CHAPTER 1

The Divided Body Politic

In the summer of 63 BCE, rumors of a conspiracy began spreading in Rome. Catiline, it was said, had held a meeting at his home in which he alluded to the cancellation of debt and other radical proposals if his bid for the consulship were successful.[1] In response, Cicero proposed that the senate delay the election and hold a meeting to debate the allegations. When Catiline was called onto the senate floor to defend himself, he decided to forego a typical explanation and instead offer his audience an unusual metaphor of the body politic. As Cicero later recalled, *tum enim dixit duo corpora esse rei publicae, unum debile infirmo capite, alterum firmum sine capite; huic, si ita de se meritum esset, caput se vivo non defuturum* ("He said then that the *res publica* had two bodies, one feeble with a weak head, the other strong without a head; and that the latter, if it proved worthy of him, would not lack a head while he was alive," Cic. *Mur.* 51). The senators were so horrified at Catiline's figuration of the *res publica* that they cried aloud in response (*congemuit senatus frequens*), convinced of his intention to overthrow the Republic.[2] Yet Cicero never explains what made the metaphor so provocative. Did the controversy stem from Catiline's description of a doubled body politic? Was it his proclaimed intention to serve as the head of the people? Or was it his implication that someone else was already playing a capital role in the senate? Cicero's lack of explanation suggests that the answer would have been obvious to his audience, if not to readers today.[3] Only when Catiline's speech is situated

[1] Frolov 2018: 245–7 and Tatum 2013: 146–7 discuss the ideological import of Catiline's *contio domestica*, as Cicero paradoxically terms it (Cic. *Mur.* 50).

[2] Plutarch tells the same story but declines to mention the feebleness of the senate's head. He calls Catiline's response "mad" (μανικὴν ἀπόκρισιν, Plut. *Cic.* 14.4).

[3] The lack of clarity surrounding Catiline's metaphor is reflected in its scholarly interpretations. Fantham 2013: *ad loc.* notes the ambiguity of *infirmo capite*, asking "who? Cicero?", while Walters 2020: 14, fn. 42 asks, "the senate? Cicero?"; Meister 2012: 160 does not address the ambiguity; Ash 1997: 196–7, drawing on Adamietz 1989: *ad loc.*, speculates that the first body is "the senate with its weak consuls" and the second "the leaderless plebs."

in relation to the norms of Roman Republicanism, I suggest, does the source of his transgression become clear.

This chapter argues that Catiline's speech operated at the intersection of two familiar problems of Roman political thought: how to understand the relationship between the senate and people and how to define the role of the ambitious statesman within the constraints of the mixed constitution. The metaphor of the body politic equipped speakers with a set of familiar images to address both these concerns. The origins of the tradition can be traced back to the Fable of the Belly, which suggested that the senate and people tended towards harmony in the same way the parts of a human body did. Yet the context of the fable's delivery, the First Secession of the Plebs, points to the recurring problem of civil strife in a community structured around an ideological divide between the "senate" and "people." As factionalism threatened to expose the disjuncture between the idealized body politic of myth and the actual operation of politics, Roman thinkers began to portray the *res publica* as a wounded, severed, and doubled organism. Their imagery of civic fragmentation expressed anxiety over the tendency of productive contestation to devolve into something more sinister. Catiline drew on this mode of discourse but mobilized it to new ends. Rather than lament the division of the Republic or propose strategies for its reunification, he used it as an opportunity for the acquisition of personal power.

Catiline conveyed his interest in acquiring a form of authority beyond the parameters of Republican statesmanship when he proclaimed himself the *caput populi*. Romans were familiar with the head of state metaphor, but it had implicit associations with kingship that made it inappropriate for figuring magisterial authority inside the Republic. There is in fact no extant example of a consul or other statesman being positively described as a head of state prior to the establishment of the Principate. An institution or place might play this role, but in the rare cases that individuals were linked to such imagery, it marked their deviation from ancestral norms. In announcing his desire to assume this position, Catiline revealed his tyrannical aspirations. Therein lay the shock to his audience and Cicero's extreme response to his adversary. Although his words were quickly dismissed as the musings of a madman, they were indicative of broader shifts in political language. Treating his imagery alongside that of Cicero, Sallust, Varro, and others, I identify the metaphor of the body politic as a key site of contestation between competing visions of the *res publica* in the mid-first century BCE. The consequences of this investigation extend into the

next chapter, which considers the figurative diseases burrowing in Rome's veins and viscera.

Senate and People in the Republican Body Politic

According to Livy, Dionysius, and later Imperial writers, the Roman body politic tradition began with a speech that Menenius Agrippa delivered in response to the First Secession of the Plebs in 494 BCE.[4] Addressing the plebeians who had withdrawn to the Sacred Mount in protest of their mistreatment by the senate, Menenius described a body whose limbs became resentful because they seemed to do all the work while the belly received all the food. They decided to stop eating to punish the belly, but soon found themselves wasting away. Only then did they realize the important role that the belly played in distributing nutrients throughout the body; what seemed like a position of privilege was in fact one of duty and responsibility. Having learned this lesson, the members abandoned their revolt, reconciled themselves with the belly, and revived their shared body. Comparing the tale to current affairs, Menenius suggested that the patricians were akin to the belly and the plebeians to the members. Civic health depended upon the deference of the latter to the former. His audience evidently agreed; according to Livy, *comparando hinc quam intestina corporis seditio similis esset irae plebis in patres, flexisse mentes hominum* ("By comparing in this way how the intestinal sedition of the body was similar to the anger of the plebeians towards the patricians, he changed the minds of men," Liv. 2.32.12). As the plebeians descended from the Sacred Mount, they physically and symbolically reunified the *res publica*. The metaphor of the body politic enabled this process by naturalizing concord in a community that seemed predisposed towards conflict.

By the Augustan era, the Fable of the Belly had begun playing an important role in the foundational mythology of the Republic.[5] Its persuasiveness derived from its representation of contingent social groupings (*plebes* and *patres*) as interdependent parts of a larger civic whole. Such interdependence did not carry any corollary notion of social equality, but rather validated an institutional hierarchy predicated upon senatorial

[4] The fable appears at Liv. 2.32.8–12; Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 6.86; Val. Max. 8.9.1; Plut. *Cor.* 6.3–4; Quint. *Inst.* 5.11.19; Flor. *Epit.* 1.17.23; Cass. Dio 4.17.10–12 (Zon. 7.14). Scholarly treatments include Walters 2020: 7–17; Gershon 2020; O'Gorman 2019: 133–6; López Barja de Quiroga 2007: 104–18; Koschorke 2007: 15–54; Hillgruber 1996: 42–56; Bertelli 1972; Hale 1968; Ogilvie 1965: *ad loc.* 2.32; Momigliano 1942; Nestle 1927.

[5] See Ch. 3 for a discussion of the fable in its Augustan context.

authority and popular acquiescence.[6] Even as the fable justified the unequal distribution of power, however, it also emphasized the affective bonds between citizens, whose shared identification with the *res publica* elides distinctions in status within it.[7] In identifying the First Secession of the Plebs as the point of origin for this tradition, Roman writers tied the metaphor of the body politic to the structural conflict between the senate and people. This duality vastly oversimplified the complexity of Republican politics but was nevertheless central to its representation.[8] The statesman, in contrast, was not a central preoccupation of the story. While Menenius Agrippa stands out for the eloquence of his delivery, the fable does not assign him any specific role in the political community. Over the course of the next two chapters, we will see how its silence on the question of individual authority proved fertile ground for imagistic innovation.

To what extent can the Fable of the Belly be interpreted as an authentic product of Republican political thought? Dionysius describes it as an Aesopic fable told in all the ancient histories, while Livy says it was narrated in an old-fashioned and rustic manner.[9] Their emphasis on its antiquity raises the question of Greek influence. Metaphors of the body politic first appeared in Greek literature in the Archaic era, when Theognis compared Megara to a pregnant woman and Solon lamented a wound on the body of Athens.[10] Oriented towards civic disruption and *stasis*, such imagery soon became commonplace across the genres of drama, philosophy, and oratory.[11] It was perhaps first theorized in Aristotle's *Politics*, where it is used to naturalize the *polis*: καὶ πρότερον δὲ τῇ φύσει πόλις ἢ οἰκία καὶ ἕκαστος ἡμῶν ἐστιν. τὸ γὰρ ὅλον πρότερον ἀναγκαῖον εἶναι τοῦ μέρους· ἀναιρουμένου γὰρ τοῦ ὅλου οὐκ ἔσται ποὺς οὐδὲ χείρ, εἰ μὴ ὁμωνύμως ("Thus also the city-state is prior in nature to the household and to each of us individually. For the whole must necessarily be prior to the part; since when the whole body is destroyed, foot or hand will not exist except in an

[6] Corbeill 2006: 439 describes the senate's privileged role as a function of the natural order.

[7] See Connolly 2007: 45 and Feldherr 1998: 121, who suggests that the fable "provides a constant resource for the generation of collective loyalty."

[8] Mouritsen 2017: 73 discusses the ideological importance of binaries like *senatus populusque Romanus* in Roman political culture.

[9] λέγεται μῦθόν τινα εἰπεῖν εἰς τὸν Αἰσώπειον τρόπον . . . ὁ λόγος καὶ φέρεται ἐν ἁπάσαις ταῖς ἀρχαίαις ἱστορίαις ("It is said that he told this sort of story in an Aesopic manner . . . and the speech is handed down in all the ancient histories," Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 6.83.2); *prisco illo dicendi et horrido modo* ("in that ancient and rough manner of speaking," Liv. 2.32.8).

[10] κύει πόλις ἥδε (Thgn. Fr. 39–40 West); ἕλκος ἄφυκτον (Solon Fr. 4.17 West).

[11] e.g. Herod. 5.28; Pind. *Pyth.* 4.270–1; Soph. *Ant.* 1015; Eur. *IA* 411. See Brock 2013: 69–82; Cagnetta 2001; Kosak 2000; Cambiano 1982.

equivocal sense," Arist. *Pol.* 1253a, trans. Rackham 1932). Just as limbs and organs can only function as part of a larger whole, individuals and households cannot live fully outside their communities.[12] Justifying the primacy of collective interests over individual ones, the analogy is similar in orientation to the Fable of the Belly.[13] Yet the precise path by which the body politic tradition made its leap to Rome remains a mystery.

