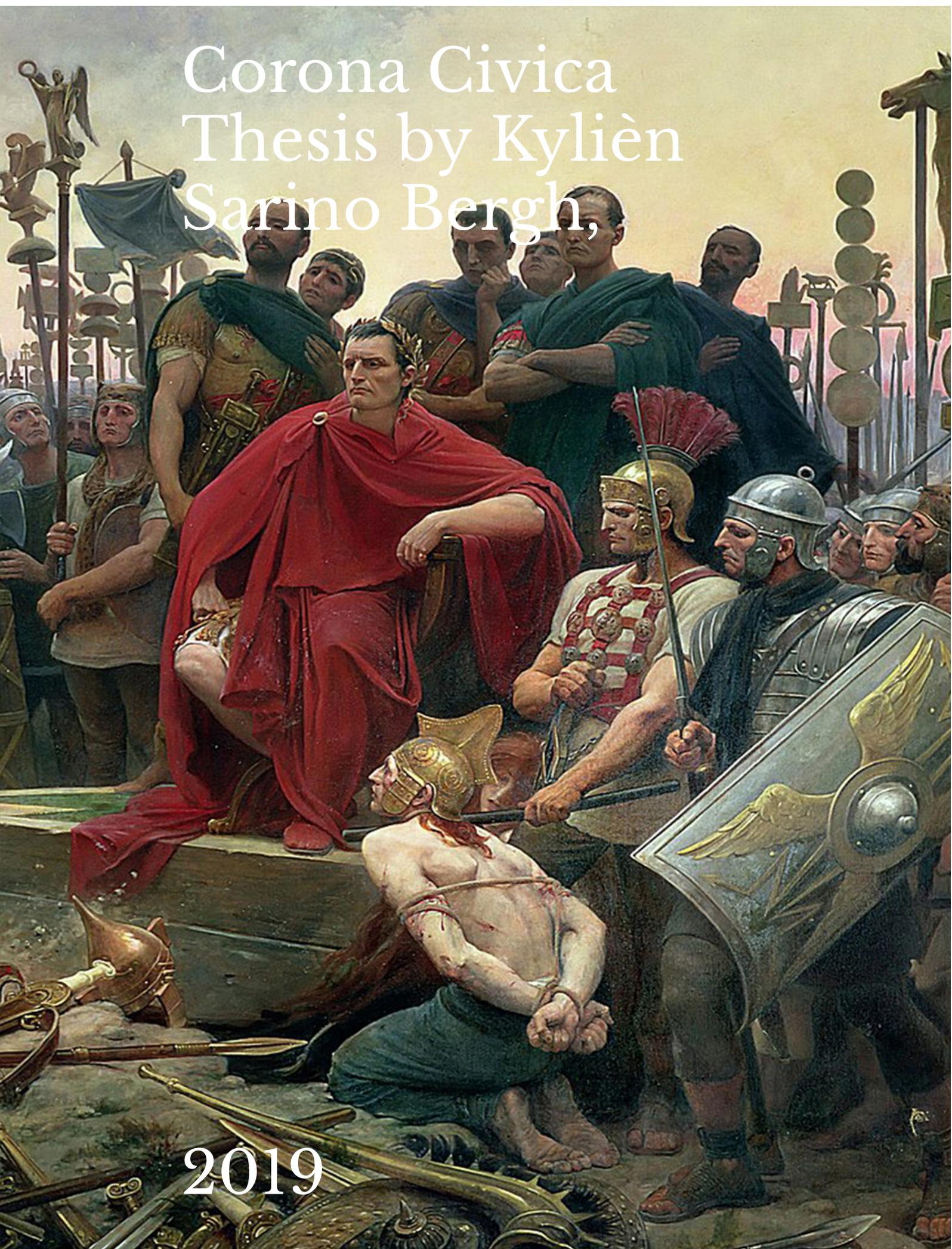


# Corona Civica Thesis by Kylièn Sarino Bergh,



2019



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I never chose to take the form of a tree  
And so become defenseless of what  
you will do to me.

Will you cut me down and desire my wood,  
Or let me be as I think you should.

Let my branches dance in the summer breeze,  
Even in winter refuse to abandon my leaf.

Use them if you like, to spice up your meal,  
Even as symbol my appearance seems ideal.

Again and again I show up in the course of history,  
Used as symbol to claim for victory.

Worn as a glorious crown,  
All you need do, is cut me down.

Ever considered how it is to be,  
Used as symbol meaningless to me.

Repeatedly as victory of some sort,  
Vulgar violence, conquest, politics even sport.

Reward for the civil and chief,  
Yet origin found in rejection and grief.

