Boudica's Daughters: Conquest and Rape in the Ancient Roman Discourse

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Introduction

It is well known that several of the stories told by the Romans about the earliest history of their polity pivoted on rape and sexual violence – both collectively, as in the case of the *raptio* of the Sabine Women, and individually, as in the case of Lucretia's rape. Especially in Livy's representation of the early Roman history rape is the catalyst for significant political upheavals.[1] Issues of predestined rise to power, autocratic hubris, gendered virtue, and even "Roman" identity were all intertwined in these stories of male sexual violence. What is rather less frequently commented on, however, is the ethnic axis of the Roman narratives of conquest-as-rape and rape-as-conquest. To give but a single example, the topics of chapters in one collected volume from almost three decades ago jump straight from Livy to Byzantine princesses.[2] The obvious omission of most of Roman history is striking. A recent volume on the strategy of the Roman Empire mentions "rape" only in the context of the Visigothic Sack of Rome.[3] The image of Roman conquest as free of the sort of sexual violence and humiliation that we unfortunately still see in modern-day conflicts is strikingly sanitized. The connections between Roman imperialism, ethnic *imaginaire* and sexual violence are also relatively underexplored.[4]

Historiographers and rhetors had always had the possibility of using descriptions of the rape of ingroup women by invading outgroup members – often barbarians – to create instances of heightened emotion, pathos and outrage in their passages.[5] *Hybris*, a quality very frequently associated with barbarians, could in these cases have the meaning of a rape: its intrinsic link with notions of violation and transgression made the word fit well with the imagery of sexual violence.[6] Funerary epitaphs, too, evoke the tragedy of young maidens who have met their death either at the hands of invaders, or through a suicide at the face of rape.[7] Kathy L. Gaca has pointed out that protection of the ingroup females of all age groups from rape was

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1 Mars' rape of Rhea Silvia (Liv. 1,1,8: *vi compressa*) initiates Roman history, and the rape of the Sabine women (1,13) is fundamental for establishing the Roman citizenry; cf. also the story of Verginia in 3,44. See Arieti 1997, 210–16; Dench 2005, 15–25; Taylor 2022a, 136; also Strunk 2014 for Tacitus' Livian models.

2 Deacy & Pierce (eds.) 1997. Newer studies, such as Gaca 2014, recognize very well the 'multi-ethnic', universal nature of phenomena such as 'populace-ravaging warfare', which in practice would have perpetrated cultures of rape among ancient population groups. Taylor 2022a, a very relevant new study, focuses on the late Republic and earliest imperial decades, and emphasises the discontinuities with the Middle Republic (129–30).

3 Lacey 2022, 340; 'sexual violence' and 'abduction' go undiscussed. See the comments on the nature of the modern military histories of Rome by Gaca 2015, 278.

4 Although see Mattingly 2011, 99–121; for the basic parameters of the field (without the ethnicized angle); Gaca 2015, 278–80.

5 Cf. Diod. Sic. 13,62; 13,89; 16,19; Dio *or.* 11,29, expressing his disappointment that Homer did not use the pathos-inducing potential of describing the fate of Trojan female captives, being led to slavery and shame.

6 Gaca 2015, 288 and n. 50; also Paradiso 1995.

7 Individual exemplars discussed in e.g. Kaygusuz 1984; Palumbo Stracca 1997; late antique cases in Vihervalli 2022.

an easily recognisable but also emotionally charged topos in ancient sources. The protection of the women – as well as children – of the household and family group could be scaled up to an outrage about possible outgroup (especially barbarian) threat to the monopoly of violence which the men of the ingroup already wielded on "their" women.[8] Technically, "rape" could only happen to citizens, which had the potential of creating different associations between sexual violence directed at the women of the citizen ingroup, and the enslavement (andrapodizing) and rape – in our modern terms – of outgroup members.[9]

It may be revealing to examine the contexts in which this basic template was – as an exception to the ethnocentricity and exceptionalism of most Roman discourse on rape – turned to furnish criticism of Roman imperialism, such as in the stories that Livy and Plutarch told about the fate of the Galatian noblewoman Chiomara, which will be discussed below. The period of the early Empire also saw clearly articulated criticism of Roman imperialism.[10] Occasionally this veers close to acknowledging its analogies with rape: Tacitus' narrative of Boudica's revolt and its origins in rape is an important example of this, but when compared with Cassius Dio's account of the same events, significant differences can be seen.

The ancient language of plundering and devastation often subsumes or elides the kinds of violence done to conquered communities.[11] In addition to the semantic permutations of *violo, rapio*, *eripio* etc., these linguistic underpinnings extend to the Roman gendered perceptions of the violence of conquest: regions were generally named in the feminine form and personified as females.[12] Caitlin Gillespie has noted how the "idea of female bodies as sacred symbols of the safety of the city runs parallel to the violation of non-Roman female bodies that often accompanied the sacking of a city".[13] Foreign women – often serving as focalizers of barbarism in conquest texts, as Tina Saavedra argued in a comparative study – form thus a particularly apt metaphor for conquest of their foreign lands.[14] This is not to say that male inhabitants of conquered provinces would not have had to experience rape and other forms of sexual violence at the hands of their conquerors. As we shall see, sculptural examples of the dynamics at play include a pair of marble frieze panels from the Sebasteion at Aphrodisias, depicting the heroically nude emperor Claudius violently subjugating the female personification of *Britannia* and Nero handling the limp and passive *Armenia* – the latter scene even with some mythological flourishes from the Epic Cycle.

This chapter will explore the intersection of the ethnic and the gendered in sources ranging from the later Republic to the late second century CE. The "embodied knowledge" of the ethnic other, when intersecting with imperial language of triumphalism, would often produce a distinct way of inscribing conquest on the foreign female body. I will discuss the intertwining of Roman ideology and "pornography" of conquest, ethnically framed sexual violence (from the point of view of either the victims or, in some cases, the perpetrators), and the way in which outgroup perceptions participated in the Imperial-era "rape culture".[15]

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8 Gaca 2014, *passim*, but cf. e.g. 320–21, 335, 345; also Gaca 2015, 280–81, 291–92 and Álvarez Pérez-Sostoa 2024, 130. On domestic violence in antiquity, see Dossey 2008.

9 See e.g. Nguyen 2006, 85; Gaca 2010; Mattingly 2011, 95 fn. 4; James 2020, *OCD s.v.* 'rape'.

10 See for instance Alonso-Núñez 1982; Griffin 2008; Mattingly 2011; Lavan 2011.

11 Cf. Lavan 2020, 201: "even if it [exceptional violence] was normally sanitized through the use of more abstract language", writing of the killing of women rather than the rape, but the same point applies.

12 Cf. Vout 2007, 214. The most important exception is *Aegyptus*.

13 Gillespie 2018, 107; see also Bellei in this volume.

14 Saavedra 1999. See also Cristea 2023, though looking more broadly at all kinds of late Republican literature.

15 For "rape culture" as a cultural and/or societal normalization of sexual violence and the applicability of this term to antiquity, see the discussion by Pyy in the Introduction to this volume and the chapter by Lynch; also Nguyen 2006 on the Roman legislation and Rabinowitz 2011 on the Greek evidence.

