CHAPTER 8

Minerva, Venus, and Cicero's Judgments on Caesar's Style

> But the Athenians also benefited more from having strong roofs over their houses than the most beautiful ivory statue of Minerva; yet I'd still rather be Phidias.
>
> *sed Atheniensium quoque plus interfuit firma tecta in domiciliis habere quam Minervae signum ex ebore pulcherrimum; tamen ego me Phidiam esse mallem.*
> – *Brutus* 257 (on Cicero's accomplishments)

> You see, they're nude, upright, charming, with all adornment of speech, like a garment, removed.
>
> *nudi enim sunt, recti et venusti, omni ornatu orationis tamquam veste detracta.*
> – *Brutus* 262 (on Caesar's *commentarii*)

Probably the most famous single judgment of literary criticism in Greco-Roman antiquity is Cicero's assessment in the *Brutus* of Julius Caesar's historical writings (*commentarii*) on the Gallic War. The passage's fame stems from its documentation of two political greats of the late republic who were also eloquent masters of the Latin language, so much so that they would become canonical models for what was long termed "the best prose," imitated in degrees ranging from obsequious to creative ever since their first publication, and defining even today the standard of "classical" prose for composition courses. This passage also yields up a rare gem in the history of literary criticism, one contemporary assessing the creative output of another, and that as a response (Cicero's) to an earlier evaluation (Caesar's) of stylistic and political merits. Caesar, in his treatise on language usage, *de Analogia*, had said that Cicero was virtually the first inventor of fullness (*copia*) and had served well the fame and esteem of the Roman people.[1]

[1] At 252, repeated at 253. On *commentarius* see Riggsby (2006) 133–55, Nousek (2018), Raaflaub (2018) 17. Cicero probably means *de Bello Gallico*; most scholars think *de Bello Civili* was published posthumously; see Raaflaub (2009) 180–82, Grillo (2012) 178–80.

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Cicero's assessment identifies several qualities of Caesar's writings, traditionally understood as "unadorned" (*nudi*), "direct" (*recti*), and "pleasing" (*venusti*). The subsequent characterization seems to explain Caesar's unembellished narratives as much as his use of simple, choice language. Succinctness is praised: "you see, nothing is more pleasing in history than pure and plain brevity" (*nihil est enim in historia pura et inlustri brevitate dulcius*, 262). This last sentence reiterates the initial description with modified attributes: *pura* ≈ *nudi*; *inlustris/brevitas* ≈ *recti*; *dulcius* ≈ *venusti*. In addition to narrative simplicity, the language of the initial judgment, *ornatus orationis* ("embellishment of style," "rhetorical artifice"), also indicates a lack of adornment. Cicero describes Caesar's slick narrative style and his famed linguistic simplicity (*elegantia*, cf. 252, 261).

The description undoubtedly reflects most readers' experience of Caesar's writings. Yet its language and the accompanying simile, suggesting or describing a physical body and its clothing, are remarkable for several reasons.[2] Cicero inherited the analogies to the human physique or clothing from Isocrates and subsequent Hellenistic theorists, yet he also differs from that tradition.[3] As descriptors of style, the first two adjectives (*nudi*, *recti*) are somewhat unusual and are not necessarily complimentary. *Nudus* occurs infrequently to mean wanting adornment, sometimes as a consequence of *brevitas*.[4] *Rectus* meaning "direct" or "straightforward" first appears here in Latin (and so may have been quite striking), but never really catches on in the critical lexicon. Subsequent usage does not greatly increase our understanding of Cicero's exact meaning.[5] Admittedly, the lexicon of Roman criticism is notoriously vague, but it also tends toward

[2] Kraus (2005) discusses technical aspects of the terms and the language's suggestiveness.

[3] Van Hook (1905) 18–23 on metaphors of dress and the body. Fantham (2006) 251 emphasizes the unorthodox descriptions of Cicero's body in the Ciceropaideia.

[4] Cf. *OLD* s.v. *nudus* 8b (Van Hook 1905 has no entry for γυμνός); Lausberg (1998) 283 (citing Isidore, where it indicates unfigured language, not so unlike the uses of *rectus* cited in the note below) and 343 with Quint. *Inst.* 8.6.41 (negatively describing language that lacks epithets); it is connected to *brevitas* and lack of embellishment: "praise speeches ... have bare and unadorned brevity" (*laudationes ... brevitatem habent nudam atque inornatam*, *de Orat.* 2.341); cf. *ieiuna atque nuda*, *de Orat.* 1.218; *nuda atque inornata*, *Rhet. Her.* 4.69. The commonality is that the term is markedly negative, not just "unadorned" but "wanting adornment." It is also typically a doublet, with a more common explanatory synonym.

[5] For *rectus*/ὀρθός Van Hook (1905) 17 (without examples). Lausberg (1998) 754–55 gives examples indicating "propriety" in an ethical, grammatical, or terminological sense, or to denote correct usage. It also denotes proper pronunciation and natural gesture. After the *Brutus* the small number of examples like Cicero's (e.g. Seneca the Elder, Quintilian, and Fronto) indicate non-figured language, "straightforward" speech that does not rely on a *schema* ("figure") used to avoid giving offense. In these technical instances *rectus* modifies a word denoting speech (*oratio*, *sermo*, etc.). *TLL* XI.2.818.53–70 [Pieroni, 2020].

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uniformity and repetition.[6] The third term (*venusti*) is more common and applies to a broad range of attractive or charming phenomena: (erotic) attractiveness, graceful gesture, deft humor, or well-ordered narrative. It is used to describe the effects of several types of rhetorical figures of speech in the *Rhetoric to Herennius* (see below). Our passage may be a calque on Greek χάρις, indicating graceful succinct narration, but the judgment, as Brian Krostenko remarks, "has been enlivened here by alluding to another of the lexeme's senses, 'gracefully shaped,' said of the human body."[7] Lastly, it remains unclear how the simile of clothing removed clarifies the terms of the judgment. It offers and then embellishes a visual image more than it elucidates the preceding adjectives.[8] Cicero's point about lack of adornment (*ornatus*) could be made without it, and the insistence on the removal of all adornment (*omnis ornatus*) is harder to square with Caesar's writing.[9]

However seemingly artless or plain his prose, Caesar still employed various embellishments, although with restraint and alongside his famed lexical selectivity (*elegantia*).[10] Rhetorical treatises demand adornment in all stylistic registers. The *Rhetoric to Herennius* tells us that "rhetorical figures lend each style distinction" (*omne genus orationis ... dignitate adficiunt exornationes*, *Rhet. Her.* 4.16).[11] The *Orator* associates *elegantia* above all with the low style (*genus tenue*), which requires a variety of rhetorical effects (*Orat.* 78–90). Caesar is no exception, as Christopher

[6] The description of Caesar's oratory is traditional, if restricted to language and delivery. For bibliography on Caesar's oratory see van der Blom (2016) 147 n.3. Cicero praised Caesar in a (lost) letter to Nepos (Suet. *Jul.* 55.2).

[7] Krostenko (2001) 109. This paragraph is heavily indebted to Krostenko (2001) 40–51, 99–111 on *venust(us)*.

[8] Cicero's embellishment to describe unembellished language seems hardly innocent: he uses assonance (*om-, or-, or-*), a simile, and hyperbaton of *detracta*, which enables its attraction to the gender of *vestis*; in addition, *venustus*, on Krostenko's reading (above), suggests two senses simultaneously (as does *ornatus*; see note 9 below) and may be Cicero's calque on a Greek word. I hope to discuss the passage in another venue along with Cicero's response to *de Analogia* and the relevant historiographical background of Cic. *Att.* 2.1.2 (SB 21).

[9] Lausberg (1998) 163–90 notes that *brevitas* still requires some *ornatus*; see esp. 174–76. *Ornatus* can indicate "attire" or "outfitting" and perfectly fits its sartorial simile; cf. Fantham (1972) 166–68, Innes (2003) 7–8. On the tension between style and content in *ornatus*, May and Wisse (2001) 326–27 note that "the two are in fact inseparable."

[10] Caesar's style is more complex and varied than Cicero's description indicates: Schlicher (1936), Deichgräber (1950), Eden (1962), Leeman (1963) 156–59, Rambaud (1979), Gotoff (1984), Williams (1985), von Albrecht (1989) 54–67, Damon (1994), Gotoff (1993) xxvi–xxvii, Riggsby (2006) 28–32, Kraus (2005) and (2009), Krebs (2018). Grillo (2012) 2–5 succinctly outlines modern misconceptions of Caesar's "simple style" (focusing on *de Bello Civili*). Krostenko (2001) 34–39, 114–23 on *elegantia*.

[11] Krostenko (2001) 103–6 on *venust(us)* and rhetorical figures from the *Rhetoric to Herennius*.