Time has progressed and things got better,  
Now my appearance is used without the matter.

Still I cannot say I agree,  
But well after all, I am just a tree.



# Introduction

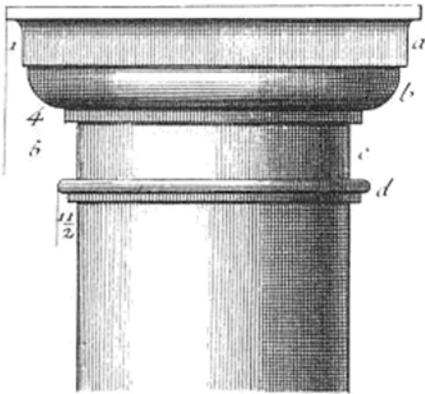
Nature is perfect and final, purposeful yet meaningless. All meaning is derived from human interpretation and can only exist through means of interpretation. Therefore nature, regardless of its own intention may acquire symbolic meaning. According to Sigmund Freud the symbol is a representation of something other than its appearance (Ricoeur, 1970). It is a distortion of elementary meaning and consequently carries double meaning that requires the process of interpretation. This takes place between the signifier – that what it means – and the signified – that what is visually expressed.

In ‘Civilisation and its Discontents’ (Freud, 1930) Freud makes a distinction between necessity and desire. The latter describes a desire for beauty, known in philosophic and artistic discourse as aesthetics. According to the Greek philosophy, the apprehension of beauty equals the apprehension of perfection and thus, the divine.

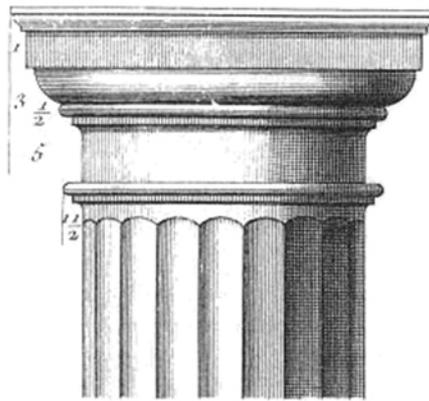
Furthermore, to bridge between necessity and desire, survival and beauty, philosophers like Thomas Hobbes argue that from origin, mankind has had an interest in dominance, as method of securing ones own position. The right of the strongest is no right at all, for it is continuously contested by competitors, thus superiority is never proven eternally. Dominance can be expressed in more ways than solely through oppression, and so, superiority can also be the result of admiration.

*Chapiteaux des cinq Ordres, avec le Chapiteau Ionique Moderne.*

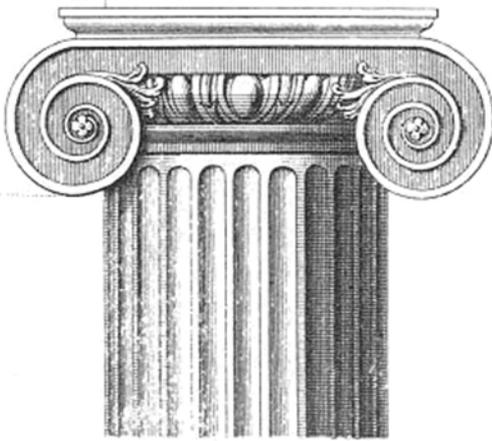
*Chapiteau Toscan.*



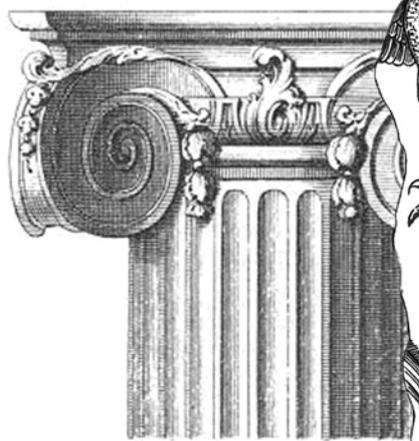
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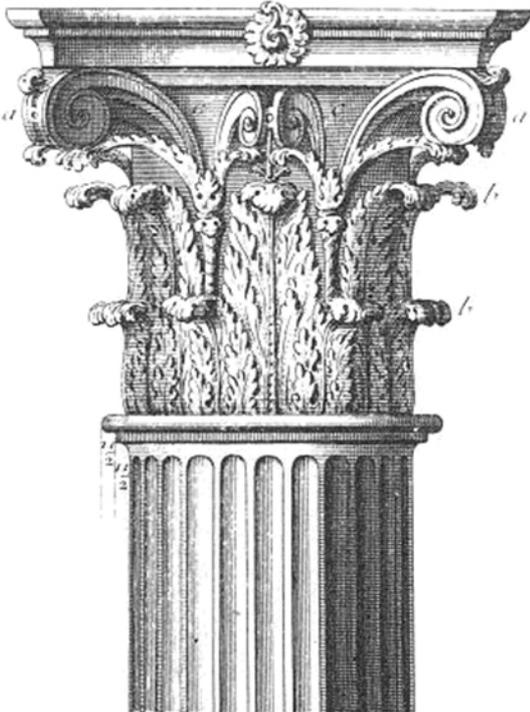
*Chapiteau Ionique.*



