TWO

Dismembering a Sacred Cow

The Extispicium Relief in the Louvre

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The Extispicium Relief (Louvre Ma 978 and 1089; fig. 2.1) presents a problem. It is poorly published, with only four (primarily descriptive) articles devoted to the relief since its original publication in 1907.[1] Few photographs

This project has benefited from the help of many people. We thank Agnes Scherer of the Department of Greek, Etruscan, and Roman Antiquities at the Louvre for helping both authors study the Extispicium Relief in person on separate visits. Elizabeth Thill was also able to see Ma 392, for which she is very grateful. Additional thanks are due to Mme. Scherer and the Department of Greek, Etruscan, and Roman Antiquities for permission to publish our photos, as well as for access to the unpublished conservation reports on Ma 392, 978, and 1089 (Ibled 2005, 2011). Thill's visit to the Louvre was made possible by an Indiana University New Frontiers Exploratory Travel Fellowship. We thank I. Shurygin for permission to publish his excellent photographs. We presented an early version of this research in January 2015 at the 116th Annual Meeting of the Archaeological Institute of America in New Orleans, Louisiana. We extend our thanks for the many helpful responses and suggestions that we received on that paper. Special thanks are due to Martin Beckmann and Steven Tuck for their perceptive observations, as well as to Alex Mayer for his help. Jennifer Lee, Jennifer Massey, Fred Naiden, and James Rives all offered helpful advice on the logistics of bovine sacrifice. Finally, we are grateful to the editors of this volume for their invitation to contribute to this project and for this opportunity to honor our mentor, Elaine Gazda, to whom we offer our ultimate and greatest thanks. Without her teaching and mentoring, we would not be the scholars that we are today.

1. The original, definitive publication of the Extispicium Relief is Wace 1907. Since then, only a handful of articles (Sieveking 1925; Michon 1932; Tortorella 1988) have been specifically devoted to the relief. Leoncini 1988 presents drawings of it but does not evaluate the relief itself. The Extispicium Relief is also discussed briefly in a catalog of Roman

Fig. 2.1. Composite plaster cast of the Extispicium Relief, comprising all known original components, post-antique restorations, scaled-up sixteenth-century drawings of lost fragments, and hypothetical sketches of missing elements, Museo della Civiltà Romana, Rome (DAIR 77.1757). (Photograph by Rossa.)

of this piece are in circulation. Post-antique alterations include inferior restorations of all foreground heads, competent but sometimes misleading restorations of most of the arms and some of the feet, and extensive reworking of most of the drapery and some of the background heads and hair. Some portions of the relief are known only from sixteenth-century drawings, particularly the detailed depiction of the pediment of the Capitoline Temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus in Rome.

Despite these difficulties, the Extispicium Relief deserves our attention. It bears our only extant Roman illustration of the *extispicium* ritual (the read-

reliefs in the Louvre (Giroire and Roger 2007, 232–33, cat. no. 159) and in the catalog of a special exhibition at the Capitoline (La Rocca and Parisi Presicce 2012, 57–58, 214–17, and cat. no. 4.1 at 330–31). Otherwise, scholarship on it has been limited to passing mentions in broader studies of monumental reliefs: Ryberg 1955, 128–31; Koeppel 1969, 146–48; Gauer 1973, 335–36; Koeppel 1985, 204–12; Leander Touati 1987, 110; Grunow 2002, 53, 109–11, 168–69; Quante-Schöttler 2002, 136–55.

Fig. 2.2. Victim Relief (Louvre Ma 978). (Photograph © I. Shurygin.)

ing of divine signs in a sacrificial victim's liver); the most elaborate depiction of a dead sacrificial victim, itself a rare motif; and our only known artist's signature on a monumental relief—a signature that has been used to establish a Trajanic *terminus post quem* for the piece. The Extispicium Relief has seldom been the primary subject of research, but because it is purportedly a securely dated monumental relief, it appears regularly in studies of other Trajanic and Hadrianic reliefs, buildings, and historical events. However, the traditional date of the early second century CE has been assumed rather than argued, and discrepancies from other early second-century reliefs have been ignored. In this essay, we deconstruct the evidence traditionally used to date the relief to the early second century, and we challenge that date, based on a close examination of the relief itself.

Today the Extispicium Relief is preserved in two large fragments, both in the Louvre: Ma 978, henceforth here called the "Victim Relief," in which the sacrificial attendants prepare to read the divine signs (fig. 2.2); and Ma 1089, henceforth here called the "Togati Relief," in which six togate figures stand in front of a temple (fig. 2.3). The reconstruction illustrated in figure 2.1 includes casts of the two fragments in the Louvre and a now-lost fragment