Ethnic gaze and the rape of the barbarian

Amazons could perhaps be cited as a group of prominently female barbarians who were actively imagined as reversing the sexual dynamics and setting strict boundaries to male power – even if their depictions in the Greek and Roman culture were always dictated by the male gaze, exoticizing and eroticizing.[16] Matriarchal societies, as Saavedra has noted, were frequently imagined to hold sway among the barbarians.[17] Occasionally, other women among the northerners seem to be depicted in ways that borrow elements or otherwise echo the "Amazon paradigm". A well-known case is Ammianus Marcellinus' vivid though probably imaginary description of a Gallic wife joining a fistfight between her husband and some undefined foreigners. Stronger by far than her husband, with flashing eyes, gnashing teeth and "huge white arms", she lets the "entire band of foreigners" get a sample of her kicks and catapult-like punches.[18] Overall, she encapsulates fully the qualities of Gauls that Ammianus includes in his ethnographic description – and does so in a largely admiring way. Though in Ammianus' telling it is the Gallic wife who joins her husband in the fray, and thus was not presented as originally participating in whatever dispute triggered the tussle, the episode itself can serve as a reminder to the way in which Roman soldiers – if indeed these are the "foreigners" of the description – were a constant source for tension, harassment and risk especially in the frontier zones where people relied on the army for their livelihoods. David Mattingly reminds us that "native women in the frontier zone would also have been targets of amorous desire, harassment, and rape".[19] Ammianus' palpable enjoyment of a feisty Gallic lady who dares to fight back could quite as conceivably have resulted from a conflict where she herself was the first target of the Romans' attention.

As a reflection of the ethnicized/gendered gaze directed at "hard-primitive" groups of barbarian women, we are not surprized to see that just as their men are portrayed as eager for battle and heedless of death, their women are likewise active and brave when faced with the threat of rape. Strabo gives a list of such courageous suicides by Cantabrians of all ages and both genders, but makes the observation that such actions are common among both men and women in Celtic, Thracian and Scythian societies.[20] It needs to be noted, however, that Saavedra read Strabo erroneously as telling of a woman self-immolating herself rather than being raped; what we have is the detail of a captive woman slaying her fellow captives.[21] In any case, the threat of sexual violence is implicit in the scenario, and one can certainly see how the female mentality here is designed to highlight the general ethnic characteristics of Strabo's Iberians: bravery in the face of death and toughness bordering on the abject. For many enslaved foreigners, the first – and often, the final – destination after their loss of freedom was to serve as sex slaves to the Roman soldiers.[22]

The columnar monuments of the adoptive emperors offer some pictorial evidence for the imagery of gendered violence as an unquestioned part of the narratives of Roman conquest. Trajan's column's Scene

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16 Hardwick 1990; Mayor 2014, *passim*; Cristea 2023, 486–94; on the erotics of gaze, see Goldhill 2002; the ethnic angle has been studied recently by Bessone 2021, though in poetry.

17 Saavedra 1999, 59. On strong Gallic women, see Diod. 5,32,2; Parth. *narr.* 30; Anon. *tract. de mul.* (*Onomaris*).

18 Amm. Marc. 15,12,1: *Nec enim eorum quemquam adhibita uxore rixantem, multo fortiore et glauca, peregrinorum ferre poterit globus, tum maxime cum illa inflata cervice suffrendens ponderansque niveas ulnas et vastas admixtis calcibus emittere coeperit pugnos ut catapultas tortilibus nervis excussas.*

19 Mattingly 2011, 117.

20 Str. 3,4,17. Northern women participating in war or inspiring battles: Sall. *hist.* 2,92; Val. Max. 6,1e,3; Tac. *Germ.* 7, *ann.* 14,30; App. *Hisp.* 72. In contrast, the British women in Tacitus' description of Boudica's rebellion are just bystanders: Gillespie 2018, 93.

21 Saavedra 1999, 64. Cf. App. *Hisp.* 72 on the suicides and infanticides of the captured women of the Bracari.

22 See Mattingly 2011, 114–16.

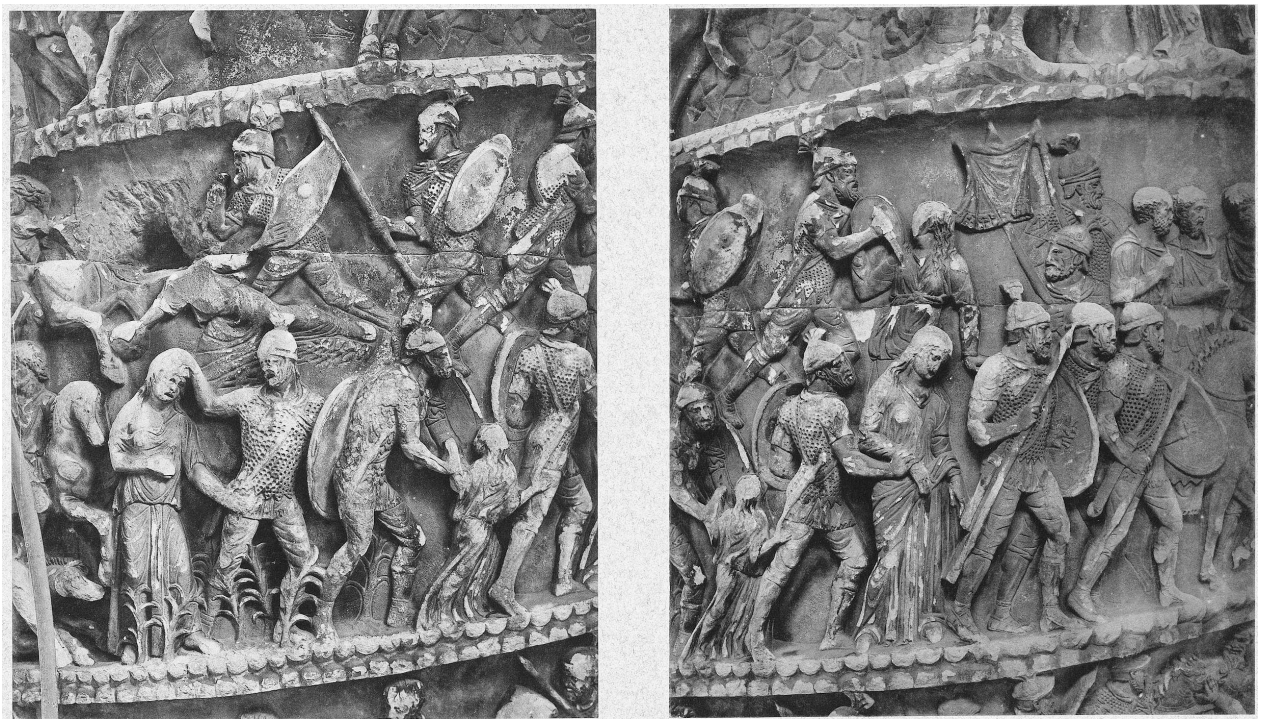

Fig. 1. Scenes XCVII-XCVIII of the Column of Marcus Aurelius. Romans leading way individual women and girls as captives. Source: Petersen & al. 1896, plate 106; public domain.