*Chapiteau Ionique Moderne.*



*Chapiteau Corinthien.*



*Chapiteau Composite.*



*2 Modules, ou 36 minutes.*



— Ancient Roman Panel, Florence.

Aesthetic production and symbolic meaning are often employed to evoke such admiration and institute dominancy. Therefore it appears as follows, the pursue of perfection and symbolic meaning is in the interest of the superior, and provides a methodology to secure and justify their claim of superiority as such.

The methodology of symbolism is heavily dependent on the visually recognisable character of the signified. This can take an abstract form, but also is commonly connected to elements existing in the natural environment. The decoration of both the body and buildings is not only an aesthetical admiration of natural beauty, but also and foremost an expression of luxury, prosperity, wealth, success and social or political status. An example can be found in the era of Dutch colonialism, where governmental buildings and houses of merchants and aristocrats were decorated with the representation of foreign spices, fruits and vegetables. Other forms of symbolism are connected to the spiritual world, divinity and worship. Such is the case for the *Laurus Nobilis*, commonly known as the laurel tree, that is originally connected to the Greco-Roman mythological deity Apollo.

In the days before time the laurel forest known as laurisilva, covered most of the Mediterranean basin. But as time passed by, the laurel forest gradually retreated and has been replaced by more drought-tolerant species.

The etymology of the aromatic evergreen already claims noble status. Pliny the Elder wrote that Apollo's favourite tree was not suited for fire nor sacrifice:



'...it is very evident that the laurel protests against such usage by crackling as it does in the fire, thus, in a manner, giving expression to its abhorrence of such treatment.' (Pliny and Rackham, 1938)

Emperors too, in their claim for status and divinity, employed the symbolic value of the *Laurus Nobilis*, in means of both flower and crown (laurel wreath). Tiberius himself only worn the laurel wreath in stormy weather, for it was widely believed that the laurel was immune to lightning, and Augustus had the entrance to his house on the Palatine Hill flanked by a laurel tree at each side.

Up until present day, the representation of the laurel – most often as wreath – claims security, power, unity and safety. A symbol that is widespread through the visual identity of both political and economic organisations to support their claim of prosperity and trustworthiness. This text is an amplification that explores the symbolic value of the laurel wreath through four different stages: the mythological origin, the historical development, the meaning of the symbol and the transitional process from its natural status. What follows is a conclusive text, combining all explorations to identify the complexity of the symbolic representation of the *corona civica*.



I.



# The Myth

After the all destructive great flood, the grounds of earth consumed the water and became more fruitful and fertile than ever before. Causing new species to emerge from the surface of the earth and others to grow beyond their previous conditions. So did a perilous poisonous serpent, already alarming in its threatening appearance. The venomous creature scavenged the surfaces of Earth for weaklings and prey and found both in the mortal beings called human.

Endangered by the cruel python, mankind prayed to the Gods to relieve them from this tyranny. Apollo – son of Zeus himself, god of music, poetry and the oracle – descended from the heavens to aid mankind in their horror. With his divine skill in archery and razor-sharp arrows – previously only destined for hunting – he managed to slay the man-devouring python. By doing so, Apollo acquired the status of saviour of mankind and gained favour amongst the human race.

One day, the Olympian noticed the young Eros – known by the Latin equivalent as Cupid – walking around with a bow of himself. Apollo, conceited in his own victory over the python, addresses the youngling, “What has, a child like yourself, to do with such warlike equipment? Leave it for the superior among us, with hands worthy of great power like myself.



Behold the victory of my own, in the destruction of the poisonous serpent stretching over the domain of man, and be content in your inferior position.”

Aphrodite’s child listened to the words spoken by the haughty Apollo and answered, “Your arrows may strike lethal and fatal, for that is true. Equally so will mine strike you. This patronising tone of yours shall be answered with actions of mine.” And so, Eros equipped his bow with two arrows from his quiver. One with desire, the other with repulsion, for Eros too strikes with precision. The arrow of desire finds his way to Apollo’s heart, while the arrow of repulsion befell on the nymph Daphne.