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Krebs remarks: "Almost any passage of the *Commentarii* will reveal an assortment of the most common rhetorical devices."[12] In short, Cicero's judgment, while accurate on the surface, merits circumspection. It describes the *commentarii* fairly reasonably, yet scholars have increasingly called attention to the corporeal imagery of the judgment and have proposed different interpretations of its suggestiveness. Several features in the description and several contexts in and beyond the *Brutus* give good reason to think that this is more than just a straightforward assessment of Caesar's *commentarii*.[13]

The following discussion offers the most speculative argument of this book, proposing that Cicero has a specific physical image in mind. The corporeal and sartorial imagery evokes a distinct and symbolically laden object: a statue of Venus, and specifically, a nude (*nudi*) upright (*recti*) Venus (*venusti*), with her clothing removed, such as Praxiteles' renowned Aphrodite of Knidos. Reference to Venus, given her importance to Caesarian self-presentation, and Cicero's prominent mention of Minerva in the digression on Caesar (quoted above) establish a meaningful antithesis between the two godesses. Cicero draws on symbolic and historical differences in the representations of Minerva and Venus, prompting us to consider the political and aesthetic divide that separates Cicero from Caesar. Far from being just a famous literary judgment, the assessment of Caesar's *commentarii* is also an intervention in the civic crisis, an attempt to communicate a set of ideals that are in competition with Caesar's ideals.[14]

Though cautious in its criticisms, the *Brutus* is a masterfully orchestrated response to Caesarian ideology and aesthetics. As Chapter 3 discussed, Cicero does not criticize Caesar directly, but rather argues that military achievement for self-promotion ultimately endangers the Roman community. Cicero's countervailing model of civic action, and his own historiography, the *Brutus* itself, offer an alternative political vision built on the legacies of Rome's oratorical and textual pasts.

[12] Krebs (2018) 119.

[13] E.g. Douglas (1966a), A. Powell (1998), Dugan (2005), Kraus (2005), discussed further below.

[14] C. Steel (2005) 146: "He and Caesar, in radically different ways, demonstrated to other politicians how to transcend the limitations of memoir and produce texts which enact contemporaneous engagement with public life." Cf. Walter (2010). I recognize that some readers might resist the possibility that Cicero alludes to the Aphrodite of Knidos. In that case, I hope that Cicero's discussion of Minerva and use of *venustus* make plausible the arguments (which do not depend on identifying the statue) about the symbolic and ideological resonances of the two goddesses and their celebrants: Minerva (Cicero) and Venus (Caesar).

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Four distinct yet interrelated topics contextualize Cicero's references to Minerva and Venus and they will be discussed in turn: (1) Cicero's longstanding appeal to Minerva as an ideological ally, which begins at least as early as the 50s and is especially prominent in his dispute over Clodius' statue of Libertas on the Palatine; (2) statuary analogies in Greco-Roman literary criticism and in the *Brutus*; (3) the larger conversational exchange concerning Caesar (251–62); and (4) statues of Athena/Minerva and Aphrodite/Venus and their aesthetic and political implications for Cicero's judgment of Caesar.

Minerva in the 50s

A decade before the *Brutus*, in September 57 BCE, Cicero returned from exile, he repeatedly reminds us, to great acclamation. Physically restored to the city after eighteen months, he still had to undertake the protracted, painstaking journey toward political restoration.[15] That journey ultimately proved endless: he stumbled against the renewed alliance of Caesar, Pompey, and Crassus, saw Clodius defeated only after Milo murdered him on the Appian Way near Bovillae on 18 January 52, failed to secure Milo's acquittal with one of the best Latin speeches ever produced, and soon witnessed Rome succumb first to Caesar and then to the triumvirate and the proscriptions that cost him his life.

Upon returning he sought the restoration of his Palatine house, which Clodius had plundered in March 58 in order to build a far more lavish home with an ostentatious portico and shrine dedicated to the goddess Libertas. On 29 September 57, Cicero pled his case before the pontiffs, seeking annulment of Clodius' consecration of Cicero's property. They ruled in his favor, and reconstruction began the following year. The full details of the speech *de Domo sua* are less relevant for our purposes than the crucial rhetorical subplot concerning two statues and the ideological dispute at whose center they stood. This similar dispute over the symbolic differences between two statues provides crucial background for the *Brutus'* references to statuary and tutelary goddesses.

Cicero challenged the erection of Clodius' statue of the goddess Libertas in various ways, claiming or suggesting repeatedly that Clodius had treated the Roman people like slaves (who by definition cannot enjoy *libertas*): "were you placing an image of Liberty in the very house that itself had been a sign of your most cruel lordship and of the most wretched servitude

[15] Kaster (2006) 1–14, Kenty (2018) 253–57 discuss Cicero's post-consular self-presentation.

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of the Roman people?" (*Libertatis simulacrum in ea domo conlocabas, quae domus erat ipsa indicium crudelissimi tui dominatus et miserrimae populi Romani servitutis?*, *Dom.* 110).[16] He also recasts *libertas* into the neighboring yet negative value associated with it, *licentia* ("license," "wantonness"): "you set up an image not of public liberty but license" (*simulacrum non libertatis publicae, sed licentiae conlocasti*, *Dom.* 113).[17] Connected to this moral reframing is the assertion that the statue actually depicted a foreign prostitute: "It's said to have been some courtesan from Tanagra" (*Tanagraea quaedam meretrix fuisse dicitur*, *Dom.* 111).[18]

Against Clodius' immorality stands Cicero's allegiance to Minerva:

> Witty fellow, you introduce urbane and charming rumors that I often call myself Jupiter and even claim that Minerva is my sister. I'm not so arrogant in calling myself Jupiter as ignorant in thinking Minerva his sister. I do claim that my sister is a virgin, which you won't let your sister be. Yet perhaps you often call yourself Jupiter on the grounds that you can rightly call the same woman both sister and wife.
>
> homo facetus inducis etiam sermonem urbanum ac venustum, me dicere solere esse me Iovem, eundemque dictitare Minervam esse sororem meam. Non tam insolens sum, quod Iovem esse me dico, quam ineruditus, quod Minervam sororem Iovis esse existimo; sed tamen ego mihi sororem virginem adscisco, tu sororem tuam virginem esse non sisti. Sed vide ne tu te soleas Iovem dicere, quod tu iure eandem sororem et uxorem appellare possis. (*Dom.* 92)

We do not have Clodius' speech, to which Cicero colorfully responds with rhetoric perfectly calculated to culminate in a favorite punchline: Clodius' affair with his sister Clodia.[19] Cicero's initial attachment to Minerva – an icon of chastity set against Clodius' sexual wantonness – takes a serious turn later on: "and you, Minerva, do I pray to and beseech, guardian of Rome, who has always stood fast to aid my plans and witness my deeds" (*te, custos urbis, Minerva, quae semper adiutrix consiliorum meorum, testis laborum exstitisti, precor atque quaeso*, *Dom.* 144). Plutarch has this language in mind when he writes that Cicero, just before leaving Rome for

[16] Cicero had just claimed that Clodius took liberty from the whole city (*Libertas . . . quam ex urbe tota sustulisti*, 110).
[17] Clodius' actions are impudent mockery (*ludibrium impudentiae*, *Dom.* 131); cf. his tribunician wantonness (*libidini tribuniciae*, *Dom.* 106).
[18] Cf. *signum de busto meretricis* (*Dom.* 112). Tanagra, in Boeotia, was highly regarded for its terracotta figurines, sometimes also deposited in graves, which might explain the statue's alleged provenance from a tomb (*imaginem meretricis, ornamentum sepulcri*, *Dom.* 112). Clodius' brother, Appius Claudius Pulcher, brought the statue back to Rome.
[19] Corbeill (2018b) reconstructs what Clodius may have said in *de Haruspicum Responso*.

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exile, "took the statue of Athena, which he had long since set up at his home and honored exceedingly, to the Capitol and dedicated it with the inscription 'To Athena, Protectress of Rome'" (τὸ μὲν ἄγαλμα τῆς Ἀθηνᾶς, ὃ πολὺν χρόνον ἔχων ἐπὶ τῆς οἰκίας ἱδρυμένον ἐτίμα διαφερόντως, εἰς Καπιτώλιον κομίσας ἀνέθηκεν ἐπιγράψας "Ἀθηνᾷ Ῥώμης φύλακι," Plut. *Cic.* 31.6).

Cicero pinned his political hopes on Minerva for the last two decades of his life. He boasted of being savior of Rome for having quashed the Catilinarian conspiracy.[20] His self-depiction as *custos urbis* likens his own role to that of Minerva (*custodem urbis*, *Dom.* 40; *custodem patriae*, *Dom.* 102).[21] In *de Legibus*, composed in the mid-50s but never completed, Cicero revisits his care for this statuette of Minerva when he abandoned his house and departed Rome in exile: "I brought her from my house into the father's and was esteemed savior of the fatherland by the judgment of the senate, Italy, and all peoples" (*eamque ex nostra domo in ipsius patris domum detulimus, iudicia senatus, Italiae, gentium denique omnium conservatae patriae consecuti sumus*, *Leg.* 2.42). He trades on an equivalence that is suggested throughout his career and that governed his actions during and after the Catilinarian conspiracy: his welfare is inextricable from that of the Roman state. As John Bodel says, "The gesture, both personal and public, effectively suggested that the fate of the *res publica* was tied to Cicero's own well-being, even as (more conventionally) his personal salvation depended upon the integrity of the *res publica*."[22]

It's worth reprising several features of the dispute with Clodius, because they resurface in 46 BCE. At the broadest level statuary, its varied symbolism and potential associations, becomes a vehicle through which to craft and convey ideological and rhetorical disputes. Minerva is central to Cicero's self-depiction as savior of the Roman state, manifested in physical representations of her in Rome. In matching Minerva against Clodius and Libertas he differently interprets his opponent's favored goddess: connecting her to individual rather than communal well-being, alluding to provocative or sexualized characteristics of the physical statue (versus

[20] Cf. *urbis servatorem* (*Dom.* 101), *patriae conservatorem* (*Har.* 58).

