

Roman Legends and Roman Values

Alan Haffa

Please Silence your Cell Phone

Legends of Rome

- Legend, Myth, and History
- Ennius (239-169 B.C.): Father of Roman Poetry; Spoke Greek; *Annals*, an Epic that covers Roman history from Fall of Troy to Cato the Elder; Source for Vergil
- Titus Livius (Livy) 59 B.C.-17 A.D.: *Ab Urbe Condite* (From the Founding of the City)
- Prose Counterpart of Vergil as Golden Age Roman Literature
- Vergil in the *Aeneid*; Ovid in *Metamorphoses*

Characteristics of Roman Myth

- Focus on origins of City and Early History
- Patriarchal Perspective
- Demythologizing Tendency
- Roman Transformation of Greek Myth
- Politicizing of Myth

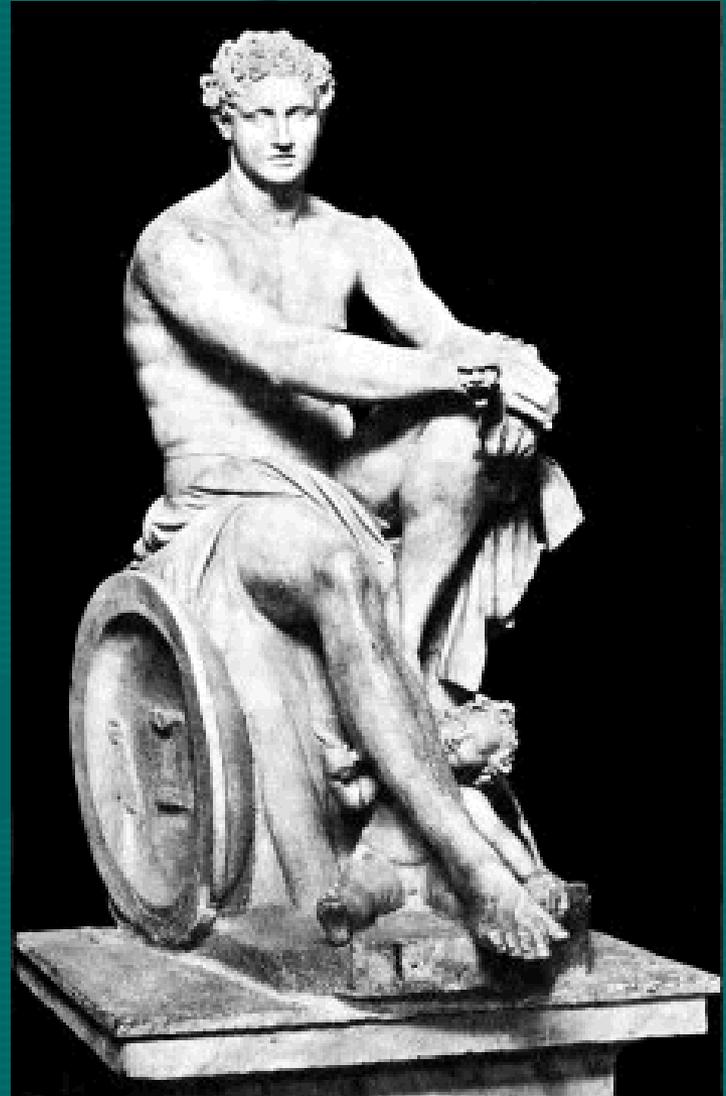
Romulus and Remus

- Born to Rhea Silvia, daughter of King of Alba Longa, and Mars
- King Amulius had them abandoned
- Raised by Wolf
- Fought and defeated Amulius
- Augur Test; Fought over walls
- Romulus killed Remus
- Divine sanction of Rome; but also **Fratricide**



Romulus Deified as Quirinus

- After 38 year rule
Romulus disappeared
- Some claimed Patrician
foul play
- Official Story: Taken to
heaven as a god
- Worshipped as
Quirinus—a Sabine
Storm God



Rape of Sabine Women

- Romulus invited Sabines to a festival
- Bride Theft and Hospitality
- Titus Tatius made war
- Sabine women made peace
- Cultural Context: Brides were taken from family homes under pretense of force and brought to groom's home



Traitorous Woman: Tarpeia



- Father was defending the Capital Hill; she led Sabine army in a secret way
- Betrayed Romans for “what is on your left arms”; bracelets
- Bury her in shields
- The place became the “rock of Tarpeia” and traitors were thrown off to their deaths there