Equally unclear is when this leap occurred. Scholars have proposed dates ranging from the fourth to first centuries BCE, though many would likely agree on a mid-Republican date.[14] More important to my study than its early history, however, is its role in Late Republican political discourse. This focus places us on firmer footing. In the *Brutus*, Cicero refers to a speech delivered on the Sacred Mount during the First Secession of Plebs. Although he does not specify its contents, he confirms that it was used to quell discord: *dicendo sedavisse discordias* (Cic. *Brut.* 54).[15] In the roughly contemporary *De Officiis*, he seems to draw inspiration from the Fable of the Belly to describe a body sickened by the selfishness of its limbs. Developing the comparison to convey the injustice of violating individual interests, he explains, *si unum quodque membrum sensum hunc haberet, ut posse putaret se valere si proximi membri valitudinem ad se traduxisset, debilitari et interire totum corpus necesse esset* ("If each individual limb were to have this idea, that it thought it could thrive by drawing away the strength of a neighboring limb to itself, the whole body would necessarily grow weak and perish," Cic. *Off.* 3.22).[16] In the same way, he continues, each person must respect what belongs to others or risk

[12] As Riesbeck 2016: 2 puts it, "it is only in and through political community that rational animals can flourish in a fully human way." See Cherry and Goerner 2006: 572–3 on the *polis* as ontologically prior to the household.

[13] Nestle 1927 explores the scanty Greek evidence for the metaphor, tying it to sophistic literature of the fifth century BCE. Perhaps the most direct precedent comes from Xenophon, who likens two quarreling brothers to a body whose members refuse to work together. He does not extend the moral of the story to the political sphere, however (Xen. *Mem.* 2.3.18–9).

[14] Bertelli 1972: 227–8 and Momigliano 1942: 118 suggest a fourth century BCE date; Ogilvie 1965: 312–3 argues for a date in the late third century BCE; López Barja de Quiroga 2007: 114–7 sees the early second century BCE as more likely; Nestle 1927 delays the entrance of the fable to the mid-first century BCE. I am inclined to follow Ogilvie's location of the fable "in the formative period of Roman historiography" initiated by Fabius Pictor.

[15] Cicero identifies the speaker as Marcus Valerius rather than Menenius Agrippa. Wiseman 1998: 87 suggests the discrepancy resulted from the intervention of the Late Republican historian Valerius Antias, who was notorious for inserting his own family members into historical events. Pieper 2016: 159–64 expresses doubt towards this idea, stressing the absence of Menenius Agrippa in all pre-Augustan evidence for the fable.

[16] Dyck 1996: *ad loc.* discusses the points of contact between Cicero's metaphor and the Fable of the Belly.

endangering the partnership (*societas*) upon which community hinges.[17] In this case, it is the limbs' disrespect for private property rather than any explicit dissatisfaction with the political order that spells societal doom. Yet the distribution of property was always a way to talk about that of political power, and never more so than amid the contentious land reform bills of the first century BCE.[18] Cicero's argument that each member should have only its just deserts is if anything a rephrasing of Menenius' warning that the limbs not overstep the boundaries of their assigned roles. In both cases, Rome is analogized to a human body to protect elite privilege.

Although the *Brutus* and *De Officiis* were composed in the 40s BCE, Cicero's engagement with the body politic tradition began much earlier. The phrase *corpus civitatis* appears for the first time in *De Inventione*, the youthful rhetorical treatise that marked the start of his writing career.[19] He uses the analogy to explain the concept of common advantage (*utilitas*), writing, *ut in re publica quaedam sunt, quae, ut sic dicam, ad corpus pertinent civitatis, ut agri, portus, pecunia, classis, nautae, milites, socii, quibus rebus incolumitatem ac libertatem retinent civitates* ("Just as in the *res publica* there are certain things which, so to speak, relate to the body politic, like fields, ports, wealth, fleets, sailors, soldiers, and allies, through which political communities preserve their security and liberty," Cic. *Inv.* 2.168). Cicero acknowledges his use of figurative speech with *ut sic dicam* but assumes his audience's familiarity with the metaphor, which allows him to define *utilitas* in relation to the *res publica*.[20] Insofar as his commonplace stresses the advantages shared by all citizens, it has a unifying function that is similar in orientation to the examples considered earlier. The treatise suggests the circulation of the Fable of the Belly tradition by the early first century BCE, engendering confidence that it played a meaningful role in the political discourse of the Late Republic.

Oversimplified models of command and obedience were a recurrent element of this tradition, though the institutions selected for analysis varied in accordance with rhetorical aims. Whereas the Fable of the Belly focuses on the senate and people, the *Pro Cluentio* sets up a dichotomy between the law and other parts of the *res publica.* Comparing *lex* to *mens*, Cicero explains, *ut corpora nostra sine mente, sic civitas sine lege suis partibus*

[17] See Hammer 2014: 63 on the "differential contributions of *societas*" in Cicero's political thought, as well as further discussion of this idea later.
[18] For agrarian reform as a leitmotiv of the last century of the Republic, see Brunt 1988: 240.
[19] Cicero later characterized the two books of *De Inventione* as *inchoata ac rudia* (Cic. *De Or.* 1.5), suggesting that the language used within them was not innovative.
[20] Wood 1988: 128–9.

ut nervis ac sanguine et membris uti non potest. Legum ministri magistratus, legum interpretes iudices, legum denique idcirco omnes servi sumus ut liberi esse possimus ("As our bodies are not able to use their nerves and blood and limbs without the mind, so our political community cannot use its parts without the law. Magistrates are the servants of the laws, judges are the interpreters of the laws, and we are all finally slaves of the laws so that we may be free," Cic. *Clu.* 146).[21] Just as the mind enables the various parts of the human body to function, the law allows the diverse elements of the Republic to do so. Cicero elaborates on this point by identifying three components of the human body that rely upon reason (nerves, blood, and limbs) and three groups in the body politic that rely upon the law (magistrates, judges, and the citizenry). His idealistic portrait of the law obscures its practical status as a combination of the senate's deliberative authority, people's right of acclamation, and magistrate's duty of enforcement. It is instead portrayed as an autonomous and rational authority that unilaterally presides over the rest of the *res publica*. Social differences within this system are effaced as everyone is represented as equally enslaved to – and paradoxically liberated by – a higher power. Stressing organic unity over disparities in political, economic, and social power, Cicero crafts a vision of the body politic that is distinctive yet works within the parameters of an established tradition.

The analogy that Cicero constructs between *lex* and *mens* points to the role of the reasoning faculties in figuring political authority. In debating which element of the mixed constitution best approximated the role of reason in the body, Roman thinkers explored broader questions about the distribution of power in the Republic. Cicero's own views on this topic changed from text to text; in the *Pro Milone*, for example, the senate assumes the role of *mens*. He makes the comparison as part of a sustained attack on those who participated in burning down the Curia at the funeral of P. Clodius Pulcher. To convey the significance of the building they destroyed, he calls it *templum sanctitatis, amplitudinis, mentis, consili publici, caput urbis, aram sociorum, portum omnium gentium, sedem ab universo populo concessam uni ordini* ("the temple of sacredness, grandeur, intellect, public counsel, the head of the city, altar of the allies, haven for all nations,

[21] Cicero uses a similar metaphor elsewhere to describe natural law, writing, *ea est enim naturae vis, ea mens ratioque prudentis, ea iuris atque iniuriae regula* ("For this [*lex*] is the power of nature, this is the mind and reason of the sensible man, this is the measure of justice and injustice," Cic. *Leg.* 1.19). Here, however, he refers to "right reason" rather than the imperfect statutes created by human societies. On his approach to natural vs. human law, see the recent discussions of Hawley 2022: 15–62; Atkins 2013a: 155–87; Asmis 2008.

seat granted to one order by all the people," Cic. *Mil.* 90). His description of the Curia as the head of the city is surprising; as we will soon see, the Capitoline typically played this role in Rome's urban landscape.[22] Here, however, the comparison reinforces the senate's association with the ideals of logic and rationality. Those who gather in the Curia stand in contrast to the unlearned crowd (*multitudo imperita*, Cic. *Mil.* 90), whose illogical impulses make it more akin to the mutinous limbs described in the Fable of the Belly.[23]

A famous quip attributed to the Elder Cato illustrates the intersection between the trope of the irrational crowd and the metaphor of the body politic. Reversing the symbolism of the Fable of the Belly, Cato responded to a popular request for a grain dole by identifying the people as Rome's stomach: χαλεπὸν μέν ἐστιν ὦ πολῖται πρὸς γαστέρα λέγειν ὦτα οὐκ ἔχουσαν ("It is difficult, citizens, to argue with the belly since it has no ears," Plut. *Cat. Mai.* 8.1). Rather than stress the role of the belly in distributing nutrients throughout the body, Cato draws on its more familiar association with the sensual appetites.[24] Denied the ears necessary to participate in rational debate, the people are cast as a drain on public resources. Cicero often expressed similar views when speaking privately; in a characteristic letter to Atticus, he refers to *illa contionalis hirudo aerari, misera ac ieiuna plebecula* ("Those *contio*-attending bloodsuckers of the treasury, the miserable and hungry rabble," Cic. *Att.* 1.16.11). He compares the crowd to leeches feasting on the treasury, an institution elsewhere identified as the *viscera* of Rome (Cic. *Dom.* 23, 124). Although he would likely insist that this crowd, whose parasitic greed justifies its subordination, had little in common with the idealized *populus Romanus*, he shares Cato's impulse to use organic imagery to diminish popular contributions to the shared project of governance.[25]

The *Epistulae ad Caesarem* goes further in using the reasoning faculties to validate senatorial authority against the popular will. Although likely an

[22] Keeline 2021: *ad loc.* dismisses the textual variant *caput orbis*, despite Cicero's identification of the senate as the counsel of the world elsewhere (e.g. *in publico orbis terrae consilio*, Cic. *Fam.* 3.8.4; *summo consilio orbis terrae*, Cic. *Phil.* 7.19). It is perhaps worth noting that Varro argues for *cor* as the etymological root of *curia* (Varro, *Ling.* 6.46), on which see Spencer 2019: 156–7.

[23] Morstein-Marx 2004: 68 notes that the adjective *imperitus* attaches to *plebs* or *multitudo* "virtually as a formula."

[24] Morstein-Marx 2004: 83 writes "A bestialized urban mob, whose enslavement to its appetites and desperate circumstances make it incapable of reason, is one of the stock characters of the Roman political drama scripted by ancient writers."

[25] Mouritsen 2001: 40–1 and Millar 1998: 120 discuss the letter's attempt to distinguish between this mob and the *populus Romanus*.