[21] Pina Polo (2003) tantalizingly suggests that Cicero's rhetoric drew on a (now largely lost) tradition of representing Minerva as the *custos urbis*. He considers two inscriptions (*CIL* 6.529 and *CIL* 5.6489) and material from a tower on the city walls of Tarraco (modern Tarragona, in northeast Spain), the first Roman city founded outside of Italy. See also Hesberg (1998), Dyck (2003) 366–67. Cf. Athena's guardianship of citadels at Catul. 64.8: *diva quibus retinens in summis urbibus arces*.

[22] Bodel (2008) 252.

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Minerva's chastity), and portraying Minerva as the community's true champion.

Statuary Analogies

Moving from the historical to the literary-historical, statuary in the *Brutus* surfaces in the long passage on Cato (61–69), the first orator of note after the first orator of record, Marcus Cornelius Cethegus (57–60).

> Who in fact of those who now consider the lesser things doesn't understand that Canachus' sculptures are too stiff to imitate reality? Calamis' are certainly hard, but still softer than Canachus'; Myron's are not yet sufficiently realistic, but you still wouldn't hesitate to call them beautiful. Polyclitus' are more beautiful and already distinctly perfect, as they typically seem, to me at least. A similar relationship holds for painting, in which we praise Zeuxis, Polygnotus, and Timanthes, and the forms and outlines of those who didn't use more than four colors. Yet in Aetion, Nicomachus, Protogenes, and Apelles already everything is perfect.
>
> Quis enim eorum qui haec minora animadvertunt non intellegit Canachi signa rigidiora esse quam ut imitentur veritatem? Calamidis dura illa quidem, sed tamen molliora quam Canachi; nondum Myronis satis ad veritatem adducta, iam tamen quae non dubites pulchra dicere; pulchriora Polycliti et iam plane perfecta, ut mihi quidem videri solent. similis in pictura ratio est: in qua Zeuxim et Polygnotum et Timanthem et eorum, qui non sunt usi plus quam quattuor coloribus, formas et liniamenta laudamus; at in Aetione Nicomacho Protogene Apelle iam perfecta sunt omnia. (70)

The passage explains inclusion of Cato in the catalogue of orators by noting his place in the early stages of stylistic evolution. The sculptural analogy includes an important formulation of stylistic change as a series of progressions across time, with each artist representing a different stage in the evolution from the stiff crudeness of Canachus to the polished realism of Polyclitus.[23] Set against the subsequent analogy to painting, which includes only two stages, an earlier and later group divided by the richness of their palette, the statuary analogy importantly sets up gradual evolution as a crucial principle for the *Brutus*. Cicero avoids the traditional and schematic division into "old" and "new" and establishes a framework that accounts for gradual change over time.[24] The innovations in his

[23] Goldberg (1995) 3–12 illuminates Cicero's evolutionary scheme. Jucker (1950) 118–46 on such analogies in Varro and Cicero. Dahlmann (1962) 591 n.1 claims Varro (without evidence) as Cicero's source for the analogies.

[24] D. A. Russell (1981) 159 on "old" versus "new."

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conceptual system are made clear by contrast with the simpler bipartite division among painters. The second analogy does not provide further, simpler clarification of the same point but instead indicates, by way of contrast, the *Brutus'* crucial emphasis on sequential evolution.

Yet while Cicero here indicates a methodological premise of his history, revisited and refined in the course of the dialogue, the analogy has provocatively left out Phidias. As long ago as 1978, Doreen C. Innes valuably observed that Cicero ostentatiously excludes him.[25] Readers familiar with the topos would expect a reference to the premier sculptor of the classical period.[26] Greek thinkers, as Jerome Pollitt notes, thought that "the art of Phidias represents the supreme achievement of Greek sculpture and that the most perfect rhetoric of the past should be compared to Phidias in its grandeur and perfection."[27] Because Phidias would be the next stage in the catalogue, Innes argued, his absence criticizes the less-developed Atticists, while Phidias implicitly represents the perfection of Cicero's hero, Demosthenes.

The abbreviated catalogue is undoubtedly striking, considering both the history of Greek sculpture and the deployment of the topos elsewhere. Within the context of the *Brutus*, however, including two explicit mentions of Phidias later, the omission is more complex than a limited intervention in the Atticism/Asianism debate. In the course of the dialogue Cicero extends not only the temporal range of sculptors mentioned, both backward and forward, but also the explanatory power of such comparisons. Right away in the next passage and the next literary judgment, of Rome's first poet, Livius Andronicus, we hear that "the Latin Odyssey is like some piece from Daedalus and also his plays do not merit a second read" (*et Odyssia Latina est sic [in] tamquam opus aliquod Daedali et Livianae fabulae non satis dignae quae iterum legantur*, 71). The beginning of Latin literature is likened to the beginning of Greek sculpture, and the alignments are further contrived by making the first

[25] Innes (1978); however, she does not address two later citations of Phidias and two additional references to other sculptors, already discussed by Jucker (1950) 128. Douglas (1973) 108–15 argues that the catalogue of sculptors (70) emphasizes realism (*veritas*) in bronze statuary and therefore culminates in the technical maturity of Polyclitus. This does not diminish the expectation that Phidias appear in comparisons of sculpture to rhetoric. Douglas notes references to Phidias, but fails to connect the different analogies. Innes (1978) 470 n.1 objects to Douglas' claim that Cicero restricts his catalogue to bronze-casting (Cicero does not mention the medium).

[26] For other examples of the topos, see Isoc. *Antid.* 2, Cic. *de Orat.* 3.26, *Orat.* 8–9, Quint. *Inst.* 12.10.7–9, Dem. *Eloc.* 14, Dion. Hal. *Isai.* 4 and *Isoc.* 3; cf. Plin. *Nat.* 36.20–21, Sen. *Con.* 10.5.8, [Longinus], *Subl.* 36.3–4; building marvelously on this tradition, Dio Chrysostom ventriloquizes Phidias to defend the spoken word over the plastic arts in his Olympic Oration (Dio *Or.* 12).

[27] Pollitt (1974) 61.

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Latin poet correspond to the first Greek poet by mention of Livius' Latin *Odyssia*, resulting in the neatly schematic trio of firsts: Homer–Daedalus–Livius.[28] Mention of Livius' status as un-rereadable also expands the analogy beyond mere stylistic assessment, because the contemporary artistic utility of older texts emerges as a central problem.[29] Yet in addition to providing a schematic structure for the different stages of development, such analogies also make substantive claims about the pedagogical (and ultimately political) relevance of an author.[30]

Phidias' centrality to any catalogue of sculptors will soon emerge: "the talent of Quintus Hortensius while he was a very young man was approved of as soon as it was seen, like a statue of Phidias" (*Q. Hortensi admodum adulescentis ingenium ut Phidiae signum simul aspectum et probatum est*, 228). Phidias is the quintessence of sculpture: his creative accomplishments and renown are as immediately recognizable as the pieces he produces.[31] It also can hardly be coincidence that Cicero names Phidias, so central a figure to Greek art and rhetorical analogies, along with Hortensius. He was a crucial colleague and rival, his death inspired the *Brutus*, and Cicero wrested from him the mantle of Rome's premier orator.

Another example adds artistic imitation to the terms of the analogy: "just as Lysippus used to say about the Doryphorus of Polyclitus, so you are now saying that the speech on the Servilian law was your master" (*ut Polycliti doryphorum sibi Lysippus aiebat, sic tu suasionem legis Serviliae tibi magistram fuisse*, 296). The claim comes from Atticus, who, despite his real-world penchant for antiquarian researches strikes an aggressively presentist pose in the dialogue's fiction. We find him challenging the canonization of allegedly outdated orators such as Cato and Crassus. Atticus responds to Cicero's former adoption as a role model of Crassus' speech promoting the *lex Servilia* of 106 BCE (161). Mention of Polyclitus in this context touches on the initial catalogue of four sculptors, where he

[28] The circle of firstness is closed by the fact that Daedalus appears in the literary record in Homer (in connection with the shield of Achilles, wrought by Hephaestus, *Il.* 18.591–92), and his name is already synonymous in Homer with good craftsmanship. Cicero had just cited Homer as the first poet of record (despite possible forerunners). That Livius' first play in 240 precedes his Latinized *Odyssey* suggests that Cicero sought out the alignment. He could have reversed the terms of assessment (plays Daedalian, *Odyssia* readable once) while asserting Livius' crude antiquity.

