Lepidus' behaviour in particular see Vell. Pat. 2.80.2 and Cic. *Ad Brut.* 1.12.1 [SB 21].

[5] On the evolving usage of *libertas* during the late republic see Arena (2012) and (2007).

[6] An archetypal case can be found at Cic. *Phil.* 3.34-35. This issue is explored further in Arena (2007), 60-67.

[7] Arena (2007), *passim* esp. 58-60.

the boundary, the point in between. With greater ease he inhabits the spaces of contradiction: at once *pius* and *impius*, sane and mad, a peace-advocate and a bringer of war, of the city and of the field, both master and slave. This in turn meant he fundamentally challenged the idea of what it meant to be a good leader in civil war.

This chapter endeavours to unpack these ideas through glimpses that emerge from the aftermath of the Ides to the early years of the triumvirate. These tensions unfold sporadically across the forthcoming sections—much like Lepidus himself, they resist strict classification. This underpins the sense of the disquiet he evokes. Insights will surface in his activity following Caesar's death, his decision to side with Antonius, his depiction in the so-called *laudatio Turiae*, and in various allusions to his father. His capacity to lead underwent constant scrutiny, and a particularly revealing episode expands on the previous chapters' interest in praise, this time considering its opposite: blame. In an act of protest, Lepidus' legate takes his own life, in public and in front of the army (a first on both counts). From here, the transformation of Lepidus is stark, as he becomes a triumviral tyrant. Yet this shift owes more to a tightening of rhetoric than to any sudden evolution on Lepidus' part. Where the amorphous complexity of the civil war leader was once allowed to flourish, it became increasingly unsustainable as conceptualisations began to favour more binary oppositions.

PIISSIMUS HOMO

> "—nec Lepidi societatem violare, piissimi hominis—"
> "—nor yet to violate my alliance with Lepidus, the honorablest of men—"
> Antonius quoted in Cic. *Phil.* 13.43[8]

Much to the assassins' chagrin, they did not emerge from their deed as acclaimed heroes in the mould of Harmodius and Aristogeiton, the famous Greek tyrannicides.[9] Far from the embrace of a city aglow with newly won liberation, the pervading mood in Rome was densely fearful and uncertain.[10] The so-called tyrannicides did not adequately make their case, the confusion

[8] trans. Shackleton Bailey (2010b).

[9] Known to the Romans, copies of the Athenian statues were located in or near the temple of *Fides* on the Capitol; see Pina Polo (2006), 88-91. The Athenians reportedly similarly honoured Brutus and Cassius; Cass. Dio 47.20.4 cf. Cic. *Att.* 14.14.3 [SB 368].

[10] For a reconstruction of events in the aftermath of Caesars death see the classic account of Rawson (1994), *passim* esp. 468-473, also, Tempest (2017), 106-110 with Appendix 2 for further chronology and a comprehensive collection of the sources.

that followed an early marker of their failure.[11] The trouble stemmed from a contested vision of Caesar, as both hero and tyrant he fundamentally challenged the viability of assassination as a means to restore *libertas* and *concordia* in Rome. Even though the conspirators misjudged the initial reception of their actions, in the wake of them, Caesar's political identity became more fragile than ever. The next steps were crucial. Much of the debate in the days and months that followed centred on the careful (re)definition of the relationship between stakeholding groups or individuals and the dead dictator.[12] The demands on Caesar's memory were social and political, and importantly needed to reconcile practical measures with fervent ideologies. During this period of intense scrutiny and experimentation, his memory became a crucial touchstone for evaluating the ongoing integrity of the community and its leading figures.

The rhetoric of *pietas* in particular assumed an increasingly central role—escalating significantly in March 43 with the delivery of Cicero's *Thirteenth Philippic*. The speech responded to, and reworked, Antonius' own invocation of the term which developed alongside the claim that the community had been polluted by the murder of the sacrosanct *parens patriae*.[13] It evolved into a site of competition, not only among those seeking to avenge Caesar but also against the sons of Pompeius who by 45 had tied *pietas* enduringly to their identities.[14] It is within the context of this competition over the best shape and degree of *pietas* that Antonius chose to emphasise the like-mindedness of his comrade by pointedly describing Lepidus as *piissimi hominis*, the *most pius* of men.[15] At the time Cicero was working hard to dissuade Lepidus from formalising this alliance, but in his speech it was the use of an apparently imaginary and aggrandising superlative that he took particular issue with.[16] This is used, however, to subtly problematise Lepidus' position, as Cicero interrogates the seemingly permeable boundary between his status as *pius* and *impius*. Cicero goes on:

[11] Cicero would later cite initial inaction as irreparably damaging to the cause (*Att.* 14.10.1 [SB 364]). See Sumi (2005), 76-89, on the *contiones* of the conspirators.

[12] Welch (2012), 121-130, draws a nuanced picture of the various stances towards the dictator which emerged in the aftermath of his death, emphasising the inherent political difficulties reconciling private sentiment with public need.

[13] Welch (2010), 12-15, (2012), 146-148, and (2020), 314. See also Osgood and Niederwieser (2020), 180 with n.71.

[14] Sextus triumphantly resolidified his claim following the horrors of the proscriptions when the avenging triumvirs lost a convincing foothold from which to assert the virtue. Meanwhile, by providing a place of refuge he fostered a reputation for *pietas erga patriam*. For the development of *pietas* on the political stage see Welch (2010), *passim*, (2012), 102-104, 108-110, 113, 146-148, 153, 304-312, and for Antonius' innovative promotion of *pietas* see (2020), 314-319.

[15] Cic. *Phil.* 13.43.

[16] Cicero appeals to Lepidus directly at several points throughout the speech (*Phil.* 13.10, 14-15, 22), but a sense of distrust lingers (*Phil.* 13.43).

> Tibi cum Lepido 'societas' aut cum ullo, non dicam bono civi, sicut ille est, sed homine sano? Id agis ut Lepidum aut impium aut insanum existimari velis. Nihil agis—quamquam adfirmare de altero difficile est—de Lepido praesertim, quem ego metuam numquam; bene sperabo, dum licebit. Revocare te a furore Lepidus voluit, non adiutor esse dementiae.
>
> You in 'alliance with Lepidus' or any other—I won't say good citizen, as he is, but sane man? You make it your aim to wish Lepidus to be thought either a traitor or a madman. Especially in Lepidus' case—even though it is difficult to be certain concerning another person—you are wasting your time. I shall never fear Lepidus, and I shall hope well of him as long as I can. Lepidus has wished to recall you from your frenzy, not to be your abettor in folly.[17]

If Antonius is correct, Cicero argues, he will be exchanging Lepidus' true claim for a false one (like his own). Cicero therefore challenges Antonius' impulse to turn a sane man (*homine sano*) into a madman (*insanum*). Yet the compression of so many contradictory positions blurs the rhetorical field. In a notable departure from this chapter's epigraph, Cicero insists that Lepidus will not be *adiutor dementiae*. Although undercutting rejections of this kind—of which there are numerous in such a short passage—is a posture of mistrust. The denials function less as rebuttals and more as gestures of skepticism. Once again, Lepidus finds himself suspended between conflicting positions, a test case of civil war leadership made to probe the boundaries.

Lepidus' own programme of self-promotion at this time is trickier to grasp. A chorus of correspondence attests to the uncertainty among his peers regarding his intentions and motivations—a situation that provoked considerable agitation.[18] True to form, Lepidus openly advocated for peace with Antonius.[19] However how he responded to his inclusion in the dialogue around *pietas* must remain obscured. That said, a helpful indication might be found in the triumviral coinage depicting the portraits of the triumvirs. In sharp contradistinction to the coinage portraying Antonius and the Young Caesar, Lepidus, is never depicted alongside the late dictator, never shown bearded as a sign of mourning, and never associated with any reference to *pietas*.[20] Even on coins featuring his bearded colleagues, Lepidus remains clean-shaven.[21] With the exception of allusions to his position as *pontifex maximus*, Lepidus does not appear to promote himself as heir to Caesar's legacy in the same way as his colleagues.[22]

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[17] Cic. *Phil.* 13.43, trans. Shackleton Bailey (2010b).

[18] These letters of 43 between Cicero, Plancus, M. Brutus and D. Brutus will be discussed further below.

[19] Cicero's *Thirteenth Philippic* is in part a response to this appeal from Lepidus (*Phil.* 13.7, 50). cf. *Fam.* 10.27 [SB 369], the letter sent to Lepidus the same day.

[20] See Laignoux (2020), 4, 11-15, for a statistical analysis of political themes on the coins. Much fewer surviving types are of Lepidus. On Antonius' depiction as a bearded mourner as early as 44, and the subsequent competition that ensued with the Young Caesar, see Welch (2020), 303-319.

[21] RRC 492/2, other portraits include RRC 491/1, 4, 10.

[22] RRC 489/1-3, 492/2, 494/1, 495.

His willingness to engage in this competition, then and earlier, must be brought into question and makes the attempts of others to draw him in all the more striking. Lepidus, perhaps, desired to maintain a more ambiguous profile.

It is with this in mind that I return to the chaos following Caesar's violent demise, where Lepidus was again caught between his preference for non-violence, the extraordinary demands of the situation, and his loyalty to Caesar. The nature of the source tradition unfortunately means our primary narratives were composed well after events transpired, for this reason I pass relatively briefly over these days in order to draw out selective echoes of the issues we have been tracing.

The details of the sources diverge in their recollection of events.[23] Despite these difficulties, there is the prevailing sense that Lepidus responded quickly and decisively to the news of Caesar's death, moving troops strategically to the Campus Martius.[24] Until his imminent abdication, Lepidus retained significant authority as *magister equitum,* continuing to exercise *summum imperium auspiciumque*.[25] He found himself unmatched in military strength, rendering him, at least in practical terms, a viable rival to Antonius in his role as sole consul.[26] Contrary to the now familiar patterns of ambitious individuals like Pompeius and Caesar, Lepidus did not seize the opportunity to exercise independent initiative—a point rarely acknowledged by modern commentators as a choice available to him.[27] Lepidus instead actively chose to defer to the consul, possibly in an effort to preserve a sense of magisterial normality.[28] Cicero's later praise of Lepidus' *moderatio*, explicitly in reference to his behaviour after the Ides, lends support this idea.[29]

[23] For an overview of events with a specific focus on Lepidus, see Allély (2004), 77-87, Weigel (1992), 44-49, Gowing (1992a), 123-126, and Hayne (1971).

[24] For discussion of the identity of these troops, see Botermann (1968), 197-200.

