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DEFEAT IN THE ARENA*

Introduction

Everybody in life wants to win. At its most basic, this must stem from the survival instinct: in a battle against predators, winning means survival; defeat means death. In a social context, however, obviously not everyone *can* win, and we have to learn to accommodate defeat, whether our own or that of others. Hence, in a competitive society, defeat presents a challenge. Usually, if an observer sympathizes with the defeated, there is an impulse to dress up the defeat in various guises; or, if the defeated party is scorned, the defeat is presented in the most humiliating terms possible. In a gladiatorial context, the attitudes of the observer, not to mention the gladiators themselves, are hard to recover. Recent work has focused on the 'affective dispositions' of the spectators, drawing analogies with modern combat sports.[1] Yet, modern spectators do not have to decide whether the defeated party deserves to live or die, whereas, for a Roman spectator, defeat was to be calibrated on a scale of life and death. The ancient protagonists themselves will obviously share impulses with their modern equivalents, although, when the contest is potentially fatal, the drive to win must take on an urgency surpassing pure ambition. When a modern athlete dies on the sports field or in the boxing ring, it is an accident, however tragic, whereas a gladiator who lost a fight could suffer the penalty of losing his life as well. Defeat was in deadly earnest.

* This paper was first delivered at the annual meeting of the Classical Association in Exeter in 2012, the year of the London Olympics. I am grateful to members of the audience on that occasion, and subsequently at the Winckelmann Institut, Berlin, the universities of Cologne, Genoa, and Pisa, Columbia University, Monmouth College, and the University of Massachusetts at Amherst for stimulating reactions, and to Luisa Musso, Susanne Muth, and Martin Ferguson Smith, who generously supplied five of the photographs. The following abbreviations are used: *CIG* = *Corpus Inscriptionum Graecarum*, 4 vols. (Berlin, 1828–77); *EAOR* = *Epigrafia anfiteatrale del'Occidente Romano*, 9 vols. (Rome, 1988–2017); *SGO* = R. Merkelbach and J. Stauber, *Steinepigramme aus dem griechischen Osten*, 5 vols. (Stuttgart, 1998–2004). In the rendering of inscriptions, vertical lines separate the lines on the stone and forward slashes indicate the divisions between lines of verse. All translations are mine, unless otherwise noted.

[1] G. G. Fagan, *The Lure of the Arena. Social Psychology and the Crowd at the Roman Games* (Cambridge, 2011).

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The identity of some athletes who were defeated on the prestigious games circuits in Greece are known to us, because athletic contests were high-prestige events honoured in epinician poetry and frequently mentioned by historians and other authors.[2] Gladiatorial combat, on the other hand, was a low-status activity despised by the educated classes, so that we lack literary evidence for stories of victory and defeat in the arena and must instead fall back almost exclusively on the epigraphic register – chiefly gladiators' epitaphs – and visual representations. A special caveat applies to epitaphs, in that the fraction of gladiators so commemorated is probably very small and necessarily excludes the least successful, and the dating is too approximate to yield evidence for chronological development in the attitudes displayed. A different caveat applies to visual representations: the image may be purely generic and considerably idealized, especially if there is no accompanying inscription supplying circumstantial details, and when images survive deracinated from their original context, it is impossible to determine their purpose and impact. Bearing those limitations in mind, some conclusions can nevertheless be drawn.

Missio

A gladiator who had technically been defeated could be granted a reprieve, if he were deemed to have fought bravely enough to deserve it. The reprieve, *missio*, was a grant of mercy, and a gladiator who received it was 'reprieved', *missus*; he did not die.[3] But *missio* is predicated upon defeat, and to record a gladiator's status as *missus* is to acknowledge, however indirectly, that he had been defeated. Since gladiators were slaves or assimilated to the status of slaves, it may seem surprising that, in a society in which a slave's life was expendable, defeated gladiators were subject to a stay of mercy at all. But the reasons may have been primarily economic. The jurist Gaius illustrates the difference between hire and purchase with the example of a sponsor who acquires gladiators

[2] V. Matthews, 'Olympic Losers: Why Athletes Who Did Not Win at Olympia Are Remembered', in G. P. Schaus (ed.), *Onward to the Olympics. Historical Perspectives on the Olympic Games* (Waterloo, Ontario, 2007), 81–93.

[3] On the terminology, see *TLL* VIII 1140.78–1141.3 s.v. *missio*, 1174.6–9 s.v. *mitto* (Fleischer); M. G. Mosci Sassi, *Il linguaggio gladiatorio* (Bologna, 1992), 139–40. On mercy in the arena, see also [Quint.] *Decl. mai.* 9.18: *uictis etiam gladiatores parcunt* ('even gladiators spare the defeated'); K. M. Coleman, 'Valuing Others in the Gladiatorial Barracks', in R. M. Rosen and I. Sluiter (eds.), *Valuing Others* (Leiden, 2010), 433–4.

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for a show; if a gladiator is killed or even maimed so severely that he cannot fight again, the price is fifty times higher than if he were returned to barracks with a prospect of fighting again (Gai. *Inst.* 3.146).

Fights could sometimes be conducted *sine missione*, without a reprieve for the defeated, which suggests an intransigent attitude towards defeat. Augustus is said to have banned engagements of this type out of his general concern (*cura*) for the people responsible for putting on spectacles (Suet. *Aug.* 45.3). This ban may be further evidence that fights to the death were exponentially more expensive for the person staging them. Sometimes, however, the result was inconclusive. In these circumstances, a double *missio* could be granted: both parties were determined to be *stans missus*, not just 'reprieved' but 'reprieved standing'.[4] Such an outcome must have been a cliff-hanger that earned commemoration: on terracotta appliqué medallions from the Rhône valley, individual grants of *missio* are not recorded, but in three instances named pairs of gladiators are accompanied by an umpire and the legend *(stantes) missi*.[5] The most famous pair of gladiators who fought to a draw like this were Amazon and Achillia, the only pair of female gladiators known to us by name – their professional names, obviously, given the appropriateness of their nomenclature to the context (figure 1).[6] Their monument is not a tombstone but, probably, a plaque recording a remarkable outcome in the track record of a single troupe. The superscription, ἀπελυθήσαν, would be *missae sunt* in Latin, 'they were granted a reprieve'; Greek renders *missio* by ἀπόλυσις.

The status of having been granted *missio* is almost invariably attributed to gladiators by a third party, chiefly either in records of this type or else in graffiti representing the outcome of a fight. It is extremely rare to find grants of *missio* recorded on a gladiator's tombstone. An epitaph from Sicily (possibly Panhormus) from the second century AD mentions quite frankly that, in addition to having fought to a draw nine times, the deceased received four grants of *missio* outright: *Flamma s*[*e*]*c(utor) uix(it) an(nis) XXX* | *pugna<ui>t XXXIIII, uicit XXI* | *stans (*scil. *missus) VIIII, mis(sus) IIII, nat(ione) S*[*y*]*rus* | *hui<c>Delicatus coarmio merenti fecit*, 'Flamma, *secutor*, lived thirty years, fought thirty-four

[4] E. Löfstedt, 'Stantes missi', *Archiv für lateinische Lexicographie* 14 (1905–6), 40; Mosci Sassi (n. 3), 140.

[5] P. Wuilleumier and A. Audin, *Les médaillons d'applique gallo-romains de la vallée du Rhône* (Paris, 1952), nos. 34, 111, 112 = *EAOR* V App. 1A, 4A, 11A.

[6] K. M. Coleman, '*Missio* at Halicarnassus', *HSCPh* 100 (2000), 487–500.

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Figure 1. Halicarnassus, relief. Amazon and Achillia fight to a draw. *CIG* 6855f. Trustees of the British Museum.

times, won twenty-one times, stood to a draw nine times, won a reprieve four times. Of Syrian extraction. To his well-deserving fellow-combatant Delicatus raised this monument' (*CIL* X 7297 = *ILS* 5113 = *EAOR* III 70). Flamma fought a remarkable thirty-four engagements, winning twenty-one and drawing nine. Hence, he was defeated in little more than ten per cent of fights over his entire career, which may be why he admits to these four instances of what was technically defeat.

Apart from Flamma's epitaph, however, I know of only two other instances that acknowledge an individual grant of *missio* to the deceased, thereby implying the prior condition of defeat.[7] One of

[7] I discount the epitaph of the *contraretiarius* Pardus (*CIL* VI 33983 = *ILS* 5106 = *EAOR* I 64), who 'left (the arena) standing', *st(ans) exit*, since, *pace* the editor of *EAOR* I, I take this to mean that Pardus fought to a draw, although outright grants of *missio* may have been recorded as well, in what is now an enormous lacuna.