XXIX depicts the seizure of Dacian women, who supplicate their captors with the traditional, though clearly ineffective gestures.[23] Explicit rape, however, is not depicted at this stage. With the Column of Antoninus Pius destroyed in the Renaissance, we have no way of telling whether that might have contained similar scenes. But the most notable – and differing – points of comparison to the relatively detached Trajanic iconography come from the Column of Marcus Aurelius, with, for example, the Scenes XX, XCVII-XCVIII and CIV depicting "German […] bare-breasted women being grabbed by their hair in preparation for rape", and both grown-up women and a little girl being abducted.[24] Scene CIV shows a Roman soldier dragging a young, childless woman apart from a crowd of female and child captives – one scholar commented overly decorously that "her imminent fate is uncertain", when in fact it seems quite easy to guess.[25]

Comparing the iconographies of the Columns of Trajan and Marcus Aurelius, Myles Lavan has observed that the Column of Marcus Aurelius is much more explicit in depicting the violence of Roman devastation than that of Trajan.[26] Perhaps this reflects the more protracted, evenly matched and thus more savage and traumatic warfare of Marcus' campaigns, which in turn foregrounded the need to offer a pictorial narrative of almost unhindered Roman domination.[27]

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23 See Lavan 2020, 185–86.

24 Mattingly 2011, 117. For the Scene XX, see Pirson 1996, 142–47, 156–57, 165, 167–68 (also analyzing Scene CIV; cf. Beckmann 2011, 114). The dragging by the hair may have been behind even the very earliest Greek terminology of rape (e.g. "dragging along": ἐρύειν, ἕλκειν, etc.): cf. Gaca 2015, 287; Ferris 2000, 93–95.

25 Ferris 2000, 95.

26 Lavan 2020, 183–88 (185). On the increasing debasement of barbarians around the time of Marcus Aurelius, see also Ferris 2000, 89–96.

27 The same experience may be behind Marcus' severe approach to the Iazyges in Dio 72(71),13,1; 72(71),16,1; see Lavan 2020, 197; cf. Pirson 1996, 158–68, noting the amount of scenes "dealing with [Roman] violence out of the context of actual fighting" (165); Beckmann 2011, 194, 198; Ferris 2000, 91 "almost a sense of panic and frantic endeavour".

From the point of view of the Romans, even sexual slavery could be presented as a road to civilization. This attitude remained unchanged in some late antique authors. Ausonius' creation of Bissula as a sexualized "child of nature" originally taken as *bellica praeda* – spoil of war – from Germania, "knowing the sources of the Danube" (*conscia nascentis Bissula Danuvii*), is one example of objectifying a non-Roman female through an explicitly ethnic gaze.[28] Whether a real person or not, Bissula's trajectory is clear in Ausonius' poetic cycle. From a captive she seems to have become an *alumna*, a foster-child, and then clearly something overtly sexualized in the eyes of Ausonius' poetic self.[29] Power reversal is to a degree described, with Bissula gaining dominance over her master, but this is a very old poetic *topos* that saw no diminished popularity in late antiquity.[30] Like Ammianus' Gallic Amazon, Bissula's description is ethnicized and lingers on her foreign beauty.[31] In Ausonius' telling, Bissula has been civilized and Romanized (*sic Latiis mutata bonis*), but without losing her alluring ethnic appeal (*Germana maneret*); she is an *ambigua puella* with Latin language but Germanic *forma*.[32]

In the context of Roman taking of cities and subjugation of communities, much of the sexual violence that almost certainly must have taken place is in the literary sources subsumed into the general language of rightful vengeance, conquest, slave-taking and dividing of spoils.[33] If noble barbarian women are more visible as victims of rape, this is largely because their value as hostages and captives was thought to be higher than that of common folk. In narrative sources, captivity almost always seems to carry the potential of rape, especially when women and children are described in this powerless position.[34] Social factors often intermesh with ethnicized ones. In the higher visibility of noble barbarian women when compared with commoners, there is a similarity with ingroup narratives, partly because of the infringement of elite women's bodily integrity was, in a patriarchal context, a direct attack on their value as hostages.[35] When Tacitus discusses the best way of binding any German group into acquiescence, he is in no doubt that this is to take "high-born young women" (or "girls") (*puellae* […] *nobiles*) as hostages: he notes that the Germans fear more than anything the horrors that captivity would bring to their women. Here, the Roman practices of conquest are the obvious source of such dread.[36] The Germans were commonly perceived as "hypermasculine", but the threat of rape of "their women" by the Roman soldiers seems to have been thought of as one powerful way of overcoming the disparity in physical prowess between the barbarian enemies and Romans.[37]

The stories of Chiomara and Boudica are good examples of this. The anecdote of the Galatian noble lady Chiomara probably originated with Polybius, but found its way to Livy, Valerius Maximus, and Plutarch.[38] At any rate, Plutarch explains that Polybius had himself conversed with Chiomara at Sardis, and

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28 Auson. *carm.* 9,3,2.

29 On Bissula in Ausonius, see Kahlos 2020.

30 Kahlos 2020, 182–83; cf. Gaca 2014, 343, citing, among others, the example of Paul the Silentiary.

31 Auson. *carm.* 9,3,9–10. Cf. Kahlos 2020, 186.

32 Auson. *carm.* 9,3,9; 9,3,11. See Kahlos 2020, 185.

33 Cf. Lavan 2020, 201–02. On the language of justifying mass violence: Taylor 2022b, 325–28.

34 Cf. Gaca 2014, esp. 306; cf. Gillespie 2018, 94 on Tacitus' description (*Germ.* 8) of the German women inspiring their men to fight harder by emulating (by exposing their breasts) the threat of captivity, servitude and – in an obvious implication – rape. Cristea 2023, 495 on Caes. *Gall.* 1,50–51 depicting Germanic women panicking at the prospect of their menfolk losing a battle. Generally, see Álvarez Pérez-Sostoa 2024.

35 Saavedra 1999, 64.

36 Tac. *Germ.* 8: *captivitate, quam longe impatientius feminarum suarum nomine timent, adeo ut efficacius obligentur animi civitatum, quibus inter obsides puellae quoque nobiles imperantur*.