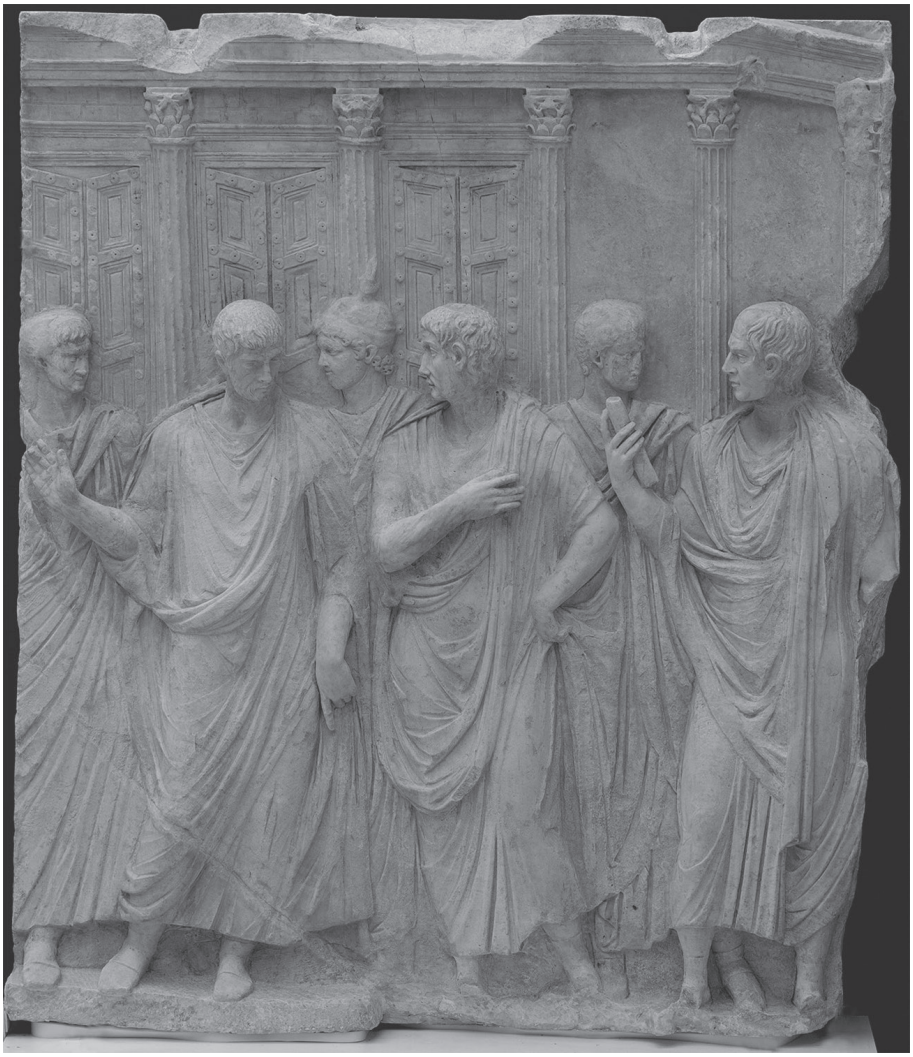

Fig. 2.3. Togati Relief (Louvre Ma 1089). (Photograph © I. Shurygin.)

of a depiction of Victory (discussed below), supplemented by enlargements of sixteenth-century drawings of the relief. Traces of three original edges are preserved on the Louvre fragments, so we need not posit extensive stretches of missing imagery to the left or right.[2]

2. The bottom edge is best preserved, excepting the triangular restoration running from the left edge of the Togati Relief underneath the "emperor's" feet. The left edge is preserved along the foot of the far-left figure in the Victim Relief. A few inches of the right edge are

The composition can be divided roughly into quadrants, which do not entirely coincide with the existing breaks in the marble (fig. 2.1). The lower-left quadrant portrays four sacrificial attendants—three *victimarii* and a presumed haruspex—grouped around a slain bovine, which lies on its back and with its head cranked at a ninety-degree angle to its body, so that its head appears frontally (and upside down) to the viewer.[3] A *victimarius* leans over the animal and pulls out its liver with his left hand, while his right arm reaches deeper into the carcass.[4] Since the head of the *victimarius* and the arm of the haruspex are both restored, it is not clear how or even to what extent the two figures originally interacted.[5] The inscription, which will be discussed below, is carved on the animal's front left hoof.

The second quadrant, encompassing the entire Togati Relief and part of the Victim Relief, originally featured a group of ten standing figures, most of them togate. All but the far-left lictor are arranged to draw attention to the relief's central figure, who is further marked as important by his centered position beneath the architecture. The modern restored portrait reflects the general assumption that this figure represents the emperor, usually identified as "Trajan"; the original head was lost even before the late sixteenth century, the time of the first drawing we have of the relief.[6] Drawings also reveal a

distinguishable adjacent to the larger eagle in the Togati Relief. That the composition is essentially complete has not stopped various scholars from positing that the Extispicium Relief was once a part of the Great Trajanic Frieze or at least of the same decorative program (Wace 1907, 244; Zanker 1970, 516–17; Koeppel 1985, 154–55). For a counterargument based on style and scale, see Leander Touati 1987, 110.

3. The angle of the head reflects the reality that the victim's spine was severed and its throat cut during earlier parts of the sacrificial act. See Aldrete 2014 on the practicalities of sacrifice. The relief does not clearly indicate the sex of the victim: the position of the victim's legs and the disemboweling underway hide the critical anatomy from view. The oddly shaped flap of skin passing in front of the victim's hooves is too high up on the belly to be genitalia and may represent a hole cut in the hide, through which the hooves were passed to hold the legs in place, much like a trussed chicken (we thank Jennifer Lee and Jennifer Massey for their help deciphering this imagery).

4. The triangular blob beneath the back of the hand of the *victimarius* is probably the gall bladder.

5. Cod. Vat. Lat. 3439 fol. 94 (reproduced in Wace 1907, plate XXIV, and in Leoncini 1988, 32, fig. 3) indicates the extent of the damage to the iconography in this area.

6. Cod. Vat. Lat. 3439 fol. 83 (reproduced in Wace 1907, plate XX). We are grateful to M. Beckmann for his suggestion that this central figure was originally *capite velato* (pers. comm., 2015). Personal examination of the relief itself supports this conclusion: the relief slopes out toward the figure's shoulders, forming a halo around where the figure's head should be, as if something has been incompletely removed from the background. The architecture along this sloped section is more sketchily rendered than elsewhere, suggestive of recutting.

secondary point of focus on the foreground figure immediately facing the emperor. Now preserved at the far right of the Victim Relief and only from the waist down, this figure stood at the center of the composition and is the only *togatus* shown as bearded in the drawings, leading some scholars to identify him as Hadrian.[7] A final figure of interest stands to the emperor's immediate right in the middle ground of the relief, wearing the distinctive hat of a *flamen Dialis*, the special priest of Jupiter. Two lictors with axes bound into their *fasces* stand to the far left of the group; in the background, the left-most lictor turns his head to watch the removal of the liver, forming a compositional link between the group of togate dignitaries and the attendants with the carcass. The remaining togate figures are presumably senators or members of the imperial family.

The Capitoline Temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus dominates the third quadrant of the relief. Today, the relief preserves the three-door frontal facade of the temple up to the moldings supporting the pediment, as well as a short stretch of its flank. Sixteenth-century drawings record that the relief also originally depicted the temple's pedimental and crowning statuary. To the right, a small eagle appears on the cornice at the junction between the facade and flank architraves; apparently floating, this feature is particularly difficult to understand or reconcile with an obvious architectural feature. A freestanding column monument topped by a larger eagle can be seen to the far right, overlapping the flank architrave of the temple (fig. 2.1).[8]

The final quadrant of the relief depicts a flying Victory, now missing wings, her original head, and the attribute at the top of the long pole that she holds.[9] She soars up and to the left, exiting the composition. Her toes

7. This identification has been used as further evidence for the relief's supposed second-century date. This argument can be dismissed because Bonanno (1988, 157–64) has demonstrated effectively that not every bearded portrait in Roman monumental reliefs references Hadrian.

