

*Provinciae captae*: Representations of captured provinces in relation to Suetonius' *Lives of the Caesars*

Reliefs of provinces at the Hadrianeum and Flavian-era coins of captured provinces support a reading of Suetonius's *Lives of the Caesars* that contrasts the Flavians with the Julio-Claudians through a lens of their relationship to *imperium* embodied in women. The paper thus contributes to broader scholarly conversation about Suetonius (Power and Gibson 2014), the Flavians (Heerink and Meijer 2022) and the roles of imperial women (Boatwright 2021), in alignment with approaches that focus on the political significance of material representations, such as Cody 2003 on Flavian coins as departure from Julio-Claudians and evocation of the Republic, discussion of imperial women on coins in Boatwright 2021, and Vout 2007 on representations of imperial desire. Like Vout, I consider the role of the emperors' erotic desire central to the configuration and representations of their political power; in this paper, I focus on the explicit representation of places as women, in which they symbolize the land itself and its power, which is densely layered and multi-valent.

This paper focuses on these two sets of representations, but the embodiment of places in female forms has a long history, both in material culture and literature, from fundamental origin myths that feature the land mating and giving birth, to the poetic personification of Jerusalem in *Lamentations*, and to Herodotus's framing of the enmity between Greece and Persia as the result of a cycle of abductions, bringing Io, Europa, Medea, and Helen from myth into history (1.1-3). In some of these cases, the personification is of both place and concept, as with Roma. (See Ramsby, Severy-Hoven 2007 on personifications in Augustan Rome.) This ties into the tradition of abstractions in female form in a way that is closer to the representations considered in this paper.

In particular, these two uses of female forms to represent captured provinces supports a significant theme in Suetonius' *Lives* — the framing of political power in sexualized terms. In contrast with the more sexualized and symbolic demonstrations in the Julio-Claudian *Lives*, which are beyond the scope of this paper, these coins and reliefs explicitly demonstrate *imperium*, tangibly

measured in territory and conquered people, as embodied in women. This fits with Suetonius's representations of the Flavians as markedly free of powerful and interfering women, and the sexualized dominance displayed by the Julio-Claudians is now straightforward capture and subjugation of provinces. In his framing of these conquests, we see a different iteration of embodying empire.

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