Imperial forgery, it remains a valuable source for what later Romans believed to be characteristic of Republican discourse.[26] Throughout the text, Ps.-Sallust sustains the persona of a Caesarian partisan eager to identify the shortcomings of the senate. Even so, he does not question the propriety of its command, writing, *igitur ubi plebs senatui sicuti corpus animo oboedit eiusque consulta exsequitur, patres consilio valere decet, populo supervacuanea est calliditas* ("Therefore, since the plebs obey the senate as a body does its mind and follow its recommendations, the senate should be strong in respect to its counsel; cleverness is unnecessary for the people," *Ad Caes. sen.* 2.10.6).[27] His phrasing echoes the prefaces of the *Bellum Catilinae* and *Bellum Iugurthinum*, both of which foreground the duality of mind and body.[28] Sallust does not explicitly extend these comparisons to the Republic, though we will see in the next chapter how the sick body politic is incorporated into his text. Ps.-Sallust, however, picks up where his predecessor left off. He represents the model of a senatorial mind and popular body as an ideal from which the contemporary *res publica* has deviated. While he blames the senate for creating this situation, he leaves the more fundamental assumption of its supremacy unchallenged. The limited scope of his critique suggests the normativity of senatorial privilege in figurations of the Republican body politic.

These examples suggest the frequency with which the duality of mind and body was used to validate the deliberative authority of the senate. Could the same rhetorical strategy be used to assert the power of the Roman people? A passage from Varro's *De Lingua Latina* raises this possibility. Explaining the propriety of conforming to the popular will in relation to language, Varro writes, *ego populi consuetudinis non sum ut dominus, at ille meae est. ut rationi optemperare debet gubernator, gubernatori unusquisque in navi, sic populus rationi, nos singuli populo* ("I am not the master of the usage of the people, but it is the master of mine. As a helmsman ought to conform to reason, and every individual on the

[26] Syme 1958a made an influential case for the text's status as an Imperial forgery, but Duplá, Fatás Cabeza, and Pina Polo 1994 argue for its authenticity. Novokhatko 2009: 111–49 offers an overview of the debate.

[27] Santangelo 2012: 41–2 sees the senatorial–popular divide as a central theme in both letters which he praises for their fluency in Republican political language.

[28] *sed nostra omnis vis in animo et corpore sita est: animi imperio, corporis servitio magis utimur* ("But all our strength has been placed in the mind and body; we use the command of the mind and rather the servitude of the body," Sall. *Cat.* 1.1); *nam uti genus hominum conpositum ex corpore et anima est, ita res cunctae studiaque omnia nostra corporis alia, alia animi naturam secuntur* ("For just as the human race is composed of body and soul, so are all our affairs and pursuits; some follow the nature of the body, others that of the mind," Sall. *Iug.* 2.1). Earl 1961: 7–8 addresses the role of the mind–body duality in Sallust's political thought.

ship to the helmsman, so the people ought to conform to reason, and all of us to the people," Varro, *Ling.* 9.6). Although Varro writes in the context of linguistic usage rather than politics, his attribution of rational authority to the people is striking.[29] It is brought into sharper relief through comparison to Cicero, who describes the senate as the master of public deliberation (*senatus dominus sit publici consili*) and suggests that the people should be steered by its judgment (*consilio rem publicam gubernari*, Cic. *Leg.* 3.28).[30] T. P. Wiseman uses these passages as evidence that Cicero and Varro stood "on opposite sides of an ideological divide," the former interested in protecting elite privilege and the latter sympathetic to the popular cause.[31] Varro's inversion of the normative configuration of the mind–body duality supports this view, hinting at an alternative strand of Roman Republicanism. The conservative bent of our extant sources, however, prevents us from saying much more.[32]

This section has argued that Roman thinkers used the metaphor of the body politic to make weighted claims about the distribution of political power in the mixed constitution. On the one hand, their imagery was marked by a high degree of variety; the senate could be identified as the mind or belly of the civic organism, while the people could be compared to mutinous limbs or bloodsucking leeches. Such diversity confirms that there was no single model of the body politic in the paradigm of Roman Republicanism, just as there was no agreed upon definition of *res publica*.[33] Which institutions were most relevant to the practice of politics and how power should be distributed between them were questions contested both practically and figuratively. On the other hand, a unified organism composed of two rival social groups was a recurrent element of this tradition. It is not necessarily obvious that the Romans would have conceptualized their community in this way. The Republic encompassed a patchwork empire that was geographically dispersed, linguistically and ethnically heterogeneous, with belonging regulated by gradients of citizenship. Those living within Rome were distinguished on the basis of birth, wealth, residency, and other classifiers.[34] Even a category like *nobiles* effaced substantial differences in the social standing, economic power, and

[29] De Melo 2019: *ad loc.* comments, "essentially the terminology is that used for slave-owners."
[30] See Mebane 2022 on metaphors of pilotage in Republican political discourse.
[31] Wiseman 2009: 112–20.
[32] See Millar 1998: 207 on the difficulty – but importance – of accessing "conceptions of popular political rights" through the "partial and indirect view" provided by our elite sources.
[33] On the indeterminacy of this term, see Introduction alongside Moatti 2018 and Hodgson 2017.
[34] Ando 2015: 54 describes this sort of pluralism as "the essence of empire as a political form," while Dench 2005: 4 stresses "the plural nature of Roman identity" as central to Roman self-conception.

political outlook of those who comprised its ranks.[35] To translate such complexity into an ideology predicated upon the existence of only two classes required a persuasive conceptual apparatus. The human body, composed of many elements yet also reducible to the duality of *animus–corpus*, provided one.

The metaphor of the body politic was not only useful in naturalizing the existence of two rival social groups, but also in explaining their coalescence into a larger whole. While Romans embraced the conflictual aspects of their political process, they also saw civic cohesion as a precondition for its success.[36] Cicero's Scipio makes this clear in his famous definition of *res publica* as *res populi*, explaining, *populus autem non omnis hominum coetus quoquo modo congregatus, sed coetus multitudinis iuris consensu et utilitatis communione sociatus* ("Yet a people is not just a group of men who have been brought together in any manner, but the gathering of many individuals united by a shared view of justice and a commitment to the common advantage," Cic. *Rep.* 1.39). Scipio describes the *res publica* as a partnership (*societas*) predicated upon shared values.[37] A prerequisite for this partnership is the cohesion of its members, a point stressed through a pointed succession of *co*-compounds.[38] Yet Scipio does not detail the institutional mechanisms that produce cohesion.[39] His vagueness is characteristic of Cicero's political thought more broadly, which tends to assume "a subjective notion of ongoing agreement" without delving into specifics.[40] Of greater concern was the ability of oratory and philosophy to generate affective bonds between citizens and foster their emotional attachment to the *res publica*.[41] Metaphors of social organization facilitated this conceptual project by prioritizing the instinctual over the logical. They allowed Cicero to frame

[35] See Hölkeskamp 2010: 32 on internal hierarchies within the governing elite.

[36] Connolly 2015, in particular, theorizes an agonistic model of Roman Republicanism against the consensualism associated with neo-republicanism. McCormick 2011 makes a similar case in his study of Machiavelli's *Discorsi*. On *concordia* as an equally foundational ideal of Ciceronian political thought, however, see Kennedy 2014: 491–6.

[37] Only if citizens hold the same view on justice and common advantage can they achieve the *societas* upon which the *res publica* is based (Schofield 1995: 74). On the *res publica* as "a cooperative enterprise undertaken for the common benefit of all its members," see Atkins 2013a: 134 alongside discussion in Introduction.

[38] Asmis 2005: 400–1.

[39] Atkins 2013a: 115 suggests that this unity is envisioned as a byproduct of a political culture rooted in the customs and traditions of the past.

[40] Hammer 2014: 47.

[41] Hammer 2008: 38–77. Connolly 2015: 79 warns that such affective associations provide little guidance on questions of civic judgment and justice.

unity as the primordial state of a citizenry increasingly unable to find common ground by the first century BCE.

This point becomes clearer in relation to the famous analogy between musical harmony and societal concord that appears in Book 2 of *De Republica*. When individuals come together to play instruments or sing, Scipio explains, they achieve harmony (*concentus*) through the blending of distinct sounds (*ex distinctis sonis*). Concord does not derive from an insistence upon sameness, but rather the successful blending of difference: *isque concentus ex dissimillimarum vocum moderatione concors tamen efficitur et congruens* ("This harmony, through the moderation of very unlike voices, is nevertheless made concordant and consistent," Cic. *Rep.* 2.69). Just as musical harmony does not require everyone to sing the same note, civic concord does not demand homogeneity: *sic ex summis et infimis et mediis interiectis ordinibus, ut sonis, moderata ratione civitas consensu dissimillimorum concinit* ("In the same way, the political community, regulated through the symmetry of the highest and lowest and intervening middling orders, as if sounds, produces harmony from the agreement of very different people," Cic. *Rep.* 2.69). Embracing difference through his use of the superlative (*dissimillimorum*), Scipio suggests that social hierarchy is an integral element of rather than barrier to the realization of concord.[42] The clarity of this principle in a musical context is used to naturalize its less obvious operation in politics.[43] The metaphor of the body politic worked similarly.[44] Showing how parts as diverse as the belly, feet, and mind could coalesce into a single organism, it invited Romans to extend their own ontological experiences of "unity and integration, identity and concord, wholeness and indivisibility" to the *res publica* at large.[45] In this way, it helped Cicero and his contemporaries reconcile the ideals of conflict and consensus.

[42] Scipio does not posit *concordia* as a byproduct of the mixed constitution, but rather the balance of the senatorial, equestrian, and popular orders (Asmis 2005: 406). This balance is made possible by "the mutual recognition by the 'orders' of the equitableness of their differing contributions and entitlements," (Schofield 2021: 45). Or as Kapust 2011: 83 describes it, the bond of *concordia* unites what is dissimilar through agreement.

[43] Ando 2011b: 99 writes, "The problem of concord was of course one that preoccupied Cicero, and not only him; alas, nowhere in his extant works does he outline in substantive terms a mechanism by which consensus among most dissimilar individuals – the superlative is important – was to be achieved, even as the very great differences internal to the populace were respected and, indeed, protected." Ferrary 1995: 65 suggests that it is not an institution, but rather a *prudens*, or wise man, that can merge these elements and secure concord.

[44] Arena 2020: 107–8 treats Scipio's metaphor alongside the Fable of the Belly to illustrate the "need of *concordia* for the effective working of the commonwealth."

[45] Neocleous 2003: 14. See also Uden 2020: 132.