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these, from Herakleia Salbakes near Aphrodisias, states that the deceased, Eidomeneus, who is depicted in an attack pose, was reprieved by the decision of the proconsul (ἀπελύθη = *missus est*): Εἰδομενεὺς [| ἀπελύθη κελεύσ[αν]|τος ἀνθυπάτου Ἀρρίο[υ] | Ἀντωνείνου, 'Eidomeneus was granted a reprieve by the proconsul Arrius Antoninus' (*MAMA* VI 122).[8] As far as I know, this is the only time that an agent is specified for a grant of *missio*; perhaps the grant is recorded precisely because the involvement of the governor reflects some glory that dissipates the shadow accompanying the reality of Eidomeneus' defeat. The other instance is the most startling (and touching), but also the most suspect: this inscription was seen in 1828 at Atripalda, near Avellino in Campania, in the garden of a Signore Cinnamo, but is now lost: *Ca]llicarpus, t(hraex), m(issus) X, d(eceptus) XI, ỌḲ ḊẠ*[, 'Callicarpus, Thracian gladiator, reprieved ten times, cheated (of life) the eleventh time' (*CIL* X 780 = *EAOR* VIII 31). The recorded version seems to say that Callicarpus, a Thracian gladiator, was granted *missio* ten times and died in his eleventh fight, although normally the numeral would precede the relevant abbreviation. If this is authentic, it is the only instance known to me where a gladiator is recorded as having lost every bout that he fought. Even if this were true, it would seem a most demeaning detail to include in an epitaph, and so I regard it with scepticism, since the testimony cannot be verified and seems incredible.

On a generous estimate, the combined total of surviving gladiatorial epitaphs approaches five hundred. Hence, of these, discounting the perpetually defeated Callicarpus, I have discovered only two – those of Flamma and Eidomeneus – that admit that the deceased had ever lost a fight. But if the evidence is so sparse, why do we get the impression that *missio* was much more prevalent? That impression comes from inscriptions and relief sculptures (like that commemorating Amazon and Achillia) that record the results of individual troupes, and from graffiti. A series of inscriptions from Thasos record the results of engagements between gladiators belonging to a woman named Hecataia, who held the high priesthood of the imperial cult with her husband, Euphrillos (*IG* XII/8 547, 549–51).[9] Beneath each gladiator's name is a tally of his results to date (victories and wreaths), followed by

[8] L. Robert, *Les gladiateurs dans l'Orient grec* (Paris, 1940), no. 155, AD 184–5.
[9] *Ibid.*, nos. 50–3.

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the outcome in the most recent combat, either ἐνίκα (equivalent to *uicit*) or ἀπελύθη (*missus est*), as in the following extract:

Θρ(ᾴξ)	Μορ(μίλλων)
Ναρκίσσος Ἑκαταίας	Κέρασος Ἑκατ[αίας]
[νι. α΄] στε. α΄ ἐνίκα	νι. α΄ στε ἀπελύθη
Thraex	Murmillo
Narcissus, belonging to Hecataea,	Cherry, belonging to Hecataea,
[(?) victories,] eleven crowns. Won.	one victory, (?) crowns. Reprieved.

(*IGRom.* I 1504 = *IG* XII/8 549)[10]

Surviving reliefs and mosaics also record particular spectacles, with the results inscribed above the gladiators' heads, with *V* (*uicit*), *M* (*missus est*), and either *P* (*periit*) or the fatal *theta nigrum*, whether it originally stood for θανών/θάνατος ('dead', 'death') or was derived from *o (biit)*, with a diagonal stroke through it signalling the abbreviation.[11] In one instance, *M* and a *theta nigrum* appear together, possibly indicating that, although the defeated gladiator had been granted *missio*, he died of his wounds all the same; there may be a gash on his left thigh, but it is hard to be sure (*EAOR* I 101; figure 2).[12] Some slabs record the results of a single gladiator's string of engagements, in numerical order, such as those of a *retiarius* (nameless, now) who defeated Felix in his third fight (*CIL* VI 33988 = *EAOR* I 109; figure 3).[13] Felix must have been granted *missio*, because the *retiarius* defeated him again in his fourth fight, and this time Felix was executed. In his fifth fight the *retiarius* defeated Ursulus, and in his fourteenth he defeated Victorinus and executed him. We have only a small piece of this monument, but it seems to have been designed in two columns. Conceivably every single fight in the subject's entire career was

[10] *Ibid.*, no. 50.

[11] *P(eriit)*: *EAOR* II 53, 57; VIII 33. *Theta nigrum*: *EAOR* I 101, 112, 113, 114; II 58; VIII 33. For the so-called *theta nigrum* on casualty reports from the Roman army in Moesia and Egypt in the second century AD, see G. R. Watson, 'Theta nigrum', *JRS* 42 (1952), 56–62.

[12] Museo Nazionale Romano, Chiostro di Michelangelo, III, 27, inv. 126119. Late first century BC (?).

[13] Musei Capitolini, Mag. Sculture B, I. CE 7328 (Inv. scul. 1812). Neg. Cap. A 4766. For discussion, see Robert (n. 8), 120–1, 289–90. Third century AD.

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Figure 2. Fragmentary marble slab recording the result of combat between Iulianus (left), 'won', *u(icit)*, and Clemens (centre), 'reprieved', *m(issus est)*. On the right, the visible gladiator was also reprieved, *m(issus est)*, but the *theta nigrum* shows that he died (of wounds?). Museo Nazionale Romano, Chiostro di Michelangelo, III, 27, inv. 126119. Photo Erich Lessing / Art Resource, NY (ART41373).

represented. But we do not know whether he was ever granted *missio*; maybe only his victories were shown.[14]

The other fertile source for records of *missio* comprises graffiti recording individual engagements. These regularly depict a pair of

[14] These representations have been interpreted as 'the *retiarius*' revenge for a lifetime of slights and abuse from disdainful *secutores*', on the grounds that the poses of the defeated opponents are reminiscent of submissive poses in sexual acts, including *fellatio*: J. Coulston, 'Victory and Defeat in the Roman Arena: The Evidence of Gladiatorial Iconography', in T. Wilmott (ed.), *Roman Amphitheatres and* Spectacula. *A 21st-century Perspective* (Oxford, 2009), 205. While the monument does not require this interpretation, *retiarii* in general do seem to have been associated with a marked element of effeminacy: see M. Carter, '(Un)dressed to Kill: Viewing the *Retiarius*', in J. Edmondson and A. Keith (eds.), *Roman Dress and the Fabrics of Roman Culture* (Toronto, 2008), 113–35.

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Figure 3. Relief sculpture in multiple registers recording the individual engagements of a single *retiarius* against various named opponents. Rome, Musei Capitolini, Palazzo Nuovo, Magazzino Sculture, inv. MC 1812/S. Archivio Fotografico dei Musei Capitolini, photo Zeno Colantoni. © Roma, Sovrintendenza Capitolina ai Beni Culturali.

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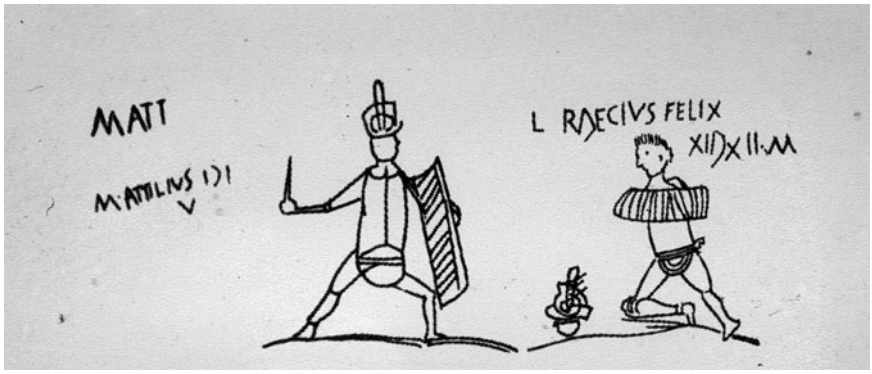


Figure 4. Tomb 19 outside Porta Nuceria, Pompeii, graffito. M. Attilius, one fight, one wreath, 'won', *u(icit)*; L. Raecius Felix, twelve fights, twelve wreaths, 'reprieved', *m(issus est)*. *CIL* IV.10236.

gladiators, either both in combat pose or with one clearly defeated (kneeling, lying on his back, or separated from his shield or helmet), with a tally of their results to date and a label of the outcome of the most recent engagement – again, via *V*, *M*, or *P* (figure 4).[15] The attitude of the outside observer who scratched these tallies – whether the owner of the *ludus* or the fan in the stands or someone else – was one of detached interest, recording the details of victories won, reprieves earned, and defeats sustained. This transparent accounting contrasts strikingly with the almost total elision of defeat from gladiators' epitaphs in the West, which I have just described; as we shall see, it also contrasts with the strenuous efforts employed on epitaphs in the East to disguise defeat or explain it away.

