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Body Horror and Biopolitics in Livy's Third Decade

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The third decade (Books 21-30) of Livy's *Ab Urbe Condita* is scattered with a variety of horrific scenes of violence, graphic rhetoric, and grotesque imagery, and we could explain the use of this gory language simply as the result of the third decade's focus on the 2nd Punic War, itself a violent affair. Within a historiographic tradition which placed value on exciting and visually memorable descriptions, the work's violence may seem like an inevitable bit of rhetorical detail in Livy's depiction of the war. However, we can also understand this grotesque language not simply as historiographical flourishes but rather as an integral part of the project of the third decade as a whole. In this article, I offer a new reading of Livy's third decade, one that is sensitive to the grotesque aesthetic program of the work and situates it at the forefront of aesthetic developments in Roman literature. This "body horror" aesthetic mode for the third decade emphasizes the exceptional nature of the 2nd Punic War, demonstrates Rome's increasingly "Punic" behavior throughout the war, and engages with issues of biopolitics in Livy's contemporary world.

Macabre details are not unique to any period or author of Roman literature, of course, and such moments can be found not just in typical genres like epic poetry but also in the works of Livy's own predecessors in historiography.¹ The third decade,

1 Among the fragmentary Roman historiographers (all fragments Cornell (2013)): Cn. Gellius

moreover, is not the only place that examples of graphic violence can be found in the *AUC* (including material not extant).² What sets Livy's third decade apart from other works of Roman literature is its extensive use of grisly violence to a degree unmatched (with one exception) by any pre-Imperial Latin compositions.³ Books 21-30 stand out even among the other books of the *AUC*, which rarely feature any consistently macabre style of rhetoric, despite certain strands of sensationalism in the earlier Greek historiographic works Livy may have read or adapted.⁴ In the occasional moments of graphic violence in the other books of the *AUC* (especially the earliest material), the context typically presents some exemplary figure whose behavior required an exceptional response and thus an exceptionally graphic portrayal, so that the episode stands out within the narrative; regardless, these descriptions are often tamer than in other extant versions.⁵

For Livy's third decade, the aesthetic of the grotesque is not simply a pattern of rhetorical embellishment, but a persistent aesthetic mode, by which I mean a guiding principle for the depiction of events (battles and otherwise) and for the rhetoric

describes a goblet made from a human skull (F9), which also appears in Livy's third decade (23.24.11-12); Cato discusses corporal punishments involving bloodletting and hands being cut off (F134); Messalla Rufus describes a return from the dead (F1). Sallust shows a well-known interest in bodily scars (*BC* 61.3; *BJ* 85.29); on his fragmentary *Histories*, see footnote 7 below.

2 E.g., the lost books 11-20 almost certainly included gruesome episodes from the 1st Punic War, such as the death of Regulus and the attack by a giant African snake mentioned by Valerius Maximus (1.8.19, quoting Livy); cf. the account of Tubero (F11-12).

3 The one pre-Imperial exception is Lucretius, whose Epicurean view of the body as merely a collection of atoms motivates his frequent graphic depictions of the human body demolished into an assemblage of parts.

4 The relative tameness of the other books, even in descriptions of the violence of the monarchy period, may partially account for previous scholars' claims of aesthetic restraint in the entire *AUC*; cf. Oakley: "Livy for the most part eschewed the gruesome." (1997, p. 121). Paul notes that when describing the capture of cities, a frequent locus of graphic violence in ancient literature, Livy usually demonstrates restraint (1982, p. 152). For the sensationalist strand of Hellenistic Greek historiography, see Luce (1997, pp. 119-122); Burck contrasts these Hellenistic practices with Livy's own (1934).

5 Examples of such exemplary figures include Mettius Fufetius (1.28.10), Spurius Cassius (2.41.10), and Spurius Maelius (4.14.6), or even positive figures such as Mucius Scaevola (2.12.13). The capital punishment of Manlius Capitolinus (6.20.16), caused by hurling him from the Tarpeian rock, is less gruesome than the version from Cornelius Nepos (Cornell F5) in which Manlius was flogged to death. Kiesling writes that in the account of Torquatus' execution of his son (8.7), Livy neglects to include details supplied by Frontinus (*Strateg.* 1.40-41) that would have increased the violence and intensity of the scene, such as the scourging that occurred before the beheading (2006, p. 238). On the function of exemplarity in Livy, see esp. Chaplin (2000).

of the narrator and the characters in the narrative. I argue here that Livy's depiction of the 2nd Punic War puts special emphasis on bloodshed and dismemberment, even in scenes not directly related to the war; graphic violence is foregrounded as a distinguishing element of the activity of the period.

