

## THE END OF FAKES: IMPOSTORS IN VALERIUS MAXIMUS

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### I. False Marius: Val. Max. 9.15.1

*quod nisi diuinae Caesaris vires huic erubescendae procellae obstitissent, simile uulnus res publica excepisset atque in Equitio acceperat. ceterum decreto eius extra Italiam relegatus, postquam ille caelo receptus est, in urbem rediit et consilium interficiendi senatus capere sustinuit. quo nomine iussu patrum necatus in carcere seras prompti animi ad omne moliendum scelus poenas pependit.*

If the *diuinae Caesaris vires* had not opposed this shameful tempest, the Republic would have received as great a wound as it had from Equitius. But relegated beyond the shores of Italy by [Caesar's] decree, and, after Caesar had been taken up into heaven, the impostor returned to the City and ventured to make plans to murder the Senate. On that account he was put to death in prison by order of the Fathers and belatedly paid the penalty for his eagerness to undertake every species of crime.\*

### II. Sempronia and the False Gracchus: Val. Max. 3.8.6

*coacta es eo loci consistere, ubi principum ciuitatis perturbari frons solebat, instabat tibi toruo uultu minas profundens amplissima potestas, clamore imperitae multitudinis obstrepens totum forum acer rimo studio nitebatur ut Equitio, cui Semproniae gentis falsum ius quaerebatur, tamquam filio Tiberii fratris tui osculum dares. tu tamen illum, nescio quibus tenebris protractum portentum, execrabili audacia ad usurpandam alienam propinquitatem tendentem reppulisti.*

You were forced to stand in a place where leaders of the community were apt to present a troubled front, a mighty power bore down on you, grim of visage, pouring out threats, the ignorant crowd clamored at you, the whole Forum strove forcefully to make you kiss Equitius, for whom they falsely sought a membership of the Sempronian clan, as the son of your brother Tiberius. But you repulsed him, that monster dredged from I know now that dark corner, who was advancing an execrable audacity to claim a kinship not his.

### III. Metellus and the False Gracchus: Val. Max. 9.7.1

*L. Equitium, qui se Ti. Gracchi filium simulabat tribunatumque aduersus leges <cum> L. Saturnino petebat, a C. Mario quintum consulatum gerente in publicam custodiam ductum populus claustris carceris conuulsis raptum humeris suis per summam animorum alacritatem portauit.*

L. Equitius, who was pretending to be Ti. Gracchus' son and illegally standing for the tribunate along with L. Saturninus, was placed in public custody by C. Marius, then in

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\* All translations are adapted by Trevor Luke from Shackleton Bailey (Loeb) or Walker (Hackett)

his fifth consulship. The people tore down the bars of the prison and snatched him away, carrying him on their shoulders in the highest of spirits.

IV. False Marcellus: Val. Max. 9.15.2

*Ne diui quidem Augusti etiam nunc terras regentis excellentissimum numen intemptatum ab hoc iniuriae genere. extitit qui clarissimae ac sanctissimae sororis eius Octaviae utero se genitum fingere auderet, propter summam autem inbecillitatem corporis ab eo, cui datus erat, perinde atque ipsius filium retentum, subiecto in locum suum proprio filio, diceret, uidelicet ut eodem tempore sanctissimi penates et ueri sanguinis memoria spoliarentur et falsi sordida contagione inquinarentur. sed dum plenis impudentiae uelis ad summum audaciae gradum fertur, imperio Augusti remo publicae triremis adfixus est.*

Not even the most excellent *numen* of the divine Augustus, who even then was ruling the lands, was unchallenged by this kind of outrage. There arose one who dared to pretend that he was born from the womb of Augustus' most distinguished and holy sister, Octavia. He said that on account of the extreme weakness of his body, he was given to a man and kept by him as his son, while his own son was substituted in his own place. Apparently, he wanted that most sacred household at one and the same time despoiled of the memory of the true blood and defiled by the sordid contagion of the false. But as he was being borne to the highest pitch of audacity by full sails of impudence, on Augustus' command he was attached to the oar of a public trireme.