If gladiators' tombstones avoid admitting that they ever received *missio*, we should also consider whether a victorious opponent explicitly states that *missio* was the outcome for the man whom he defeated. This is the case with M. Antonius Exochus, whose tombstone, though now lost, is partially preserved in a sixteenth-century drawing in the Codex Coburgensis from the Kunstsammlungen der Veste Coburg.[16] When the drawing was made, the lower portion was already broken off, so that Exochus' feet are missing, and his epitaph breaks off in the middle of recording his third fight; we do not know how many more fights were

[15] *CIL* IV 1474, 8055, 8056, 10221, 10236, 10237, 10238.
[16] Robert (n. 8), 120, 289–90.

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originally recorded. Exochus made his debut in the arena on the occasion of the games celebrating the posthumous triumph of Trajan over the Parthians in AD 117, when on the second day he fought to a draw, *st(ans) miss(us)*, with an imperial slave, Araxes. On the ninth day, he fought again, this time against Fimbria, who was of free status (*liber*, hence a 'contract' gladiator), and he evidently won, although this victory is presented not as defeating Fimbria but as reprieving him:

. . .Rom(ae) ob triump(hum) | *diui Traiani die II* | *tir(o) cum Araxe Cae(saris)* (scil. *seruo)* | *st(ans) miss(us)* | *Rom(ae) mun(eris) eiusd(em) die VIIII Fimbriam* | *lib(erum) VIIII (pugnarum) miss(um) fe(cit)*.

At Rome, for the triumph of the divine Trajan, on the second day, he fought to a draw as a novice against Araxes, an imperial slave. At Rome, during the same spectacle, on the ninth day he caused Fimbria, a man of free status with nine fights to his credit, to be reprieved.

(*CIL* VI 10194 = *ILS* 5088 = *EAOR* I 92).[17]

The locution *missum facere*, 'to render someone reprieved', suggests that, just as *missio* implied a type of qualified defeat, so it also implied a type of qualified victory, otherwise we might expect an unequivocal statement that Exochus won against Fimbria. In that case, we may infer that there was less kudos in defeating an opponent who earned a reprieve than in defeating one who lost his life as a result. This distinction, however important to the gladiators themselves, may have escaped the layman, for whom a grant of *missio* meant one victor and one loser. This is implied by the juxtaposition of *V* and *M* on graffiti tallying the results of individual encounters, and by the metaphor of fighting to a draw that Seneca uses to illustrate his contention that there is no possibility of being happy without being virtuous (the subject is *uirtus*): *stans non potest mitti: aut uincatur oportet aut uincat*, 'It is not possible [for virtue] to be reprieved standing: she should either be defeated or win' (Sen. *Ep*. 92.26).

It is noteworthy that, in listing individual engagements against named opponents, Exochus' monument is unusual in the West, where the regular format supplies mere statistics, like the epitaph for Flamma discussed above. A detailed list of victories against named individuals is occasionally found in the East, where it is apparently

[17] The editor of the entry in *EAOR*, Patrizia Sabbatini Tumolesi, seems mistaken in concluding (81) that Fimbria was *stans missus*, which would require this engagement to have resulted in a draw, like Exochus' previous engagement against Araxes.

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modelled upon epitaphs for athletes, such as the sarcophagus for Polos at Gortyn, the surviving portion of which evidently presents his achievements in chronological order, naming both the city where each fight took place and his opponent.[18] He says that he won seven times (νεικῶ, unqualified by an adverb); won once more in a victory that apparently 'took' his opponent, νεικῶ λαμβά(νων);[19] won twice more in a specific manner that is no longer legible but allows us to conjecture νεικῶ + participle λαμβά(νων), as above, or νεικῶ + adverb λαμ(πρῶς), 'brilliantly'; fought to a draw once, στάς; and once took a respite, σχολάζω.[20]

Defeat that does not end in *missio* ends in death, either death as a result of wounds sustained in combat or, when an appeal for *missio* has failed, by execution afterwards, as on the explicit relief sculptures described above. We can therefore infer that a bald νεικῶ on Polos' sarcophagus resulted in *missio* for his opponent, whereas νεικῶ λαμβά(νων) implies that the opponent lost his life. Defeat can also be inferred when an epitaph records the number of engagements fought, and specifies that the deceased fell in the next one, as in two epitaphs from Verona, both now lost. One of these, from the second or third century AD, states that the deceased, Glaucus, engaged in seven fights and died in the eighth: *. . .pugnar(um)* | *VII (theta nigrum) VIII. . .in* | *Nemese ne fidem* | *habeatis:* | *sic sum deceptus* | *aue uale*, '. . .seven fights, died in the eighth. . .Don't trust Nemesis: that's how I was cheated. Hail! Farewell!' (*CIL* V 3466 = *ILS* 5121 = *EAOR* II 47). The other epitaph, from the first or second century, is for Pardon, who fought ten times and was likewise *deceptus*, 'cheated (of life)', the eleventh time (*CIL* V 3468 = *ILS* 5122 = *EAOR* II 52).

[18] Robert (n. 8), no. 65 = *IC* IV 375 = C. Mann, '*Um keinen Kranz, um das Leben kämpfen wir!' Gladiatoren im Osten des römischen Reiches und die Frage der Romanisierung* (Berlin, 2011), no. 84. Third or fourth century AD.

[19] The reading λαμ(πρῶς), adopted by Robert and followed by Mann, must be rejected, since a squeeze clearly shows λαμβα: see commentary at *IC* IV 375; G. W. M. Harrison, *The Romans and Crete* (Amsterdam, 1993), 131–2 (although note that λαμβα, printed correctly, is erroneously transliterated *lambra*). 'To be taken' is a euphemism in gladiatorial epitaphs for 'to die': see the epitaphs for Gaius from Gortyn (Robert [n. 8], no. 66 = *IC* IV 374 = Mann [n. 18], no. 82) and Polyneikes from Alabanda (Robert [n. 8], no. 169 = *SGO* 23/03 [= 02/04/02] = Mann [n. 18], no. 87), quoted below, with n. 39 and n. 48.

[20] Why Polos 'took a respite' is uncertain. Perhaps the fight was cancelled or he lost (Harrison [n. 19], 132). In the latter case, σχολάζω might be a euphemism for a grant of *missio*, but in that case, just as in the record of his victories, we would expect his opponent to be named, unless that would demean Polos too much. For the alternative interpretation of σχολάζω as 'serve as a trainer', see L. Robert, 'ΠΥΚΤΕΥΕΙΝ', *RA* ser. 5, 30 (1929), 28, followed by Mann (n. 18), 167 n. 96.

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If the restorations of the lacunae in the epitaph of a certain Rapidus at Salona in the second or third century are correct, he too was 'cheated' (a common euphemism) in his sixth fight, this time as a result of medical ineptitude: *Rapido retiar*[*io*] | *A*<*q*>*u(i)leie(n)sis ann(orum)* [| *d*]*omo Bellu*[*no*] | *pug*]*na VI occid*[*it*] | [*in me*]*dicina dec*[*eptus*(?)] | [*a m*]*edic*[*o*, 'To Rapidus, *retiarius*, from Aquileia, aged [ ], domiciled at Bellunum, died as a result of his sixth fight while under medical treatment, cheated by the doctor' (*CIL* III 12925 = *ILS* 5119). The cause of Rapidus' death is safely attributed to a third party, the physician evidently tending to the wounds that he sustained in combat. We do not know the official result of the fight, although we may infer that Rapidus' opponent won. In other cases, however, the subject's defeat was unambiguous, and yet the epitaphs employ various strategies to avoid admitting this. Under such circumstances, polytheism affords multiple opportunities for shifting the blame, but still the range of guilty parties mentioned in gladiators' epitaphs is remarkably limited.

Blame

It is extremely rare for gladiators' epitaphs in the West to specify the manner of death, but there is one interesting example from the territory of Beneventum, datable on palaeographic and onomastic grounds *c.* AD 150–200, which commemorates two gladiators. One, Purpurio, was commemorated by his *conuictores*, and the other, Filematio, by his wife, Aurelia Aphrodite. Purpurio, a *retiarius*, died in his eleventh fight, *mo(rmillone) adu(ersario) occi(sus)*, 'killed by the *murmillo* who was his opponent' (*AE* 1960, 139–40 = *EAOR* III 69). It is just possible that this detail is added because the usual opponent of the *retiarius* was not the *murmillo* but the *secutor*, though the difference boiled down to the *murmillo*'s elaborate crest, which was missing from the *secutor*'s helmet to reduce the risk that the *retiarius*' trident would get caught in it.[21]

In the East, on the other hand, gladiators' epitaphs frequently address the manner of their death and explain the circumstances, and the epitaphs themselves are cast in an entirely different mode from

[21] For the arms and armour that defined the different gladiatorial styles (*armaturae*), see in detail M. Junkelmann, *Gladiatoren. Das Spiel mit dem Tod* (Mainz am Rhein, 2008), 96–128, and in tabular form K. M. Coleman, 'Illuminating Tools: Gladiatorial Equipment on Roman Lamps', in F. Gury (ed.), *Actualité et décor. De l'événement éphémère à l'image pérenne* (Paris, forthcoming).