The term "body horror" refers to works of art whose chief emotional impact comes from the graphic presentation of the mutilation or unwilling modification of the body. The term has been most often applied to art, films, and literature in the horror genre, such as the works of H.R. Giger, David Cronenberg, and Clive Barker. As Kelly Hurley puts it: "The narrative told by body horror again and again is of a human subject dismantled and demolished: a human body whose integrity is violated, a human identity whose boundaries are breached from all sides."⁶ An experience of disgust or revulsion when witnessing a mutilated body is not a modern phenomenon, but was understood as a typical reaction even in the classical world (despite the insistence of some scholars that that the ancients were somehow inured to violence in a way that modern readers are not). Aristotle took it for granted that the sight of opened-up bodies was considered disgusting (*PA* 645a 28-30). Titus Castricius, in Gellius' *Attic Nights*, found it impossible to believe the description of Sertorius in Sallust's *Histories* in which the general "rejoiced in the disfigurement of his body," and he criticized Sallust for exaggerating a similar expression from Demosthenes beyond what could be believed.⁷ While the literature of the Roman Republic contains individual cases of such "dismantled" bodies, in the third decade their prevalence is conspicuous. The frequent grotesque descriptions of violence and violation throughout Books 21-30 can best be understood as a persistent aesthetic mode built on body horror.

By reading this work with an eye to this grotesque aesthetic mode, we become aware of the great variety of forms of physical violation described in the narrative: not just dismemberment and decapitation but also such phenomena as rape, cannibalism, reanimation of the dead, and the transgression of the boundary between man and beast. This body horror reading ignores all vague terms of slaughter (e.g., *clades*, *caedes*) or reports of mere killings as failing to reach the level of true grotesque, since

6 Hurley (1995, p. 205). See also Edwards and Grauland (2013, pp. 56-60).

7 Gell. *NA* 2.27.3: *dehonestamento corporis laetari*. Among the surviving fragments of Sallust's *Histories*, there are instances of graphic violence (3.32-5; 3.44.4; 3.76), including cannibalism (1.97; 3.31; 3.60-1), as well as references to bowel movements (1.45), menstruation (4.29), and urination (inc. 22); see Ramsey (2015). It is possible that the work had a focus on corporeality that influenced Livy's later use of body horror, but not enough text survives to allow us to make claims about the tone and tenor of Sallust's *Histories* with confidence.

body horror derives its effects from graphic presentation. The frequent appearance of words and descriptions, independent of context, that depict “a human body whose integrity is violated” instead of simply a generalizing and sanitizing word like “death” (*mors*, etc.) demonstrates how the aesthetic of the grotesque is foregrounded in the work. This reading focuses not only on how events are described but even which events are chosen for inclusion in the narrative: the appearance of bloody omens in third decade, for example, is subject to the desires (including aesthetic desires) of the writer.⁸

Throughout books 21–30, body horror imagery is pervasive, as the following survey of its various appearances will demonstrate. The extensive graphic violence of the narrative includes dismemberments, such as the severing of hands or heads, as well as other corporal violations, such as live burnings, floggings, and crucifixions, which are no less gruesome.⁹ In one memorable episode, the Roman legate Pleminius endures the mutilation of his face (29.9.7) by disobedient Roman troops; this act (and the light punishment that the troops’ tribunes receive) so enrages Pleminius that he commits violent atrocities on the bodies of the military tribunes (29.9.10–11). It has been argued that unlike the version of this episode in Diodorus, the third decade’s version makes the mutilation of Pleminius a central component of the story; the violation of a body is fundamental to the narrative’s focus.¹⁰ And while this example shows individuals receiving horrific wounds, there are also larger-scale moments of body horror, both in battle scenes and in depictions of the chaos of sacked cities.¹¹ Livy further complements the horrific images of violence in his narrative, in his “annalistic” sections detailing the years’ prodigies, with grotesque omens that mirror the rest of the narrative in their emphasis on violent or gory displays.¹²

Body horror also appears in the narrative’s digressive interest at two points in

8 As can be observed by comparing the *AUC*’s prodigy lists to other extant ones; see MacBain (1977). See also Levene on the transformations by Livy of prodigy lists for the third decade (1993, p. 77).

9 Hands cut off upon capture: 22.33.1; 26.12.19. Decapitations: 23.24.11–12; 24.14.16; 26.15.7–9; 26.40.13; 27.51.11; 28.28.2–3; 28.29.10–12; 30.43.13. Live burnings: 21.14.1–2; 24.45.14; 28.23.2; 28.23.4; 30.6.6. Flogging and crucifixion: 22.13.9; 28.37.1–3; 26.40.13; 28.29.10–12.

10 Köster (2014).

11 Battles: 22.48.4; 26.6.1–3. Mass suicide: 21.14.4; 28.23.1–5. Mass rape: 29.17.15. City-wide massacre: 24.39.5; 28.20.6–8.