37 On the Germanic 'hypermasculinity', see Evans 2023.

38 Plb. 21 F 38 *ap.* Plut. *de mul. virt.* 22; Liv. 38,24 (cf. Flor. *epit.* 1,27,6); Val. Max. 6,1e,2.

on the basis of this had confessed his admiration of her spiritedness and intelligence. In Plutarch's telling Chiomara, the wife of the Galatian Ortiagon, was taken captive "along with the rest of the women" (of whom we hear nothing, but presumably many of them ended up being raped or in sexual slavery) when Gnaeus Manlius Vulso waged war against them (189 BCE). A Roman officer (ταξίαρχος), said to have been "naturally an ignorant man with self-control neither in matters of pleasure or money" (ἦν δ' ἄρα καὶ πρὸς ἡδονὴν καὶ ἀργύριον ἀμαθὴς καὶ ἀκρατὴς ἄνθρωπος), "used his good luck in a soldier's fashion" (ἐχρήσατο τῇ τύχῃ στρατιωτικῶς), and raped (κατῄσχυνεν) Chiomara. The Roman officer's greed proved his undoing, as he agrees to hand her back to her relatives in exchange for a very large sum of gold; the swap is arranged to take place at a river crossing – a symbolic boundary par excellence. As soon as the Chiomara is back with her kinfolk, and with the Roman avariciously counting his gold, she gives a nod to her male relative, who beheads the Roman. Chiomara wraps the severed head into the folds of her dress and returns home; when presenting it to Ortiagon, she responds to his comment "Fidelity is a praiseworthy thing", with a proud "Yes, but even more so is that there should be only one man living who has lain with me".[39]

Plutarch's version may be fairly faithful to Polybius' one; at any rate, Livy's account differs from that of Plutarch in some details, while not mentioning Polybius as the source. Chiomara is left anonymous by Livy and her husband is called Orgiago, while the rank of the Roman soldier is defined more exactly as a centurion. Livy offers other details, however, which may represent literary and dramatic involution. The scene is defined as the Roman military camp near Ancyra, very much during Vulso's campaign. Both Livy's and Plutarch's version mention fortune (τύχῃ, *fortuna*), which emphasizes the powerlessness of Chiomara, and the consequent way in which her virtue is kept intact. The rapist centurion in Livy's version of Chiomara's story seems like an unambiguous admission of moral failure from a member of the ingroup. Typical for many of Livy's rape descriptions, a Roman male – not the *ideal* male perhaps, but nonetheless one that is often invoked in a variety of narratives – proceeds from a failed seduction to the act of rape.[40] Next, the rapist dangles in front of Chiomara the hope of returning her, "but even this he did not offer for free, as a lover would have done" (*et ne quidem, ut amans, gratuitam*).[41] What in Livy comes across as the centurion's fatal error is to avoid involving another Roman in the exchange: he allows Chiomara to send a messenger to her kin, and she chooses one of her own slaves, who was similarly captured by the Romans. The specific explanation of the go-betweens and arrangements for the ransoming are a detail that Plutarch's version is missing, but on which Livy focuses quite a bit – perhaps in order to build vividness, but also possibly because this sort of practicalities was part of the way the Roman audience thought about ransoming as a process. The centurion's fate is the same, in any case: Chiomara orders the members of her household (or kinsmen: *necessarii*) to execute the Roman. The ending of the story is slightly different, too. Baffled as to the identity of the severed head she has rolled to his feet, Orgiago comments on the "unwomanly" (*quod id*

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39 Plut. *de mul. virt.* 22: ἐκείνου θαυμάσαντος καὶ εἰπόντος 'ὦ γύναι, καλὸν ἡ πίστις,' 'ναί' εἶπεν 'ἀλλὰ κάλλιον ἕνα μόνον ζῆν ἐμοὶ συγγεγενημένον.' On women in Plutarch, see Nikolaidis 1997; Walcot 1999; and Gallic/Galatian heroines in particular, see Brenk 2005; Delattre 2021.

40 Liv. 38,24,1–11 (Chiomara): "at first he tried to seduce her but, seeing that consensual sex was abhorrent to her, he assaulted her person, which fortune had made his slave" (*is primo animum temptavit; quem cum abhorrentem a voluntario vieret stupor, corpori, quod servum fortuna erat, vim fecit*). Cf. 3,44,4 (Verginia), 8,28,3–4 (Publilius); in the case of Lucretia, the aim is secured by threats: 1,58,2–3. The Roman male ideal of sexual continence, especially when serving in a command role, is explored by Taylor 2022a, pointing out that sexual exertion was thought to weaken the body and the mind (128, 139), while the sexual self-control of the elite male – enjoying increasing access to control over the "bodies in imperial space" – came under increased scrutiny in the Middle Republic (129); the story of Chiomara is studied on page 140.

41 Liv. 38,24,4.

facinus haudquaquam mulieris esset) nature of this deed, leading Chiomara to confess "both the injury to her body and the revenge taken for the forcefully violated chastity".[42]

Typical for descriptions of barbarian women, the variants of Chiomara's story are also interspersed with ethnicizing gestures, such as the proverbially "Celtic" detail of decapitation, the wealth in gold that the Celts can dispose of, and their gnomic, aphoristic way of speaking.[43] James Arieti has pointed out that the admiring tone of the anecdote and the fame Chiomara is said to have won through her dignified action are at least partly explicable through her obviously higher social standing than that of the Roman soldier.[44] It is difficult to see how a Roman matron would have been portrayed taking the life of her rapist; Orgiago's comment on the unwomanliness of such a deed, as well as Livy's comment on how Chiomara preserved the "matronly seemliness" (*matronalis decus*)[45] to the end of her life, just reinforces this normativity. Chiomara is, in other words, a typically active and "manly" Celtic woman, even if she does not wield the sword herself. Yet a rape in the barbarian lands is also curiously inert politically, as Arieti noted: no change is initiated and "no kingdom toppled".[46] Despite the references to luck or fate, the story only tells about personal (and possibly ethnic) incorruptibility. In its details and set-up, the Chiomara story does, however, offer good insights into the dynamics of conquest, enslavement, rape, and ransoming that the Roman subjugation of local groups would have routinely entailed.

The second case that seems very pertinent to the topic of this chapter is the representation of Boudica, her daughters, and violence in Tacitus' and Cassius Dio's descriptions of the Icenian revolt.[47] The Livian pattern of rape leading to a crisis in legitimacy and an (attempted) change in power relations seems to linger in the Tacitean story of Boudica, too.[48] Prasutagus, king of the Iceni, had made the emperor his heir alongside his two daughters, hoping that this would safeguard his kingdom and dynasty. The events that follow cause the Roman rule to lose almost all legitimacy among the Iceni and many other Britons. As in Livy's anecdote about Chiomara, centurions are singled out among the guilty parties: they "plundered his kingdom", while "slaves" (probably imperial ones) plunder his house "as if it was war booty".[49] The greatest outrage with the Roman behaviour at this stage seems to be that they treat an allied realm as if it was a conquered land. Heading the litany of grievances is the way in which Boudica, the king's widow, was whipped and her daughters raped (*Boudica verberibus adfecta et filiae stupro violatae sunt*).[50] The other assaults on the Iceni are listed as the despoiling their aristocrats of their holdings and the king's clansmen being made slaves. The neighbouring Trinovantes join the Iceni, with the rebels hating the Roman veterans, settled in Camulodunum, with particular passion: the veterans had ejected Britons from their homes, "called them captives

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42 Liv. 38,24,10: *mirantique cuiusnam id caput hominis aut quod id facinus haudquaquam mulieris esset, et iniuriam corporis et ultionem violatae per vim pudicitiae confessa viro est aliaque, ut traditur, sanctitate et gravitate vitae huius matronalis facinoris decus ad ultimum conservavit.*

43 For decapitation, see e.g. Claud. Quadr. *FRHist* 24 F 6 *ap.* Gell. 9,13,19; Pos. F 274 (Edelstein & Kidd) *ap.* Str. 4,4,5; Diod. Sic. 14,115,5; Just. 24,5,6; for gold, see Pos. F 272 *ap.* Str. 7,2,1–2; Diod. Sic. 5,27,4; for gnomic speech, see Cato F 94 (Peter); Diod. Sic. 5,31,1; Diog. Laer. 1,6.

