

ITAL 156: EXPLORING ROME

ROME: DAY 1



TAKEAWAYS

- Every (hi)story of Rome is a vision, an idea of Rome that reflects the society of the time (give some examples?)
- Detailed reading of the image of Augustus: the emperor's body as the Roman universe (name some features?)
- Augustan Age and the *Pax Romana* (list some accomplishments?)
- The Roman road system as a res public, a public good (US interstate system, Internet, GPS...)



ROME

- One of the most expensive television series in history
- An HBO, BBC, RAI co-production
- Part of the advent of "quality TV"
 - *Sex and the City, The West Wing, The Sopranos, The Wire, Mad Men, Breaking Bad, Game of Thrones, etc.*
- Highly regarded by critics (and viewers) in the US, UK, hated in Italy
 - The Italian Wikipedia entry has a brief plot summary, then two long sections detailing historical errors and inaccuracies
 - Second season sort of bombed



CREDITS

- Visual style
- Images/imagery
- Music
- What we don't see?
- Image/Idea of Rome?



CHARACTERS

- List of principal characters:
 - Titus Pullo, Lucius Vorenus, Niobe
 - Julius Caesar, Marc Antony
 - Pompey, Cato, Cicero
 - Atia, Octavia and Octavian
 - Servilia and Brutus
- The *idea* of character
- Favorite character?
- Familiar structures of character?



EP 1: THE STOLEN EAGLE

- Multiple plots: Pompey and his allies; Octavian and his adventure; Caesar and his campus; Pullo and Vorenus's attempt to find the golden eagle
- All the plots intertwine: Pullo and Vorenus find the eagle, along with proof Pompey ordered it stolen, and rescue Octavian, bringing everything back to Caesar's camp
- How is Rome depicted? What elements of Hughes do you see here?



EP 2: HOW TITUS PULLO...

- Two lines:
 - #1: political maneuvering: Pompey orders Caesar to surrender, but expects Marc Antony to veto — sends a message but doesn't escalate the conflict
 - #2 soap opera: Vorenus returns home to find his wife, Niobe, with a new baby
- The attempted de-escalation instead escalates: Antony cannot veto, and bloodshed erupts when he tries
- The tense domestic situation, however, (partly) defuses: the baby is Vorenus' grandson; then re-kindles: it isn't.
- Is there a "message" to this episode?
- What elements of Roman culture/history do you see here?



EP 3: OWL IN THE THORNBUSH

- Pullo and Vorenus on a scouting expedition — they effectively meet no resistance and go all the way to Rome
- The treasure cart full of gold: a classic “sublime object” that is a vortex for action
- Brutus and Servilia
- The “siege of Atia” by the Pompeians



EP 4: STEALING FROM SATURN

- A lavish dinner party, replete with sexual and political tensions
- A lavish luncheon party, replete with sexual and political tensions
- A precious object on the loose (the cart full of gold)
- Titus Pullo in love?
- Caesar's epilepsy



LATER EMPIRE



CALIGULA

- Tiberius: 14-37 AD
- Caligula: 37-41 AD
- Famously weird and perverse (made his horse consul)
- Built the *Ager Vaticanus*, a huge race track
- Cruel: building of the Mamertine Prison; the Fucine Lake project; raped his sister in public at banquets; had people eaten by animals, sawed in half, etc.
- Assume that, *at most*, only half of this is true; but all accounts agree he was insane, angry, and narcissistic. Suetonius wrote his account 80 years after Caligula's death.



CLAUDIUS

- 41-54 AD
- Sexual tastes were “perverse for a Roman emperor... he was interested only in women” (102).
- Distant colonies (Colchester); conquered Britain; treated the conquered well; good administrator; wrote books of history
- Liked watching people die
savage deaths
- Died from poisoned *fungi porcini*, served by Nero's mom.



CALIGULA

- 54-68
- Tutored by Seneca
- Accused of frequent incest; murdered anyone he disliked; kicked his pregnant wife to death; killed his aunt with a laxative overdose
- Catstrated, then married his male lover
- 64 AD: the Great Fire of Rome. Nero was blamed; he blamed in turn the Christians, whom he had put to death in the Ager Vaticanus.
- Built his Domus Aurea after the fire