12 Bloody omens: 22.1.8–13; 22.36.6–9; 23.31.15; 24.10.7–8; 27.37.3; 28.11.3–4. Note also the botched sacrifice of Gaius Flaminius that splattered onlookers with blood (21.63.13–14), as well as the “prophecies of Marcus” (25.12.6). For a case study of how a prodigy may move from the religious sphere to the literary sphere, see MacInnes (2000).

the third decade, when presenting the destructive capabilities of the weapons of various ethnic groups: the Saguntine *phalarica* and the Gallic and Spanish swords.¹³ In addition to these brief looks at non-Roman weaponry, Livy also discusses Hasdrubal's instituted method for stopping rogue elephants from crushing their Punic masters -- the elephant drivers all kept chisels with them, which they would jam into the elephants' heads if the elephants ever "went rogue" (27.49.1-2).

Many examples of body horror come from Livy's authorial voice, but since the grotesque is a fundamental aesthetic mode of the third decade as a whole, the speech of characters within the narrative itself often adopts body horror imagery as well. Secondary narrators describe various atrocities, including alleged cannibalism.¹⁴ They also adopt the imagery of corporal violation in their rhetorical devices; for example, after Scipio Africanus punishes mutineers by flogging and beheading them, he tells his soldiers that punishing them felt "no different than carving out his own entrails."¹⁵ There are also multiple instances throughout the work of Romans referring to the state as a dead, wounded, or mutilated body, such as when Varro declares that the war would "chew on the entrails of the republic."¹⁶ Discourse about the Roman state, and about the relationship between leaders and their subordinates, had used such imagery before in Roman literature, but the emphasis here on violations of that "body politic" reflects the narrative preoccupation with violence.¹⁷ This repeated identification of the body politic with the actual human body, and in particular a violated body (as Scipio graphically describes), shows how attention to materiality and corporeality is such an important aspect of the work's aesthetic mode; it is a messy narrative of blood and guts, of bodies rather than abstractions. With the presence of body horror in not only primary narration but also the thoughts and speeches of figures within the narrative, the grotesque aesthetic dominates the entire work.

In addition to graphic violence, a further element of the body horror mode of

13 Livy describes how the head of the *phalarica* was long enough to pass through a man's body, but even without corporal penetration it could further endanger an enemy because it was lit on fire before being thrown (21.8.10-12). Livy compares the swords of the Gauls and Spaniards in terms of their ability to kill a man: the Gallic sword, lacking a point, was meant to slash, while the shorter Spanish sword was meant to stab (22.46.5).

14 Body horror in secondary narration: 29.17.10-20; 22.59.3. Cannibalism: 23.5.12-15; 26.13.13.

15 28.32.4: *haud secus quam viscera secantem sua*.

16 22.38.6: *mansurum in visceribus rei publicae*. Other examples: 22.8.2-5; 22.39.3; 28.28, esp. 28.28.13.

17 Cf. the famous "Belly and Members" speech by Menenius Agrippa in 2.32.7. Squire notes the extensive use of this metaphor in 1st century BCE Rome, especially in the works of Cicero (2015, pp. 306-309).

Books 21–30 is the transgression of the boundary between man and beast. In other words, these are moments or images in which humans become not so clearly distinct (physically or otherwise) from lower animals, a disturbing reminder that human beings may indeed be no different from other mammals or that they may have within them the same sorts of drives or instincts. This type of body horror appears in the narrative in the form of certain prodigies, but the man/beast transgression appears far more often in the rhetorical language of the primary and secondary narrators.¹⁸ For example, the deprivations and degradations that Hannibal’s soldiers experience on their march to Italy in the first two books of the decade reduce them at times to situations in which they are almost like their pack animals.¹⁹ Another such ambiguity occurs in the “*trucidatio pecorum*” motif of the third decade, in which soldiers are compared to a herd of cattle to be slaughtered; this rhetorical device can be found in both the primary narration and in the speeches of other characters.²⁰

Comparable to the transgression between man and beast as an element of the body horror aesthetic is the disturbing gray area between life and death that also emerges at times in the work. Imagery of the reanimation of dead tissue, or of people in an uncomfortable liminal stage between life and death, also fits into the rubric of body horror, as it suggests exceptions to the normal expectation of individual corporal mastery. Such a transgression grants an unnatural power of locomotion to a dead body and disrupts the normal rhythms of human life, which is meant to have a permanent end.

As one might expect, examples of this particular sort of body horror aesthetic in Books 21–30 are generally not literal.²¹ Battle scenes, such as those at Cannae and Zama, are a common locus for this particular type of grotesque imagery in the nar-

18 Talking animal prodigies: 24.10.7–8, 27.11.4, 28.11.3–4. A human baby born with an elephant’s head: 27.11.5.

19 Livy describes a pathetic mess of men and animals (*miserabili hominum iumentorumque strage*) frozen together by the cold (21.58.7–9; cf. 21.32.7), and some of Hannibal’s Gallic troops collapse from fatigue among dying pack animals and fall asleep on their dead bodies (22.2.7–9).