[25] Jordan (2024), 26, 33 with n.79, 125, 129, convincingly demonstrates that the *magister equitum* retained his position after the dictator's death until such a moment he could officially abdicate, possibly late March or early April.

[26] Jordan (2024), 26.

[27] But see both Hayne (1971), 110-111 and Jordan (2024), 129 who each acknowledge his decision, albeit from different standpoints. Tatum (2024), 123 and n.153, describes Lepidus' initial moves as 'bold', 'forceful', and 'potentially provocative', with Antonius acquiescing to his decision to occupy the Forum. Welch (1995), 448, notes that unlike other Caesarians even before the dictators death, 'Lepidus never made a bid for individual power'.

[28] Jordan (2024), 129.

[29] Cic. *Phil.* 5.38. Gowing (1992a), 125-126, notes with interest that despite Cicero's growing hostility towards Lepidus, he never suggests that he acted otherwise. Later sources, by contrast, describe Lepidus as inspiring fear: in the assassins (App. *B Civ.* 2119, Suet. *Iul.* 82.4) and in Antonius (Cass. Dio 44.34.5-6, 53.6). But see Gowing (1992a), 124-126, 141-142, on Lepidus' characterisation as subservient to the greater narrative.

Lepidus' visibility was at its peak, surpassing even that of Antonius.[30] The troops under Lepidus' command flooded the city, and most notably the Forum, in an effort to retain control and suppress the threat of violence. Scattered references recall Lepidus's initial calls for vengeance, sometimes complimenting, sometimes conflicting with Antonius' own desires, yet his actions largely reveal a more conciliatory path.[31] To the speeches made on behalf of the 'tyrannicides', Lepidus was the first to respond with his own *contio* in the Forum.[32] Subsequent *contiones* supposedly held during the Senate meeting at the Temple of Tellus the following day, aimed not only to build consensus regarding Caesar or placate his veterans, but also exploited the performative setting to frame a privileged relationship between key supporters and the late dictator.[33] Yet if we accept that Lepidus would have been dressed in the *paludamentum* as a consequence of primarily addressing his troops during his initial *contio*, this event represented a striking collision of the military and political spheres, of a kind unseen before in the Forum.[34] The performance emphasised the disruption of civil order following the actions of the self-proclaimed tyrannicides.[35] But it also situated Lepidus in an ideologically uncomfortable space.

The threatening and potentially destabilising nature of this address stands in contrast to Lepidus' actions in an intriguing episode preserved by Appian, who credits him with interceding on behalf of L. Cornelius Cinna and in response to the people's first freely given, and terrifyingly violent, 'opinion' regarding Caesar's death.[36] Despite not being privy to the conspiracy himself, Cinna had publicly branded Caesar a tyrant, provoking a mob to throw stones and give chase, seeking to burn down his house with him inside.[37] What the memory of Lepidus' action represents is clear: an individual seeking to temper *all* violent urges, no matter which side their allegiances fell. Again Cicero's *moderatio* is brought to mind. To this we might add the assessment of Atticus from the month following the Ides who, privy to Lepidus'

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[30] Sumi (2005), 90.

[31] Nicolaus is especially explicit on his desire for vengeance (106, 130); Appian notes they both wanted to avenge Caesar (*B Civ.* 2.124). Lepidus in a show of good faith sent his son as hostage, in addition to dining with Brutus, see App. *B Civ.* 2.142, Livy *Per.* 116, Cass. Dio 44.34.7.

[32] Cass. Dio 44.22.2; see no.348 in Pina Polo (1989), 308-309.

[33] See n.350 in Pina Polo (1989), 309. Although James Tan has pointed out to me that the likelihood of these meetings occurring simultaneously (if they even happened) is dubious at best.

[34] For this suggestion on Lepidus' attire see Sumi (2005), 90.

[35] Sumi (2005), 93, 96.

[36]App. *B Civ.* 2.127. Hayne (1971), 113 n.21, notes Cinna's support of his father in 77 as a possible motive.

[37] On the speech of Cinna and its outcome, see App. *B Civ.* 2.121, 126, 147, Val. Max. 9.9.1, Plut. *Brut.* 18.13, and Suet. *Iul.* 85. For further discussion, see Sumi (2005), 80-82, 89.

communications with the Senate, happily reported the *moderate et amice* nature of his correspondence.[38]

Lepidus, like Antonius, worked hard to appease, or at least placate, the various dissenting groups alternately demanding peace or vengeance.[39] Yet his approach to leadership is marked by a number of persistent tensions: he retains the highest magistracy, yet chooses to defer to another; he works outwardly to secure peace, but harbours vengeance; he asserts control while simultaneously highlighting disorder; and he actively contaminates civilian spaces with military presence.

Insight into how these tensions may have manifested at the time is offered by a fleeting yet precious contemporary anecdote. In a letter to Atticus sent a month after Caesar's death, Cicero reports:

> …at mihi Paulus dedit ad se a fratre missas; quibus in extremis erat sibi insidias fieri; se id certis auctoribus comperisse. hoc nec mihi placebat et multo illi minus.
>
> …Paulus gave me one [a letter] sent to him by his brother which ended with the statement that there was a plot against him and that he had learned of it on certain authority. I didn't like the sound of that, and Paulus liked it much less.[40]

This treacherous plan has been linked to a known conspiracy of Caesar's freedmen—one Cicero had recently recounted to Atticus as a means of disparaging Antonius' effectiveness and his overall control of post-Ides tensions.[41] These men were evidently displeased at the concessions made to the murderers of Caesar and felt something akin to betrayal for Lepidus' part in it. His inability to follow through with his initial calls for vengeance may also have played some role.[42] Such a reaction is undeniably extreme, and it is curious that no mirrored plot against Antonius is similarly reported. At this time he had seriously angered a group of urban *plebs* who had thrown their support behind Gaius Amatius Herophilus, a freedman and pretender, who actively and violently rallied in favour of Caesar's divinity and against the tyrannicides.[43] This 'False Marius' was summarily arrested and executed, the altar he and his supporters had erected on the site of Caesar's cremation having already been torn down. Despite these consular actions further complicating the treatment of Caesar's memory, it is

[38] Cic. *Att.* 14.8.1 [SB 362]. On the letter, see Rohr Vio (2012), 111-113.
[39] For example the speeches in App. *B Civ.* 2.130-132, with Gowing (1992a), 124-126.
[40] Cic. *Att.* 14.8.1 [SB 362], trans. Shackleton Bailey (1999b).
[41] Cic. *Att.* 14.5.1 [SB 359].
[42] For the connection, see Weigel (1992), 49 and Hayne (1971), 116.
[43] See Tatum (2024), 135-136 for a summary of events.

towards Lepidus, now even abdicated as *magister equitum*, that we find evidence of discontent at its most extreme. Given the scant details, it is difficult to fully assess the situation, but it seems plausible that this targeted violence should be interpreted as a form of protest. At least some in the community evidently felt Lepidus had defaulted on the kind of leadership they expected or felt due to them, and to such a degree that his future contributions to the cause were insufficient to spare him.

I Publicly Protest

> …cum in fraudem se deductum videret, manus, quas iustius in Lepidi perniciem armasset…
>
> When he saw that he had been the victim of a deception, he tried to turn against himself the hands which he might with greater justice have armed to destroy Lepidus…
>
> Plancus to Cicero, Cic. *Fam.* 10.23.4 [SB 414][44]

Over a year later and amid much ongoing speculation and political manoeuvring, a letter from Lepidus reached the Senate that signalled a definitive shift in the direction of existing hostilities against the 'tyrant' and now *hostis* Antonius. As a rare opportunity to hear directly from Lepidus, it is worth quoting the missive of 30 May 43 in full:

> Deos hominesque testor, p. c., qua mente et quo animo semper in rem publicam fuerim et quam nihil antiquius communi salute ac libertate iudicarim. quod vobis brevi probassem, nisi mihi Fortuna proprium consilium extorsisset. nam exercitus cunctus consuetudine<m> sua<m> in civibus conservandis communique pace seditione facta retinuit meque tantae multitudinis civium Romanorum salutis atque incolumitatis causam suscipere, ut vere dicam, coegit.
>
> In qua re ego vos, p. c., oro atque obsecro ut privatis offensionibus omissis summae rei publicae consulatis neve misericordiam nostram exercitusque nostri in civili dissensione sceleris loco ponatis. quod si salutis omnium ac dignitatis rationem habueritis, melius et vobis et rei publicae consuletis.
>
> I call Gods and men to witness, Fathers Conscript, how my heart and mind have ever been disposed towards the commonwealth, how in my eyes nothing has taken precedence of the general welfare and freedom. Of this I should shortly have given you proof, had not Fortune wrested my decision out of my hands. My entire army, faithful to its inveterate tendency to conserve Roman lives and the general peace, has mutinied; and, truth to tell, has compelled me to champion the preservation in life and estate of so vast a number of Roman citizens.
>
> Herein, Fathers Conscript, I beg and implore you to put private quarrels aside and to consult the supreme interests of the commonwealth. Do not treat the compassion shown by myself and my army in a conflict between fellow countrymen as a crime.

[44] trans. Shackleton Bailey (2001).

> If you take account of the welfare and dignity of all, you will better consult your own interests and those of the state.[45]

Since early 43 Lepidus, among others, had been advocating for peace with Antonius much to Cicero's deep exasperation.[46] Claims prioritising *pax* were being scrupulously used to justify communication with, and martial inaction against, Antonius.[47] It is interesting then that *pax* is mentioned by Lepidus only once, buried among other considerations and qualified by *communis* in a way which evokes a state of being, rather than a pact forged through political or military intervention.[48] Explicit mention of Antonius, too, is conspicuously absent. Neither Lepidus' loyalty to him nor through him to Caesar's memory is invoked as a defining feature of his decision: that despite prior assurances to the contrary, he has moved to bolster Antonius' dwindling and exhausted forces. In this moment critical to his self-presentation as a leader in civil war, Lepidus prioritises the image of a 'good person' over that of a 'good general'. Confronted by his mutinying army he does not look to punish them as perhaps a typical general might, he shows no inclination to emulate Antonius's use of decimation.[49] Instead he reports to have considered their plight and, in a verb that wrests back some control, to champion (*suscipere*) their cause.[50] He continues however to promote an intrinsic solidarity, ascribing compassion—the ever important *misericordia*—to both himself *and* his army.

