



ANCIENT ROME: THE IDEA

ITALIAN 156: EXPLORING ROME

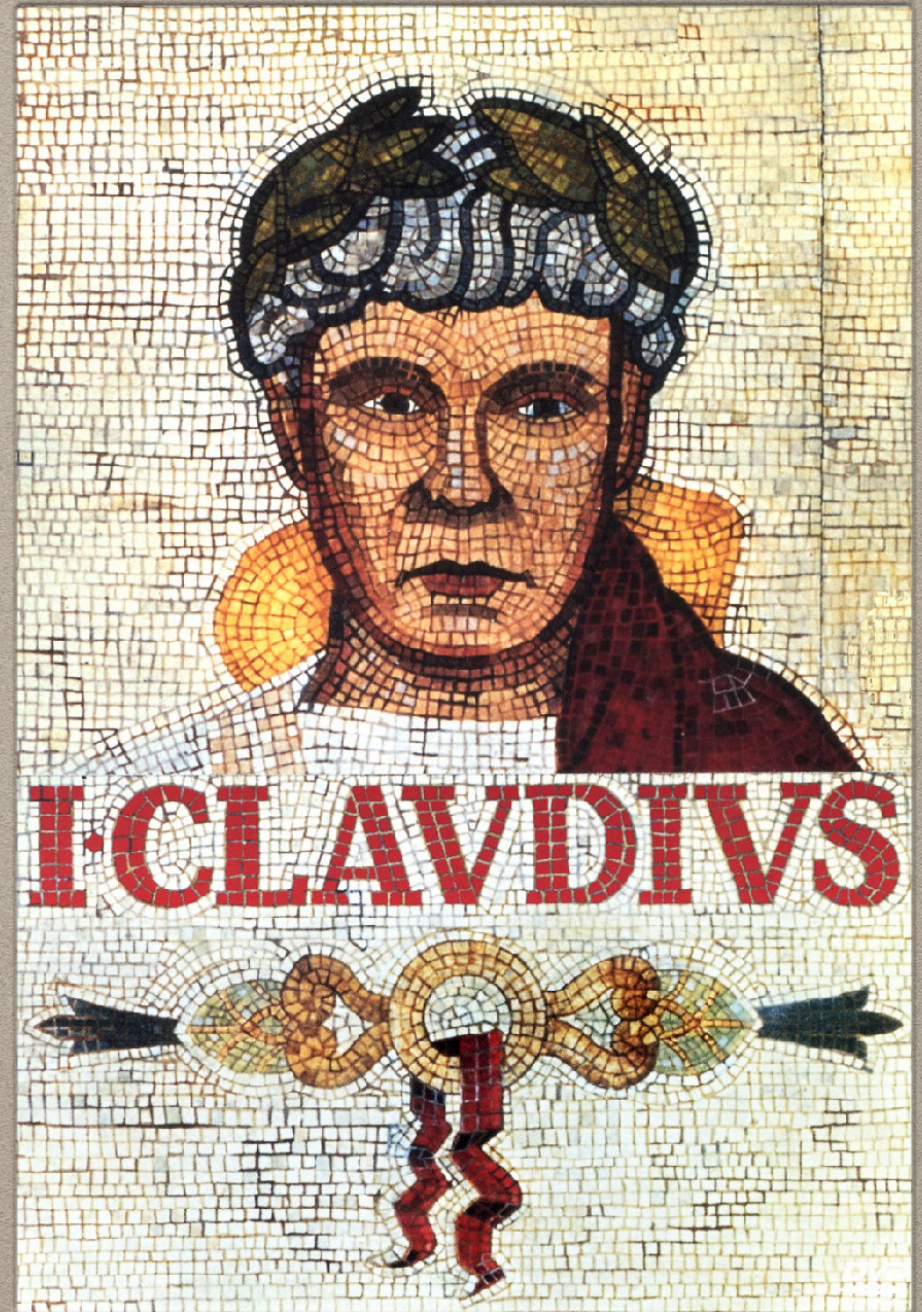
TAKEAWAYS

- “Impure” beginning (multicultural)
- *Patria potestas*, authority
- Symbolic boundaries (Remus, *pontifex maximus*, *religio*)
- SPQR: *Senatus populusque romanus* (Senate & Roman people)
- Military 1: Rome defeats Carthage (second Punic war), becomes master of the sea (202 BC)
- Military 2: Caesar conquers Gaul, Rome becomes master of the land (50 BC)



THE *IDEA* OF ROME

- History really happened, but strangely, no one can agree about it. This is true of even very recent events
- Every version of history is thus an interpretation, a narrative, a story (*storia* and *Storia*); it may (or may not) also be true.
- You can always tell a different story: instead of Augustus, I could call him *Palpatine*, for example
- Such stories always reflect the ideas, interests and biases of their own time (*Invisible Romans* could not have been written by a Victorian scholar)
- **Not** postmodern relativism: *not* all (hi)stories are equally true or good





THE FALL OF THE
ROMAN EMPIRE



MEET THE ROMANS

A woman with long, wavy white hair and a pink top is smiling in the foreground. Behind her is the massive, tiered stone structure of the Colosseum in Rome, showing its characteristic arches and weathered facade under a clear sky.

