

Adding Insult to Injury: The *glandes Perusinae* as a Threat to Roman Masculinity

In order to achieve the high social status of the Roman *vir*, men had to remain “impenetrable penetrators” in all activities except one: warfare (Walters 1997). Whereas the scars of physical punishments signified that slaves had no power to protect their bodies from penetration, the scars received in warfare indicated the opposite, the Roman soldier’s manliness. Yet a set of lead bullets embossed with obscene text and used in the siege of Perugia in the winter of 40-41 BCE (*CIL* XI 6721.1-42) attempted to convert the honor of being a soldier to shame. These *glandes Perusinae* provide evidence of accusations against Fulvia and Octavian of sexual deviance (Hallett 1977) and symbolize “the Roman male sexual persona in its most elemental form: the phallus ready, willing, and able to assert its penetrative power at the expense of another” (Williams 2010). Building on these interpretations, I argue that these bullets aimed to transform the honor of warfare by attacking not only the soldiers’ body but also their masculinity in two ways. Firstly, the addition of phallic drawings and obscene insults that implied penetration of male and female orifices to the *glandes* transformed the objects into symbolic limbs, thereby adding insult to physical injury. Secondly, the bullets attacked the honor of the military leaders by accusing them of sexual deviance. For example, *CIL* XI 6721.7, which reads, PET[o] OCTAVIA // c CVLVM, “I attack Octavia’s ass,” illustrates this phenomenon by both implying the penetrability of Octavian’s body and by writing Octavian’s name in a feminine form. Although these bullets posed no physical threat to the leaders’ bodies, they nevertheless sought to penetrate the army as a group by attacking the head of each corps. Thus, a re-examination of these unique bullets reveals tensions present in the Roman conceptions of warfare, penetration, and masculinity.