

Fractures: Political Identity in the Fall of the Roman Republic

by

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ABSTRACT

This academic thesis examines the development and changes in Political Identity in the Late Roman Republic. After an overview of the Roman institutions and societal patterns among Roman citizens, the work goes on to examine the events of the Late Republican period and how political identities for both powerful and ordinary individuals developed and changed during its course. The main argument of this thesis is that during the Late Republic, the more divisive notion of political identity became the most important factor in the identities of individual Romans, replacing the older, broader “national” identity which had been so prevalent during earlier periods. This shift, coupled with the highly competitive nature of Roman politics, self-perpetuated, and fostered the conditions for the end of Republican rule.

The time period being examined is from 133 B.C to 44 A.D. The major events examined include the tribunates of Tiberius and Gaius Gracchus, the seditions of Sulpicius and Saturninus, the Social War, the Consulships of Gaius Marius and the subsequent civil wars between him and Sulla, the revolts of Lepidus and Sertorius, the conspiracy of Cataline, and the assassination of Julius Caesar.

INTRODUCTION

Primary sources for Roman history contain a multitude of references to Roman cultural patterns. Taken together, a few concrete aspects of the Roman mentality can be distinguished. The following passages shall be used to that effect.

From Polybius:

Whenever any illustrious man dies, he is carried at his funeral into the forum to the so-called rostra, sometimes conspicuous in an upright posture and more rarely reclined. Here with all the people standing round, a grown-up son, if he has left one who happens to be present, or if not some other relative mounts the rostra and discourses on the virtues and successful achievements of the dead. As a consequence the multitude and not only those who had a part in these achievements, but those also who had none, when the facts are recalled to their minds and brought before their eyes, are moved to such sympathy that the loss seems to be not confined to the mourners, but a public one affecting the whole people... Besides, he who makes the oration over the man about to be buried, when he has finished speaking of him recounts the successes and exploits of the rest whose images are present, beginning from the most ancient. By this means, by this constant renewal of the good report of brave men, the celebrity of those who performed noble deeds is rendered immortal, while at the same time the fame of those who did good service to their country becomes known to the people and a heritage for future generations. But the most important result is that young men are thus inspired to endure every suffering for the public welfare in the hope of winning the glory that attends on brave men.¹

From Plutarch:

He (Marius) was eager by every means to excite some new commotions, and hoped that by setting at variance some of the kings, and by exasperating Mithridates, especially, who was then apparently making preparations for war he himself should be chosen general against him, and so furnish the city with new matter of triumph, and his own house with the plunder of Pontus, and the riches of its king. Therefore, though Mithridates entertained him with all imaginable attention and respect, yet he was not at all wrought upon or softened by it, but said, ‘O king, either endeavor to be stronger than the Romans, or else quietly submit to their commands.’ With which he left Mithridates astonished as he indeed had often heard the fame of the bold speaking of the Romans, but now for the first time experienced it.²

From Caesar:

¹ Polybius. *Histories* 6.53-54.

² Plutarch. *Life of Gaius Marius* 31.

In the number of Caesar's cavalry were two Allobrogians, brothers, named Roscillus and Aegus, the sons of Abducillus, who for several years possessed the chief power in his own state; men of singular valor, whose gallant services Caesar had found very useful in all his wars in Gaul. To them, for these reasons, he had committed the offices of greatest honor in their own country, and took care to have them chosen into the Senate at an unusual age, and had bestowed on them lands taken from the enemy, and large pecuniary rewards, and from being needy had made them affluent. Their valor had not only procured them Caesar's esteem, but they were beloved by the whole army. But presuming on Caesar's friendship, and *elated with the arrogance natural to a foolish and barbarous people*, they despised their countrymen, defrauded their cavalry of their pay, and applied all the plunder to their own use.³ Displeased at this conduct, their soldiers went in a body to Caesar, and openly complained of their ill-usage; and to their other charges added, that false musters were given in to Caesar, and the surcharged pay applied to their own use.⁴

From Livy:

Quinctius replied: Archidamus had in his mind those in whose presence rather than those to whose ears he was addressing his remarks, for you Achaeans know perfectly well that all the warlike spirit of the Aetolians lies in words not in deeds, and shows itself in haranguing councils more than on the battlefield. So they are indifferent to the opinion which the Achaeans have of them, because they are aware that they are thoroughly known to them. It is for the king's representatives, and through them for the king himself, that he has uttered this bombast. If anyone did not know before what it was that led Antiochus to make common cause with the Aetolians, it came out clearly in their delegate's speech. By lying to one another and boasting of forces which neither of them possess they have filled each other with vain hopes... It is very like something that happened when we were at supper with my host in Chalcis, a worthy man and one who knows how to feed his guests. It was at the height of summer; we were being sumptuously entertained, and were wondering how he managed to get such an abundance and variety of game at that season of the year. The man, not a boaster like these people, smiled and said, 'That variety of what looks like wild game is due to the condiments and dressing, it has all been made out of a home-bred pig.' This might be fitly said of the king's forces which were just now so extolled. All that variety of equipment and the crowd of names no one ever heard of-Dahae, Medes, Cadusians and Elymaeans – *are nothing but Syrians, whose servile, cringing temper makes them much more like a breed of slaves than a nation of soldiers...*⁵ The king's confidence in the Aetolians is misplaced, so is theirs in his empty professions.⁶

Though each of these passages is written by a different author in a different context, they show continuity in the Roman mentality. To reaffirm the traditional rites and virtues

³ My italics.

⁴ Caesar. *Bellum Civile* 3.59.

⁵ My italics.

⁶ Livy. *Ab Urbe Condita* 35.49.

of the Romans while treating with contempt those who did not exist within that sphere was a common feature of it. The passage from Livy in particular shows the continuity of that mentality through the republic into the empire, because either a speech of a similar nature was given, or it was invented by the author and presents us with a homage to alleged Roman values from the Principate. When compared to the other passages, similarities are easily detected despite the chronological separation of the authors. Roman sources are unique in this sense because they state such mentality almost as a matter of fact, while Greek authors portray words spoken or deeds accomplished with that mentality as exceptional. Taken together, this means Roman identity was easily identifiable to those who held it and those who viewed it from the outside. If Livy's account is taken at face value, it shows the Roman pattern of thought towards foreign peoples at a time when the Romans were approaching complete hegemony over the Mediterranean. Caesar's writing exemplifies a similar attitude in an earlier period. If we look at his account in its own contemporary context, however, it is an indication of the success of the Augustan reforms. Livy's account of this interaction during the Roman-Seleucid war reveals a pattern of Roman resilience, confidence in arms, and superiority in both men and institutions. His bombastic style appropriately characterizes the Romans' opinions of themselves as well. This broad, patriotic national identity is one that was indeed present during the Republic, since it is easily detectable in the above sources as well as others. If Livy's role as the author is any indication, such connections to identity also existed during the Principate. In these periods, the overarching, national Roman identity was the single most important one for those living under Roman hegemony. In the Late Republic, however, the chaotic events which facilitate the transition to imperial rule also changed the ways that Romans identified one another.

The rise of political dynasts such as the Gracchi, the triumvirs, and their respective enemies forced many to abandon their traditional identity as Romans in favor of political identities that were more direct and had more tangible effects on their lives.

The Late Republic has been characterized as a revolutionary time, yet the existence of a unifying identity before and after the Late Republic indicates that the social fabric was not completely undone. There was continuity on a macro level, but when enough individuals or communities acted in unison in the same disruptive direction, that indicates that there were forces which existing institutions and cultural patterns were not sufficient to counter. These forces were the consequences of empire and were almost innumerable. Having long since institutionalized warfare into their political bodies, Romans intrinsically coveted distinction in both civil and military service. By the time of the Late Republic, however, Rome had subdued most of the geopolitical threats that had defied its growing empire. As a result, a limited number of opportunities for military glory existed, while the number of men and families that had achieved distinction and *dignitas* for themselves had steadily increased. As the traditional demand for distinction remained, politics became an increasingly important field in which to win it, but to win distinction among those who were already distinguished required increasingly unorthodox actions. Mob violence, gang warfare, proscriptions, political intimidation, and other heinous activities were never characteristic of earlier republican periods, but their appearance and recurrence in the Late Republic were typically the result of political developments. The drive for distinction in a political system that was already incredibly competitive created new divisions in the population that had previously been unified by a patriotic sense of national identity. This thesis, therefore, attempts to analyze the events and dynasts of the Late Republic and to

determine how each uniquely contributed to the process of political identity supplanting national Roman identity as the main identifying characteristic of people during the Late Republic. At the heart of my argument is the following: Roman identity was in flux during the Late Republic at different times for different people, in different circumstances. The disunity inherent in such a development contributed in large measure to the downfall of the republic. When the main focus of individuals changed from their personal circumstances to the most expedient political alliance, the result was chaos and confusion that impeded proper long term solutions to crises from being considered. This transition was accelerated by the military interventions of the Late Republic, which made political affiliations all the more urgent. Heavily competitive politics created political rivals, whose confrontations often turned violent. The interconnectedness of military and political positions of authority became so close that they became almost indistinguishable in the aftermath of Marius' reforms, yet this was never addressed. That almost all of Roman politics was within the city boundary (*pomerium*) was an opportune circumstance for dynasts, because they needed only to influence a small minority of the Italian population to achieve their ends in the voting assemblies, and this was best achieved by their direct influence in the lives of ordinary people. And, while no two dynasts of the Late Republic took the exact same approach to achieving their goals, most understood that they had to operate within the traditional bounds of politics to avoid widespread revolt against them. Those who did not wound up dead and provided valuable lessons for the dynasts of the future. Challenging the norms of the Roman political system while working within it was a key factor of political identities, and such activity always prompted resistance. As political conflicts turned into civil wars, individuals and communities alike were forced to choose sides; and

while invading armies were thoroughly persuasive political tools, they were not themselves apolitical. They had the potential to affect political dynamics for their leaders, and their exercise of this power had significant consequences. Each of these patterns will receive its due diligence in this work and will contribute to the larger argument that Roman identity changed in the Late Republic. Political identity is a somewhat vague term, therefore a clear explanation of it is an appropriate prerequisite to this analysis. It should be noted that these identities are more than just the sum of their parts, which I shall now define. There were requirements for an individual in the Late Republic to own what I define as a potent political identity. Those who met those standards were the major players, those who did not meet them could still have political identity, but that is usually a result of their affiliation with the major players. First and foremost, needed a political affiliation and agenda. These cannot be separated, since innumerable affiliations among patrons and clients developed through the course of the Republican period; but the vast majority of citizens did not have an agenda or a venue for advocating it. For instance, a gladiator in one of Clodius' street gang would have a political affiliation, but there is no evidence to suggest that he would have understood the broader implications of his activities. So, other than doing the bidding of the patrician tribune, that gladiator would have lacked any cohesive sense of political direction. In addition, any Roman citizen with aspirations for pushing a political agenda would have quickly become affiliated with individuals who had influence among members of the elite – a universal political principle if ever there was one. Secondly, a potent political identity stands out from the crowd of politicians either in fame, infamy, or both. This is a fairly standard political practice as well, but in the case of the Late Republic and the established standards of Roman politics, standing out with popular

legislation or ingratiating oneself with the broader population was seen as overly ambitious and a threat to the established political order. We see as much at the start of the Late Republic with the political violence leading into the Social War. The Gracchi brothers, Marcus Fulvius Flaccus, and Marcus Livius Drusus paid the price for their political boat rocking, but their activities provided a valuable lesson for future demagogues: they needed to account for dramatic resistance from the political elite to more thoroughly achieve their ends. The more riotous actors of the Late Republic acted with this in mind and became infamous for violence in the process. Gaius Marius is a peculiar case, because his actions resulted in him achieving fame at the height of his career, and infamy at its end; but I shall discuss this more in chapter three.

Another feature of potent political identities is the influence that the owners had on others. Romans abandoned their individual identity in favor of political identity in the Late Republic, in response to the emergence of potent political identities of the major players. Individual identity consisted of wealth, occupation, marriage and social status, since these factors were the dominant concerns for people in this setting. With these factors occupying the attention of the general public, the patriotic sentiment of a national identity would have been a unifying one, since it was the existence of the organized Roman state which best guaranteed them safety to continue to focus on the factors mentioned above. As the Late Republic became more and more chaotic, individuals were forced to change personal outlooks in order to safeguard the aspects of their individual identity. Civil upheavals, revolutions, and proscriptions all had direct, tangible impact on the aspects of individual identity; people had to rationalize decisions based on their relationship to the political identities that were creating the changes around them. The ability to force such shifts and

investments among individuals is a key component of a potent political identity, and it could be accomplished in a variety of ways: rhetorical devices, bribery, electoral corruption, and physical violence were all common tools.

Finally, a political identity is defined by the owner's relationship to the radical changes that occur in the Late Republic. This is mainly a binary distinction when it comes to the major players. They are either an instigator of the major changes, or they resist them. The clearest example of such a dynamic would be Caesar's revolutionary actions, and Cato's defiant resistance to his every move. It should be noted, however, that resistance to a major change in the Late Republic does not constitute political identity. It must be combined with the other factors. The legions which were raised for the Republican cause after the death of Pompey resisted the radical changes which Caesar was almost in complete control to make, but they did so at the direction of those who owned the political identity of resistance to Caesar, not necessarily out of their own initiative.

These identities are multi-faceted, in that they are themselves developments, and in that their developments allow other individuals and groups to create or change their own political identities. This is fascinating, because political identities are defined by what they are *not* as much as by what they *are*, and the emergence of political identities set the stage for dedicated opposition to become a political identity in itself. Thus, when appropriate, I analyze major actors in the Late Republic from the frame of their individual identities, and how their actions in life as both individuals and political actors influenced the pattern of others developing political identities.

As a general rule, the men who created potent political identities could not appeal to the entire population for support, because it was from this crowd that all the distinguished

men had come and remained connected to it various ways. In order to achieve the prominence they desired, they pursued a policy of *division* rather than distinction. It was both easier and faster for one to raise himself above his political rivals if he undermined them while winning over supporters at the same time. By doing this, men like Caesar and Augustus made followers and enemies alike and had to contend with the consequences of a fractured population that could be separated into various bases of support. While some have categorized this fractionalizing as a growing class consciousness, I completely reject this notion. The process of the Roman population being divided along political lines is the inversion of the relationship between politics and culture. As political rivalries became more intense, and consequently more violent, they had a much more direct impact on the population than they did in previous centuries. Marius' *bardiyae* and the gangs of Clodius and Milo are just two examples of how political rivalries affected the physical well-being of the city population, and a population under duress is more likely to make snap decisions based on immediate interests. In addition to acting quickly with these interests in mind, the increasing frequency of violent outbreaks in the Late Republic would have made the population both inside and outside the city more politically aware, in order to be better prepared to make quick political affiliations.

In summation, I argue that the transition we see in the Late Republic among leading figures is the culmination of Roman cultural patterns which demanded that wealth, power, connections, and prestige all be drawn inward from various parts of the empire towards the capitol. After centuries of conquest, the Roman population had produced many distinguished men and families, but the ingrained cultural desire for ever greater distinction forced men to take ever more radical measures to raise themselves above the rest. As they

committed to these courses of action, they created political identities which supplanted and began to replace the notion of a broad Roman national identity. This was not an overnight transition. Roman political dynamics resisted change; and without radical actors to prompt major responses, even when there was a violent outburst, long term precedents were ignored in favor of more immediately expedient policies. Unfortunately, most of the Romans who lived in the time of the Gracchi would not have survived to see the civil war between Caesar and Pompey, and hardly any would have survived to see the later one between Antony and Octavian. Those who were born after one major sedition would have witnessed one within ten years, and another within ten years of that. Individuals who noticed the pattern would have tried to protect themselves by making connections with members of the political elite – already a common practice. So, when the violence erupted in the city streets again, they could at least have the safety of faction. This necessity-driven movement towards faction helped accelerate the development of potent political identities among the ruling class, and ultimately the dissolution of the Republic. Though this was a most important development, it is important to note that it was not a universal one. Since all major political activity occurred in the city of Rome itself, people in more distant areas of Italy were essentially disenfranchised, even though they all held the citizenship after the Social War. Without firsthand knowledge of political developments in Rome, distant communities would have experienced the transition from national identity to factional political identity more slowly than cities in closer proximity to the capitol. However, since the social web of families and business connections was both wide ranging and complex, influential members of distant communities could influence which faction their community

aligned with, and shape their political identities without the direct influence of factional violence.

The obvious hierarchical nature of Roman society can be easily observed, but can also be oversimplified unless it is carefully examined. The different distinctions that existed in the Middle Republic were not nearly as divisive as those of the Late Republic, because the existing Roman institutions functioned well enough without nurturing conflict among the classes.⁷ I shall first lay out the normal functions of the Roman institutions in order to identify where the Roman population was most vulnerable to internal divisions. What did ordinary Roman citizens expect to happen, given the structure of their society and institutions? To properly examine this topic, I shall first survey some of the basic tenets of Roman society and briefly explain how those patterns drew all types of wealth and power towards the seat of Empire in Rome, and how order was generally maintained with those patterns in mind. Then I shall move on and examine the events of the Late Republic themselves in a more or less chronological manner. The radical movements of the Gracchi and the seditions of Saturninus and his accomplices, will be the subject of the second chapter. The Social War and the rise and conflict between Marius, Sulla and their respective allies will be examined in the third chapter. The fourth chapter will examine some of the numerous complex developments between the death of Sulla and the death of Caesar which solidify political identity as the defining attribute of Roman identity in large portions of the population. The Ides of March, in my view, mark the end of the Republic, but to make the best analysis of political identities requires that this work go slightly beyond that time period into the immediate aftermath of Caesar's death. I place this in the fifth and final

⁷ In this context, the term "class" is used to refer to the property classifications in the centuriate assembly not as a social division. See below, Chapter 1.

chapter along with an examination of how political identities functioned within the military sphere, and I end the work there. Since the civil wars that rage after Caesar's assassination are primarily based on political identity, and the point of this work is to highlight the transition from national Roman identity to political identity, it is unnecessary to address them or the events that officially create the Empire.

CHAPTER I

FOUNDATIONS

Part One: Political Institutions

The Late Republic's major figures, whatever their agendas, were all Roman citizens. It was the Romans themselves who destroyed the Republican system; a feat that innumerable hordes of Carthaginian, Macedonian, Illyrian and Gaulic peoples never accomplished in their seemingly endless wars against them. This indicates that the status of Roman citizenship held the *potential* for individuals to rise to power. This allure is in no small part what led to the outbreak of the Social War – which I shall discuss later – but potential was not the end all, be all for Roman citizens. The reality of political power was reserved for those who could win it for themselves in the elections; these were always men of such wealth and influence that they had no problem supporting themselves in office. The divide among those who ran for office and those who voted for them is blatantly obvious, but reveals a certain pattern of limited interdependence. At the most basic level, citizens depended on other citizens to achieve political success, and the *auctoritas* and *potestas* that it entailed. Citizens in the city of Rome would have been exposed to a variety of political activity and actors, given the yearly elections of public officials, but that does not necessarily mean that they would have been regularly involved in the political process itself. The voting assemblies were organized differently, and those institutions were never intended to represent all citizens in an egalitarian fashion.

First and foremost, the centuriate assembly (*comitia centuriata*) – a creation of the Early Republic – served to represent the male citizen body eligible for military service. By the Middle Republic, the centuriate assembly was divided up into 193 centuries; these units

were distributed among the male population based on property ownership and age. Property ownership determined to what class an individual would be assigned, and that classification would dictate his century. Age further divided up the distribution of the centuries; men over the age of forty-six would be grouped into the senior centuries (*seniores*), and those between seventeen and forty-six would be grouped into the junior centuries (*iuniores*). The complete breakdown was as follows:

Twelve centuries of knights, six centuries of *sex suffragia*, two centuries of engineers, eighty centuries of first-class members, twenty centuries of second-class members, twenty centuries of third-class members, twenty centuries of fourth-class members, thirty centuries of fifth-class members, two centuries of horn blowers, and a single century of *proletarii* who were ineligible for military service until the Marian reforms of the Late Republic.⁸ These combined totaled the 193 centuries. The distinctions among the classes were as follows:

Knights, and *sex suffragia* centuries were not divided between *seniores* and *iuniores* age groups -- probably as a result of their service in the cavalry forces. The engineers, horn blowers, and *proletarii* likewise remained undivided due to their status as noncombatants.⁹ Members of the First, Second, Third, Fourth and Fifth class served as the infantry forces for the Roman army and were indeed divided among *seniores* and *iuniores* classes resulting in 40/40, 10/10, 10/10, 10/10 and 15/15 splits respectively. In regards to property, Knights, *sex suffragia*, engineers and all members of the first class, regardless of age, would have had property values

⁸ Gary Forsythe, "The Army and Centuriate Assembly in Early Rome," in *A Companion to the Roman Army*, Paul Erdkamp (Malden: Blackwell, 2007) 25-39.

⁹ E. S. Staveley, *Greek and Roman Voting and Elections* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1972), 124. (hereafter *GRVE*)

of 100,000 *asses* or higher. Members of the second, third and fourth classes would have had property values of 75,000-100,000 *asses*, 50,000- 75,000 *asses*, and 25,000 - 50,000 *asses* respectively. Fifth class members and horn blowers would have had property values between 12,500 and 25,000. *Proletarii* would have had less than 12,500 *asses* in reported property value.¹⁰

In addition to representing the military men, the centuriate assembly also acted as a voting body for several functions of state. It elected all public officials with *imperium*, meaning the consuls, praetors, censors and curule aediles; these magistrates always came from an upper-class background, so that they would have undoubtedly held a distinct advantage within the centuriate assembly when running for office. The *comitia centuriata* also tried and passed verdicts on legal cases, especially those involving capital offenses.¹¹ The centuries alone declared war and ratified treaties for the Roman state.