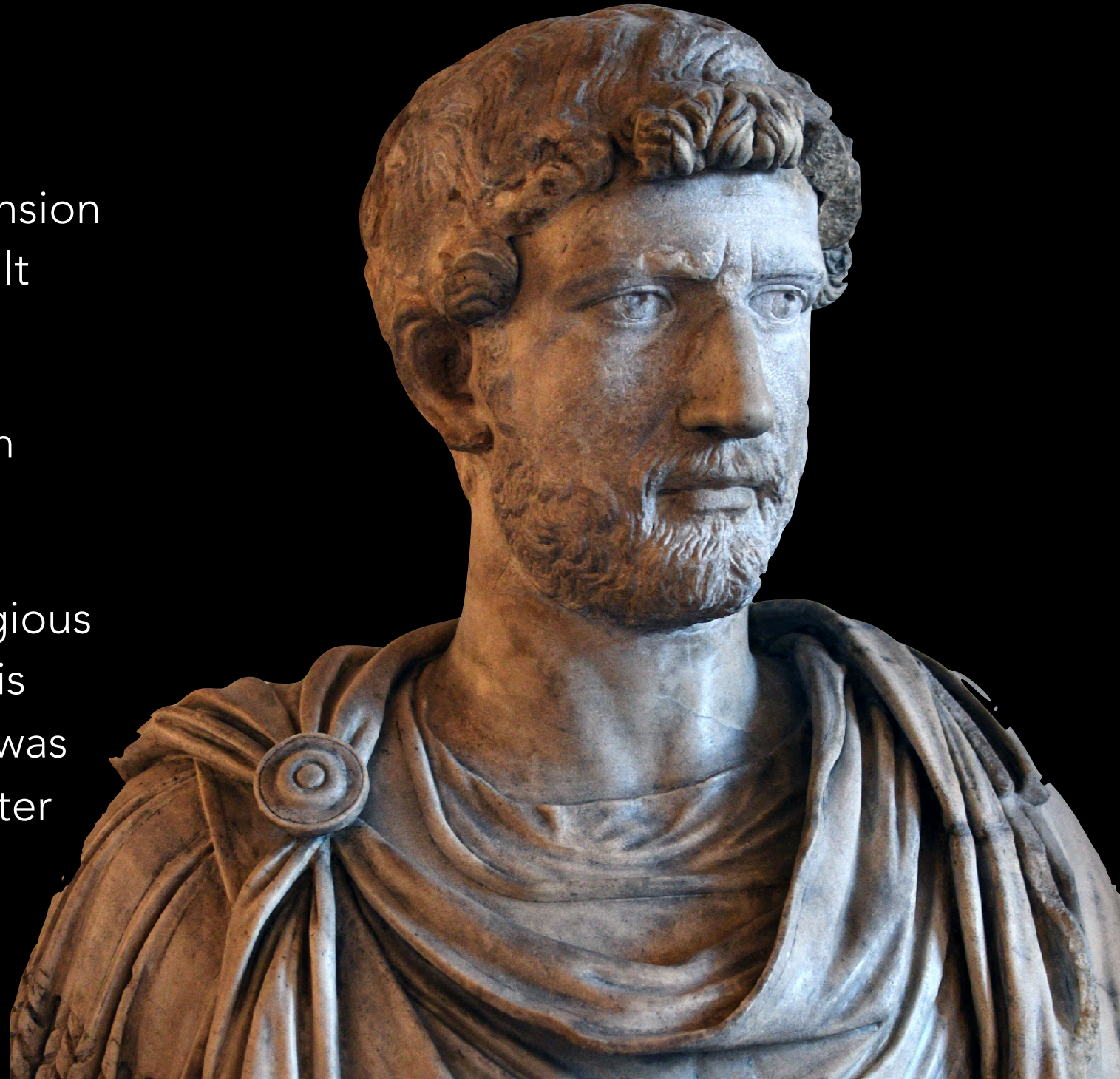
TRAJAN

- 98-117
- Supremely successful military leader
- Rome reached its maximum size under Trajan
- Civic expansion in the city of Rome as well: Trajan's market, Trajan's Column, baths, forums, bridges...
- Unlike almost all other Roman rulers, his reputation remained continuously untarnished after his death



HADRIAN

- 117-138
- Abandoned expansion of the Empire; built Hadrian's Wall
- Built the Pantheon
- Loved Antinous; established a religious cult of him after his death in 130 that was very successful (later condemned by Christians)

