

# Roman Legends and Roman Values

Alan Haffa

Please Silence your Cell Phone

# Legends of Rome

- Myth, Legend 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

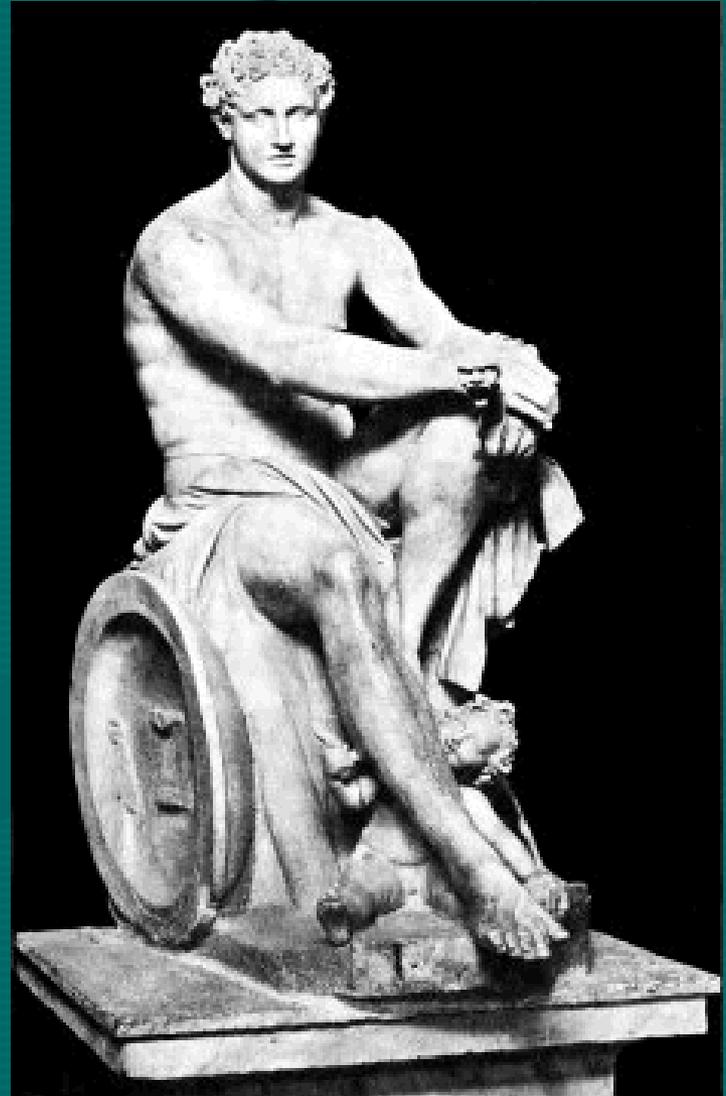
# Romulus and Remus

- 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
- According to Livy, Romulus spoke to them each in person, "and pointed out to them that it was all owing to the pride of their parents in denying the right of intermarriage to their neighbors. They would live in honorable wedlock, and share all their property and civil rights, and—dearest of all to human nature—would be the mothers of free men."



# Traitorous Woman: Tarpeia



- Titus Tatius led Sabine Army to avenge women
- Tarpeia betrayed Rome and led Sabines up a secret way to Capitoline Hill
- 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
- Sabine Women Stop Fighting

# Livy: Appeal of Sabine Women

- [They] went boldly into the midst of the flying missiles with disheveled hair and rent garments. Running across the space between the two armies they tried to stop any further fighting and calm the excited passions by appealing to their fathers in the one army and their husbands in the other not to bring upon themselves a curse ... "If," they cried, "you are weary of these ties of kindred, these marriage-bonds, then turn your anger upon us; **it is we who are the cause of the war**, it is we who have wounded and slain our husbands and fathers. **Better for us to perish rather than live without one or the other of you, as widows or as orphans.**"