Discord as Division and Doubling

In the last section, I argued that Roman thinkers favored the metaphor of the body politic because it naturalized both the social divisions embedded in the Republic and the subordination of those divisions to an overarching ideal of concord. Yet it is important to emphasize how rare depictions of a well-functioning body politic were. Far more common were portrayals of a political community on the brink of death.[46] Such claims were part of a broader conversation about civic decline that took many rhetorical forms.[47] When the paradigm of decline intersected with the problem of discord, it produced distinctive imagery of a body politic that had lost its physical integrity. Rome was figured as an organism that had doubled, divided, or simply collapsed into a heap of bloody parts. Such imagery located the realization of consensus in the past and expressed concern over its absence in the present. It conveyed bewilderment at how the conflictual politics upon which the Republic had long been based had turned toxic and deadly. Tracing the expression of this theme within Cicero and Sallust allows us to see what was so different about Catiline's two-bodied *res publica*.

There was nothing inherently negative about the trope of doubling in Roman discourse.[48] Duplication had long been woven into the fabric of the Republic, which was founded by the twins Romulus and Remus, refounded as a Republic led by two consuls, and composed of two antagonistic social groups. As we saw in the last section, Romans considered these dualities to be integral to their political process. In Ps.-Sallust's view, they were stamped with the imprimatur of ancestral precedent: *in duas partes ego civitatem divisam arbitror, sicut a maioribus accepi, in patres et plebem* ("Personally, I think that the political community has been divided into two parts, the senate and the people, as I have heard from the ancestors," *Ad Caes. sen.* 2.5.1). Although the phrase *in duas partes* was often used to signify factionalism, as we will see in passages from Cicero and Sallust later, Ps.-Sallust does not interpret this division as antithetical

[46] Walters 2020: 23 describes the healthy body politic as a nostalgic ideal against which the present was judged.

[47] See Pocock 2003: 17–60 on competing Roman paradigms of decline; Seng 2017 on the model(s) of decline operative in Cicero's and Sallust's thought; Levick 1982 and Lintott 1972 on the historical merits (or lack thereof) of Roman analyses of decline; Williams 1978: 6–51 on Imperial proclamations of literary decline. In the realm of metaphor, we might think of Cicero's famous comparison of Rome to a painting that has faded with age (Cic. *Rep.* 5.2), on which see Hammer 2008: 58–9; Connolly 2007: 154–6; Wallace-Hadrill 1997: 14.

[48] On doubling, see Neel 2015: 5–11; Bettini 2011: 171–237; Feeney 2010; Konstan 1986: 202–4.

to the realization of concord. Among the ancestors, he says, the *res publica* was one: *quippe apud illos una res publica erat* (*Ad Caes. sen.* 2.10.8). Those writing in the mid-first century BCE, however, were highly aware of the ease with which such conflicts could devolve into violence that suspended rather than invigorated the political process. As widespread anxiety arose over Rome's "ideal twinned harmony going rancid," to use Denis Feeney's memorable phrase, a body politic structured around social division was recast as one that lacked any structure at all.[49]

In Book 1 of *De Republica*, Cicero uses imagery of a divided, doubled, and lacerated body to denote the tipping point of productive contestation into destructive discord. The dialogue opens with the programmatic appearance of two suns in the sky, an event that prompts Q. Aelius Tubero and his fellow interlocutors to begin debating their astrological significance.[50] When prompted for his opinion, C. Laelius connects the symbolism to the political crisis precipitated by the death of Tiberius Gracchus, asking, *quid enim mihi Luci Pauli nepos . . . quaerit quomodo duo soles visi sint, non quaerit cur in una re publica duo senatus et duo paene iam populi sint?* ("Why does the grandson of L. Paulus . . . ask me why two suns are visible, not why there are two senates and nearly now two peoples in a single *res publica*?" Cic. *Rep.* 1.31). Although Laelius' description of social division strikes a familiar chord, it is more complex than the simple duality of senate and people. What worries him is the loss of senatorial consensus, which has produced a rift within the elite that is replicated in the populace at large.[51] Blaming Tiberius Gracchus for this situation, he continues, *nam ut videtis, mors Tiberi Gracchi, et iam ante tota illius ratio tribunatus, divisit populum unum in duas partes* ("For as you see, the death of Tiberius Gracchus and even earlier the whole program of his tribunate split one people into two parts," Cic. *Rep.* 1.31).[52] Laelius ties Rome's civic divide to the rise of a new class of statesmen interested in pursuing political advancement through popular rather than senatorial channels. His analysis points to the centrality of intra-elite competition to Cicero's understanding of discord and its potential remedies. Of primary concern

[49] Feeney 2010: 282.

[50] On the importance of astronomical metaphors to the interpretation of *De Republica*, see Gallagher 2001.

[51] The "discord of the *optimates*" assumes structural importance in the roughly contemporary *De Haruspicum Responsis*, where it appears in a warning issued by the haruspices (Cic. *Har. resp.* 40).

[52] Cicero uses *in duas partes* in the traditional sense of factionalism, on which see Hellegouarc'h 1963: 110–5; Taylor 1949: 10–11. Caesar attributes similar phrasing to the Massilians: *intellegere se divisum esse populum <Romanum> in partes duas* ("They understood that the Roman people were divided into two parts," Caes. *BCiv.* 1.35.3).

is restoring concord to the senate, not reconciling its interests with those of the people.

Although the extant sections of *De Republica* do not reprise the theme of the two senates, the same idea recurs in the *Pro Sestio*, a speech famous for its specious description of Republican politics.[53] In the "manifesto" that dominates the latter third, Cicero suggests that the senate has long been divided into two halves.[54] He explains, *duo genera semper in hac civitate fuerunt eorum qui versari in re publica atque in ea se excellentius gerere studuerunt* ("In this political community, there have always been two kinds of men who have wanted to involve themselves in the *res publica* and conduct themselves excellently within it," Cic. *Sest.* 96). He then introduces the dichotomy of the *populares* and *optimates*, two rival senatorial factions vying for supremacy: *quibus ex generibus alteri se popularis, alteri optimates et haberi et esse voluerunt* ("Of which some wanted both to be and be considered *populares* and others *optimates*," Cic. *Sest.* 96).[55] Whereas the *populares* pander to the crowd and seek its approval at all costs, the *optimates* are guided by virtue and only value the opinions of the best sort of men. The gulf between them is reflected in the broader composition of the populace, in which the idealized *populus Romanus* stands in contrast to the demonized *plebes*. As long as public policy is determined by the *optimates* and their allies, this divide does not preclude the realization of concord.[56] When the *populares* seek excessive power, however, a more dangerous sort of factionalism arises that threatens the long-term stability of the mixed constitution. Cicero joins Laelius in tracing its origins back to the Gracchi, whose legislation produced *discordia* between the leading men and the crowd (Cic. *Sest.* 103). Insofar as the division described in the *Pro Sestio* originates within the senatorial elite, whose disagreement filters down into the larger populace, it mirrors the doubled suns that open *De Republica*. The two texts work in tandem to confirm Cicero's perception of intra-elite

[53] Balsdon 1960: 47 memorably argued for "the political barrenness" of Cicero's thought in the speech. Lacey 1962 responded with a defense of the *Pro Sestio*, which remains one of the few *post reditum* speeches held in high regard.

[54] See Kaster 2006: 31 on the tendency to read this section as "a freestanding political 'manifesto.'"

[55] Recent work on the terminology of *optimates* and *populares* stresses the divergence between Cicero's use of these terms and their standard function in Late Republican discourse. See Gildenhard 2011: 146–56; Kaster 2006: 33; Robb 2010; Stone 2005; Ferrary 1997; Seager 1972.

[56] Kenty 2020: 190–1 emphasizes the inclusivity of this alliance, which allows Cicero to use the broader term *boni* instead of the more polarized label of *optimates*. Stone 2005: 63 suggests *optimates* was too exclusive a term for Cicero to use in relation to his own faction, the existence of which he sought to deny.

competition as the primary catalyst for the splitting of the political community. It is not the urban masses, but rather the politicians who pander to them, who are held responsible for the dysfunctional politics of the 50s BCE.

Cicero frequently conveyed this idea by portraying popular politicians as assailants of the body politic. By wielding figurative weapons against the *res publica*, they challenged its physical integrity and destroyed the consensus connoted by organic wholeness.[57] In the preface to Book 1 of *De Republica*, for example, he urges that readers "not let the *res publica* be torn to shreds by these men," (*neve ab eis dilacerari rem publicam patiantur*, Cic. *Rep.* 1.9). Cicero does not specify the identity of the wicked men (*improbi*) to whom he refers, but he elsewhere uses the same formula in relation to Clodius: *annum integrum ad dilacerandam rem publicam quaereret* ("He was seeking a whole year [as *praetor*] to rip the *res publica* apart," Cic. *Mil.* 24). Comparing the praetorship to a weapon allows Cicero to represent a magistrate elected by the Roman people as a hostile attacker. He employs the same tactic against Piso and Gabinius, who are accused of using their consulship like a sword: *ii summi imperi nomine armati rem publicam contrucidarunt* ("Armed with the title of the highest power, they cut the *res publica* to pieces," Cic. *Sest.* 24).[58] How statesmen like Cicero ought to respond to a body politic on the brink of death is a question taken up in the next chapter. For now, it is sufficient to note that the wounded *res publica* denotes strife that has gone too far. It is used to distinguish productive and destructive modes of conflict, the boundary between which was fading in the 50s BCE.

Although Cicero crafts remarkably bleak imagery of the Roman body politic, he also expresses faith in the prospect of its healing. As Laelius' excursus on the doubled suns comes to an end, he remarks, *senatum vero et populum ut unum habeamus, et fieri potest et permolestum est nisi fit* ("But that we have one senate and people is both possible and worrisome if not achieved," Cic. *Rep.* 1.32). Laelius suggests that what was once whole can be made so again; the two suns need not remain in the sky for long. The seemingly fundamental divide between the *optimates* and *populares* in the *Pro Sestio* likewise disappears almost as quickly as it is introduced.[59] In its place is the harmony of the orders (*concordia ordinum*) and the consensus

[57] See Walters 2020: 62 on the language of laceration here and elsewhere.

[58] *Contrucido*, as Walters 2020: 54 notes, connects the suffering of the Republic to that of P. Sestius, the nominal subject of the speech and a man whose own body has been mangled in more literal fashion (*debilitato corpore et contrucidato*, Cic. *Sest.* 79).