8. A casual observer (or one working from a small photograph) might assume that this column belonged to the temple's flank, but it is clearly differentiated from the other columns, as its capital overlaps, rather than supports, the architrave.

9. Wace (1907, 236–37, plate XXX) published drawings of the Victory (which he assigned to a triumphal relief) along with drawings of the Extispicium Relief. The whereabouts and scale of the Victory fragment were unknown at the time. Sieveking (1925, 161–63) identified the "Bacchant" in the private collection of Valentin de Courcel at Cannes with the Renaissance drawings of the Victory published by Wace, and he argued for associating the Victory with the Extispicium, based on the scale of the fragment, the connecting *fasces*, and the way this fragment filled an otherwise empty portion of the composition (163–65). Sieveking judged the style of the Victory (and thus the Extispicium Relief as a whole) to be Hadrianic (165). Michon (1932) gives the best photos and most extensive description of the Victory. Its current whereabouts are unknown.

and drapery obscure the tips of the *fasces* that link the Victory fragment to the Victim Relief below.

The "Evidence" for a Second-Century Date

We turn now to the problem of chronology. Two main pieces of evidence underlie the traditional dating of the relief to the early second century. The first is the relief's reported findspot near the east hemicycle of the Forum of Trajan. The second is the inscription, commonly interpreted as an artist's signature reading "Marcus Ulpius Orestes." These two factors combined have led scholars repeatedly to attribute this piece to an imperial freedman of Trajan and to search for military events late in the reign of Trajan or early in the reign of Hadrian that might have inspired the relief.

The Extispicium Relief can be connected to the east hemicycle of the Forum of Trajan through a series of references in the records of Antonio da Sangallo the Younger, who describes a number of sculptures discovered in that approximate area in 1540.[10] Da Sangallo's description of the depicted architecture goes into great detail, including the telling feature of the eagle on the cornice. From there, the Extispicium Relief, already in several pieces, went to the Capitoline Hill, where several artists sketched it before the restorations took place and while now-lost portions of the relief were intact.[11] Later, the Togati Relief and the Victim Relief were installed separately on the main facade of the Villa Borghese (probably around 1615–19).[12] After part of the Villa Borghese collection was sold to Napoleon in 1807, the Togati Relief and the Victim Relief were sent to the Louvre.[13]

The findspot in the Forum of Trajan can hardly be considered decisive,

10. The provenance of the Extispicium Relief is traced in fuller detail by Michaelis (1891, 21–23) and Wace (1907, 231–32).

11. See Leoncini 1988 and Wace's summary table (1907, 230).

12. A mid-seventeenth-century description of the Villa Borghese facade mentions these reliefs (Manili 1650, 46). In an unnumbered plate, Fabréga-Dubert (2009) reconstructs the two large fragments as widely separated pendants on the facade flanking the main entrance to the Villa Borghese. The majority of the head and arm restorations and the extensive retooling probably took place in connection with this installation.

13. At the Louvre, the Togati Relief and the Victim Relief were initially displayed as two different works (Clarac 1841–53, 2.1:732–33, 743–44). Michaelis (1891, 21–23, plate 3) identified the reliefs as belonging to the same composition on the basis of a sixteenth-century drawing.

for several reasons. The Forum of Trajan has yielded a steady and prolific stream of sculptures since its abandonment sometime after the sixth century CE.[14] Scholars have attempted to fit the fragments into a comprehensive Trajanic program, to which they have also attributed pieces only suspected of coming from the Forum of Trajan, such as other reliefs installed on the Villa Borghese and the monumental battle frieze fragments now on the Arch of Constantine.[15] Yet, thus far, no one has suggested a convincing architectural setting within or near the forum for all of these reliefs, either in the form of a monumental frieze or as separate installments.[16] This lack of an obvious physical setting seems suspicious. We suggest that the Extispicium Relief was not part of the original architecture of the Forum of Trajan.

Indeed, the findspot in the Forum of Trajan provides only a *terminus post quem* for the Extispicium Relief. We know that the Forum of Trajan continued to be a favorite location for honorary statues as late as the fifth century CE.[17] Relief fragments reported to have been found with the Extispicium Relief feature architecture reminiscent of third-century sarcophagi, suggesting that reliefs, too, were added to the forum at later periods.[18] Although such miscellany could indicate a marble stockpile or lime kiln, early reports of the relief fragments also mention an arch.[19] To us, it seems likely that the Extispicium Relief belonged to a third- or fourth-century arch combining new and reused reliefs.[20]

As previously mentioned, the relief's inscription (*CIL* 6.29800; fig. 2.4) is often quoted as reading "Marcus Ulpius Orestes," but it actually reads M. V[LPIUS] | ORE[S] | TES.[21] The critical word "Ulpius" is a restoration.

14. Wace 1907, 229–57; Leander Touati 1987, 96–111.

15. See especially Wace 1907; Leander Touati 1987.

16. Packer (2001, 58–59) points out that earlier solutions have not been sustained and offers only a brief suggestion that the "Great Frieze of Trajan" was probably on "the north façade of the Basilica Ulpia" (198); see also Zanker 1970, 517.

17. Chenault 2012; Weisweiler 2012.

18. Cod. Vat. Lat. 3439 fols. 85, 86, 88 (reproduced in Wace 1907, plates XXI–XXIII). Some of the recorded relief fragments are now lost, so their scale is impossible to determine.

19. Wace 1907, 232–33.

20. The Arco di Portogallo reused Hadrianic reliefs (VanderLeest 1995; Liverani 2004). The Arcus Novus of Diocletian reused Julio-Claudian reliefs from several different monuments alongside contemporary material (La Rocca 1994). The Arch of Constantine, still standing and the most discussed example of this genre, reused reliefs from several different periods alongside contemporary material. For bibliography on the Arch of Constantine and the practice of spoliation, see Elsner 2000; Marlowe 2004, 2010.