[29] I assume that judgment of the *fabulae* applies to the *Odyssia*, that is, Livius is universally antiquated. The point is that Livius will not repay in-depth study.

[30] The reference to Naevius' *bellum Poenicum* as "like a work of Myron" (*quasi Myronis opus*, 75) creates a tripartite lineage for epic poetry: Livius–Naevius–Ennius, with Ennius figured as Polyclitus: *perfecta* (70) ~ *perfectior* (76).

[31] The statue is the summit of artistry (*Minerva illa Phidiae*, *Parad.* 5), outranking the lowly workmanship of the *Paradoxa Stoicorum*.

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was the developmental endpoint. With the addition of Lysippus the entire catalogue now contains seven sculptors.[32] This last analogy also introduces the imitation of artistic works, which was implicit in the earlier assessment of Livius Andronicus (71, quoted above), since the pragmatic value of reading and rereading, in addition to the recreational purpose of enjoyment, is to find material suitable for imitation. Cicero expands the traditional analogy to statuary in order to include the likening of the specific works produced by an author to the specific works produced by a sculptor.[33] The comparison might seem inevitable, but other works do not so extensively elaborate the topos. Among other theorists, statuary analogies tend to elucidate the relative development of an author (Demetrius, Dionysius of Halicarnassus) or a specific quality or characteristic of style (Quintilian).[34] Cicero has instead interwoven both sides of this analogy to give it greater explanatory power, as authors no less than sculptors engage with a tradition of past works as part of their own artistic development. Just as Lysippus studied and imitated Polyclitus' renowned statue of a nude warrior, so Cicero relied on a prominent deliberative speech by his role model, Crassus, to improve his eloquence. Statuary and eloquence are more complexly intertwined in the *Brutus* than anywhere else.

Chronology should be borne in mind as well, since Lysippus takes us into the later classical period, well after Polyclitus and Phidias, and suggests one guiding principle of the *Brutus*: change continues beyond a notional classical acme. Lysippus (*fl.* 330) was a somewhat younger contemporary of Praxiteles (*fl.* 360) and along with him is seen as a great innovator who helped to establish the bridge from the late classical period into the Hellenistic.[35] If the initial catalogue of four sculptors was surprising for having suppressed mention of Phidias, especially given its listing of figures from the sixth and fifth centuries and the notion of artistic perfection, the absence of Praxiteles is notorious, since the larger range of analogies offered in the *Brutus* brings us well into the fourth century.

It is noteworthy that only in the digression on Caesar does Cicero directly identify himself with a sculptor producing a work of art, claiming

[32] The number of sculptors cited across the *Brutus* thus equals the total number of painters cited. Cf. *de Orat.* 3.26–27, in which Cicero creates a neat symmetry in groups of three for sculptors (Myro, Polyclitus, Lysippus), painters (Zeuxis, Aglaophon, Apelles), Roman tragedians (Ennius, Pacuvius, Accius), and Greek tragedians (Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides).

[33] Precision replaces the vagueness used for Livius: *opus aliquod Daedali*.

[34] See Jucker (1950) 118–46, Fantham (1972) 141–43 on Cicero's analogies with visual arts, and Squire (2015); generally, Pollitt (1974).

[35] For the (not always reliable) *floruit* dating I rely on Stewart (1990).

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that he would prefer to be Phidias crafting a Minerva than a useful workman (*ego me Phidiam esse mallem*, 257, discussed below). Other examples compare statuary to style in general or individual speakers and speeches, while Cicero essentially collapses the analogy, identifying himself with Phidias' cultural and political relevance. He asks not merely *What object does Phidias produce?*, but *How is artistic production meaningful in the broadest sense?* By inserting himself into the digression on Caesar's style and emphasizing the importance of his own actions over those of other military commanders, Cicero sets himself up to be compared to Caesar. To then liken himself to a Phidias producing a Minerva prompts the inevitable question: what sculptor and sculpture might we associate with Caesar in comparison? From there it is no great interpretive leap for Cicero to suggest that Caesar in producing his *commentarii* is essentially a Praxiteles producing a Venus. Yet even with the conceptual framework in place, and even in light of the *Brutus'* repeated tendency to have readers posit comparisons and meaningfully fill in conceptual gaps, the identification still requires further evidence connecting Caesar to the statuary analogies.[36]

The Conversational Exchange (251–62)

The evaluation of Caesar comes as part of an extended, complex, and animated exchange on a range of topics. It is the most intricate digression in the *Brutus* and among the liveliest scenes from any of Cicero's dialogues, dramatically reminiscent perhaps of the mid-conversation exchange that opens *de Legibus* or the occasional Socratic back-and-forth between Laelius and Scipio in *de Republica*. The digression on Caesar challenges the value of military triumphs while promoting Cicero's civic and oratorical achievements. All three interlocutors participate, a rarity in the dialogue, and the trio together evaluates no other orator. Coupled with the evaluation of Marcus Claudius Marcellus (248–50), the topic also seems to violate the injunction to discuss only the dead, further marking its importance.[37]

[36] On filling in the gaps in the *Brutus*, see Chapter 1 on the Ciceropaideia and Chapter 4 on the syncrisis of Coriolanus and Themistocles. Longinus offers a similarly tantalizing "riddle" in comparing an unidentified "Colossus" with the Doryphorus of Polyclitus (*Subl.* 36.3). De Jonge (2013) argues for an identification with Phidias' Zeus at Olympia.

[37] Age should not have prevented Brutus from hearing Caesar's oratory (248; cf. Chapter 1). Badian (1967) 229 says Cicero means forensic oratory, but that overlooks the importance of deliberative. Van der Blom (2016) remarks that Caesar's "entire career is characterized by vigorous political and oratorical activity when in Rome." Cic. *Lig.* 30 says that Cicero frequently pled alongside Caesar.

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Cicero begins by seeking Atticus' opinion of Caesar (251), while Brutus vainly recalls the intention to evaluate only the dead, before Atticus gives a brief account (252–53) and hands over to Brutus (254–55); he quickly yields to Cicero (255–58) and his inbuilt digression on the true utility of eloquence over military achievement, in which Cicero fields the imagined objections of a fictive interlocutor; Atticus picks up the relay (258–59), followed by Brutus' query of Atticus' mentioning Sisenna and C. Rusius (260), prompting Atticus to relay the notorious *sputatilica* story (260), to discuss the analogical method, and to note Caesar's oratorical *elegantia* (261); Brutus then moves from the *orationes* to the *commentarii* (262), which Cicero takes up in the well-known judgment (262) before urging a return from the digression to the main account (*revertamur*, 262).

The topics broached are central to the dialogue and indeed encapsulate the most essential themes in it: the use of language (analogy and anomaly), the utility of public achievement (military and civic), state well-being (*salus civitatis*), communal memory (*historia*), literary exchange, aesthetic evaluation, and Greek culture as a model for explaining Roman artistic practices (Phidias' Athena/Minerva). Formally and topically the long digression is a masterpiece of rhetoric.[38] The key to understanding the judgment of Caesar lies in Cicero's mention of Phidias' famed statue:

> The great orator far excels petty commanders ... It was also of greater utility to the Athenians to have sturdy roofs over their houses than to have that most beautiful ivory statue of Minerva. I'd still rather be Phidias than the best setter of roof beams. That's why we must weigh carefully not a man's utility but his true value, especially since only a few can paint or sculpt remarkably, but you can't have a lack of workmen and heavy lifters.
>
> multo magnus orator praestat minutis imperatoribus ... Atheniensium quoque plus interfuit firma tecta in domiciliis habere quam Minervae signum ex ebore pulcherrimum; tamen ego me Phidiam esse mallem quam vel optumum fabrum tignuarium. quare non quantum quisque prosit, sed quanti quisque sit ponderandum est; praesertim cum pauci pingere egregie possint aut fingere, operarii autem aut baiuli deesse non possint. (256–57)

Mention of Minerva is almost an afterthought, a fortuitous example to support his dismissal of the average commander and his triumphs and to promote his own civic achievements as an orator and politician. Cicero does not challenge the triumph outright but revises the values attached to

[38] See Chapter 3 for fuller quotation and discussion.

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it and offers countervailing sources of civic value, a strategy already prominent in his dialogues of the 50s and in many respects the distinguishing feature of his self-fashioning.[39]

Cicero's association of himself with Minerva, while it feeds into the larger network of statuary analogies, is different from them in character. It underscores a key theme in Cicero's history of oratory: the interrelationship of the Roman state and stylistic practice. He transposes the statuary comparison to the political plane, underscoring how Phidias and Athena are central to Athenian civic identity in the classical period. Phidias, of course, was inherently tied to Pericles, the orator-statesman who plays a surprisingly outsize role in the *Brutus*.[40] The association of Cicero with Phidias and Minerva, inserted into the digression on Caesar, provides an interpretive framework for Atticus' subsequent analysis of Caesar's style. Even if Atticus does not explicitly cite Praxiteles and his vastly influential Venus, Cicero has primed us to expect an artistic analogy in the discussion of Caesar.