**'MARY BEARD'S VIVID
AND ILLUMINATING
SERIES'**

SUNDAY TIMES

'A GENUINE JOY'

THE TELEGRAPH

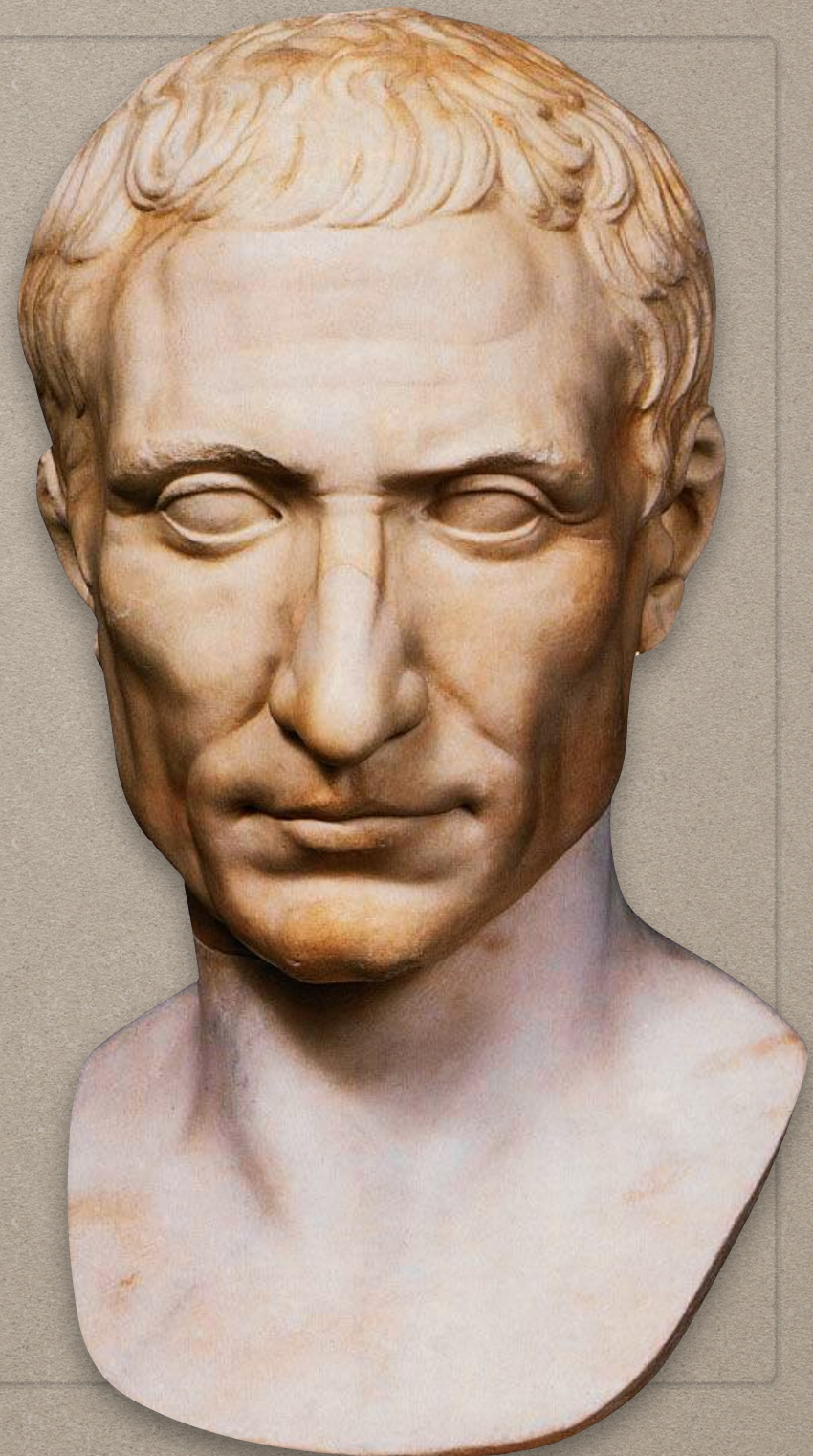




BROMANS

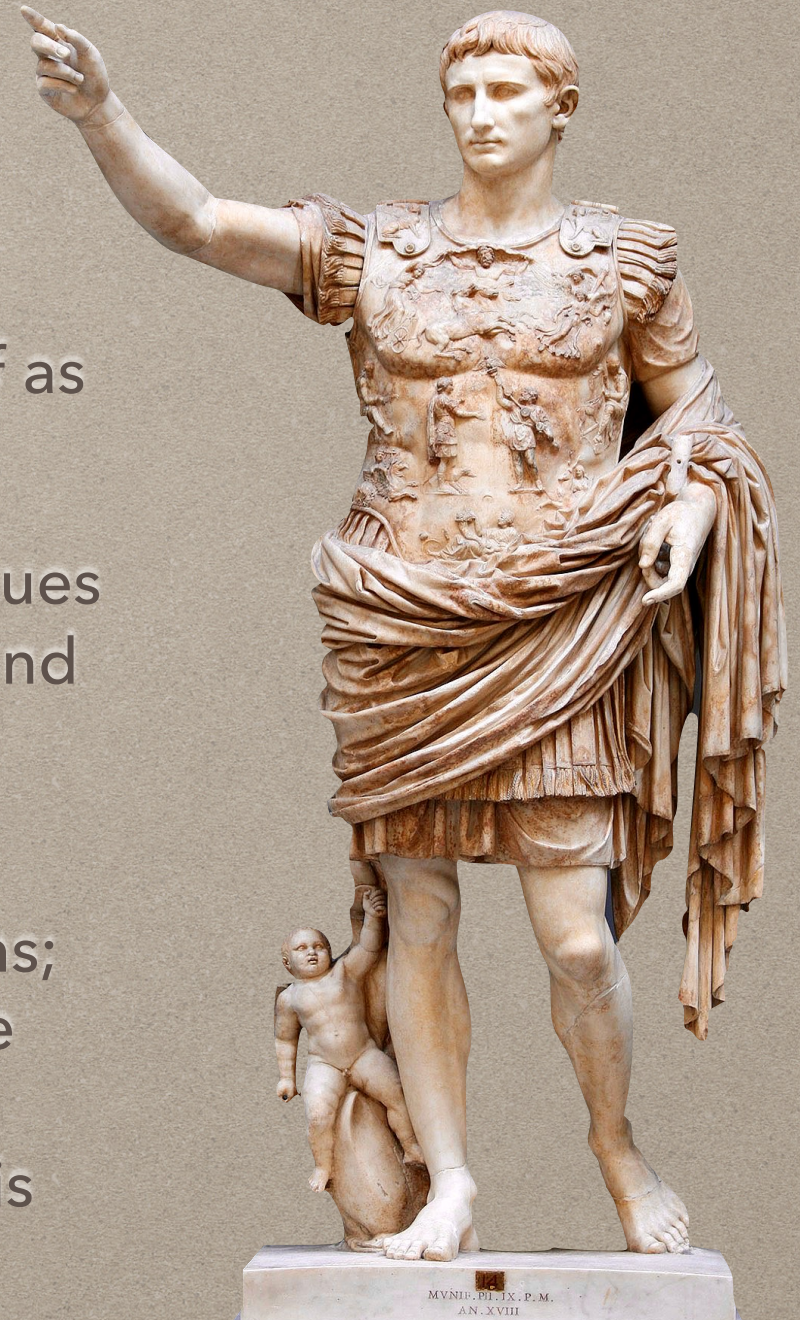
JULIUS CAESAR

- Public speaker and military leader
- Aristocratic family, but aligned with the *populares*, not *optimates*
- Conquered Gaul: $\frac{1}{3}$ men killed, $\frac{1}{3}$ sold into slavery (about 1,000,000); Rome was Mediterranean—now it is also European
- His main enemy Pompey prepares to prosecute him if he returns to Rome; Caesar crosses the Rubicon with his troops; Pompey flees
- 44 BC becomes dictator for life; renames Quintilis “July” (*Julius*)
- Betrayed by two old friends, Cassius and Brutus, assassinated in the Senate
- Caesar’s only male relative, Octavian, eventually emerges from the civil war as Rome’s first Emperor. He is renamed *Augustus*.