[59] On the rhetorical collapse of this divide, see Gildenhard 2011: 162 and Kaster 2006: 34.

of all good men (*consensus omnium bonorum*), both of which are tied to the cultivation of civic virtue on an individual level.[60] The inclusivity of Cicero's ethical language elides the ideological differences that he has just explicated at length. Provided that his fellow senators nurture their sense of duty and honor, they will naturally arrive at a shared course of action for the *res publica*. He thereby identifies a moral solution to what might be viewed as a structural problem: the increasing frequency with which public institutions like the assembly and the courts exacerbated rather than remediated the political struggles of the mid-first century BCE.[61] Insofar as he views discord as a consequence of moral failure rather than a byproduct of the mixed constitution, Cicero confirms his continued faith in the traditional paradigm of Roman Republicanism.

Writing in the aftermath of Caesar's assassination, Sallust was even more highly attuned than Cicero to the problem of discord in a political community structured around class-based difference. His texts embrace what Daniel Kapust calls an "antagonistic republicanism," one that sees social conflicts as beneficial if they are oriented towards the realization of collective goods like *libertas* and *virtus*.[62] Channeling ambition towards public rather than private ends, however, does not come naturally to the competitive and glory-obsessed Romans. It is a byproduct of extrinsic forces like the fear of a foreign enemy (*metus hostilis*), which allows citizens to struggle for acclaim at the expense of others rather than each other.[63] The looming threat of Carthage ensured the successful operation of this mechanism for centuries, enabling the senate and people to set aside their differences and collaborate in governance: *nam ante Carthaginem deletam populus et senatus Romanus placide modesteque inter se rem publicam tractabant, neque gloriae neque dominationis certamen inter civis erat; metus hostilis in bonis artibus civitatem retinebat* ("For before the destruction of Carthage, the Roman people and senate were managing the *res publica* together peacefully and moderately, and there was a struggle for neither glory nor domination between citizens; fear of a foreign enemy was holding the political community to honorable means," Sall. *Iug.* 41.2). Sallust constructs this passage to emphasize the primacy of collective over individual

[60] Wood 1988: 198–9.

[61] While neo-republicans see such public institutions as the primary mechanism through which contestation yields to consensus, the Roman Republic asks us to consider what happens when public institutions worsen the conflicts they are theoretically designed to resolve.

[62] Kapust 2011: 31.

[63] Earl 1961: 59 discusses the role of *metus Punicus*, specifically, in Sallust's political thought. Dunsch 2006 traces variations on this theme across Sallust's works, while Vassiliades 2013 argues that a lack of external enemies leads to the creation of internal ones.

interests (*inter se*; *inter civis*). As long as class-based identities are subordinated to the common good, he suggests, concord remains an achievable aim. Perhaps more than his contemporaries, however, he recognized that civic cohesion had to be actively secured rather than passively assumed. His interest in the forces that facilitated its realization yields a strikingly structural analysis of Republican politics.

The *Bellum Iugurthinum* illustrates what happens when a societal mechanism responsible for producing concord is removed.[64] After the downfall of Carthage, Sallust explains, individuals began to pursue their own interests at the expense of the community. The spread of vice and deterioration of virtue soon followed.[65] As the people prioritized their freedom (*libertas*) and the senate their standing (*dignitas*), a once unified *res publica* was torn to shreds: *ita omnia in duas partis abstracta sunt, res publica, quae media fuerat, dilacerata* ("In this way everything was split into two parts; the *res publica*, which had been shared, was chopped to pieces," Sall. *Iug.* 41.5).[66] Sallust joins Cicero in using imagery of a wounded body politic to denote the devolution of generative social conflict into destructive civil strife. Both blame the corrupted morals of the Roman elite, who have perverted ancestral tradition through their pursuit of personal gain. Yet whereas Cicero restricts this criticism to the so-called *populares*, Sallust extends it to the senatorial class at large.[67] The two thinkers likewise diverge in their identification of solutions to the problem. Cicero focuses on the cultivation of civic virtue, which can rehabilitate the flawed morals of individual statesmen, restore senatorial consensus, and set the Republic back on its proper course.[68] Sallust, in contrast, portrays men as predisposed towards difference and disagreement. Overriding this predisposition is not a matter of philosophical study; it requires the implementation of new mechanisms for channeling "antagonistic energies." He sees the practice of rhetoric as one such solution; balancing the tensions of political life without removing them, the rhetorical battlefield offered a potential

[64] Shaw 2022: 194 stresses the close connection between the absence of Carthage and decline of Roman morals in the *Bellum Iugurthinum*.

[65] Balmaceda 2017: 48–82 argues that *vitium* gradually replaces *virtus* in Sallust's narratives, while McDonnell 2006: 356–84 sees a confrontation between Greek and Roman conceptions of *virtus* within them.

[66] On the conflict between *dignitas* and *libertas* in Sallust's political thought, see Earl 1961: 53–7.

[67] Connolly 2015: 100 asks, "If wealth corrupts the republic at the top, must not poverty and deprivation corrupt it everywhere else . . . ?"

[68] Honohan 2002: 33 cites Cicero for his argument that the maintenance of republican liberty hinges on the virtue of the political classes. Philp 1996: 387–8 extends the argument for civic virtue to the citizenry at large. On the intellectual origins of this idea in Cicero's political thought, see Schofield 2021: 147–51.

path back to political vitality.[69] Whether the words of the orator might indeed provide a civic cure is a question that we will see Cicero approaching from a different direction in the next chapter.

While Cicero and Sallust diverge in their interpretations of the discord plaguing the Republic, they share a nostalgic attachment to the unified body politic enjoyed by their ancestors. So does Ps.-Sallust, whose fictive letters to Caesar explore strategies for reestablishing *una res publica* (*Ad Caes. sen.* 2.10.8). Catiline's image of a two-bodied Republic (*duo corpora esse rei publicae*) emerged from this tradition but worked towards opposite ends. It denied the interdependence upon which the Fable of the Belly and other normative organic metaphors were based. After all, why should a political community rooted in dichotomies and dualities coalesce as one? The factionalism that others treat as the corruption of the political process is reframed as the status quo. Catiline was not interested in reconciling these bodies but rather adapting Rome's governing structure to better meet their different needs. He made this point clear when he announced his desire to serve as the *caput populi*. Putting a head atop an organism that conspicuously lacked one, he sought to incorporate an exceptional statesman into a tradition that left little room for individual authority. In doing so, he raised the troubling possibility that the body politic might need to change its shape to survive.

Missing and Monstrous Heads

Catiline's description of the *duo corpora rei publicae* marked a purposeful intervention in the normative body politic tradition. Rather than describing the people as limbs subordinate to senatorial authority, he argued that they had a fully-fledged body of their own. His words confirmed that organic imagery could be mobilized to validate the authority of the people against that of the senate. Yet Catiline also described the body of the people as headless (*sine capite*), implying that its autonomy was only possible under his command. In doing so, he transgressed an implicit boundary in the figuration of political authority. While Romans were comfortable comparing institutions like the senate and the courts to the reasoning faculties, they rarely used such analogies in relation to individual statesmen. They were not only disinclined to label a magistrate the *mens*, *ratio*, or *animus* of the Republic, but also avoided the body part with which reason was often associated: the head. In fact, there are no extant examples

[69] Kapust 2011: 54–5.

in Late Republican texts in which the authority of the statesman is validated through the comparison of head and body. I argue that this silence stemmed from the head's association with kingship, a connection that went back to Plato. In the rare cases where Republican writers applied capital imagery to the *res publica*, they did so to draw attention to the subversion of Republican norms. In making explicit use of this symbolism, Catiline laid bare his desire for *dominatio*.[70]

This section begins by exploring the symbolic capacities of the head in Roman thought. Although Roman writers did not understand the function of the brain in the body, they nevertheless assigned the head a privileged role in corporeal analogies from an early date.[71] There were multiple reasons they might have done so. Foremost among them was the head's association with personhood, which allowed it to synecdochally represent one's life and citizenship. It could also represent the source of something, whether an action or a river, or its chief part, like a geographic capital.[72] The symbolism likely stemmed in part from ancient awareness that a body could not survive without its head. This principle found expression in the Greek body politic tradition as early as the sixth century BCE. According to Herodotus, the Argives received an oracle before the invasion of Xerxes that advised them to guard their figurative head: καὶ κεφαλὴν πεφύλαξο· κάρη δὲ τὸ σῶμα σαώσει ("Keep your head well guarded, and it will save the body," Herod. 7.148, trans. Strassler 2007). The Pythia does not specify who – or what – constitutes the head of the Argives. Some suggest it refers to the ruling class, others to those with full citizenship.[73] More important for our purposes, however, is the oracle's assumption that the condition of the head dictates that of the body. This principle is used to validate a certain distribution of resources – and power – inside the *polis*. Herodotus reports the delivery of a similar oracle

[70] For *dominatio* as a signifier of illegitimate authority in Republican political thought, see Atkins 2018a: 760; Arena 2012: 244–8; Hellegouarc'h 1963: 562–3.

[71] Homeric epic reveals no awareness of the head as the seat of consciousness (Collins 1996: 63–85), while the Hippocratic texts were divided over the location of the reasoning faculties (van der Eijk 2005: 119–35). The Alexandrian physicians Herophilus and Erasistratus proved the cognitive function of the brain in the third century BCE (Cambiano 1999: 600–1), but the question continued to provoke philosophical debate well into the Imperial era (on which see Tracy 1976).

[72] See *OLD* s.v. 4 for the *caput* as the life of a person; s.v. 7 for its signification of personhood; s.v. 5–6 for its connection to citizenship, about which Cloud 1994: 493 writes, "The head as the most obviously vital part comes to mean 'life' and then 'civil rights,' since a citizen deprived of these ceases to exist as a citizen." On the *caput* as the source or chief part of something, see s.v. 9–12, and as a capital city, s.v. 14b.

[73] How and Wells 1928: *ad loc.* suggest the head signifies "the remnant of the ruling class," while Godley 1922: *ad loc.* proposes it refers to those with full citizenship, "the nucleus of the population."

to the Athenians around the same time. In this case, the tottering of the head foretells the destruction of the limbs.[74] These oracles confirm an early impulse to derive political lessons from the relationship between the head and body.

