



Edited by Mark Heerink and Esther Meijer

Flavian Responses to Nero's Rome

Amsterdam
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1 Introduction

Esther Meijer

Nero's suicide on 9 June of 68 CE brought the Julio-Claudian dynasty of imperial Rome to an end. A period of great turmoil ensued, the so-called Year of the Four Emperors, which ended on 20 December 69 when Vitellius was murdered and the Senate acknowledged Titus Flavius Vespasianus as emperor. So began the Flavian era (69–96 CE). Vespasian then faced the challenge of establishing the legitimation and durability of his rule and that of his dynasty in a world marred by civil war and political unrest. An unavoidable aspect of this undertaking was the establishment of Vespasian's rule in relation to that of the Julio-Claudian dynasty, from its first ruler, Augustus, to its last emperor, Nero, who had thoroughly embedded himself in Rome's physical structures, material cultures, arts, and peoples.

A key question when examining Vespasian's rule, and that of the Flavian dynasty more broadly, therefore, is how the Flavian emperors navigated Nero's embeddedness in the Roman mind, cities, and Empire. Scholars have shown how the Flavian emperors, in their propagated desire to bring back peace and stability to Rome, connected their dynasty with the Augustan and more widely with the Julio-Claudian past, while avoiding or 'overwriting' Nero.¹ This volume aims to further investigate and provide nuance to existing explorations of the transition from Neronian to Flavian Rome. By examining a range of Flavian responses to the complicated legacy of Nero's time that reinforce some aspects of his memory and that erase or overwrite others, the papers in this volume highlight the variety of Flavian modes of remembering Nero. In doing so, they demonstrate the integration and appropriation of Neronian Rome by Vespasian, while drawing attention to the situational, selective, and strategic ways in which Vespasian, Titus, and Domitian navigated memories of Nero during their individual eras of rulership.

1 Quotation from Augoustakis, Buckley, and Stocks (2019) 8. Select important works on Nero and the Flavians include Griffin (1984); Darwall-Smith (1996); Levick (1999) 65–78; Ripoll (1999); Davies (2000); Kragelund (2000) 512–515; Flower (2006); Kramer and Reitz (2010); Bönnisch-Meyer et al. (2014); Cordes (2017); Varner (2017); Schulz (2019).

In their contributions, the scholars take different methodological approaches to varying types of evidence to show that the Flavian emperors did not categorically or uniformly oppose Nero. From Vespasian's claim to power onwards, aspects of Nero's legacy were integrated into the Flavians' policies, building projects, and imperial representations. Through discussions of visual (self-)representations in material culture, literary analyses, and considerations of architectural remains, the contributions to this volume demonstrate how distinctions between Nero's Rome and that of the Flavian emperors were regularly deconstructed and reconstructed, thereby characterizing and (de) legitimizing the individual Flavian emperors and their abilities to rule, and articulating their relation to imperial predecessors. Overall, by highlighting continuities between the Neronian and Flavian eras and by exploring imperial individuality within the Flavian dynasty, we hope that this volume provides a stimulus to our understanding of the evolution of the principate, especially regarding issues of dynasty and succession in the first century CE.² At the same time, the papers in this volume highlight the complex nature of many of our different types of evidence for Flavian Rome, offering reflections on the difficulties involved in negotiating these complexities in our acts of interpretation and reminding us of the risks of over-ideologization.³

This volume builds on the surge of recent scholarship on Neronian and Flavian Rome that explores the ages in themselves as well as the (dis)continuities and interactions between them. Following Boyle and Dominik's important volume on Flavian Rome, which delineated the Flavian era as a defined and definable age,⁴ scholars from different fields have examined a range of aspects of this period. Comprehensive studies on both Neronian and Flavian Rome are offered by recent companions, including those on the Neronian age edited respectively by Buckley and Dinter (2013) and Bartsch (2017), and the companion to the Flavian era, edited by Zissos (2016).⁵ These volumes provide valuable overviews on the cultural, political, economic, and social features of Neronian and Flavian Rome and have advanced our understanding of these eras as interpretative categories. Moreover, by collating examinations of different types of evidence, they have brought together different strands of scholarship which have produced a wealth of studies on their own, such as studies of Flavian literature.

2 For a recent discussion of continuities and discontinuities between the Flavian age and Julio-Claudian Rome, see Zissos (2016) 10–13.