When Apollo noticed the beautiful young maiden, he was struck with desire and wished to be with her. His approach, however, scared the serene Daphne and caused her to flee. The mighty and handsome god Apollo, unfamiliar with rejection and possessed by love pursued in the chase. “Do not mistake me for pervert nor peasant, son of Zeus is who I am, and it is only for love that I pursue you!” cried Apollo. But it made no difference for the frightened Daphne. When strength and velocity start to fail Daphne, she cries out to her father, Peneus the river god: “Help me, Peneus, open thy arms, your realm of rivers and enclose me in your safety, or alter my form which has brought me this daunting situation!” Scarcely she spoke while stiffness seized her limbs. Like roots her toes grooved into the dirt, and her arms raised for the skies while transforming into branches. Her hair, dancing in the wind, turned green and took the form of laurel leaves. Not a single characteristic of her initial appearance was preserved, solely her beauty remained. Apollo stood amazed, witnessing the transformation. It was only now that he could embrace her.



Despite regretting the metamorphosis, his love still lingered on. “Since you can no longer be my wife, you shall assuredly be my tree.” He spoke: “It shall be your hair that I shall wear as my own, and my harp that shall be decorated with the material you provide me with.”

And so, he plucked the leafs of the laurel and blended them with the hair of his own, and carved a harp out of the wood of the laurel tree.

No lesser than Apollo – saviour of mankind – himself declared the laurel to be sacred. Thus it is, that by its appearance it bears resemblance to the greatness of the immortal divine deity.



II.



# The History

No lesser than Apollo – saviour of mankind – himself declared the laurel to be sacred. Thus it is, that by its appearance it bears resemblance to the greatness of the immortal divine deity. Every four years, the ancient Greeks celebrated Apollo's victory over the python with the 'Pythian games'. This was only one of the four games amongst which was the Olympic games, which is still in its current form a worldwide famed celebration of physical superiority.

Unlike the Olympic games, the Pythian games did not only praise the physical strength of athletes, but also provided a stage for competitions of culture. And so, located at Delphi – where the oracle of Delphi too is devoted to Apollo – the Pythian games allowed artists, singers and dancers to compete amongst each other. The victor of the Pythian games was suitably rewarded with the laurel wreath.

So it is that a long history of associating the laurel wreath with victory begun. The laurel wreath took the form of a crown without any royal significance, and so a reward obtainable by the common, the cunning, the loyal and the strong. The crown itself, as traditional wearable representation of monarchy or divinity is great possibly the most enduring symbol of the sovereign.







Where in different cultures a variation of regalia is employed to signify authority – scepters, rods and robes, – it is the crown that developed simultaneously in the wide range of cultures over time without any form of connectivity.

The etymology alone – crown coming from the Latin: corona – secures the divine status of the headgear, for in fact it describes the aura of light that surrounds the sun and the stars. Resting on the head, it secures not only a position most likely seen by others – in contrast to rings, belts or the royal shoelace – but also claims a symbolic position in relation to the human body. For the head is the most superior of the body, in which all faculties of the mind take place. It is the sense of human agency and rational capacity that separates civil society from brute and beast. Hair itself, styling or the absence of such, is already a representation of social and (-or) political status. Well shaved Egyptians and Renaissance wigs are examples of such. So it seems, that all pieces of ornamentations and decorations of the head join the ranks of nobility.

It proves hard to point out the origin for it dates back beyond our recordings of time. Yet the ancestry of our perception of the crown can already be found in diadems worn by the Persian Achaemenid emperors. The ornamented headbands made of silks and satins found its material translation into precious materials decorated with rare earths and jewellery.

Additionally, it would be unforgivable to exclude the collection of Egyptian crowns; Hedjet, Deshret, Pschent and Khepresh worn by the pharaohs. Each crown carries specific symbolic meaning, for Hedjet represented Upper Egypt, Deshret Lower Egypt, Pschent the unification of



Lower and Upper Egypt, and finally the Khepresh known as the war crown, which was meant to evoke the divine power of the pharaoh in military conquest. While the Egyptians maintained a clear distinction between the crown and its representation (relating to either territory or military purposes), the golden laurel wreath blends all. The splendour of decorative value carries the divine right of power, legitimacy, absolute authority and perhaps even righteousness and immortality.

Even the Crown of Thorns bears with its horrific suffering religious and spiritual significance. However, the laurel wreath in contrast to the more dominant perception of the crown, bears no resemblance to monarchical structures or power through inheritance. Thereby as a symbol, it represents a form of glory gained through the actions of the individual. Actions which lead to the glorification of that individual in context of the collective, thus the honour of man through his own agency. The crown of the common is the reward achievable by all, a glorification of action achievable by all, unlike status through noble birth.