The Aesthetic and Political Judgment of Caesar

Statuary's importance to the *Brutus* is signaled early, if indirectly, in the dialogue's dramatic setting: after the long preface the speakers sit in a small meadow near a statue of Plato (*in pratulo propter Platonis statuam consedimus*, 24). Reference to spatial settings and their physical objects within dialogue-frames typically allude to a Platonic forerunner and foreshadow a significant theme in the Ciceronian version.[41] In no other dialogue does Cicero insert a statue of Plato into the dramatic transition from preface to discussion, and the detail, along with mention of the meadow, points us to the setting of Plato's *Phaedrus*, with its *locus amoenus*, statuettes, and shrine. Statuary there crucially elucidates the work's analysis of writing, rhetoric, and philosophy, and refers to specific individuals in the Athenian social and political milieu.[42]

[39] Dugan (2005) and van der Blom (2010) on Cicero' self-presentation and his use of role models.

[40] For a comparable affiliation of Pericles with Phidias and his creation of statues, see Dio Chrys. *Or.* 12 (the *Olympic Oration*) and Plut. *Per.* 31.4–5.

[41] See Zetzel (2003) on the *pulvinus* and Plato's pillows, as well as the plane tree (*platanus*), in Cicero's *de Oratore*. On the *pratulus*, compare Cic. *Rep.* 18.4: *in aprico maxime pratuli loco*; *Att.* 12.6.2 (SB 306), and Chapter 2.

[42] See Morgan (1994) on indirect references in the *Phaedrus* to golden statues set up in honor of Gorgias and the meaning of these references for the dialogue.

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Direct reference to statues of Plato and Minerva in the *Brutus* are likely of special significance for the conversation in which they are engaged, a significance underscored by the fact that Cicero has otherwise modeled the *Brutus* less on the dialogues of Plato (or his follower, Heraclides of Pontus) in the way that he did for *de Oratore* and *de Republica*, and more on those of Aristotle, in which the author takes the leading role in exposition of the material rather than use intermediaries such as Socrates (Plato's works), Scipio (*de Republica*), or Crassus (*de Oratore*). Given the formal design of the dialogue, the reference to Plato in the dramatic setting, including reference to Plato's *Phaedrus*, is striking and indicates the thematic relevance not just of oratory but also of statuary as a crucial theme in the *Brutus*.

Evidence for Cicero's admiration of statuary and its representative potential in his own life abounds. Despite occasionally feigned dilettantism and criticism of statuary's extravagance in the *Verrines*, Cicero knew Greek art well and was alert to the intellectual and symbolic value of objects and images.[43] He eagerly sought a Hermathena, a double-faced composite bust with Hermes and Athena, for the gymnasium in his Tusculan villa nicknamed the Academy, probably a peristyle garden. "That decoration is appropriate to my Academy," he tells Atticus, "because Hermes is common to all (such) places and Minerva is the special symbol of that gymnasium" (*est ornamentum Academiae proprium meae, quod et Hermes commune omnium et Minerva singulare est insigne eius gymnasi*, *Att.* 1.4.3 [SB 9]).[44]

Both the language and the structure of the digression on Caesar's style are closely connected to the analogies with the visual arts. After mentioning Phidias, Cicero notes that sculptors are valuable, "especially since few men can paint or sculpt with excellence" (*praesertim cum pauci pingere egregie possint aut fingere*, 257). Given that Cicero has only just offered an analogy to statuary, the additional mention of painting, which otherwise serves no purpose, points beyond the immediate context. First, it directs us back to the double analogy of style to painting and statuary earlier in the work (70), connecting the contents of the later digression with the earlier statements about the development of style. The claim *pauci . . . possint* also reinforces at a general level the close connection between the visual arts and the production of oratory, since this "*paucitas* motif" is one of the crucial premises of the *Brutus* (and of Cicero's rhetorical dialogues in

[43] Vasaly (1993) discusses his references to physical space in Rome's urban landscape.

[44] Cf. *Att.* 1.1.5 (SB 10). Cicero frequently discusses art and its collection in the first book of letters to Atticus: 1.1.5 (SB 10), 1.3.1 (SB 8), 1.4.3 (SB 9), 1.5.7 (SB 1), 1.6.2 (SB 2), 1.8.2 (SB 4), 1.9.2 (SB 5), 1.10.3–4 (SB 6), 1.11.3 (SB 7). He elsewhere criticizes the inept choices of M. Fadius Gallus in selecting for him (*Fam.* 7.23 [SB 209]).

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general): only few men achieve greatness in oratory because oratory is so difficult and therefore valuable.[45] Employment of this motif here further aligns the creative uniqueness of visual artists to the rare skills of the true orator.

Second, the two verbs *pingere* and *fingere* also direct us forward to the description of Julius Caesar himself, in which Caesar is likened to an artist producing works of art, first as a painter and then as a sculptor.

> Atticus said, "Caesar, however, systematically fixes faulty and corrupt usage with pure and uncorrupted usage. And so when he adds to this elegance of Latin diction – which is still necessary, even if you're not an orator and just a well-bred Roman citizen – those oratorical decorations of speech, it then seems as if he places well-painted pictures in good light. This distinction is uniquely his, yet I don't see to whom he should give pride of place in shared virtues. He has a marvelous and hardly routine manner of speech, with voice, movement, and physical appearance even grand and well-bred in a certain way."
>
> Then Brutus said, "I certainly admire his speeches greatly. I've read a great many and even his *commentarii*, which he wrote about his affairs."
>
> I said, "They really are remarkable; you see, they're nude, upright, and charming, with all adornment of speech, like a garment, removed. But while he intended to ready materials for others wanting to write history, he perhaps did a favor for the fools who'll intend to burn them with curling irons: sensible men at any rate he scared off from writing. You see, in history nothing is more pleasing than pure and lucid brevity. But, if you're willing, let's get back to those who are no longer living."

> Caesar autem rationem adhibens consuetudinem vitiosam et corruptam pura et incorrupta consuetudine emendat. itaque cum ad hanc elegantiam verborum Latinorum – quae, etiam si orator non sis et sis ingenuus civis Romanus, tamen necessaria est – adiungit illa oratoria ornamenta dicendi, tum videtur tamquam tabulas bene pictas conlocare in bono lumine. hanc cum habeat praecipuam laudem, in communibus[46] non video cui debeat cedere. splendidam quandam minimeque veteratoriam rationem dicendi tenet, voce motu forma etiam magnificam et generosam quodam modo.
>
> Tum Brutus: orationes quidem eius mihi vehementer probantur. compluris autem legi; atque etiam commentarios quosdam scripsit rerum suarum.
>
> Valde quidem, inquam, probandos; nudi enim sunt, recti et venusti, omni ornatu orationis tamquam veste detracta. sed dum voluit alios habere

[45] The *paucitas* motif: 182, 244, 270, 299, 333, *de Orat.* 1.8, *Orat.* 20; difficulty of the *ars*: *rem unam esse omnium difficillimam* (25); cf. e.g. 137, 199.

[46] The comma is moved forward before *in communibus* (Kaster, following Douglas).

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> parata, unde sumerent qui vellent scribere historiam, ineptis gratum fortasse fecit, qui volent illa calamistris inurere: sanos quidem homines a scribendo deterruit; nihil est enim in historia pura et inlustri brevitate dulcius. sed ad eos, si placet, qui vita excesserunt, revertamur. (261–62)

Caesar's speeches abound in oratorical adornment. *Ornamenta* is a related if more specific version of the abstract *ornatus* that his *commentarii* allegedly lack, and the cognate terms align the qualities of his speeches with the (absent) qualities of his histories.[47] The metaphor, signaled by *tamquam*, presents Caesar as a painter: his use of ornament allows him to paint pictures well and place them in good lighting.[48]

In describing Caesar as a painter (261) Cicero paves the way for us to discern his role as sculptor (262): Caesar's speeches are like painting, his *commentarii* like statuary. The later language *nudi*, *recti*, *venusti*, etc. thus continues the idea of Caesar as a producer of artworks but shifts from painting to statuary. Given Cicero's earlier mention of Phidias' Minerva it also suggests that in his *commentarii* Caesar creates a specific sculpture. The questions remain, which one and why?

Praxiteles' Aphrodite of Knidos

When read with attention to its visual elements, Cicero's judgment of the *commentarii* most closely suggests a nude upright statue of Venus: Praxiteles' Aphrodite of Knidos. Nudity is evident (*nudi*). *Recti* in the sense of "upright" identifies the Knidian original while differentiating that version from variations – all the major variations present Aphrodite as less upright than the Knidia.[49] The term *venusti* plays on the name of the goddess, who was, of course, so central to Caesarian ideology: Venus.[50] As Christina S. Kraus observes, "any application of *venustus* to Caesar must conjure up the image of the most famous Julian ancestor, the goddess of love herself."[51] Lastly, the detail concerning the clothing removed also perfectly matches the typology of the Knidian Venus, who alluringly holds in her left hand the garment removed for bathing. Simply put, Cicero's

[47] Mankin (2011) 213 on *ornamenta* versus *ornatus*.

[48] Note too *tamquam* in 262, *tamquam veste detracta*, another parallel between the two passages on the visual arts.