AUGUSTUS

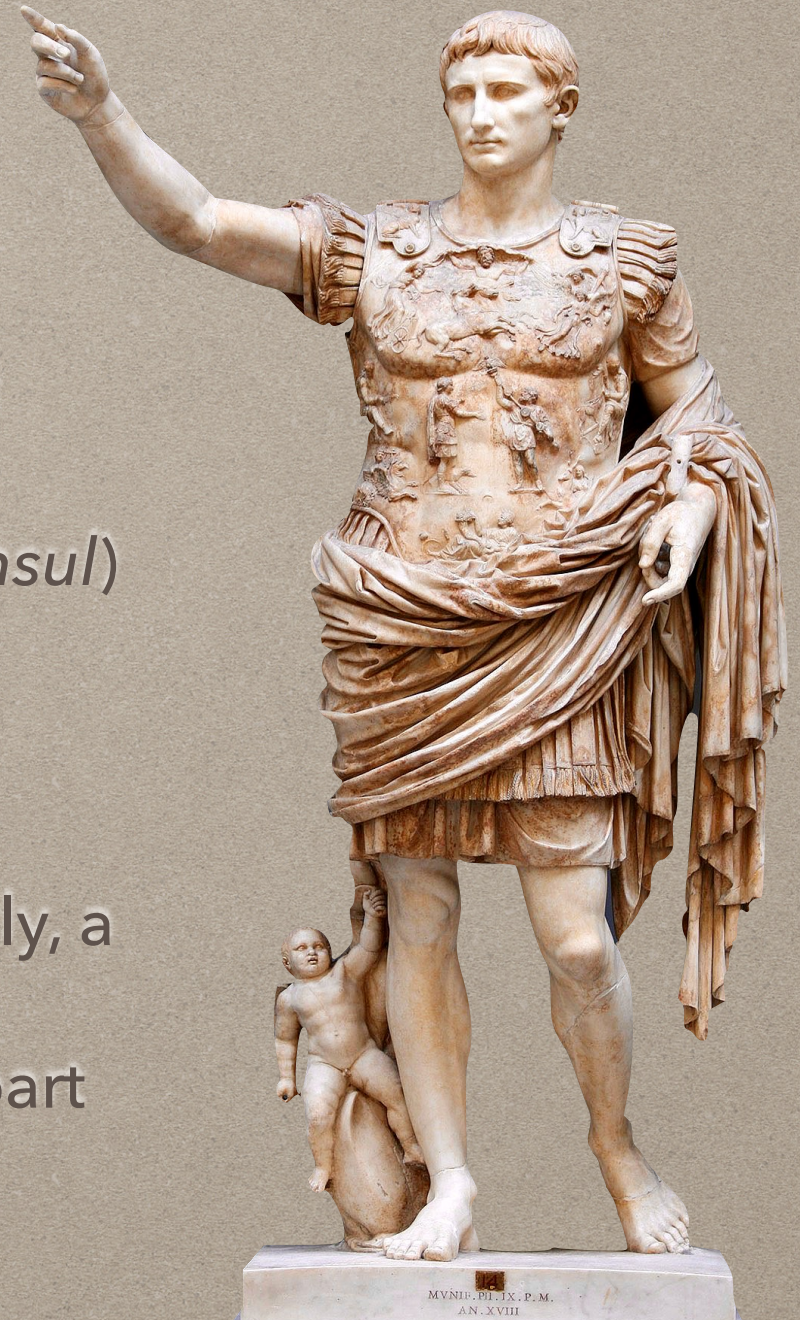
- Consolidated power after several more brief civil wars
- First emperor, but presents himself as savior of Republic
- Tens of thousands of copies of statues and likenesses, distributed all around the Empire—the *image* of Rome
- Most famous: Augustus of Prima Porta, now held in Vatican Museums; copy at Spurlock (don't worry – the Vatican one is also a copy; the original was probably bronze and is lost). Let's take a closer look...