By the fourth century BCE, the symbol of the head was being used to justify the authority of one over many. Polyaenus reports that the Athenian general Iphicrates employed the comparison in relation to his army, explaining (Polyaenus, *Strat.* 3.9.22):[75]

> Ἰφικράτης τὴν σύνταξιν τῶν στρατοπέδων εἴκαζε τῷ σώματι. θώρακα ἐκάλει τὴν φάλαγγα, χεῖρας τοὺς ψιλούς, πόδας τὴν ἵππον, κεφαλὴν τὸν στρατηγόν. 'τὰ μὲν δὴ ἄλλα ὅταν ἐπιλείπῃ, χωλὸν καὶ πηρὸν τὸ στρατόπεδον· ὅταν δὲ ὁ στρατηγὸς ἀπόληται, τὸ πᾶν ἄχρηστον οἴχεται.'
>
> Iphicrates compared the ranks of troops to the body. He called the phalanx the trunk, the light-armed troops the hands, the cavalry the feet, and the general the head. 'When the other parts are lacking, the army is lame and maimed. But when the general is killed, the whole army – useless – is ruined.'

Iphicrates uses the analogy not only to explain the need for different types of troops, but also to draw attention to their collective dependence on their general.[76] Just as a person can survive the amputation of a limb but not a decapitation, an army can lose individual soldiers but not its commander. The contrast between the necessity of the head and expendability of the parts naturalizes the authority of the general, reminding soldiers of their subordination to him. This model worked well in the context of the army but was less applicable to the dispersed power relations of the *polis*.[77] Perhaps for this reason, Iphicrates' metaphor finds no parallel in contemporary discussions of Athenian politics.[78]

It is difficult to determine the extent to which Roman writers were familiar with these precedents from the Greek world. Yet the longest surviving fragment of the Elder Cato's *Origines*, which describes the heroism of an unnamed military tribune during the First Punic War,

[74] οὔτε γὰρ ἡ κεφαλὴ μένει ἔμπεδον οὔτε τὸ σῶμα, | οὔτε πόδες νέατοι οὔτ' ὤν χέρες, οὔτε τι μέσσης | λείπεται, ἀλλ' ἄζηλα πέλει· ("For neither the head nor the body remains in its place, | Nor the feet underneath, nor the hands nor the middle | Is left as it was, but now all is obscure," Herod. 7.140, trans. Strassler).

[75] Plutarch preserves the same story (Plut. *Pelop.* 2.1).

[76] Lendon 2005: 92 interprets Iphicrates' quote in relation to growing awareness that armies should balance hoplites with other types of soldiers.

[77] See Hamel 1998: 59–61 on the strong form of authority exercised by Athenian generals.

[78] There is no evidence for the head of state metaphor in Athenian political discourse, although the head could be used to designate the person in charge of something (e.g. Plut. *Per.* 3.4).

evokes Iphicrates' analogy.[79] Cato reports that the tribune, whom Aulus Gellius identifies as Q. Caedicius, chose to sacrifice himself and his troops in Sicily to facilitate the escape of the rest of the army. In a twist on the typical *devotio*, however, he alone survived the battle: *nam ita evenit: cum saucius multifariam ibi factus esset, tamen volnus capiti nullum evenit, eumque inter mortuos defetigatum volneribus atque, quod sanguen eius defluxerat, cognovere* ("For the following happened: although he had been wounded in many places there, nevertheless his head received no wound, and they recognized him among the dead, exhausted from his wounds and the blood he had lost," Gell. *NA* 3.7). Caedicius' body figuratively represents the outcome of the battle; his severely wounded torso reflects the loss of the troops under his command, while his perfectly intact head signifies his own survival as a leader. His survival, in turn, enables that of the rest of the army: *eum sustulere, isque convaluit, saepeque postilla operam reipublicae fortem atque strenuam perhibuit illoque facto, quod illos milites subduxit, exercitum ceterum servavit* ("They carried him off, and he recovered, and often afterwards offered brave and active service to the *res publica*, and by that deed, because he led those soldiers, he saved the rest of the army," Gell. *NA* 3.7). Like Iphicrates, Cato suggests that an army can survive the loss of its limbs if its head remains intact. Bill Gladhill consequently interprets this anecdote as an early example of *corpus–civitas* metaphor.[80] This reading should not be pushed too far, for Cato does not offer any overt invitation to interpret the anecdote figuratively. Yet the story raises the possibility that the symbolic capacities of the head had begun making their way into Latin literature.

The most explicit evidence for Romans' interest in the hierarchy of head and body comes from the symbolism they used in relation to their own urban geography. Emily Gowers has illustrated how Romans conceptualized the Capitoline Hill as the head of the city and the Cloaca Maxima as its bowels.[81] Varro provides further anatomical detail in the satire *Marcopolis*, which calls the gates of the city its senses, the aqueducts its veins, and the sewers its intestines: *sensus portae; venae hydragogiae; clavaca intestini* (Varro, *Sat. Men.* Fr. 290 Astbury 1985).[82] The primacy of the Capitoline in the landscape was explained through the legendary discovery of a human head in its soil when the foundations of the Temple of Jupiter were being laid. Livy interpreted this story as a divine sign of Rome's

[79] See Gotter 2009: 116 on Cato's emancipation of "the exemplary action from the name" and Walter 2004: 292 on his effort to foreground the *populus Romanus* as a whole.
[80] Gladhill 2012: 316. [81] Gowers 1995: 25–6.
[82] See Spencer 2019: 129–59 on Varro's etymological "tours" of the city in *De Lingua Latina*.

imperial prerogative: *quae visa species haud per ambages arcem eam imperii caputque rerum fore portendebat* ("This sight not at all ambiguously foretold that it would be the citadel of an empire and the head of everything," Liv. 1.55.6). It is worth noting that Varro, our primary Republican source for the myth, does not connect the Capitoline head to the project of empire.[83] Yet as the pinnacle of Rome's urban geography, the home of its chief deity, and the recipient of offerings made by victorious generals, the Capitoline must have seemed a "guarantor of empire," as Catharine Edwards puts it, well before it was officially designated the head of the world.[84] This tradition suggests a connection between capital symbolism and political authority.

The Capitoline's status as the head of Rome mirrored Rome's status as the head of the territory under its command. Although this connection was not fully developed until the Augustan era, its conceptual groundwork was laid in the Late Republic. A letter that Cicero wrote to Atticus shortly after the outbreak of war between Caesar and Pompey confirms as much. Complaining that Pompey had abandoned the coastal towns of Italy to Caesar, he writes, *nec sum miratus eum qui caput ipsum reliquisset reliquis membris non parcere* ("I was not surprised that he who had already abandoned the head itself was not sparing the remaining limbs," Cic. *Att.* 8.1.2). Playing upon the commonplace use of the term *caput* to signify capital cities, Cicero crafts a metaphor of the body politic in which the head is the seat of governing authority.[85] We might also think of his description of the Curia as the *caput urbis*, a revision of the Capitoline tradition meant to validate senatorial supremacy against encroaching claims of popular prerogative (Cic. *Mil.* 90). Such examples suggest that Roman writers were aware of the metaphorical ends to which the relationship between head and body could be put. Their disinclination to adapt the dichotomy to their internal governing structure consequently seems more akin to a choice than an accident.

This hesitancy can be explained in relation to the regal resonance of the *caput* in Republican political thought. The utility of the head–body

[83] *e quis Capitolinum dictum, quod hic, cum fundamenta foderentur aedis Iovis, caput humanum dicitur inventum* ("Among these [hills] the Capitoline is so named because it is said that a human head was discovered here, when the foundations of the Temple of Jupiter were being excavated," Varro, *Ling.* 5.41). As De Melo 2019: *ad loc.* notes, the story of the head is almost certainly a later invention designed to etymologize the hill's name.

[84] Edwards 1996: 71. See also Borgeaud 1987: 91 on the Capitoline as "le signe idéologique de l'impérialisme romain." For the relatively late appearance of the *caput orbis* figure in Latin literature, see Nicolet 1991, 192 fn. 9 alongside further discussion in Ch. 3.

[85] *OLD* s.v. 14b.

dichotomy in justifying sole rule went back to Plato's *Timaeus*, which maps the elements of the tripartite soul onto the parts of the human body.[86] The dialogue locates reason (λογιστικόν) in the head, courage (θυμός) in the chest, and desire (ἐπιθυμία) in the belly. Reason is placed in the separate chamber of the head to facilitate its command over the baser elements of the soul, whose influence is regulated by the neck. Plato uses an elaborate metaphor of the *polis* to explain this framework, calling the head an acropolis (τῆς ἀκροπόλεως, Pl. *Tim.* 70a), the neck an isthmus and boundary (ἰσθμὸν καὶ ὅρον, Pl. *Tim.* 69e), and the heart a guardhouse (τὴν δορυφορικὴν οἴκησιν, Pl. *Tim.* 70b).[87] Scholars have long noticed that the layout of this figurative city is reminiscent of Syracuse, a kingdom whose palace was located on an island connected to the mainland by a narrow isthmus.[88] Just as the Syracusan king exercises authority over his subjects, reason commands organs and limbs obedient to its orders (Pl. *Tim.* 70b-c). This divinely prescribed arrangement, Plato explains, ensures that the best part of the body is allowed to rule (καὶ τὸ βέλτιστον οὕτως ἐν αὐτοῖς πᾶσιν ἡγεμονεῖν ἐᾷ, Pl. *Tim.* 70b). Although Plato's primary concern is to articulate the role of reason in the soul, he constructs a corporeal hierarchy in which the head plays a regal role. The political implications of his argument emerge elsewhere in his writings, where the ideal of the rational philosopher-king assumes central importance.[89]

The *Timaeus* had a significant impact on Cicero, who translated portions of the dialogue into Latin.[90] Its theory of the tripartite soul pervades the *Tusculanae Disputationes*, a text constructed in self-conscious dialogue with Plato. Summarizing his predecessor's theory in Book 1, Cicero writes, *Plato triplicem finxit animum, cuius principatum, id est rationem, in capite sicut in arce posuit, et duas partes parere voluit, iram et cupiditatem, quas locis disclusit: iram in pectore, cupiditatem supter praecordia locavit* ("Plato fashioned a tripartite soul, whose principal part, that is, reason, he placed in the head as if in a citadel. He wanted the other two parts, anger and desire, each separated in its own location, to obey it. He situated anger in the chest and

[86] Nutton 2004: 118 argues that Plato's description of the human body owes less to his knowledge of anatomy than to his preconceptions about the soul.

[87] For the analogy between city and soul in the *Republic*, see Renaut 2017; Blössner 2007; Ferrari 2005; Williams 1999; Smith 1999.

[88] See Taylor 1928: *ad loc.* 69d6-70a2 on the compatibility of Plato's language with the topography of Syracuse. On Plato's familiarity with the politics of Syracuse, see Monoson 2000: 145–53.