[49] *OLD* s.v. *rectus* 7b and below for the variations.

[50] See Weinstock (1971) 15–18 and *passim* on Venus in Caesarian ideology. Krostenko (2001) 42–43 discusses puns on the name of Venus; Cic. *Verr.* 2.5.142 puns on Venus and Cupid. A. Powell (1998) 114 suggests a connection to Caesar's sexual peccadillos. Cic. *N.D.* 2.69 implausibly connects Venus to *venire*.

[51] Kraus (2005) 112.

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description of Caesar's *commentarii* corresponds to Praxiteles' Aphrodite of Knidos, the paradigmatic upright statue of a nude Venus.

Praxiteles' innovative and controversial Knidia is thought to be the first rendering of a full-size female nude in the plastic arts. She inspired several formal variations that became immensely popular beginning (probably) at the end of the second century BCE and would even establish themselves in the iconography of self-presentation for respectable Roman matrons in the imperial period.[52] There was the crouching Venus tying her sandals or putting up her hair, or Venus rising from the sea, reclined, as we see in a fresco from Pompeii – rather than upright as Botticelli portrayed Venus' emergence into the world.

Other explanations of the language have argued that it indicates the shape of a human form in general, Caesar's body itself, or Caesar portrayed in the Greek tradition of the heroic nude.[53] Several objections to these identifications can be made. There is no evidence that by 46 BCE the heroic male nude had claimed a spot at Rome in the repertoire of artistic self-presentation among the political class. There exists, certainly, a history of the Roman heroic nude from roughly the second century BCE onward, although a controversial history in many respects. Cicero excoriates Verres' son for one such statue in Greek-speaking Sicily in the 70s.[54] In the *pro Rabirio Postumo* (54/53 BCE) Cicero defends Rabirius' choice to don Greek attire at the court of King Ptolemy XIII Auletes of Alexandria by noting that Scipio Asiagenus was honored with a statue on the Capitol depicting him wearing a *chlamys* and *crepides* for his victory over Antiochus III of Syria in 189 BCE.[55] As Christopher Hallett notes, that this was the only example Cicero cites (or perhaps could cite) "must make it extremely

[52] Understandably, the more diffident "Capitoline" type became the norm. On the statue and its various transformations and receptions in the Greco-Roman world, see *LIMC* II s.v. "Aphrodite" nos. 391–422, Havelock (1995), D'Ambra (1996), Stewart (1997) 96–106, Hallett (2005) 199, 201, 219–22, 260, 331–32, Kousser (2010), Stewart (2010). On republican Rome and Venus' cooption by Sulla, Pompey, and Caesar, see Schilling (1982) 272–345, Kousser (2010) 289–91.

[53] Douglas (1966a) 191: "the human form as represented in sculpture"; Dugan (2005) 185: heroic nude; Kraus (2005) is the most extensive discussion of the passage in comparison to Caesar's historiography; she interprets this as an eroticized representation of Caesar in statuary terms ("The physical image ... is unabashedly masculine," 112). Cf. also Pelling (2006). I differ from Dugan and Kraus in arguing for a statue of Venus, although that identification would still support some of their arguments, even if (or in part because) the intermediary layer of irony is removed.

[54] Cicero's criticism in the *Verrines* merits circumspection: its persuasive effect, regardless of attitudes toward heroic nudity, depends on rhetorical wordplay, to link *nudus* with the spoliation of Sicily (*statua ... nuda fili* ~ *nudata provincia*, *Ver.* 2.4.143).

[55] The statue was commissioned not by Scipio, however, but by local Greeks.

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unlikely that the heroic portrait was a generally accepted part of Roman self-representation at this date."[56]

The first clear examples we have of individuals portraying themselves in this way do not appear until Sextus Pompey's and Octavian Caesar's issuance of coinage after the death of Caesar, and they appear to be an innovative attempt to portray their martial virtue and filial piety during the propaganda wars of the triumviral period: Octavian as son of *divus Iulius*, Sextus as son of Neptune/Pompey. Such portrayals were fostered in large measure by the association of the Greek nude with the idealized physique of young men. For Caesar and Pompey, however, we have no clear evidence of their self-presentation using the heroic nude.[57] Perhaps like the triumviral successors years later, Cicero in the *Brutus* might have been appealing to a possibility latent but not yet realized in the repertoire of celebratory iconography at Rome.[58] His audience surely will have been able to make this and other conceptual leaps along with him. Yet arguing against such a reference is the unquestionably honorific nature of such a portrayal, even if we allow for hints of ironic criticism in the polysemy of the description: reference to the heroic nude would associate Caesar with the majesty of a Hellenistic ruler or the great heroes of mythology. "The costume," in the words of Michael Koortbojian, "declared that they were to be thought of as having achieved a level of *honor et gloria* far beyond the norms toward which all good Romans might ordinarily strive."[59] Such panegyric hardly accords with Cicero's desire to downplay Caesar's achievements and to express displeasure at the contemporary distress of the Roman state.

Furthermore, despite the potential erotic connotations of nudity, *venustus* is hardly an attribute of the heroic male nude, which emphasized grandeur, reverence, and military virtue above all else. It justified nudity

[56] Hallett (2005) 153. On statues of Caesar at Rome, See Cadaro (2006), Zanker (2009), Koortbojian (2013), esp. 191–226 on the nude costume. Koortbojian (2013) 194 remarks: "Several much-contested examples of nude or seminude statues survive that may well date from the late second century (although none of them can be dated with certainty)." Such honors from others were more acceptable, and Cicero could have honored Caesar in this way. Yet he has every reason to avoid the celebratory heroic nude in a text that challenges martial accomplishments.

[57] This is not to say that Sextus and Octavian could not have been imitating their fathers or appealing to already acceptable norms, but there is no clear evidence of widespread acceptance at an earlier time. It seems far more likely that they were pursuing their own innovative ends while tying them back to claims of legitimacy through familial inheritance.

[58] Silver denarii issued by Caesar in 47/46 do represent Venus on the obverse and on the reverse a heroic nude Aeneas carrying Anchises and the Palladium with the legend "CAESAR," but no coins show Caesar himself in the heroic nude. See *RRC* 458/1.

[59] Koortbojian (2013) 194.

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through the associations with physical training, competitive fighting, exploits in battle, and the heroes and gods of mythology. In addition, the nudity of the heroic nude is paradoxically not really "nude." Such statues do not have the garment, typically the Greek battle cloak, the *chlamys*, fully removed, but rather at a minimum draped over the left shoulder and accompanied by weaponry, such as a sword, spear, or *balteus* (swordbelt). Nudity is a feature of the statues insofar as they show the genitalia, but the heroic nude is a type of costumed portrait with accoutrements. While *nudus* is a flexible term, typically meaning not "nude" but "mostly nude" or "unadorned," Cicero's specific description – *omni ornatu orationis tamquam veste detracta* – better fits the versions of a fully disrobed Venus, in which the nudity itself, including the presence of the garment fully removed for bathing, is a crucial element of the statuary typology and an integral part of its erotic appeal, all tied back to Praxiteles' innovations. Quite differently, the nudity of the portrait in heroic costume was, paradoxically, a representation in which the nudity itself was important but was not the sole emphasis; rather, nudity in conjunction with the military apparatus formed a crucial mode of dress that symbolized an entire Hellenic world of martial and mythological heroism. It was not nudity alone that was on display for visual consumption but rather the heroic majesty and virtue of which nudity was an index and iconographic convention.[60]

The questions are essentially twofold: which of two standard topoi does Cicero refer to, and how does each of those topoi determine the analogy he uses? The first commonplace is *talis oratio, qualis vita*, which aligns in largely moral terms the qualities of an author's style with his own life. The scholarship thus far has largely emphasized this topos. The operative analogy in this case is that Caesar's writings are a reflection of Caesar as a person (and thus are meant to describe him).[61] The second possibility is the commonplace that likens writings to monuments, structures, or objects.[62] On this second explanation, the analogy compares Caesar's writings to another object, specifically a statue.

[60] Koortbojian (2013) 195 does underscore the symbolic effectiveness of "the sheer material radiance of such nude images."

[61] Möller (2004) capaciously studies the topos.

[62] Cicero's *de Orat.* 3.180 offers an analogy to a temple; cf. Tac. *Dial.* 20.7, 22.4. Architectural analogies are more commonly a poetic topos and go back at least to Pindar (*Ol.* 6.1–7); the most famous Latin example is Vergil's promise of a *templum* to Augustus in the *Georgics* (3.4–12; presumably the *Aeneid*).

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It is true that Cicero's indirectness, his innovations with statuary analogies in the *Brutus*, and the subsequent history of the topos might suggest a comparison of Caesar's works to his physical body, thus creating the possibility of moral judgment of that body. Elements in the surrounding discussion, such as the mention of the *calamistri* ("curling irons") applied by imitators (262), are used by authors such as Seneca and Tacitus to describe a figure such as Maecenas; they rework the passage precisely in line with the topic *talis oratio, qualis vita*. However, the subsequent reception may mislead us about the original text's purpose. While the two topoi are closely related, they have fundamentally different aims; the second topos – the comparison of written texts to objects – has a crucially different focus: not on the craftsman but the craft he produces.