POSTURE

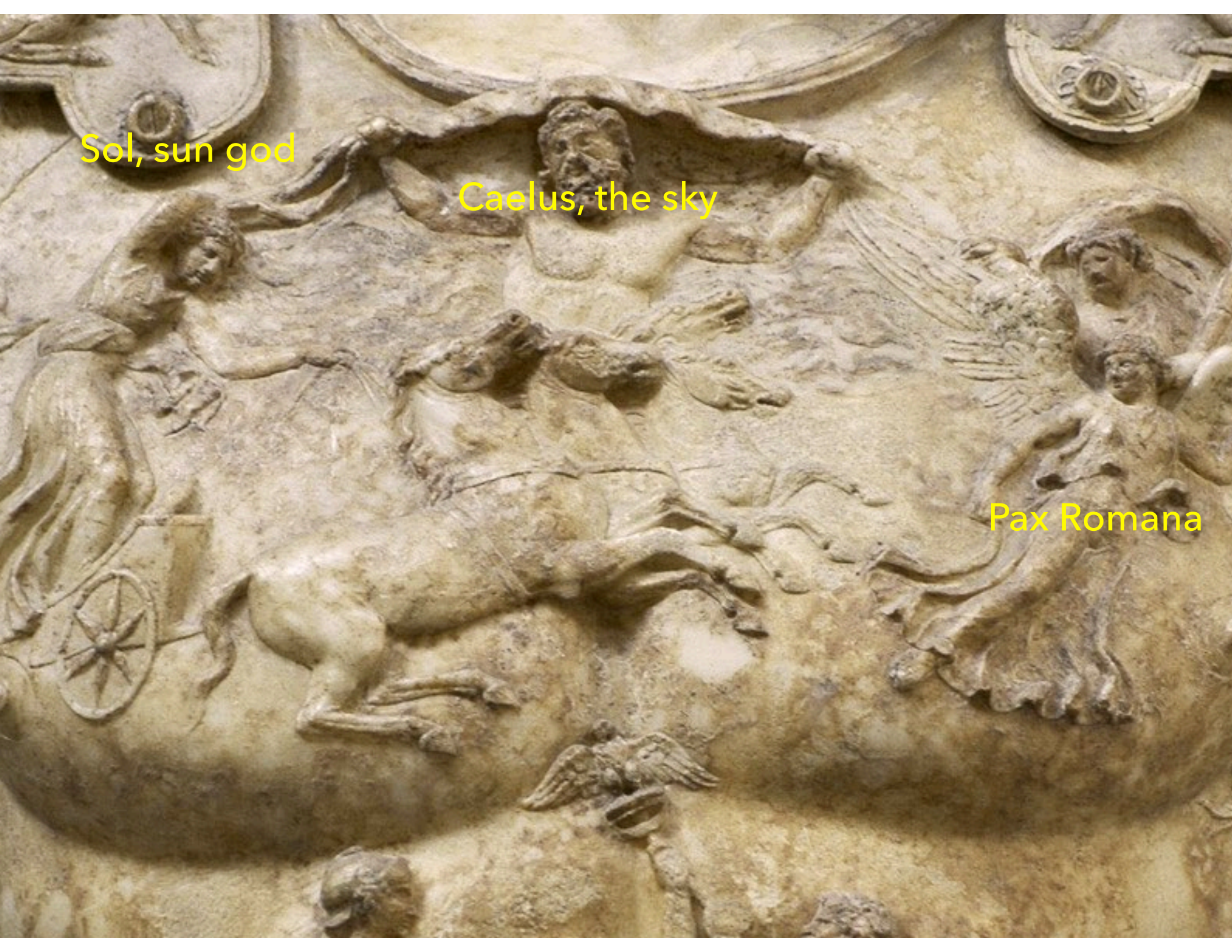
- Right hand raised: orator
- Left hand lowered: probably held something (spear: military; laurel crown: honors; baton: rank as *consul*)
- *Contrapposto* (counterweight, dynamic, action)
- Breastplate (military), robe (priestly, a reminder that Augustus is also *Pontifex maximus*), bare footed (part divine)



BREASTPLATE

- Intricately worked with scenes, figures – all are either *allegorical* (representative of an idea) or historical references
- No real armor would have looked quite *this* ornate, but generals and other leaders would have had armor that was decorated
- Augustus was not an especially good military leader (he wasn't terrible, either, but was no Julius Caesar)