Hence the laurel wreath gained the title 'corona civica' (the civil crown) in Roman civilisation. It was the second highest honour to which the common citizen could aspire, reserved only for those victorious in combat who due to their violent actions saved fellow citizens or legionaries. It was only surpassed by the rarest of all, namely the 'corona graminea' (the grass crown), which was appointed only to officers and commanders whose actions saved the entire legion.

In the Roman society, honour was reserved for the victorious, which primarily concerned violent conquest and warfare.



Admirable only, was the strength of men contested in combat, or wisdom and strategic insight, that resulted in victory on the battlefield. Despite the dependency on trade, no merchant claimed noble status. The glorious champion of Rome, were those who claim victory over the slave rebellion that threatened the republic, those who launch holocausts and raids in foreign country home only to competitors in commerce, or those who annexed new lands into their territory. Both citizen and slave, legionnaire and gladiator, only claim honour through the actions of the brute. Rome – despite perhaps honourable memories – was a brutal state in which senator met senator, dagger in hand or opposed one and another on the battlefield.

Power, wealth, glory and status are inherently social faculties that can only exist through the perception of the other. Thus emerges a necessity to obtain an appearance that represents and embodies such. Once rewarded, the carrier was allowed to wear the *corona civica* until death. And so the crown would be worn with pride and honour at public events — festivals and spectacles such as chariot races and gladiator games — to embody his glory and significance. The *corona civica* became a well-known public symbol, transforming a mythological story and the representation of glory into a wearable object.



In the year 81BC, the Mytilene revolt at Lesbos against the Roman Republic is overcome, due to the violent effort of the Roman legionnaires. It is precisely at this battle that the young – nowadays most well-known political figure – Gaius Julius Caesar makes his first appearance on stage and due to his contribution in combat is rewarded the *corona civica*. This is still decades before his role as consul, exile and conquest of Gall which inevitably resulted in his immortal fame.

Not only did the actions of his life acquired fame beyond the grave, but his effort also laid the fundament for the transition from the Roman Republic into the Roman Empire. An empire hardly matched in size or fame throughout the centuries, that flourished due to its military strength and techniques, but also by means of art, literature and philosophy. Thereby it created a set of ideals that continued to reoccur.

Centuries later, the same Roman principles and Caesarean image were adopted by the military leader, who also acclaimed worldwide fame, Napoleon Bonaparte. All warfare, politics and art were based on the roman model. He understood the importance of his image and so, ordered painting after painting, displaying himself – young and flawless – victorious in battle, just like the roman senate who would heroically lead the legionnaires into combat. Artistic propaganda created the perception of an undefeatable heroic leader on his road to victory. Like a roman senate, he knew the importance of representation and too employed symbolism as agent and advocate. Displayed either victorious in combat or wearing the symbol of such – the *corona civica* – he immortalised his own image over the course of time.



During the coronation in 1804, Napoleon Bonaparte entered the Notre-Dame Cathedral wearing a golden laurel wreath, accepted the crown and raised it symbolically above his head after which he placed it on the head of his wife Joséphine de Beauharnais.

The Crown of Charlemagne – specially forged for Napoleon himself – never reached the head of the Emperor during the coronation for it was already occupied by the *corona civica*. No other crown is a more accurate and superior representation of victory than the golden laurel wreath.



**III.**



# The Victory

No other crown is a more accurate and superior representation of victory than the golden laurel wreath. Yet what remains to discover is the meaning of victory. The etymological stems from the Latin 'victor' synonymous for conqueror. Thereby it appears that victory is solely concerned with acts of warfare and can only be found in military practice.

Victory thus is the success or triumph as result of battle or combat, the ultimate and decisive supremacy in warfare. This seems to exclude all personal, spiritual, intellectual and individual matters such as the possibility of moral victories. However, in the mythology of Apollo, we see a pluriform conception of victory. One indeed, as result of the violent destruction of the opponent – in this case the python – yet the other as the result of love and desire. From this perspective, it appears true that victory can be achieved due to personal endeavour, independent from violent conquest. Nevertheless, a closer inspection of the mythological story is required to reveal the true meaning of Apollo's personal victory in love.

Caught in a chase by the lusty libidinous Apollo, Daphne herself anxious for his desire, accepted all alternatives and cried out: "Help me Peneus, open thy arms, your realm of rivers and enclose me in your safety, or alter my form which has brought me this daunting situation!"