This neatly aligns with an already established pattern of seeking a non-violent path to conclude civil war. It is also likely that the strategy of this publicised approach, namely highlighting the growing antipathy of soldiers having to fight fellow Romans, was sensitive to the recent slaughter at Forum Gallorum (April 14/15) and Mutina (April 20). An eyewitness account and contemporary commentary compliment Appian's hauntingly rendered scene: men so accustomed to these dire circumstances, and so evenly matched, that the fighting, the pain, and

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[45] Cic. *Fam.* 10.35 [SB 408], trans. Shackleton Bailey (2001).

[46] For the attempts of Lepidus and Plancus see Cic. *Fam*. 10.31.4 [SB 368], 10.27 [SB 369], 10.6.1 [SB 370], *Phil.* 13.7-21. For others including C. Asinius Pollio, L. Piso, and Q. Fufius Calenus, see Cornwell (2017), 67-73, with references.

[47] Cornwell (2017), 70.

[48] *Pax* is also linked here to the idea of the safety of Rome's citizens, an argument previously attempted by Calenus, see Cic. *Phil.* 8.13 with Cornwell (2017), 68-69.

[49] Lepidus' troops, as emblematic of anxieties surrounding his loyalties, surface repeatedly in Cicero's correspondence; see, for example, *Fam.* 10.31.5 [SB 368], 10.9.2 [SB 379], 11.9 [SB 380], 10.11.2-3 [SB 382], 10.21 [SB 391], 10.18 [SB 395], 10.34 [SB 396]. On Antonius' use of decimation in 44, see Cic. *Phil.* 5.22 and App. *B Civ.* 3.43, 53.

[50] For the sense of advocating for a cause 'especially of one's own accord' see OLD s.v. *suspicio* 8a and c.

even extinguishing of life take on a mechanical and muted quality.[51] The oversaturation of the experience, for many, had divested it of some of the horror.

Lepidus pursues the line of a virtuous man in pursuit of the greater good. Appearing to entrust some of his decision-making process to the troops works toward this end, and is not, as some would have it, simply a means of deferring blame and responsibility from himself.[52] He does not seek approval from the senate, he expects it as the natural consequence of his actions which he promotes as exhibiting loyalty to the *res publica*. This letter reveals how Lepidus himself, and not merely representations of him, was toeing the line in intriguingly complex ways. Again he embraces contradiction self-congratulating his keen judgment in pursuit of *libertas* while claiming a subservience to Fortuna and at times, his troops. Again he challenges expectations by cleverly transforming a form of self-deprecation and admonishment into a success, taking the failure of a good general and working it into a hybrid image of the good civil war statesman-general.

Scathing indictments from Rome were quick to follow. By the end of June Lepidus was declared a *hostis*.[53] Condemnation of Lepidus' behaviour came in various forms, and a rarely examined yet striking early example is worth considering in more detail. It was in the face of Lepidus' 'defection' that one M. Juventius Laterensis, legate of Lepidus, keen senatorial supporter, and intermediary between his commander and Plancus, attempted to kill himself before Lepidus' (and possibly also Antonius') troops.[54] Laterensis had previously advocated for, then despaired over, Lepidus' loyalties, and had campaigned to keep him from veering astray of the Senate's wishes, actively dissuading him from colluding with the *hostis* Antonius.[55] Betrayed on multiple fronts when this course of action failed, he deemed it necessary to take his own life. So Plancus relays in a letter to Cicero otherwise railing against Lepidus:

> Laterensis nostri et fidem et animum singularem in re<m> publicam semper fatebor. sed certe nimia eius indulgentia in Lepidum ad haec pericula perspicienda fecit eum minus sagacem. qui quidem, cum in fraudem se deductum videret, manus, quas iustius in Lepidi perniciem armasset, sibi adferre conatus est. in quo casu tamen

[51] App. *B Civ.* 3.68, Cic. *Fam.* 10.30.3 [SB 378] and 10.33.1 [SB 409] with Osgood (2006), 52-55.

[52] See for example, Weigel (1992), 61 and Osgood (2006), 57.

[53] By unanimous vote of the Senate on 30 June, see Cic. *Fam.* 12.10.1 [SB 425].

[54] Velleius notes the catalyst was Antonius' entry into the camp (Vell. Pat. 2.63.2). On his death, see also Cic. *Fam.* 10.23.4 [SB 414] and Cass. Dio Dio 46.51.3-4.

[55] See Cic. *Fam.* 10.21.1-3 [SB 391], 10.18.2 [SB 395], 10.23.4 [SB 414], Vell. Pat. 2.63.2, and Cass. Dio 46.51.3-4. Appian only reports Laterensis' deep concern regarding the troops and not his death (*B Civ.* 3.84).

> interpellatus et adhuc vivit et dicitur victurus; sed tamen de hoc parum mihi certum est.
>
> I shall always acknowledge the good faith and conspicuously patriotic spirit of our friend Laterensis. But his overtenderness towards Lepidus undeniably made him less alert to perceive the dangers in which we stood. When he saw that he had been the victim of a deception, he tried to turn against himself the hands which he might with greater justice have armed to destroy Lepidus, but he was interrupted in the act. He is still alive, and is said to be likely to live. However, I have no certain information on the latter score.[56]

The depiction of Laterensis' act is not straightforward. While Plancus acknowledges his dedication to the *res publica* he undercuts the sentiment with a series of rebukes. Firstly, that Laterensis failed to accurately gauge the character of Lepidus, secondly, that suicide in this instance was ill-conceived, and lastly a note of derision lingers in the report of this bungled attempt. As it transpired, Laterensis did eventually succumb to his wounds, but he is not mentioned again in the extant correspondence. Despite Plancus' quibbles it is clear that Laterensis' actions were intended as a powerful statement, no doubt evoking the recent civil war *exemplum* of Cato and the act of heroic suicide around which a body of literature was already beginning to coalesce.[57] Laterensis' situation differed from Cato's in that, whereas Cato responded to defeat in battle and a new post-war reality, Laterensis' suicide *preceded* the reignition of civil war, one which by many accounts would have ended at Mutina.[58] For him, that reality was unacceptable, and to some extent he prefigured the reality Rome was barreling towards. Similarly however, the threat of immediate violence was absent, a condition generally unusual for suicides taking place during civic upheaval.[59]

These cases not primarily motivated by fear can be characterised as political suicide, an action which establishes 'one's status as a moral witness in the community'.[60] An upshot of this privileged moral position is that suicide could be harnessed as an immensely powerful communicative act. Laterensis, not content to merely capitalise on its already symbolic value, chose to innovate. This episode marks the first recorded instance to include a performative component.[61] It seems likely that such a spectacle was intended to reach a multitude of audiences, both near and distant. If per Lepidus the soldiers were already firmly committed to

[56] Cic. *Fam.* 10.23.4 [SB 414], trans. Shackleton Bailey (2001).

[57] On suicide in Rome see Griffin (1986a) and (1986b); also Rauh (2018), who emphasises the cultural shift which occurred following Cato's suicide.

[58] See n.80.

[59] Rauh (2018), 80.

[60] On the category of political suicide in Rome see Hill (2004), 183-212, who further notes the phenomenon is typified by 'ostentation, ritualization, political protest, and philosophical allusion'.

[61] Rauh (2018), 88-89, notes this novel development.

joining Antonius, we can only assume that Laterensis meant to amplify by word of mouth his concern for the fate of the *res publica* and its loss of *libertas* in the face of aspiring tyrants. Meanwhile, it's possible he also wanted the men to confront the reality, and thus the magnitude, of their decision: both soliders and commander were accountable for the loss of Roman lives. On the other hand, his approach might suggest uncertainty within the camp regarding Lepidus' decision, after all, he was interrupted in his attempt. But this too invites alternative readings: was the interruption driven by concern for his safety, or by a desire to prevent the emergence of a martyr-like figure?

The carefully considered *staging* of the event inevitably tied its message more concretely to a specific physical context, that is, the camp of Lepidus and by extension the commander himself. Laterensis is commenting on the *res publica* but is also forthright in reorienting Lepidus' perceived place in it. He intends to cast judgement on Lepidus' character and his capacity, and even his authority, to lead. Cato's actions had been similarly framed. His death was seen as an act of protest against the autocratic inclinations of Caesar via a private display of intense loyalty to his own vision of the *res publica,* advocating for a traditional locus of authority and legitimacy.[62] Laterensis likewise made an unyielding claim of disapproval: death was preferable to enduring the consequences of Lepidus' dangerous folly which saw him consolidating power outside of the community, alongside a declared *hostis*. The public rather than private nature of his protest reinforced the idea that his own personal sense of betrayal, in fact, belonged to the broader community. Caesar by comparison looked moderate, where he offered *clementia* to bring a fractured community back together, Lepidus seemingly cared little about fracturing it even further. The *piissimus homo* is lost entirely from the picture and Lepidus is configured as rather more incendiary.

A fragment from a lost *Sixteenth Philippic* preserves mention of a Laterensis who *ne vestigium quidem deflexit*, 'turned aside by not even a step'.[63] While certainty is elusive, the delivery of this oration must have occurred after the *Fourteenth* of late April, placing it conceivably around June and following Laterensis' suicide. The brief contents further support the idea that contemporary attempts were made to portray Laterensis as a defiant Cato-like figure, a man who remained unwaveringly committed to his beliefs and chosen course of action. The relative

[62] Later evidence shows attempts to enfold Laterensis within this tradition, including its Stoic elements. Velleius thus describes him as *vir vita ac morte consentaneus* (2.63.2), cf. Cicero's description of Cato at *Off*. 1.112.

[63] Cic. *Phil*. fr.3, trans. Shackleton Bailey (2010b).

obscurity of Laterensis' actions in later accounts only serves to encourage a reading which attaches his suicide closely with Lepidus' leadership, himself only finding a place in the narrative when intersecting with those of Antonius and the Young Caesar.