21. A sixteenth-century illustrator records an *L* after the *V* (accepted in Wace 1907,

Fig. 2.4. Inscription from the Victim Relief. (Photograph by E. Thill, reproduced by permission of the Musée du Louvre Département des A.G.E.R.)

The signature, in other words, could be restored as "MARCUS VIBIUS ORESTES." This suggestion is as speculative as restoring the word Ulpius, but the point is that the signature does not read "Ulpius" and therefore is not definitively associated with Trajan's family.

Even if the signature were carved by a Marcus Ulpius Orestes, this nomenclature is not as chronologically or socially restricted as the prior literature on this relief presumes.[22] The *Prosopographia Imperii Romani* (*PIR*)—which does not include our M. V. Ore[s]tes under either "Orestes" or "Ulpius"—provides us with no fewer than fifty-three additional members of the *gens Ulpia* that left literary or epigraphic traces. Quite a few of them sported the praenomen Marcus (M.), and members of the family continued to achieve prominence well into the third century.[23] Only five M. Ulpii are specifically named as *liberti*. Even the name "Orestes" cannot be firmly tied to slave

238). Looking at the inscription as preserved today, it is not clear where this *L* would have been, unless there was unusually extended spacing between the *V* and the *L*, compared to the spacing in *ORE[S] / TES*.

22. For instance, Claridge (2015, 118) notes, "Orestes was surely an imperial freedman and more conventionally has a Greek cognomen. Whether he was really a Greek . . . is anybody's guess."

23. *PIR* 3:458–466, nos. 533–86.

status: Greek names were in vogue in the Augustan period among elite families.[24] In fact, an [Ore]stes was suffect consul in 85 CE.[25]

A tombstone of the wife of one M. Ulp. Orestes (*CIL* 06.26432) may or may not relate to the same individual as the signature on the Victim Relief but should be mentioned here.[26] The tombstone is datable to either the second or third century on the basis of epigraphic style. In the event that we are dealing with the same individual, we have evidence here for a relatively long life (a fifty-year-old wife) and children, one of whom might have borne his father's name.

Ultimately, explicating the Extispicium Relief inscription proves less of a sure thing than was once promised. The name *Ulpius* not only is a restoration but also spans a broad chronological and social range. One-to-one correlations among the inscription, the reign of Trajan, and the artist who created this work cannot be upheld.

Objections to a Second-Century Date

Arguments against associating the Extispicium Relief with the Trajanic or Hadrianic periods can be derived from looking closely at the details of the relief itself. Pragmatically, stylistic analysis is difficult because the relief has been heavily restored and reworked (table 2.1).[27] Stylistic analy-

24. Wardle 1998, 112.

25. *PIR* 5.3:459, no. 135.

26. As recorded in *CIL* 6.26432, the inscription reads in full: "D M | SERVILIAE ACTE VI | XIT ANNOS L M III | D XXVIIII BEN ME | CON M ULP ORES | TES ET FILI." The text omits occupations and other markers of social status. The tombstone is reported to have been found sometime before 1733 "della vigna del colombario de'liberti di Livia." This findspot, too vague to be meaningful, should not be used to argue for a servile statue for either wife or husband, since it is unlikely that anyone living as late as the Trajanic period would have been buried in the Augustan imperial columbaria: see Bodel 2008, 207 n. 57.

27. Areas showing post-antique restoration are listed in Wace 1907, 238–39. Ibled 2005, the report prepared for the Louvre in advance of conservation work on the relief, is the most recent and extensive information on the subject and includes several drawings. This report largely concurs with Wace's list but is far more detailed and distinguishes between restoration media (plaster, marble, etc.). We thank Mme. Scherer for access to this unpublished report. The unusual thinness of the relief panel is probably due to the preparations for its baroque installation on the facade of the Villa Borghese. The atrocious restoration heads probably date to the same era (Rossi and Sandrelli 2011, 150). The arms and hands and other fixes are not nearly as bad as the heads.

Table 2.1. Post-Antique Alterations to the Extispicium Relief

Type of Alteration	Victim Relief (Ma 978)	Togati Relief (Ma 1089)
Reconstructed in plaster	#2: L arm below bicep #3: head #4: nose, R hand, handle of axe #5: nose, R foot from instep #6: nose, R foot from instep #7: heel, toe #8: middle section of both feet	#3: nose #5: nose #6: R arm at juncture with toga
Reconstructed in marble	Victim: snout #1: upper body, arm, head #2: head #4: wrist, hand #6: R arm from elbow down (including hand)	#1: face #2: head, both arms #4: head, R arm #6: head, R arm Triangular section at bottom of #1 and #2
Plaster patching	Patch running upward across middle of victim's body and liver up to neck of #3 Victim: along snout #1: around marble inserts #2: between head and neck	#1: between face and back of head #2: between head and neck #4: between body and arm #6: between head and neck along edge of triangular section
Retouched / re-carved	Background around #1 Victim: most of body, excepting head, hooves, lower legs, shoulder, lower half (tail etc.) #1: most of toga #2: outer R arm #3: left half #4: head, upper body, some of toga #5: neck, some of face #6: face, neck, some of toga, upper edge of L foot #7: lower toga #8: bottom and edges of toga	Door 1: along bosses on left side, upper right #1: neck, stomach area #2: most of toga, excepting along neck joint and bottom R corner #3: entirety of toga #4: chest area, L shoulder, L arm, most of lower body #5: head, shoulders #6: high relief areas, R leg

Source: After Ibled 2005.

Note: Numbers refer to figures in each relief, counting from left to right (for the Victim Relief, #2 refers to the figure bending over, #3 to the figure in the background).

sis is methodologically problematic as well, due to the well-documented Roman practice of stylistic pluralism: later reliefs often employed stylistic conventions developed centuries earlier and combined them in traditional or innovative ways. Therefore, we cannot expect all works from the same period to utilize the same artistic style.[28] Given the solemn subject of the

28. The figures of the extended spiral frieze of the Column of Marcus Aurelius, for example, look very different from the more traditional figures of the Aurelian panels now in the Palazzo dei Conservatori and incorporated into the Arch of Constantine. Removing

Extispicium Relief, we would expect a traditional classicizing style regardless of date.