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those in the West. Western epitaphs for gladiators are in terse bureaucratic prose, whereas the more elaborate epitaphs in the East are usually metrical, conforming to the canons of funerary epigram, and accompanied by a relief sculpture. The sculptures show the deceased either standing in frontal pose, often with his shield beside him and his helmet placed on top, or else lunging forward to attack; neither pose, obviously, gives any hint of defeat, even if there is a whiff of it in the epitaph. To get the full effect conveyed by the combination of text and image on the stone, the epitaphs discussed below should ideally be studied in a photograph. Accordingly, I have indicated available images in the footnotes.

Only very rarely is a gladiator's defeat transparent, as with Sulpicius, who died ἐν ὅπλοις, 'under arms', in Beroia at the age of seventeen,[22] or Melanippos, who fought twelve times and died in his thirteenth fight, enabling the epitaph to reach a climax with a comparison to Herakles:

> τὸν θρασὺν ἐν σταδίοις ἐσο|[ῥᾷ]ς με νέκυν, παροδεῖτα,
> Ταρ|[σέ]α ῥητιάριν, δεύτερον πᾶλον, | [M]ελάνιππον·
> οὐκέτι χαλκε[λ]|άτου φωνὴν σάλπιγγος ἀκο[ύω] |
> [οὐ]δ' ἀνίσων αὐλῶν κέλαδον ἀ|[εθ]λῶν ἀνεγείρω·
> φασὶν δ' Ἡρα[κ|λ]έα δυοκαίδεκα ἆθλα τελέσσ[αι]· |
> [τα]υτὰ δ' ἐγὼ τελέσας τρισκαιδέκατ[ον] | τέλος ἔσχον

Traveller, you see me, a corpse, brave in the stadia, the *retiarius* Melanippus from Tarsus, second grade. No more do I hear the voice of the bronze trumpet, nor do I rouse the sound of the unequal pipes in contests. They say that Heracles accomplished twelve labours. I accomplished the same number; in the thirteenth I met my end.
(*CIG* II 3765 = *IGRom.* III 43)[23]

Otherwise, blame is deflected onto an ineluctable force, such as Tyche, who features prominently in Greek funerary culture to represent the inexorability of death.[24] Or the deceased is 'afflicted by (his) own apportioned lot', ὑπὸ τῆς ἰδίας εἱμαρμένης ἐνοχλήθην, as happened to

[22] Robert (n. 8), no. 17, pl. III = Mann (n. 18), no. 23. Early third century AD. Beroia Museum, inv. 216.

[23] Robert (n. 8), no. 298 = *IK Nikaia* 277 Taf. 24 = *IK Alexandreia Troas* 123 (photo) = *SGO* 07/05/01 = Mann (n. 18), no. 146. From Kemallı, near Alexandria Troas. Louvre, inv. MA 2911.

[24] E.g. Mann (n. 18), no. 33 (Tagachori, Church of the Prophet Elijah), Beroia Museum, inv. 665. Tyche features prominently in Greek funerary epigram in general: R. Lattimore, *Themes in Greek and Latin Epitaphs* (Urbana, IL, 1962), 149–50.

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Polyneikes, also known as Marcianus, at Marcianopolis.[25] Sometimes death is attributed to a vague βία, 'force', as with Flammeatis (formerly known as Zosimus), at Beroia, who was killed 'not by an opponent but by force', οὐχ ὑπὸ ἀντιδίκου ἀλλὰ ὑπὸ βίας.[26]

Most frequently, however, the fatal agent is Moira. She is often associated with premature death, a circumstance clearly relevant to a gladiator who was still fit for a fighting career.[27] The wide variety of metaphors and other expressions – some trite, some ingenious – that the epigrammatists employ in attributing the initiative to her are set out in the appendix. When she is adduced in the singular, it is debatable whether she is a personification and therefore to be capitalized or an abstraction to be left in lower case, but sometimes she is adduced in the plural, where capitalization seems *de rigueur*. The original sense appears to have been 'apportioned lot', evolving to the sense of 'decent limit'.[28] As in the Homeric epics, in funerary epigraphy the abstraction and the personification are both deployed, with the personification playing an active role, while the norm represented by the abstraction is somehow flouted.

On one occasion, defeat is attributed to Moira in the form of an illness that weakened the protagonist Stephanos in his last fight: οὐ γὰρ ἀντί|παλος ἔδα<μ>έν με τὸν | ἄθλιον οὐδ' ἐδύνατο. | / εἰ δὲ νόσῳ προδο|[θ]εὶς ὑπὸ Μύρης ὧδε | ἐφονεύθην, / ὄγδον πυ|κτεύσας ἔσχα τέ|λος θανάτου…, 'No opponent overcame me, worn down with toil as I was, nor could he do so. Betrayed by an illness, I was murdered here by Moira; having fought eight times, I suffered the deathly end' (*TAM* V/3 1906).[29] It was not a teammate, σύνζυγος, who snatched away a certain Victorius at Amaseia; rather, an illness killed him, νόσος…κατέκτανε (*CIG* 4175).[30] An unknown gladiator at Cyrene was saved from the sword, but died of illness.[31] Even a beast-fighter,

[25] Mann (n. 18), no. 69 = Junkelmann (n. 21), Abb. 148. Approximately AD 200. Devnja, Muzej na Mozajkite, inv. 40.

[26] Robert (n. 8), no. 16 = Mann (n. 18), no. 24. Beroia Museum, inv. 323. The opposition between τέχνη ('skill') and βία ('force') is inherited from the funerary commemoration of athletes: see Mann (n. 18), 164.

[27] See the examples cited by Lattimore (n. 24), 150–1, although he does not explicitly associate Moira with a death that is untimely. See also Mann (n. 18), 147–8.

[28] B. C. Dietrich, *Death, Fate and the Gods* (London, 1965), 59–90, 194–231, esp. 223–9; W. Burkert, *Greek Religion*, trans. J. Raffan (Cambridge, MA, 1985), 129–30.

[29] Robert (n. 8), no. 141 = *SGO* 04/24/04 (drawing) = Mann (n. 18), no. 139, from Philadelpheia, lost. Illness as an excuse for defeat: Mann (n. 18), 149–50.

[30] Mann (n. 18), no. 169, lost.

[31] Robert (n. 8), no. 69 = Mann (n. 18), no. 193.

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a category of performer not – to my knowledge – graced with a single epitaph in the West, claims *in propria persona* in an inscribed epigram from Philippopolis that he 'was overcome not by the jaws of beasts, but by a mortal illness', [μ]ὴ θηρῶν γενύεσσι δ[α]μέις, νούσῳ δὲ βροτείῃ,[32] while at Amaseia another beast-fighter, Troilos, who fought bears, was ultimately overcome by a fever: Τρωίλος ἐν σταδίοις | πάσας ἄρκους ὑποτάξας | / νικηθεὶς πυρετοῖς | πρὸς νέκυας κατέβη, 'Troilos, having subordinated all the bears in the stadia, was conquered by a fever and went down to the corpses'.[33]

Death tends to come when a gladiator is on the point of victory: [πυκτεύ]ων Βίκτωρ ἔθανον στα[δί|οις παρὰ] Μοῖραν, / νεικήσας μὲν π[άν|τας…, 'I, Victor, died flouting Moira while fighting in the stadia, having defeated everybody' (*CIG* 2942c).[34] Dying a natural death, expressed as 'having one's own Moira', Μο[ῖ]ραν ἔχων ἰδίαν,[35] or 'dying one's own death', ἰδίῳ ἔθανον,[36] is emphasized; Pardus from Rome 'died his own death', *sua morte obi(i)t*.[37] And dying unbeaten (ἄλ[ε]ιπτος) is something to emphasize, also.[38] Polyneikes, probably from Alabanda, who was famous for his invincibility, implies that he was the better fighter, but his opponent's youth gave the young man an inevitable advantage; the implication, laced with pathos, is that the disgrace of Polyneikes' defeat is thereby mitigated: Πολυνείκης ὁ θρασὺς δόξαν ἔχων ἔνοπλον | / πᾶσαν ἐπαρχείαν ἐν σταδίοις ἔσχον ἄλειπτος, | / εἰκοστὸν πυκτεύσας, | οὐχὶ τέχνῃ λειφθείς, | / ἀλλὰ νέος γεραρὸν σῶ|μα κατειργάσατο, 'I, Polyneikes the brave, glorious in combat, reigned supreme in the arena, undefeated. I was not taken by skill, but a young man forced my old body down below.'[39]

Sometimes it is not just a matter of paying a debt to Moira; rather, the opponent's success is explicitly conceived as her will, as with Chrysopteros

[32] Robert (n. 8), no. 37.