Dio records another significant detail. For his earlier interventions then voluntary death Laterensis was voted eulogies, a statue, and a public funeral by the senate:

> μαθὼν δὲ τὸ γιγνόμενον Μᾶρκος Ἰουουέντιος ὑποστράτηγος αὐτοῦ τὰ μὲν πρῶτα ἀποτρέπειν αὐτὸν ἐπειρᾶτο, ὡς δ' οὐκ ἔπεισεν, αὐτὸς ἑαυτὸν τῶν στρατιωτῶν ὁρώντων κατεχρήσατο. καὶ ἐκείνῳ μὲν ἐπαίνους τε ἐπὶ τούτῳ ἡ βουλὴ καὶ ἀνδριάντα τήν τε ταφὴν τὴν δημοσίαν ἐψηφίσατο, τὸν δὲ δὴ Λέπιδον τήν τε εἰκόνα τὴν ἐν τῷ βήματι ἱδρυμένην ἀφείλοντο καὶ πολέμιον ἐποιήσαντο·
>
> Marcus Juventius, his lieutenant, learned what was being done and at first tried to alter his purpose; then, when he did not succeed in persuading him, he made away with himself in the sight of the soldiers. For this the senate voted eulogies and a statue to Juventius and a public funeral, but they deprived Lepidus of his statue which stood upon the rostra and declared him an enemy.[64]

In the same breath we learn how Lepidus was deprived of his statue on the Rostra and declared a *hostis*. By holding these decisions up in parallel Dio intimates a special connection between the two, a kind of distorted reciprocity. It is possible that Cicero also exploited this connection for rhetorical impact. The *Philippics* fragment above suggests he spoke publicly on Laterensis' merits, plausibly in relation to the honours the senate were to vote on. Laterensis' steadfastness would have served as a potent contrast to the well-voiced anxieties surrounding Lepidus' complete disregard for his own declared intentions.[65] To see an 'exchange' of honours is unusual and provides further insight on the complex issue of commemoration and praise in civil war that Lepidus had already found himself at the centre of on multiple occasions.

Hostis declarations and the removal of statues were but two facets of punitive memory sanctions that had already been developing 'slowly and piecemeal' alongside various bursts of violence and periods of civil strife.[66] This was an exercise of control aimed at defining right and wrong—legitimising or discrediting certain leaders or courses of action. Once exclusively deployed against memories of the deceased, these sanctions soon became weapons against living political rivals.[67] Lepidus' punishment here is all the more stark for the parallel

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[64] Cass. Dio 46.51.3-4, trans. Cary (1917).

[65] Lepidus' letters repeatedly reassure the senate of his commitment; for example, *Fam.* 10.34 [SB 396], 10.34a [SB 400].

[66] Flower (2006), 68.

[67] For a detailed discussion of the development of these tactics, see Flower (2006), 67-111.

promotion of Laterensis into a space of public commemoration. His death would precipitate a public procession and lavishly applied words, outdoing yet embedding recognition of Lepidus' betrayal. It seems unlikely that the dismantling of the statue would have been accompanied by speeches, nevertheless, the silent emptiness on the Rostra where a golden equestrian statue once stood would have spoken volumes.[68] Such was the symbolic value of reversal, that in a letter to Brutus Cicero goes so far as to claim that the statue was almost worth setting up just for the dishonour it brought in tearing it down—a point he stresses in his repetition of *evertere*.[69] This itself however was not uncomplicated. The statue was a civil war monument, valorising peace as victory. On the one hand removing the statue condemns Lepidus all the more, sharply contrasting the once agent of peace with (from the senate's perspective) the current agent of war. On the other hand, the rapid-fire bestowal and removal of honours—Lepidus' statue enjoyed less than a year in its privileged position—worked to undermine the Senate's judgement and authority, or at least to underline the difficulty they had in identifying exemplary individuals in times of civil war.

Complicating matters further was the implicit approval of suicide as an appropriate response to an 'illegitimate' leader. Plancus' letter provides a good indication of the shape of possible objections to Laterensis' course of action, and care must have been taken when eulogising a man who signalled defeat before the war began. Much like the development of punitive sanctions, the negotiation of acceptable incarnations of praise in civil war was taking place in an ad hoc manner, with many instances involving the careful (re)positioning of the often-opaque Lepidus. Memory practices generally between 121 and 43 were highly unstable, with political leaders wrestling with internal divisions and partisan histories to frame themselves in a way which might be considered least problematic. Some point to a specifically Hellenising influence, that is, facing a choice between the dichotomous notions of honour and disgrace. This attitude in turn recalled the turbulent dynamic between Greek cities and their kings, and despite his inability to be anything akin to the next Caesar, Lepidus, through his timely prominence, found himself and his legacy pressed by these same demands.[70]

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[68] Unfortunately the location of Laterensis' statue is unclear. However, if as Tanner (2000), 26 n.37, suggests it was on the Rostra, this would further underscore the absence of Lepidus' statue. The contrast recalls Flower's (2006), 94, observation on the symbolic value of Sulla's statue occupying the space where Marius had once stood, but was no longer commemorated.

[69] Cic. *Ad Brut.* 1.15.9 [SB 23]. OLD s.v. *everto* 1, 3.

[70] On the previous two points and the allusions to Greek kings, see Flower (2006), 111.

Much of the less-than-favourable and often dismissive portrait of Lepidus fashioned in modern accounts relies on the fertile repository of colourful language from Cicero's correspondence up to the formation of the triumvirate. The dynamics of Lepidus and Antonius' relationship, the shape it took and the traits it exposed, became a favourite subject for political speculators. For Lepidus, this meant that greater emphasis was being placed on his independent agency, his flexibility, once prized under Caesar, was now invoked largely to hold him accountable.[71] In the private correspondence of senatorial supporters during the first half of 43 this independence was being critiqued in a manner that relished projecting the idea to its most edifying extreme. Terms such as *levitas* (fickleness), *inconstantia* (inconstancy), and the well-known use of the superlative *ventosissimus* (most changeable like the wind; translations often use 'weathercock') are suggestive of detachment and lack of conviction or forethought.[72] This kind of rhetoric minimises the moral substance of Lepidus, yet the deep frustration with which these descriptions are always conveyed not only exposes that expectations were unmet but reveals the degree to which Lepidus was expected to meet them. The depth of disappointment here is commensurate with the very potential held to provoke change. Whether or not these represent a fair portrayal of the man is less interesting than what these insults might tell us about the world within which these individuals were operating. In this case, we begin to see the inexplicability of a political and military operator like Lepidus who managed to vacillate between leader and follower, in particular with regards to his relationship to Antonius but also in his interactions with his troops and subordinates.

Once Lepidus officially allied with Antonius, a substantial shift in his portrayal took place as he started to acquire for himself the trappings of tyrannical behaviour already lavished on Antonius. Charges of *scelus* (criminality) now slipped in next to his *levitas*.[73] In an important update to Cassius on July 1, Cicero offers a particularly scathing assessment:

> Praeclare viceramus nisi spoliatum, inermem, fugientem Lepidus recepisset Antonium. itaque numquam tanto odio civitati Antonius fuit quanto est Lepidus. ille enim ex turbulenta re publica, hic ex pace et victoria bellum excitavit.
>
> We had won a splendid victory, if Lepidus had not harboured Antony as he fled, stripped of his power and unarmed. Hence Lepidus is more hated in the community

[71] Welch (1995) stresses the importance of Lepidus' flexibility and tactical mobility for the years 49-44.
[72] Examples at, Cic. *Ad Brut.* 2.2.1 [SB 3], 1.10.2 [SB 17], *Fam.* 11.9.1 [SB 380], 12.8.1 [SB 416]. Syme (1939), 166, agrees ardently with these assessments.
[73] See for example across June and July, Cic. *Fam.* 12.8.1 [SB 416], 12.10.1 [SB 425]; his criminality alone also becomes a recurring motif, see *Ad Brut.* 1.12.1 [SB 21], 1.14.2 [SB 22], 1.15.10 [SB 23].

> than ever Antony was; for whereas Antony stirred up war in a country that was already in turmoil, Lepidus has done so in time of peace and victory.[74]

The letter itself opens with '*Lepidus, tuus adfinis, meus familiaris…*', clearly marking Lepidus as the primary subject and one of particular concern for both correspondents, before divulging news of the Senate's unanimous vote against him.[75] He too was now an enemy of the state. Cicero goes on briefly to describe unconfirmed reports regarding Dolabella's troops before insisting on the community's desire to have Cassius and Brutus return to Rome.[76] The latter idea is revisited in the concluding paragraph, stressing the *res publica*'s need for their leadership, even if only to set the state right after the enemy had been defeated by others.[77] Achieving true *libertas*, Cicero suggests, will require more than simply freeing the state from *sceleribus hostium*. This idea was not new. It recalls a tortured exclamation made to Atticus closely following the Ides of March: *o di boni! vivit tyrannis, tyrannus occidit!*[78] Removal of the tyrant did not ensure the removal of tyranny, and distress surrounding this notion played out multiple times using this and associated vocabulary.[79] By mid 43 Cicero was reconciled to this truism and wanted to ensure measures were put in place to combat the legacy of leaders—or as Cicero would have them, tyrants and despots—like Lepidus and Antonius. The imagery of Lepidus in the excerpt above is developed along these lines but with a striking and indeed surprising alteration that does not receive comment even by his biographers. Here he is considered an *even worse* example of leadership than the scourge of the *res publica*, Antonius.

Lepidus' 'crime' is felt acutely. The charges are twofold: first, he offered protection to the *hostis* Antonius which second, led to the reignition of civil war that had otherwise been stamped out. Cicero perhaps exaggerates the reality of the latter point, but the sentiment is repeated enough through his correspondence to suggest it had a broad acceptance in certain circles.[80] The description of the scantiness of Antonius' resources only serves to emphasise how disruptive Lepidus' choices were and how delicate putting an end to civil war inevitably was. Emphasising

[74] Cic. *Fam.* 12.10.3 [SB 425], trans. Shackleton Bailey (2001).

[75] Cic. *Fam.* 12.10.1 [SB 425]. According to Appian (*B Civ.* 4.12), Lepidus' brother Paullus was the first to vote in favour.

[76] Cic. *Fam.* 12.10.2-3 [SB 425].

[77] Cic. *Fam.* 12.10.4 [SB 425].

[78] Cic. *Att.* 14.9.2 [SB 363].

[79] See for example: Cic. *Att.* 14.4.1 [SB 358] (using *libertas* and *res publica*), 14.11.1 [SB 365] (using *rex* and *liber*), 14.14.2 [SB 368] (using *tyrannus* and *tyrannis*), and *Ad Brut.* 2.5.1 [SB 5] (using *rex* and *regnum*).

[80] For example, Cic. *Fam.* 11.9.1 [SB 380] (Decimus), Cic. *Fam.* 10.33.5 [SB 409] (Pollio), and *Ad Brut.* 1.14.2 [SB 22] (Cicero). This idea endured, see Rut. Namat. 1.312 on Lepidus crushing the *libertas* acquired with Mutina.