In terms of the distribution of power, the centuriate assembly was clearly designed to afford more voting power to upper-class elites. The distribution of the centuries by property class meant that affluent members of Roman society had more influence on the outcome of curule elections, but it never led to a violent confrontation between those of the various classes. If there were a push among the lower classes for higher representation in the centuries, it could easily have descended into a civil tumult of some sort, as there was undoubtedly a much more numerous population of individuals in Rome of the lowest property classes rather than the first, equestrian or senatorial ones. The division of the centuries in the manner aforementioned indicates that the Romans were able to make distinctions among themselves, and give deference to men of age and rank. The lack of

¹⁰ Forsythe, *The Army and Centuriate Assembly in Early Rome*, 29.

¹¹ This practice declined steadily as the Republic wore on - Staveley, *GRVE*, 129.

civil unrest prior to the Late Republic means that there were both political and cultural mechanisms in place which deterred such sentiment, and thus any potential revolutionary activity. The first is likely the tribal assembly.

The *comitia tributa* had different functions than the *comitia centuriata*, but operated with similar procedures. It elected lower magistrates such as plebeian aediles and quaestors; it also selected one of its own possible presiding magistrates, the Plebeian Tribunes.¹² When summoned, both the tribal and centuriate assemblies were subject to the same prerequisite religious rites for observing the will of Jupiter and keeping an eye out for omens which may indicate divine displeasure. Such rites were not required if a plebeian tribune was presiding over the tribal assembly, but that requirement reversed itself twice during the Late Republic.¹³ While similar in this form, the tribal assembly represented the geographical distribution of the general population in thirty-five tribes (four urban and thirty-one rural) and was responsible for ratifying legislation which managed to avoid being vetoed during the legislative process. The manner in which the two assemblies distinguished themselves from one another is revealed by examining who was allowed to participate in their gatherings. In the centuriate assembly, all citizens were allowed to participate, given that they showed up on the voting day and stayed within the appropriate century; but in the tribal assembly – more specifically the *concilium plebis* – only members of the plebeian class could participate.¹⁴ Although the plebeian assembly is another clear

¹² Lily Ross Taylor. *Roman Voting Assemblies from the Hannibalic War to the Dictatorship of Caesar* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1966), 7.

¹³ Taylor, *Roman Voting Assemblies*, 6.

¹⁴ Patricians could participate in the tribal assembly (*comitia populi tributa*), but their numbers were too few to have a tangible effect. I am inclined to believe that the *councilium plebis* may have been an important institution in the fifth century when the population of Rome was small, but was quickly supplanted by the tribal assembly as the population of Rome increased, and the effectiveness of patrician influence in that body waned; Staveley, *GRVE*, 129. There is a possibility that the term *concilium* may have

example of the Romans' distinguishing themselves from one another based on social standing, there is no indication that this difference between the assemblies was a source of any virulent enmity between the patrician and plebeian groups before the Late Republic.¹⁵ If anything, the plebeian assembly provided the plebeians' much larger population, a certain degree of power. The ability to pass legislation into law lay strictly with their assembly. And, although they lacked the political clout which accompanied curule positions, they held a power which their social betters did not. This designation of responsibility to the general population served a dual purpose: politically it provided a way for magistrates to determine the popularity of their proposed legislation; and culturally it created an outlet through which plebeians could assert their collective will. Without such an institution, plebeian masses – particularly the poorer classes – would have sought out other outlets to fill the same purpose, and violence could have easily been the result. Luckily, the constant military expeditions and occasional colonial founding functioned as pressure valves to release developing angst in the population and kept people focused on external conflicts than on domestic politics in the capitol.

In addition to these two assemblies, the Roman Senate functioned as a deliberative body. That was its main role. It was comprised of men considered to be among the best men of Roman society. Members were selected or thrown out by the censors, and only those who had succeeded in getting elected to an office on the *cursus honorum* were eligible. Membership numbers fluctuated at various times throughout the republican

been a synonym for general political gatherings, and *not* an explicit legal term for a voting body. See A.W. Lintott, *The Constitution of the Roman Republic*. (Oxford Clarendon Press, 1999), 48.

¹⁵As noted above, the *councilium plebis* was obsolete well before the Late Republic began and certainly after the *lex Hortensia* of 287, when plebiscite laws held assumed validity for the entire population. See Claude Nicolet, *The World of the Citizen in Republican Rome*. (Berkley: University of California Press, 1980), 225.

period, from 300 in the time of the Gracchi, to 600 under Sulla, to 900 in the time of Caesar, but whenever a particularly catastrophic event depleted the supply of senators there was a demand for the ranks to be replenished.¹⁶ This body debated most important matters, whether in foreign policy or domestic activity, and it then submitted its decisions to a magistrate to be passed into law by the appropriate assembly. However, despite the prestige the Senate held as the embodiment of the collective experience and wisdom of Roman society, it technically lacked legal authority to enforce its decisions. As a result, the decline of the Senate's authority accelerated rapidly in the Late Republic after the seditions of the Gracchi, and a decline is most evident at the start of the war between Caesar and the Republicans. While the most practical thing would have been to avoid a civil war – even if only temporarily – the consuls of 49, in their determined opposition to Caesar coaxed the Senate into issuing the final decree (*senatus consultum ultimum*) against Caesar, even though he had yet to take military action against the state. While the Senate's reputation and prestige as the major deliberative body remained intact, its resistance to those attempting to implement major changes via legislation made its conservative members appear selfish and self-interested rather than wise; and since action was more effective than deliberation at advancing agendas, members of the Senate – patrician and plebeian alike – became the targets of demagogues through physical violence and political maneuvers. None of these demagogues, however, were so set on supreme power as to abolish the Senate completely; it would have been too obvious a power play and would have likely sparked a popular revolt and created new political identities to oppose them.¹⁷

¹⁶ Lintott, *Constitution*, 70.

¹⁷ The exception to this pattern was Sulpicus (see chapter 3) but even he did not go so far as to actually attempt replacing the Senate.

Now consider both of the assemblies together: one represented the propertied classes, the other, the rest of the general masses. Each creation was a reflection of an earlier cultural development of Roman society, which was completely inverted by the Late Republic. The centuriate assembly's creation during the late regal period indicates a reliance on a self-sufficient male population for sustained periods of warfare.¹⁸ This disappears with the military reforms during the consulship of Marius. The Tribal assembly's creation was indicative of a growing population and a growing discontent among a sizable portion of it in regard to the contemporary distribution of political agency. In the Late Republic, however, the divisions in the population were *created* by members of the existing political institutions, and the chaotic events which followed were the result. Responses to these violent outbreaks were ineffective in addressing the underlying causes and only served to contribute to the Republic's decline.

The development of political bodies in the early stages of the Roman Republic were moves in reaction to broader cultural patterns, but the time between these developments and the events which destroyed the republic was a vast expanse. The implication here is that there were stimuli during the Middle Republic which enabled the existing institutions and cultural patterns to remain intact. I argue that these stimuli were the expansionist wars that encompassed the entirety of the Middle Republic. As the demand for manpower in the legions increased, the justification for the centuriate assembly's existence was further entrenched. Not only did the reason for the assembly's initial creation remain unchanged, but the constant military activity resulted in increased activity within the assembly itself.¹⁹

¹⁸ Forsythe, *The Army and Centuriate Assembly in Early Rome*, 27-28, 30, 37.

¹⁹ In the context of declaring war. Yearly elections proceeded unhindered unless there was some major emergency or religious interruption.

Recall that the establishment of treaties, declarations of war, and elections of magistrates with imperium were all decided upon by the centuries. The assembly was very active in its own right and, in consequence of the periodic elections that it decided, would have been very conspicuous in the public eye.

Throughout the Early and Middle Republic, the Romans waged what seemed like unending wars against peoples all over the Mediterranean. The 4th and 3rd centuries B.C sport the Latin, Samnite, Pyrrhic, Illyrian, Punic and Macedonian wars, supplemented by many smaller conflicts and innumerable military campaigns against the troublesome Gallic tribes in northern Italy. These conflicts created a demand for military readiness. This was no longer a necessity – as it may well have been in the regal period and earlier stages of the republic – but an expectation. By the outbreak of the first Punic war, Rome had established itself as the military and cultural hegemon of the Italian peninsula. Imagine for a moment that Rome had contented itself with control of Italy. Rather than a government focused on the maintenance of military might and territorial holdings, the Roman government might have concentrated on administering of its existing territories rather than conquering new ones. Such a shift might have rendered the centuriate assembly obsolete and led to a change in the nature of the Roman government itself. This supposition is only relevant, because, as the actual historical events transpired, the exact opposite occurred. The *comitia centuriata* saw the Romans through the calamities and triumphs of all their various wars. It performed its functions just as the Roman soldiers performed theirs upon the battlefield. As long as Rome was victorious in war, the political bodies which were responsible for overseeing it would have faced little scrutiny from citizens outside the ruling elite. Warfare by the end of the Punic wars would have long since been considered

a cultural norm, and victory was the expected outcome. Even in the face of a military disaster such as Cannae or the Caudine Forks, the blame for defeat usually resided in some unavoidable factor such as poor omens, bad generalship, breakdowns of military discipline or other such things. Never once was the institution responsible for the selection of military leaders reviewed for having failed.

In short, the creation of the centuriate assembly was prompted by the cultural pattern of regular warfare; the endless wars which preceded the Late Republic only perpetuated that cultural pattern. With this cycle ongoing, there was never any reason for Romans to question the nature of that institution since it produced successful results on a regular basis. The tradition of political developments being reflections of cultural patterns was inverted in the Late Republic, and not just in terms of military functions. When cultural patterns start reflecting contemporary political developments, it becomes much easier for politically involved individuals to identify sympathetic portions of the population and ally them with themselves. Seeking to use such subsections of the population to advance political agendas is the very essence of politics, but in the case of the Roman Republic, it set a negative precedent for internal divisions.

One of the main factors which facilitated such divisions was the limited space available for the assemblies to do business, and such limitations imply a limited number of voters. Modern inventions like national voting places, local elections and mail in ballots would have been totally alien to the Roman political class. The politics of empire were mostly in Rome, and those who lived outside the center had little say.²⁰ For politicians, this

²⁰ Electoral battles were often waged over magistrate positions in order to secure commands over provinces. These were used to repay debts incurred during the election. Once in control of the province, men could acquire more political influence by becoming patrons of local communities, and as a result,

meant that only a tiny fraction of the population showed up to vote; estimates place this number at a maximum of 55,000, with 35,000 to 40,000 being a more realistic estimate.²¹

With perhaps less than three percent of the eligible population voting in the Late Republic, it stands to reason that politicians would have sought to maximize the utility of their local connections to reach the largest possible number of this subset. The overwhelming majority of voters in the tribal assembly would have been from Rome or neighboring communities. This proximity to the political class provided the greatest probability for them to be directly influenced by them. Quintus Cicero frequently asserts, throughout his electoral advice to his brother, that it is necessary to maintain as many connections with as many people as possible, even though one could not possibly serve all of their interests directly.²² Connections were good, but as the Late Republic wore on, bribery became a more efficient, if expensive method of securing votes. Laws prohibiting such activity were passed four different times – a testament to their lack of effect and the frequency of the problem.²³ Violence also undoubtedly affected voter turnout. Marius' return to Rome with his violent *bardyliae* gang disrupted the vote to officially recall him from exile, and many were slaughtered in the ensuing violence. Marius showed that he was not afraid to do battle in the very heart of Rome's political institutions, and such events would only discourage ordinary voters.²⁴ Those without political associations would likely abstain from electoral participation to avoid personal injury, thereby opening up room for voters who were allies

increase their influence and reputation in Rome. – see Ernst Badian, *Foreign Clientelae 264-70 B.C.* (Clarendon Press, 1958), 11.

²¹ Ramsay MacMullen, *How Many Romans Voted?*, Athenaeum N.S. 58 (1980), 1.

²² Quintus Cicero *Commentariolum petitionis* 6-8.

²³ Lilly Ross Taylor, *Party Politics in the Age of Caesar* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1949), 67-69

²⁴ Plut. *Marius* 43.

of potent political actors, or those who had been bribed to support them. Bribes would undoubtedly have increased in scale to keep reluctant voters incentivized.

Part Two: Citizens, Latins, Colonies and the Social Web

Rome used a variety of different methods to maintain control over the Italian peninsula. Cultural hegemony was much more effective than strict military occupation, and the varying degrees of citizenship which existed prior to the conclusion of the Social War created both a legal gray area and a cultural objective for those who did not hold the full citizenship. The three main ranks of citizenship were allies, Latins, and citizens (or fellow-citizens) and each functioned differently. Allies were considered essentially military compatriots of the Romans in the event of a military conflict, but operated more or less autonomously when it came to their own civil administration. Latins held some of the same rights as full Roman citizens – *comercium*, *conubium* and *ius migrandi* – but did not hold the suffrage or the right to appeal to the Roman people in the case of a criminal trial or magistrate's punishment (*provocatio*). Despite the separation in legal rights between the two groups, the general outlook on life for most Latins would have been mostly unchanged until the end of the Third Macedonian War in 167. Prior to this, there had been means for individual Latin citizens to make the transition to the full Roman citizenship without having it bestowed upon their community by the Senate or a magistrate. Fraudulent methods such as selling themselves or their children into slavery under a master who would immediately manumit them were not out of the question.²⁵ Declaring oneself to the Censors in the city of Rome was another alternative.²⁶ Since there were many similarities between full Roman citizens and Latin allies in terms of military service and taxation, the distinction between

²⁵ Nicolet, *The World of the Citizen*, 37.

²⁶ Ibid, 36.

the two groups was mainly an issue of suffrage, and individuals who were highly motivated to acquire it were not entirely incapable of achieving that end. The plunder taken by the Romans from the war against Perseus in Macedonia created such a surplus in the treasury that Roman citizens were exempted from taxation in the future.²⁷ After generations of the older pattern being the norm, this exemption created a much wider divide between the Latins and Romans almost overnight. No new ways for Latins to acquire full Roman citizenship accompanied the abolition of taxes. Consequently, while being treated as second class citizens economically, they were restricted to relying on luck and the same handful of ways to gain the full suffrage. While this could be considered a simple consequence of empire, an examination of the same development through the lens of political identity shows that both sides later found opportunity in it. Increasing dissatisfaction among the Latin population with the distribution of the tax burden attracted the attention of political figures in the early parts of the Late Republic. As a result, getting Latins full citizenship status became a cause for men like Gaius Gracchus and M. Flaccus to champion and distinguish themselves from the rest of the political elite. The expansion of Roman citizenship after the Social War created a new voting dynamic in Rome; huge numbers of new citizens were created and slowly enrolled in the census, and politicians in the Capitol stood to influence members of the new voting bloc. If Ramsey MacMullen's case for physical limitations on the number of voters in the assemblies holds, then a few hundred well-placed, well-organized citizens could swing the opinion of several voting tribes. This strategy was within the realm of possibility for those with financial means. Bribery was a common problem in the voting assemblies, but the main point is that with a

²⁷ Ibid, 38-40.

new pool of citizens and limited space in the city for citizens to participate in the voting process, there was some incentive for individuals attempting to create a potent political identity to appeal to new citizens and subvert the traditional pattern of only pandering to the original ones. However, since Roman politics was reluctant at best to let newcomers into the political realm, all the new citizens were crammed into ten new voting tribes that voted last, not distributed evenly among the existing ones.²⁸ On the other hand, for the Latins, admission to the Roman electorate meant gaining access to the full benefits of legal rights, expanded representation in voting institutions and, most importantly, the *cursus honorum*. No example better illustrates this pattern than the City of Arpinum, whose famous progeny are Marius and Cicero. The city did not receive full citizenship until 188 B.C, but capable men from that community were clearly drawn to Rome.²⁹ The allure of a political career in the center of empire proved irresistible, as did the chance for both Marius and Cicero to create their own political identities.³⁰

As the Roman army served as a pressure release that prevented domestic disturbances, so too did colonies. The foundation of these effectively sent a large number of citizens away from the Capitol and out into the periphery. This was a common practice in the ancient world, but it was a useful tool for diverting the attention of the population. The only ones directly impacted by these colonies were the people actually selected to be moved there, but that would not prevent those who were in the pool of candidates from hoping to be chosen. Being uprooted from their home would have been no small change for those selected, and it appears that expanding the use of this tactic between the deaths

²⁸ App. *Bellum Civile* 1.49.

²⁹ We can see here the influence of Roman cultural dominance. Arpinum was 100 kilometers from Rome, but had been under Roman Control since the 4th century.

³⁰ Only Marius fully achieved this end. See below, chapters 3 and 4.

of Gaius Gracchus and Fulvius Flaccus to the Latins had the desired effect. Despite the loss of their advocates in the political center, and their growing discontent, we hear of no more violent activity from the Latin communities until the death of Livius Drusus the younger. Without someone to champion their cause and focus their attentions, individual situations became the most pressing concern for people, and not the communal identity they found in political figures championing their cause.

Part Three: Magistrates and Local Control

Consuls and Praetors held the official military and civil authority granted by *imperium*. In the field, their commands were law. In the civil sphere however, their powers were limited by the rights which citizens held. They could not summarily execute or imprison troublesome individuals, but they could order their lictors to clear a path or silence a heckler in a public area. Rome had several magistrates to exercise control over civil and military affairs, but they were far too few to form any type of actual peacekeeping force. Two consuls served as the chief executive magistrates in both civil and military spheres and could only be superseded by the appointment of a dictator and his master of the horse, but the use of these offices ceased in 202 and was not revived until the time of Sulla. Praetors held *imperium* similar to consuls and also served as military commanders or provincial governors. The function that set them apart from their superiors was their oversight of judicial and legal affairs among citizens and non-citizens. In addition to these officials, the censors conducted the census every five years and reviewed the Senate roster every year and adjusted it as needed. The next rung down the ladder were the curule aediles who were in charge of maintaining the city, keeping logistical track of supplies, and organizing the public games. Finally, quaestors functioned as civil and military assistants to higher magistrates. The plebeian magistrate positions of tribune and aedile numbered

ten and two respectively. Somehow the Romans managed to oversee the administration of all their imperial holdings and maintain relative peace in their growing capital city with this small number of magistrates and no large bureaucracy. Even if all the magistrates were combined at their highest numbers, and all of their accompanying lictors and even the night watchmen (*tresviri nocturni*) were added, there would still be less than two-hundred men with official authority to manage millions of citizens, allies and subjects.³¹ This is a minuscule number, and by modern standards would not suffice to properly administer a small city, much less an empire. The number was smaller still, since plebeian magistrates held no authority outside the city boundary (*pomerium*).³² As a matter of pure logistics, maintaining civil order with elected officials was an impossibility. The use or threat of force to achieve the same end was also not a viable option due to the vast expanse of the empire. The city of Rome maintained a healthy level of concord among its population, because it cultivated a culture of respect among inhabitants. Paternal authority was recognized legally, and respect for elders and eminent men was ingrained by the use of rhetoric in public cases, triumphal celebrations, and funeral orations.³³ In addition to these, when the authority and influence of the magistrate positions were being properly exercised in safeguarding the city and empire, respect for those offices remained high and consistent. Livy provides an interesting example of interactions between a consul and normal citizens:

"It was not without a feeling of shame that I made my way into the Forum through a regular army of women. Had not my respect for the dignity and modesty of some amongst them,

³¹ Dictator and his 24 lictors, *magister equitum* and his 6, two consuls and their combined 24 lictors, 16 praetors (at their maximum number under Julius Caesar) and their 96 combined lictors, two curule aediles and their combined 4 lictors, four quaestors, ten plebeian tribunes, two plebeian aediles and three *tresviri nocturni* total 195 men, but since dictators and their master of the horse never served while consuls were in power the number is lessened; other *tresviri* magistrates were appointed for specific tasks such as the founding of colonies or oversight of coin minting, and public slaves were doubtlessly used to complete most of the actual work for all officials, Roman or otherwise. – Lintott, *The Constitution*, 137-144

³² Proconsular and propraetorian positions also alter this total number.

³³ See above (introduction) for the example provided by Polybius.

more than any consideration for them as a whole, restrained me from letting them be publicly rebuked by a consul, I should have said, 'What is this habit you have formed of running abroad and blocking the streets and accosting men who are strangers to you? Could you not each of you put the very same question to your husbands at home?"

Publicly rebuked by a consul. This consequence would only have applied to women, because any man who accosted a magistrate in that manner would have been cleared away by a lictor. However, the lack of physical consequences for the woman does not mean lack of any consequences; dishonor would have been one, discipline by her husband would have been another. Another interesting detail is Cato's hesitance to rebuke the women for the sake of a select few. His claim to recognize some of them indicates that he had a degree of personal familiarity with them, and we can safely assume this stems from his familiarity with other men in politics. Cato's show of restraint was most likely the result of him not wanting to cause a scandal for a man of presumably eminent rank. This indicates that, at least among the ruling elite, the social fabric of respect which the Romans had cultivated was still in place at the time. Compare this to the tribunate of Clodius in 58 whose only goal seemed to be sowing division and chaos, and a rather distinct picture begins to form. Whereas mutual respect had a place in the political landscape of the Middle Republic, desire for distinction among their peers forced some Late Republic figures to engage in unsavory activity to build potent political identities.