With remorse, regret and pity, Apollo witnessed her transformation into the Laurus Nobilis. Despite her new physical form, his love and attraction did not settle. He desired her body still, and sequentially used it to decorate his harp and hair, and wore the leafs of Daphne like it were hairs of his own.

This mythological story perfectly illustrates the complexity of victory, by the display of both desire and rejection. Daphne has no interest in being desired nor obtained by the lustful Apollo, no matter his divine status or parenthood. Meanwhile Apollo has no interest in her rejection and only considers his own desire. Thus a relation emerges between oppressor and the oppressed. It is a relation in which the oppressor is not at all interested in the wellbeing of the other – nor being in harmony with – but rather with obsessive behaviour of aiming to obtain another. Thereby it is that the quest of love is not at all an endeavour of admiration, but instead a rather violent conquest in obtaining through the destruction of the other.

Within this mythological story, the process of destruction is literally translated in acquirement. As soon as the body is transformed, it is used as source material for the production of goods in the interest of Apollo. The victorious obtained the defeated through domination and destruction. This describes what it means to have victory.

It is in the work of psychoanalyst and writer Erich Fromm that we see a clear distinction between two modes of existence that relate to this perception of victory. In 'To Have or To Be' Fromm describes a distinction between *having* and *being* through the following poems;



Tennyson:

Flower in a crannied wall,  
I pluck you out of the crannies,  
I hold you here, root and all, in my hand,  
Little flower—but if I could understand  
What you are, root and all, and all in all,  
I should know what God and man is.

Goethe:

I walked in the woods  
All by myself,  
To seek nothing,  
That was on my mind.

I saw in the shade  
A little flower stand,  
Bright like the stars  
Like beautiful eyes.

I wanted to pluck it,  
But it said sweetly:  
Is it to wilt  
That I must be broken?

I took it out  
With all its roots,  
Carried it to the garden  
At the pretty house.

And planted it again  
In a quiet place;  
Now it ever spreads  
And blossoms forth.



The difference between the two poems is striking, for Tennyson reacts with a desire to obtain the flower – both as object and in understanding – and so, aims to *have* it. “He “plucks” it “root and all.” And while he ends with an intellectual speculation about the flower’s possible function for his attaining insight into the nature of God and man, the flower itself is killed as a result of his interest in it.”

(Fromm, 1979) In the poem by Goethe, we see a similar desire to have the flower, but also an awareness that in the process of obtaining it, the original will be destroyed.

The alternative is to relocate the flower as such, that both form and function remain unaltered. It is rather the environment and surrounding of the flower that has changed, and in doing so the admirable continues to exist as such, but also in harmony with the admirer. It is this second notion that Erich Fromm describes as *being*. It is obvious that the second notion – the notion of *being* – is a far more noble perception, yet it appears that victory in its previous definition solely relates to the mode of *having* victory. It is – as described by Erich Fromm – a process in which the original is destroyed as the result of admiration. This is the case for both the poem written by Tennyson, as it is for the mythological story of Apollo and Daphne.

Indeed when victory appears solely as a synonym for triumph, it describes superiority in a violent conquest or battle – final and ultimate – thus the *having* of a victory. Whereas we aim to describe victory in the mode of *being* we relate to it as *being successful*. It is the achievement or accomplishment of one’s goals, which do not inherently relate to violence or bloodshed, and thus present us with a far more applicable, honourable and ideal perception of victory.



Since the symbolic origin of the *corona civica* relates to the brutal process of victory through the violent destruction of the original, it relates to a vulgar and vicious perception of victory and thus a direct representation of desire for power and lust for *having* victory. The glorified symbolism of victory, is inherently linked to the violent destruction of all it opposes.



**IV.**



# The Transition

The glorified symbolism of victory, is inherently linked to the violent destruction of all it opposes. Already the image making of the past shows the *corona civica* in visual representation. This representation of glory without the physical necessity of neither living victor nor laurel wreath, allowed for the distribution of the image, and so reputation of the glorious.

The representation of the symbol serves as a testimony for the glory of the depicted. This is the evolution of the symbol in which it releases itself from its physical dependency. Here, we witness a transformation of the laurel wreath into the visual representation signifying the symbolic value of such, without the necessity of physically being present, nor related.

Even more so, the symbol evolved to such an extent that the physical identity of such does no longer influence the method and meaning of the visual representation. That is to say, that the symbol effectively separated itself from its physical dependency. It can be applied, used and reproduced without its true nature corresponding to its representation, while still evoking the same reaction and interpretation of the symbol.

This is seemingly a complicated process, but in fact describes nothing else than the spectator understanding the visual representation without the support of physical reality.