Lepidus' betrayal of *pax* inverts the pattern of behaviour that we have seen being developed by previous portrayals of his actions. Indeed, it makes his current actions all the worse. An earlier letter from mid-May had preempted the damage such a comparison would have on Lepidus' integrity, only a madman, the adjective *furiosus* is used, would champion peace to then undermine it once it arrived, therefore Lepidus need not be feared.[81] By July this fear was a reality. Antonius' crimes by comparison were tame, he merely stirred up trouble where it already existed. Lepidus on the other hand had managed to eclipse this and all past actions, by willingly exchanging peace and victory for more civil war. For this he is *hated* by the *civitas,* more than Antonius ever was. The term used here, *odium*, has strong ties to thinking about tyrannical behaviour.[82] The idea that the *causa Lepidi* was both indistinguishable from Antonius' but also by *universal judgement* considered *durior*—harsher and less defensible—was echoed again in a letter to Brutus, in addition to the repeated emphasis of another tyrannical trait, *crudelis* (cruelty).[83] Lepidus had thus transformed into a creature to be reviled.[84] He had been instrumental in facilitating the reascendancy of a would-be tyrant, more troubling however was the inexplicability that in doing so he became something worse himself.

Triumviral Tyranny

> Quid hac virtute efficaciu[s], praebere Caesari clementia[e locum et cum cu]stodia spiritus mei not[a]re inportunam crudelitatem [Lepidi egregia tua] patientia
>
> What could have been more effective than this courage of yours, to offer Caesar an opportunity for clemency and, while preserving my life, to brand the ruthless cruelty of Lepidus through your own exceptional willingness to endure hardship?
>
> *CIL* 6.41062, 2.19-21[85]

The *res publica* was turned on its head, mirroring, yet freely rearranging, familiar patterns of past civil wars. Now, not only might an act of political suicide signal the danger of imminent war rather than protest its outcome, but also that most despised measure of terror, proscription, spoke not of victory and controlled purges to prevent cycles of reprisal, but

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[81] Cic. *Fam.* 11.18.2 [SB 397], with a note of skepticism.

[82] A famous line from Accius' Atreus, *oderint dum metuant*, is retooled by writers and commentators such as Cicero and Nepos to explore the fundamental character of despots and the inevitable outcome which awaits them; see Slingsby (2019), 60-63, with references.

[83] Cic. *Ad Brut.* 1.12.1-2 [SB 21].

[84] To desire civil war is to revoke one's status as citizen or even man; Cic. *Phil.* 13.1.

[85] Text and translation in Osgood (2014).

instead warned of arbitrary violence and substantial losses to come.[86] The new extraordinary magistracies of the triumvirs embedded within their titulature their aim and justification: *IIIviri rei publicae constituendae*. The five year task before them, the 'triumviral assignment', specified three primary goals: the pursuit and punishment of Caesar's remaining assassins, ending civil wars, and setting the state back in order.[87] Italy under the triumvirs was crueler than this mission suggests. Most unnervingly, the machinery of the state which was meant to protect its citizens was complicit with the terror.[88] The ominous tendrils of proscription now enforced decisions of collaboration or resistance, as kin, friend, and slave were obliged to report the whereabouts of the proscribed. The resulting tales of danger, escape, loyalty and betrayal deeply inscribed themselves within the Roman imagination, sympathising with the victims and enduring as a way of remembering (and memorialising) the difficult history of triumviral Rome.

Naturally, the blame was shuffled, alternately attributing the proscriptions to Lepidus, Antonius or the Young Caesar, or pairs thereof.[89] Remembering the civil wars, writing them down, was a path neither simple nor straightforward. As Horace warned Pollio in the 20s it could be a dangerous path indeed.[90] There were other ways to preserve memory, and to publicise it. Approximately ten years after Horace's advice, in a eulogy to a wife known as the *laudatio Turiae*, a stirring life's story was monumentalised in stone.[91] Far from shying away from the turbulent and uncomfortable years of civic strife, key moments provided the setting for some of the husband's most effusive praise. The wife's virtues in all areas were beyond reproach, but it was the devotion manifested in her public activities that made her remarkable.[92]

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[86] Hinard (1985), 306, notes the inextricable link between civil war victory, purging and proscription in the minds of Romans which ultimately contributed to the surprise of proscription's novel use as a 'trigger' for war; for a compelling analysis of the proscriptions which emphasises their terrorist nature, see 303-312. Hurlet (2020), 237, describes a city 'paralysed' with fear following the initial men targeted prior to the posting of official lists, and the subsequent atmosphere of uncertainty as names of the proscribed were progressively supplemented. For an exploration of how the triumvirs attempted to 'pitch' their actions at the time, see Welch (2019).

[87] Lange (2009), 18-33. On the nature of this magistracy and its relationship to existing institutional frameworks see Vervaet (2020).

[88] Ando (2020), *passim* esp. 478 notes the perversion to predation; read with the entire collection in Pina Polo (2020).

[89] On reassigning blame, see Welch (2019), 243-253.

[90] Hor. *Carm*. 2.1.7-8.

[91] Gowing (1992b), 295, has the *terminus ante quem* at 9; Osgood (2014), 153, suggests 6. On the difficulties identifying the wife and *laudator*, see, with bibliography, Osgood (2014), 117-124.

[92] The expected 'domestic' virtues are commemorated with much more efficiency, see 1.30-36.

A highly dramatic confrontation with the triumvir Lepidus in 42 demonstrates the pinnacle of the wife's successes, and her torments.[93] The treatment is excessively long, pointing to its exemplary resonance.[94] Its configuration of Lepidus further supports the trend so far illustrated in this chapter, that he can be used to great effect in blurring and transgressing the boundaries of civil war leadership. In this case however, a provocative contrast is made with the wife, who embodies the *virtus* one should expect of Lepidus.

Having sought pardon for her proscribed husband from the Young Caesar, she presented his *edictum* to Lepidus, triumvir and consul in charge of affairs in Rome, who needed to provide confirmation.[95] Not only was Lepidus uncooperative, but he is depicted as brutal and ruthless:

> Acerbissumum tamen in vi[ta] mihi accidisse tua vice fatebo[r, reddito me iam] cive patriae beneficio et i[ud]icio apsentis Caesaris Augusti, [quom per te] de restitutione mea M. L[epi]dus conlega praesens interp[ellaretur et ad eius] pedes prostrata humi [n]on modo non adlevata, sed tra[cta et servilem in] modum rapsata, livori[bus c]orporis repleta, firmissimo [animo eum admone]res edicti Caesaris cum g[r]atulatione restitutionis me[ae atque vocibus eti]am contumeliosis et cr[ud]elibus exceptis volneribus pa[lam ea praeferres,] ut auctor meorum peric[ul]orum notesceret.—Quoi no[cuit mox ea res.]
>
> Quid hac virtute efficaciu[s], praebere Caesari clementia[e locum et cum cu]stodia spiritus mei not[a]re inportunam crudelitatem [Lepidi egregia tua] patientia
>
> Nevertheless I have to say that the most distressing thing to happen to me in life was what happened to you. Thanks to the favorable decision of Caesar Augustus, then away from Rome, I was restored as a citizen of our country. You then confronted his colleague Marcus Lepidus, who was in charge in Rome, about my reinstatement. Prostrate on the ground before his feet, not only were you not lifted up, you were also dragged and carried off like a slave. Your body was covered with bruises, but most strenuously you kept reminding him about Caesar's edict with its rejoicing over my restoration, and although you had to endure Lepidus' insulting words and cruel wounds, you kept on putting forward your case in the open so that the person responsible for my trials would be publicly disgraced. It was not long before his behavior brought him to harm.
>
> What could have been more effective than this courage of yours, to offer Caesar an opportunity for clemency and, while preserving my life, to brand the ruthless cruelty of Lepidus through your own exceptional willingness to endure hardship?[96]

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[93] Gowing (1992b), 285, suggests late November or December.

[94] Various commentators have noted the surprising amount of time spent on Lepidus, for example Gowing (1992b), 296.

[95] The precise nature of the Young Caesar's *edicum* is unclear, for a discussion on the formal and informal reasons for requiring Lepidus' confirmation see Gowing (1992b), 285-288, also Osgood (2014), 55-56 and Franco (2016), 140-142. Hinard (1985), 248-255, notes the inconsistent rules applied in removing names from the proscription lists. Millar (1973), 59-61, challenges the idea that this episode, among others, represented an instance of routine personal jurisdiction of the kind Caesar used as dictator.

[96] *CIL* 6.41062, 2.11-21, trans. Osgood (2014).

Within this domestic tribunal where we might anticipate the good judge or the just leader, instead we are faced with Lepidus the tyrant. The political character of this section of the epitaph has been well observed, as the *laudator* carefully navigates the terror of triumviral Rome by echoing the work of Augustan propoganda, both its elevation of the virtue of *clementia* and the negative portrayal of Lepidus, here a foil for Augustus' own hand in the proscriptions.[97] In contrast to the Young Caesar's *clementia*, Lepidus is branded with *importuna crudelitas*.[98] *Clementia* had similarly been used earlier in the inscription as having been 'won' (*vinco*) by the wife from Caesar following the war with Pompeius, and used to shield (*munio*) her husband from harm.[99] Although not his own preferred term for his policy at the time, he explicitly sought to position his actions as the inverse of *crudelitas*.[100] Here Lepidus' cruelty is not merely an unwillingness to extend *clementia*, but in his ruthless application of excessive and gendered violence.

Further bolstering the claim of *importunam crudelitatem* is a proliferation of excessively violent language and transgressive ideas.[101] Some key observations are worth noting. The primary action of the wife is one of prostration (*prostrata humi*). Ritual dictates that this act of submission be followed by a gesture to stand up (*adlevare*) and by rejecting the role of a clement ruler Lepidus instead falls into a well established and highly negative mould.[102] This is further intensified by additional acts of mistreatment. The matron is dragged (*tracta*), bruised all over (*replere aliquem livoribus*) and endures insults and cruel wounds (*contumeliosis et crudelibus…volneribus*). Identity between the infrequent verb *rapsare* and *vexare* fills out the picture further, contributing the latter's sense of violence dependant on the arbitrariness of another, a man who is not in control of himself.[103] These very visible signs of violence served as 'proof' of Lepidus' abhorrent nature; it also imbued a starkly military character to the

[97] On the *laudator*'s delicate handling and the influence of Augustan propaganda see Gowing (1992b), *passim* esp. 288, 291, 293, and Franco (2016), 138-139, 150-151, who also notes an Augustan tendency to silence and delegitimise Lepidus. For Henderson (1997), 101 n.39, the text 'parades the prototype Augustan incrimination of Lepidus'.