Part Four: Patrons and Clients

As the institution of Roman citizenship slowly inculcated itself into Italian communities and beyond, the less intricate system of patron-client relations continued unabated. This was a common feature of an increasingly interconnected society, and the pattern continued well into the Imperial period. For the wealthier, more influential patrons, the system was highly beneficial in terms of increasing their distinction and *dignitas* among

their peers in the political ruling class. The clients of said individuals were rewarded for their support (directly and indirectly) by favors, connections, protection and assistance. This arrangement served as a unifying force, because as the client communities survived, they naturally grew over time. This resulted in an increased base of client support for the patrons of that community, and by proxy of family, friends and business connections that expanded over time and distance. These connections were vital for patrons, because there was no guarantee that their clients in the local community were all citizens who could directly influence the outcomes of elections by voting. Even if a patron's clients in a distant community did have the full citizen's rights, mobilizing them to exercise the vote in Rome would have been a logistical nightmare, and no law or policy prior to the reforms of the Gracchi was significant enough to warrant such a mobilization. Patrons figured out that the greater the multitude of their client base, the better chance they had of gaining someone influential in that net by proxy. This increased the distinction of themselves and their descendants, since many clients became hereditary dependents.³⁴ All of this was part and parcel of political life in Roman society. However, even though this pattern of interaction remained constant, the end goal of some patrons began to shift in the Late Republic. Distinction among the people was no longer sufficient; distinction among the distinguished was the new goal, and the Latin demographic presented an opportunity for ambitious individuals to achieve it.

When Marcus Fulvius Flaccus proposed granting suffrage for the Italians in 125, he subverted his rivals in the political class in a few ways. He was standing as an innovator of policy in a normally conservative senatorial body, and if implemented, his policies

³⁴ Badian, F.C, 168.

would make many individuals partially reconsider their dependence on their patrons. Flaccus' proposals would have given autonomy (or rather the perception of it, given the voting institutions and procedures) to clientele, and thereby decreased the original patron's prestige because he would no longer have been absolutely necessary for the former non-citizen clients to participate in the decisions of the legislative body. Even though most individuals living outside Rome would still have been much better off directly involved with a patron, they would now be indebted to Flaccus, and those close enough to Rome to attend the yearly elections would likely have repaid this debt with their votes. Even though patrons did not particularly care about the citizenship status of their clients, for someone other than them to grant a major benefit on *their* client base would have rubbed many patrons the wrong way. This would have been particularly problematic because it was nearly forty years after the tax exemption following the Third Macedonian war – more than enough time for the Italians to notice the unequal benefits of the tax exemptions and nurture discontent. Flaccus' election as tribune in 123 shows that there was no severe popular resistance to his enfranchisement proposal, but his affiliation with Gaius Gracchus was more than enough motivation for political elites to resist him. As more political identities began to take shape later in the Late Republic, the client followings of those individuals became less notable as a natural feature of a distinguished man, and more a threat to the established order. Crassus claimed that 'no man was to be accounted rich who could not maintain an army at his own cost and charges.'³⁵ More than a boast about his personal wealth, it exemplified a few new developments in Roman society more than fifty years removed from the second Gracchan sedition. In one sense, it suggests Crassus' awareness

³⁵ Plut. *Life of Crassus* 2.

of mercenary tendencies that had developed among military units. In another it reveals that the patron-client relationship between colonies and their founders was still going strong in the Late Republic – even after the Social War.³⁶

³⁶ Crassus' colonies for his veterans were not an occurrence unique to him, but the threat of him (and others) using those settled veterans for political purposes was characteristic of the Late Republic. This does not mean, however, that every colony or client community was a private army waiting to be conscripted. See Arthur Keaveney, *The Army in the Roman Revolution* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 25-33.

CHAPTER II

THE FIRST CRACKS

Now the actual events of the Late Republic shall receive analysis. The initial tumult in 133 B.C is well known, but in the bigger picture of political identity it is a unique development. It is the first occasion in which a political actor, Tiberius Gracchus champions a cause for the people, and the speed with which new identities rise in opposition to that of Tiberius is remarkable. To begin, however, it is necessary to examine Tiberius Gracchus as an individual.

The Gracchan Seditions

First and foremost, Tiberius Gracchus was notable for his lineage. He was the grandson of the famed Scipio Africanus by way of his mother Cornelia. This provided him with connections to the highest levels of Roman politics. His father's accomplishments only added to this potential, since he had been elected to the censorship once and to the consulship twice.³⁷ His mother was highly invested in his and his brother's futures and took great pains to ensure that their education was of excellent quality.³⁸

But lineage was not enough for one to reach the highest ranks of the Roman political system. Tiberius had to put in the necessary work to get elected. He secured the office of quaestor in 137 and served in Spain under the consul Hostilius Mancinus. During his service, he is credited with negotiating the rescue of the consul and his trapped army, assisted in no small part by the client connections his father held among the Numantine population.³⁹ On the surface, these seem like the traits of any run-of-the-mill Roman

³⁷ Plut. *Life of Tiberius Gracchus* 1.

³⁸ Ibid. 2.

³⁹ Ibid. 5.

politician. That is because they are. Prior to his attempted Agrarian Law reform in 133, Tiberius had done nothing that stood out from among his peers in the political class. He married his wife Claudia and made some political adversaries as a result, but that was not unusual.⁴⁰ As long as his career followed traditional patterns, the ruling class was willing to accept his presence. The year 133 proved fatal for him, because he deviated from that pattern.

The intricacies of the *lex agraria Sempronia* have been discussed in many other works. Therefore, only a brief summary is necessary. The law proposed reversing the pattern of wealthier men acquiring large swaths of public land by enforcing the law that none may possess more than 500 *jugera* of it.⁴¹ It was the intent of Tiberius that whoever unlawfully possessed more than the specified limit should relinquish the surplus, so that it could be permanently distributed among poorer elements of the population, and create a surge in population growth.⁴² It is evident that Tiberius that believed he was witnessing a population decline, even though demographic evidence suggests otherwise. He would not have pursued his policy course so vigorously had he not believed it. He could gain nothing by passing this legislation other than the gratitude of the people. Tiberius' individual identity had already given him prestige, and his service as quaestor had opened the way for him to run for any of the higher curule magistracies. His decision to run for plebeian tribune implies his desire to institute reform was genuine. It was the way in which he attempted to get his legislation approved that created starker divisions in the populace and a violent

⁴⁰ David Stockton, *The Gracchi* (London: Oxford University Press, 1979), 58.

⁴¹ There were caveats for children of the owners resulting in more land. See Stockton, *The Gracchi*, 59.

⁴² The motives ascribed to Tiberius in the ancients sources do not hold when demographic evidence is scrutinized. - P.A. Brunt, *Italian Manpower 225 B.C – A.D 14*, (London: Oxford University Press 1971) ; Luuk De Ligt, *Peasant, Citizens and Soldiers: Studies in the Demographic History of Roman Italy 225 BC – AD 100* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 138.

response. By circumventing the Senate and taking his proposal directly to the tribal assembly for ratification, Tiberius Gracchus did nothing illegal. Technically, according to the *lex Hortensia* of 287, all laws passed were legally binding to all Roman citizens. There was no legal structure in place to prevent such a maneuver, but seeking the opinion of the senators had been the traditional pattern.⁴³

As he pushed for the passage of his agrarian bill, Tiberius Gracchus unwittingly created his own political identity.⁴⁴ His redistribution agenda was the core of it. By pursuing this policy he stood apart from others in the past who passed other agrarian bills. His affiliations with politicians mattered less than this policy which stood to benefit large portions of the poorer population. The interests of the large holders of public land stood in diametric opposition to those poor who stood to gain land from the former's possession. It is no surprise then that they resisted the legislation. At the head of this opposition was the tribune Marcus Octavius, who interposed his veto against the agrarian reform bill and remained obstinate in his opposition. Appian describes him as having been ‘induced by those who had possession of the land’ to maintain that course. Gracchus would not be stopped, however, and passed a second measure depriving his colleague of his office. This was also technically legal, since no statute barred such a measure from being passed, but it was definitely unprecedented, and a much more radical action. When questioned by Annius on whether he would repeat the action, Gracchus required some time to overcome his befuddlement and give his response.⁴⁵ In short, he argued that Octavius had abandoned his

⁴³ Adherence to precedent or pattern is termed *mos*. See Lintott, *The Constitution of the Roman Republic*, 5-8, 90. Bypassing the Senate had been done before, but rarely and the legal principle still held. See Stockton, *The Gracchi*, 64.

⁴⁴ Unwittingly in that he did not consider such a thing to be happening. He clearly understood the system he was a part of.

⁴⁵ Plut. *T. Gracchus* 15.

office by vetoing what was in the interest of the people, and therefore he no longer deserved to serve in that function. Increased resistance against oneself in the political realm was a sure sign of political identity. But since this was the first instance of it in the Late Republic, those present to witness its occurrence did not realize it until extreme events were upon them. Octavius was deposed by a second bill in the tribal assembly, and the agrarian bill passed as a result.

When King Attalus III of Pergamon died and willed his kingdom to the Roman people, Tiberius took it as an opportunity to further his already passed agrarian reform. His program to oversee the redistribution of appropriate land was officially legal, but was meeting resistance from other prominent politicians of the day. The Senate had long held authority over the state treasury and used this power to deny Tiberius the ability to enact his agrarian law properly. Tiberius seized the initiative in this situation and declared that the sudden influx of wealth from the deceased king be appropriated for use by the people and by extension, his program of redistribution. He usurped the usual function of the Senate. This was unacceptable. All his previous actions could have been explained away with the argument that they were for the good of the people, but this was a bridge too far. He had effectively shifted the focus of his changes from the good of the people to himself personally. If he could manage to get his agrarian reform off the ground *and* secure the new influx of wealth from Pergamum for the purpose, he would be considered a true champion of the people, and he would be difficult to dislodge. Vetoes from other tribunes clearly did not pose much of a barrier, and no other tribune seemed interested in using theirs after Octavius was deposed. One might be tempted to view this hesitance as their agreement with Tiberius' agenda, but the fact that the tribune Publius Satureius dealt the

first blow in killing Tiberius dispels this notion.⁴⁶ As he aspired to take control of the funds, he also canvassed for a second year as plebeian tribune. This was a clear deviation from established patterns; and whatever his motives, even the most passive member of the Senate would have viewed this as a dangerous development.⁴⁷ Rather than keep the focus on the legislation that he passed, he was acting outside the norm to grant himself authority to oversee major changes in the state. While the tribune may have seen himself as a genuine reformer, his enemies were right to recognize the potential for demagoguery. In the end, it seems that Gracchus could not distinguish his individual identity from the political identity he was creating for himself. This was not the case with his enemies.

The two main antagonists who stood against Gracchus are Octavius and Scipio Nasica. The former suffered an ignominious end to his term in office and was never heard of again in any account.⁴⁸ He did not create any type of political identity, because his only goal appears to have been stopping Gracchus' legislation. He presented no alternatives despite the protracted debates, and he never solicited assistance from any of his fellow tribunes when he was attacked. He stood out from his peers in terms of his resolute resistance, but this alone was not sufficient for a political identity. It was not even enough to guarantee his term of political office. Scipio Nasica, however, developed a much more potent political identity much more quickly and was able to suppress Tiberius much more effectively than Octavius. Plutarch says that the *pontifex maximus* demanded that the consul Scaevola take action to suppress the supposed tyrannical activity that was afoot, but the consul refused to act. In both Appian and Plutarch, Nasica then took it upon himself to

⁴⁶ Plut. *T. Gracchus* 19.

⁴⁷ H.H. Scullard, *From the Gracchi to Nero: A History of Rome 133 B.C. – A.D. 68* (London: Methuen, 1962), 29.

⁴⁸ He is mentioned in passing in Plutarch's *Life of Gaius Gracchus*.

remove Gracchus from the scene, and the consul did nothing to stop him. Nasica essentially seized the power which Scaevola officially held, and applied the use of force. It would have been much more appropriate and effective had the consul stormed into the assembly and demanded to know what was going on, but he did not. Neither account reveals his motivations. Thus, it remains unknown as to why he allowed a tumult to erupt in the city. He could have been overawed by Nasica, the chief of the pontifical college, and member of the powerful Scipiones family, and let him walk out unhindered. Nasica's individual identity allowed him to gain prestige in the usual way, much like Gracchus had done. He had served in the military and was even elected consul for 138, therefore he held the advantage of seniority. Alternatively, Scaevola could have agreed that Gracchus needed to be removed, but did not want to open himself to the enmity that accompanied the violation of precedent. Gracchus had felt the effects of that, and Cicero would later suffer a similar attack from Clodius for having the Catilinarian conspirators executed without trial. In any case, Nasica proceeded uninterrupted. He had made it clear through his actions that he intended to oppose Tiberius in any way he could; and after killing him, he railed against his associates.⁴⁹ This antagonism towards Tiberius and his friends was the core of Nasica's political identity, but neither he nor his contemporaries would have seen it in this light. Removing a seditious official and restoring order to a confused city would have been praised as a noble action. Indeed, Cicero later received such praise during his consulship for similar actions. But Nasica and the Senate realized they needed to destroy the political identity created by Tiberius – not just the tribune himself. To achieve this, the Senate directed the consuls of 132 (P. Laenas and P. Rupilius) to hunt down those who had

⁴⁹ Plut. *Life of Gaius Gracchus* 3.

supported Gracchus in his endeavors, lest they adopt his political identity by finding common cause with the people and become an overly aggressive mouthpiece for them in the tribal assembly. Tiberius's enemies did not, however, repeal the agrarian law that Tiberius had proposed. To do that would have been a step too far in the opposite direction. Having both slain the people's champion, and dispossessed them of an opportunity to improve their condition would have been taken as an overreach of oligarchic control in a time when factional divisions were starting to take shape. The legal and political connections of the wealthy land owners would have given them some recourse to avoid losing their property in the redistribution, and the three men at the head of the agrarian commission could always be delayed by other means as well. Once the conflict was refocused on politics within the existing institutions, and not on a political identity acting outside of the normal functions, business as usual could resume.

After the tumult in the city had subsided and the persecutions of Tiberius Gracchus' friends had come to an end, many of the issues which caused the turmoil in the first place remained unresolved. The agrarian commission remained intact, but the rapid death and replacement of its members in 131 and 130 slowed its progress.⁵⁰ This was but a brief respite to the Latin allies, who were beginning to have their land seized and redistributed to Romans from the city; Fulvius Flaccus and Papirius Carbo replaced the dead officers, and the work of the commission proceeded. Scipio Aemilianus championed the cause of the Italians in the land reform, but his sudden death in 129 snuffed out that ray of hope. Fulvius Flaccus took up that mantle in 125 with his citizenship proposal, but was quickly sent away on a military campaign by the Senate. It was in the midst of these developments

⁵⁰ Scullard, *From the Gracchi to Nero*, 1962, 31.

that Gaius Gracchus thrust himself forth as the next reformer and created a new political identity that threatened the conservative leanings of the state.

As with Tiberius, the individual identity of Gaius Gracchus must be examined before his political identity can be assessed. This task is uncomplicated because in many ways, the individual identities of the brothers were the same. They held the same lineage, were educated by the same mother, and both served as quaestors in military campaigns before setting out on their political careers. Gaius, however, was a more capable orator and energetic politician; he also had the reputation of his elder brother attached to his name. His entrance into politics would have been startling for the senators, particularly those like Scaevola, who had been so vigorous to crush Tiberius' supporters in the aftermath of 133. In order to prevent another political identity from rising and threatening the established order, the Senate preemptively created one for a different plebeian tribune in order to stunt the growth of the younger Gracchus, whose sweeping attempts at reform occurred rapidly.

Gaius Gracchus' agenda, according to Plutarch, consisted of several laws. One increased the power of the tribal assembly by guaranteeing the legality of any motion depriving a plebeian magistrate of his office. His other reforms during his consecutive terms as tribune were focused on the management of civil affairs: fixing the price of grain, serving on the commission for land redistribution under the *lex agraria Sempronia*, changing military regulations on recruitment and pay, and reforming the judicial courts to have only equestrians serve on the extortion court.⁵¹ He even went so far as to agree with Fulvius Flaccus on expanding the citizenship (or at least the right of *provocatio*) to the Latins.

⁵¹ Plut. *G. Gracchus* 4-5.

These laws were clearly intended to address the interests of the common people and to legitimize the actions of Tiberius. The Senate was understandably wary of these developments. Senators used the tribune Livius Drusus the elder to subvert Gaius' influence with the people. In effect, they artificially created a political identity for Drusus similar to that of Gaius Gracchus. The Senate's goal was to have him serve as controlled opposition. By converging politically with Gaius, Drusus was able to undermine his support and make the claim of being supported by the Senate. The same Senate that had worked so vigorously to crush any remnants of Tiberius Gracchus' identity feared the same type of revolutionary activity from his younger brother. This was not unfounded. The changes that he enacted while tribune were practical and effective (other than his colony in Africa) and the rhetoric he used in regard to his political adversaries was not restrained: "'Whereas,' said he, 'these men did, in the presence of you all, murder Tiberius with clubs, and dragged the slaughtered body through the middle of the city, to be cast into the river. Even his friends, as many as could be taken, were put to death immediately, without any trial, notwithstanding that just and ancient custom, which has always been observed in our city, that whenever anyone is accused of a capital crime, and does not make his personal appearance in court, a trumpeter is sent in the morning to his lodging, to summon him by sound of trumpet to appear; and before this ceremony is performed, the judges do not proceed to the vote; so cautious and reserved were our ancestors about business of life and death.'"⁵²

This type of speech gave an air of legitimacy to the slain Tiberius, but was also intended to shift the identities of the listeners as well. An appeal to the ancestral customs of the Romans would doubtlessly have provoked feelings of unity, and unity in the cause of remembering the dead Tiberius made changing political identities of individuals in the crowd easier. We shall see later that, depending on the context, the same type of appeal could be used in different ways to different ends. In the present context, Gaius Gracchus

⁵² Plut. *Gaius Gracchus* 3.

used such rhetoric not to restore the broader national identity of the Romans, but to highlight himself as the defender of it. By placing himself above the rest in this regard, he not only alienated the audience from the Senate, but asserted himself as the defender of that same identity. By diverging from the Senate's interest and converging with those of the people, affiliating with men like the consul-turned-tribune Marcus Fulvius Flaccus, and driving his legislative agenda without hesitation, Gaius Gracchus ensured that he created a potent political identity.

This was exactly what his opponents in the Senate feared. But rather than giving him the same treatment as Tiberius' allies in 132, they used similar tactics to what Gaius used in his speech: convergence and divergence. By playing the part of the tribune who was favored by the Senate, Livius Drusus converged with the people in two ways: the first was the popular legislation which he passed, the second was his manufactured support in the Senate. By appealing to the people with the first he gave normal people an alternative to the political identity of Gaius. With the second, he appealed to the broader Roman identity by putting on the façade of a tribune who worked in concord with the Senate, rather than one who railed against them and sowed division. This tactic, in addition to moving Gaius from the capitol to Africa for a time, allowed the Senate to undermine the political identity of Gaius Gracchus, and not just his policy agenda or general popularity. The former was far more important.

Both the Gracchi were able to amass a popular following by advancing a political agenda that challenged the conservative outlook of elder Roman statesmen. Their advances failed mainly because they challenged the existing system rather than working within it and distinguishing themselves as reformers. The Roman political system could not tolerate

political identities arising in this manner, and the Senate's reaction was justified by the cultural tradition of abhorrence to monarchy.

Impotent Interlopers

After the fall of the Gracchi, a period of political stability followed. Wars outside of Italy distracted the population and provided new opportunities for the political elite to win glory and add to their *dignitas*. Not least of these was the Jugurthine War, in which Gaius Marius made his name famous and was first challenged in the pursuit of glory by Sulla. After these wars, however, political discord began to emerge once again. The office of plebeian tribune had been the source of the previous chaos under the Gracchi, and from 103 to 100, the pattern repeated itself again. I refer here, to the violent actions of Saturninus and Glaucia. Their activity in the assemblies created great revulsion among the population, but a direct intervention by those masses is a unique development for political identity. Saturninus murdered Nonius in 104 while Glaucia was Praetor, so that he could become tribune in 103. Once elected, he attempted to reconcile himself to the people by various means, but he never followed a consistent pattern or agenda, other than preserving his own position of power. The legal immunity which accompanied the office of tribune was an alluring prospect, despite the fact that it had not saved the Gracchi from violent ends. Saturninus, once elected, paraded a freedman about as the supposed son of Tiberius Gracchus in his first tribuneship and passed laws reducing the price of grain and redistributing land in his second.⁵³ Neither of these accomplished the goal of winning over the people. He was thus forced to rely on other political actors to retain his own power. The elaborate ruse to oust Mettellus Numidicus from the Senate by the use of a deceitful

⁵³ App *B. Civ.* 1.32.

oath was an act that benefited Marius. Even though it was successful, it revealed just how incapable a politician Saturninus was. He relied on others to achieve electoral success and resorted to using violence, intimidation, and exile against those who resisted him. If he planned on using his office for radical changes or reforms, he was an utter failure. Saturninus exemplifies what a political identity looks like when it does not meet all the parameters established for a potent political identity. He had affiliations with political actors like Glaucia and Marius, but his lack of legislative initiative is a sign that he had no clear political agenda, despite being tribune for two consecutive years. He was an instigator of radical change *only* in that he dared to intimidate senators with physical violence, whereas during the upheavals of the Gracchi, the violence was aimed in the opposite direction. In terms of standing out from his peers or influencing others, the violence that he perpetrated on political actors and on the assemblies themselves made him a notorious rogue rather more than anything else. He functioned merely as a tool of Marius, who had established himself as a formidable political figure as a result of his six consulships, and who was trying to construct a potent political identity of his own. Saturninus' violence did nothing but spark a backlash that resulted in him and his associates being declared public enemies by the Senate and killed by an angry mob of citizens. More than this, it complicated the situation for Marius, who had the most to lose as consul if he handled the situation in a way that did not satisfy the outraged population.