[33] Robert (n. 8), no. 77.

[34] From Tralles. Robert (n. 8), no. 148, pl. I = *SGO* 02/02/05 (photo) = Junkelmann (n. 21), Abb. 32 = Mann (n. 18), no. 101, Abb. 6. Third century AD. Istanbul Archaeological Museum, inv. 761. Attack pose with six wreaths in the background.

[35] Mann (n. 18), no. 26. From Beroia. Beroia Museum, inv. 65.

[36] *IG* XII Suppl. 479 = Robert (n. 8), no. 55 = Mann (n. 18), no. 80. From Thasos.

[37] Mentioned already for having fought to a draw, *st(ans) exit* (see n. 7).

[38] Two examples: *IGRom*. 774 = Robert (n. 8), no. 29 = Mann (n. 18), no. 57, from Arkadioupolis; Robert (n. 8), no. 294 = *IK Kyzikos* 400 = Mann (n. 18), no. 156, from Edincik, lost.

[39] Robert (n. 8), no. 169 = *SGO* 23/03 (= 02/04/02) = Mann (n. 18), no. 87. Second or third century AD. Garden in the village of Karakollar, south-west Turkey. For the concept of being 'taken' by an opponent, see also n. 19 above, and n. 48 below. For further discussion, see Mann (n. 18), 163–4.

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from Tripolis on the Maeander, who was pitted against the mighty Eteokles: δώδεκα νεικήσας Χρυ[σό]|πτερος ἐν σταδίοισι[ν], | / πυκτεύων τρισκαιδέκ[α]|τον σθεναρῷ Ἐτεοκλ[εῖ], | / [Μ]οῖραν ἔχων θανάτ[ου] | κεῖμαι νέκυς ἐνθά[δε τύμβῳ], 'I, Chrysopteros, having won twelve times in the stadia, in the thirteenth engagement fought mighty Eteocles, and, receiving the lot of death, here I lie, a corpse, in my tomb'.[40] Chrysomallos from Nicaea was killed by Tydeus, because he was trapped by the threads of fate: ἦν μίτος οὗτος ὁ Μοιρῶν, 'this was the thread of the Moirae'.[41] A *murmillo* whose name has not survived was killed in combat against the *prouocator* Hyakinthos, having fought eleven times, but it was no mortal who snatched victory from him; Moira was responsible: [ἐνθάδε], μυρμύλλων, Ζμύρνης | [κλέος?, ὦ] παροδεῖτα, / κεῖμ[ε], θανὼν πυγ|μῇ προβοκάτορος Ὑακίνθου, / ἔν|δεκα πυ|κτεύσας· νείκην | [δ' ἀπ' ἐμοῦ?] λ[ά]βε οὐδίς, / [Μοῖρα δ'] ἐμοὶ κατέκλω|[σε θανεῖ]ν, ἐπέπρωτο γὰρ | [οὕτως], 'Here lies the *murmillo*, glory of Smyrna, passer-by, who died at the hands of the *prouocator* Hyakinthos, after eleven fights. Nobody snatched victory from me, but Moira determined that I should die, for so I paid my debt.'[42] Sometimes the gladiator's end is expressed with epigrammatic virtuosity, as with the epitaph for Autolykos from Tenedos, which stresses the paradox that, although he had the upper hand, he wanted to spare his opponent, and so, at his moment of victory, he flouted Moira: θαυμάζις με θανόν|τα τυχόν, φίλε, τὸν Αὐ|τόλυκον· / οὕτως πῶς | προλαβών, σῶσαι δὲ θέλω<ν>· | / νικήσας ἔθανον παρὰ | Μοῖραν, 'Perhaps you are astonished, dear [passer-by], that I, Autolykos, have died. I was ahead, but I wanted to save [my opponent]; and, in the act of winning, I flouted Moira and died.'[43]

Despite these avoidance tactics, occasionally the opponent is credited – albeit obliquely – with the demise of the deceased, as with Rhodios at Ephesus, whose strength killed many, but who was himself 'overcome by the hands of Hermeias', χερσὶ δ' ὑφ' Ἑρμείου δμήθην.[44]

[40] Robert (n. 8), no. 146 = *SGO* 02/10/02 (photo) = Mann (n. 18), no. 145. Second or third century AD. Jenice-Köy, in the courtyard of Abdullah-Oglu Ibrahim. Frontal pose; (?)five wreaths. For the phrase Μοῖρα θανάτου, i.e. 'doom of death', see Lattimore (n. 24), 151.

[41] Robert (n. 8), no. 81 = *IK Nikaia* 276 = *SGO* 09/05/10 = Mann (n. 18), no. 162, lost.

[42] Robert (n. 8), no. 30 (Plotinopolis) = *IGRom*. I 773 = Mann (n. 18), no. 66. Hermitage, St Petersburg.

[43] Robert (n. 8), no. 285 = *IG* XII/2, no. 644 = *IK Alexandreia Troas* 104 (photo) = *SGO* 07/05/02 (drawing) = Mann (n. 18), no. 147 (Tenedos). Çannakkale Museum, inv. 2328. Dog and seven palm fronds.

[44] Robert (n. 8), no. 214, pl. III = *IK Ephesos* 1177 = *SGO* 03/02/53 (photo) = Junkelmann (n. 21), Abb. 361 = Mann (n. 18), no. 104. Ephesus, Marmorstraße. Attack pose.

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The deceased sometimes claims to have killed the man who slew him, a somewhat ironic outcome: a *sagittarius* killed Decoratus, but he could not escape Decoratus' left hand.[45] A gladiator from Smyrna whose name is unfortunately corrupt was killed by an opponent called Pardus, who suffered the same death.[46]

The opponent, however, is sometimes specifically mentioned as *not* responsible: Victor, from Thessalonica, was killed by a *daimon*, not by ἐπίορκος Πίννας, 'perjured Pinnas'; his epitaph goes on to say that Victor was avenged by his σύνοπλης Polyneikes (his 'comrade-in-arms'), who killed Pinnas in revenge.[47] Gaius from Gortyn fought for his life, not for a wreath; no opponent ever beat him, but cruel Moira overcame him and laid his corpse at the feet of his defeated opponent (or possibly the corpse is the opponent's): οὐ κότινος τὸ θέμα, | ψυχῆς δ' ἕνεκεν μαχόμεσθα· | / οὔποτ' ἐ[λ]είφθην | (ἔ)κ τινος ἀντιπάλοιο, | / ἀλλά με Μοῖρ' ὀλοὴ | δαμασσαμένη πο|σὶ θῆκεν | / ἀντιπάλοιο δέμας | ὑπ' ἐμεῖο δαμέντος, 'An olive-wreath is not the prize; we are fighting for our lives. I was never taken by any opponent, but deadly Moira overcame me and laid me, a corpse, at the feet of my opponent, who was himself overcome by me.'[48] There is a curious inversion of this pattern in an epitaph, headed Βιτᾶλις | πῶ(λου) α΄ ('Vitalis, first *palus* [= grade]'), commemorating Vitalis at Stratonikeia, whose opponent, Polydeukes, bore the name of one of the Dioscuri: [ὁ θ]ρασὺς ἐν πυγμαῖς Βιτάλιος | ἐνθάδε | [κε]ῖται / ὃν κτάνεν ἐν σταδίοις | [ἰδ]ίαις παλάμαις Πολυδεύκης / [πὺξ ἀ|γα]θός, κρατερός, ἄξιος οὐνό[ματος], 'Vitalius, brave in combat, lies here. Polydeukes killed him in the stadia with his own hands, good at fighting, strong, and worthy of his name' (*SEG* LII 1113 bis A).[49] Here the intention seems to be to vindicate Vitalis' defeat by emphasizing that he had a worthy opponent, whose heroic name made his victory inevitable.[50]

[45] Robert (n. 8), no. 238 (Smyrna) = *IK Smyrna* 546 = *SGO* 05/01/27 (drawing) = Mann (n. 18), no. 114, lost. Left-handers were particularly formidable, because most people, being right-handed, did not get much practice against them: see K. M. Coleman, 'A Left-Handed Gladiator at Pompeii', *ZPE* 114 (1996), 194–6.

[46] Robert (n. 8), no. 237 = *IK Smyrna* 547 = *SGO* 05/01/28 = Mann (n. 18), no. 115, lost.

[47] Robert (n. 8), no. 34 = *IGBulg.* III/1, no. 1019 (Philippopolis?) = Mann (n. 18), no. 63. Church of St Bogorodica, Asenovgrad.

[48] Robert (n. 8), no. 66 = *IC* IV, no. 374 = Mann (n. 18), no. 82. For 'taken' (ἐ[λ]είφθην), see also nn. 19 and 39 above.