44 Arieti 1997, 217.

45 Liv. 38, 24, 11.

46 Arieti *loc. cit.*

47 For the reception of Boudica's figure, see Gillespie 2018, 133–41; Johnson 2023.

48 Cf. Tac. *ann.* 14,35 with Boudica's daughters; Livy 1,59 with Lucretia.

49 Tac. *ann.* 14,31: *adeo ut regnum per centuriones, domus per servos velut capta vastarentur*. See Adler 2008, 176 on the Roman view about the legality of such appropriations in the wake of a client king's death; Gillespie 2018, 28–32 on the background and progress of the revolt.

50 Tac. *ann.* 14,31.

and slaves" (*captivos, servos appellando*),[51] and in doing all of this inspired still-serving Roman soldiers to emulate them.

The cultural background, explained by Tacitus in both *Agricola* and *Annales*, is the British indifference to the gender of their leaders.[52] Boudica's ability to motivate her compatriots to the uprising is undeniably tied to her own personal sense of injury, and is metonymy for what was in store for Britain. In some ways, Boudica and her daughters are in Tacitus the personified exemplar of the "devastation that is called peace", that in *Agricola* gets put into the mouth of Calgacus, the war-leader of the Caledonii.[53] Particularly noteworthy is Boudica's condemnation of *Romanorum cupidines*.[54] This works as another demonstration of Saavedra's argument about the importance of women as focalizers in conquest texts.[55] This metonymy and its imaginative potential again becomes clear before the principal battle against Suetonius' legionaries, as Boudica rides her chariot to each tribe in the British host in turn, and shows her daughters as the embodied evidence of the Roman ravages. She argues that her noble ancestry is immaterial to the outrage her family has suffered, and her lost freedom, flogged body, and raped daughters bind her to the experience of the rest: "The Roman lust has gone so far that not even our persons, not even age or virginity, are left unpolluted".[56]

In response to the atrocities committed by the rebels, the Roman mass slaughter of the British at the closure of Boudica's rebellion is indiscriminate, with soldiers killing women and even baggage-animals.[57] The two groups are singled out as exceptional types of casualty, possibly, in part, because in a normal situation both would be just forced to serve the victors with their bodies. Earlier, Tacitus had noted that the British rebels had aimed purely at plundering, not at "taking prisoners and selling them, or any of the barter of war" – which essentially confirms the Roman soldiers' habit of taking hostages and selling them back.[58] In texts that worry about the loss of Roman legitimacy due to the unscrupulousness of the empire's representatives – or, as often in the case of Tacitus, the more general moral degeneration of the Roman society – the revolt of Boudica was a stark warning. To Tacitus, Boudica's leadership could represent a more positive exemplar than the imperial rule in Rome. In a Livian fashion, the rape of Boudica's daughters initiates a serious challenge to the *status quo*, and the theme of autocracy as the enabling factor of such affront is close to the surface, too.[59]

In Cassius Dio, writing as he does in the early 200s, the Boudica story has both similarities and departures from Tacitus' account. One commonality is the shame brought onto the Romans by the rebellion,

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51 Tac. *loc. cit.*

52 Tac. *Agr.* 16,1 (see Clarke 2001, 99); *ann.* 14,35. See also Gillespie 2015, 426–27.

53 Tac. *Agr.* 30,5: *atque ubi solitudiinem faciunt, pacem appellant*; in the same speech (32), Calgacus also casts fighting-spirit to his Britons by reminding them that unlike themselves, the Romans do not have "wives to kindle their courage" during the battle of Mons Graupius. This conforms with the Roman pattern of imagining northern enemies fighting all the more fiercely due to their fear of what will befall their womenfolk.

54 Tac. *ann.* 14,35 See Adler 2011; Lavan 2020; also see below.

55 Saavedra 1999.

56 Tac. *ann.* 14,35: *non ut tantis maioribus ortam regnum et opes, verum ut unam e vulgo libertatem amissam, confectum verberibus corpus, contrectatam filiarum pudicitiam ulcisci. eo provectas Romanorum cupidines ut non corpora, ne senectam quidem aut virginitatem impollutam relinquant.* See Adler 2008, 179–84; Gillespie 2018, 64.

57 Tac. *ann.* 14,37,1–2. On the way in which Boudica's rebels turn the violence of conquest back at the Roman women of the *coloniae*: Gillespie 2018, 107.

58 Tac. *ann.* 14,33: *neque enim capere aut venundare aliudve quod belli commercium, sed caedes patibula ignes cruces* […] *festinabant*.

59 Strunk 2014 has studied the way in which a change from *libertas* to *servitium* in Tacitus can be portrayed through tolerance of abduction, much like in Livy *libertas* is achieved when rapes are not tolerated (e.g. p. 146). Cf. Gillespie 2018, 64–65.

which forms one of the initial crucial points in Dio's narrative.[60] Dio also foregrounds the description of Boudica's (or Bouduika's, as Dio calls her) authority, intelligence ("greater than often belongs to women"), great height and terrifying, exoticized looks ("a gaze most fierce and a harsh voice, a great mass of the tawniest hair falling to her buttocks") and stereotypically northern outfit ("round her neck was a golden torque, and she wore a tunic of diverse colours with a thick mantle fastened with a brooch over it").[61] In Boudica's rousing speech to the gathered Britons, one of her accusations towards the Roman rule is that besides the herding and agriculture that the Britons now only conduct for the benefit of the Romans, they "pay a yearly tribute from our very bodies" (τῶν σωμάτων αὐτῶν δασμὸν ἐτήσιον φέρομεν).[62] This is an ambiguous statement. It could be an oblique reference to the rape of Boudica's daughters, but since she goes on to discuss the extortionate taxes that the Romans had enforced on the locals, this may be the main thrust of the argument. But notably there is no explicit mention of rape. Instead, Dio has expanded on the earlier descriptions of the rebels' savage reprisals against the Romans in a way that strongly links bloodshed and sexualization.[63] Captive Roman noblewomen are hung up naked, their breasts cut off and sewed onto their mouths, and then they are impaled on pikes – all of this accompanied by sacrifices and banquets. The rape accusation has clearly been turned around to point back at the "barbarians".[64]