3 See Hurllet (2016) for a systematic overview of our sources for the Flavian age, including a discussion of the factors we need to consider in our acts of interpretation.

4 Boyle and Dominik (2003).

5 Buckley and Dinter (2013); Zissos (2016); Bartsch, Freudenburg, and Littlewood (2017).

No longer deemed ‘silver’ and derivative of Augustan literature, Flavian literature has received an increasing amount of scholarly attention in recent decades.⁶ A range of studies have considered different aspects of Flavian poetry and prose, investigating, for example, its literary techniques and its interaction with Greek and Roman literature.⁷ Studies of individual texts are complemented by studies of Flavian literary culture more widely, which interpret the texts in their societal and political contexts: particularly well established are examinations of occasional poetry and imperial panegyric in relation to the Flavian court.⁸ Recent studies have examined Flavian literature in its socio-political context more widely, too. The volume on *fides* in Flavian literature, edited by Augoustakis, Buckley, and Stocks (2019), widens the scope from literature to its connections with society by examining the Flavian reconceptualization of Roman *fides* and its importance as a foundational principle of and for Flavian Rome, investigating how this concept ‘binds the Flavian dynasty to an Augustan and more broadly Julio-Claudian past, overwriting Nero’.⁹

In addition to the scholarly focus on Flavian literature, we have also seen interdisciplinary studies of the Flavian era and its (dis)connections with the Neronian period and the Julio-Claudian era more broadly, especially in relation to issues of dynasty and succession. Studies of material culture have, for example, explored Flavian imperial aesthetics, from soberness under Vespasian to a return to luxuriousness under Domitian, and compared these to Augustus’ rebuilding of Rome and Nero’s occupation of Rome.¹⁰ Scholars

6 On the judgemental application of the ages of metal to the periodization of Latin literature, see e.g. Klein (1967); Mayer (1999), and most recently, Bessone and Fucecchi (2017) 1, describing the Flavian era as ‘an epoch that nobody today would any longer call “Silver”’.

7 See, for example, the contributions to Nauta, van Dam, and Smolenaars (2006) on Flavian poetry, the volume on Statius’ poetry by the same editors (2008), as well as the volume edited by Manuwald and Voigt (2013) on *Flavian Epic Interactions* and the volume edited by Augoustakis (2014) on *Flavian Poetry and Its Greek Past*.

8 For discussions of social and performative aspects of Flavian literature, such as the poet-patron relationship, recitals, and participation in festivals and competitions, see e.g. Markus (2000, 2003), Nauta (2002). The volume on literary genres in the Flavian age edited by Bessone and Fucecchi (2017), examines the system and evolution of genres in the context of contemporary transformations of society and culture, highlighting a marked consciousness of the social and pragmatic function of literature as evidenced by its occasional poetry and celebrations of imperial civilization.

9 Augoustakis, Buckley, and Stocks (2019) 8. Other recent examples are the volume on *Campania in the Flavian Poetic Imagination*, edited by Augoustakis and Littlewood (2019) and the special issue of *Phoenix* on philosophical currents in Flavian literature, edited by Keith (2018).

10 See e.g. Darwall-Smith (1996) 252–262; Packer (2003) 176–177; Elsner (1994) 123. For more recent views, bringing nuance to this interpretation, see the discussion on Nero’s memory in Flavian Rome

have also examined ‘imperial image-making’,¹¹ exploring the different ways in which media were employed to secure the stability of the newly founded Flavian dynasty, and looking for innovations, continuities, and breaks in the imperial representations of Nero and Domitian.¹²

Fundamental to all these studies is their focus on engagement with memories, whether that engagement manifests itself through the erasure, appropriation and/or adaptation of visual imagery and material culture, through intertextuality, or in other ways. To many people in the Roman Empire, the concepts of memory and history were inextricably connected with each other and formed an essential way of connecting with the past and constructing identity. The past functioned as a social construction, as a narrative, and as such, stories, histories, and memories deeply informed formations of identities: the identities of individual Roman citizens, but, on a more collective level, also the identity and conceptualization of the Roman state.¹³ Consequently, the ability to negotiate and control memories was a crucial component of participating in society and holding political power, especially in relation to issues of dynasty and succession.¹⁴ Thus, the death of Nero and the ending of the Julio-Claudian dynasty meant that those striving to claim power in the Year of the Four Emperors not only competed for imperial rulership, but also for the interpretation of the Neronian past.