[49] *IK Stratonikeia* 1497 = *SEG* LVI 1212 = Mann (n. 18), no. 98. Muğla Museum. Frontal pose, (at least) fifteen wreaths.

[50] For the reminiscence of Hom. *Il.* 3.237, πὺξ ἀγαθὸν Πολθδεύκεα, see G. Staab, 'Zu den neuen Gladiatorenmonumenten aus Stratonikeia in Karien', *ZPE* 161 (2007), 44–5; Mann (n. 18), 227.

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Sometimes when the opponent is named, his success is attributed to the intervention of Moira, whom we have already seen adduced as the ineluctable force controlling the gladiator's destiny. This was the case with Victor at Tralles (cited above), who had defeated everyone, but Moira caught him and took him to Hades, when he met his end at the murderous hands of Amarantos.[51] Another example from Tralles employs the same trope, but the identity of the opponent is unfortunately hidden from us by damage to the stone.[52]

In a unique instance, defeat is attributed to the coincidence of pernicious fate and a tricky umpire, and both parties are shown on the stone prior to the debacle, Diodorus of Amisus in triumphant pose, his opponent gesturing for mercy (figure 5): ἐνθάδε νεικήσας κεῖμαι Διόδωρος | ὁ τλήμων· / ἀντίπαλον ῥήξας | Δημήτριον οὐκ ἔκτανον εὐθύς, | / ἀλλά με Μοῖρ' ὀλοὴ καὶ σουμμάρου δόλος αἰνὸς / ἔκτανον, ἐκ δὲ | φάους ἤλυθον εἰς Ἀΐδην, 'Here I lie, stout-hearted Diodorus the winner. Having defeated my opponent Demetrios, I did not kill him immediately, but deadly Moira and the terrible trickery of the umpire killed me, and I came out of the daylight down to Hades.'[53] Stephanos at Hierapolis, ten times victorious, went to Lethe, tricked after killing an irrationally angry opponent:

ἦ] τὸ πρὶν ἐν στα[δίῳ] κε|λαδούμενος ἔλαβα λήθην |
κτείνας ἀντίπαλον μεστὸν πικρίας ἀλογίστ[ου].
οὔ|νομά μοι Στέφανος, δέκατον στεφθεὶ[ς] ἐν ἀγῶνι
θνήσκω καὶ τρέφομαι μακροῖς αἰῶσι πεδηθεὶς |
γαίης ἐν κόλποισι· τὸ γὰρ σθένος οὔποτ' ἔλειπ[ε],
πρὶν | κτεῖναι παλάμαισι [ ] ψυχῆς ἐπιβούλον. |

To be sure, I, who was once celebrated in the stadium, have received oblivion, having killed my opponent, who was full of irrational bitterness. My name is Stephanos. When I was crowned in the contest for the tenth time, I died, and I am nourished after a long

[51] Mann (n. 18), no. 101; see also n. 34, above.

[52] *CIG* II 2942b = Robert (n. 8), no. 149 = *SGO* 02/02/06 (photo) = Junkelmann (n. 21), Abb. 96 = Mann (n. 18), no. 102, Abb. 7. Archaeological Museum, Istanbul, inv. 762. Attack pose, six wreaths.

[53] Robert (n. 8), no. 79 = *SGO* 11/02/01 (photo) = Junkelmann (n. 21), Abb. 40 = Mann (n. 18), no. 170, Abb. 13. Early second century AD. Musées royaux du Cinquantenaire, Brussels, inv. A 1562. σουμμάρου is an error for the transliteration of the Latin term *summae rudis* (= genitive singular, 'umpire'). For the 'trickery' of the umpire, see M. Carter, 'Blown Call? Diodorus and the Treacherous *Summa Rudis*', *ZPE* 177 (2011), 63–9, suggesting that Demetrius was downed by a legitimate move on the part of Diodorus, but that the *summa rudis*, interpreting his fall as an accident, let him stand up and retrieve his weapons, with results fatal for Diodorus.

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Figure 5. Funerary stele of Diodorus from Amisus, in triumphant pose, brandishing two daggers and standing over his defeated opponent. Musées royaux du Cinquantenaire, Brussels, inv. A 1562. © RMAH, Brussels.

time fettered in the bosom of the earth. My strength never left me, until someone, plotting against my life, killed me with a trick.[54]

[54] Robert (n. 8), no. 124 = T. Ritti and S. Yilmaz, 'Gladiatori e venationes a Hierapolis di Frigia', *Atti della Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei. Classe di Scienze Morali, Historiche e Filologiche. Memorie* ser. 9, 10 (1998), no. 20, Abb. 39 = *SGO* 02/12/08 = Mann (n. 18), no. 177. First three centuries AD. North necropolis.

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Blaming defeat upon trickery or fraud on the part of the victor is a classic tactic to avoid shouldering responsibility for failure. It is a standard element in Roman narratives of military defeat, although such defeat may also be blamed on treacherous terrain or bad weather – excuses that are not available in cases of failure to win a gladiatorial contest. There is no mention of cowardice or incompetence on the part of the Roman army. This silence in battle narratives is replaced in the gladiatorial record by strident denial, as we have already seen.[55]

Shame

A heroic death is a trope on these monuments. Sometimes it is expressed obliquely via a comparison with the labours of Herakles, an analogy that is particularly appropriate when the deceased fell in his thirteenth fight. This was the case with Melanippos, near Alexandria Troas,[56] and Hilaros, from Troy.[57] Sometimes the heroic identification is explicit: Amarantos at Tomis died ἐν ἡρώων μάχαις, 'in heroes' battles';[58] on the island of Cos, Zeuxis, *alias* Kinyras, who died in the process of killing his opponent, was a 'noble hero', ἥρως χρηστός;[59] a very lacunose epitaph for an anonymous gladiator at Hierapytna includes the phrase ὡς ἥρως κατέχω, 'I stand my ground like a hero'.[60]

In these epitaphs, defeat is presented in such ingeniously oblique ways as to be almost unrecognizable. As Christian Mann has noted, the heroic presentation of gladiators on their tombstones in the Greek East is very similar to the presentation of athletes, who are often portrayed as heroes.[61] Fifty years ago, Louis Robert analysed some of the satirical epigrams on athletes by the Neronian epigrammatist Lucillius, to show that every detail in the parody is an inversion of a

[55] On Roman narratives of military defeat, see I. Östenberg, 'War and Remembrance: Memories of Defeat in Ancient Rome', in B. Alroth and C. Scheffer (eds.), *Attitudes towards the Past in Antiquity. Creating Identities* (Stockholm, 2014), 262–3.

[56] Mann (n. 18), no. 146; see also n. 23, above.

[57] *SEG* XLIX 1755 = LI 1691 = *SGO* 23/11 (photo) = 07/06/07 = Mann (n. 18), no. 149. Second or third century AD. At entrance to excavations. Inscription without relief sculpture.

[58] Mann (n. 18), no. 74. Second or third century AD. Muzeul de Istorie Naţională şi Arheologie, Constanţa, Romania, inv. 814.

[59] Robert (n. 8), no. 191 = Mann (n. 18), no. 76. Cos, House of Captain Dimitri.

[60] *IC* III 51 (drawing) = Mann (n. 18), no. 86. Third century AD.

[61] C. Mann, 'Gladiators in the Greek East: A Case Study in Romanization', *International Journal of the History of Sport* 26 (2009), 272–97; Mann (n. 18), 156–74.

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standard trope in an athletic epitaph.[62] This parodic treatment makes it clear that, in the world of the athlete, defeat could not be countenanced.

The shame of athletic defeat goes all the way back to the archaic period. Celebrating the victory of Aristomenes of Aigina in wrestling in 446 BC, Pindar recounts the reaction of four opponents whom Aristomenes defeated one after the other:

> τέτρασι δ' ἔμπετες ὑψόθεν
> σωμάτεσσι κακὰ φρονέων,
> τοῖς οὔτε νόστος ὁμῶς
> ἔπαλπνος ἐν Πυθιάδι κρίθη,
> οὐδὲ μολόντων πὰρ ματέρ' ἀμφι γέλως γλυκύς
> ὧρσεν χάριν· κατὰ λαύρας δ' ἐχθρῶν ἀπάοροι
> πτώσσοντι, συμφορᾷ δεδαγμένοι.
>
> *And upon four bodies you fell from above*
> *with hostile intent,*
> *for whom no homecoming as happy as yours*
> *was decided at the Pythian festival,*
> *nor upon returning to their mothers did sweet laughter*
> *arouse joy all around; but staying clear of their enemies*
> *they shrink down alleyways, bitten by failure.*
>
> (Pind. *Pyth.* 8.81–7)[63]

Similarly, in celebrating Alkimedon, also of Aigina, who won the boys' wrestling contest in 460 BC, the victor's defeated opponents are imagined returning home in disgrace. Pindar describes Alkimedon as the person

> ὃς τύχᾳ μὲν δαίμονος, ἀνορέας δ' οὐκ ἀμπλακών
> ἐν τέτρασιν παίδων ἀπεθήκατο γυίοις
> νόστον ἔχθιστον καὶ ἀτιμοτέραν γλῶσ-
> σαν καὶ ἐπίκρυφον οἶμον
>
> *who, with divine favor, but also by not failing his manhood,*
> *put away from himself onto four boys' bodies*
> *a most hateful homecoming, words less respectful,*
> *and a hidden path*
>
> (Pind. *Ol.* 8.67–9)[64]

[62] L. Robert, 'Les épigrammes satiriques de Lucilius sur les athlètes', in *L'épigramme grecque*, Entretiens Fondation Hardt 14 (Vandoeuvres, 1968), 181–295.