Quality proves a more productive vein of exploration than style. In places where undamaged original carving is still evident, the carving is extremely shallow and sloppily executed, unlike other material more convincingly dated to the early second century. For example, the channels that indicate the doors of the temple are not straight, nor are the lines of the architrave. While we recognize that there were various qualities of art in all periods, art made for the emperors in Rome—and this must be such a piece, based on its size[29] and subject matter—was generally of the highest quality available at the time.

Subjectively, the composition is stiff and boring, and it contains elements that are not well integrated, particularly the Victory, who seems to be exiting the composition. The relief deploys its figures rather simplistically, in two rigid relief planes; in contrast to much of first- and second-century relief practice, this pattern is broken only by the single *victimarius* leaning down to extract the victim's entrails.[30] Other layout problems also date to the initial carving of the relief. The pose of the third *togatus* from the right on the Togati Relief is awkward. More significantly, his drapery swings out entirely too far at the bottom and is confused with the drapery of the *togatus* in the background to the right. In turn, this background figure's feet and ankles are poorly aligned with his head and shoulders, being shifted too far to the right.[31] The bottom of the emperor's toga ends strangely, at nearly a right

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the heads of the latter panels makes it difficult to connect them to the squat soldiers of the column. Indeed, this is exactly what happened to the eight panels incorporated in the Arch of Constantine: the current portraits are of Trajan, since eighteenth-century restorers removing the Constantinian heads that had replaced the original Antonine portraits judged the panels' style to be Trajanic, a mistake not corrected until E. Petersen (1889, 317; 1890) connected the panels in the arch to panels in the Palazzo dei Conservatori that preserved their original portraits.

29. The dimensions are as follows: Victim Relief, 1.63 m high, 2.28 m wide; Togati Relief, 2.03 m high, 1.72 m wide (Ibled 2005); Victory fragment, 1.47 m high, 0.67 m wide (Michaelis 1893, 173–74, no. 5).

30. Leander Touati (1987, 110) notes that "a feeble relief depth was chosen for the Extispicium relief."

31. Personal observation suggests that this drapery arrangement is original to the relief. This area does not have the heavy chisel marks present elsewhere on the relief, and, generally, retouching on the relief as a whole seems to have involved filing the surface down, rather than recarving the design. The unpublished diagram in Ibled 2005 does not mark this area as retouched, but it also reproduces the drapery lines inaccurately to correct the error seen on the relief.

angle.[32] No individual detail is precisely diagnostic, but we do have a large corpus of second-century monumental reliefs, and all are of much higher quality than this. These sorts of problems, in other words, do not happen in the second century in this concentration, and no one has attempted to explain why this relief should date to the early second century despite them.

The rendition of the temple in the background presents other oddities. First of all, examples of carefully rendered pedimental sculptures in securely datable monumental reliefs from the early second century are rare. Hadrianic reliefs, as preserved, do not provide good comparanda, but we have literally hundreds of examples of sculpted depictions of architecture in the Trajanic period—from the Column of Trajan, the Arch of Beneventum, and the Great Trajanic Frieze—and not one of them can be recognized as a particular building on the basis of a depicted sculptural program or unusual architectural features.[33] While not definitive, such a pattern should not be ignored.

In addition, in the Extispicium Relief, the artists have attempted to show the flank of the temple receding into the background, by slanting the architrave downward, away from the main facade's architrave. This angling gives an impression of depth but diverges from normal Roman practice. In monumental relief, the flank architrave is angled upward from the facade archi-

32. This area does not appear heavily altered and is marked as original in the unpublished diagram in Ibled 2005.

33. The depictions on the Arch of Trajan at Beneventum have been identified as particular historical buildings based primarily on the hypothetical subjects of the relief panels, rather than on any features of the depictions themselves. Methodological problems of this approach aside (see Wolfram Thill 2012, 53–92), only a building of the southwest right attic panel includes pedimental statuary, and the motif in question—a shield with a lightning bolt—is generic. Only four buildings on the Column of Trajan, three arches (Scenes 33, 79, 101) and a temple (Scene 79), include statuary, the latter case a nondescript cult statue. For the architectural depictions on the Column of Trajan as generic in general, see Wolfram Thill 2010. The only architectural sculptures on the Anaglypha Reliefs are the lion-head keystones of the Adlocutio Panel, despite the inclusion of three temples. The Vatican-Terme relief showing a decastyle temple with elaborate pedimental statuary obviously would be an exception to this pattern (Goette 1983; Liljenstolpe 1996; Grunow 2002, 39) if it dates to the Trajanic/Hadrianic period (and it is not clear at all that it does). Carefully depicted renditions of recognizable buildings in monumental relief are more characteristic of the Julio-Claudian and Flavian periods. They reappear in the Antonine period, with the best-known examples being the Sacrifice Panel and Adventus Panel of Marcus Aurelius, now in the Palazzo dei Conservatori and on the Arch of Constantine, respectively (Sobocinski 2009). For the corpus of temple representations, see Grunow 2002; Quante-Schöttler 2002; Kossatz-Deissmann 2005; Wolfram Thill 2012.

trave in nearly every example.[34] Adding to the sense of architectural oddness are the inexplicable floating eagle on the architrave and the eagle-topped column monument; while the latter reflects actual architectural practice, column monuments are otherwise not depicted in relief until the fourth-century Adlocutio Frieze on the Arch of Constantine in Rome.

Another critical feature of the Extispicium Relief that deviates from the established pattern of second-century monumental reliefs is its inscription. It is our only known example of an apparent artist's signature from a monumental relief.[35] The only somewhat comparable situation is the signature *C. Vib(ius) Ruf(us)* found on the upper surface of the plinth of one of the caryatids in the Forum of Augustus.[36] The Extispicium Relief inscription is small, a mere three centimeters by three centimeters as preserved,[37] much smaller than many artist's signatures on ideal sculptures. The Orestes inscription is difficult to explain. Why was this artist alone allowed to mark an officially commissioned relief with his name? If it were a point of honor, why is the signature not more prominent and expressive? If this sort of expression of pride was frowned on for monumental relief, why was it placed where it could be seen at all, rather than, for example, on the bottom of the hoof?