[98] See Dowling (2006), 18-28, 40-45, 149-151, on the evolution of *clementia* and the parallel development of *crudelitas*.

[99] *CIL* 6.41062, 1.6a.

[100] See Griffin (2003), 159-163, for a discussion on Caesar's preferred use of *lenitas* and *misericordia,* and why he might have avoided *clementia*. For Caesar's response in 49 to Cicero's praise of his *clementia*, see *Att.* 9.16.2 [SB 185], he was unequivocal: *Recte auguraris de me (bene enim tibi cognitus sum) nihil a me abesse longius crudelitate.*

[101] The range of vocabulary has been examined closely by Franco (2016), 145-150, who also draws out relevant linguistic parallels and contextual background.

[102] Franco (2016), 145-147.

[103] Franco (2016), 148.

tribunal's proceedings.[104] The incongruence of this entire scene, its importation of the field into a domestic space and the forced introduction of a woman into this masculine domain, serves to elevate the already very negative depiction of Lepidus.

The public nature of the scene, reiterated within the text, is evidently important. This idea is amplified further not only in the presumed speech act of the *laudatio* at the funeral but in the physicality and display of the marble monument itself.[105] Together, these immortalise not so much a judgement of Lepidus as the elevated judgement of the 'submissive', the wife, upon him, as she acts politically in a public forum. While Lepidus is shown to break down and reject the expected virtues of a good Roman man and leader, the wife is remarkably described throughout the entire text as possessing typically male qualities such as courage (*virtus*), firmness of mind (*firmitas animi*), steadfastness (*constantia*), and endurance (*patientia*).[106] While not an exact match, these certainly echo the attributes of ideal leadership discussed in earlier chapters. Lepidus's insufficiencies by contrast are glaring. He fell, like a bested commander, into her carefully orchestrated trap that allowed the wife to publicly humiliate and expose his brutality; the man who quite possibly proscribed her husband.[107] She sacrificed her dignity so that she might *notare*, brand, or censure, Lepidus for all to see.[108] Her service is made to extend to the entire community, indeed it is hinted that the revelation of Lepidus' tyrannical behaviour is linked to his ultimate downfall. The preference to be feared can only lead to destruction, we are confronted with the familiar idea that the tyrant is always made to face the consequences of his actions.[109]

The reality of Lepidus' portrayal has rightfully been questioned, as has the scholarship's largely uncritical acceptance of his behaviour.[110] Exaggeration and embellishment were typical of the

[104] Franco (2016), 149. Many of the wife's actions during the civil wars are described using martial terminology with her husband summarising her merits using *speculatrix* and *propugnatrix*; see Hemelrijk (2004), 189.

[105] See Osgood (2014), 135-149, for a discussion of the physical monument and associated funerary practices.

[106] *CIL* 6.41062, 2.6a, 19, 2.8a, 15, 1.25, 2,21. Hemelrijk (2004), 190, also notes the inversion of male/female roles between the wife and the husband.

[107] Osgood (2014), 56-60, discusses this 'political ploy' and links it to earlier acts of civil disobedience under the triumvirs including the group led by Hortensia. Wistrand (1976), 49, suggests the husband may be promoting the idea that his wife's intervention helped initiate Lepidus' downfall by provoking the Young Caesar's anger. Hinard (1985), 249, suggests that Lepidus' proscription of the husband may have contributed to his hostility toward the edict.

[108] For this usage of *notare* see OLD s.v. *noto* 3.

[109] For the the idea, recently illustrated by the fate of Caesar, that death awaits the tyrant see for example Cic. *Phil.* 1.35 and *Off.* 2.23 with Pina Polo (2006), *passim* esp. 75-76.

[110] Gowing (1992b).

genre, and this paired with the political burden of the civil war victor's outlook necessarily led the *laudator* to stretch the truth.[111] In reality, Lepidus' objection to the Young Caesar's edict may have been legally justified; in any case, the intervention represented a threat to Lepidus' authority. Despite this, the worst Lepidus likely did was deploy his lictors to remove the wife from his presence, an action which itself was still a violation of her rights as a citizen and *matrona*.[112] The depiction of more aggressive tactics must be understood in light of the above considerations as part of a tradition looking to discredit Lepidus, and from the perspective of the husband, as an acknowledgment of his debt to Augustus.

The apologetic component of the inscription makes strong use of binary language—in *clementia* and *crudelitas*—to convey its alignment with the victor. Yet ultimately this obscures the fundamentally amorphous quality of the ideal civil war leader. For someone like Lepidus, although echoes of that uncomfortable quality which sees him inhabiting liminal spaces is used to the *laudator*'s advantage, in the unforgiving designation of *crudelitas* his complexity is compressed. Glimpses from the time reveal how Lepidus too was starting to exploit these binaries, possibly as a tool to mitigate some of the previous invective against him that challenged the weight of his conviction. An anecdote from an eyewitness account preserved in Suetonius recalls how at a senatorial meeting in early 41 Lepidus discussed the conclusion of the proscriptions, and in contrast to a petulant Caesar, advocated for *clementia*.[113] Enough punishment (*poena*), he claims, had been exacted. For the civil war leader acting as judge, ambivalence appeared to have no place.

[111] Gowing (1992b), 283-284, 292-293.

[112] Gowing (1992b), 294, discusses this more likely scenario with reference to the negative reaction received by the triumvirs for using their lictors to disperse the women gathered with Hortensia.

[113] Suet. *Aug.* 27.2. The eyewitness, Julius Saturninus, presumably a senator, is unknown outside of references in Suetonius; see Introduction in vol. 1 Cornell (2013). On the date of the speech, see Gowing (1992b), 292 n.33.

The Elder Lepidus

> …M. Lepidus nobilissimae stirpis, quem divorti anxietate diximus mortuum, flammae vi e rogo eiectus recondi propter ardorem non potuisset, iuxta sarmentis aliis nudus crematus est.
>
> …the corpse of Marcus Lepidus, the man of distinguished family whose death from anxiety about his divorce we have recorded above, had been dislodged from the pyre by the violence of the flame, and as it was impossible to put it back again because of the heat, it was burnt naked with a fresh supply of brushwood at the side of the pyre.
>
> Plin. *HN* 7.186[114]

At the onset of the previous chapter, it was posited that the spectre of the elder Lepidus was a presence his two surviving sons could not ignore.[115] In general it is surprising how little the potential consequences of this family history is acknowledged in the scholarship, and to my knowledge, not ever in relation to questions of leadership during civil dissension.[116] But as the younger Lepidus became increasingly exposed to resonances of Sullan terror—one need only recall the triumviral proscription edict which explicitly defined their programme as a less severe version of Sulla's own measures—memories of the father's relationship to the man would surely have found their way to the surface.[117] Yet very little in the extant contemporary material makes explicit parallels between father and son.[118] I posit this is both telling of the danger looming here in addition to the successfulness of familial strategies of reintegration undertaken by Lepidus and Paullus.[119] The triumvir's political trajectory certainly shook things up. As his capacity to lead became increasingly under scrutiny, the resurfacing of the morally and politically complex figure that was his father, most notably in Sallust's grand *Historiae* where he is given the first set-piece speech, feels pointed.

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[114] trans. Rackham (1942) with minor amendment.

[115] The memory of an older brother, adopted by a Scipio and, if not proscribed himself, suffered the fate of a son of the proscribed, to then be killed fighting alongside his biological father, would doubtless serve as another reminder of the personal losses of civil war. For this son see Oros. 5.22.17, 24.16, with full discussion in Rosenblitt (2014), 419-422.

[116] Exceptions include Hayne (1972a) and Osgood and Niederwieser (2020).

[117] For the edict see App. *B Civ.* 4.10. Vell. Pat. 2.66.1, speaks of the triumvirate's renewal of Sullan evils. Lepidus' relationship with Sulla was complicated further by his earlier cooperation and benefit from the proscriptions, see Hayne (1972b), 661-663, with references.

[118] cf. the late antique reference in Rut. Namat. 1.295-312, which alluding to a 'Lepidian infection', cites the father, triumvir, triumvir's son (who was executed for attempting to assassinate the Young Caesar in 30), and a later Lepidus active under Caligula.

[119] On civil war precipitating the need for families to 'reknit' themselves back into the community see Osgood and Niederwieser (2020).

The elder Lepidus' final years (79-77) were eventful and violent, a 'counter-revolution' which deeply challenged the community's response to 'post-conflict' scenarios.[120] It was a time plagued by instability and required careful manoeuvring in response to complex political and social realities, not least including Sulla's retirement to private life and his death not long thereafter.[121] What follows is a brief summary of events.[122] After canvassing for the consulship in 79, with the conspicuous backing of Pompeius against Sulla's wishes, Lepidus secured the position with the most votes and Q. Lutatius Catulus as colleague. As consul, his legislative programme sought to address a range of issues, from corn distributions to the restoration of exiles, many of which posed a challenge to the Sullan settlement. The relationship between the two consuls was famously fraught from the onset, a situation which only escalated when both were sent with armies to Faesulae to confront revolts against Sulla's measures. There, Lepidus took up the cause of the dispossessed. When recalled to Rome to preside over delayed elections, Lepidus, with troops and having demanded a second consulship, fought Catulus' army just outside the city and was officially declared a *hostis*. Although defeated, with the support of men from prominent families, including L. Cornelius Cinna and M. Junius Brutus, further fighting took place in Etruria and Sardinia where Lepidus eventually died.

The younger Lepidus would have been around eleven or twelve when his father and namesake died ignominiously and was deprived the usual *pompa funebris*.[123] While it is impossible to fully comprehend the impact these events might have had on a young boy's worldview, we might safely assume that from an early age he developed a keen awareness of the consequences

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[120] On the appropriateness of the label 'counter-revolution', see Rosenblitt (2019), 61.

[121] For a detailed and at times necessarily speculative account of these distinctive years and the political motives of key individuals see Rosenblitt (2019), *passim* esp. 31-79, and (2014). For an exploration of the ideological differences which drove the quarrel between Lepidus and his colleague Catulus and the careful use of moral language to situate these leaders with regards to one another and the *res* publica see Arena (2011). Burton (2014), *passim* esp. 419, draws attention to the idea of a 'misalignment of fears' as fuelling tension between Catulus, Philippus their supporters, and those led by Lepidus, although see Rosenblitt (2019), 174 n.73 who is skeptical of this reading; in addition, see 406-408 for a helpful timeline with references. Earlier, Hayne (1972b) sought to rehabilitate a picture of Lepidus during these years, although presents him as a moderate politician. Syme (2016), is particularly useful on Lepidus' earlier relationship with Sulla. For a summary of the conflict and a discussion of the repercussions for the families involved see Osgood and Niederwieser (2020). On the 70s see Santangelo (2014).

