

## “Full of awareness and life”: The Body of Marius Gratidianus in the Literary Tradition

My paper examines Roman literary depictions of the violent death of Marcus Marius Gratidianus, who was painstakingly dismembered at the hands of Catiline *inter alios*, possibly at the tomb of the *gens Lutatia*. I argue that the morbid fascination in literary sources with the dying and dead body of Gratidianus can be explained as a reflection on his role in currency reforms while praetor in 85 BCE. Despite confusion over the exact nature of Gratidianus’ political actions and agenda, Roman authors consistently engage with a larger discourse about the nature of money when they portray the mutilation of his body.

Ancient sources offer two explanations for such violence, shocking even amidst the intense factional animosities of the 80s BCE: an extraordinary blood sacrifice in retaliation for Gratidianus’ prosecution of Quintus Lutatius Catulus; and political retribution for a popular cult that grew up around Gratidianus either because he and his colleagues set exchange rates or because he implemented a method for detecting counterfeit coins. Although the first intervention in monetary matters is far more plausible than the second, both memories conjoin the figure of Gratidianus with efforts to secure fluctuating monetary values and restore confidence in the durability of this form of property. Moreover, coins in small denominations were perhaps crucial to the cult of Gratidianus centered around the *lares compitales*.

I show that literary representations of Gratidianus’ mangled body parallel a larger ancient discourse that understands money as an eerie substance of value that lives on – animated, full of intention, and yet inhuman – despite the mutilation, so to speak, that occurs to coins and commodities in daily use. In other words, a substance that remains *plenum animae et spiritus*, to quote Cicero’s chilling description of Gratidianus’ decapitated head.

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