Perhaps the ultimate questionable feature of the relief is its subject matter.

34. Grunow 2002; Wolfram Thill 2012. Exceptions to this broad pattern can be found in several buildings on the Column of Trajan (Scenes 44, 76). The exceptions, however, are very schematic renderings and some of the poorest on the frieze. The building in Scene 44, for example, lacks a roof, although it has a blank pedimental facade, and the flanks of one of the buildings in Scene 76 splay out in opposite directions, belying any sense of perspective. Roman coins also indicate depth by angling the temple flank upward or extending it at the same level as the architrave.

35. It is worth raising the question of what the signature actually represents; in other words, was M. Ulpius Orestes a sculptor? The phrase "made it" is notably absent. Action verbs are characteristic of ancient artists' signatures; for the use of such phrases, see Claridge 2015, 120. The names of private individuals also frequently appear on public artifacts such as water pipes, bricks, and marble blocks from the quarry, usually in reference to a contractor or supplier (see Pensabene and Gasparini 2015, 100, regarding inscribed quarry blocks). The Extispicium Relief's signature could be read in a similar way, perhaps as the mark of an individual responsible for collecting the relief as spolia (as suggested but rejected in Claridge 2015, 118); for a similar proposition regarding signatures of the so-called Esquiline Group, see Erim and Roueché 1982; Smith 2011, 72–74. For artists' signatures in general, see Claridge 2015; Vollkommer 2015.

36. Ungaro and Del Moro 2007, 159, fig. 214; Claridge 2015, 117.

37. The measurements are by E. Thill. To give one example, the *R* in the inscription measures 1.0 cm high and 0.6 cm wide. This limited size makes it unlikely that the inscription could have been seen from ground level if the relief were at all elevated. We have no evidence on the latter point.

Roman art is replete with images of sacrifice, but representations where the victim is already dead are exceedingly rare.[38] Those that do exist provide poor comparanda for the Extispicium Relief, both in composition and concept. The earliest slain victims are also the least applicable. A series of numismatic and intaglio motifs from the republican period represent a military oath and feature the sticking of a pig.[39] The scene typically takes place in front of a blank background and features two or three figures grouped around the unfortunate pig. This motif is distanced from the Extispicium Relief in terms of composition, chronology, medium, and, of course, the animal represented. The overall concept is broadly similar, in that both scenes involve a sacrifice and possibly war, but a military oath and the reading of the divine signs are both very specific—and distinct—rituals. In short, these republican victims shed little light on the relief and need not be considered further here.

A closer point of comparison is Scene 86 on the Column of Trajan (fig. 2.5). This scene does show a dead bovine,[40] but merely the head of the animal is visible, and its death is implied only by its position—lying (upright) on the ground—and its tongue sticking out. The Trajan's Column scene is not exactly analogous in other respects: there is a theater in the background, not a temple; the scene takes place in some provincial town, not in Rome; and the emperor himself is depicted as the primary actor in the ritual, pouring a libation, rather than as a dignitary patiently awaiting the results of the diagnostic gutting.[41] The dead victim in Scene 86 is prefigured by another bovine in Scene 80, shown with head and knees bent in front of a flaming altar but with no other elements of sacrifice.[42] Most important, both the Column of Trajan and the Column of Marcus Aurelius avoid depicting any reading of the divine signs, even though our best testimony for this ceremony is from a military text from the first century CE.[43]

38. Huet 2005; Elsner 2012. Images of dead victims are also rare in archaic and classical Greek art; see Van Straten 1995, especially 115–53.

39. See, e.g., Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum IX.B.899.

40. Ryberg 1955, 126.

41. One must make mention of the issue of visibility for the scene on the column: you would have to have very good eyes indeed to notice the animal's head, let alone his tongue. The problems (both logistical and conceptual) for the visibility of the Column of Trajan frieze have seen extensive discussion; for good summaries and bibliography, see Dillon 2006, 259; Galinier 2007, 134–63; Wolfram Thill 2011, 285. In short, visibility problems further compromise the applicability of Scene 86 as a direct comparison for the Extispicium Relief, whatever one's position is regarding the relative chronology of the two.