Saturninus and company's gruesome end under a hail of ceiling tiles highlights a feature of the population of Rome. Appian's account places the deed *after* the Senate issued the final decree and declared them all public enemies. The mob did not react in the same way after the killing of Nonius, or after witnessing Memmius being beaten to death in the

middle of the election. They *did* act out in a similar fashion later, with regard to the tribune Furius whom they “tore to pieces” for preventing the return of Mettellus after his term of office had expired.⁵⁴ Why did the throng of Roman citizens act out violently in these instances and not in the instances of the Gracchi, who were also targets of the Senate’s final decree? I argue that this reaction is a direct result of the changing dynamics of identity in each situation. In the instances of the Gracchi, the Senate issued the final decree in response to them holding enough political power to threaten the order of the state, and causing confusion in the city at an inopportune moment. The population did not rise up and lynch the Gracchi brothers; it was elected officials, senators and other prominent men who responded to the decree and perpetrated the violence. By winning the favor of the people and creating potent political identities for themselves, the Gracchi caused a shift in the identity dynamics for many individuals. Their reforms attracted the attention and personal investment of large numbers of ordinary people, because they stood to gain from them on a personal level. In short, they created a faction and shifted many people away from an individual identity tied to a broader sense of Roman nationality. The Senate could not undo such a transition with a mere decree.

In the case of Saturninus, however, the dynamics of identity were not the same. His first year serving as tribune was a full two decades after the death of Gaius Gracchus, and those intermediate years were characterized mainly by foreign wars, not by the rise of political revolutionaries. Twenty years is nigh a generation, even by modern standards. This was more than enough time for the normal patterns of Roman identity to recover, especially for those who did not witness the events surrounding the younger Gracchus, or

⁵⁴ App. B. Civ. 1.33.

were too young to comprehend them at the time. To many outside the political class, Saturninus would likely have been viewed as a tribune who lashed out violently at his political enemies, threatened the Senate, disrupted and dispersed elections, and altogether frustrated the normal order of politics. Tensions between oligarchic and democratic forces aside, removing Saturninus from the political scene was a cause both ordinary citizens and politicians could espouse.

While broader notions of Roman identity may have been entrenched by the murder of Saturninus, it was not long before the entire notion of Roman identity was challenged by the outbreak of war. From this trial emerged new actors, new political identities, and new fissures in the foundation of the republic.

CHAPTER III

THE CRACKS DEEPEN

The Italian Question and the Social War

Once Saturninus was removed from the political scene, there was a lull before the next revolutionary attempt, as with the removal of the Gracchi. This was only in the political center, however; and a long-brewing crisis of inequality in the periphery burst into armed conflict at the end of the decade. Marcus Livius Drusus (the younger) as tribune in 91, attempted to avert the coming storm by passing legislation that would grant the allied Italian states Roman citizenship, but he met political resistance and was killed. When the allies revolted, they were already aware of the Romans' unwillingness to fully admit them into the political fold. Those who had championed their cause in the past had been permanently silenced, and history had repeated itself yet again with Drusus. This time, however, no promise of new colonies could prevent the allies from revolting.

The implications of the revolt were more significant in terms of identity than military conflict. Italy was no stranger to war. There were several battles between 90 and 88 in which the armies and leaders on both sides suffered major victories and devastating defeats. If we examine the war through the lens of politics and identity, we can detect the importance of a Roman identity among the Italian states. At a macro level, the reason for the war was simple: the Italians wanted to officially be admitted to the political system of the Romans, and the Romans who held the monopoly on political power did not want this to take place. If the allies were admitted into the political fold, it would be more difficult for political elites to maintain their usual control, because he who finally managed to get the allies enfranchised would likely become the most influential man on the political scene. Drusus was said to have had huge crowds of Italians following him about the city, and he

entertained the leaders of those communities.⁵⁵ If he was able to attract such a following when the allies were excluded from the citizen body and the electorate, how much more influence might he have attained if his supporters were suddenly given equal status? Absorbing the Italian communities in a piecemeal manner was the preferred method, because it allowed the Romans to limit the influence that members of those communities had in politics. They practiced this rather effectively with the Latin states. By granting them limited rights, they incorporated them into the Roman body politic without too much disruption to political dynamics, because all Latin voters were put into a single voting tribe. These limited rights were useful to the Latins, as I have already discussed, but now they were useful to the Romans, since only a single Latin territory – Venusia – joined the Italian revolt. Rather than risk a spread of the rebellion, the Romans decided to capitalize on the utility of their enfranchisement with the *lex iulia* in 90 and the *lex Plautia-Papiria* in 89.⁵⁶ These were political concessions designed to offer alternatives to open conflict to the Italian communities, and to undermine popular support for the war in them. There was no guarantee that the Italians would succeed in a conflict with the Romans, even though they had assisted them in past military conflicts and had been exposed to Roman tactics. It would be illogical therefore, for Italians continue to risk life and limb in a war with the Mediterranean juggernaut after it had offered to concede to their demands, and when their proposed confederation already contained features modeled after the Roman system.⁵⁷

In addition to gaining political agency in the Roman system and the benefits which accompanied it, the Italian allies adopted the same broader national identity that the

⁵⁵ App. B. Civ. 1.36.

⁵⁶ Scullard, *From the Gracchi to Nero*, 69.

⁵⁷ Consuls and Praetors were used as the head positions for the Allied confederates, but the details remain obscure. See Scullard, *From the Gracchi to Nero*, 67.

Romans held, while at the same time maintaining that which they developed in their native communities. They could simultaneously be Marsi *and* Romans, or Ligurians *and* Romans: a dual identity of community and country. While they may not have clearly understood every institution in the city of Rome, or every appeal to ancestral custom in public speeches, they still would have officially been part of that society. For the Romans however, no such shift developed. Community and country were usually one and the same with the exception of colonies. They therefore maintained their usual patterns of identity. There was no Fannius this time to goad the Roman population into resisting the Italian incorporation, no Scipio Aemilianus to hurl the insult “stepsons of Italy” upon the Italians.⁵⁸ In the context of political control, a war with the allies was likely preferable to some of Rome’s ruling elite rather than a peaceful incorporation. Wars focused the attention and physical presence of the population away from the issues at the heart of politics and provided new opportunities for military command and increasing their own prestige. In the short term, a reliable well from which to draw more political influence had been tapped; and Livius Drusus, a clever politician and possible candidate for political identity, was now out of the way, the outcome of the Social War could be decided on Roman terms, in accordance with the usual patterns of political power.

Fame, Infamy and Civil War

The aftermath of the Social War brought about political change at a faster rate than the incorporation of the Italian allies had produced. Sulla used his accomplishments from the Jugurthine War, war with the Teutons and Cimbri, and Social War to propel himself to prominence in the political arena. He was elected consul for 88, but had disbanded his

⁵⁸ Valerius Maximus, *De factis dictisque memorabilibus* 6.2.3.

camp from the Social War before being attacked by Gaius Marius and Sulpicius. These two men posed much more of a threat to the political order in that moment, because they had a clear plan to achieve their aims, but they did not anticipate Sulla's revolutionary response. As with the previously discussed figures, it is necessary to examine the individual identity of these three men before moving on to an analysis of their political identities.

Gaius Marius was the fated harbinger of Civil War whose covetousness for power and seven consulships led the Roman Republic to destruction. But before he fulfilled this role, he had served the Republic in a very traditional manner. Born at Arpinum to a family of equestrian rank, he first made himself noted by Scipio Aemilianus during the Numantine campaign. Unfortunately, his exemplary service did not springboard him into political prominence as it had for so many of his predecessors. As his family had never before held a position on the *cursus honorum*, his path to political office faced a considerable obstacle: he would be running as a ‘new man’ (*novus homo*) at all times. He had success in some elections, such as his quaestorship and his tribunate of 120, but he fumbled others like the local election in Arpinum and his double loss for Curule and Plebeian aedile in 118. Eventually, however, he became praetor and held a provincial command in further Spain. He served effectively, but without a triumph for his victory over the many robbers of the region.⁵⁹ Undeterred, he married into the Julian family by way of Caesar’s aunt and had a son with his same name. Up to this point, Marius had done nothing to challenge the normal order of politics. He engaged in political battles to be sure, but they were normal ones. And while Marius certainly affected the outcomes of policy debates in Rome, his policies did not initially lean in any one direction, nor did they solely serve his personal advantage. As

⁵⁹ Plut. *Marius* 6.

tribune, he passed a measure ensuring the secret ballot for voters in the plebeian assembly and had threatened to have his political benefactor and consul of 120, Caecilius Metellus, thrown into prison for resisting it. Clearly, he was not afraid to throw his weight around as an official, nor afraid to turn on his allies when they stood in his way. Such characteristics would have been commendable had they supported a clearly defined set of principles, but this did not apply to the ambitious Marius. He had yet to establish himself as a truly important political figure, but he had taken steps in the right direction. Alienating the Metelli family by slighting one of their members might not have been the most prudent thing for one pursuing a political career, but the Roman political scene was filled with rivalries, and Marius undoubtedly attracted the support of the Metelli's enemies. He crossed paths with another one of their gens in North Africa and eventually found himself at odds with him as well, once he had established his own reputation as a capable military officer. This was Caecilius Metellus Numidicus. Marius' actions saved the Roman forces in Africa from disaster more than once, and he was highly esteemed among the troops as a result. Using this influence, in conjunction with the many client, business, and political connections that he had made during his previous office tenures, Marius decided to seek the consulship while still serving as legate during Metellus' Numidian command.⁶⁰ Metellus however, snidely responded to this move by saying, "some men should not want everything" and essentially put himself at odds with the future consul for the rest of the campaign. However, the persistent Marius eventually succeeded in badgering his way out from under his patron's command and shortly after attained his desires in Rome in 108. This was the genesis of Marius' career as a major political actor. When the Metteli had

⁶⁰ Mark Hyden, *Gaius Marius: The Rise and Fall of Rome's Saviour* (Barnsley: Pen and Sword Military, 2017), 55-57.

ceased to be of use in furthering Marius' political career, he had no qualms discarding his affiliation with them. Indeed, during his run for consul in 108 he railed against Numidicus, and his political affiliates, much to the dismay of the traditional elites; but more than this, he expanded the juxtaposition between himself and Numidicus to encompass the entirety of their respective social classes. This tactic changed the focus of his consular run from his distinction as a candidate, to societal divisions.⁶¹ However unseemly and divisive the tactics of Marius' campaign, they secured him victory, and he assumed consular command in 107. The general population, much more interested in ending the war which had already consumed the state's attention for several years, did not recognize the precedent for social division that Marius' rhetoric had established.

Much of Marius story is well known after this. He established military levies from the population with little or no property; and eventually, after replacing Metellus Numidicus as commander in Numidia, he succeeded in capturing Jugurtha by way of Sulla's negotiation and the betrayal of Bocchus in 105.⁶² He was then thrust into another military command over the armies defending Italy from the Cimbri and Teutons. These forces had suffered humiliating defeats, and Marius was the only one trusted to bring their losing streak to an end. He was subsequently elected to the consulship *in absentia* several times in a row as a result, but being away from Rome for the entirety of the military conflict with northern invaders meant that Marius was away from the body politic. His influence remained only as long as there was a campaign to be fought, and his previous political maneuvers had made him plenty of enemies in the Senate. Without being in Rome to react

⁶¹ This was not the wisest decision politically since consular elections were decided by the centuriate assembly (see above, Chapter 1) but the protracted nature of the Jugurthine war coupled with Marius' popularity among the soldiery provided him with firm ground to stand on for such raillery.

⁶² Sallust *Bellum Jugurthum* 105-114; Plut. *Marius* 10, *Sulla* 3.

to their maneuvers against his prestige, Marius could only maintain his current level of prominence, while others moved to raise themselves at his expense. Marius' handle on this popularity contest loosened to the point that Metellus Numidicus, his benefactor-turned-rival, ran against him in the consular election of 101, though he was unsuccessful.

The main reason for Marius' political stagnation was, ironically, his focus on the military in both foreign and domestic policy. He granted citizenship to the allied contingents which accompanied his legions' crushing military victories at Aquae Sextiae and Vercellae, and he later proposed land grants to his veterans of the Jugurthine war. Such things were not innovative, but they did have the potential to create a new, very numerous, Marian faction.⁶³ For this reason, therefore, both were resisted by his adversaries in the Senate. Without refined rhetorical skills to counter this resistance, Marius needed allies within the political system to advance his agenda, and he unfortunately found one in the tribune Saturninus.

Prior to this tribune's seditious activity, Marius held all the necessary components of a potent political identity except for one. He had raised himself to the consulship at the expense of the ruling elite, and he had made plenty of affiliations to get there. His many consecutive consulships were unparalleled in Rome's history, and such fame refocused the efforts of the ruling elite to undermine him. Had the war with the Teutons and Cimbri ended sooner, Marius might have returned to the eternal city and passed any legislation he pleased. As it is, the length of his command provided the reprieve that his political foes needed to encroach on his status. Without attempting to implement a major, radical change in Roman politics or society, Marius had established political identity, but it was not secure.

⁶³ See above (Chapter 1) for connections between patrons and client communities.

Marius did not attempt any major political or institutional change during the height of his career. So when Saturninus embarked upon his seditious activity in 100 and met his end at the hands of a violent mob, their affiliation cast a poor shadow on Marius and resulted in his decline in popular favor. This was a particularly deep wound for Marius, because his main legislative victory had been getting the land grant for his Jugurthine veterans passed. Saturninus had used violent intimidation to achieve this end in 100. As a result, the Senate had the measure annulled following Saturninus' death.⁶⁴ Marius then had to contend with the same political enemies he had since his first consulship in 108, but he had less support from the people, and his enemies were now armed with political ammunition with which to attack him. This would have been a major political headwind for Marius, especially since there was no major military activity for him to command, and his old rival Metellus Numidicus had been recalled from exile. Thus, Marius was essentially reduced to the role of a senator; and rather than sit in the midst of his political enemies, he opted to leave Rome for the east. At this point, Marius' political identity was nearly eliminated. He was no longer in a position to enact a political agenda, since he had the stain of Saturninus on him, and political adversaries openly competed with him for spots on the *cursus honorum*. Clearly, he did not hold the same influence on others as he had in the past; and, without allies in power like Saturninus or another military command, he fell by the wayside. He did, however, maintain a celebrity-like fame that no amount of political blunders could erase, and this left him the potential to rise again. It was this potential that the ruling elite feared, and we see after Marius' travels had ended and the Italian allies had revolted, just how remiss the Senate was to foster this fame.

⁶⁴ Hyden, *Gaius Marius*, 166.

After the deaths of the consul P. Rutilius Lupus and praetor Q. Servilius Caepio, Marius' military performance in 90 was exemplary. His victories over the Italian confederates on the Tolenus River and against the Marsi were reminiscent of his past glories, and his political opponents were wary of such successes. If Marius maintained his successful military activity, he could use it to spring himself back into political prominence just as he had before. This was an unacceptable outcome for the political class. With the death of one consul, and the poor generalship of the other, the Senate decided to let the year pass with only one consul in office rather than to allow Marius to acquire the newly vacated position. At the same time, however, they recognized the need for Marius to remain in the field. They therefore expanded the consular authority over the military to Marius without awarding him the official title. This was a balanced approach from the Senate, which we do not often see in the Late Republic. They paid equal attention to long term repercussions of allowing Marius new life for his political identity, and at the same time they acted with the immediate demands of the Social War in mind. This did not sit well with Marius. He likely concluded that the Senate was withholding the consular title so that they could replace him in the following year with a legitimate consul, and thus demote him from command in the midst of a large scale war. This would have been a grave insult; and rather than suffer it, Marius laid aside his command after citing health concerns.⁶⁵

After this setback, it seems that Marius still did not grasp the importance of balancing political and military activity in his pursuit of prominence. His past experience had shown him that military prestige led to political office, not the other way around. The opposite was true for Sulla in this situation, but Marius knew from the example of

⁶⁵ Hyden, *Gaius Marius*, 186.

Saturninus that openly attacking an official by violence or unorthodox means would be a major mistake. He therefore only put his name forward for the Mithridatic command; and when he was not chosen to lead it, he turned to political allies to get what he wanted. Marius did not hold any elective position, and therefore he could not bring legislation before the assembly, which would grant him the command. Thus, the plebeian tribune Lucius Sulpicius Rufus was the key to Marius achieving his command. Despite its polarizing effects, Marius supported Sulpicius' legislation for the enfranchisement of Italians into the 35 voting tribes rather than their new 10. Violence erupted in the forum as a result of this legislative battle, and Sulla was effectively driven from the city for delaying the vote. Ironically, despite not holding any official office, it was at this point that Marius finally achieved a potent political identity. He had finally adopted a substantial political agenda, albeit, not his own, and only in order to get a military appointment. His affiliation with the bold plebeian tribune Sulpicius facilitated these maneuvers, and all the while he still held the reputation of the general who had conquered so many thousands of enemies in the name of Rome. From this influential position, he was able to directly affect Sulpicius' activity – probably with promises of debt relief – and by extension, the activity of the Roman crowd. He was now in position to implement radical change, so long as the other tribunes did not veto his pawn's proposals. None of the ancient sources mention a tribunician veto at this time, and whether that was out of fear of violence – which Sulpicius was not above using – or their agreement with the proposed legislation is unknown, but it testifies to the influence which Marius and Sulpicius had in that moment.

Sulla, now out of the city, was deprived of his command in the Mithridatic war, but still maintained his consulship; Q. Pompeius Rufus – the other consul – was simply

removed from his office altogether for resisting the tribunes open attacks on his colleague.⁶⁶ Marius and Sulpicius were in complete control of the city and were in position to enact any change that they wanted; but they also knew that if they overplayed their hand, the people of the city who had not benefitted from the recent enfranchisement law would revolt against them. This radical move of deposing elected officials had been used before, but not with the intent of controlling the city. Unfortunately for the troublesome duo, leaving Sulla's consulship intact left him with grounds to stand on for a reactive assault on the city. From there, they were dispelled from the capitol and declared public enemies: Sulpicius was killed, and Marius was hunted all over Italy and into Africa, his potent political identity being short lived. His return to Rome with Cinna in 87 did not revive it, because his agenda was nothing more than wanton slaughter of his enemies and the outraging of their families and possessions. Eventually, he was elected to his seventh consulship and died soon thereafter as an infamous rogue with a deteriorating mind, his prior deeds on behalf of the Republic long forgotten by the public.

Marius would not have fallen into such infamy had he not had the support of political allies in Rome. Sulpicius is well known for functioning as Marius' pawn; and although the evidence on his earlier life is almost nonexistent, one piece might shed some light on his otherwise obscure persona. In 94, Sulpicius prosecuted a tribune of the year, Gaius Norbanus, but failed to see him condemned. In this function he charged Norbanus with treason for driving away two fellow tribunes who had attempted to veto his own legal prosecution against Servilius Caepio.⁶⁷ Imagine that: a tribune who prosecuted a man

⁶⁶ Plut. *Sulla* 8; Hyden, *Gaius Marius*, 228.

⁶⁷ T. Robert and S. Broughton, *The Magistrates of the Roman Republic*. Vol. 1 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1984) 563.

under the *lex Aepulia* for intimidating tribunes not ten years prior, eventually chased Sulla, the duly elected consul of 88, through the streets with a gang of ruffians and drawn swords.⁶⁸ Politically, Sulpicius must have taken his failed prosecution of Norbanus to mean that the conservative cause of preserving the sacrosanctity of tribunes was a lost one; and then, as tribune, and fearing his own deposition in the face of political resistance, he decided to pursue more radical measures to preserve his own power.⁶⁹ This is a rather cynical outlook, but the alternative is Plutarch's oversimplified explanation that he was an unscrupulous villain to his very core. Politics is hardly so black and white.

Sulpicius was no fool. He understood quite well that he needed to be in the right position in order to commit seditious activity. This demanded both a base of support from the general population and among the political class, and he had a plan for each. To court the masses, he suggested a renewal of Livius Drusus' legislation to distribute the previously disenfranchised Italians into the existing 35 voting tribes. This was the maneuver of a keen-eyed politician. Attempting this redistribution in the aftermath of the Social War would have proved a much easier political battle now that the Italians were full citizens.⁷⁰ By championing this cause in the face of resistance from the political elite, Sulpicius created a stark juxtaposition that even the most disinclined observer would have recognized, and he began creating a potent political identity as a result. He had his political agenda and a base of support, but he still needed political affiliations to push the agenda through. If he attempted to do so unilaterally as a tribune of the Plebs, he might suffer the same fate as

⁶⁸ Plut. *Sulla* 8, *Marius* 36.

⁶⁹ Jonathan G.F. Powell, "The Tribune Sulpicius." *Historia: Zeitschrift Für Alte Geschichte* 39, no. 4 (1990): 446-60.