20 Examples at 25.16.19; 26.27.12; 27.41.9–10; 28.16.6. Outside of the third decade, the motif describes battle in the *AUC* just one other time (37.39.4). On this motif, see also Ash (2010, p. 148).

21 Scipio’s father describes Hannibal’s soldiers, exhausted from crossing the Alps, as ghosts (*effigies, umbrae hominum*) (21.40.9); in the extended sequence of horrors that Livy describes while writing about the plague at Rome (25.26.7–12), he says that the effect of the plague was so bad that even the dead were attacking the still-living (*mortui aegros... conficerent*), by means of their stench, diseased state, and terror-inducing appearance (25.26.10). Note also the two live burials in the third decade (22.57.1; 22.57.5–6) and the sacrifice by drowning of a large hermaphroditic baby (27.37.3).

ration, where descriptions of reanimated soldiers and unclear distinctions between the living and the dead show an uneasy mixing of life and death.²² In addition to these examples, there are several rhetorical uses of reincarnations or of people rising from the dead.²³ While the narrative of the third decade never quite turns into a ghost story, still the prevalent imagery of the transgression between life and death contributes to the grotesque aesthetic.

The breadth of the examples of graphic imagery clearly demonstrates that body horror is not simply an occasional ornamentation in Livy's third decade, but permeates Books 21-30 in a pervasive grotesque aesthetic program. In every element of the work (from battle scenes to domestic affairs to lists of omens, and primary narration as well as secondary), body horror has a presence. Moreover, outside the third decade, the narrative of the *AUC* fails to adopt this aesthetic mode. By comparison, we can see that in the book immediately following the third decade, the aesthetic program has changed. Book 31 lacks any extensive use of body horror, with fewer examples than in any book in the third decade, including no list of omens.²⁴ Philip V, the Romans' chief adversary in this time period, is more apt to destroy buildings than to destroy bodies as Hannibal did. There is even a specific parallel moment: Philip's siege of Abydos is directly compared to Hannibal's violent siege of Saguntum.²⁵ Yet the narrative slows to a halt, and the people of Abydos fail to immediately suffer the self-inflicted horrors that the Saguntines did, owing to their own cowardice (31.17.11). When the Abydites finally commit mass suicide later, the description of their deaths is much restrained, with merely the word *facinora* ("crimes," or even "deeds") to describe their self-inflicted massacre (31.18.8). Livy clearly demonstrates here that a different, and much tamer, aesthetic mode will mark the books that fol-

22 Survivors at Cannae rise from bloody piles of corpses, almost like reanimated dead men, after the battle had ended and thus need to be "re-killed" (22.51.6); one such survivor, found half-dead among the slain men (as if reanimated), actually lived to desert to Hannibal's side (23.15.8); after Cannae, reports about which men lived and which died were so unclear at Rome that the citizens took to mourning the living and the dead together (22.55.3-4).

23 Manlius Torquatus imagines, in a speech, King Hiero rising from the dead (*ab inferis existat*) and walking to Rome (26.32.1-7); note that Livy does not simply write "if King Hiero were still alive" (as he does at 25.28.8: *si Hiero ipse viveret*) but specifically imagines Hiero rising from the dead. Scipio Africanus tells his soldiers that he will behave as a copy (*effigiem*) of his father's and uncle's character, such that they will think his father had come back to life (*revixisse*, 26.41.23-25).

24 Notwithstanding the famous body horror passage at 31.34.4, where Philip V's troops are terrified by the sight of their fellow soldiers' mutilated bodies after battle with the Romans.

25 31.17.4-5: the people of Abydos act "having turned to the madness of the Saguntines" (*ad Saguntinam rabiem versi*).

low the third decade.²⁶

A reading of the third decade sensitive to its body horror aesthetic brings out several attributes. The degree of intensity of the violence (both in battle and anywhere else) emphasizes the exceptionality of the 2nd Punic War, the event that dominates the work. Livy makes clear the singular nature of the war in the opening section of the decade, calling it the most remarkable war ever waged and saying it was marked by “a hatred between the enemies almost greater than their strength,” which suggests an elevated degree of violence.²⁷ This suggestion is complemented by the notice at the beginning of the fourth decade that the degree of peril of the subsequent war with Philip V was in no way comparable to that of the 2nd Punic War.²⁸ He also describes his account of the latter as in some way worthy of being a standalone work, which signals the potential that the aesthetic mode of this project will be different for the third decade.²⁹ The heightened body horror aesthetic of Books 21-30 helps depict the 2nd Punic War as a historically significant, epochal, even cosmic event, as opposed to, for example, the wars with the Volsci that Livy himself admits are merely tiring to read (6.12.2). Indeed, the war is less a foreign affairs event than a spectacle for an audience of posterity, a rhetorical decision to which grotesque aesthetics contributes.