Pornography of conquest in the early Roman Empire

Based on the discussion of the previous section, it seems uncontroversial to say that martial rape was a ubiquitous part of ancient warfare, especially in cases where the captives had no value as hostages.[65] Michael Taylor has recently examined very usefully the rhetoric of sexual restraint that was sometimes present in representations of Roman legionary life, but I would argue that this may still be more ideological and prescriptive than a reflection of realities.[66] In this section I will examine some examples where the Roman conquest of peoples, regions and provinces approaches some of the iconography, ideology or dynamics of rape. In his important 2011 study, David Mattingly explored the ideology of Roman conquest as a masculine, penetrative force. He emphasizes that sexual exploitation of those seen as marginal or inferior to the ingroup was in antiquity viewed through a different set of values than that directed at "core membership". According to him, agency and structure – body and power – cannot be studied in isolation from each other in an inherently unequal system such as the Roman Empire.[67] Mattingly's contribution was also important in highlighting the exploitation and violence that characterized Roman colonial sexuality: the sexual "op-

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60 Dio 62,1: "and all this was brought upon them by a woman, which in itself caused them great shame" (καὶ ταῦτα μέντοι πάντα ὑπὸ γυναικὸς αὐτοῖς συνηνέχθη, ὥστε καὶ κατὰ τοῦτο πλείστην αὐτοῖς αἰσχύνην συμβῆναι).

61 Dio 62,2: μεῖζον ἢ κατὰ γυναῖκα φρόνημα ἔχουσα […] ἦν δὲ καὶ τὸ σῶμα μεγίστη καὶ τὸ εἶδος βλοσυρωτάτη τό τε βλέμμα δριμυτάτη, καὶ τὸ φθέγμα τραχὺ εἶχε, τήν τε κόμην πλείστην τε καὶ ξανθοτάτην οὖσαν μέχρι τῶν γλουτῶν καθεῖτο, καὶ στρεπτὸν μέγαν χρυσοῦν ἐφόρει, χιτῶνά τε παμποίκιλον ἐνεκεκόλπωτο, καὶ χλαμύδα ἐπ᾽αὐτῷ παχεῖαν ἐνεπεπόρπητο. See Gillespie 2015, 420; cf. Gillespie 2018, 87–90 (and cf. Adler 2008, 189–90) on Dio's Boudica as a representation of an "Amazon queen". Note also the similarly Romano-centrically expressed ethnic stereotypes about "burden-bearing Egyptians" and "trafficking Assyrians" in Boudica's own speech: Dio 62,6. Northern hair had a distinctive exotic and erotic charge among the Romans: Ov. *Amor.* 1,14, 45–50; Mart. 5,68 (cf. Juv. 6,120) refer to the blonde Germanic hair from captives traded to Rome in order to furnish fashionable wigs for Roman elite women.

62 Dio 62,3.

63 Dio 62,7; cf. Tac. *ann.* 14,33. Religion is part of the equation, too: see Gillespie 2018, 110–13.

64 Cf. Adler 2008, 189, noting how Dio stresses the "monstrous, barbarian features" of Boudica's character.

65 Gaca 2014, 306–09; Taylor 2022a, 140.

66 Taylor 2022a, especially 129–31, 139–40.

67 Mattingly 2011, 95–96.

portunities of empire" which may partly explain the chronological correlation between the developing ideology of sexual domination and submission, and the growth of Rome's empire.[68] As the conquest of outside societies is one of the starkest settings of unequal power relations, there are good reasons to look at the ways in which the Roman conquerors and the conquering masculine gaze might have created out of the violence and subjugation of a foreign society a sort of "pornography of conquest".[69]

From at least Herodotus onwards, the assumption was sometimes made that a woman could not be abducted – the verb is ἁρπάζειν, the meaning of which often covers rape, too – without being willing.[70] Conquered peoples and individuals did not get to express their consent – only to surrender and hope for leniency – much like the individuals being targeted within unequal sexual power relations (in peace and war alike).[71] The analogous wielding of male conquering power by the Roman hegemony on the female personifications of the provinces would have appeared to need justification in only exceptional circumstances. In such a setting of structural violence, trauma would have become a prominent unifying experience of the generation alive during the hinge of the conquest.[72] Enslavement would have removed some percentage of the populations, but enough survivors would usually have been left in the conquered lands to form an emotional community of sorts, linked by their experience of surviving the collective and sometimes individual violence of the Roman conquest. The experience of conquest also no doubt shaped the victors. As Mattingly has observed, "the dominant [Roman] male view of sexuality was profoundly affected by the experience of imperial success".[73]

Neither Greek nor Roman perceptions were completely unresponsive to the basic mirroring act of seeing in the defeated individuals the very fundamental human reactions to bereavement, loss and violation. We will see just below how occasionally the ingroup (Greek or Roman) rape of outgroup (barbarian) non-combatants is picked up by writers to offer a suitable source for a set-piece description of collective suffering in a non-individualized way, unlike in the cases we examined in the previous section. Some pictorial depictions demonstrate this willingness to project feelings of violation – sexual or otherwise – to the vanquished outgroup members, though the exact tone struck is hardly one of compassion or sympathy. This is the case with one of the early examples of a conquered barbarian as the victim of sexual violence: the Eurymedon vase. This classical red-figure *oinokhoe* has been debated extensively not only as a prominent piece of evidence for the Greek image of the "Orient", but also as an early example for the analogy between rape and warlike victory (in this case, the battle of the Eurymedon River, where the Delian League defeated the Persians).[74] The Persian – or according to others, a Scythian – depicted in the vase is clearly terrified by the impending rape, but his portrayal is untypically frontal and not particularly sympathetic; his gesture is that of unmanly supplication, implying his lack of honour.[75]

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68 Ibid. 98, 104–05, 118–21.

69 The term is that of Ferris 2000, 55–62; see also Roy 2024, more generally.

70 Hdt. 1,4. On Herodotus' portrayal of non-Greek peoples' sexualities, Wenghofer 2014.

71 Cf. the definition of "martial rape" by Gaca 2014, 306: "openly performed martial acts of sexually penetrative aggression in which girls and young women wanted alive are subjected to mores of generally survivable rape, whereas female captives not wanted alive or used as vehicles of vengeance and interrogative torture are subjected to gang rape and other practices that are often lethal in effect and, to a degree, in intent". See also Harris 2015.

72 Cf. Gaca 2014, 307–08, 345–46; Gaca 2015, 280. This is comparable to the way in which trauma may have been a common – perhaps to a degree also unifying – experience to the Roman soldiers, too: van Lommel 2013. Cf. also Kotrosits 2018, 355.

73 Mattingly 2011, 108.

74 Schauenburg 1975; Hall 1993; Kilmer 1997, 135–38; Smith 1999; McNiven 2000; Isaac 2004, 566 fig. 2a–b; Llewellyn-Jones 2017.