[89] On the philosopher-kings, whose legitimacy derives from their wisdom, see Desmond 2011: 19–43; Klosko 2006: 170–91; Schofield 2006b: 155–63; Ferrari 2005: 100–8; Reeve 1988.

[90] On Cicero as a reader and translator of the *Timaeus*, see Hoenig 2018: 44–101; Sedley 2015; Puelma 1980.

desire below the diaphragm," Cic. *Tusc.* 1.21).[91] He subsequently endorses Plato's bodily hierarchy, making the case for the head as the home of reason: *in quo igitur loco est? credo equidem in capite et cur credam adferre possum* ("And so where is it [*mens*] located? I for one believe it is in the head, and I can explain why I think so," Cic. *Tusc.* 1.70). The generous attention paid to the tripartite soul foreshadows its importance in subsequent books.[92] It comes to the fore again in Book 2, when Cicero refers to reason as the mistress and queen of everything (*domina omnium et regina ratio*, Cic. *Tusc.* 2.47). Its control over the soul mirrors that of a master over a slave, general over his troops, or father over his son.[93] This model of absolute authority was an ill fit for the Roman consulship, which was collegial, temporally limited, and resistible through the right of *provocatio*.[94] It was more compatible with kingship and other forms of sole rule.

The political ends towards which the tripartite soul could be put are confirmed in *De Republica*, where Scipio uses the reasoning faculties to argue in favor of monarchy as the best form of simple government. Seeking to illustrate the operation of sole rule in daily life, he draws on analogies like the helmsman and ship, physician and patient, bailiff and farm, and reason and soul (Cic. *Rep.* 1.62).[95] Elaborating on the last of these comparisons, he explains, *et illud vide, si in animis hominum regale imperium sit, unius fore dominatum, consili scilicet – ea est enim animi pars optima* ("Consider this: if there is any kingly power in the souls of men, it would involve the domination of one element, surely reason – for this is the best part of the soul," Cic. *Rep.* 1.60). Scipio's description of reason as a *regale imperium* sets up a political analogy upon which he elaborates as the dialogue continues: *sub regno igitur tibi esse placet omnes animi partes, et eas regi consilio?* ("Do you think it right, then, that all the parts of the soul are under kingship, and are ruled by reason?" Cic. *Rep.* 1.60). When Laelius agrees, Scipio applies the same argument to the political sphere: *cur igitur dubitas quid de re publica sentias? In qua, si in plures translata res sit, intellegi iam licet nullum fore quod praesit imperium; quod quidem nisi unum sit, esse nullum potest* ("Why then do you doubt what you perceive about the *res*

[91] See Douglas 1985: *ad loc*. for the reference to *Tim.* 69d. [92] Gildenhard 2007: 239.

[93] *vel ut dominus servo vel ut imperator militi vel ut parens filio* (Cic. *Tusc.* 2.48).

[94] Although the nature of consular *imperium* continues to provoke debate, the legal and practical constraints on its exercise in the domestic sphere are well-established (see Pina Polo 2011; Beck 2011: 78–9; Lintott 1999: 18).

[95] On the metaphors of statesmanship in the dialogue, see Mebane 2022; Zarecki 2014: 89–90; Nelsestuen 2014; Gallagher 2001. See Ch. 2 for further discussion of *Rep.* 1.62.

publica? For if its management should be handled among many, you can now understand that there will not be any power that has command; for such power is in fact not worth anything, unless it is singular," Cic. *Rep.* 1.60). Scipio's argument operates in the realm of the theoretical; in practice, he remains committed to the mixed constitution as the best practicable form of government.[96] It nevertheless confirms that the command of reason could be used to justify monarchy and other types of sole rule.[97] The risks of applying the analogy to statesmen within the Republic are readily apparent.

Because Cicero adhered to Plato's model of the tripartite soul, it comes as little surprise that he associated the rational head with strong forms of political authority. But what about the Roman thinkers who did not follow Plato? Two passages from Lucretius confirm that the *caput* retained its association with command even among those who located reason elsewhere in the body. Lucretius follows standard Epicurean doctrine in arguing that the soul (*anima*) is distributed throughout the body, but that reason (*animus*) is placed in the chest.[98] He introduces this idea with a bit of wordplay, explaining, *sed caput esse quasi et dominari in corpore toto | consilium quod nos animum mentemque vocamus. | idque situm media regione in pectoris haeret* ("But the head, so to speak, and the commanding force in the whole body, is reason, which we call the mind and intellect. And this adheres to its location in the middle region of the chest," Lucr. 3.138–40). Lucretius conveys the authoritative force of reason by analogizing its power to that of the *caput*. By qualifying the comparison with *quasi*, however, he hints that readers should interpret his words figuratively rather than literally. For the true home of reason, he now reveals, is the chest (*pectus*).[99] Lucretius' pun only makes sense if his readers were predisposed to see the head as the ruler of the body. He draws on this tradition even as he positions his philosophy in opposition to it, confirming its prevalence in Roman discourse.

[96] *itaque quartum quoddam genus rei publicae maxime probandum esse sentio, quod est ex eis quae prima dixi moderatum et permixtum tribus* ("And so I believe that a certain fourth type of *res publica* should be ranked highest, that which has been balanced and mixed from those three about which I spoke first," Cic. *Rep.* 1.45). On the Roman constitution as the best exemplification of the best practicable regime, see Atkins 2013a: 159; Nicgorski 1993: 241.

[97] Scipio introduces the dictatorship as another example of efficacious sole rule (Cic. *Rep.* 1.63) but does not apply the analogy of mind and body to it. Perhaps because this office had fallen into disuse after 202 BCE, it did not play a significant role in the Late Republican body politic tradition.

[98] See Sanders 2008 on the persistence of this idea among Epicureans long after medical consensus on the brain had been achieved.

[99] On the construction of the joke, see McOsker 2019: 904; Kenney 2014: *ad loc.* 136–9.

The regal connotations of the head reappear when Lucretius describes the rise of a civilization similar to Rome.[100] Political communities, he argues, were initially founded by kings who built citadels for their refuge and governed the less powerful. Yet as men driven by ambition began competing for the highest honors, these kings were toppled and the symbols of their power overturned: *ergo regibus occisis subversa iacebat | pristina maiestas soliorum et sceptra superba, | et capitis summi praeclarum insigne cruentum | sub pedibus vulgi magnum lugebat honorem* ("And so, after the kings were slain, the ancient majesty of thrones and proud scepters were lying in ruins, overturned; and the illustrious symbol of the highest head, bloodied under the feet of the crowd, was mourning its great honor," Lucr. 5.1136–9). Lucretius refers to the *rex* as the highest head, a term that signifies both his personhood and his political supremacy. Surrounded by the symbols of the throne, scepter, and crown, three elements of royal insignia that Rome borrowed from Etruria, the *summum caput* is imbued with regal significance.[101] Only after its abolishment do men discover how to implement magistracies (*magistratum*) and create laws (*iura*, Lucr. 5.1143–4).[102] The leveling of heads is cast as a prerequisite for the establishment of a political community reminiscent of the Roman Republic. Though less explicitly than Cicero, Lucretius too distances capital symbolism from the norms of statesmanship operative in the contemporary *res publica*.

The monarchical history of the head of state metaphor explains why Romans avoided its usage in relation to domestic politics. That the *res publica* did not have a king was a hallowed principle of political discourse in the first century BCE. Cicero traced it back to the expulsion of the Tarquins, which sparked the Roman people's *odium regalis nominis* (Cic. *Rep.* 2.52).[103] Andrew Erskine argues that this antipathy arose much later, likely during Romans' encounters with Hellenistic kingdoms during the second century BCE.[104] Whatever triggered its development, by the 80s BCE the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* could represent the expulsion of the kings as coextensive with the realization of liberty.[105] In subsequent decades, accusations of *regnum*, often intertwined with invocations of the

[100] See Fowler 2007: 422–3 on Lucretius' five stages of social development.
[101] See Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 3.61.1 alongside the discussion of Tagliamonte 2017: 126–8.
[102] See Fratantuono 2015: 377 on the transition into a world "not unlike that of the Roman Republic."
[103] On the Romans' *odium regni*, see Russo 2015; Sigmund 2014; Martin 1994.
[104] See Erskine 1991, whose proposal remains controversial. Glinister 2006 and Smith 2006 offer counterarguments.
[105] Imagining a speech delivered by Lucius Junius Brutus, the author writes, *ego reges eieci, vos tyrannos introducitis; ego libertatem, quae non erat, peperi, vos partam servare non vultis* ("I expelled kings, you

Greek *tyrannus*, became a standard element of invective.[106] This is true despite the fact that Romans did not see kingship as an evil in and of itself.[107] In *De Republica*, Scipio is quick to select it as the best form of simple rule.[108] Nor does he hesitate to identify the consulship as a monarchical element in the mixed constitution (*potestas . . . regia*, Cic. *Rep.* 2.56). Cicero's *Pro Rege Deiotaro*, among other texts, confirms that foreign kings could be praised effusively without raising any ideological hackles. When it came to the internal governing structure of the Republic, however, the potential merits of kingship were not open for discussion. A reliably negative signifier in the context of internal politics, the figure of the *rex* denoted the perversion of Roman Republicanism. This hostility extended to the *caput* and other symbols with which kingship was associated.

While Romans avoiding using the head to validate the authority of the statesman, they did use it to police the boundaries of Republican governance. Our first evidence for this tradition comes from a joke that Cicero preserves about Scipio Africanus. Discussing the rhetorical value of humor in *De Oratore*, he praises a *bon mot* delivered by P. Licinius Varus. Commending its combination of gravity and levity, he writes, *Africano illi superiori coronam sibi in convivio ad caput accommodanti, cum ea saepius rumperetur, P. Licinius Varus 'noli mirari,' inquit, 'si non convenit, caput enim magnum est,'* ("P. Licinius Varus said to that famous Africanus the Elder, who was fitting a garland on his head at a banquet, when it kept breaking, 'Do not be surprised if it does not fit, for it is a head of great size,'" Cic. *de Or.* 2.250).[109] Varus suggests that the convivial garland does not fit Scipio's head because it has become too large to be accommodated within the bounds of civic life. He hints at symbolism that was later made explicit by Livy, who reported that Scipio was criticized for presuming to be *caput columenque imperii Romani esse*

bring in tyrants; I secured liberty, which did not exist, you do not wish to preserve what has already been secured," *Rhet. Her.* 4.66).