V. False Sertorius: Val. Max. 9.15.3

Repertus est etiam qui se diceret esse Q. Sertorii filium, quem ut agnosceret uxor eius nulla ui conpelli potuit.

One was also found who called himself the son of Q. Sertorius, whom Sertorius' wife could not be forced to acknowledge by any compulsion.

VI. False Clodius: Val. Max. 9.15.4

Quid Trebellius Calca, quam adseueranter se Clodium tulit! et quidem dum de bonis eius contendit, in centumuirale iudicium adeo fauorabilis descendit, ut uix iustis et aequis sententiis consternatio populi ullum relinqueret locum. in illa tamen quaestione neque calumniae petitoris neque uiolentiae plebis iudicantium religio cessit.

How insistently did Trebellius Calca make himself out to be Clodius! And when he went to law for Clodius' property, he came to the centumviral court in such public favor that the popular delusion scarce left room for just and equitable votes. But the conscience of the jury in that trial did not succumb to the false plea of the claimant or the violence of the populace.

VII. False Asinius Dio: Val. Max. 9.15.5

Multo fortius ille, qui Cornelio Sulla rerum potente in domum Cn. Asini Dionis irupit filiumque eius patriis penatibus expulit uociferando non illum, sed se Dione esse procreatum. uerum postquam a Sullana uiolentia Caesariana aequitas <rem

publicam> reduxit, gubernacula Romani imperii iustiore principe obtinente in publica custodia spiritum posuit.

Much more forceful was the action of the person who under the rule of Cornelius Sulla broke into the house of Cn. Asinius Dio and expelled his son from his father's house, vociferating that he, not that son, was Dio's child. But after Caesarian equity brought the Republic back from Sullan violence and a juster leader held the rudder of empire, he surrendered his life in public custody.

VIII. False Rubria: Val. Max. 9.15.ext.1

Eodem praeside rei publicae in consimili mendacio muliebris temeritas Mediolani repressa est. si quidem cum se pro Rubria quaedam, perinde ac falso credita esset incendio perisse, nihil ad se pertinentibus bonis insereret neque ei aut tractus eius splendidi testes aut cohortis Augustae fauor deesset, *propter inexpugnabilem Caesaris constantiam irrita nefarii propositi abiit.*

In the same regime of the Republic the rashness of a woman of Mediolanum in a very similar lie was checked. She said she was Rubria, and that she was falsely believed to have perished in a fire. She inserted herself into Rubria's property although she had no claim to it whatsoever, and she lacked neither the support nor witnesses of this distinguished region and an Augustan cohort. She nevertheless departed disappointed in her nefarious scheme on account of the unassailable perseverance of Caesar.

IX. False Ariarathes X: Val. Max. 9.15.ext.2

Idem barbarum quendam ob eximiam similitudinem Cappadociae regnum adfectantem, tamquam Ariarathes esset, quem a M. Antonio interemptum *lucelarius* erat, quamquam paene totius orientis ciuitatum et gentium credula suffragatione fultum caput *imperio dementer inminens iusto inpendere supplicio coegit.*

A certain barbarian pretended to the throne of Cappadocia because of an extraordinary likeness, posing as Ariarathes, whom it was clearer that daylight, was killed by Antonius. Backed though he was by the credulous support of the communities and nations of almost the entire East, the same Caesar compelled him to devote his head that in folly threatened the empire to a just punishment.

X. Behistun Inscription 1.13-14: False Smerdis

King Darius says . . . . There was none who dared to act against Gaumâta, the Magian, until I came. Then I prayed to Ahuramazda; Ahuramazda brought me help. On the tenth day of the month Bâgayâdiš I, with a few men, slew that Gaumâta, the Magian, and the chief men who were his followers . . . . By the grace of Ahuramazda I became king; Ahuramazda granted me the kingdom . . . . The kingdom that had been wrested from our line I brought back and I reestablished it on its foundation. The temples which Gaumâta, the Magian, had destroyed, I restored to the people . . . .  
[trans. King and Thompson]

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