

Under the Influence of Art: The Effect of the Statues of Horatius Cocles and Cloelia on Valerius
Maximus' *Facta et Dicta Memorabilia*

In his work, *Facta et Dicta Memorabilia*, Valerius Maximus stated in the *praefatio* of his chapter “*De Fortitudine*” that he will discuss the great deeds of Romulus, but cannot do so without bringing up one example first; someone whose similarly great deeds helped save Rome (3.2.1-2). This great man is Horatius Cocles. Valerius Maximus noted that he must next talk about another hero, Cloelia, after Horatius Cocles because they fight the same enemy, at the same time, at the same place, and both perform *facta memorabilia* to save Rome (3.2.2-3). Valerius Maximus mentioned Horatius Cocles and Cloelia together, as if they are a joined pair that cannot be separated. Yet there is another legendary figure, Mucius Scaevola, who also fights the same enemy, at the same time, and also performs *facta memorabilia* to save Rome. It is strange both that Valerius Maximus seemed compelled to unite Cloelia with the mention of Horatius Cocles, and also that he did not include Mucius Scaevola. Instead, Scaevola's story is at the beginning of the next chapter (3.3.1). Traditionally these three heroes, Horatius Cocles, Cloelia, and Mucius Scaevola, were mentioned together by historians such as Livy and Dionysius of Halicarnassus, whose works predate Valerius Maximus' (*Ab Urbe Condita* 2.10-13, *Roman Antiquities* 5.23-35). Valerius Maximus was able to split up the triad, despite the tradition, without receiving flack because it had already been done by Virgil in the *Aeneid*, where he described the dual images of Cocles and Cloelia on Aeneas' shield, but Scaevola is absent (8.646-651).

Furthermore, it appears that there were no public statues of Scaevola, while equestrian statues of Cocles and Cloelia were set up by the city, which Livy, Dionysius, Pliny the Elder, and Plutarch mentioned (*Ab Urbe Condita* 2.10 & 2.13, *Roman Antiquities* 5.25 & 5.35, *Natural*

Histories 34.11 & 34.28, *Life of Publicola* 6.16.7 & 6.19.5). Cocles' statue stood in the Comitium, the area in front of the Curia in the Roman Forum, while Cloelia's equestrian statue, an arguably even greater honor given her gender, stood on the highest part of the Via Sacra. These statues seem to have had an impact on the way Valerius Maximus ordered his prose and it appears that he and other Roman authors have statues in mind when they wrote their texts. When Pliny the Elder discussed the statue of Horatius Cocles he also mentioned two other historical figures, Hermodorus of Ephesus and Attus Navius, and their statues, which were near Cocles' image. Pliny ordered his prose just as he saw the monuments in the Forum. He moved from a statue in front of the Curia (Attus Navius) to another in the Comitium (Hermodorus), then discussed Cocles' statue, which stood in the same place. He must have been envisioning these places and monuments as he wrote.

Even though previous historians created a strong link between the three legendary heroes, the visual memory of the statues of Cloelia and Cocles had a stronger connection in the minds of the Romans, causing both Virgil and Valerius Maximus to group Cocles and Cloelia, leaving out Scaevola. Valerius Maximus' pairing of Horatius Cocles and Cloelia and his choice to leave out Mucius Scaevola at first seems like an odd combination, however, by examining the role of art in memory I will show that Roman authors envisioned their city and its monuments when writing about historic figures. Romans often linked legendary heroes by the location of their public monuments in urban landscape rather than their chronological location in history.

Works Cited

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