[122] Further detail may be found in Rosenblitt (2014) and (2019) and Burton (2014).

[123] Allély (2008), 610.

of civil dissension.[124] Stories, like the one preserved by Pliny above, must have fuelled the oral histories of civil war.[125] During his exposition on prior civil wars to contrast his own successes without bloodshed, Cicero, in his *Third Catilinarian*, remarks negatively of Lepidus that the *res publica* did not mourn his death so much as the citizens who died with him.[126] Pliny's account recalls an end which was most undignified: Lepidus's body thrown violently from the pyre by its flames to be exposed, naked, at its side, and arduously cremated with bundles of twigs. This could not be further from the expected magnificence of an aristocratic funeral, the impact of which is emphasised by Pliny's mention of his *nobilissimae stirpes* and even the reiteration of his divorce reminding readers of his distant family and lack of mourners.[127] It is through the imagery of fire that we are implicitly reminded of civil war; it was an apt metaphor and warning which gained traction as a way to describe the persistent threat of violence, and the difficulties in truly bringing an end to internal conflicts. Horace used it to great rhetorical effect, capitalising on civil war's insidious character and its propensity for sudden and disastrous renewal.[128] Lepidus was repeatedly associated with this idea.[129] This association may have been further strengthened once his son too was roundly criticised for reigniting war amid the bloom of peace.[130] This particular dishonour, of re-embroiling Rome in a war it thought had concluded, would draw a strong parallel between father and son. When only months before the younger Lepidus had been awarded honours explicitly for *extinguishing* the threat of civil war, the disruptive potential he embodies becomes even more acute.[131] In occupying both sides of the threshold he transforms into something incomprehensible. The particular

[124] Gotter (2000), 330-332, identifies these as important considerations in Brutus' parallel experience, his father having been executed by Pompeius while acting as Lepidus' legate. The lack of proper opportunity to transfer the individual from the living political world to that of collective memory represented a 'familiäre Katastrophe'. Allély (2004), 18-19, remarks only that the brothers Lepidus and Paullus were not adversely impacted in their advancement of the *cursus honorum*; see also Allély (2008), 614-616 and Hayne (1972b), 668. Rosenblitt (2019), 77-78, argues that the subsequent election of Mamercus Aemilius Lepidus Livianus and Decimus Iunius Brutus as consuls for 77 was the result of concerted efforts by multiple parties and represented a 'public guarantee' that the political fortunes of the Aemilii and Iunii Bruti would not suffer from the exclusionary politics for which Sulla was known. On the funeral procession and associated memory practices in general see Flaig (1995) and Flower (1996).

[125] In general on the transmission of oral memory in civil war, see Rosillo-López (2023).

[126] Cic. *Cat.* 3.24.

[127] Pliny, *HN* 7.122, 186, credits love and grief over his divorce for his death, Florus 2.11.7, later cites disease and tellingly, remorse.

[128] Hor. *Carm.* 2.1.7-8.

[129] Flor. 2.11.1, Oros. 22.18, 24.16, Plin. *HN* 7.178, Sall. *Hist.* 1.67.8, 10R.

[130] See for example Pollio in early June 43, Cic. *Fam.* 10.33.5 [SB 409], describing the need to 'quench the devouring flames'. Later, Florus (2.16), describes Lepidus joining Antonius as adding 'fire to fire'. The conspiracy of Lepidus' son (the elder Lepidus' grandson) against the young Caesar is described by Velleius (2.88) as an attempt to 'rekindle' civil war.

[131] See again Cic. *Phil.* 5.39, 41, with OLD s.v. *exstinguo* 1 and *restinguo* 1, which can both refer to the tamping out of flames.

symbolism of fire and its occupation of liminal spaces and ideas, its ability to represent points of change, only strengthens this tapestry of ideas.

Not long before the momentous turn of events which saw Lepidus and Antonius join forces, Cicero had, in his *Thirteenth Philippic,* argued vehemently against Lepidus' public calls for peace, addressing the absent statesman and commander directly a number of times.[132] For all Cicero's praise of Lepidus, there was a thread of distrust lingering beneath the surface, one which draws attention to some very potent concerns regarding Lepidus' loyalty and his very frame of mind.[133] Lepidus' disposition was one thing, but the true concern plaguing the senators in Rome was what this meant for the considerable forces under his command.[134] With this in mind Cicero launched into a pointed reproof, dismissing the fanciful notion that the army was the general's personal instrument, rather than beholden to the senate and the people of Rome; it was only arrogance which made men think otherwise.[135] It is therefore entirely inappropriate for these forces to be allowed to intimidate the *patria* and facilitate an individual's every whim in his search for personal power: just because an individual can do something it does not mean he should. In exhorting Lepidus to heed his obligations to the people and to the senate, he reflects:

> Haec si cogitas, es M. Lepidus, pontifex maximus, M. Lepidi, pontificis maximi, pronepos; sin hominibus tantum licere iudicas quantum possunt, vide ne alienis exemplis eisque recentibus uti quam et antiquis et domesticis malle videare.
>
> If you think along these lines, you are Marcus Lepidus, pontifex maximus, great-grandson of Marcus Lepidus, pontifex maximus. But if you judge that people are permitted to do anything they have the power to do, consider lest you seem to be preferring to follow recent precedents drawn from outside your family rather than ancient and familial ones.[136]

Cicero at first recalls Lepidus' illustrious great-grandfather, another Marcus Aemilius Lepidus and an important family *exemplum* whom Lepidus previously featured on coins.[137] In contrast, the subsequent line omits any explicit naming of a negative *exemplum*, instead referring vaguely to *aliena exempla recentis.* Commentators have called out the lie, and Weigel explains

[132] Cic. *Phil.* 13.10, 14-15, 21.

[133] Weigel (1992), 54-55, reads these tensions in the very premise of questioning Lepidus' judgement over the prospect of peace. The loeb edition draws attention to Cicero's underlying distrust, see n.25 and 74. The aside at Cic. *Phil.* 13.43 is particularly suggestive.

[134] For a discussion of the character of Lepidus' seven legions see Botermann (1968), 116-119.

[135] Cic. *Phil.* 13.14.

[136] Cic. *Phil.* 13.15, trans. Shackleton Bailey (2010b).

[137] On Lepidus' great-grandfather as a personal *exemplum* and Lepidus' coins, see chapter two n.126. On the general function of *exempla*, see Roller (2018); on civil war, Havener (2023); and on Cicero's use of family *exempla*, van der Blom (2010), 93–103.

how Cicero 'avoided any reference to the one ancestor whom he probably felt Lepidus was in danger of imitating'.[138] 'Avoided' is the wrong word. The deception here is so blatant, so glaring, that immense power lies in the absence of his father's name—the *same* name Cicero has already cited here twice.

Cicero had to great effect in his *Second Philippic* utilised competing family *exempla*, juxtaposing the choice for Antonius between his uncle and stepfather.[139] While the situation is not entirely analogous—Antonius was being censured for past behaviour, Lepidus encouraged for the future—it is suggestive that Cicero's silence, and in fact misinformation about Lepidus' family, was intended to draw attention. Indeed the complicit erasure only deepens the threat of the unnamed. For Lepidus to follow that path would be to reinscribe the family's shame and losses in civil war back into the collective memory and undo all the good work he and his brother had done re-knitting their family back into the political community. A point Cicero had earlier stressed by recapitulating Lepidus' merits already detailed in the *Fifth Philippic,* reminding him of the many attainments which 'commemorate him, his brother, and their ancestors', praising his wife and children and ample wealth 'untainted by civil bloodshed', before, immediately preceding his veiled concerns for the future, celebrating Paullus' recent work as an envoy to Sextus as evidence of his own 'unflagging, steadfast patriotism'.[140] These sections insistently emphasise the importance of a prestigious family's behaviour during civil war. Most pressingly, Cicero seems to be working hard to keep the brothers united and working towards the same valiant goal: keeping this family of the 'right' side.[141] The boundary had been drawn, and Cicero challenges Lepidus by holding up to him the shadow of an outline, evoking his father without naming him, and leaving Lepidus suspended in a space all too familiar. In that moment of potential, he was both his father and not his father.

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[138] Refer n.22 in the loeb edition and Weigel (1992), 55. Although in Novielli's (2001), 99-100, commentary no allusion to Lepidus' father is suspected, rather, Julius Caesar. Osgood and Niederwieser (2020), 179-180, note an attempt to turn his family history against him. Allély (2004), does not mention the passage. Syme (1964), 222, expresses 'no doubt' that in his later *Philippics* Cicero would have named the father 'in proper detestation'.

[139] Cic. *Phil.* 2.14 with van der Blom (2010), 96-97.

[140] Cic. *Phil.* 13.7-9, 13.

[141] An interesting comparison is provided in the faithless and debauched description of brothers Antonius and Lucius at Cic. *Phil.* 13.4.

In a much changed, yet equally uncertain world, Sallust began his ambitious historical project, probably around year four of the triumvirate.[142] Scholarship has firmly established that, in composing the *Historiae*, Sallust sought both to comment on the turbulent times in which he lived and to reflect on those he had already witnessed.[143] Many complex themes and concerns arise in the extant text, including, for example, the discourse of the *pauci potentes* and the troubling use of slogans like '*libertas*' which can be deployed against the same person who purports to champion it. The complexities of his critique are such that each structuring decision is influenced by diverse objectives and it is not my intention to diminish the critical nature of these other forces. Yet it seems a striking decision to give the 'erased' father of one of the triumvirs the first 'external' voice, one that might compete with the authorial one, and one so important for setting the tone of the *Historiae*.[144]

Lepidus' is the voice of dissent. He fiercely attacks the tyranny (*tyrannis*) of Sulla, and it is not a substantial leap to see his words as a critique of his son and his triumviral colleagues. Fear, cruelty, oppression, and injustice all feature heavily throughout, and there is much in the speech which echoes concerns we have seen attached to the younger Lepidus.[145] But it is to Sallust's depiction of Lepidus as a would-be leader that I instead wish to turn. Lepidus is an ambivalent figure and Sallust's portrait 'pulls in different directions'.[146] At times, readers can hear the authorial voice, rightfully condemning the kinds of individuals Lepidus describes, and yet, Sallust disapproves of Lepidus. This assessment becomes increasingly clear as the reader is encouraged to interrogate elements of Lepidus' claims, a task advanced through the rhetorical structure of the speech but made unavoidably clear by the next set-piece oration of L. Marcius Philippus, who urges the senate to act decisively against the seditious proconsul.[147]

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[142] For the date of the Histories see McGushin (1992), 18-20 and Gerrish (2019), 2-3. Important monographs dealing with this fragmentary text include Earl (1961), Syme (1964), McGushin (1992), Funari and La Penna (2015), Gerrish (2019) and Rosenblitt (2019).