A further aspect of the war’s exceptional nature, brought out by a reading focused on body horror, is the gradual debasement of the Romans during the war through their increasingly barbaric behavior. Throughout the course of Books 21-30, the Romans shift noticeably from being primarily the victims of body horror at the hands of more “barbarous” cultures (not just Carthaginians, but also Numidians,

26 Other comparanda show that the third decade’s grotesque aesthetics are not matched in other books of the *AUC*: at 39.22.5, we are merely told of (and not shown) a hermaphroditic boy’s execution; the *trucidatio pecorum* motif appears at 5.44.7 and 41.18.3 but describes the slaughter of actual cattle, not soldiers; 6.20-21 and 7.1-3 describe plagues, but neither passage approaches the graphic body horror of the extended account at 25.26.

27 21.1.1-3: *odiis...prope maioribus certarunt quam viribus*.

28 31.1.6: *periculo haudquaquam comparandum*.

29 The opening words, *In parte operis mei licet mihi praefari quod in principio summae totius professi plerique sunt rerum scriptores* (“It is permitted for me to preface just a part of my work with what most historians argue at the beginnings of their entire projects”), suggest that since this “part” of Livy’s history is comparable to entire works by other writers, it could be considered as a standalone monograph (cf. the work of Coelius Antipater, which was in fact a standalone monograph on the 2nd Punic War). See Levene for the monographic qualities of the third decade (2010). Regarding Livy’s claim at the beginning of Book 21 that the war was exceptional, see Marincola for the larger trend of *amplificatio* in the openings of works of ancient historians (1997, pp. 34-43).

Spaniards, and Gauls) to being primarily its perpetrators. The turning point occurs in the middle books of the decade, as the pentad of Carthaginian offensive shifts to the pentad of Roman counteroffensive.³⁰ Scholars have already noted the complex but certainly uncomfortable likeness of Roman behavior, more broadly speaking, to typical Punic behavior throughout the third decade.³¹ Although Livy does not make an explicit claim for any direct influence occurring, a reading focused on his balance of Punic and Roman body horror scenes (and the similarities between the two) compels the reader to see wartime Rome evolving to commit those atrocities with which the Carthaginians (and their “barbarian” allies) were stereotypically associated, and thereby growing in resemblance to its own enemy.³² Moreover, the frequent examples of man/beast ambiguity point to greater fears of “inferior” cultures being beast-like or closer to animals than to rational humans, and thus those examples of Romans transgressing the man/beast boundary also play into this larger narrative of Roman “Poenicization” during the war.³³

Claims of cannibalism provide a typical example. After Cannae, the consul Varro says that Hannibal has trained his men to be tough through brutal acts such as building bridges from piles of human corpses, and has even taught his soldiers to eat human flesh (23.5.12-15). Later, the Capuan leader Vibius Virrius, to emphasize Roman hostility, claims the Romans have a thirst for Capuan blood (26.13.13), showing that the Romans have matched the savagery that Hannibal’s troops once had. As

30 At 26.37, Livy evaluates the war and makes Rome and Carthage look vaguely equal. Naturally, the Punic successes and Roman defeats in the war in the first half of the decade, and their reverses in the second half, correspond with some of this body horror material, but such outcomes alone would not account for all the examples we find. Hoyos notes the moral implication at 26.37, writing that “it is no longer—if it ever was—white-hatted Rome versus black-hatted Carthage, but a contest between equals in strength, resolution, and (though he does not say so outright) other qualities.” (2015, p. 378).

31 In particular Levene, who argues that Livy seeks to place the turning point in Roman morality (typically described by Romans to be in the middle of the second century BCE) as early as the 2nd Punic War (2010, pp. 164-260). See also Rossi, who writes that Livy’s Rome/Carthage parallels always favor the Romans but, in terms of violence, show the Romans ultimately to be just as cruel as their opponents (2004).

32 E.g.: the Roman general Postumius is killed in battle and his skull is made into a goblet by the Boii, per their custom (23.24.11-12); later, Hasdrubal’s severed head is carried around by the consul Gaius Claudius and thrown into an enemy camp, with the intent that Hannibal should hear about it (27.51.11).

33 On Roman attitudes to “inferior” cultures, see Isaac (2004, pp. 213-15). Luce traces the opposite trajectory in Book 5: the Romans at first act more like Gauls than like Romans, but eventually recover their normal identity (1971, p. 269).