75 McNiven 2000, 83–94; for the interpretations of the passive figure as a Scythian, see Smith 1999, 137–39.

Literary evidence may offer better chances for expressing sympathy for the fate of the raped. In a passage discussed by Gaca, for instance, Athenaeus of Naucratis attributes to Clearchus of Soli a very emotional and dramatic description of the mass rape of the Iapygian town of Carbina.[76] Here, the emphasis on Greek savagery is a tool designed to delegitimize the moral failure of the degenerate Tarentines who perpetrate the impious act – the mass rape is conducted in the shrines of the city – and receive the divine punishment for their crimes, though it is worth noting that an immediately following fragment shows that Clearchus had also envisioned the originally Cretan Iapyges to have degenerated from their Hellenic "well-ordered life" and become effeminate in dress and luxury.[77] Gendered, ethnic and moralizing aspects are intertwined already in the set-up of the set-piece.

Moving closer to the chronological focus of this chapter, we can note the most famous case of a barbarian spokesperson uttering condemnations of the Romans' greed and ravages in a metaphoric way: the pre-battle exhortation given in Tacitus' *Agricola* by Calgacus. The language of the Roman lust for conquest (*raptores orbis […] quos non Oriens, non Occidens satiaverit*), and the way in which the speech describes the Romans as raping the earth (*auferre trudicade rapere falsis nominibus imperium, atque ubi solitudinem faciunt, pacem appellant*) and despoiling the rich and poor peoples alike (*si locuples hostis est, avari, si pauper, ambitiosi […] opes atque inopiam pari adfectu concupiscunt*), is worthy of note for how close to the language of sex acts and sexual yearnings it cleaves.[78] The main themes of the speech are freedom and slavery, but the gendered angle is constantly present. The British should avoid the fate of the Gauls, who lost all their *virtus* (literally "manliness", though encompassing a host of other associations) together with their freedom, as Tacitus notes at an earlier passage in *Agricola*.[79] The enslavement of the British has not been completed (*iam domiti ut pareant, nondum ut serviant*: 13,1), and as the Romans under Agricola penetrate to the furthest reaches of their island, Calgacus exhorts the Caledonians to push against the final act of domination.[80] He also condemns the Romans for raping the wives and sisters of Britons under the guise of friendship and hospitality every bit as badly as they would through "an enemy's lust" (*coniuges sororesque etiam si hostilem libidinem effugerunt nomine amicorum atque hospitum polluuntur*).[81] As in the case of Boudica's daughters, the condemnation of Roman *cupidines* is very much present, and the feeling of violation stokes the flames of resistance.

From the Sebasteion of Aphrodisias, in Asia Minor, we have some potentially quite significant iconographical representations of the gendered violence of the conquest that – although they do not depict rape, strictly speaking – may well be important in this context.[82] The two Julio-Claudian reliefs, together with a third one portraying the "Nike of the *Sebastoi*", forms a local triumphalist celebration of Claudius' conquest of Britain (43 CE) and Nero's subjugation of Armenia (58 CE). Though some scholars choose to emphasize the way in which, respectively, Claudius is about to deliver the killing blow to Britannia and Nero is handling the already-slumped Armenia, the abject postures and the clothing torn away from the breasts of

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76 Clearch. Sol. F 46 (Dorandi & White) *ap.* Ath. 12,23 (522d–f). See Gaca 2014, 324–28; also cf. Harris 2023 on general expressions of sympathy, though only within the ingroup.

77 Clearch. Sol. F 47 (Dorandi & White) *ap.* Ath. 12,24 (522f–523b).

78 Tac. *Agr.* 30,4–6. On Calgacus, see Rutledge 2000; Clarke 2001, 100–05; Adler 2011, 20, 117, 124, 127, 131; also Lavan 2020, 201, fn. 103.

79 Tac. *Agr.* 11,4.

80 See Lavan 2011, 299–300.

81 Tac. *Agr.* 31,1; see Adler 2011, 131. On the sexualized violence in this type of Tacitean speeches, see O'Gorman 2014, especially 176–84.

82 For the Sebasteion reliefs more generally, Smith 2013.

the dominated female personifications – not to mention the sheer look of anguish and pain on the face of Britain – make the association with rape quite likely.[83] In the case of Claudius, he straddles the still struggling Britannia in a posture that seems to be exerting pressure on the small of her back, and pinning her thigh down with his other leg, as observed by Iain Ferris, who was among the first to read the piece as a reflection of "Roman male violence towards a non-Roman or barbarian woman".[84]

Fig. 2. Claudius and *Britannia* from the Sebasteion of Aphrodisias. Source Wikimedia Commons (CC 4.0 International).

It seems to me that Ferris' reading of the relief's iconography as a "prelude to a sexual assault […] and to a rape", especially when considering the violent pulling of the hair and the very forceful pinning-down of the struggling female figure, is quite justified.[85] The base of the marble relief of Claudius and Britannia bears a smiling head of a young satyr, which has been interpreted to indicate the rustic character of Britain, but could certainly also have led the viewer to expect sexual connotations, considering how commonly satyrs harass and rape nymphs in Greek iconography.[86] On symbolical level, too, rape seems more apt than a slaughter. Killing a conquered province outright would seem like a rather strange message to send – as Bert Smith has noted – so it makes more sense to read the composition as indicating the themes of utter humiliation, enslavement and sexual violence.[87] From the Roman point of view, these might conceivably give way to incorporation, acculturation, breeding and fruitfulness – in short: the most typical process whereby barbarian women were either destroyed or appropriated into the Roman system. This imperial conception of rape almost echoes the mythographical register, where all the rapes invariably result in offspring.[88] When combined with the unequal power relations and the ethnic gaze inherent in the Roman conquest, it also reminds us of Caroline Vout's comment about the autocrat as the ultimate inseminator.[89] In some overt cases of genocidal mass violence, such as Caesar's Gallic Wars, we are most commonly seeing the perpetration of a "gendercide", as Tristan S. Taylor has recently pointed out.[90] The combination of killing the men and enslaving the women accomplishes a genocidal end result.

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83 Smith 2013, C12 and C-base 12; 142f., 145–47; cf. 146 "Claudius … pulls her head back by the hair for the death blow", but also cf. 147. Lavan 2020, 185 also prefers to see death as Britannia's imminent fate. In the case of Armenia, perhaps, this is a valid point. On the expression on Britannia's face, Ferris 2000, 56. See also Erim 1982, 279ff.; Stewart 1995.

84 Ferris 2000, 56–57.

85 Ibid. 58.

86 Smith 2013, 145: "Britannia is a rustic place".

87 Ibid. 147.

88 As noted by Arieti 1997, 219.

89 Vout 2007, 20.

90 Taylor 2022b, 313; see also Álvarez Pérez-Sostoa 2024, 130–32; Cristea 2023, 484–85, 495–98.

Fig. 3. Nero and Armenia from the Sebasteion of Aphrodisias. Source Wikimedia Commons CC 4.0 International).

In such a pattern of eradicative violence towards the conquered, the forced breeding of captured women – irrespective of whether they were enslaved or returned against ransom – was a real phenomenon that also lent itself to blunt symbolism.