[106] Baraz 2018; Kalyvas 2007; Gildenhard 2006; Smith 2006.

[107] Baraz 2020: 79–80 argues that a positive discourse on kingship developed firstly from the historical tradition of the early kings and secondly from the influence of the Greek philosophical tradition.

[108] "Although Scipio repeatedly expresses his preference for the mixed form of constitution," Fox 2007: 96 notes, "the dialogue circles strangely around the issue of monarchy." Schofield 2021: 73 suggests that "the attraction monarchy at its best holds for Cicero, as for Plato, is its supreme embodiment of the union of power and *consilium*." See also Sigmund 2014: 61–84; Atkins 2013a: 96–7; Zetzel 1995: 19–22.

[109] In his translation of this passage, Plass 1988: 9 inserts the phrase "head [of state]" to clarify the joke. Sutton and Rackham 1942: *ad loc*. likewise comment, "the Head of e.g. a body politic."

("the head and pillar of the Roman empire," Liv. 38.51.4).[110] Both stories draw attention to Scipio's head to express concerns over his potentially excessive power. They gesture towards a rhetorical tradition that came into fuller view in the polarized politics of the Late Republic.

The transgressive capacities of the head found explicit expression in the trope of the multi-headed body politic, which was used to denote the perversion of Roman Republicanism.[111] Such imagery merged two strands of thought under consideration in this chapter: one that associated the head with sole rule and the other that figured discord as doubling. Two-headed organisms had long served as signifiers of societal disruption in Roman thought, appearing frequently in catalogs of portents that preceded civic crises. Livy reports the birth of a two-headed pig (*porcus biceps*, Liv. 28.11.3) during the Second Punic War, a two-headed and five-footed lamb after a feud between consuls and tribunes (*agnus biceps cum quinque pedibus natus*, Liv. 32.29.2), and a two-headed boy amid a plague (*biceps natus puer*, Liv. 41.21.12).[112] In the months leading up to the Pisonian Conspiracy of 65 CE, Tacitus describes the discovery of two-headed fetuses (*bicipites hominum aliorumve animalium partus*, Tac. *Ann.* 15.47.1) and the birth of a calf with a second head on its leg (*cui caput in crure esset*, Tac. *Ann.* 15.47.2).[113] Cicero confirms the significance of these portents in *De Divinatione*, where Quintus explains, *si puella nata biceps esset, seditionem in populo fore, corruptelam et adulterium domi* ("When a two-headed girl was born, it foretold sedition among the people and seduction and adultery at home," Cic. *Div.* 1.121). Mapping the home onto the *res publica*, Quintus connects doubled heads to the problem of discord.[114] It required only a small conceptual leap to transfer this symbolism from the body of the individual to that of the Republic.

The *locus classicus* for the two-headed body politic is Varro's *De Vita Populi Romani*, a genealogy of the Roman people modeled upon Dicaearchus' *Bios Hellados*.[115] The organic analogy implied by the title of the work is reflected in its extant fragments, which rely on metaphors of

[110] See further discussion of this passage in Ch. 3.
[111] Wiseman 2010 identifies "the two-headed state" as a trope of Roman civil war literature.
[112] For further examples of two-headed births, see those cataloged throughout Rasmussen 2003.
[113] See Ash 2018: *ad loc.* on Tacitus' engagement with this trope.
[114] Wardle 2006: *ad loc.* connects the portent to the *biceps civitas* created by the Gracchi, on which see later.
[115] Ax 2000 addresses the relationship of *De Vita Populi Romani* to the *Bios Hellados*. For its pairing with *De Gente Populi Romani*, which investigated legends surrounding the early kings of Rome, see Taylor 1934.

growth and decay to narrate Roman history.[116] In Book 4, Varro criticizes Gaius Gracchus for reassigning control of the bribery courts from the senatorial to equestrian class, which created a political community with two heads: *iniquus equestri ordini iudicia tradidit ac bicipitem civitatem fecit, discordiarum civilium fontem* ("He unjustly handed the courts over to the equestrian order and made the political community two-headed, the source of civil discords," Varro, *De vita p. R.* Fr. 114 Riposati).[117] Varro blames Gracchus for dividing a form of institutional power that had previously been in the exclusive possession of the senate. His analysis seems to validate the governing authority of the senatorial class, an idea that complicates the popular politics he expressed elsewhere.[118] It is not the relationship between the senate and people that preoccupies him, however, but rather that between the senatorial and equestrian orders. Incorporating yet another duality into the Roman body politic tradition, he identifies their struggle as a point of origin for the civil strife that had overtaken politics by the time that he was writing in the late 40s BCE.[119] Using the *biceps civitas* as an explicit marker of *discordia*, Varro represents this rhetorical tradition at its fullest expression.

De Vita Populi Romani was not the first time that Varro explored the symbolism of the multi-headed body politic. According to Appian, he composed a pamphlet about the so-called First Triumvirate entitled Τρικάρανος, or "The Three-Headed Monster."[120] Little is known about the text aside from its title, which was borrowed from Anaximenes of Lampsacus' attack on Sparta, Athens, and Thebes.[121] Its character has long puzzled interpreters, who have struggled to reconcile its apparently

[116] See Ch.2 for further discussion of this text.

[117] The context of the passage is confirmed by Florus, who follows Varro but blames both brothers: *iudiciaria lege Gracchi diviserant populum Romanum et bicipitem ex una fecerant civitatem* ("Through their judiciary law the Gracchi had divided the Roman people and had made a two-headed body politic from one," Flor. 2.5.17). See Nicolet 1979 on the historical import of the passage.

[118] Wiseman 2010: 29 argues that Varro was interested in diagnosing the structural causes of discord, not blaming Gaius Gracchus specifically. The fragmentary nature of the text makes it difficult to say much either way.

[119] Although scholars do not agree on a precise composition date for *De Vita Populi Romani*, most would place it in the late 40s BCE (Riposati 1972: 84–6 offers an overview of dating issues). Its companion *De Gente Populi Romani* can be securely dated to 43 BCE due to a reference to the consulship of A. Hirtius and G. Vibius Pansa.

[120] καί τις αὐτῶν τήνδε τὴν συμφροσύνην συγγραφεύς, Οὐάρρων, ἐνὶ βιβλίῳ περιλαβὼν ἐπέγραψε Τρικάρανον ("A certain historian, Varro, treating this alliance of theirs in a book, wrote 'The Three-Headed Monster,'" App. *B Civ.* 2.9).

[121] Pausanias reports that the text was circulated in Theopompus' name as an act of revenge (Paus. 6.18.5). Flower 1994: 21–2 casts some doubt on Anaximenes' authorship, but the question need not concern us here.

negative title with Varro's collaboration with Caesar, Pompey, and Crassus.[122] Although some have speculated that he circulated the pamphlet in support of the alliance, it strains belief that this analogy was intended to communicate praise.[123] It was an image with "factionalism and discord already built in," as Diana Spencer argues, and one that Varro himself used as a mode of critique.[124] The more common trope of doubling becomes tripling in order to fit the context, but the underlying principle of multiplied heads as a marker of constitutional deviation remains the same. I am therefore inclined towards Raymond Astbury's view that Varro simply changed his mind about the alliance after its formation.[125] Yet whatever the purpose and tone of the Τρικάρανος, it clearly compared Caesar, Pompey, and Crassus to three heads atop the Roman body politic. Perhaps this image was inspired in part by the one Catiline had used just a few years earlier.

In tracing the role of capital imagery in Republican political language, we can now discern what was so provocative about the speech that Catiline delivered in the summer of 63 BCE.[126] As we saw earlier, one layer of his transgression stemmed from his portrayal of the senate and people as two separate bodies, an idea that denied their inherent predisposition towards unity. Yet it was the latter half of the metaphor that located him firmly outside the bounds of normative discourse. Asserting that the senate had a weak head (*infirmum caput*) and the people no head at all (*sine capite*), he challenged the deeply held belief that the Roman body politic did not have a head of state. In laying claim to this role for himself, he sought to import a novel form of individual authority into the paradigm of Roman Republicanism. It comes as little surprise, then, that Cicero interpreted his words as proof of his guilt: *atque ille, ut semper fuit apertissimus, non se purgavit sed indicavit atque induit* ("And that man, as he was always so audacious, did not exculpate himself but betrayed and entangled himself," Cic. *Mur.* 51). Cicero sought to limit the transgressive potential of

[122] On the problem, see Zucchelli 1976: 611–2.

[123] Anderson 1963: 45 speculates the pamphlet was intended to mock someone else's use of the term or argued for the value of the alliance "by associating it with the marvels of myth." Della Corte 1970: 77 suggests that it was a satire of "Roma democratica" rather than the alliance. Wiseman 2009: 117 and Fantham 2003: 111 deny its hostility.

[124] Spencer 2019: 23 nevertheless remains ambivalent on the question of tone, asking, "Could it be funny to make a joke about this?"

[125] Astbury 1967: 406 bases his argument on Cicero's letters from July 59 BCE, which criticize Varro for his political insincerity.

[126] In the terms of Skinner 1974: 297, Catiline attempted "to reverse the standard speech-act potential of an existing and unfavorable evaluative-descriptive term," applying a term normally used to express disapproval (the two-headed body politic) in such a way as to neutralize its negative force.

Catiline's speech by casting his words as those of a madman. While Catiline might have been unique in his daring and premature in his revolution, however, he was not the only one rethinking the shape of the Roman body politic. As we turn our attention to imagery of the sick body politic in the next chapter, we will see that this was a project to which Cicero contributed as well.

Catiline's effort to incorporate the exceptional statesman into the body politic was symptomatic of the shifting political landscape of the early-to-mid first century BCE. Although his conspiracy was put down relatively quickly, the tension he identified between powerful individuals and Republican governance would only grow more acute. Amid institutional innovations like the First Triumvirate and Pompey's sole consulship, Roman thinkers began reconsidering and revising their normative models of statesmanship. Cicero played a key role in this conceptual shift. Deploying medical terminology across his speeches, he crafted imagery of a civic healer able to cure the intertwined ills of discord and decline. Unlike Catiline and his *caput populi*, Cicero developed this figure to safeguard a constitution that he believed to be under threat. In proclaiming the need for drastic intervention to save the body politic, however, he too acknowledged the failure of the Fable of the Belly. Because he located the legitimacy of the civic healer in the wisdom he possessed rather than the legal position he occupied, he also created a rhetorical framework susceptible to appropriation by those less committed to Republican governance than he. For within half a century, his medical metaphors would find their way into the burgeoning political language of the Principate.