Isaac has written, there is a racial component to the connection between body horror and Roman descriptions of other ethnic groups, suggesting that Romans directly associated the Carthaginians' cannibalism with their inferiority as a separate culture.³⁴ Vibius Virrius' comment about the Roman thirst for blood, then, while seemingly a rhetorical exaggeration, contains within it a latent observation that the Romans have begun to resemble their enemies in savagery.

Body horror also highlights the parallelism between the major Carthaginian and Roman leaders of the third decade, Hannibal and Scipio Africanus. In the first pentad, Hannibal burns interrogated locals alive (24.45.14), but later Scipio torches a Punic camp at night, burning men to death while they sleep (30.5-6); the narration dwells grotesquely on the charred bodies clogging up the entranceway to the camp (30.6.6). Whether Scipio's action is morally justified is immaterial here: the narrative attention paid to the gruesome deaths by fire of the Punic soldiers invites direct comparison to Hannibal's act. Elsewhere, Hannibal flogs and crucifies an incompetent subordinate, to strike fear into others (*ad reliquorum terrorem*, 22.13.9), while Scipio flogs and beheads mutinous soldiers (28.29.10-12), making those present numb with fear (*torpentibus metu*). Hannibal's activity as a Carthaginian leader preserves the ghost of Hamilcar in Punic foreign affairs (21.10.3), and Scipio tells his soldiers that through his behavior they will think his father had come back to life (26.41.23-25).

Through body horror, Scipio and Hannibal are thus shown to be peer and parallel versions of each other, willing to perpetrate violent acts and portraying themselves as quasi-reincarnations of their relatives. The story of the third decade, then, is the story of Rome's increasing barbarity, as if it required a "Hannibalic" leader like Scipio for the Romans to win the 2nd Punic War. Thus, despite the ostensible glorification of the victorious Roman army by the end of the work, body horror reveals a simultaneous subtext: Rome's growing brutality during this time period complicates the praise of Rome's heroes.

Reading the pervasive body horror aesthetic of the third decade also provides an indirect way to engage with the issue of biopolitics in the Roman world. Biopolitics is a term generally used to describe the intersection of biological processes with politics and law.³⁵ Michel Foucault popularized the study of biopolitics in the 1970s and '80s, with a series of works focusing on the control of citizens in mod-

34 Isaac (2004, pp. 207-11).

35 For the history of biopolitical scholarship, including the evolution of the term "biopolitics," see Lemke (2011).

ern western liberal democracies through public policy issues involving health and medicine.³⁶ Later, Giorgio Agamben, applying the study of biopolitics to ancient Roman society as well as modern times, instead focused on the application of law for defining citizen bodies.³⁷ Agamben makes a distinction between what he calls “bare life” (i.e., physical bodies themselves) and politically active beings (i.e., citizens). He argues that throughout human history, the state has been able to exploit the ambiguity between these two concepts in order to exert control over citizens by making “bare life” subject to state power and by creating legal ways to turn citizens into “bare life” (and, in the final stage, by having the control over the legal process of defining citizen beings).

The broad power that Roman magistrates held during war-time, particularly the power military officers had over their own soldiers (such as the power to enact brutal or humiliating punishments to soldiers, without a right of appeal), largely stripped citizen bodies of their peacetime legal protections, reducing them to “bare life”; the soldiers became objects for commanders to manipulate.³⁸ This power is seen not only in forced marches and battles but also in military discipline.³⁹ State control of citizen bodies was an issue of major concern during the period when Livy was composing the third decade (most prominently in the variety of attempts by the Augustan state to regulate Roman sexuality and procreation through laws), and body horror occurs in several episodes when Roman leaders inflict violence against their own soldiers, such as in Scipio’s punishment (and justification) of mutineers in his own camp (28.28-29).⁴⁰

36 See esp. Foucault (2007).

37 Articulated in Agamben (1998); see also, with particular relevance to this article, Agamben (2004).

38 Polybius 6.12 notes the consul’s absolute power of inflicting punishment on all who are under their command while on active service. The third decade’s biopolitical engagement is perhaps influenced by the interruption of Polybius’s own account of the 2nd Punic War to discuss the structure and powers of the Roman government. On Roman military law, see Brand (1968, esp. pp. 42-5), and Phang (2008, pp. 115-17).

39 Though the actual severity of Roman discipline was in practice less than was legally permitted (or idealized by later writers). Watson argues that commanders usually chose non-capital (or even non-corporal) punishments in many situations (1969, pp. 117-26), and Sage notes that “the commonplace of the effective general presupposes lax discipline prior to his arrival and so calls into question whether the maintenance of discipline and administration of punishment were really as relentless as some of the sources would have us believe.” (2008, p. 225). Phang concedes the commander’s unrestricted choice of penalties but contends that punishments still required legitimation to maintain the compliance of the soldiers and thus left a window of resistance (2008, pp. 111-152).