Looking at a portrait of Napoleon Bonaparte, the spectator – even if unfamiliar with the depicted – understands through the symbolic interpretation the status of the depicted.

The painting in which the glorious is to be portrayed, is by its very own nature (until the possibilities of mechanical and digital reproduction) limited to the physical realities of its own existence, that is to say the location of such. The location of such – museum or private gallery – determines the physical limitation that only allows access to a specific audience to witness the glory of the depicted.

The *corona civica* – the symbolism of victory – undergoes a transition that exceeds not only its physical reality but also its singular artistic representation and transcends into the multiplicity of practical application. It does so for example by its translation into coinage. The translation from the artistic practice – witnessed only by the few – into the practical economic usage – witnessed by all – appears to be a brilliant tactic, not only for the distribution of its representation, but also to secure the value of such. In contrast to other distribution techniques at the time – like the pamphlet – the coin carries intrinsic and fundamental value. It is therefore that the coin does not only become the carrier of the message, but also supports the message.

At first glance, this transition seems to primarily concern the method of symbolism as either physical or visual representation. However, the process of dissolution also distinguished from the individual and allows for the symbol to be connected to a collective.



RENÉ COTY  
*Président de la République Française*  
avec ses compliments







While the physical object of the *corona civica* takes the form of a crown, directly relating to the head on which it rest, the visual representation can be applied on anything, anywhere at all times. Thus the symbol – suitable or not – can be applied to any movement or organisation and can liberate itself from the individual.

A simple example of such case, is when a glorious individual through his hard labour and action, by all means earned the *corona civica*, and in his pride and gratitude applies the symbolic representation to his heraldry or family signature. The coat of arms, which symbolically stands for the glory of those it represents, will live on after the death of the victorious individual himself. Yet future or distant members of this family, also take credit and claim the same victory without having shared the burden or effort. Every member of the collective – regardless of their contribution – claims heroic victory, the moment the representation of the *corona civica* transcends in the symbolic sphere.

The transition from the symbolic representation of the individual to the collective is essential to understand the complexity of the contemporary application of symbolism. It is namely in our contemporary society and age in which we witness a shift towards the representation of the glory of organisation and institute.

Within this, the symbolic value is exploited as a glorification of primarily the visual identity of political and economic organisations that too, claim victory and employ symbolism to support their effort and claim. The symbolic visual identity aims to establish a reputation of glory, in essence trustworthy, thus to be glorious and victorious in the near future.



This rhetoric design method is most often applied in two categories of organisation, (1) political organisations and (2) sport related organisations. Within the category of sports, the application of symbolism seems suitable for it is by nature a competition driven affair. Although sport is no warfare, there is always friction and competition involved and maintains by such its relation towards the battleground. To play a match is to strive for victory which can only be achieved by superiority over the other player or team. Only one champion claiming victory and superiority over the others.

It is in particular the category of political driven organisations in which the representation of victory – through destruction of the other – acquires dubious status. Until so far, that politics is translated into the battlefield, it is exactly the purpose of politics to organise affairs in an all cohesive coherent form. Even the United Nations for example, uses the symbolism of the *corona civica* as representation of peace and unity, but seemingly forgets (or worse, ignores) that the origin of the symbol only signifies peace through the destruction of all it opposes. Consequently it seems that the symbol of the *corona civica* is continuously applied to support the status of the institute, with a certain ignorance towards the process and meaning of victory.

The symbolism of glory institutes historically approved propaganda.



**V.**



# The Total

The symbolism of glory institutes historically approved propaganda. This is the case for the present, the past and prehistory. Both modern and historical representations build upon the image and value of the *corona civica* established during the Roman era. Chances are that people refer to Caesar (despite some might unconsciously refer to Augustus) if asked for the origin of the *corona civica*, for he is for many of us, the first known carrier of the civil crown. Even though men preceded him, the records are scarce – and fame even less – of those who earned the *corona civica* during the time of the Republic, let alone the victors of the Pythian games. Indeed Gaius Julius Caesar is often associated with ideals of unity for his annexation of Gall, alliance with Egypt, end of the famine and civil war.

All these acts of peace and unity however, are the result of violent conquests. Gall, Egypt and the civil war, are all cases of peace in which the opposition is crushed. Therefore, the glorious *corona civica* resting on the head of noble Caesar, appears as nothing more than the bone necklace hanging around the neck of the barbarians it aims to crush.

The meaning of victory – peace as result of violent conquest – its desire, vulgarity and complexity are already disguised in the mythology that dates back to the very roots of Western civilisation.