[63] Translation from W. H. Race, *Pindar. Olympian Odes. Pythian Odes* (Cambridge, MA, 1997), 347.

[64] Translation from *ibid.*, 143–5.

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The athlete's shame in defeat, transferred from the athletic context to the gladiatorial arena, helps to show why Greek funerary epigrams are so concerned to explain away the circumstances of the gladiator's death. In the West, on the other hand, while *missio* is very rarely mentioned in a funerary context, gladiators' epitaphs almost never try to explain away the circumstances of death in combat. And even after the founding of Greek agonistic festivals – such as the *Sebasta* at Naples or Domitian's *Capitolia* at Rome – had familiarized western audiences with the eastern image of the athlete, this does not seem to have affected the presentation of the gladiator in the West.

End game

Gladiatorial epitaphs in the East blame fate; in the West, they ignore her. But texts tell only part of the story. As we have already seen, images are eloquent, too. An inscription is sometimes accompanied by a relief sculpture (see figure 5), or the two are inextricably combined (see figures 1–3), or, in some cases, a relief has no text to explicate it. Like inscriptions, the repertoire of gladiatorial representations is revealing of attitudes towards defeat, at least on the part of the people who commissioned them.

It has often been observed that the greatest number of gladiatorial representations depict not the combat itself but the moment of suspense when the defeated party is awaiting the verdict that will either grant him *missio* or send him summarily to Hades. He generally signals surrender by standing, kneeling, or reclining, gesturing eloquently for his release with one arm raised and the index finger pointing upwards.[65] Clearly this is a moment of humiliation, whatever the outcome, and the defeated gladiator is frequently shown to be in the power of his opponent, whether, for example, the opponent is standing on his hand to prevent him from snatching up his weapons and using them against the victor (figure 6), or the victor is being restrained by the umpire from dispatching his vanquished opponent then and there (figure 7). Sometimes the defeated gladiator may be bleeding, a sign of his powers of endurance (figure 8). In a mosaic from the Via Appia, now in Madrid, the presence of the *theta nigrum* next to Kalendio's name

[65] For the range of postures, see Coulston (n. 14), 200–6.

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Figure 6. Lucus Feroniae (Fiano Romano), funerary relief. (a) Segment showing defeated gladiator gesturing for mercy, his right hand immobilized under the foot of (presumably) his opponent. Museo Nazionale Etrusco di Villa Giulia, Rome, inv. 261838. (b) Segment showing victorious gladiator standing behind defeated opponent, his right foot (fragmentary) immobilizing his opponent's sword hand (also fragmentary). Museo Nazionale Etrusco di Villa Giulia, Rome, inv. 261855. Photos Mauro Benedetti. © Ministero per i beni e le attività culturali.

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Figure 7. Villa of Dar Buc Amméra, Zliten, Libya, amphitheatre mosaic, north-west frieze. A *summa rudis* restrains the hand of a victorious *eques* kneeling beside his defeated opponent. Assaraya Alhmara Museum, Tripoli. Photo © Gilles Mermet / Art Resource, NY (ART416022).

both predicts and confirms the fatal narrative sequence, read from the lower to the upper register (figure 9).

The defeated party is often shown impassively – one might say 'stoically' – waiting for his fate to be decided, as on a fragmentary relief from the end of the first century AD from Rome, on which a victorious *eques* is waiting for the verdict of the *editor* with his sword at the ready, while his defeated opponent sits on the ground, his shield beside him (figure 10). The head of the defeated gladiator is tilted back, which most immediately suggests that his opponent would wield the deathblow by plunging his sword into the loser's throat. It strikes me, however, that the victor may be bracing his shield against his opponent's head with the intention of striking it with the full force of his body weight just at the point where the shield rests against the man's temple. This would have the effect of crushing his skull in the manner seen on

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Figure 8. Villa of Dar Buc Amméra, Zliten, Libya, amphitheatre mosaic, north frieze. Centre: *murmillo* raises finger in surrender to *hoplomachus*, attended by *summa rudis*. Photo © Gilles Mermet / Art Resource, NY (ART416021).

three of the cranial remains from the gladiatorial graveyard at Ephesus, which show traces of 'massive blunt force' that the forensic archaeologists have ascribed to impact from a shield.[66]

The actual moment of the dispatch of a gladiator who has been denied *missio* is often depicted with a brutal frankness that nevertheless preserves a certain dignity in his portrayal, as he readies himself to receive a sword strike in the back from his victorious opponent (figure 11).[67] Some of the depictions of the execution of defeated gladiators are very savage, such as a series of reliefs from Hierapolis recording highlights from the games put on by a certain Cn. Arrius Apuleius Aurelianus, priest, and his wife, where brutally frank legends like 'Odysseus was slaughtered', Ὀδυσσεὺς ἐ[σ]φάγη, accompany images of vanquished opponents being stabbed to death by the victors (figure 12).[68] But they do not bleed: as far as I can tell, defeated gladiators only

[66] F. Kanz and K. Grossschmidt, 'Dying in the Arena: The Osseous Evidence from Ephesian Gladiators', in Wilmott (n. 14), 214.

[67] A similar pose is preserved on a lamp from the later first century AD in the Sammlung Axel Guttmann in Berlin: see Junkelmann (n. 21), Abb. 225. On a flask from Cologne from the second or third century AD, now in the Römisch-Germanisches Museum, the defeated gladiator is lying on his stomach, with the victor kneeling on his legs: see Junkelmann (n. 21), Abb. 226.

[68] Ritti and Yilmaz (n. 54).

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Figure 9. Via Appia, mosaic. The *secutor* Astyanax, 'won', *vicit*, against the *retiarius* Kalendio, who died (*theta nigrum*). Museo Arqueológico Nacional, 3600. Photo Jordi Moliner Blanch. Museo Arqueológico Nacional, Madrid.

bleed as a sign of brave conduct (see figure 8); no gladiator bleeds in the process of suffering his own execution. This is in stark contrast to the depiction of criminals condemned to the beasts, where bloodshed may be depicted in graphic detail (figure 13). It also contrasts with the dispatch of prisoners of war on monuments like the Column of Marcus Aurelius, where beheadings are often shown with unmistakable clarity (figure 14). In depicting the death of a defeated gladiator, decorum of a sort is observed.

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Figure 10. Relief sculpture from the environs of Rome. Gladiator about to despatch defeated opponent to musical accompaniment. Late first century BC. Staatliche Antikensammlungen und Glyptothek München, inv. Gl. 364. Photo Renate Kühling.

One final image captures the ambiguity of victory in the arena. It occurs on a mosaic found recently at Wadi Lebda in Libya, the site of ancient Lepcis Magna (figure 15).[69] The mosaic consists of five panels: in the

[69] M. Wendowski and H. Ziegert, 'The Wadi Lebda Roman Villa, Libya', *Minerva* 16 (2005), 33–4; L. Musso, G. Matug, and S. Sandri, 'Leptis Magna, il mosaico delle terme dell'uadi Lebda: contesto, iconografia, valorizzazione', in G. Trovabene (ed.), *XII Colloquio AIEMA. Venezia, 11–15 settembre 2002. Atti* (Verona, 2015), 305–17; K. M. D. Dunbabin, *Theater and Spectacle in the Art of the Roman Empire* (Ithaca, NY, 2016), 193–4.

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Figure 11. Apollonia, relief sculpture. Gladiator about to despatch defeated opponent. Muzeu Historik Kombëtar, Tirana, Albania, inv. 1317. Photo Martin Ferguson Smith.

middle is an elaborate circus scene (comprising a chariot race, mimes, acrobats, and a *damnatio ad bestias*), flanked by two scenes of beast-baiting, with the outcome of a gladiatorial fight depicted at either end. At one end, although the view of the victorious *thraex* from the rear is unusual, his posture, planted in front of a crumpled *murmillo*, is exactly what we would expect (figure 16): he is brandishing his shield aloft in a triumphant gesture, his *sica* at the ready in his other hand, just in case. The corresponding panel at the other end, however, defies our expectations (figure 17): the *retiarius* on the right, remarkably foreshortened to fit our frontal view, has obviously been defeated and is either dying or already dead; but the *secutor* who defeated him looks far from triumphant.[70]

[70] Although there is a shield beside the gladiator on the right, from the *manica* on his left arm, the *galerus* on his left shoulder, and the gaiters on his legs, he must be the *retiarius*; his trident is

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Figure 12. Hierapolis, relief sculpture. Lower panel illustrates slaughter of the gladiator Odysseus in spectacles sponsored by Cn. Arrius Apuleius Aurelianus and his wife. Odysseus' name and the last four letters of the word ʾΕ[Σ]ΦΑΓΗ ('was slaughtered') are legible above his head. Photo Susanne Muth.

shown above, lying behind the helmet of his opponent, the *secutor*, who is holding his sword in his left hand, with a *manica* on his sword arm and protection on both legs. For gladiatorial *armaturae*, see also n. 21 above.