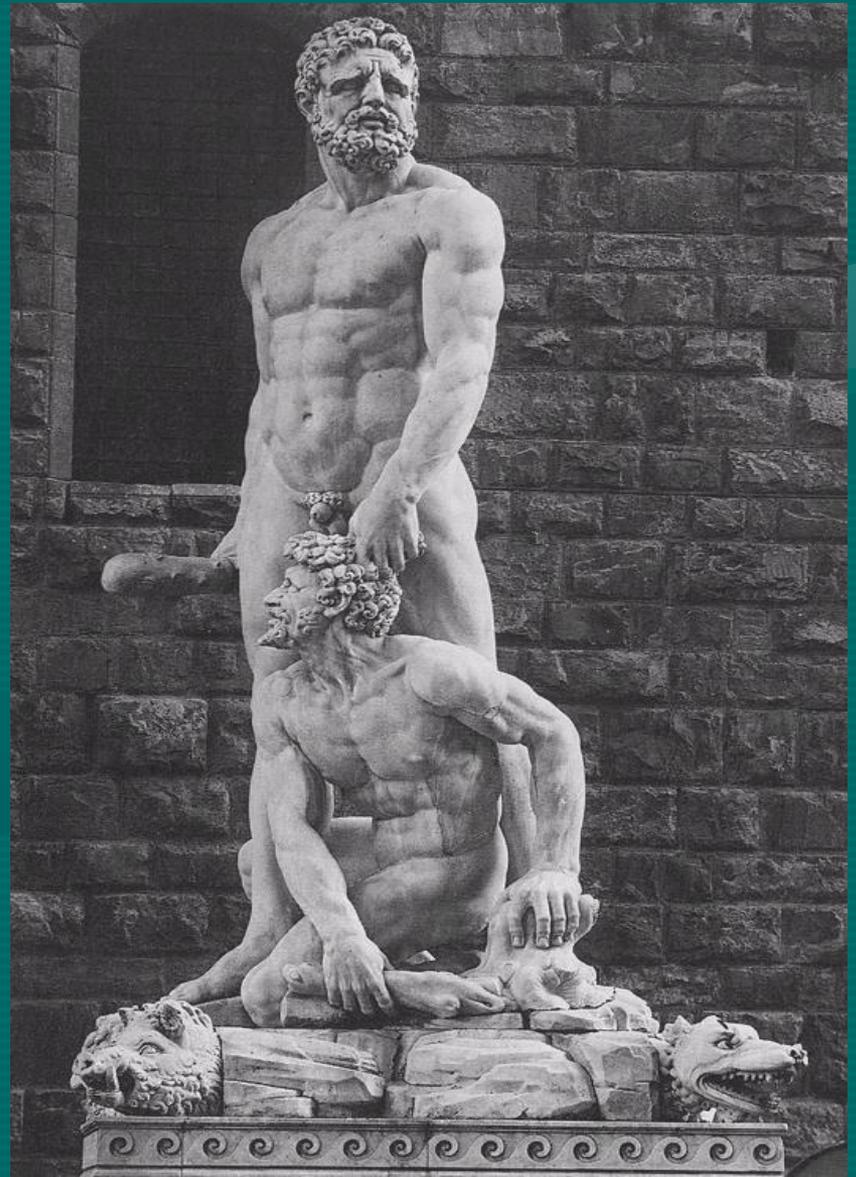
# Roman Hero: Aeneas

- 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 the symbol of Strength and Hospitality
- 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.**”

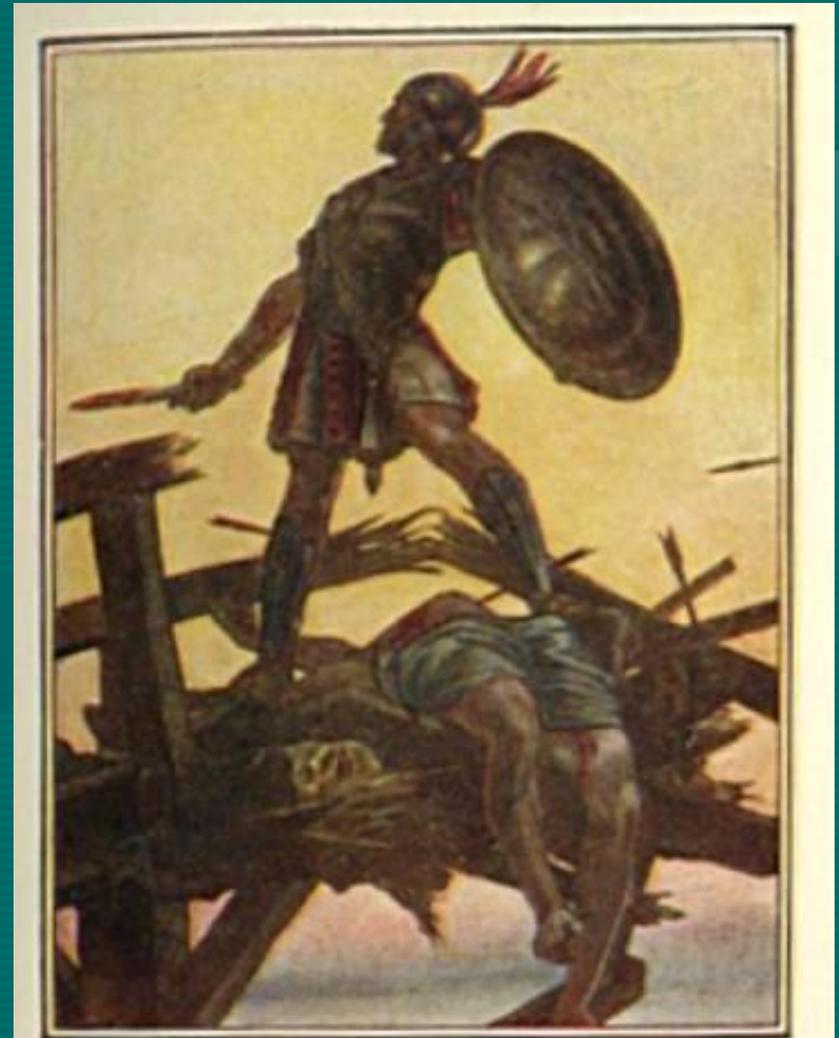
Taking a knife which she had concealed beneath her dress, she plunged it into her heart,”



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



# Coriolanus

- Leader of Rome; expelled as a tyrant by the Plebeians
- Led the Volscian Army against Rome; destroyed only Plebeian farms, sparing Patrician lands
- 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



- 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.

## Cincinnatus



# 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)