⁷⁰ The Romans, ever conscious of their own identity, distinguished themselves from their new equals by classifying them as "new citizens" and embracing the term "old citizens" for themselves. This is readily noted in both the contemporary and later sources.

Drusus or Tiberius Gracchus and accomplish nothing. To curb this possibility, he made two strategic moves: first he attempted to win some approval among the ruling elite by way of Sulla, then he enlisted support from among the masses to attend his person as an armed band.

The first move was a failure. Despite Sulpicius interference in the recall of the Varian exiles, Sulla was unmoved by the favor. Without some form of connection to the tribune, Sulla had no reason to support his legislative agenda of Italian enfranchisement. He had commanded the legions with success during the height of the Social War and had been entrusted to stamp out the last embers of it in the Campanian city of Nola. There was no reason for Sulla to suddenly look on the formerly seditious Italians with any warmth, especially since such a move provided no advantage in either military or political affairs. Undeterred, Sulpicius cast about for an alternative connection to help push his agenda through, and he found a willing ally in Marius. The latter, however, was only a private citizen at the time and held no public office. Sulpicius must have realized this and, rather than his direct impact on politics – which recent events had shown, was in the wane, relied on the connections that Marius had. With this alliance secured, Sulpicius was rapidly acquiring the aspects of a potent political identity.

Sulpicius' second maneuver was much more successful, mostly because it was much simpler and thus easier to obtain. He gathered an armed body of some 3,000 followers to act as his private bodyguard, and 600 equestrians to serve as his personal political supporters; and he openly flaunted them as the ‘anti-Senate.’ The smaller body was an open challenge to the political class and a show of confidence by Sulpicius in his actions. He knew that the larger body secured him from violence, and this security

undoubtedly attracted more support from the ‘new citizen’ Italians. This was, of course, all to the detriment of the existing citizens, but Sulpicius did not need their support: he only needed to terrorize them out of resisting him. And since there was no sense in letting an armed private army go to waste, terrorize them he did.⁷¹ All of these developments climaxed in 88 when Sulpicius rammed his legislation through with the use of violence, ran Sulla out of the city, and then deprived him of the Mithridatic command at the behest of Marius. Sulpicius had achieved a potent political identity at this point, and this identity allowed him to engage in seditious activity: for in addition to his coherent political agenda and affiliations with Marius, and, presumably, other enemies of Sulla, Sulpicius was an instigator of radical change. His policy agenda was not new, but it challenged the regular order of political control – the original reason for the Social War. It was not that Romans were against enfranchising the Italians, they were against doing it quickly, and without tight control over the resulting political changes. Sulpicius disregarded this concern in favor of the popularity and personal power Italian enfranchisement would provide. His creation of the ‘anti-Senate’ was also a clear indication of his disregard for the normal political order. Not even Sulla or Caesar at the height of their dictatorships dared to suggest replacing the Senate, or mocked it with such obvious contempt.⁷² Sulpicius’ alliance with Marius undoubtedly helped swell the ranks of his supporters, and his use of violence certainly affected the decision making of his opponents both during the violence, and afterwards as the threat of it loomed. Violence in itself was not a radical change, since it

⁷¹ Plut. *Sulla* 8, *Marius* 34-34 ; App. *B. Civ.* 55-56.

⁷² Although, neither man was against packing the Senate with his own supporters. Adrian Goldsworthy, *Caesar: Life of a Colossus* (London: Yale University Press, 2006), 476.

had been used as a political tool in the past; but since it was an effective tool, it quickly found a place in Sulpicius' arsenal of political weapons.

Compounded, these activities ensured that Sulpicius successfully created a potent political identity. This allowed him to commit seditious activity without significant fear of reprisal. However, this only applied in the domestic sphere. Sulla's military intervention was unprecedented, unexpected, and it quickly reduced Sulpicius' hard-earned political identity to ashes.

Sulla, Proscriptions and a not-so-clean Slate

Sulla's creation of a potent political identity was a reaction to preceding events with Marius. Prior to his march on Rome, his personal identity was altogether unremarkable. He was a member of a patrician family who had fallen from prominence and thus had some serious catching up to do in the realm of political competition. His father left him no inheritance. He was therefore severely handicapped until the death of his step-mother and his intimate actress friend Nicopolis.⁷³ These women left him the monetary means to engage in politics, and Sulla did not snub the opportunity. He was elected quaestor for 107 and was placed under the command of Marius for the Jugurthine War, whose general events need not be recounted here. He served as an effective officer in this war, and then later in the War against the Teutons and Cimbri as Marius' Legate, then as a senior officer in the Social War. All of this was in line with the standard career path for someone of Sulla's rank. Unfortunately, Marius' insatiable ambition was in direct conflict with Sulla's political aspirations, and this culminated in the events of 88, which have been discussed at some

⁷³ Plut. *Sulla* 2.

length above. It was not until Sulla stormed into the city at the head of an army that he fully met the criteria of a potent political identity.

Sulla initially had no need for a political identity. He had achieved consular rank on his own merit and had no intention of disrupting the normal political order within the state, since he had already benefitted from it and more than once had been the guarantor of its survival. Recognition did not mean influence, however, and his deficit in this regard was to his enemies' advantage. His lack of potency is no more apparent than in the riots of 88 in which Sulla was forced to flee for his life and concede to Sulpicius' demand for a restoration of public business. If a sitting consul could not rally any support in the city to counter the tribune's seditious forces, it indicated that there was a vast difference in how much local influence each of them had. Sulla therefore calculated that eclipsing the troublesome tribune would require a sudden surge of popularity and was about to utilize the Marian technique of leading massive military campaign to further his reputation, but then events went awry.

It was the revocation of the Mithridatic command that forced Sulla to turn from a regular to a radical. He was (strangely) spared the ignominy of losing his consular authority, but this was no consolation. If he were to concede yet again to the seditious tribune, he would be giving Sulpicius more to boast about, and simultaneously undermine his own political career. To be driven out of the city by the tribune was bad enough, as it gave the appearance of weakness in the face of domestic tribulations. To relinquish a lucrative military command as well would make Sulla appear spineless and would relegate him to either domestic politics, where it had already been shown that he could be harassed into acquiescence, or to a lesser provincial command, where he would struggle to win glory

sufficient to eclipse his enemies in Rome. There was also the risk of physical violence perpetrated by his enemies if he returned to the city and attempted to achieve prominence with political maneuvers or legislation. In short, Sulla faced the destruction of his political career; and rather than suffer such an outrage, he marched on Rome with the support of his troops.

Sulla's entrance into the city was resisted by the population, who hurled stones and roof tiles down on him and his forces, but these proved to be easily demoralized by the threat of the houses being burned down. Sulla then defeated the Marian defenders in the streets by outflanking them; and after a drawn out engagement he became master of the city. Sulla proceeded to quickly dismantle the political identity of his enemies. He declared his two main antagonists and ten others public enemies (*hostes*) and dispatched men to hunt them down. But more than this, he quickly formed a political agenda which would obstruct seditious activity in the future. He laid low the power of the plebeian tribunes, forced all legislative proposals to be approved by the Senate, and all approved bills to be voted on by the centuriate assembly. Sulla's policies accomplished two things: structurally they blocked the electoral path for demagogues to come to power; and politically they helped Sulla gain the support of the aristocratic elite. He needed a broader base of support in Rome than the one upon which he had relied for his consular run, and what better way to gain more political affiliations than by summarily granting the normally factious elite greater political importance?

Sulla passed these reforms quickly because, despite being master of the city, he was in a precarious position. He was limited by his consular term of one year, and disregarding this limit without legal reason would make him the very tyrant he claimed to be ridding the

Roman people of. This would undoubtedly spark revolt from all directions, and he would possibly have to resort to force to maintain his control over local events. Sulla could not risk this. Fortunately, he did not have to. His use of the legions in the capture of Rome had created a whole new dynamic for the city population. They risked the wrath of a professional army if they declined to pass Sulla's reforms; and as a result, they decided that it would be in their best interest to approve Sulla's measures with alacrity. In reality, they probably had nothing to fear, as a massacre of citizens in the city would likely have the same result as Sulla retaining his consulship past his legal term. Sulla realized this as well and made the effort to keep the citizens safe from any violence on the part of his troops. Despite these efforts, Sulla was now infamous. He had violated the *pomerium* at the head of an army and had his political enemies declared public ones. His military service on behalf of the republic could not conceal these glaring facts, especially since they were so fresh in the public mind. He had been resistant to radical change when it had come from Sulpicius, but when threatened directly, he did not hesitate to act in what he perceived to be the best interests of both himself and the Republic.

Thus in 88 did the political identity of Sulla come to be. In his mind, he had secured his position from future usurpation; but just as he had created his political identity as a response to that of Sulpicius, new challengers attempted to create their own political identities to defy him. This, of course, refers to the sedition of Cinna, who, after being expelled from the city and allying with Marius, returned and captured it. From there the massacres of Sulla's allies began, courtesy of Marius' *bardyiae* slave gang. This outburst of violence indirectly reveals how potent Sulla's political identity had become. Rather than challenge him directly, Cinna had waited to make his move until Sulla was off in the east

fighting Mithridates. Some of the victims of the slaughter then fled to Sulla while he was on campaign. They might not have been victimized had Sulla not expanded the prestige of the aristocratic elite during his first stint as master of Rome, but reality dictated their actions, and the victimized elites understood that only one potent political identity could undo another. Many of these men certainly had connections to client communities in Italy and abroad and could have sought refuge there, out of the reach of the Marian bloodbath.⁷⁴ Instead, they chose to join the company of the man who had taken Rome by force of arms. He could undoubtedly provide them with safety, but that was not their only objective. They knew how far Sulla would go to restore himself to his rightful position of authority, and Sulla knew that once they had joined him, they were his dependents in every sense of the word. His strategy of strengthening the aristocratic elements in the political system was paying dividends.

This was a turning point in Roman identity, because there were two clearly defined, diametrically opposed factions, each headed by an individual who had held a potent political identity. While huge swaths of the Italian population were still trying to incorporate themselves fully into the Roman system, they latched on to anyone who advocated their cause, and ambitious individuals exploited this willingness to advance themselves. While they undoubtedly held the Roman identity, their struggle for full political enfranchisement forced them to adopt the political identity of their advocates. The struggle between Marius and Sulla spilled into the streets of Rome, and people of all stations suffered the consequences of the factional violence. With Sulla about to undertake his second march on the capitol, lines had to be drawn. Roman identity was now political;

⁷⁴ Some did take this course rather than joining Sulla. See Arthur Keaveney, *Sulla: The Last Republican* (London: Routledge, 2005), 105.

the common features which had united the Roman identity in the past were not sufficient to prevent this development, because different portions of the population were becoming reliant on those individuals who were creating potent political identities.

While Sulla had been waging a successful war with Mithridates, the attacks of his political enemies in Rome became a major distraction. His family and friends had been openly attacked, and he had been deprived of his military command yet again. It was clear that his enemies would not rest until they had laid low Sulla's political identity; and Sulla, realizing this, determined that his enemies must lose their positions of influence. After his victories against the Mithridatic forces at Orchomenos and Chaeronea, Sulla had his eastern foe on the ropes. Thus, he was able to quickly negotiate the Peace of Dardanus and turn his focus westward. While his troops were dismayed at the sudden conclusion of the eastern campaign, Sulla had no qualms about it. The war had mostly been the means to achieve his end of increased political prominence; he could not achieve that end if he was stripped of his proconsular authority, and his troops were replaced. Fortunately for the so-surnamed proconsul, the efforts to replace him were disastrous. Cinna's forces were shipwrecked and demoralized. Flaccus' troops were stirred up into mutiny by Fimbria, and he was consequently murdered. Fimbria himself fared no better at maintaining the loyalty of his troops than his predecessor. After all, the troops had their own interests to tend to. Sulla had a potent political identity, superior forces under his command and the stomach to do what was necessary to secure the future for himself and his followers. Fimbria's troops found themselves commanded by a treacherous man who had none of those things. There was no sense in risking themselves in a war with their fellow legionaries when one side would clearly emerge the victor, and the troops who fought for that faction would likely be

rewarded once the conflict was over. Adjudging Sulla to be better aligned with their interests, the whole army deserted to his camp, and Fimbria slew himself in despair. The attempts to undermine Sulla had backfired spectacularly, and Sulla proceeded with an enlarged force.

Once Sulla had finally landed in Italy, he had to consider several dynamics. He needed to determine who his enemies were in Rome and in the field. He had just experienced desertions that benefitted him. So, there was ample evidence to suggest that any opposing military force could have their resolve weakened. The same could not be said, however, for his political enemies who sent the armies out against him. These would not suffer Sulla to become the master of the city once again since it would, and eventually did, spell certain doom for them. Sulla also had to reckon with the noncombatant communities in Italy, and they with him. The Social War was not yet a decade past, and all of Italy likely recalled the strain that such a conflict put on their communities. If this conflict between factions in Rome spilled over into the neighboring areas, it could result in a long, costly war. To preempt this disastrous situation, communities in Italy needed to consider their position. They could abstain from allying with a faction, but if Sulla or one of his enemies decided to make use of their town for military purposes, they would be forced to let them in or endure a siege. That choice would invariably be seen as a political decision, even if the community simply wanted to be left alone. Italian communities faced the possibility of punishment if they supported the wrong side in the coming conflict, and the internal struggles to choose a side that occurred in those communities reflected the battles of Roman politics. Irony *par excellence*. It was the adoption of the Roman identity by Italian peoples that was the precedent for the Social War; now, as Roman identity

became increasingly political and fractionalized, the Italians followed along the same lines. They were, quite literally, doing as the Romans did.

As Sulla approached the Capitol, his enemies attempted to stop him by armed resistance. Unfortunately for them, Sulla's political identity had suffered no setbacks, and his military forces had only increased in strength. The consul of 83, Scipio Asiaticus found out the hard way just how potent a figure Sulla had become; not one, but two armies that the consul levied abandoned him and joined Sulla's cause. He escaped unscathed, but the Republic was not so fortunate. The other consul of the year, Gaius Norbanus, actually managed to hold his army's loyalty long enough to come to blows with Sulla, but he was outclassed and lost 6,000 men near Tifata. The younger Marius suffered a similar defeat in 82 at Sacriportus, where he fell prey to both Sulla's superior military performance and the snap decision the city made to shut the gates and strand his army outside. Offering the defeated army a safe haven would have aligned the city with the Marian faction and sentenced the city to suffer a siege. As the civil war wore on, situations like these only contributed to the decline of the Roman identity which had united Romans in the past. Some found themselves reacting to the negative effects of political fracturing, others took stock of the situation and found opportunities to advance themselves within the new power dynamics. Pompey and Crassus were the most successful in employing their services with the goal of political alliances in mind. Since both were members of the aristocratic elite prior to the civil war, they had the means to support Sulla's cause in a substantial manner. They employed their own forces in service of Sulla during the war, and Crassus actually delivered him the victory in the battle outside the walls of Rome. Both Pompey and Crassus recognized the potency of Sulla's political identity, and they cemented their political

affiliation with him by serving as his military subordinates. This was a critical step for the two men, because it allowed them to rise to prominence after Sulla was finally out of the picture, but in a more immediate context, it protected them from Sulla's wrath.

When Sulla finally gained mastery over Rome, he was determined to purge his troublesome adversaries from the Roman political system. The rise of political identities was exactly what had been causing civil strife during the last several years, and Sulla was aware that he, as the owner of a potent political identity, was in prime position to make effective changes to the existing political structure. He knew that someone as audacious as he could embark on a similar revolutionary path in the future if things remained unchanged, thus, the reforms that he had in mind would have to be enacted quickly and not be impeded by the resistance of his political opponents. To achieve this, he engaged in activities that made him infamous in the eyes of history: he massacred the captured soldiers of the *populares*, declared himself dictator, and created the proscription lists. The first two were prerequisites for the last. To execute the troops showed Sulla's enemies that he meant business, and to declare himself dictator gave him an air of legal legitimacy. Both served to solidify Sulla's own position. The proscription lists, however, were designed to destroy those who had the means and influence to attempt seditious activity or to resist his goals. Hundreds were killed, and their heads displayed in public areas. Those who managed to escape the immediate reach of the murderous bounty hunters put as much distance between themselves and the Empire's center as they could. Those who were caught up in the massacres were members of the political elite, because Sulla recognized that that demographic held the first two requisites for a political identity: political affiliations and agenda. Those who did not possess these were of no consequence, so there was no need for

wanton massacre.⁷⁵ To engage in this activity would be reminiscent of Marius – Sulla’s antithesis. That was not Sulla’s purpose, he was determined to prevent the rise of another Marius, or of someone else like himself. Killing potential rivals completely removed them from the scene and was the cleanest way for Sulla to achieve his end. So the proscriptions continued unabated. Those who managed to stay off of the lists were undoubtedly intimidated, because they knew that crossing Sulla would expose them to danger and that attempting to challenge his political hegemony would be a death sentence. The terror was effective, but not universally. Sertorius eluded Sulla’s culling and established a defiant rebellion in Spain for several years. He was an exceptional case and exemplified exactly what Sulla was trying to prevent.

In addition to wiping out many of his potential political challengers, Sulla set about changing existing political processes to deter the seditious activity that had plagued Rome for the last several decades. The legal changes were the following: family members of the proscribed were banned from holding *any* political office, plebeian tribunes were banned from holding any *future* political office, and proconsuls and propraetors were guilty of treason if they held on to their command longer than 30 days past its expiration. The changes that he applied to institutions were: a revocation of the rights of tribunes to bring legislation before the people, or to veto any that was brought by the Senate. The number of praetors was increased to eight, and the number of quaestors was increased to twenty. The *cursus honorum* was given a strict sequential structure, and mandatory gaps between recurring magistracies were imposed. The Senate was packed with 300 new members from

⁷⁵ This does not mean politically neutral individuals were spared. Many were killed for their property, which meant that men who lacked wealth were not targeted. Sulla’s political career was stifled by his poverty early in life and it was luck that provided him with it later; he knew, therefore that poor men posed little threat to him, or the future of the republic. See Keaveney, *Sulla*, 130.

the equestrian class and given control of the law courts. The end goal for all of these moves was the same. Sulla knew that the emergence of potent political identities had been facilitated by the existing weaknesses in the Roman system, and he needed to create changes that would prevent, or at least significantly delay the emergence of one. This barrage of political reform occurred in 81 and forced politically ambitious individuals – at least those who survived the proscriptions – to reevaluate how they would approach politics. An increased number of offices provided more potential for political success, but the two year gap imposed between curule magistracies would relegate those men to inaction once their term had expired. The only alternative would have been running for an inferior office, which was in effect, a voluntary demotion. Changed as it was by the proscriptions and Sulla’s dictatorial decrees, the Roman political class reeled from these changes. Their adoption of new rules for politics was likely unenthusiastic, but they could do nothing substantial in the way of resistance while Sulla was on the scene. They did not have to wait long, however, because Sulla laid down his dictatorial powers in 79, and died soon after in 78.

Thorough as Sulla’s reforms were, they were only effective while Sulla lived. He possessed the potent political identity necessary to enforce his reforms and guide them along. His use of force also functioned as a deterrent for any potential challengers. After his death, however, the consul Lepidus immediately broke out into rebellion, and the Republic approached another round of convulsions. There was still enough wiggle room in Sulla’s reformed system for individuals to nurture private ambitions. They had outlived the dictator, and now they could pursue their political agendas afresh.

CHAPTER IV

IRREPARABLE DAMAGE

The Post-Sulla years

With Sulla gone, Roman identity had the potential to recover the stability it had lost in the recent past. Violent outbursts had forced many Romans, regardless of class, to think of themselves and each other in terms of political faction and divided interests rather than in the traditional notions of superiority to others and cultural and legal commonality. Sulla's proscriptions had removed many men from the political class, and his reforms had strengthened the aristocracy in order to reduce the infighting among the institutions; but he left no safeguards to ensure that these changes would not be overturned later. This left Sulla's legacy open to attack, and these attacks were the first steps towards political identities for a new generation of prominent men. Not all of these achieved this end. The most successful realized that openly declaring their intentions on this path would result in strong resistance from the opposing parties. As a result, the tactic of engaging with multiple groups in less direct ways became more common.

The first man who attempted revolution in the aftermath of Sulla was Lepidus, the consul of 78. He finds little mention in the ancient sources except for this sedition, and his attempt was quickly dispelled by the efforts of Pompey. Lepidus had openly demanded a second consulship for 77 under force of arms, but since he dared attempt this so soon after Sulla's demise, he was seen as an imminent threat by all parties. He had not achieved any sort of political prominence other than his consulship in 78, and he therefore lacked the prerequisites for a potent political identity. Without such an identity, Lepidus could not create a faction of his own that was separate from the military forces under his command. Without

this faction, Lepidus had no one with which to create social divisions. We have seen, in the case of Marius and others, that factions, or at the very least, large popular followings, have been leveraged to achieve power. Juxtaposing different groups against each other in the pursuit of political goals was how factions formed; championing the cause of a faction was a critical step towards gaining a potent political identity. Lepidus did not realize this. He understood that Sulla had used his legions to make himself master of Rome, and was attempting to employ the same tactic to secure a second consulship. This was a strategic blunder. Consecutive consulships had recently been outlawed by Sulla's reforms and were reminiscent of Marius who had brought great calamity down upon the city of Rome. Thus, Lepidus' actions were both dangerous and illegal. Without a faction to support him, this effort was doomed to fail from the start. Major changes to the republic were enacted by those with potent political identities; those who tried to enact change before achieving this status usually failed. Therefore, Lepidus' impudence most likely stemmed from his victory in the consular elections of 78. It is quite inconceivable that he would launch his rebellion with no support from either a faction from the general masses, or from the Roman nobility; he must have mistakenly thought, therefore, that he had the latter by way of Pompey. After all, the future triumvir had (to Sulla's dismay) secured Lepidus' election and had already been gaining political prominence in his own right.⁷⁶ Pompey, however, had no such revolutionary leanings. He did not hesitate when the Senate declared Lepidus a public enemy, and it selected him to lead the army sent against the seditious consul.⁷⁷

Lepidus' military defeat at the hands of Pompey played right into the hands of the latter. Pompey getting Lepidus elected had been an attempt to distance himself from Sulla and

⁷⁶ Plut. *Pompey* 15.