In her influential monograph on *The Art of Forgetting*, Harriet Flower provides us with an example that illustrates the plural and divergent ways of remembering Nero immediately after his death.¹⁵ In their claims to imperial rulership, both Otho and Vitellius represented themselves as heirs to Nero in several ways. Their imperial images appealed to Nero’s portraiture and politics, and Vitellius even settled his household in the Domus Aurea,

by Varner (2017). On Flavian soberness in relation to Neronian *luxuria*, see also Kragelund (2000), who discusses Neronian *luxuria* in Tacitus, as well as Moormann’s contribution to this volume.

¹¹ Tuck (2016).

¹² See Kramer and Reitz (2010) and Bönisch-Meyer et al. (2014) as well as Cordes (2017), who discusses the literary and visual strategies used in the ‘recoding’ of imperial representations of Nero and Domitian.

¹³ Foundational studies on the formations of collective and state identities in the ancient Roman Mediterranean through stories, histories, and memories include, for example, Assmann (1988); Edwards (1996); Habinek (1998); Citroni (2003); Gowing (2005); Flower (2006); the contributions to Stein-Hölkeskamp and Hölkeskamp (2006); and Galinsky (2014), as well as Connolly (2009); Lowrie (2009); Willis (2011).

¹⁴ The most thoroughly researched period in this respect is Augustus’ reorganization of the Roman Republic into the principate, which encompassed radical political, social, and moral reforms, for which see most famously Zanker (1988).

¹⁵ Flower (2006) 201, 208–209.

thus almost literally assuming the seat of imperial power.¹⁶ These appeals to Nero's memory in support of their claims to imperial rulership must have been well received by some, but not by others: a uniformly positive remembrance of Nero, then, or a rehabilitation, was not successful. But neither was a uniformly negative remembrance of Nero, as the papers in this volume show. By examining the different ways in which individual Flavian emperors engaged with Nero's memory, as well as by considering the variety of Flavian responses to Nero's memory that can be recognized in literary sources, material evidence, and archaeological remains, this volume shows that there is no one way to remember Nero.

On these strands of scholarship, then, does the current volume build, bringing together different disciplinary views on the ways in which Flavians responded to memories of Nero's Rome, highlighting how such responses were situational, selective, and not uniform across the Flavian dynasty. The volume opens with the contributions by Andrew Gallia and Annemarie Ambühl, who introduce us to the complex dynamics between Flavian and Neronian Rome, respectively demonstrating how Vespasian appropriated and integrated Nero's Rome into his own rule, and alerting us to the problem of retrospective constructions, showing us the synthesis and deconstruction of boundaries at work in the (post-)Flavian characterization of rulers. The volume ends with a chapter by Verena Schulz on historiographical responses to Flavian responses to Nero, thus highlighting the volume's reflections on the difficulties of negotiating Flavian and post-Flavian retrojection and bias.

Within this framework, chapters could have been organized into interpretive groupings in different ways. Points of contiguity and strands of thematic continuity can be found across the contributions, including discussions of representations of individual Flavian emperors as part of a cohesive Flavian dynastic identity, analyses of the aesthetic and political charge of material evidence in portraiture, architecture, and the imperial cult, and explorations of the methodological issues presented to us by our sources on the Flavian period. We have chosen to organize the chapters into groups according to disciplines and themes, moving from examinations of Flavian buildings and studies of Flavian poetry to explorations of imperial legitimation in multimedia representations of emperors. Our aim with this division has been

16 On Otho and Nero, see Tac. *Hist.* 1.13, 16, 26, 30, 2.78; Suet. *Otho* 7 (Domus Aurea); Plut. *Otho* 3, 5.2. On Vitellius and Nero, see Tac. *Hist.* 1.50, 74, 2.95.1; Suet. *Vit.* 11.2 (Domus Aurea); Eutrop. 7.18. For discussions of Otho and Vitellius in the Domus Aurea, see also Dio Chrys. 47.15; Dio 64.4 with Morford (1968) 165 and Davies (2000).

to highlight how examinations of different types of evidence complement and inform each other's findings.