40 Lowrie writes that “many of the stories told during [the Augustan] period show that the Romans

While Livy's work lacks the sophisticated focus of modern theorists' analyses, nonetheless his frequent body horror imagery emphasizes this transition of the soldiery from citizen beings to collections of body parts that commanders can send into battle to be removed for the benefit of the state, in war or elsewhere.⁴¹ In this way the soldiers are similar to animals, recalling the many examples which transgress the boundary between man and beast in the third decade. This "bare life" can also seem like an extra body part of a commanding general: recall that after Scipio Africanus flogs and beheads those mutinous soldiers, he declares to his troops that punishing them felt like carving out his *own* organs (28.32.4).⁴² The general thus imagines his soldiers as extensions of his own body, like extra limbs, that he can control.

The prominence of body horror in Books 21–30 confronts the disturbing extremes of state authority at a time when power (military and otherwise) was increasingly moving into the hands of a small number of Roman elites, chief among them the *princeps*.⁴³ The Roman government, of course, did not regulate citizen bodies to the extent that the modern governments examined by Foucault and Agamben do, but Rome in the 20s BCE witnessed a variety of legal and political changes, and the sociopolitical milieu of the early Augustan Principate contains aspects that scholars of horror have found particularly conducive to a cultural interest in body horror.⁴⁴ And Livy's comment at 28.12.12 explicitly notes that the wars of the Augustan re-

were thinking about the relationship between sovereignty and citizen rights in terms of the law, regardless of where any particular solution might come down" (2010, p. 181); for Agamben and Roman history, see also Lowrie (2007).

41 *Contra* Kiesling, who downplays the degree of military corporal punishment in Livy (2006, p. 237).

42 Feldherr notes that the execution is compared to a sacrifice, with Scipio the sacrificial victim whose entrails would be torn out and examined, and that no such body horror imagery appears in the Polybian version of this episode (11.28–9) (1998, p. 160 n. 135).

43 The body horror perpetrated by the Augustan regime was not solely military in nature: e.g., Strabo (6.273) claimed to have witnessed Augustus kill a prisoner with a fake Mt. Aetna in a bizarre public execution, and accused conspirators were executed without a chance to defend themselves (Dio Cass. 54.3). Additionally, there was an outbreak of plague in Rome in 22 BCE (Dio Cass. 54.1), which may have influenced Livy's account of the plague in the third decade.

44 Carroll connects an interest in horror with social phenomena such as "anxiety about cultural categories," the end of a war, nostalgia, "social instability," and "the instability of norms—both classificatory and moral," all of which could be described as elements of Augustan Rome (1990, pp. 209–14). Barton suggests that the popularity of gladiatorial shows at Rome was "a response to an intense and excruciating feeling of humiliation and insecurity and an attempt to find compensation, even exaltation, within this feeling of inescapable degradation." (1993, p. 46). See also Bartsch (1997, pp. 45–7).

gime are especially relevant to the third decade.⁴⁵ Thus the activities of Scipio and his earlier Roman armies invite contemplation about the activities of Livy's own age. Given the 2nd Punic War's position within Roman culture as the most famous and most lauded of all of Rome's early warfare (superlative qualities already emphasized by Livy), its depiction as a time of frequent body horror adds significant weight to contemporary commentary on Augustan Age biopolitics: the grotesque undermines claims of renewed order and stability.

From this setting emerges a narrative of the 2nd Punic War that stretches the limits of what kind of Roman activity can be tolerated through its amplification of graphic violence, forcing the reader to confront the harsh realities of state corporal control. A degree of ambivalence occasionally appears: Livy is unsure whether the massacre of the people of Henna was unavoidable or just evil, and he seems to express a measure of disgust at the desperate decision to bury alive Gallic and Greek men and women in a human sacrifice in the city.⁴⁶ Body horror's prominence within the third decade reveals the biopolitical anxieties aroused by even the most celebrated Roman warfare.

This connection between body horror and biopolitics in the third decade shows the *AUC*'s anticipation of aesthetic developments in future Latin literature, in which the formal style of the grotesque is linked to, or functions as, political commentary.⁴⁷ Glenn Most's work on literature in the 1st century CE has demonstrated the prevalence of dismemberments in the works of Statius and, in particular, Lucan and Seneca, and he has posited that this tendency of Neronian literature is a response to various elements of Nero's reign: violent spectacles, the slaughter of animals for sport or dining, state violence, and Stoic reflections on the gray area between man and beast.⁴⁸ As the state exerted further control over its citizens (and their bodies)

45 28.12.12: *itaque ergo prima Romanis inita provinciarum quae quidem continentis sint postrema omnium nostra demum aetate ductu auspicioque Augusti Caesaris perdomita est* ("And so, therefore, of the provinces which are on the continent at least, the first entered by the Romans was the last of all to be completely conquered, under the leadership and auspices of Augustus Caesar at last in our own time").