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Figure 13. Domus Sollertiana, Thysdrus (El Djem), mosaic (detail). Condemned prisoner mauled by leopard. Photo © Gilles Mermet / Art Resource, NY (ART157143).

As we have seen, victors are regularly shown standing (or, occasionally, kneeling) over their vanquished opponent, often trying to prevent them from retrieving their weapons until the *editor* has announced his verdict. But if the *retiarius* here is already dead, there is no verdict to be awaited. The *secutor* has sunk to the ground, suffering from exhaustion, although 'catatonic shock' might be a better definition, a state documented for modern soldiers who kill in battle. A further twist is that the defeated *retiarius* may have been someone whom the victor knew very well; we know that sponsors hired gladiators from a single troupe to put on a display, and so gladiators fought in public against people with whom they lived and trained, only (potentially) to wound them or even (occasionally) to kill them.[71]

[71] Coleman (n. 3), 440–2.

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Figure 14. Column of Marcus Aurelius, Rome. Execution of German prisoners. Alinari / Art Resource, NY (ART70496).

There are no inscriptions on this mosaic to indicate specificity; it might conceivably be a generic image out of the artist's imagination, although the blond hair of the victor – and of his counterpart in the corresponding panel – is curiously particular, suggesting a Germanic origin. If the panel showing the defeat of the *retiarius* does record a specific incident, the representation may have been commissioned precisely because the death of a gladiator in combat, occurring so seldom, invited commemoration. But whether the representation is specific or generic, its ambiguous portrayal narrows the gap between victory and defeat.

Conclusion

In gladiatorial combat, defeat was the inevitable outcome for one of the parties; the only exception was a fight that ended in a draw. How it is

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Figure 15. Lepcis Magna (Wadi Lebda), mosaic depicting spectacles in the arena and the circus. Photo Fabian Baroni, Missione Archeologica dell'Università Roma Tre in Libia, courtesy of Luisa Musso.

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Figure 16. Lepcis Magna (Wadi Lebda), mosaic: panel depicting the victory of a *thraex* over a *murmillo*. Photo Fabian Baroni, Missione Archeologica dell'Università Roma Tre in Libia, courtesy of Luisa Musso.



Figure 17. Lepcis Magna (Wadi Lebda), mosaic: panel depicting the victory of a *secutor* over a *retiarius*. Photo Fabian Baroni, Missione Archeologica dell'Università Roma Tre in Libia, courtesy of Luisa Musso.

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represented in the surviving sources is a question of focalization. Sponsors, trainers, and fans freely admit it; it is part of their accounting system. In the West, the associates of gladiators who composed their epitaphs elide it; those in the East rewrite it in accordance with the heroic treatment of athletes, deflecting responsibility onto an ineluctable force to preserve the reputation of the deceased. Pictorial representations are usually unsparing in showing the defeated appealing for mercy, and generous in depicting the losers steadying themselves unflinchingly for the end. The proportion of healed wounds on gladiators' skeletons suggests that endurance prevailed, even when wounds were sustained to the bone, it being a reasonable assumption that a gladiator so badly wounded cannot have won. In such circumstances, physical and psychological pain must have blended, mitigated only by survival and, ultimately, recovery. At least on the surface, *missio* qualified the disgrace and humiliation of defeat.

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Appendix:. Moira in gladiatorial epitaphs from the Greek East, numbered according to Mann (n. 18)

#	Area	Name	Wording	Translation
12	Larisa	Olympos	ὅτε δ' ἤθελε Μοῖρα	As Moira wished
14	Larisa	Phoibos	τὸ πεπρω[μέ]νον Μοίρης ἀπέδωκα	I paid my debt to Moira
18	site in Albania	Primogenes	τοῖον ἐν ἀνδρείᾳ Μοῖρα παρεῖλε βίου	Moira snatched him away in the prime of life
20	Amphipolis	Euchrous	Μοίρης κρατερῆς ἄπο λειφθείς	seized by mighty Moira
26	Beroia	Alexandros	Μο[ῖ]ραν ἔχων ἰδίαν	having his own Moira
66	Plotinopolis	?	[Μοῖρα δ'] ἐμοὶ κατέκλω[σε θανεῖ]ν	Moira determined that I should die
68	Marcianopolis	Smaragdos	ὅταν ἤθελε Μοῖρα...πεπρωμένον ὦδ' ἀπέδωκα	As Moira wished,...here I paid my debt
72	Tomis	Skirtos	παρὰ Μοῖραν ἀπελθὼν	flouting Moira and departing
82	Gortyn	Gaius	με Μοῖρ' ὀλοὴ δαμασσαμένη ποσὶ θῆκεν ἀντιπάλοιο δέμας	deadly Moira overcame me and laid me, a corpse, at the feet of my opponent
95	Stratonikeia	Droseros	ἔκτανέ με...καινοῖς ὀρχήμασι Μοίρης	he killed me with new dances of Moira[72]
101	Tralles	Victor	ἔθανον...[παρὰ] Μοῖραν...ἑλοῦσα δὲ Μοῖρα κραταιὴ ἤγαγε [μ' εἰς Ἀΐ]δην	I died flouting Moira...Mighty Moira seized me and drove me to Hades
102	Tralles	?	Μοῖρα δὲ κατέκλωσε θανεῖ]ν	Moira determined that I should die
116	Smyrna	?	νείκης δὲ βραβῖον ἔχο[ν]τα Μῦρα κατήγαγεν ὧδε	Moira brought him here when he (already) had the prize of victory
139	Philadelpheia	Stephanos	ὑπὸ Μύρης ὧδε ἐφονεύθην	I was murdered here by Moira
140	Philadelpheia	?	με Μοῖρα κατήγαγεν ἔνθα βιαίως καὶ δέμας ἐνκατέθηκε	Moira brought me down here by force and buried my corpse
145	Tripolis on the Maeander	Chrysopteros	[Μ]οῖραν ἔχων θανάτ[ου]	receiving death's Moira
147	Alexandria Troas	Autolykos	νικήσας ἔθανον παρὰ Μοῖραν	winning I flouted Moira and died
157	Pergamon	Oreinos	ταῦτα δὲ πάντα μίτοις Μοιρῶν πάθον	I suffered all this in accordance with the threads of the Moirae

Continued

[72] The epigrammatist plays on the identity of the opponent, Achilleus, who used to be an actor.

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Appendix:. Continued

#	Area	Name	Wording	Translation
162	Nikaia	Chrysomallos	Μοῖραν δ' οὐκ ἔφυγον ἐπεὶ ἦν μίτος οὗτος ὁ Μοιρῶν	I did not escape Moira, because this was the thread of the Moirae
163	Nicomedia	Apollonios	κατέχει με μίτος καὶ νήματα Μοιρῶν	the thread and yarn of the Moirae are holding me
164	Nicomedia	Homeros	ἀ]λλ' ὑπὸ Μοίρης	. . .but by Moira
166	Bursa	Achilleus	τελέσας πικρὰ δόγματα Μυρῶν	fulfilling the bitter decrees of the Moirae
170	Amisus	Diodorus	με Μοῖρ' ὀλοὴ. . .ἔκτανον	deadly Moira. . .killed me
171	Ancyra	Kallidromos	Μυρῶν τέλος ἔσχον. . .οὐδεὶς γὰρ θνητῶν Μυρῶν μεῖτυν ἐξέφυγεν	I received death from the Moirae. . .for no mortal has escaped the Moirae's thread
179	Şemitler	Asbolas	Μοίραις τὸ δάνειον ἔ[τεισα]	I repaid my loan to the Moirae
185	Attaleia	Meiletos	με. . .κατήγαγε Μοῖρα βιαίως καὶ δέμας ἐνκατέθηκε	Moira brought me down by force and buried my corpse
189	Xanthos	Victor	σὺν δόγματι Μοιρῶν	in accordance with the decree of the Moirae
190	Xanthos	Achilleus	εἰ δὲ με καὶ Μοίρης μίτος ἤγαγεν ἰς χάος ἐλθεῖν	when Moira's thread led me to go into the abyss