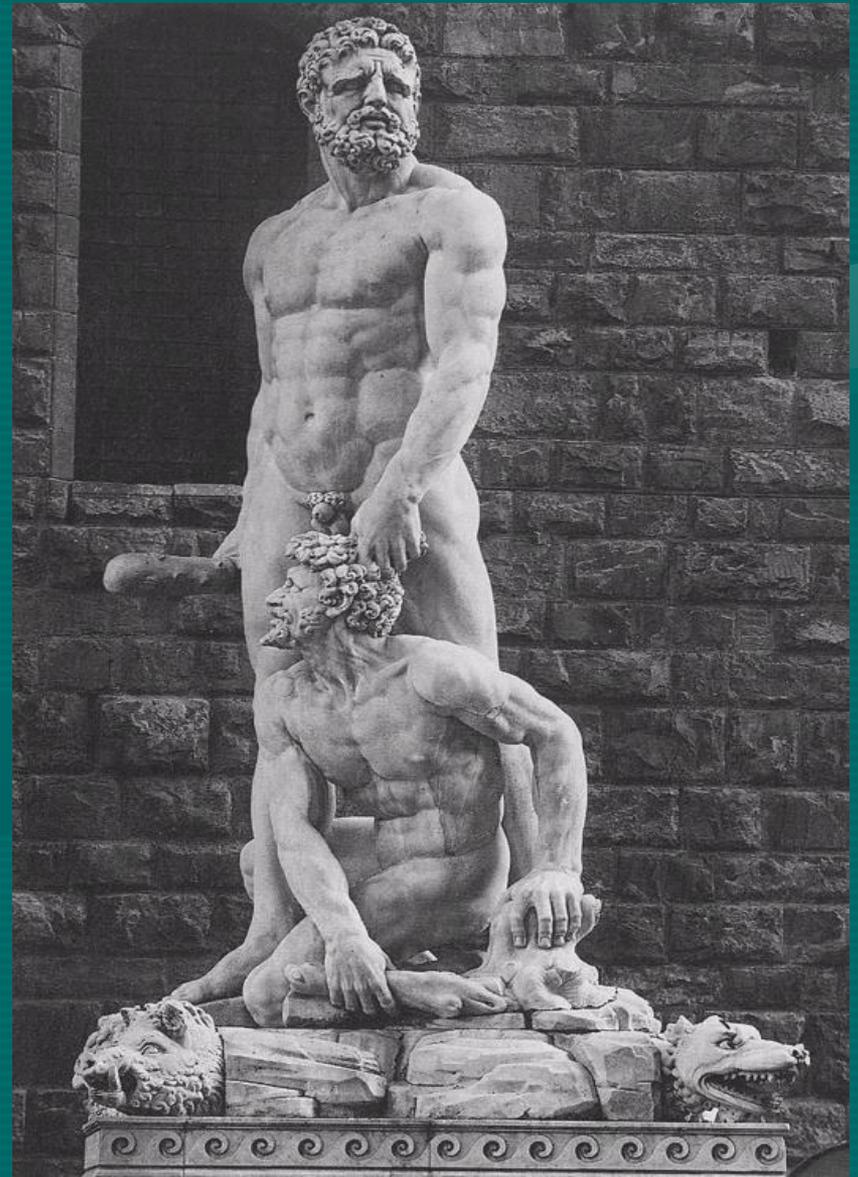
Roman Hero: Aeneas

- Divinity of Julius Caesar and Augustus from Venus, through Iulus (Julian line)
- **Pietas:** Duty to family, State, and Religion
- **Gravitas:** Seriousness of Purpose and Duty
- **Frugalitas:** Ideal of Simple Life
- Emotional Restraint
- Subordination of Individual



Hercules and Cacus

- Cacus, a giant who had a cave on Mt. Aventine
- Hercules Stole the cattle of Geryon; Cacus stole them from Hercules
- Hercules is symbol of civilization who removed a troublesome thief
- Ara Maxima founded at site of Forum Boarium, Cattle Market of Rome