In terms of Nero's victory over Armenia, we are more clearly dealing with a dying barbarian, though one who in death is clearly presented to the male gaze as an erotic object. No longer a threat, Armenia – "defeated and highly desirable" – is held between his legs by her upper arms.[91] The identification of the region is secure on the basis of an inscribed label, while the Phrygian cap localizes the iconography in the Eastern sphere.[92] As Smith has noted, the design as a whole is based on compositions depicting Achilles and Penthesileia at the moment of the Amazon queen's death.[93] Nero's eroticized quelling of Armenia may, in addition to the episode in the *Aethiopis* of the Epic Cycle, be also connected to local traditions in Aphrodisias. The legendary Assyrian king Ninos had become cited at Aphrodisias as their founder – giving the city impeccably ancient and imperial roots – and in this sense it is intriguing that in the possibly late 1st century CE *Ninos Romance* the great conqueror mounts a dramatic campaign against Armenians.[94] Though the dating of the *Romance* is not secure, and it may be later than the Julio-Claudian Sebasteion sculptures, this apparent parallel is rather interesting – especially if the conquest of Armenia was already part of Ninos' legend around the time the sculptor cast Nero in the role of the new conqueror of Armenia.

Depictions in the triumphalist mode would understandably focalize the conquering and sexualized potency on the figure of the emperor,[95] but one could also look at the dynamics of conquest-as-rape from the point of view of the collective of its actual perpetrators. Indeed, it could even be asked if the Roman conquest of a region or a people can be seen as a metaphorical gang rape. Such acts of sexual violence have been noted to be acts of "establishing bonds between men via the domination and subjugation of a woman".[96] This theme comes up already in the – admittedly less aggressive – Herodotean anecdote about the Lydian king Candaules, who clearly intended to stage a voyeuristic opportunity for the benefit of his bodyguard Gyges,

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91 Smith 2013, 142.

92 As do the quiver and bow, depicted at the background: Markaryan 2019, 193.

93 Smith 2013, 142; in fact both reliefs, Claudius' and Nero's, are variants of Hellenistic Amazonomachies: Markaryan 2019, 193–94.

94 *Ninos* (Zimmermann) F B2. On the role of Ninos in Aphrodisias, see Yildirim 2004, 25–26, 29, 44; on the *Ninos Romance*, see Yildirim 2004, 43–44.

95 Cf. Lavan 2020, 194–95; also Rosso Caponio 2020.

96 Martin Alcoff 1996, 24; see Hubbard 2022, e.g. 48 (where the sex may be forced).

whom he wanted to ogle at his queen's naked body.[97] Though Gyges is portrayed as revolted by such an act of besmirching the honour of the queen, and Candaules' act leads to the demise of himself and his dynasty (foreshadowing the changes that Livian rape narratives often lead to), this story – as well as Herodotus' way of leaving the queen unnamed – nonetheless tells about the possibility of using the shared male gaze directed at a non-consenting female body as a potential source for male solidarity. In the extremely phallocentric Roman culture, it is not at all inconceivable that the legions marching into a region, named in a feminine form – *Armenia*, *Britannia*, *Gallia* and so on – could be seen as a penetrative force in its own right.[98] The terminology for sexual intercourse, as other scholars have already noted, is full of analogies with typical soldiers' tasks of "striking, cutting, wounding, penetrating, digging, triumphing, dominating".[99]

Conclusion: inscribing the Roman domination on the barbarian body

It seems that the range of concrete, imagined, and metaphoric connections between the Roman subjugation of regions and peoples, the rape of individual humans, and the imperial language of triumph and conquest well justify the term "culture of rape".[100] Adult male armed conflict was only part of the practicalities of conquest, and similarly the representations of the Roman takeover of regions made use of the symbolism that female bodies – sometimes through metonymy with regions – offered. In so doing, the ethnic gaze is revealed as an active force shaping the narratives of the horizon of conquest. The Roman audiences in the second century CE, in particular, seem to have become increasingly desensitized to depictions of barbarian suffering, as Gillespie observes.[101] The development of this tendency is, however, visible already in the reliefs of the Sebasteion of Aphrodisias, where the utter subjugation of the female personifications of Britain and Armenia by Claudius and Nero comes very close to the iconography of rape.[102]

The emperor is the metonymic sexual despoiler in the Aphrodisias reliefs and Marcus Aurelius stoically presides over both the execution and the abduction of German captives, but the actual rapists of the conquered peoples would have been the soldiers and officers of the Roman army, the early administrators, their middlemen (both native and Roman), and the owners of the freshly enslaved captives. *Centuriones* are among the culprits in both Chiomara's story in Livy and Boudica's story in Tacitus, although in the latter it is not explicitly said that they raped the queen's daughters. While the sample is too small to draw firm conclusions, one may speculate as to why this might be. Presumably the division of female captives was done according to the rank. Considering their relatively high position within a legion, centurions may have ended up with some of the noble captives who were not only valuable enough to be ransomed, but – if raped – would have been worth of notice due to their social status. This seems possible at least in the case of Chiomara. The rank of the rapists of Boudica's daughters is, on the other hand, impossible to identify. In any case, the rape of the barbarian became worth mentioning only when it had triggered a serious revolt or allowed for a particularly striking anecdote.

Challenging the right of Rome (or the Roman male) to rape non-Romans is, overall, not very common in our sources, though occasionally the topic is taken up in endogenous criticism of Roman imperialism,

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97 Hdt. 1,8–12. For the episode, see Harrison 1997, 193–95.

98 On the phallocentricity of Roman society, Mattingly 2011, 106.

99 Adams 1982, 145–49; Mattingly 2011, 106.

100 Cf. Gaca 2015, 280.

101 Gillespie 2018, 77.

102 Also seen, for instance, in the strongly classicizing Amazonomachy friezes currently in the Piraeus Archaeological Museum.

either as a metaphor or through concrete acts. The cases I have examined more closely in this chapter have mostly dealt with northern women, which may well have formed a somewhat distinctive class of barbarians in the minds of the Early Imperial Roman male writers. Much as in the late antique account by Ammianus Marcellinus, these women were portrayed in a highly eroticized fashion, but also often understood to be "manly", active, temperamental and independent. Even so, foreign individuals were not admitted as fully possessing Roman-style *honos* or *castitas*: a non-citizen could not be raped.[103] Even freedmen were to a certain degree still tarnished by the assumed sexual submission that they would have undergone as slaves.[104] Inflicting the dishonour of *stuprum* on the raped person was not an association that the "taking possession" of conquered foreign bodies would have evoked. The horizon of conquest made barbarians mere objects in a multitude of ways, and as newly made slaves they would not have had any *honos* to lose. Free barbarian women – especially their elites – seem to have been, at least occasionally, another matter, as the case of Chiomara shows, but any condemnation was articulated from the point of view of morals, not law. Ethnic elements are frequently foregrounded – physical traits in particular – so as to introduce both authenticating details and exotic sources for titillation: the northern women's stature, skin and hair seem like particularly often-repeated elements. While it would be too rash to conclude that the Roman "pornography of conquest" had an ethnic kink, it seems that the conquering masculine gaze – influenced by and, in turn, perpetuating the ancient Roman culture of rape – was frequently fixed on ethnically framed details.

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