42. Huet 2005, 94 n. 17. Issues of visibility apply to this figure as well.

43. Onosander, *Strategikos* 10.10.

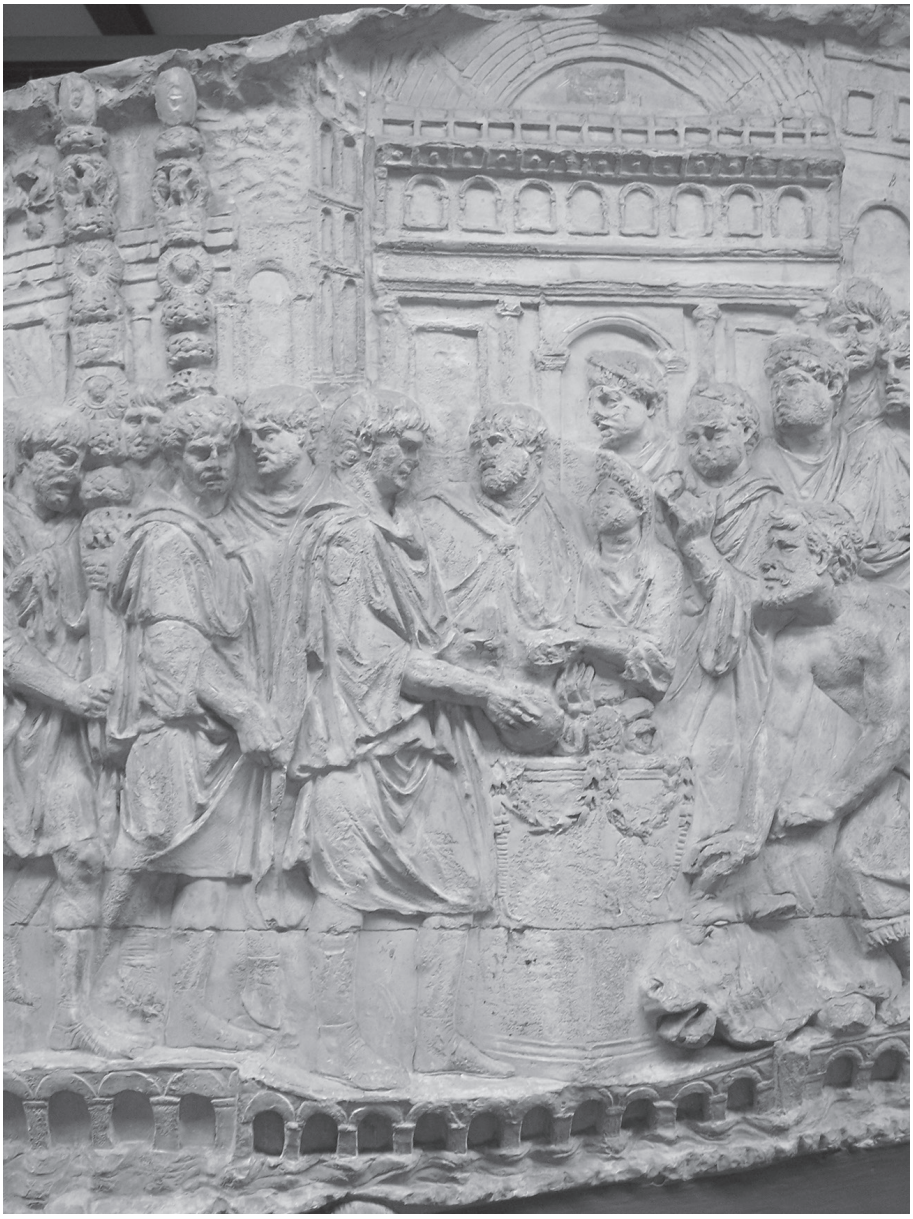

Fig. 2.5. Scene 86 from the Column of Trajan (cast in the Museo della Civiltà Romana). (Photograph by E. Thill.)

We have to jump forward almost a hundred years and to North Africa for our next dying victim. In a sacrifice scene on the Arch of Septimius Severus in Leptis Magna, the traditional trio of *popa*, kneeling *victimarius*, and bent bovine seems normal enough at first glance, until one notices that the right hand of the *victimarius* holds a knife seemingly inserted up to the hilt in the neck of the animal.[44] This iconography is strange, not only for the apparently unique (and subdued) imagery of slitting the victim's throat, but also because this combination would seem to contradict sacrificial practice: Aldrete has argued that to maintain the safety of the sacrificial attendants, as well as the critical illusion of the victim's peaceful assent to the sacrifice, the *popa* would sever the spinal cord of the bovine before the throat was cut.[45] Yet on the Leptis Magna arch, the *popa*'s arms are still raised in preparation for the blow.

Two undated artworks feature prominently dead or dying victims. A very large mosaic from the pronaos of the Augusteum in the Barracks of the Vigili (II.V.1–2) in Ostia shows a sacrifice scene with three bovines, with one tied and struggling victim at the center and with two prostrate or falling victims that are each flanked by a *popa*.[46] The date of this mosaic is uncertain, but a Severan date seems likely.[47] I. S. Ryberg has pointed out, however, that this scene is unusual in several respects: depictions of ruler cult were rare in Rome and its environs after the Julio-Claudian period; the restrained victim contradicts the traditional Roman pretense of the willing victim; and the head of the priest is bare and laureate.[48]

The next undated dead victim is part of a monumental but fragmentary

44. Bianchi Bandinelli et al. 1966, figs. 36, 41. This scene also has visibility issues. The exact date of the Severan Arch at Leptis Magna is uncertain, but it was probably erected in celebration of the emperor's visit to the city between 202 and 204 CE (Bianchi Bandinelli et al. 1966, 67–70). We thank Katherine Crawford for sharing with us her paper given at the 2015 meeting of the American Institute of Archaeology in New Orleans, which drew our attention to this sacrifice scene.

45. Aldrete 2014.

46. This mosaic is cursorily published (Carcopino 1907; Ryberg 1955, 96–97). The figurative space of the mosaic measures 8.45 × 2.95 m, and the largest figure (second from the right) measures 1.40 m high (Carcopino 1907, 230). The lack of a ground line for the left victim leaves its exact situation unclear, but its legs are bent backward under its body, and at the very least, it is in serious trouble.

47. The original building was heavily rebuilt in the Hadrianic period, and Ryberg (1955, 96 n. 50) assigned the mosaic to that building phase. Later research has determined that the pronaos in which the mosaic was placed was a Severan addition (Zevi 1970).

48. Ryberg 1955, 96–97, plate XXXI.

relief (fig. 2.6).[49] Once immured on the facade of the Villa Borghese, it, too, is currently in the Louvre (Ma 392).[50] As preserved, the relief shows four figures standing against a blank background. Unfortunately, the heads have been excised almost completely. The far-left figure is heavily draped and holds a large cornucopia. The next figure wears distinctive high boots and a short tunic that exposes her left breast; she is clearly either Roma or Virtus. The far-right figure is a winged Victory moving forcefully to the right. In the background between Victory and Roma/Virtus, an unbearded togate figure turns slightly to the right. The limp head of a bovine victim can be seen at Victory's feet, right before the relief (unfortunately) breaks off.[51] Because the victim is positioned chin down, it seems unlikely that the removal of internal organs was part of the original composition.

The closest comparanda for the Extispicium Relief can be found in rare third-century medallions of Volusianus and Trebonianus Gallus (fig. 2.7).[52] Like the Extispicium Relief, the medallions show a scene of sacrifice before a temple. In some specimens, a bovine head, with foreleg folded beneath, can be seen on the ground to the left of the altar. Two togate figures face each other across an altar, with their hands extended in sacrifice. Various additional figures bookend the composition. The hexastyle temple of Fortuna Redux in the background of the scene features a seated cult statue in the central intercolumniation, as well as prominent acroteria. Some examples include detailed pedimental statuary, while others feature only the standard

49. E. Thill measures the relief at 0.95 m high and 1.20 m wide.

50. Ryberg 1955, 156; Tortorella 1985, cat. no. 10, fig. 13. Ryberg suggests that Ma 392 is Trajanic; while she does not elaborate, her reasoning seems to be based on parallels with the dead victims of the Column of Trajan and the Extispicium Relief, which she also dates to the Trajanic period. Tortorella briefly comments on the relatively flat relief work and schematic drapery, notes unfinished details, and suggests, rather than argues for, a Hadrianic date for Ma 392. We find neither date convincing.