Rape of Lucretia

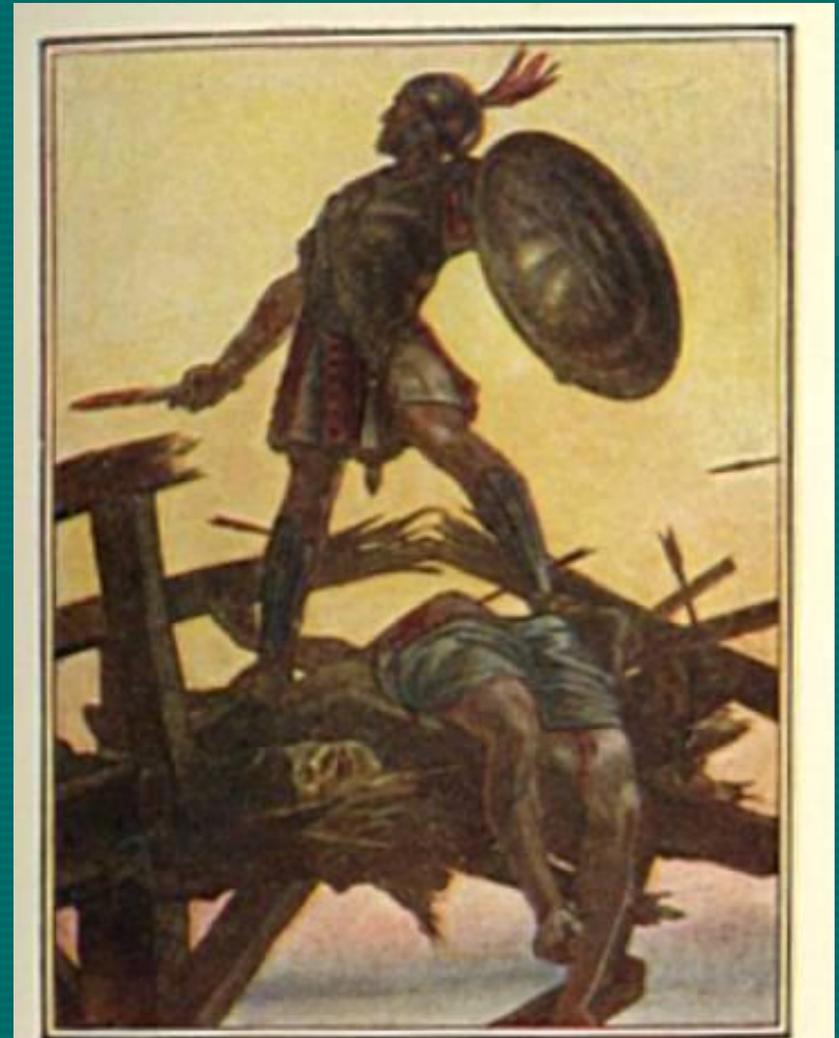
- Contest of best wife: Lucretia busy at loom while others are feasting
- Raped by Etruscan Prince
- Livy, “They tell her it is the mind that sins, not the body; and that where purpose has been wanting there is no guilt. “It is for you to determine,” she answers, “what is due to him, for my own part, though I acquit myself of the sin, I do not absolve myself from punishment; nor in time to come shall ever unchaste woman live through the example of Lucretia.”



Charles-Alphonse Dufresnoy 1611-1668: Lucretia's Death. Photo ©Maicar Förlag-GML

Horatius Cocles

- Etruscans were approaching city
- Defended the Sublican bridge
- Prayer to Tiber: “Then Cocles said, “Tiberinus, Holy Father, I pray thee to receive into thy propitious stream these arms and this warrior”
- Symbol of Courage and Piety



Mucius Scaevola (Lefty)

- Attempted to steal into Etruscan camp
- Assassination attempt
- Captured
- Thrust his hand into fire in contempt of death
- King let him go out of respect!



- Peace Treaty: Roman hostages sent to Etruscans
- Cloelia led women to escape
- King so respected her bravery he allowed her to take more hostages back with her and she choose young men
- Equestrian statue was erected in her honor on Sacred Way
- Roman Women are as brave as Roman Men

Cloelia and the Hostages



Cincinnatus

- At work in fields, drops his plow to come to aid of Rome. Made Tyrant to fight Aequians
- Upon winning the war he dropped his armor and picked up the plow again
- Symbolized the simplicity of early Romans who valued patriotism but were not power hungry or greedy.



Coriolanus

- Leader of Rome; expelled as a tyrant by the Plebeians
- Led the Volscian Army against Rome
- Mother appealed to him not to attack; “my son, thou shalt enter Rome only over my dead body.”
“Mother, thou hast saved Rome, and lost a son”
- Killed by Volscians



Observations on Roman Values

- Pietas: Duty
- Gravitas: Oath Keeping
- Frugalitas: Simplicity
- Fratricide a metaphor for conflict between Patricians and Plebeians
- Role of Mother: Sacrifice and Loyalty (Tarpeia contrasts with Coriolanus' Mother, Sabine Women, and Lucretia)