46 Henna was held "by a deed either wicked or unavoidable" (*aut malo aut necessario facinore*, 24.39.7). Livy calls the live burial "a most un-Roman sacrifice" (*minime Romano sacro*, 22.57.5-6).

47 For a broader discussion of literary aesthetics in the Empire, see Poe (1969), Tarrant (1978), Mans (1984), Most (1992), Bartsch (1997), Segal (1998), Gilbert (2001), Maes (2008). Poe notes the literary commonplace of morbidity or "ghoulishness" in poetry of the Augustan period, making an explicit connection between Augustan aesthetics and Imperial literature's later interest in carnage (1969, p. 356).

48 See Most (1992). Most also picks up on a 1st century CE interest in the transgression of the boundary between man and animal (found frequently in Livy's third decade), and explains this interest

during the Neronian period, the Latin literature of the time began to show a greater interest in biopolitics and body horror, for which Livy's earlier explorations could have influenced later poets.⁴⁹

Likewise, Charles Segal has written about similar body horror aesthetics in the works of Ovid, a writer whose career overlaps Livy's.⁵⁰ Segal reads Ovid's *Metamorphoses* as paying attention to what he calls "primary boundary anxiety," an anxiety about maintaining one's bodily integrity. The various physical transformations seen in the poem, including "dismemberment, decapitation, disembowelment, and other grisly events," are violations of that bodily integrity that activate this anxiety.⁵¹ Segal also notes that Ovid's metamorphic bodies, transgressing the human/animal boundary, may reflect broader anxieties about a fear of subjection to physical punishment or exploitation, a growing trend under the increasing authoritarianism of the Augustan imperial regime and its claims for biopolitical authority.⁵² These are "specifically Roman anxieties, for example, the horror of a free person's reduction to slave status, in which he or she is only a body, and a body subject to physical punishment or sexual exploitation by the master."⁵³ This anxiety in the *Metamorphoses* expands the body horror aspect of the transgressions between man and beast scattered throughout Livy's Books 21-30. Livy thus anticipates the Ovidian and Imperial body horror aesthetic with his own breadth of grotesque imagery; these later body horror practitioners build on a foundation set by the third decade.⁵⁴

in terms of the possible life experiences that writers may also have had during this time. For example, at a public hunt where the animals accidentally mauled the humans, "spectators could just as easily conclude that there was no real difference between animals and at least some men" (1992, p. 404). For an extended analysis of body horror in Lucan, see Bartsch (1997).

49 Livy's influence on Silius Italicus is well known (see Nicol (1936), Nesselrath (1986)), and such grisly episodes as the cannibalistic Roman soldier (*Pun.* 6.41-54) barely exceed the body horror of the Livian original (22.51.9). Lovatt argues for a similar influence on Statius, whose allusive reading of the *AUC* "bring[s] out epic tendencies in Livy." (2010, p. 86).

50 Segal (1998).

51 *ibid.* (1998, p. 25).

52 *ibid.* (1998, pp. 32-6); "as the center of power seems increasingly remote, the abrupt transformation of one's life by sudden, arbitrary violence seems more possible" (1998, p. 32). This aspect of the body horror aesthetic had perhaps begun during the early Augustan period -- Vitruvius observes the popularity of the current fashion (*novi mores*) for human and animal hybrids in frescoes (7.5.3-4). See Lowe (2010, pp. 463-4).

53 Segal (1998, p. 36).

54 One might also consider Ovid's *Ibis* as a collection of body horror, largely (though not solely) mythological; note that in several places (e.g., 279-80, 281-2, 299-300) he brings up actual historical

The events of the third decade of Livy's *AUC*, with its focus on the account of the 2nd Punic War, are composed in a body horror aesthetic mode. The multiple mutilations and dismemberments, bloody omens, graphic rhetorical figures, discussions of killing technology, and collapses of the dichotomy of man/beast and life/death all contribute to create this pervasive grotesque aesthetic. A reading of Books 21-30 sensitive to this graphic imagery shows how Livy describes the 2nd Punic War as a singular moment in the history of warfare on Earth, and it reveals a source of tension in the gradual transition of the Roman army's behavior. A reading focused on body horror also encourages reflection on the biopolitics of empire, through which Livy anticipates the aesthetics of later Imperial writers such as Seneca, Lucan, and Ovid. This aesthetic of the grotesque in the third decade is a crucial element for understanding Livy's historiographical approach and aims in the *Ab Urbe Condita*, and should be treated not just as ornamental rhetoric but as an integral aspect of the force of the work.

episodes -- perhaps with a post-Livian attitude toward historiographical images of the grotesque.

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