[143] On his dynamic approach to writing history, see for example, Gerrish (2019).

[144] Sall. *Hist.* fr. 1.49R. Rosenblitt (2019), 93-96, provides a useful summary of the scholarship on the speech, with references. Both Rosenblitt (2019), 94, and Gerrish (2019), 40 highlight its importance for tone setting.

[145] Gerrish (2019), 39-41, 60, in particular emphasises the importance of temporal slippage between people and events. See Sall. *Hist.* fr. 1.49.24-26, with commentary at McGushin (1992), 32 and Funari and La Penna (2015), 217-218; also *Hist.* fr. 1.49.14 with Syme (1964), 220, who notes how it 'pleased Sallust's irony to have the father denounce murder and spoliation in crude and vigorous terms'.

[146] On this and the next point, see Rosenblitt (2014), 447-448. The below on Lepidus' speech follows the trajectory of their analysis.

[147] For the importance of the speech's structure in guiding the reader see Rosenblitt (2014). Sallust's exploration of 'hostile politics' underlies the desire to challenge the rhetoric of all parties involved, see Rosenblitt (2019), *passim* esp. 131-138. For Philippus' speech see Sall. *Hist.* fr. 1.67R.

Lepidus' speech is a call to action. He encourages the people of Rome to first, recognise the state of tyranny which has been concealed from then, and to second, take a stand against this oppression. A declaration of Lepidus' own role is left vague, initially only warning the audience as to the dangers of waiting for someone to assume the role of *princeps*.[148] It is not until the final line where he exhorts '…follow Marcus Aemilius, your consul, as your leader and advocate for the recovery of freedom!' where he explicitly seeks to take charge, claiming not one, but three titles of leadership: *consul*, *dux*, and *auctor*.[149] And yet despite the inevitable violence readers are trained to associate with the fight for *libertas*, earlier Lepidus had made promises to avoid violence and bloodshed:[150]

> Satis illa fuerint, quae rabie contracta toleravimus, manus conserentis inter se Romanos exercitus et arma ab externis in nosmet vorsa. Scelerum et contumeliarum omnium finis sit…
>
> Let those sufferings be enough which we have endured as the product of frenzy: Roman armies fighting hand to hand against each other, and our arms turned away from outsiders against our very selves. Let there be an end of all crimes and outrages…[151]

The significance of these promises is heightened by their position in a *confutatio*, which invites the reader to assess Lepidus against the terms which he himself had laid out.[152] Readers well aware of the ultimate outcome of Lepidus' efforts, may begin to discern a pattern of his attempts to occupy incompatible positions. Layers of hypocrisy weave their way through the speech. Another example sees Lepidus justifying his gains from the proscriptions by appealing to personal safety, only subsequently to encourage his audience that virtue is superior to concerns of safety.[153] All this contributes to the 'unravelling of his persona'.[154] The surrounding detail of the *Historiae* further undercuts Lepidus' attempts to distance his leadership from violence, with a later fragment suggesting that it was in fact the very prospect of Lepidus' leadership which incited the Etruscan desire for war.[155] Then, in the opening of his later speech, Philippus mocks the idea of offering peace terms to Lepidus, unless, of course, war

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148 Sall. *Hist.* fr. 1.49.20R.

149 Sall. *Hist.* fr. 1.49.27R, trans. Ramsey (2015).

150 On the new moral force behind *libertas* and its attachment to individual *iudicium* see Arena (2007). On the fundamental disagreements over how best to pursue it see Arena (2012) with (2011).

151 Sall. *Hist.* fr. 1.49.19R, trans. Ramsey (2015).

152 On reclassifying a part of the speech as a *confutatio* and the way in which this 'invites, prioritises, and structures the readers judgement', see Rosenblitt (2014), *passim* esp. 451-453, 460-467.

153 cf. Sall. *Hist.* fr. 1.49.18R and 1.49.15R.

154 Rosenblitt (2014), 464.

155 Sall. *Hist.* fr. 1.59R. While unnamed, it is highly likely this fragment refers to Lepidus, see Ramsey (2015), 59 and McGushin (1992), 33.

was the true objective.[156] The absurdity of a man who would claim both things underscores his criticism. The younger Lepidus was no longer of political significance at the time Sallust was writing. Yet these initial resonances of character is striking. When reading of the father, the recently disgraced triumvir was doubtless to come to mind, reinforcing the contradictions and concerns that had already shaped the audience's perception of his character. Perhaps, then, it could even be used to explain his downfall: ultimately the civil war leader that tried to be too many things, would be no leader at all.

[156] Sall. *Hist.* fr. 1.67.2R, trans. Ramsey (2015).

Final Observations

…sed instrumentum regni delatum ad Lepidum et Antonium, quorum alter inconstantior, alter impurior, uterque pacem metuens, inimicus otio.

…but the apparatus of monarchy descended to Lepidus and Antony, one more of a weathercock, the other more of a blackguard, both afraid of peace and hostile to domestic tranquility.

Cic. *Ad Brut.* 1.15.4 [SB 23][1]

Cicero could bemoan the apparatus of monarchy's descent onto Lepidus and Antonius as if it were an unyielding and predictable framework for behaviour.[2] If reorienting the discussion around Lepidus has revealed anything, it is that civil war leadership encompassed multitudes. In Lepidus' case, it also persistently embraced contradictions.

Lepidus' competences posed problems. He was no charismatic general, yet his position as a commander with troops at his disposal gave him much of the power that had caused concern among his peers. In the field, depictions of Lepidus largely focused on either camp politics and administration (the suicide of his legate) or the outcome of peace negotiations (the conflict in Spain). Conversely, his activities in the city included transgressive moments of military force (after the Ides) or even violence (at his tribunal with the wife). The familiar impression of uncomfortableness with Lepidus, conceived as a leader, is, I contend, a result of often subtle expressions of these very transgressions. He blurred the boundaries between statesman and general, but not in the way many had become accustomed to over the course of Rome's civil wars. Typically, calculated military manoeuvres had been used to exert pressure on the political sphere, such were the approaches of Sulla, Julius Caesar, and the Young Caesar. Lepidus imprecisely inverted this expectation. He often trialled domestic behaviours in the field through the promotion of pathways that preferenced non-violence. Yet, he brought violence into the city as an author of the proscriptions.

As a result, he inadvertently became an ideal candidate for the community to test, challenge and come to terms with their leaders during civil war. *Bellum civile* disrupts categories. So did Lepidus. He transgresses boundaries, blurs, and overlaps them—though not necessarily

[1] trans. Shackleton Bailey (2002).

[2] OLD s.v. *instrumentum* 3.

through any innovation of his own. This thesis has sought to bring these tensions forward, to dwell in the chaos of attempting to navigate crisis in Rome. My first chapter set the stage for what followed by investigating the burgeoning interest in defining a Roman model for the ideal general and good victor. Chapter two then explored the notion of victory without bloodshed and argued that, despite its notional appeal, it actually exposed deep concerns over the viability of definitively bringing civil war to an end. A vital thread has been to press at an evolving language of communication, as groups and individuals negotiated the most appropriate forms of praise, but also of blame and protest. Particularly interesting moments arose when the two came into direct contact, as was the case with Lepidus' gilt equestrian statue, which crossed chapters two and four. In chapter three I argued that the unique nexus of historical circumstances Lepidus found himself in needs to be taken more seriously into account, especially in light of the later scrutiny he faced and the perceived need to carefully articulate his relationship with power. Chapter four further advanced the idea that Lepidus relentlessly challenged the shape of the ideal civil war leader by inhabiting the space of paradox and contradiction.

A key contribution of this thesis is that it reclaims something of a contemporary voice; a sense of how a community responded in real-time to the horrors of civil war. Naturally, the narrative continuity provided by later sources such as Appian and Cassius Dio is tempting, but as much as possible I draw on these only to complement the contemporary or near-contemporary material. This approach is further validated by Gowing's observation that the later authors' portrayals of Lepidus exhibit a degree of disinterestedness in the man himself.[3] As a result, major events of Lepidus' story that might otherwise be pertinent to his presentation as a leader, such as his confrontation with the Young Caesar in Sicily in 36, are conspicuously absent. Another primary driver of the project was to both bring to the attention of the reader understudied and undervalued texts and episodes from Lepidus' life, for example the *Bellum Alexandrinum* or the incident concerning Juventius Laterensis, that have the potential to provide new and exciting insights.

Lepidus is a curiosity rarely regarded as such. This claim sits at the heart of this thesis, and is one, I hope, that sparks a new inquisitiveness in the reader. The tapestry of glimpses has by necessity been selective and compact—it is by no means exhaustive. This thesis, then, serves as

[3] Gowing (1992a), 124-126, 141-142.

the eager departure point for further scholarship. There are a number of routes this could take. A broader approach might seek to draw up Lepidus' incarnation of the civil war leader more closely alongside his peers and colleagues to systematically sketch out the unique features of this model of leadership, especially the full extent of the alternative scope for praise and blame. A thread which surfaced a number of times throughout this thesis, but deserves further and more detailed attention, is that of families navigating crisis. The relationship between Lepidus and Paullus, memorably defined by the proscription of the latter, is especially interesting in light of the growing tendency to view fractured families as a mirror of the fractured state. A project that foregrounded the complex intersection of family and leadership through a comparison of Lepidus and Paullus with another pair of active brothers, Antonius and Lucius, would undoubtedly yield fruitful results. On Lepidus' father a lot more work can also be done. Restraints of scope allowed me only to hint at some of the resonances that surface in Sallust's *Historiae*. A dedicated project would be required to tackle this further. As this thesis neared its conclusion, I became ever more convinced that the behavior of the triumvir had an impact on the depictions of his father. Together, they became instrumental in addressing perceived inadequacies of civil war leadership.

Ultimately, this thesis has set out to show what might be gained by reintroducing a leader like Lepidus back into the picture, to hold him up as an intriguing and underexplored part of the discourse of civil war leadership. His own actions, but more importantly, how these were perceived, represented, and put to use by the community, challenged and informed the very nature of what it meant to be a 'good' leader in civil war.

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