⁷⁷ P. A. L. Greenhalgh, *Pompey: the Roman Alexander* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1981), 37.

to gain some support from among the general population. Sulla had been no benefactor to the common masses and had put down the insurrection of those who had claimed to be such. His reforms gave power to the aristocracy, both senatorial and equestrians since these men were the ones most involved in making substantial changes to Roman society. His curtailing of the tribunes' powers was intended to discourage the use of demagoguery; and his terrorizing of political foes with proscriptions stunned the masses into nervous acquiescence. Pompey used the war with Lepidus to gain favor with the people, since he had already been affiliated with Sulla during the civil war. Crushing Lepidus after he turned rogue only furthered Pompey's political prominence, because he would be seen as a defender of the state. In the end, Lepidus was defeated and spent his last days in Sardinia, where he soon died.⁷⁸ He accomplished nothing by his actions other than uniting Romans of all stations against his rebellion. His failure gave Pompey the opportunity to advance himself.

The other man who had frustrated Sulla's designs was Sertorius, whose rebellion in Spain had proven quite formidable and was a thorn in the side of the political elite after the death of the dictator. The rebel commander had fled Italy once Sulla returned to dispel the joint insurrection of Cinna and Marius, and had established himself well by fostering good relations with the local inhabitants of the region. He was so successful a military tactician that he, despite having inferior forces, frustrated all Roman commanders who were sent against him. As a result, he managed to outlive Sulla. This put Sertorius in a very unique position. He had allied with Cinna's faction at the start of the civil war, but then abandoned him in 85 because of his own aversion to Marius. As a result, he had no enduring political affiliations and had alienated himself from those with the most influence at the time. He had

⁷⁸ Plut. *Pompey* 16.

proven himself to be an excellent military commander, but the warring factions of the civil war both had leaders who possessed the same qualities. What Sertorius had lacked was potent political identity, and his potential to create one was stifled by those of Marius and Sulla. Alienating himself from the factions of both was prudent, given the circumstances; but it destroyed any chance that Sertorius may have had to become a significant political player. Instead, his armed rebellion drew the ire of the political class generally. How could they claim to be the shepherds of the state when they could not wrest control of their own empire from the hands of a single rogue commander? His existence undermined their authority, even though he did not openly challenge or threaten the state itself. Open military rebellions had, in very recent history, proven disastrous for the political order of the republic. Sertorius therefore needed to be removed.

For these reasons, the Senate sent Metellus Pius, and later Pompey, against Sertorius, but they fared no better than those who had attempted to dislodge him before. It was not until Perpenna betrayed and murdered Sertorius in 72 that Pompey was able to overcome the rebel forces in Spain—though they were greatly reduced. Pompey had secured another victory to add to his career. Even though he had not dispatched Sertorius directly, Spain was back under Roman control, and Pompey had served the interests of the Senate. Maintaining the Empire was just as crucial to the Roman identity as acquiring it had been, and Pompey had filled this role well. He was quickly gaining momentum in the post-Sulla world.

Once Lepidus and Sertorius had been defeated, there remained a loose end: what was to be done about the men who had supported them? Enemies of powerful factions had suffered all manner of horrible ends in the past: they had been flung from the Tarpeian rock, cut down in the streets and thrown into the Tiber, strangled to death, had their families outraged by

slaves, and had been summarily executed. The outlook was definitely grim. Lepidus and Sertorius, however, did not possess potent political identities during their rebellions, and it proved to be the salvation of their supporters. Without that status, Sertorius and Lepidus could not create factions that were enduringly loyal, and without these factions their threat to the political order was not as severe as it might have been otherwise. Without political affiliations or agenda, there was little attraction to either man from an ideological standpoint. Sertorius had abandoned what political connections he had in Rome once it became clear that a civil war in the city was inevitable. From his position in Spain, he could advance no political agenda, nor did he attempt to. His influence was completely local; and while it expanded during his rebellion, it produced no political changes in Rome other than some covert support.⁷⁹ Sertorius himself seemed satisfied with existing outside of Rome's toxic political scene; while he was in it and held some influence, he attempted nothing that disrupted the normal political order. As a commander, he gained widespread fame for his exploits against other famous Roman generals, which reached as far as Pontus, where Mithridates – ever the incorrigible rebel – sent him correspondence to foster a two pronged rebellion against Rome. Sertorius gave no serious thought to this proposition, probably because he realized that Rome's reaction to such an alliance would bring his state of relative independence to ruin.

Lepidus also failed to create a potent political identity, though his intent was to seize more political power. He had some affiliations with members of the political elite, as shown by his connection to Pompey, but these connections disintegrated once he decided on sedition. Lepidus had also shown himself a somewhat capable legislator during his consulship, during which he attempted to undermine some of Sulla's policies.⁸⁰ However, it was too soon for

⁷⁹ Plut. *Pompey* 21, *Sertorius* 27.

⁸⁰ Greenhalgh, *Pompey: the Roman Alexander*, 32-33.

Lepidus' plan to work in the way that he imagined. The Roman political system was still adjusting to Sulla's reforms; and the unity among the aristocracy created by those changes was more than a match for Lepidus' attempt at subversion, especially since Catulus was his consular colleague. In these circumstances, there was no way for Lepidus to create a political identity successfully. His march on the city was more audacious than radical, and it failed because it lacked a supporting faction.

Since Sertorius and Lepidus had failed to create political identities, the men who supported them could not be considered members of a political faction. Without this political identity, they were little more than ordinary Romans who had thrown their lot in with a prominent individual at an opportune moment. There was no need to make such men suffer horrible consequences for rational behavior; doing so would only increase the speed at which the republic was fracturing. If the men were punished, onlookers would clearly perceive that no one was safe from the destruction of political conflicts; and as a result, everyone would be pushed into new factions when they appeared. This was an unacceptable outcome, and the rebels had perpetrated no great evil when compared to the dynasts of the recent past. It was, therefore, easier and preferable to bring the former rebels back into the fold of normal Roman society. Thus, their return was legally facilitated in 70 by the passage of the *lex Plautia* during the consulship of Pompey and Crassus.⁸¹

Political Rivals: Cicero and Cataline

Cicero was born in Arpinum in 106, to a family who had never secured a Roman magistracy. His formal education gave him a deep appreciation for what the Roman state represented, and his natural inclination was to throw his support behind the cause of restoring

⁸¹ Erich S. Gruen, *The Last Generation of the Roman Republic* (Berkley: University of California Press, 1974), 37.

it to that ideal state. Cicero was the greatest orator of his day and was by no means reserved in exerting his rhetorical skill. He used his talent to become a legal advocate; and in 70 he achieved great notoriety for his successful prosecution of Verres, the corrupt governor of Sicily. With these experiences under his belt, Cicero proceeded to secure himself senatorial status by election onto the *cursus honorum*. He was rewarded for his case against Verres with a curule aedile position, two years later he secured the praetorship, and two years after that, finally the consulship of 63. This was an impressive feat for a *novus homo*, especially when Sulla's time restrictions between curule magistracies were still in effect. Ultimately, however, Cicero's political aspirations were handicapped in a few ways. As a new man, he lacked the political connections which other, long established men of the political class had. This was a major disadvantage for elections, and for political maneuvering in general. His political agenda was what he called restoring 'concord between the orders' which meant that he aimed to restore harmony between the emerging popular and conservative factions. In order to accomplish this task, he had to placate both groups and foster his own popularity at a time when members of these groups tended to double down in their efforts to undermine each other to their own advantage. Lastly, Cicero was attempting all this without any experience as a military leader, at a time when Pompey had received several major generalships. Military victories were a much bigger part of the Roman psyche than the courts. It was easier to gain notoriety for a great military victory over a foreign foe because the conquest meant the same thing to all Romans: the continuity of their hard won empire, and for the generals, a celebratory triumph. Cicero's performances in the courts would have impacted a much smaller demographic. Prosecuting a corrupt individual like Verres meant different things to different people. To Verres' clients, it meant a reduction of the benefits they received; to non-affiliates,

it might simply mean that some stranger was punished for some vague crime that had no bearing on them or their lives. “Corruption” itself also had different meanings for different individuals. For instance, electoral bribery was a form of corruption, but that did not stop men from engaging in it, nor did it keep voters from reaping the benefits of such corruption. It was in this political environment that Cicero found himself. As consul in 63 he was at the top of the ladder and was in the best possible position to implement the changes necessary to foster the *concordia ordinum*, but instead, for a large part of his term his attention was preoccupied with the conspiracy of Cataline.

Cataline was a loose cannon. He was born into a noble family that had fallen from prominence, and he aimed to reclaim it by winning public office. Unlike previous men of the Late Republic, however, Cataline ran his consular campaigns primarily on the promise of the abolition of debts and redistribution of land, rather than waiting until after he was in office to reveal that agenda and vie for popularity. The notion was nothing new, but since all debts are paid either by the debtor or the creditor, the policy would not actually solve anything. Instead, it would shift debt-causing expenses onto those who had offered the loans, ergo, members of the equites and senatorial nobility. Clearly this was a targeted move to achieve broad support from debtors, and land redistribution was always a popular policy with the masses. Cataline needed to generate widespread popularity for his consular run, because he was infamous for several notorious scandals. He had supposedly deflowered a vestal virgin, murdered the Praetor Marcus Marius Gratidianus, and also murdered his own son to win over the affection of Aurelia Orestilla. The political elite would never allow such a base character to enter their ranks without stiff resistance.

It appears that his *populares* leanings did provide some assistance to Cataline in his political ambitions. He was elected praetor in 68 despite his infamy. He attempted to stand for the consulship in 66, but he was prevented from running, because charges of fraud were brought against him.⁸² The snub was enough to turn the volatile Cataline to revolution: he plotted to have the consuls and other leading men murdered so that he could replace them, but the plot was never enacted. He repeated his consular run in 64 and was foiled again, this time by Cicero. Cataline's rage reappeared and he decided to attempt a coup in earnest this time. Long story short: Fulvia, the mistress of one of Cataline's conspirators (Quintus Curius) revealed the plot to Terentia, Cicero's wife. The latter informed Cicero who was then on high alert until corroborating evidence – the letters to the Allobroges –was acquired in December. Cicero revealed these to the Senate; and following lengthy deliberation, the Senate passed a sentence of punishment against the conspirators whom they had arrested. Despite Caesar's urging for leniency, Cato and Cicero won the day, and the conspirators were executed. It is here that Cataline's lack of influence can be discerned. After the plot was revealed, and after Cicero's first oration in November of 63, he left Rome for Etruria to join the military forces of one of his affiliates, Gaius Manlius. The troops there, however, were not so invested in their leaders as to make a genuine effort at sedition. Many of them deserted, and those who remained were easily destroyed in battle in early 62. Cataline also lost much of his prominence among his supporters in Rome: Crassus and Caesar turned away from him once he proved volatile; and those who had been intrigued by his policy proposals felt no need to risk their necks in a coup. They only needed to wait for some other official to propose similar legislation, and then they would rally to him. Indeed, a land bill was defeated by Cicero at the

⁸² This ploy called the first Catilinarian conspiracy, and is likely retroactive propaganda. See Anthony Everitt, *Cicero: The Life and times of Rome's Greatest Politician* (New York: Random House, 2002), 89-92.

beginning of his consulship, and Caesar would table a similar bill in 59. So there was not much which made Cataline a more viable political champion. He was certainly not original in his policy proposals. His supporters stuck by him so long as the plot was undiscovered, and they had something to gain from the insurrection; but they deserted when these conditions were not met. Without the influence to maintain his supporters in a cohesive faction, Cataline could not put the changes he promised into effect. As a result, his political identity deflated, and he was killed in battle with what remained of Manlius' troops.

Cicero and Cataline had completely different goals that brought them into conflict with one another. However, their failure to achieve their goals was not due to their mutual opposition, but rather to their lack of a potent political identity. Cicero was trying to restore harmony among the Romans at a time when political identity had become a very important factor in the lives and strategic thinking of many. Sulla's constitution had attempted to remedy the conflict of factions, but its central tenets had been swept away in the 70s; and by the end of Pompey and Crassus's joint consulship the republic had almost reverted to its pre-Sulla form in terms of institutional rules. One thing that could not be reversed, however, was the precedent of military intervention. With this on the table, men like Pompey who secured major military commands had to be reckoned with as potential political threats to the state. Cicero did not have a military command until 51 when he became the provincial governor of Cilicia. Thus his political victories were overshadowed by Pompey's increasing prominence in the 60s. While he clearly had an agenda, Cicero lacked the proper political affiliations to effect substantial changes. He was having to create those connections on the go and ran into resistance from those like Cataline, who had the advantage of lineage to assist them in their aspirations. Cicero undoubtedly resisted radical change in favor of more conservative causes,

but he made the mistake of throwing his support behind Pompey, who went on to create his own political identity. Cicero did not receive the same enthusiastic support from Pompey in return. Even though his fame as an orator was unparalleled, and his victory over the Catilinarian conspiracy was complete, Cicero retained little influence over others. He was a household name to be sure, but his incessant boasting of his own achievements annoyed other prominent men; and Cicero was influenced more by what they thought of him than they were by his oratory or ideas.

Well-intended as he was, Cicero was in a tough spot both politically and chronologically. He lacked the political identity to create meaningful reform, and by catering to both *optimates* and *populares* interests in pursuit of his own agenda he ensured that no faction of his own ever emerged. Thus, his goals were never realized even though he enjoyed political prominence, and the shockingly fast emergence of the triumvirate relegated him to the status of a political tool.

CHAPTER V

DISINTEGRATION

Political Identity in the Military

The vast majority of Roman legionaries were effectively disenfranchised. Despite their status as citizens, geographic situation usually meant that few soldiers could travel to Rome and cast their votes in the assemblies. There are notable exceptions, such as when Caesar sent some of his officers and legionaries back to Rome for the consular elections of 56, but the fact remains that most soldiers were removed *de facto* from the political process, even though no particular statute barred them from participating.⁸³ In the post-Sulla world, however, hardly anything could prevent them from getting what they desired. The events of the first civil war between Marius and Sulla resulted in unprecedented military intervention into political affairs. The relationship of political office and military command was eclipsed by the relationship between the commander and the rank and file. The duality which most military leaders possessed as political actors was reflected in the politics of Rome, but senators never realized the threat which it posed to both the Senate and the Republic.

The Marian reforms of the military produced a new type of Roman legionary: one who depended on his military service to sustain himself. Such a soldier would have undoubtedly been a great benefit for commanders seeking political office, but whether the generals were politically ambitious or not, they became a source of senatorial concern. After Sulla's march on Rome and the subsequent proscriptions of the ruling class on the city streets, the elites could no longer assume that the military's allegiance was to the state itself, because

⁸³ Dio 39.31, Plutarch *Pompey* 58.

the soldiers looked for rewards from their leaders in the field for gain, not from the state. As a result, the rank and file sometimes had the final say on political conflicts in Roman society. By their actions, they could quickly validate their commander or undermine his position of authority. This dynamic created a new duality of focus in both the military commanders and the political establishment at Rome. In order to stay in an ideal position of political strength, military commanders needed to appease both the Senate and their troops – a delicate balancing act given the wide array of military activity that occurred in the 60s and the shifting political tides of the 50s. In the Middle Republic, such things were not of much concern for military commanders; they were usually appointed by the Senate to address a military conflict in some part of the empire, and if needed, their selection was ratified by the people. Even if they proved to be ineffective commanders, their disposition as a Senatorial-class member could provide multiple opportunities for positions of military leadership.⁸⁴ For the Senate at home, the new duality of focus was more acute. The threat of a military intervention into the political structure would have loomed constantly after the end of Sulla's dictatorship; the fact that violent outbursts plagued normal political activity meant that the Senate's position was ever more precarious. The main objective for the Senate was to maintain the political balance at home while not kicking the potential hornets' nest that was the recently changed army, but given the ethos of the political-military relationship in Roman society, such a task was incredibly difficult. Since the main magistrate of the Roman military was the consul, and the consul could only be elected by the centuriate assembly, his election was of utmost importance in this regard. Ambitious politicians could get themselves elected and receive a consular army to command, which in itself was not too severe of a problem unless the individual in question

⁸⁴ Nathan Rosenstein, "Military Command, Political Power, and the Republican Elite," in *A Companion to the Roman Army*, Paul Erdkamp (Malden: Blackwell, 2007), 139.

stood directly against the interests of the Senate. If the Senate and its clients could manage to control who received military command, their position would be more secure, but this did not guarantee that the elected consul would immediately gain the loyalty of his men. Appian relates the instance in which the dissatisfied rank and file turn on Cinna, their elected commander:

"[The Senate] ordered Cinna and Carbo to cease recruiting soldiers until Sulla's answer should be received. They promised to do so, but as soon as the messengers had gone, they proclaimed themselves consuls for the ensuing year, so that they need not come back to the city directly to hold the election. They traversed Italy, collecting soldiers from whom they carried across by detachments on shipboard to Liburnia, because they expected to meet Sulla there. The first detachment had a prosperous voyage. The next one encountered a storm; and those who reached land went home immediately, because they did not relish the prospect of fighting their fellow-citizens. When the rest learned this, they refused to cross to Liburnia. Cinna was angry and called them to an assembly in order to coerce them. They, angry also and ready to defend themselves, assembled. One of the lictors, who was clearing the road for Cinna, struck somebody who was in the way, and one of the soldiers struck the lictor. Cinna ordered the arrest of the offender, whereupon a clamor rose on all sides, stones were thrown at him, and those who were near him drew their swords and stabbed him. So Cinna also perished during his consulship."⁸⁵

Plutarch relates the death of Cinna in a different way:

"[Pompey] then joined Cinna's army, but finding that various accusations and suggestions were being made against him, he grew afraid and took himself speedily and secretly out of the way. His disappearance caused a lot of talk and a rumor got about in the army that Cinna had killed the young man. As a result of this, all those who had for a long time hated Cinna and felt oppressed by him now rose up against him. Cinna attempted to escape, but was seized by a centurion who followed after him with his sword drawn. Falling at this man's knees, Cinna held out to him his seal-ring which was a very valuable one. But the centurion very insolently said: I have not come here to seal documents, but to punish a wicked, lawless tyrant,' and with these words killed him."⁸⁶

There are a few things that should be noted about Cinna's demise. In both accounts it was not his political affiliation which influenced the actions of his murderers, but the circumstances in which the soldiers found themselves. Appian's story reveals the reluctance

⁸⁵ App. B. Civ. 1.78.

⁸⁶ Plut. Pompey 5.

of his men to engage in civil war against Pompey after a logistical disaster, and they turn on him because of their resulting low morale. If this version is true, some of the soldiers in the group responsible for Cinna's slaying might have been the very same ones who killed off Marius' *bardyliae* slave gang with a hail of Javelins.⁸⁷ This indicates that political alliances of their commanders were of little importance to soldiers when they decided on mutiny; this pattern is even more evident in Plutarch's version, where a lone centurion commits the dastardly deed of murdering his commanding officer, but the rest of the army under his command offers Cinna no protection. Without a positive relationship, the soldiers ultimately determined the reality of power, and there are numerous other examples where a general found himself in a similar sticky situation. Fimbria, for instance, learned the hard way how his position of power was delicately balanced on the support of his men, and even Julius Caesar could not act without his legionaries' support, hence his address to the thirteenth legion prior to the crossing of the Rubicon, and again to the majority of his troops in 47 after their mutiny at Placentia.⁸⁸ Augustus too saw reluctance from Caesar's veterans; they twice refused to fight Mark Antony's forces at Brundisium and Tarentum.⁸⁹ Despite the numerous past successes of both generals, and promises for more rewards, there was no guarantee that the men would follow without objection. The collective interests of the soldiers – in terms of financial and physical well-being – always had to be gauged by the commanders. Maintaining political and military affairs as *status quo antebellum*, was no longer possible. The recurrence of civil wars not only created a precedent for military intervention into politics, but also a new type of intervention of politics into the legions themselves. Mutinies occurred with increasing

⁸⁷ Plut. *Marius* 44, App. B. Civ 1.74 ; Strangely, Plutarch also attributes this massacre to Sertorius in section 5 of his *Life*.

⁸⁸ App. B. Civ. 2.47.

⁸⁹ Nic Fields, *The Roman Army: the Civil Wars 88-31 BC* (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2008), 57-59.

frequency throughout the civil wars of the Late Republic, which indicates that the soldiers were developing a fuller situational awareness of their commanders' positions as well as of the general state of factions in Rome.⁹⁰ Armies fighting with Pompey or Octavian or Antony could (and did) switch sides and alter the power dynamics of the situation, whereas an army in the Punic or Macedonian Wars would consider such a violation of the military oath an unthinkable betrayal of their commander and country. The new demographic developments in the army had effectively turned a two part harmony between the Senate and appointed military commander into a trio of competing forces, and the Senate never fully comprehended this. In the Late Republic, the troops found their political identity in their commanders, which overrode their collective identity as soldiers and allowed them to break Roman tradition and intervene in events.