Sol, sun god

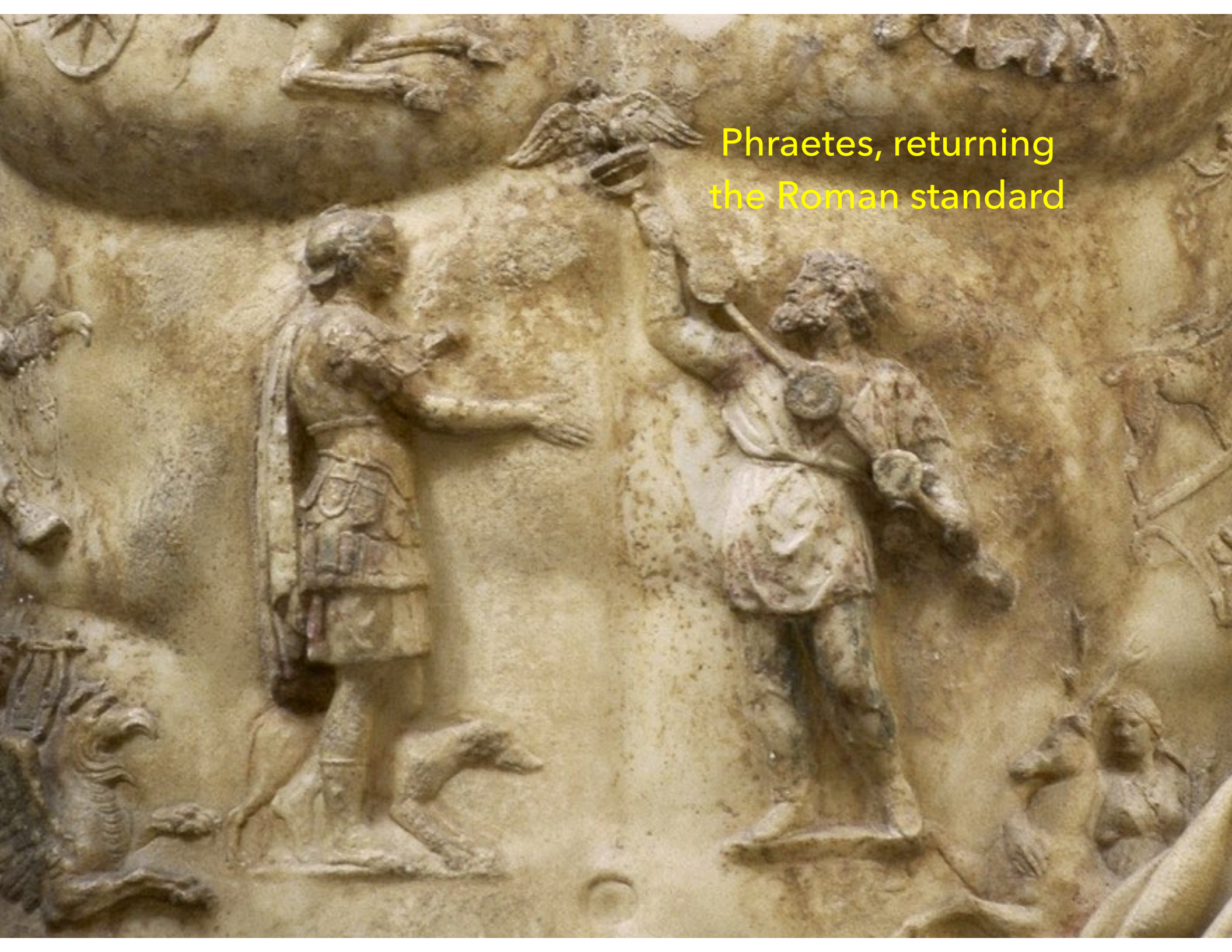
Caelus, the sky

Pax Romana

The Sphinx (conquest of Egypt)



Phraetes, returning
the Roman standard





Tellus, god of earth,
fertility (cornucopia)



Note the belly button!



- Breastplate (cuirass) then functions as a representation of the entire cosmos, from the vaults of the heavens to the ground under our feet
- The entire universe, in other words, is Augustan
- While the ground gives up its cornucopia, the Pax Romana is guaranteed at the celestial level.







- It's a baby riding a dolphin. An angel? He's kind of squishing the dolphin in an uncomfortable way. What's going on here?