Cicero's judgment does describe a human or human-like form, but the target of the analogy is not Julius Caesar but rather the object that Caesar by analogy produces in his writings: the *commentarii* are like the Aphrodite of Knidos. Praxiteles' Aphrodite and Phidias' Athena, probably the two most celebrated female statues of Greco-Roman antiquity, are crucial to the work's political and aesthetic commitments. Cicero's reference to Venus offers a potent and contextually relevant criticism of Caesar, bringing into focus the symbolism that separates Minerva from Venus.

Cicero's Minerva: The Symbolic and the Real

The symbolic contrast between Minerva and Venus is the greatest strength of the implicit comparison. Cicero portrays himself as the defender of state and civic order in his actions and writings and reprises the association with Minerva he first made in battling Clodius. Phidias' Athena and Praxiteles' Aphrodite embody fundamentally different attitudes and contexts for producing statuary, and Cicero aligns himself with the former in order to promote a specific vision of Rome modeled on Athenian learning, Periclean Athens, and its martial and civic accomplishments. Phidias represents classical Athens at its highpoint, after the defeat of the Persians, which was accompanied by a sense of Athenian supremacy in the military and artistic spheres. Praxiteles, by contrast, whatever his artistic fame, represents a subsequent phase of Athenian history, the decline of Athens that would culminate in capitulation to Macedonian rule. Minerva marvelously encapsulates Cicero's promotion of his theoretical and historical ideology as a countervailing force against military accomplishment. As the quintessential goddess of Athens and learning, Athena/Minerva suits Cicero's attempts in the 50s and 40s to align Roman

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civic identity with broad-based theoretical learning derived from Greek sources.[63] Thus Minerva's championing of the learned arts crucially supports Cicero's rejection of military triumph as Rome's main source of greatness.

This is not to deny a martial connection. Athena/Minerva is a goddess of war, but symbolizes war combined with wisdom, guided policy to benefit the polity, and battle conducted with strategic deliberation.[64] She differs from her typically bloodthirsty, glory-seeking counterpart, Ares/Mars, who in the worst versions represents the brutal aspects of warfare and destructive slaughter.[65] Most notably, Athena symbolizes the salvation of Athens from the great Persian enemy, and her monumental function as the protectress of Greece underpins Cicero's self-description as the savior of Rome. Built in the 450s and 440s, the Parthenon celebrated Athenian victory over the invading Persian forces and offered tribute to the gods for their assistance. The temple was rebuilt over the older temple to Athena, which the occupying Persians had destroyed in 480. It contained Phidias' massive chryselephantine statue of Athena, dressed in a peplos, with a shield lowered to the ground and supported upright by her left hand while she held a statue of Nike in her right.[66] The temple complex, with its central position in the city, massive size, elaborate friezes, and dazzling statue of its patron goddess celebrated Athenian victory, thus suggesting for Cicero's audience an alternative vision of triumphal success, one based not solely on military conquest, but on defending the welfare of the state and promoting civic harmony.

This emphasis emerges in Brutus' remark that Cicero's *supplicatio* (of 63 BCE, rather than 51 BCE) outranks Caesar's praise for Cicero's oratorical accomplishments, which in turn outranks the triumphs of many men (*hanc autem, inquit, gloriam testimoniumque Caesaris tuae quidem supplicationi non, sed triumphis multorum antepono*, 255). The hierarchy is a crucial

[63] Quint. *Inst.* 11.1.24 (probably citing *de Consulatu suo* 1) notes that Minerva trained Cicero in the arts (*Minervam quae artes eum edocuit*). That Minerva represents Athens, while Praxiteles' Venus is associated with Knidos in Asia Minor, conveniently aligns Cicero with Athens (versus Asia), yet again challenging the Atticists by reversing the terms of debate.

[64] Cic. *N.D.* 3.53 cites her reputation as the founder of warfare (*quam principem et inventricem belli ferunt*).

[65] Further details are beyond the scope of the present study, but the Roman Mars is generally portrayed in a better light than his Greek counterpart Ares. In mythology Ares/Mars is closely connected to Aphrodite/Venus.

[66] Cicero's description of the ivory features identifies the Athena Parthenon as opposed to Phidias' bronze Athena Promachos, which stood between the Parthenon and the Propylaea. Cf. the reference to the shield of Athena Parthenon at *Orator* 234; *LIMC* II.212–33, 574–631 s.v. "Athena."

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reminder that great oratory must serve great political ends. It also cautiously locates Caesar in that hierarchy even as it demotes military honor. Caesar had unabashedly promoted Venus as the patron of his military success. He vowed a temple to Venus Genetrix at the battle of Pharsalus in 48 and dedicated it on 24 September 46, the last day of his magnificent quadruple triumph. It is important, of course, to keep in mind that at the writing of the *Brutus* Caesar had received *supplicationes* but had yet to triumph, and thus Cicero's prioritization of his own *supplicatio* likens their achievements while giving pride of place to Cicero. He offers a deliberate countermodel to Caesar's self-representation as a descendant of Venus and to his impending celebration of victory.

Phidias' Athena was also a prime example of civic benefaction and especially of Pericles' centrality to classical Athens. Cicero's emphasis on the statue dovetails remarkably with Pericles' political and oratorical prominence, emphasized in the *Brutus* far more than in any other dialogue.[67] Pericles is the first Greek orator of merit (28) and anticipates the first Roman orator, Marcus Cornelius Cethegus (cos. 204). Cicero excludes orators prior to Pericles/Cethegus by claiming not to know or not to value earlier texts.[68] Pericles also assumes a notably Ciceronian profile as the first to introduce learning (*doctrina*) to his oratory, allegedly through his philosophical association with Anaxagoras. Pericles, seeming to follow Ciceronian prescriptions, turned abstruse philosophical knowledge into material for public speeches, and in addition to stylistic fullness (*ubertas*, *copia*) he also mastered powerful, almost violent, persuasion: "they [the Athenians] feared the terrifying force of his speech" (*vim dicendi terroremque timuerunt*, 44). His applied *doctrina*, *ubertas*, and *copia*, as well as a command of *vis* ("forcefulness") makes him resemble Crassus, Antonius, or Cicero much more than a politician active well before the classical canon of Greek speakers.

Pericles also crops up, somewhat unexpectedly, at the "beginning" of Roman oratory, since Cicero claims, probably wrongly, that Ennius' description of Cethegus as the "marrow of persuasion" (*Suadai medulla*) was crafted in imitation of Eupolis' description of *Peitho* sitting on the lips of Pericles (59). He plays a crucial role not only in the history of Greek oratory, but also in the history of literary history at Greece and Rome. Pericles becomes a forerunner for Cicero's stylistic and political values.

[67] See Noël (2014) on Pericles in the *Brutus*, Chapter 5 on Pericles/Cethegus.

[68] Pericles' role as the beginning is brought further into relief by his contrast with the alleged endpoint of Greek oratory, Demetrius of Phalerum (38), who lacks Pericles' forceful stings (*aculei*).

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By likening himself to Phidias Cicero associates himself with Periclean Athens and underscores his political and artistic superiority.[69]

The juxtaposition of Minerva and Venus also trades on the opposition of virginal purity to licentiousness that was central to criticizing Clodius' statue of Libertas in the previous decade.[70] Minerva's chaste adult maidenhood is wholly unlike Venus' associations of sexual frivolity and sensual pleasure.[71] The absence of Venus' *vestis* also pointedly contrasts with Athena's most prominent garment, the *peplos* presented to Athena (Polias) at the Panathenaia each summer.[72] Cicero thus represents the Greek civic and artistic worlds so that they match up with his own political and aesthetic designs. He draws on the symbolism of Minerva as a foil to Caesar's Venus-driven ideology and to promote a coherent and powerfully persuasive civic and artistic alternative for Rome and its past.

The Real Goddess Minerva

When Cicero claims that he would rather be a Phidias sculpting a Minerva, he indulges not in fantasy but fact. In one very real sense he was a creator of Minerva, having crafted a Roman equivalent to Athena at the center of Roman public worship by transferring a Minerva from his domestic *sacrarium* to the Capitoline (discussed above). The statue still

[69] Dio Chrysostom (*Orat.* 12.6) associates Pericles and Phidias and makes a further connection between artisan and politician in the crafting of Minerva: Phidias depicted both men on the shield of Athena Promachos (cf. Plut. *Per.* 31.4–5).

[70] And against Clodius he reprises criticism first crafted against Verres: "he relocated the treasures of the maiden Minerva into the house of a courtesan" (*hic ornamenta Minervae virginis in meretriciam domum transtulit*, *Ver.* 2.4.123). There may be a (tenuous) connection between Minerva and the allegory of *eloquentia* as a *virgo* needing protection (330). Stroup (2003) on the *adulta virgo*.