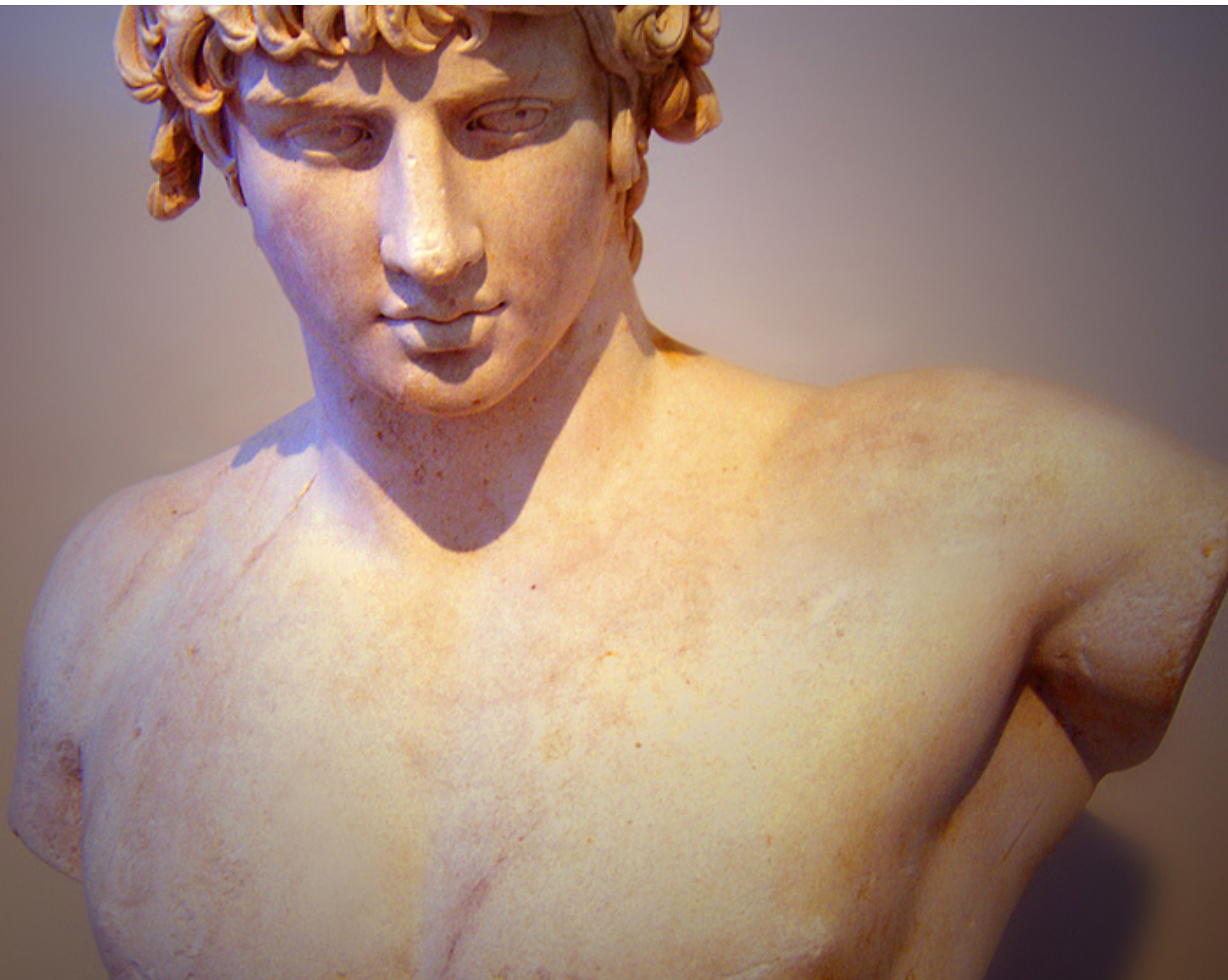




M·AGRIPPA·L·F·COS·TERTIVM·FECIT



The dome weighs five thousand tons. It is the largest unreinforced concrete dome in the world, and in history. We can't built a bigger one today.



PANEM ET CIRCENSES

- Public monuments seem good, but public entertainment?
- By the time of Emperor Claudius, 159 public holidays per year, with parades, combats, games and spectacles (and no work) paid for by the emperor
- Massive infrastructure of stadiums and amphitheaters, gladiatorial fighting schools
- Baths and gyms



DIOCLETIAN

- 284-305*
- Divides the Roman Empire, placing the East half under his own control, the West under Maximian; remains an important division still today
- Persecutes Christians, but is unable to stamp them out (it will soon become the Empire's dominant religion)
- Abdicates voluntarily, the first emperor ever to do so!



ANCIENT ROMAN FOOD

- Average food was plain and simple: corn porridge like polenta, beans and other legumes, vegetables and, more rarely, pork, chicken or eggs
- Cheese (probably quite like a modern pecorino, ricotta, mozzarella)
- Fish and eels
- Garum, or fermented cod sauce (salt was extremely rare, hence *soldatus* and *salary*). Sounds gross? Do you ever use Worcestershire sauce?
- To drink: ritual offer of water. Wine was a *daily* drink for everyone (slaves included); perhaps a bottle per day; very high alcohol content. Sweet whites and Greek wines were preferred. Beer existed, but was not well known or liked.