The case of Apollo namely describes two forms of conquest, yet with similar result. At first, we see a case of conquest that directly relates to the violent destruction of the other, the python. Indeed, the python in all its destructive power threatened the preservation of man and since there is no reasoning nor sanctioning a perilous poisonous serpent, it must be destroyed for the sake of mankind. There is a relation at stake that can only result in either victory or defeat.

The process of destruction in the second case – the case of Daphne that is, – is perhaps less obvious but equally present. It is namely because the destruction is separated into two stages, one the transformation and second the obtaining.

First, we should acknowledge that the desire without fulfilment is a punishment as result of Apollo's patronising behaviour and attitude towards Eros.

Secondly, that Eros represents desire in a foremost primal and sexual sense. The first stage of destruction – Daphne's metamorphosis – should be considered the direct result of Apollo's chase and approach. In other words, it is his own (sexual-) desire, that solely relates to his own interest and nothing but his own interest, that caused Daphne – the un-interested – to run, flee and turn into a tree. Therefore his desire to obtain her, can no longer be fulfilled. When this story is regarded within the context of victory and defeat, this surely fits the description of defeat. More explicitly, the defeat of both parties. Apollo lost – due to his own actions – his love, Daphne her form and existence.



The story continues with the romantic poetic expression, that because of his admiration, he adopted the tree nevertheless. Of course, – knowing that Greek mythology is more about violence, orgies and ecstasy than anything else – it is questionable if he obtained the laurel as an act of love, or that he completely ravished the tree out of (sexual-) frustration.

It is likely that Apollo did not feel the same satisfaction after his acquisition of Daphne, as much as his satisfaction after slaying a massive venomous python. Nevertheless the destruction of both is final. Thus the mythology inevitably represents victory through the destruction of the other.

It appears however that the complexity of victory has been lost over time, and that consciously or unconsciously, the *Laurus Nobilis* is applied as a symbol for peace and unity. Institutes, nations and organisations in our era, both from economic and political background, (of which the latter is more concerning) shamelessly apply the symbolism as naïve representation of peace, trust, victory and alliance, solely with the purpose of supporting the claim of the superior and sovereign.

The ignorant attitude towards the process of victory, causes our interpretation and understanding of the complexity oblivious. This troublesome naivety is the result of the symbolic transition, that takes part in three stages. First, the transition from physical object into the realm of visual representation, and second the separation from its ritualistic, mythological origin and value.



The combination of such, allowed for anarchism in the application of symbolism (which is the third transition), in which both; individual and collective, political and economic, state and counter movement may claim for victory by means of the visual symbolic personification of such. Yet, it is the state and the sovereign that benefits most from such representation. This anarchism, and application of symbolism with underlying strategic purposes lead to a collective misunderstanding.

Together, it did not neutralise the meaning and connotation of the symbol, but rather transformed it into historically approved propaganda, that takes stage in visual communication, solely to support the claim of the institute, beneficial to itself alone, while simultaneously the perception, knowledge and understanding of the symbolic origin and its complexity is in decline.

The issue at stake is not so much the shift in meaning of the symbol, for no natural condition intrinsically carries meaning, instead all meaning is derived from the human process of interpretation. The shifts of mankind – values, cultures, knowledges, religions, method of production, ideology etc. – equally causes shifts in interpretation and thus potentially a shift in the symbolic meaning and collective understanding.

The loss, considering the *corona civica* is divisible by the meaning and ideology of the symbol. First, the meaning in relation to the mythological origin, carries with it, the complexity of victory. Victory is the violent destruction of the other. Secondly, the ideology, for the *corona civica* – despite inevitably related to violent victory, – was object and reward for the civil (civil crown).



Although the individual receives the crown as result of actions, primarily in favour of the institute (namely the destruction of the other) it still signifies the individual glory. Nowadays instead, the institute itself claims that glory. The ultimate claim for glory truly belongs to none, yet symbolic interpretation to all.

Nature is perfect and final,  
purposeful yet meaningless.



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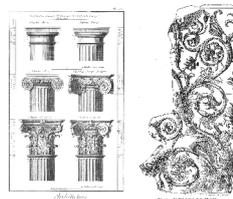
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Nature is perfect and final,  
purposeful yet meaningless.

No lesser than Apollo – saviour of mankind  
– himself declared the laurel to be sacred.

Thus it is, that by its appearance it bears  
resemblance to the greatness of the immortal  
divine deity.

No other crown is a more accurate and  
superior representation of victory than  
the golden laurel wreath.

The glorified symbolism of victory,  
is inherently linked to the violent  
destruction of all it opposes.

The symbolism of glory institutes  
historically approved propaganda.