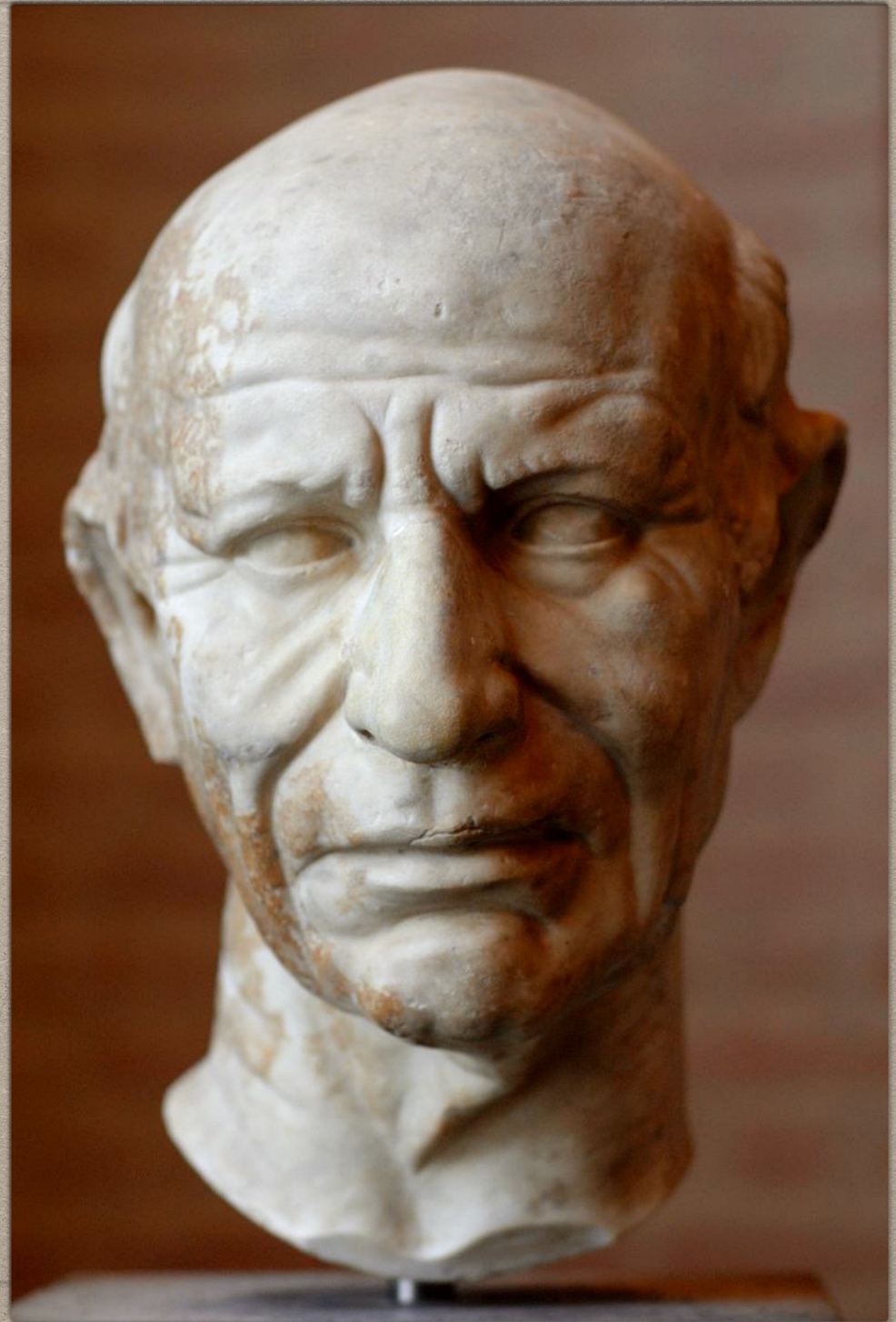


- The baby is Cupid, son of Venus. The reference to a child of Venus is intended to remind us that the Julian line (Caesar, Octavian, etc.) are supposedly descended from Venus, too, and are thus part divine
- Cupid is squishing the dolphin a way to reference Augustus' naval triumph at Actium (31 BC), where his fleet destroyed Marc Antony's and Cleopatra's ships. (Antony and Cleopatra escaped, but committed suicide after.)

OVERALL

- A shift from Roman “verist” practices of sculpture (typical of the Roman Republic) to a more idealized Greek version (more typical of the Empire)
- Note that Augustus here is young, serious but not burdened or worn out with care
- His face is plausible and individual, but almost certainly *idealized* (the Roman equivalent of Photoshop or Instagram filters), rather than *verist*.
- Compare:

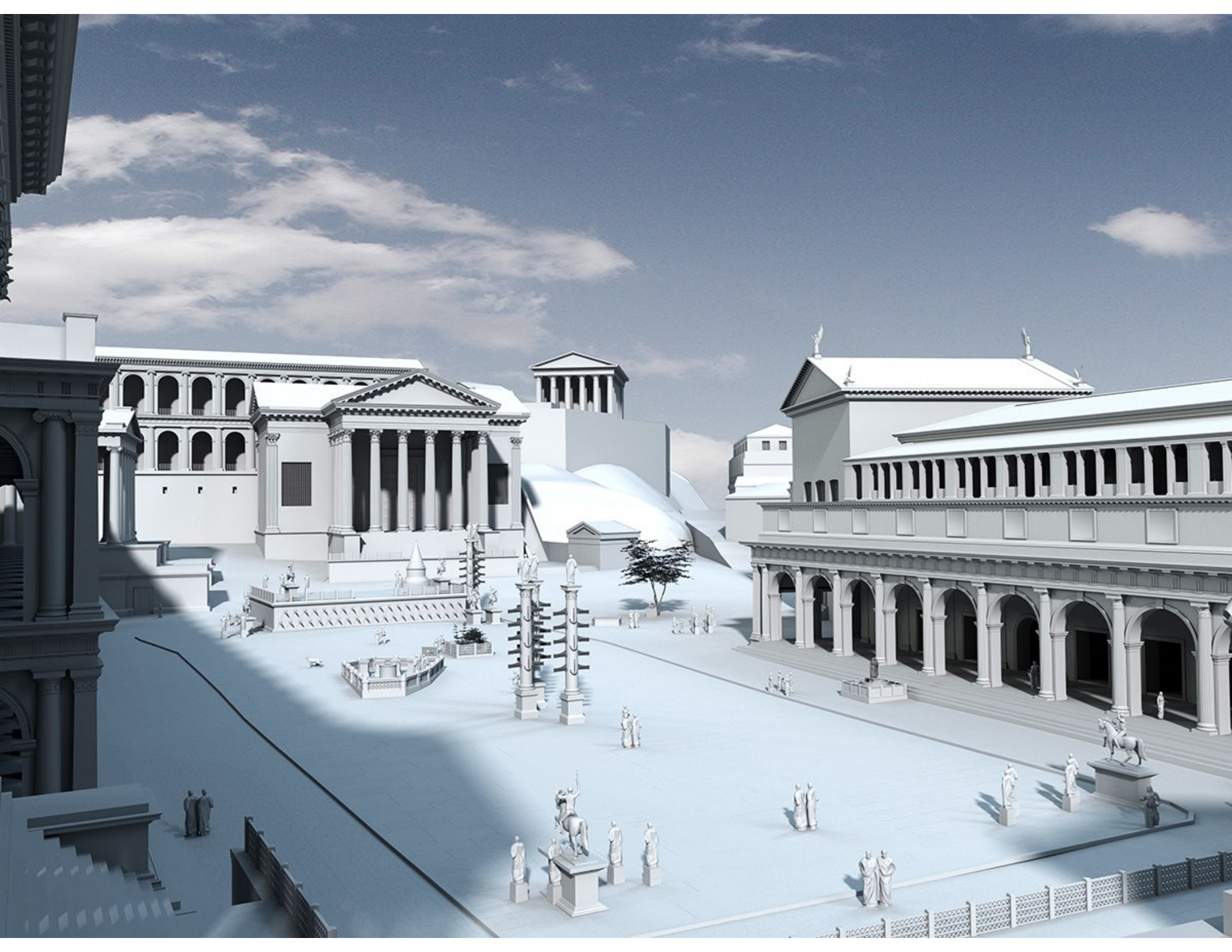




THE AUGUSTAN AGE

- 27 BC - 14 AD (but *Pax Romana* runs from 27 BC - 180 AD)
- Water, aqueducts, hygiene
- Literature: Vergil/Virgil, Ovid
- One important historical figure Hughes doesn't mention...
- Greek influence
- Roman Forum
- Ara Pacis and mausoleum
- Roads





















THE ROMAN EMPIRE IN 125 AD

IMPERIAL BORDER
LEGIONARY BASE
VII CLAUDIA LEGION DEPLOYED (125 AD)
MAJOR NAVAL BASE
GALATIA ROMAN PROVINCE
ROMAN CITY
MAIN ROAD
ROMAN CLIENT STATE
BARBARIAN NATION/TRIBAL GROUP

0 250 500 750 1000
kilometers

6000 m
2000 m
1500 m
1000 m
400 m
200 m
0 m



PROBABLE BARBARIAN LINGUISTIC GROUPS:

GERMANIC	FINNO-UGRIC
BALTO-SLAVIC	CELTIC
DACIAN	HAMITO-SEMITIC
IRANIC	

1 ALPES CRAIAE

VIAE ROMANAE MAIORES

Tabula reticuli





ALL ROADS LEAD...

- A complete network
- Integrated with major sea ports
- Accessible to all (unusual for the ancient world)
- From Rome to Damascus, across North Africa to Morocco, to Spain, through France, to Britain – all on what was essentially one continuous, well-paved, safe road with a network of repair shops and inns. The entire Mediterranean Basin
- Comparable to the US Interstate Highway System and Internet (also in its underlying military purpose): *res publica*
- Some roads still functional today
- HBO's *Rome* for next time!