One of the most interesting cases of this new interrelated system is that of Pompey. After gaining his prominence as a military man in various theatres throughout the empire, he was renowned as a formidable general, and he also enjoyed a large degree of support among the political elite due to the connections he had among the *optimates* party. After the split with Caesar and his *populares* sympathizers, Pompey would have seemed like the ideal leader for an *optimates* victory in the Civil War. Caesar was crossing the Rubicon into Italy with an army loyal to him, opposing him was Pompey, a general no less experienced or strategically capable, backed by the senatorial elite and who, with the Senate's blessing, had only to "stamp his foot upon the ground and legions of republican armies would spring forth."⁹¹ The harmony of old was in place, and the old guard thought themselves ready to crush the usurper; but

⁹⁰ Keaveney, *The Army in the Roman Revolution*, 88.

⁹¹ Plut. *Pompey* 57.

Caesar's bull rush south into Italy completely surprised those so confident of victory, and the civil war dragged out for four years before the future dictator claimed total victory. By this point it should have been fairly evident to the Senate that the old way of thinking about their relationship to armies and their generals was completely obsolete. Now a commander only needed the loyalty of his army and a moderate base of support in Rome to do what he wanted. To maintain that loyalty was a process all its own, independent of the Senate. It appears that Cato did indeed notice this situation, because he demanded that Pompey lay down his command in the event that he should be the victor over Caesar; if he did, then the functionality of the state could recover. The entire system depended upon a general adherence to the Senate's decrees, but this had been repeatedly ignored during the Late Republic by radical tribunes. So, it was no surprise when the same dismissive attitude towards the Senate's authority began to show itself among the legions. Instead of taking steps to curb or change such developments, the Senate aimed to control the choice of the main hegemon in the event of an autocratic takeover, with Cato himself uttering the phrase "better any authority than no authority at all."⁹² Such a mentality is self-defeating in the context of republicanism and its preservation, but it is revealing in the context of political identity. The same pattern of patron-client relationship which had developed among so many other individuals in earlier republican periods had now developed among the ruling elites. The Senate submitted to Pompey's hegemony because he appeared to be motivated by the preservation of the normal order, and to be the only one capable of defeating Caesar. Senators were willing to abandon their usual political identities to Pompey in order to resist the rise of the future dictator.

⁹² Plut. *Cato the Younger* 47.

In light of the Senate's decision, the following question must be asked: why did they never take steps to reduce the dependence of soldiers upon their generals? The Marian reforms of the Roman army changed both the military formations and the demographics which made up the majority of the soldiery. The removal of the property qualification for service is often looked upon as the source of much of the Late Republic's turmoil, but in practice, property qualifications were being reduced throughout the Middle Republic, and the removal of such a prerequisite would be the next logical step.⁹³ The change of these qualifications was due to the necessities of contemporary military conflicts, but after the cessation of hostilities, these changes were never reversed, and there is no evidence to suggest that the Roman Senate even considered the idea of doing such a thing. This could be explained by the subsequent events of Marius' consecutive consulships, but the Roman Senate and most Roman politicians in general were disinclined to create major policy changes; individuals that were so inclined were perceived as ambitious and several who did create potent political identities and threw normal political dynamics into disarray. The ability of new laws to change and supplant older ones without any legal trouble (other than making it through the legislative process) was a pattern discernable well before the Late Republic began, and can be discerned during the debate over the Oppian law.⁹⁴ When responding to Cato the Elder, Lucius Valerius, a plebeian tribune, referred to laws passed during the Second Punic war that were created to help fund the war effort after the disaster at Cannae.

"Who does not clearly see, that the poverty and distress of the state, requiring that every private person's money should be converted to the use of the public, enacted that law, with intent that it should remain in force so long only as the cause enacting the law should remain? For if all the decrees of the Senate and orders of the people, which were then made to answer the necessities of the times, are to be of perpetual obligation, why do we refund their money

⁹³ Nicolet, *The World of the Citizen*, 93 ; Keaveney, *The Army in the Roman Revolution*, 23-24.

⁹⁴ Livy. AUC 36.6.

to private persons? Why do we contract for public works for ready money? Why are not slaves brought to serve in the army? Why do not we, private subjects, supply rowers as we did then?"

L. Valerius clearly means that Roman laws can and should be changed to fit the circumstances of the times, especially regarding military affairs. Cato's resistance to that idea in this context comes from his notion that to repeal this law would be to the detriment of the state as a whole. If we examine the events of the Late Republic, the logic that L. Valerius presents regarding law is nowhere to be seen, in neither military nor civil contexts. Laws that appear to benefit the state are rejected, while others which set dangerous or harmful precedents in the long term are never repealed. In the specific context of the army, this is easily recognizable in two instances. First, Marius' proletarization of the troops changed the nature of the relationship between the rank and file and their commander; likewise, during the Social War, the use of citizen cavalry was suspended in order to properly fill the legions. Neither of these changes was ever rescinded, even though both were passed in times of crisis. Even if these changes had caused no further issues down the line, would it not have been prudent of the Senate to repeal the laws after the crises which produced them had passed? In hindsight, of course, but a contemporary viewpoint suggests otherwise. Marius' successes in the Jugurthine war and then against the Teutons and Cimbri were celebrated upon completion, and the armies which had accompanied him on these campaigns were the first to have *proletarii* serve in their ranks. The percentage of the legions which consisted of this new demographic cannot be determined, but that is less important than the result of the campaigns. If the new recruiting method helped to produce victory in war, there would have been no reason to repeal the law. After the triumphs were celebrated, there was no immediate threat to the normal order of the state, internally or externally. This would have been the ideal time for the repeal of such a practice, but the outbreak of the Social War created a new demand for

soldiers and simultaneously sapped the Romans of their supplemental allied strength. Not repealing the change likely came in handy during this crisis; and since it had not yet posed a threat to the republic, there was no reason to repeal it. The second instance was the change of the Roman cavalry during the Social War. In an attempt to fill the legions' ranks properly, recruits were sourced from foreign cavalry, which could be brought in from various parts of the empire; and this new recruiting practice was also never reversed to prior methods.⁹⁵ Why not? A plausible answer would be that the concern surrounding the changes vanished with the ending of the crisis, but this denies agency to those individuals who would have been directly affected by the transition. The transition from functioning as cavalrymen to standard legionaries would have been a major blow to the prestige of the equestrian class, and there would doubtlessly have been some resistance to that change. It is more likely that after the end of the Social War, it was neither politically nor militarily expedient to restore the older pattern of recruitment, since the equestrian class did not control a majority of centuries in the dominant centuriate assembly, nor were cavalrymen numerous enough to swing the outcome decision of the tribal assembly. Politically, they were most notable when they are utilized to usurp the normal powers of the senatorial class and not notable for any action of their own creation.⁹⁶ The lack of a political backlash from the equestrian class in our sources for the Late Republic suggests that Romans were not against outsourcing their military activities to other social groups or non-Roman cavalry specialists, as long as the original group maintained the same political position. This was of utmost importance, since it was very much the patterns of political activity which determined the leadership roles in military affairs.

⁹⁵ Rosenstein, *Military Command, Political Power, and the Republican Elite*, 143-144.

⁹⁶ Plut. *G. Gracchus* 5-7, App. B. Civ. 1.22-23.

When the Social War ended, Roman citizenship was expanded to a large number of Italians. This would have provided a new opportunity for the Senate to reverse both the Marian and equestrian reforms which affected the army, since the pool of new citizens undoubtedly contained many men who met the older property prerequisites for military conscription, in addition to those who were conscripted during the regular levies to equal the Roman legions in number. The application of citizenship would also have removed any distinction between legionary and allied military contingents, who would have been accustomed to serving with the Romans on campaign.⁹⁷ A reversal of proletarian recruitment policy at this point would have been a much needed disruption to the developing pattern of dependence between Roman generals and the rank and file, but passing such a measure would have been an incredibly difficult political battle -- one that could endanger the physical safety of the proponents. Sulla's death came twenty-nine years after the initial Marian reforms, ample time for members of the proletariat class to filter into the legions and for the propertied class members to either retire from their military service or die off from various causes. It is reasonable to assume that Sulla's legions contained many men of the lowest property rank, given their willingness to follow Sulla into a civil war. Any attempt to revert to previous standards for military conscription would have alienated these men who were already in active service. Such a policy would have been seen as a targeted attack on the legionaries and an attempt to delegitimize Sulla. This would have been met with violence from the dictator, his partisans and the troops themselves, since all could essentially act with impunity, and thus a reversal of policy would have been impracticable. A reversal of this sort would have also been impossible because Marius himself returned with Cinna in 87 and would not have hesitated to massacre anyone who dared to try

⁹⁷ Brunt, *Italian Manpower*, Chapters 24-25.

to undo the measure which he had enacted, and which had helped him win military glory. In any case, it is clear that senators were incapable of addressing the situation while a proverbial "900 pound gorilla" was around to overrule their wishes or put them to the sword.

This point in the Late Republic was clearly too tumultuous for the Senate to consider the long term consequences of the leader-led relationship of the legions, but even after the first round of civil wars came to an end and Sulla finally died, violence or the threat of it did not cease. The consuls Catulus and Lepidus immediately began hostilities after Sulla's death, and Sertorius maintained a vigorous rebellion in Spain against even the likes of Pompey. Such developments would have created a strain on what remained of the ruling class. According to Appian, the hostilities between the consuls erupted immediately after Sulla's funeral procession. That would have provided little respite for them physically, and mentally, since the threat of more proscriptions loomed for the entirety of Sulla's dictatorship. These threats aside, as a matter of actual applicable principle, once Roman armies were fighting one another, cutting down fellow soldiers and citizens alike, did it really matter where the troops were drawn from or what century they could be classified into? No. Warfare in Italy was a common occurrence throughout the centuries of the Early and Middle Republic, but Rome's expansionary wars, Punic Wars, and other involvement in the Mediterranean had always been against foreign adversaries. The Social War and its various battles and sieges that occurred throughout Italy would have normalized warfare among a large population who had much in common in terms of language, culture, and legal rights – a civil war in all but name.⁹⁸ If a senator or some other member of the elite did realize the destructive consequences that the new army recruitment created, he is likely to have been cut down in the various proscriptions

⁹⁸ "Foreign" meaning non-Roman, but not necessarily "barbarian."

of the 80s. The best piece of evidence we have of this is in Lucan when Cato reprimands the remnants of Pompey's army for their loyalty to him rather than the state.⁹⁹ This was likely nothing more than a literary device used by a later poet who, with hindsight, could identify the problem which the republic faced. If indeed Cato did say such a thing at the time, it was already far too late to nitpick on the particulars of military recruitment. The Civil War was at its halfway point by that supposed utterance, and the threat of Caesar was a much more immediate issue than reestablishing recruiting standards.

Political Identity in the Officer's Tent

Pompey accelerated the shift toward personal loyalties. His victories in various theatres throughout the 60s made him a popular figure among his soldiers, the general population and most importantly, the Senate. His third triumph over the Asian territories won him great renown among the soldiery and the population at large, but it was his disbanding his army upon returning to Italy that was well received by the Senate. This seemingly genuine move spurred a positive reaction from the Senate because the looming threat of violent, direct military intervention, was lifted, and the indirect threats were nullified, at least from the military side of things. Plutarch claims that the crowd that followed Pompey on his way into the city was so large that "if he had at the time been planning any sort of revolutionary measures, he would not have needed his army at all."¹⁰⁰ A crowd of this size enthusiastically following a single man would have caused the more conservative members of the *optimates* to be concerned, especially since he still commanded the loyalty of the troops. Despite the

⁹⁹ Vivian L. Holliday, et al. *Pompey in Cicero's Correspondence and Lucan's Civil War* (Berlin: Mouton, 1969), 37.

¹⁰⁰ Plut. *Pompey*. 43.

fact that Pompey's triumphant return had turned the attention of the masses in a positive direction, men of senatorial rank attempted to undermine him in order to limit his increasing popularity. Lucullus and Metellus criticized Pompey on personal grounds. Since Pompey had yet to do anything to undermine the Senate's perceived authority, those attacks were essentially unwarranted. The Republic would have appeared to be functioning normally, or at least, within the extreme bounds of order and utter chaos, which it had oscillated between many times before. This would have been the ideal time to reverse the recruitment policy, because the general population was being distracted with festivities, and the legions were returning home with their fill of plunder taken from Mithridates' kingdom, Syria and Judea. Pompey was enjoying the glory of his own victories but held no authority to make official changes in terms of policy or law. The restoration of older recruitment standards was not implemented, however; and the unbearably short-sighted Senate took no measures to protect itself. As a result, the power of veto which the plebeian tribunes held plagued senators down to the republic's last gasp. For instance, in 56 the consul Marcellinus attempted to pass a measure ensuring the Senate's authority in the matter of foreign policy. The main objective was to let the Senate determine the appropriate commander and solution for the restoration of the monarchy in Egypt; more specifically, that the Senate should have the final decision without the need for ratification in the plebeian assembly, but the motion was blocked by the tribune Callinius – a partisan of Pompey – in order that he might win the honor of resolving the conflict instead of Lentulus Spinther.¹⁰¹ This event shows that even where it was most appropriate, the Senate's authority could always be foiled by the tribunate. The ability of one man, immune from prosecution or removal, to veto the deliberated decisions of a larger

¹⁰¹ P. A. L. Greenhalgh, *Pompey: The Republican Prince* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1982), 30-31.

multitude was a thorn in the side of the Senate. An attempt to reduce the power of the tribunician office – even a moderate measure such as requiring two tribunes' dissent to veto legislation – would be seen as an attack on a sacrosanct office and, in this particular case, an affront to Pompey because he had restored the powers of the tribunes in the wake of Sulla. Senators could not afford to make themselves political enemies with Rome's leading citizen, especially not after he had recalled Cicero from exile in 57 and lined himself against the rabble-rousing Clodius. Even if Pompey were removed from the equation, a measure to effectively split the power of the tribunes in half would doubtlessly have been vetoed by the tribunes of the year, and the Senate's impotence would remain unchanged. The Senate could not control these outcomes, because it could not control the opposition that came from the magistrates and the tribunate; the fact that partisanship afflicted many of the sitting senators of the *optimates* and *populares* factions assured that there would never be a unified movement among the deliberators to produce any kind of substantive change or effective solution. In the end, it was Pompey who facilitated positive change with his 'law of the ten tribunes' and secured himself even higher senatorial esteem. The unilateral nature of his laws 'on corruption' and 'on violence' should not be lost here. His political identity allowed him to bypass the resistance of the tribunes and factional fighting in the Senate to make effective change.

Throughout these events, the senatorial class often appeared dumbstruck at the events unfolding. Senators maneuvered to control the people who controlled the events, but not the course of events itself. This is evident in the events leading to the civil war and through its duration. Before the battle of Pharsalus, Pompey was accused of cowardice by high ranking men because of his desire to maintain his geographic advantage by starving Caesar's army

into submission. This was a sound tactical strategy since Pompey's army had both political and military leverage. He did not need to force a battle and could have used his allied and naval forces to hold Caesar in the east and could have returned to Rome with his vanguard. This would have provided him with an opportunity to undermine Caesar's popularity. While Caesar was stuck in Greece, Pompey could remove his allies from their governorship positions and frame him in the public eye as an illegitimate usurper who had illegally seized power and threatened legitimate government. A strategy such as this would have been equally easy and difficult since Caesar's invasion of Italy had thrown Rome into such confusion and had so terrified the population that they preemptively voted him dictator in order to avoid his wrath. Caesar responded with a policy of clemency for his enemies that likely shifted some political opinion in his favor. Appian writes that a crowd followed Caesar out to the city gates and begged him to come to terms with Pompey before his departure to Brundisium; this move was obviously motivated by general self-interest, but it was also likely a result of Caesar's willingness to come to terms with his enemies once they were in his power, a pattern that he maintained throughout the war.¹⁰² This event also indicates a general apprehension of Caesar's victory, because he was master of half of the empire by that point. Clearly, there was a general fear of proscriptions, and a Pompeian return to Italy would easily stoke these fears again, so that it would be quite possible for Pompey to force himself into a similar position as that of Caesar. But, in addition to possible political resistance in Rome, Pompey would likely have faced seditions among his subordinates. Well before the war's end, several men of the upper class were fighting about who should receive what political office after Caesar's defeat. In the event of a strategic move back to Italy or a Pompeian victory in the war, the same men who

¹⁰² App. *B. Civ.* 2.41, 2.49, 2.80; Caesar *B. Civ.* 1.84-85, 3.98, *De Bello Hispaniensi* 1.17-18.

were quite willing to submit themselves to Pompey in order to defeat Caesar would have found themselves back in the political center from their forced exile; and with that semblance of normalcy, they would likely have found Pompey's usefulness at its end, even if the war was still ongoing.

In all, such maneuvers might have solidified Pompey's position against Caesar, but not against the political elite. There would have remained the issue of leaving Caesar in the east challenged only by conscripted forces of local and foreign men. Caesar's disciplined army already had many successes, and he could probably rally his men to victory once more. This would not only have allowed Caesar increased access to supplies, but also overshadowed Pompey's past victories in the east.¹⁰³ A bruised ego in this hypothetical situation would be a small price to pay compared to the actual turn of events, but to Pompey accusations of authoritarianism from his peers were likely just as injurious, if not downright insulting. His critics had failed to see the two triumvirs reconciled in the face of Lentulus and Marcellus' consular opposition, and they had delivered Pompey the supreme command after declaring Caesar a public enemy.¹⁰⁴ Pompey eventually conceded to the demands of his peers and decided on an engagement at Pharsalus. This decision is by far the most interesting in all the Late Republic, because it is a complete reversal of the initial dynamic which Pompey and his supporting senators held at the beginning of the war. Pompey's position as the saving patron of the Roman elites became irrelevant because in that moment his political identity superseded his individual identity. As an individual, Pompey was many things. He was a Roman citizen, wealthy aristocrat, popular politician, and had held the consulship three times. He had

¹⁰³ Greenhalgh, *Pompey: The Republican Prince*, 235-242.

¹⁰⁴ App. B. Civ. 2.67, 2.31-32, Plut. *Caesar* 41, *Pompey* 67.

conducted many successful military campaigns across the empire, and his forces had humbled Caesar in Spain and in Greece. The willingness of leaders in the eastern parts of the empire to levy troops for Pompey's service meant that his popularity extended well beyond the borders of Italy. Pompey held leverage in every sense of the word. His political identity, on the other hand, depended upon two key things: personal advancement and positioning with prominent individuals. Once he became the head of the republican armies, he was irreversibly tied to them despite all his leverage. It would have been a difficult task to maintain military order and respect for the chain of command among fairly new recruits if the leaders and officers were seen to be infighting, but if he defied their wishes, Pompey would have risked alienating himself from the elite class which had formerly borne so much power. In the immediate aftermath of such a move, there likely would have been no major consequences since the war still had to be concluded, but it would have shifted Pompey's political identity closer to that of Caesar. Caesar had made his name on three things: the support of Pompey and Crassus, his individual feats as a military commander, and gratifying the general Roman masses. He never enjoyed the favor of the Senate, but had influence over the events in Rome via surrogate tribunes like Curio, Trebonius and Antony. That he was at odds with many men in the senatorial class is easy to discern, but his alliance with Pompey made him untouchable while he held his proconsular imperium. Once he was determined to pursue civil war, his relationship with Pompey was completely severed, and he made himself an open enemy of both the Senate and its leader. This decision forced him to stand on the other two key factors of his identity, and he reinforced them as the civil war went on. Pompey, on the other hand, earned his reputation by his conquests as a military commander, being the "first citizen" among the senatorial class, and restoring the city of Rome to tranquility during his sole

consulship in 52. That he did not prevent the outbreak of another civil war and had to flee the city with his limited forces undermined his reputation as the guardian of civility and public order. To alienate his peers at the critical moment of Pharsalus would negate his status among the elites, and leave him with only his success as a military commander intact. If Pompey had been victorious at Pharsalus, he would have faced political problems, but in reality he sacrificed his prestige as a military commander to retain his status as first citizen, and he wound up losing both.

Caesar just barely managed to avoid a similar breakdown of his own political identity after the battle of Dyrrachium. Pompey's maneuver to lure and catch the Caesarian forces in the camp between the two fortified walls of his old camp was an effective tactical plan, and the ensuing route could not be quelled even by Caesar himself.¹⁰⁵ The immediate aftermath of the battle was absolutely critical, because Caesar's political identity was synonymous with his reputation as a military commander. Earlier, it was mentioned how Caesar, by beginning the Civil war, discarded his affiliation with Pompey from his political identity. That left his prestige as a general and his past policies of gratifying the masses as the remaining pillars on which his identity was built, and Caesar took measures to enhance those same characteristics. As acting dictator in 48, he settled the issue of confused property debts by setting their values to their prewar estimates – a tactical move to ease financial tensions in the city but also to not overplay his hand with the debtors, of whom he was a member – and he further improved his reputation as a military commander by seizing the initiative and securing Spain and Sicily from the local Pompeian forces through his surrogates. His personal reputation of boldness (borderline recklessness) in the face of unfavorable circumstance was perpetuated by his

¹⁰⁵ Caesar. *B. Civ* 3.62-72.

voyage across the Adriatic with less than half of his forces, and his initial successes on the mainland encouraged his partisans further. But once he had departed Italy, certain events in Rome indicate that popular investment in Caesar's political identity was not as universal as he would have preferred. The praetor Caelius Rufus attempted to undermine Caesar's debt legislation in 48, only to nearly cause a tumult in the city akin to that which occurred after Clodius' demise. Both he and the recently recalled Milo were killed in the resulting throes of violence which spread from the Senate house to neighboring Italian towns. The practicality of this seditious activity is questionable at best, foolish at worst. The full repeal of the financial policies Caesar had imposed would have done nothing which would affect Caesar directly, but would likely have caused a financial crisis in the city in the midst of a civil war. Such a thing would serve no purpose other than to undermine Caesar's status in domestic politics and would be useful to Pompey only if it stirred up a popular revolt against Caesar in Rome and drew away some of the remaining Caesarian forces at Brundisium, but the proximity of Antony and those forces is precisely what kept the revolt from materializing in the first place. Clearly, Caelius Rufus was doing nothing more than signaling his newfound political identity as an enemy of Caesar; and as a result, he accomplished nothing of significance.¹⁰⁶ Had he timed his revolt from Caesar in the wake of Dyrrachium, he might actually have achieved his goals, since the majority of Caesar's forces had sailed to Greece and had been therefore demoralized by defeat and want of supplies.