[71] Other Roman representations of Venus, including Caesar's Venus Genetrix, traditionally associate her with war (and Mars) rather than with the sensual eroticism of Aphrodite (and accordingly emphasize her nudity less); cf. Kousser (2010). Cicero, however, in alluding to the Aphrodite of Knidos, need not accurately portray the martial versions of Venus. If anything, such distortion is crucial to his rhetoric, reframing what Caesar's Venus means by presenting a different version of her. My interpretation requires only that the association Aphrodite/Venus *could* be made. The syncretism of Aphrodite/Venus is underway by the late second century; see Schilling (1982) 378–79.

[72] Barber (1992) on the *peplos* in the festival. Would a reference to the Knidia evoke Caesar's rumored affair with Nicomedes IV Philopator, which led Bibulus to dub him "the Queen of Bithynia" (*Bithynicam reginam*, Suet. *Jul.* 49.2)? Nicomedes IV may have acquired the statue from Knidos in return for the cancellation of debts; cf. Pollitt (1990) 84, Stewart (1990) 279, and Havelock (1995) 63, with Plin. *Nat.* 36.20. Cicero may well have known about the bid for the statue in 70 BCE: Ver. 2.4.135: *quid Cnidios ut Venerem marmoream?* If it was this Nicomedes, then Cicero marvelously challenges Caesar's association with Venus by putting it into the least favorable context. Cicero once quipped that the son of Venus was deflowered in Bithynia (Suet. *Jul.* 49.3).

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occupied its place, presumably in Minerva's precinct as part of the Capitoline Triad, in 46 BCE and stayed beyond Caesar's (and probably Cicero's) death.[73] In a letter of 43 to Cornificius she again makes an appearance: "on that very day [19 March, Quinquatrus, the festival of Minerva] the senate decreed that our Minerva, guardian of Rome, whom a gale overturned, be set up again" (*eo ipso die senatus decrevit, ut Minerva nostra, custos urbis, quam turbo deiecerat, restitueretur*, *Fam.* 12.25.1 [SB 373]). The real-life placement of Minerva on the Capitoline and her textual notice in the *Brutus* connect the location of Cicero's Minerva on the heights of the Capitol to its monumental equivalent in Athens, the Parthenon, perched above the city Athena protected.[74] Cicero's dedication of Minerva as he departed Rome may even have been calculated to recall the dedication of Athens to Athena as citizens abandoned the city to the invading enemy during the Persian War.[75] The gesture is inseparable from the subsequent triumph of Athens over the Persians and claims to superiority over other Greeks. Once again Cicero's ingenuity found a way to indulge the *Brutus'* obsessive creation of meaningful parallels between Athens and Rome. This masterful manipulation of spatial and geographical resonances throws into relief Caesar's Venus, still in search of a place in Rome's urban topology. Cicero knew this well, since, in conjunction with Caesar's financial creature-in-Rome, Oppius, he already in 54 was busy helping to secure land for Caesar's forum with its temple of Venus Genetrix.[76]

Cicero may also be responding to Caesarian provocation. Caesar too had sought to lay claim to Minerva and to connect her to Julian propaganda. Almost contemporaneous with the *Brutus* is Caesar's issuance in 47/46 BCE of silver denarii with Venus on the obverse and Aeneas fleeing Troy with Anchises on his left shoulder and, crucially, the Palladium in his right hand. This wooden image of Pallas Athena may have been stolen by Diomedes and/or Odysseus; the mythological differences are part of the complex story of post-Homeric reception. Somehow, it arrived at Rome and was housed in the temple of Vesta. Caesar's numismatic vision is clear: Aeneas brought her to Rome and therefore it is Caesar who protects Rome during the civil war. It will also have reinforced Caesar's already prominent

[73] The cella to the right of Jupiter was dedicated to Minerva. *LTUR* III.146, with Liv. 7.3.5.

[74] Mont Allen reminds me that the considerable overlap in the iconography of Minerva and Roma reinforces the overlap in their function as tutelary deities.

[75] Isoc. *Antid.* 233, *Paneg.* 96, Lys. 2.33–43, Plut. *Them.* 10.2–3.

[76] Cic. *Att.* 4.16 (SB 89), *LTUR* II.306–7. It surely formed part of his rivalry with Pompey: *LTUR* V.35–38 on Pompey's theater complex with a temple of Venus Victrix.

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connection to Troy via Venus, since the Palladium was given by Zeus to Ilus, Troy's mythical founder. And as *pontifex maximus* Caesar had a close connection to the Palladium, since the Vestal Virgins were its sacred keepers in the temple of Vesta and were in turn under control of the pontifical college. Caesar appears to have crafted an East–West lineage of devotion to the Roman state, and Cicero through Minerva similarly matches Caesar's efforts at crafting an eastern precedent as part of civic ideology.[77]

Caesar's citation of the Palladium on coinage is also a claim on her powers of intellectual and artistic production. Caesar ranked, after all, among the chief intellectuals of his day and was no less eager than Cicero to emerge victorious from the ideological battles that depended on rhetorical skill and the manicured presentation of public image. His *commentarii* and *de Analogia* are both products of that scholarly persona, but no less so are his administrative reforms, such as the solar Julian calendar, established from new knowledge derived from Greco-Egyptian scholars.[78] Caesar's calendrical reforms were in full effect by the end of 46 BCE, the monstrous year bloated beyond all measure to allow the new calendar to begin in 45. Cicero, for his part, acutely felt the imperious weight of knowledge turned into power: once told that Lyra, the constellation, would soon rise, he quipped, "Well of course, it's been ordered to" (Plut. *Caes.* 59.6).[79]

From this larger network of complex representation, of claims and counterclaims about knowledge, authority, and civic duty, emerges Cicero's citation of Phidias' famed statue of Athena on the Acropolis. Certainly it is much more than part of the local argument against the limited value of military triumphs. Allusion to Venus in Cicero's judgment of the *commentarii* strikes directly at the heart of Caesarian self-promotion through his familial claim of descent from Venus, a point perhaps given special piquancy in light of Atticus' composition of family histories, including of the Julii.[80] It is as if Cicero says defiantly, "You may have

[77] Assenmaker (2007) and (2010) on the Palladium in late republican and Augustan contexts, respectively. R. M. A. Marshall (2017) 70–71. Cic. *Scaur.* 48 relates how the *pontifex maximus*, L. Metellus, once snatched the Palladium from the burning temple of Vesta; it guarantees the safety of the Roman state (*pignus nostrae salutis atque imperi*).

[78] Feeney (2007) 197 on the reforms as "part of a larger revolution of systematizing and personal control in many departments of Roman life, by which Caesar's name and presence were made indispensably central." I also discuss this in the Introduction.

[79] Volk (2021), chap. 6 suggests that Cicero may have been ridiculing an error in the timing of Lyra's rise.

[80] Cf. Nepos *Att.* 18.3. Varro also traced the ancestry of the Julii to Troy, although his work's date is unknown; see *FRHist* I: 421; on Varro's historical writings: *FRHist* I: 412–23, II: 836–43, III: 513–17.

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Venus, Caesar, for yourself and your family, but that is all. Minerva is mine, just as she and I belong to Rome."

Much as Cicero manipulated the antithesis between Minerva and Libertas (or Licentia, as he calls her) to attack Clodius, so in the *Brutus* does he repeat the rhetorical ploy. Yet in place of Libertas and her statue emerges Venus, so crucially associated with Caesar and the *gens Iulia*, allegedly descended from Aeneas, son of the Trojan Anchises and the goddess Venus. The shift in statuary reflects Cicero's shifting struggles against Rome's turbulent self-destruction in the 50s and then the emerging problem of autocratic rule in the 40s. It also reflects, in his literary career, the shift from the (begun-and-then-abandoned?) *de Legibus*, with its emphasis on Clodius, to the *Brutus*, with Caesar occupying his energies and Clodius barely an afterthought.

The *Brutus* crucially contextualizes Caesar's attempts to define his public image and his divine descent, a reminder of the extent to which the elevation of Venus and the promotion of Julian ancestry from her were a long and contested process that may only have seemed complete with the rise of Augustus and the writing of Vergil's *Aeneid*. Yet if we fast-forward nearly half a century, then perhaps Vergil too produces a distant and sympathetic echo of Cicero's claims on Minerva. Aeneas is depicted fleeing Troy with Anchises and the Penates, but Vergil makes no mention of the Palladium, and this despite the famous Caesarian denarius showing Aeneas fleeing, Palladium in hand.[81] There are of course any number of explanations, yet it's tempting to ask if Vergil, out of sympathy for the lost cause and with full knowledge of Cicero's Minervan attachments, conceded this small yet meaningful ideological battle in a war that Cicero and his like-minded contemporaries would never win.

Cicero, for his part, well imagined that powerful weapons against Caesar, or perhaps just refuge, could be found in Minerva, who, in a single potent symbol, commanded the arts of learning, and of resistance. She had long buoyed him in the ideological maelstrom of the late republic and would continue to do so even after the dictator's death. In the crisis of 46, the crucial moment of the *Brutus*, Minerva became the last hope-filled image of salvation before the political iconoclasm that Caesar and his lovely Venus would bring soon enough.

[81] See Serv. ad *Aen.* 2.166 with Assenmaker (2007) 392 and (2010) 41–2.

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