51. Ryberg (1955, 156 n. 43) believed the head of the victim to be a restoration. Personal examination of the relief shows that the head is original: besides a lack of a clear break, the marble is clearly the same as the rest of the piece. The conservation report also indicates that the head is original (Ibled 2011).

52. Only eight of these medallions are known (Sobocinski 2009, 142). Three feature the dead bovine to the left of the altar—one in Paris (Cabinet des Médailles MED 474; Gnecchi 1912, 102); one in London (British Museum 1872,0302.12; Grueber 1874, 59, plate 46.3; Gnecchi 1912, plate 111.10); and one formerly in Gnecchi's personal collection, now owned by the Museo Nazionale Romano in Rome (Gnecchi 1912, 102, plate 111.4). None of the medallions with the dead bovine include details of the pediment of the Temple of Fortuna Redux (Sobocinski 2009).

Fig. 2.6. Relief with Victory and a dead bull (Louvre Ma 392). (Photograph © E. Thill, reproduced by permission of the Musée du Louvre Department des A.G.E.R.)

Fig. 2.7. Medallion of Trebonianus Gallus and Volusianus showing a sacrifice at the Temple of Fortuna Redux. (From Grueber 1874, pl. 46.3.)

wreath and ribbons. In this scene on the medallions, as in the Extispicium Relief, we have two figures often identified as emperors, facing each other against the facade of a temple, in the presence of a dead victim. The moment is different, yet the iconography clearly overlaps.

To summarize, dead sacrificial victims were rare in Roman art. The closest compositions to the Extispicium Relief are on third-century medallions. The Ostia mosaic and the other relief in the Louvre are the next-closest conceptual comparanda, in terms of emphasis on the imminent or accomplished death of the animal. Both are undated, but, notably, both may belong to the late second century or beyond.

The Extispicium Relief is unusual not only in its inclusion of a dead victim but in the ritual that it depicts. While written sources tell us that reading the signs was a critical component of a departing military commander's religious duties, this ritual never appears elsewhere in Roman art.[53] None of the Roman scenes with dead or dying victims graphically illustrate the disemboweling of the victim or even show the animal flipped onto its back. Illustrations of reading the signs in the victim's liver are found in some archaic Greek vases and Etruscan mirrors, but these show only the haruspex alone with the liver. The victim does not appear.[54] In the Extispicium Relief, the dead victim dominates nearly a third of the foreground, and the focus is on the removal of its liver by the *victimarius*, while the haruspex waits at the edge of the composition. The Extispicium Relief thus stands alone in its emphasis on the logistical practices of divination.

These radical breaks with tradition require an explanation. First- and second-century monumental reliefs are broadly homogenous, with few thematic surprises outside of the special circumstances of the Column of Trajan and the Column of Marcus Aurelius. The set of iconographic and thematic boundaries for sacrifice scenes is particularly well established and included a widely held taboo against showing the bloody part of the sacrifice in monumental reliefs. Therefore, the Extispicium Relief deviates profoundly from the usual themes, iconography, and composition of first- and second-century sacrifice scenes in Roman art.

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53. See Livy 21.63.7–9, 45.39.11; Caesar, *Bell. civ.* 1.6; Julius Obsequens 76; Lactantius, *De morte persecutorum* 10; Onosander, *Strategikos* 10.10; see also Ryberg 1955, 129 n. 25. For the critical relationship between *imperium* and *auspicium*, see Versnel 1970, 174–195, 304–75.

54. De Grummond 2002, 69–71. A highly fragmentary terra sigillata sherd from Arretium, dated to ca. 15 BCE, shows similar imagery as the Etruscan mirrors, with a haruspex looking at a liver (Torelli 2000: cat. no. 158).

Conclusion

The traditional date of the Extispicium Relief depends on flimsy, unsubstantiated assumptions. It is not a securely dated example of monumental relief, though a date has been long supposed. Neither the relief's findspot nor its inscription, the two main lines of evidence for an early second-century date, hold up to careful scrutiny. Since the relief cannot be placed securely within the initial construction phase or a particular architectural setting of the Forum of Trajan, it is impossible to say when or how the relief came there. A secondary arch seems likely, although a composition as large as the Extispicium Relief could only have fit in the attic or passageway.[55] The inscription cannot be definitively connected to the Ulpii, and even if it could, the lifespan of that family and of its individual members covers much more than the reign of Trajan or Hadrian.

Reflexively assigning the Extispicium Relief to the early second century prompts scholars to overlook its aberrant features, from the sloppy rendering of drapery to the curious handling of architecture. Other differences are more conceptual and, thus, more significant. The inscription finds no comparison in the extensive corpus of monumental reliefs and seems to represent a significant anomaly. Finally and most important, it is hard to understand why, at the apparent height of the production of monumental reliefs, the Extispicium Relief would prominently break with an ancient tradition of avoiding the display of the bloody part of the sacrifice.

Individually, these strange details are merely odd; taken together, they constitute a distinctive break with early second-century patterns. These concerns are difficult to reconcile with a date in the Trajanic or Hadrianic periods. Evicting the Extispicium Relief from those periods, however, suggests another obvious question: if the relief's date is not the early second century, when is it? A full examination of that question is beyond the scope of this piece. In a companion article, we reappraise the Extispicium Relief as a hitherto-unrecognized survivor from the troubled third century and argue that it reflects an attempt to use the imagery of Rome's past greatness to secure tenuous political footing in a disputed empire. For now, the Extispicium Relief demonstrates both the perils of parroting past assumptions and the rewards of reexamining the apparently familiar.

55. As a point of comparison, the sections of the Great Trajanic Frieze now in the attic and passageway of the Arch of Constantine average 2.95 m high and 4.6 m wide (Leander Touati 1987, 83).

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