Caesar was wise to encourage his men after the rout at Dyrrachium, since he knew full well that his position depended entirely on the loyalty of his troops. After suffering such a major setback, he had to do everything in his power to make sure that the political identity

¹⁰⁶ Caesar. *B. Civ* 3.20.

of his soldiers remained entirely invested in him. Since word of his defeat was being spread around by his Pompeian foes, he could no longer be sure that the general masses would not divest their political identity from Caesar, now that his reputation as a conqueror was in doubt. After raising the morale of his troops, he forced the issue of a battle at Pharsalus, and Pompey did not deny him the satisfaction. This shows Caesar's awareness of just how precarious his situation was at that moment, and how well he understood the shifting nature of political identity during the Late Republic.

Political Power Post-Mortem

While individuals with domineering political identities tended to be very influential during their lifetimes, their political identities did not long outlive them. This held true for every notable political player in the Late Republic, but the noticeable trend that developed as the Late Republic wore on was that once the original owner of the political identity was no more, other politically involved individuals were quick to try to seize upon the death in order to help establish their own political identity. The initial tumults in Rome under the Gracchi, Sulpicius, and Saturninus all ended in death. However, the only case in which we see the living trying to utilize the reputation of the dead was when Gaius Gracchus attempted to advance himself under the premise of being the political successor of the slain Tiberius Gracchus, whereas nobody (except maybe Clodius) wanted to adopt the repute of the murderous Saturninus. During the Social War and first Civil War between Marius and Sulla, political identities quickly became associated with power at the same time that the demographic change in the army was taking place. Marius' consecutive consulships attracted many followers to his side, and his identity as a great conqueror and statesman appears to have

saved him during his exile from a Gaul with murderous intent.¹⁰⁷ Now the political identity of Marius changed quite rapidly in response to the rise of Sulla (as already discussed). He utilized violence as a political tool, his identity changed from a traditional one to one based on fear and intimidation. Sulla did not refrain from similar tactics, but not in an effort to emulate Marius: it was an attempt to physically remove anyone who could possibly adopt Marius' political identity and present a challenge to him. By removing them, Sulla secured his own position and consolidated his own political identity. Individuals that rose to political prominence later had to do so organically, and with some tie to Sulla himself. In the Civil War between Caesar and Pompey, political identities had become so closely linked with their military service that they were essentially synonymous. A military defeat did not necessarily present the end of the associated identity or faction, but the death of the individual who possessed it certainly threw the dynamics of a political identity into disarray.

After his defeat at Pharsalus, Pompey fled to Egypt in the hopes of securing forces with which he could face the victorious Caesar, but he was ingloriously slain shortly thereafter. Upon his death, a shift in the identity of the Republican faction occurred, going from pro-republican to anti-Caesarian, despite lacking effective leadership. The military successor chosen for the Republican forces was Metellus Scipio, who was hardly a reputable representative of temperance, just governance, or principled support for the republic. A more suitable political successor for Pompey would definitely have been Cato, but his principled unwillingness to take command prevented such a transition. The sources for the period do not provide a glimpse into the command tents of the republicans after Pharsalus, but it appears that they did not have any plans for the restoration of governance, and they were simply

¹⁰⁷ Plut. *Marius*. 39 ; App. B. *Civ.* 1.61.

committed to armed resistance against Caesar. We see this at the battle of Adrumetum, where Caesar's forces were routed, but his destruction was prevented by Petreius' withdrawal, during which he utters the phrase "Let us not deprive our general, Scipio, of the victory."¹⁰⁸ A tactical blunder if ever there was one, political identity makes its appearance here as well. If truly committed to the restoration of republican rule, why would any officer hesitate to end Caesar's streak of escaping a rout, only to be victorious at a later time? Why would Petreius want Scipio to gain the glory of victory instead of himself? It was a clear political decision, not one based solely on respect for personal or military prestige. If Scipio were to finish off Caesar, he would have everything to gain in terms of political identity. As father-in-law to Pompey by way of Cornelia, he could claim familial obligation for the destruction of the opposing forces on both their accounts, and his position as Pompey's succeeding general was already in effect. If he could just manage to defeat Caesar decisively, he would do the one thing Pompey himself had failed to accomplish despite all his power and prestige: this would allow Scipio to both assume the political identity of Pompey and supersede it. He would effectively be the new 'first citizen;' and once Caesar was out of the picture, he would have been the one to facilitate the restoration of the government. Petreius must have realized this and acted accordingly. The Civil War was a feud of personas and political wills; and fitting though it would have been for him to avenge his ignominious withdrawal from Spain two years earlier, Petreius was only significant enough to have a military place in it.¹⁰⁹ In addition to what is included in this account of the battle, what is missing must also be reckoned. The soldiers engaging in the pursuit do not seem to have opposed Petreius' decision; if in truth they did, their resistance

¹⁰⁸ App. B. Civ. 2.95 ; It appears he was satisfied with this role since he had also commanded the forces that crushed the rebel forces of Cataline in 62. See Sallust. *Catilinarian Conspiracy* 59-61.

¹⁰⁹ Caesar. B. Civ. 2.85-87.

was not significantly widespread enough to alter Petreius' mind or even enough to warrant mention. There are numerous factors which could have influenced the troop's adherence to this order, but a combination of military discipline and the development of political identity between the soldiers and the republican leadership is the most likely explanation. In the end, the battle at Thaspus ended any hope that Scipio would rise to political prominence, but the episode indicates rather clearly that political identity was coveted in both life and death, and it was somewhat transferable in the case of the latter. The same pattern makes its presence known not long afterward, in the case of Caesar.

Caesar's victory over the republican holdouts in Africa was evidence that he was the political and military hegemon of the Roman state. Once he had established himself as such, his campaigns against Pompey's sons in Spain showed that he would not tolerate armed resistance from those ideologically opposed to him. Only the lack of proscriptions distinguished him from Sulla in consolidating his power, and this was deliberate: to be Sulla's equal would likely produce general opposition to him from the masses, and his obvious propaganda show in refusing the diadem which Antony bestowed on him showed that he feared that more than his political enemies in the Senate. And why should he not? That institution had long since showed itself to be incapable of cohesive action when faced with challenges to its traditional authority. That is not to say that he was ignorant or dismissive of such opposition, but his political identity as a military general and curator of popular appeal was much more important than the Senate's approval had ever been. His actions during his time as dictator in the 40s show as much. With that present authority he passed legislation on the forgiveness and collection of debts - a clear attempt to reinforce the popular-support pillar of his political identity, and on the eve of his assassination he was planning a military

expedition against the Parthians to avenge the ignominious destruction of Crassus and his forces, which if successful, would undoubtedly increase his renown as a military leader and divert domestic attentions away from further civil strife, and furthermore restore some sense of the broader Roman identity which had been so predominant prior to the Social War. Alas, none of this was to be. The Senate's surprise on the ides of March left Caesar sprawled in a pool of his own blood and left the city of Rome in a state of utter confusion. When the dictator's death was confirmed by the masses in the city, a new opportunity arose for both his allies and adversaries to make use of his political identity.

Brutus' speech to the people of Rome as recounted by Appian reveals his agenda:

"If there are any present who have been settled in colonies, or are about to be settled, you will gratify me by making yourselves known." [140] A large number did so, whereupon Brutus continued, "Bravo, my men, you have done well to come here with the others. You ought, since you receive due honors and bounties from your country, to give her equal honor in return as she sends you forth. The Roman people gave you to Caesar to fight against the Gauls and Britons, and your valiant deeds call for the recognition and recompense."

This is a clear appeal to the soldiers' individual identities as Romans, and their collective identities as military actors and veterans. It also presents Brutus as converging with Caesar's intent to reward them for their service, but the next sentence immediately creates a divergence from Caesar himself, and the subsequent one converges again:

"But Caesar, taking advantage of your military oath, led you against your country much against your will. He led you against our best citizens in Africa, in like manner against your will. If this were all that you had done you would perhaps be ashamed to ask reward for such exploits, but since neither envy, nor time, nor the forgetfulness of men can extinguish the glory of your deeds in Gaul and Britain, you shall have the rewards due to them, such as the people gave those who served in the army of old, yet not by taking land from your unoffending fellow-citizens, nor by dividing other people's property with newcomers, nor by considering it proper to requite your services by means of acts of injustice."

Next, he appeals again to their identity, but now in the broader sense of nationality and ancestry and not just as members of the soldiery:

"When our ancestors overcame their enemies they did not take from them all their land. They shared it with them and colonized a portion of it with Roman soldiers, who were to serve as guards over the vanquished. If the conquered territory was not sufficient for the colonies, they added some of the public domain or bought other land with the public money. In this way the people colonized you without harm to anybody."

Now Brutus diverges from Caesar once again, equating him with Sulla and derides both as traitors and thieves:

"But Sulla and Caesar, who invaded their country like a foreign land and needed guards and garrisons against their own country, did not dismiss you to your homes, nor buy land for you, nor divide among you the property of citizens which they confiscated, nor did they make compensation for the relief of those who were despoiled, although those who despoiled them had plenty of money from the treasury and plenty from confiscated estates. They took by the law of war – nay, by the practice of robbery – from Italians who had committed no offence, who had done no wrong, their land and houses tombs and temples, which we do not take away even from foreign enemies, except a mere tenth of their produce by way of tax."

From here, Brutus continues his derision while appealing to the individual identity of the listeners.

[141] "They divided among you the property of your own people, the very ones who sent you with Caesar to the Gallic war, and who offered up their prayers at your festival of victory. They colonized you in that way collectively, under your standards and in your military organization, so that you could neither enjoy peace nor be free from fear of those whom you displaced. The man who is driven out and deprived of his goods will always be watching his opportunity to ensnare you. This was the very thing that the tyrants sought to accomplish, not to provide you with land, which they could have obtained for you elsewhere; but that you, because always beset by lurking enemies, might be the firm bulwark of a government that was committing wrongs in common with you. A common interest between tyrants and their satellites grows out of common crimes and common fears. And this, ye gods, they call colonization, in which are common the lamentations of a kindred people and the expulsion of innocent men from their homes."

And in his final sentences, Brutus emphasizes the difference between himself and his faction and Caesar's.

"They purposely made you enemies to your countrymen for their own advantage. We, the defenders of the republic, to whom our opponents say they grant safety out of pity, confirm this very same land to you and will confirm it forever; and to this promise we call to witness the god of this temple. You have and shall keep what you have received. None of us will take it from you, neither Brutus nor Cassius, nor *any of us who have incurred danger for your freedom*. The one thing wanting in this business we will supply – a reconciliation with your fellow countrymen most agreeable to them now, as they hear that we shall at once pay them out of the public money the price of the land which they have been deprived; so that not only shall your colony be secure, but it shall not even be exposed to hatred."¹¹⁰

The intent of this speech is quite clear. Brutus was attempting to undermine the political identity which Caesar's veterans in the city held. Directly addressing Caesar's armed legions under Lepidus would have been impossible: for they would have reacted violently to the murder of their leader. Swaying the settled veterans intermingled with the general mob was a much easier task because they would have held more sway among the mob and the active soldiery than Brutus. While the political identity of the veterans might have been tied to Caesar in life, his death left a political void which several individuals raced to fill, since, as we saw with Pompey (and the Gracchi before him) without the main individual political factions tended to falter. Brutus' promises to reward the colonial veterans was a clear attempt to take on a piece of Caesar's political identity, but not to replace him in totality. The speech before the mob was specifically designed to sway popular opinion in the city. If Brutus could bolster the crowd's sense of their individual or national identity, he could more easily attract supporters to himself and alienate them from Caesar as a political figure. Guaranteeing the benefits and rewards of Caesar's colonies while humbugging notions of restored liberty in a great oration before a crowd would be a good way to establish oneself as a face for a new political faction. Unfortunately for Brutus, Antony was equally proficient in giving orations before the Roman masses, and his strategy was much easier to fulfill. Since his individual and

¹¹⁰ My Italics.

political identities had already been linked to Caesar, it was incredibly easy to converge with him to be seen as his successor, he also did not need to appeal to any of the people's identities to get them to pay him heed. In the immediate aftermath of Caesar's death Antony was able to direct the distress of the crowd in Rome into anger against the assassins, and since he had served Caesar politically and as a military officer, he could expect the active and retired legions to accept his position as legitimate.

This excerpt from Dio's account of Antony's funeral oration shows that Antony's main objective was reinforcing the people's political identity that had been derived from the deceased dictator and shifting it to himself:

"Now all his administrative acts in this city during the discharge of that office would be verily countless to name. And as soon as he had left it and been sent to conduct war against the Gauls, notice how many and how great were his achievements there. So far from causing grievances to the allies he even went to their assistance, because he was not suspicious at all of them and further saw that they were wronged. But his foes, both those dwelling near the friendly tribes, and all the rest that inhabited Gaul he subjugated, acquiring at one time vast stretches of territory and at another unnumbered cities of which we knew not even the names before. All this, moreover, he accomplished so quickly, though he had received neither a competent force nor sufficient money from you, that before any of you knew that he was at war he had conquered; and he settled affairs on such a firm basis and..., that as a result Celtica and Britain felt his footstep. And now is that Gaul enslaved which sent against us the Ambrones and the Cimbri, and is entirely cultivated like Italy itself. Ships traverse not only the Rhone or the Arar, but the Mosa, the Liger, the very Rhine, and the very ocean. Places of which we had not even heard the titles to lead us to think that they existed were likewise subdued for us: the formerly unknown he made accessible, the formerly unexplored navigable by his greatness of purpose and greatness of accomplishment."

This was a clear attempt to remind the masses of Caesar's deeds as a conqueror, the appreciation of which was thoroughly engrained in Roman culture; and more importantly, it was a reference to their shared identities as Romans. The next section of the speech separates the Pompeian faction and the assassins from the broader body of patriotic citizens who are then impugned with subconscious, pro-Caesarian motives:

"And had not certain persons out of envy formed a faction against him, or rather us, and forced him to return here before the proper time, he would certainly have subdued Britain entire together with the remaining islands surrounding it and all of Celtica to the Arctic Ocean, so that we should have had as borders not land or people for the future, but air and the outer sea. For these reasons you also, seeing the greatness of his mind and his deeds and good fortune, assigned him the right to hold office a very long time,--a privilege which, from the hour that we became a democracy has belonged to no other man,--I mean holding the leadership during eight whole years in succession. This shows that you thought him to be really winning all those conquests for you and never entertained the suspicion that he would strengthen himself to your hurt."

This was a deliberate move by Antony to create sympathy for Caesar and by extension, for himself. The next part of the speech was not intended to get the crowd to converge with Caesar so much as it was to get them to diverge from the republican faction which had never been a mainstay of Caesar's political identity:

"No, you desired that he should spend in those regions as long a time as possible. He was prevented, however, by those who regarded the government as no longer a public but their own private possession, from subjugating the remaining countries, and you were kept from becoming lords of them all; these men, making an ill use of the opportunity given them by his being occupied, ventured upon many impious projects, so that you came to require his aid. [44] Therefore abandoning the victories within his grasp he quickly brought you assistance, freed all Italy from the dangers in which it had become involved, and furthermore won back Spain which had been estranged. Then he saw Pompey, who had abandoned his fatherland and was setting up a kingdom of his own in Macedonia, transferring thither all your possessions, equipping your subjects against you, and using against you money of your own. So at first he wished to persuade Pompey somehow to stop and change his course and receive the greatest pledges that he should again attain a fair and equal position with him; and he sent to him both privately and publicly. When, however, he found himself unable in any way to effect this, but Pompey burst all restraints, even the relationship that had existed between himself and Caesar, and chose to fight against you, then at last he was compelled to begin a civil war."

This exemplifies two things very clearly, the ease with which a mob is swayed by words and Antony's understanding of revisionist history as a political tool. Lastly, this penultimate section of the speech implicates the masses with the reign and deeds of Caesar. This was a brilliant ploy, since it would have coaxed many fence-sitters and politically ignorant individuals to accept this assessment without much thought, especially given the

form and emotional style of appeal. Such activities would likely have gotten Antony exactly what he wanted had Caesar not torpedoed his ambitions from the grave by his adoption of Octavian. By the time of the civil war between Antony and Octavian, however, there was no going back from the changed patterns of Roman identity. Investment in political figures was the greatest deciding factor for many Romans (and non-Romans) because it directly impacted their physical safety, and they stood to reap benefits if their political associates managed to seize supreme power. There were several civil wars after Caesar's death, but the wars raged over which political identity would rule over the Roman government as a whole. There was no room for republicanism in that new reality.

CONCLUSION

This thesis has attempted to analyze the events of the Late Roman Republic through the lens of division. When the dynasts of this era took hold of the levers of power, they often succeeded in dividing many Roman citizens into factions where there previously had been none. As political tensions mounted, political factions became more common and fractured the unifying patriotic sense of national identity that many Romans held in common. Ronald Syme and Howard Scullard have recounted these events as an inevitable march towards monarchy. The former implies that the dynasts willed it, the latter implies that the occurrence of chaotic events self-perpetuated and accelerated the Republic's demise. This work does not disprove of their assertions, nor does it find fault in their arguments; it has instead argued that a significant change to the Roman psyche occurred in conjunction with the tumultuous events of the era.

When the dynasts of the Late Republic achieved the status of a potent political identity, they were able to enact changes that they benefitted from, and this resulted in political factions. In addition to political developments, the Marian reforms of the Legions created a sufficient demographic change in the rank and file over time to transform them into a new political subgroup which applied intense pressure on the institutions of the republic by way of direct intervention. The two-way street of political identity between soldiers and their leading generals proved a great strain on the stability of the republic. This in itself was not what caused the republic's demise as much as the failure of the existing institutions to address the problem that the new dynamic presented. The civil wars depleted much of the ruling class, and political violence further crushed and intimidated individuals determined to improve the conditions of

the republic. This type of pressure changed the outlook of the Senatorial class over the course of the Late Republic from one of defensive, conservative political maneuvering to one that ignored these principles altogether, and it allowed for an indirect adherence to the very notion of one man governance that they purported to be fighting to prevent. Adherence to Pompey was not only the Senate's greatest tactical error in a military sense, but indeed in a political sense as well. By believing that Pompey was the strongman who would restore them to power, they clearly showed that the republic's greatest interest was not their major concern. If they could not control the levers of power, they would center on someone they believed would do it in their interest. In this change of mentality, the republic was doomed to perish. The inability of the republican faction of the Senate and Pompey's unwillingness to divert a civil war with Caesar in 50 by allowing him to maintain a partial military command showed that they were either confident of victory, or that Caesar would not dare begin another military conflict in Italy. In both cases they were wrong. Caesar's general policy of clemency for his political enemies in Rome was the only thing that prevented another round of proscriptions from reducing the numbers of former ruling elite, but they would receive no such clemency under the domination of the second triumvirate. They failed to secure themselves against violence, and they failed to secure the republic against the domination of a hegemon. They failed to act on the increasing fractionalization of the electorate and those typically outside it, and as a result, they fractured themselves. It only took the right individual to apply pressure and split the cracks asunder. Caesar's ascendance was the result of these failures, and his death at the hands of jealous senators accomplished nothing which could remedy the republic's dire circumstances. The following decades were characterized by partisanship of the most extreme levels, as political identities were coveted and fought over with words and armies alike. The

Civil war between Caesar and Pompey cemented political identity as the dominant identity among Romans in the Late Republic. After decades of increasing violence among political factions, the chaos of the Social, Civil and later Perusine wars, the electorate was ready for someone who could guarantee their security from such calamities in the future. Augustus, as both the political and legal heir of Caesar could promise a respite from civil upheavals, but his claim to a restoration of the republic was as genuine as Flamininus' claim of restoring Greek liberty after the Second Macedonian War.¹¹¹ After his victory over Mark Antony in the third civil war, Augustus attempted to lay down his dictatorial powers, but the Senate refused. This was either a genuine move on the part of Augustus or a calculated tactic to measure the Senate's hostility towards the idea of his domination. Their approval of his domineering position signaled the death of republican thought. Despite the institutions remaining intact, their various powers were consolidated in Augustus the man, and he could impose his will legally over both the assemblies and the Senate. With these new powers, Augustus picked up the fractured pieces of the republic and reformed them in his own ideal image. His political identity determined political reality, and the Roman Empire was born.

¹¹¹ Livy. AUC 34.48-53.

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