Analysis of literary sources, from Flavian epic to post-Flavian historiography, shows that there is no consistent opposition in authors' characterizations of Neronian versus Flavian rulers. Rather, boundaries between Neronian and Flavian Rome are deconstructed and (re)constructed in different situations and in different contexts, usually alongside an Augustan-Neronian-Flavian nexus. This phenomenon occurs in other types of evidence as well. In their examinations of the different ways in which Flavian emperors navigated the physical environment of Neronian Rome, Aurora Raimondi Cominesi and Eric Moormann show how the different Flavian emperors reuse, repurpose, and expand on Neronian building projects, and question how this Flavian appropriation of Neronian Rome works on an ideological level. Likewise, examinations of multimedia representations of Nero and the Flavian emperors by Anne Wolsfeld, Lisa Cordes, and Verena Schulz demonstrate that visual imagery, too, does not feature strong or consistent oppositions between Nero and Domitian, as we may have expected, instead pointing to elements of continuity between the Julio-Claudian emperors and their Flavian successors.

Thus, the examinations of different types of evidence performed in this volume collectively demonstrate the omnipresence and variety of integrating modes of remembering Nero across the Flavian dynasty. Overall, while we do not claim to provide a comprehensive overview of Flavian responses to Nero's Rome, we hope to have produced a volume that offers varied and complementary examinations of the different modes of remembering Nero, that brings to our attention issues emerging from these examinations, and that thereby stimulates further thought in several areas of both Neronian and Flavian studies.

Family Matters

When Vespasian became emperor, the Julio-Claudian chain of inheriting imperial power, and thus of the legitimation of power through heritage, had been interrupted. Vespasian and his successors, Titus and Domitian, were therefore unable to straightforwardly appeal to an immediate Julio-Claudian predecessor to justify their claim to imperial rule. The concept of family did, however, play an important role in legitimizations and characterizations of their individual eras of rulership. Flavian coinage, for example, shows how the Flavian rulers represented themselves as a family unit: Vespasian's coins depict his sons, Titus and Domitian, and proclaim their titles, including

consul, praetor, and princes of youth.¹⁷ This dynastic aspect of coins was continued by both Titus and Domitian.

This representation of the Flavian emperors as a family unit, and the Flavians' calculated appeal to and association with specific predecessors and successors, can be recognized across the different Flavian emperors' eras of rulership. This section, 'Family Matters', examines the characterization and legitimization of the Flavian dynasty through their association with predecessors and female family members. Vespasian's early navigations of Nero's memory demonstrate the appropriation and integration of specific elements of Nero's Rome in the legitimization of imperial power and the construction of charismatic authority. In post-Flavian evidence, too, the concept of family plays an important role in the characterization both of individual Flavian emperors and their respective eras of rulership as well as of the Flavian dynasty in relation to the Julio-Claudian dynasty more broadly.

In the paper on 'Nero's Divine Stepfather and the Flavian Regime', **Andrew Gallia** deals with the complex and contradictory ways in which the Flavians dealt with Nero's legacy – on the one hand distancing themselves from their predecessor, and on the other hand continuing Neronian policies – by focusing on one striking example: the Temple of Divus Claudius on the Caelian Hill. By continuing and finishing this building project started by Nero, Vespasian could claim the monument as Flavian. Perhaps more importantly, he thus ensured his own deification and associated himself with the only two deified Julio-Claudian emperors, Augustus and Claudius, neatly skipping over the family's last scion.

But Vespasian's appeal to Claudius was not a foregone conclusion, and Vespasian did not appeal to Claudius in every respect. Through the (re-)examination of different arguments for Vespasian's appeal to Claudius, Gallia brings nuance to our understanding of the use of Claudius within the broader framework of Vespasian's strategy of legitimization and his use of the imperial cult. By distinguishing Claudius' mortal deeds from his posthumous divinity and only appealing to the latter, Gallia argues, the Flavians did not appeal to Claudius' individual merits, but rather to the category to which he belongs, namely that of a deified emperor. As such, Claudius not only formed a precedent for the eventual apotheosis of the Flavian emperors, but also functioned as a source of charismatic authority – a quality that the Flavians lacked, when compared to the Julio-Claudians' familial *nobilitas*.

17 Carradice (1998) esp. 97. See also e.g. Buttrey (1972); Carradice and Buttrey (2007). Visual (self-)representation of the Flavian emperors, both individually and as part of a dynasty, is discussed in detail by Wolsfeld in this volume.

In her discussion of ‘The Flavians and their Women: Rewriting Neronian Transgressions?’, **Annemarie Ambühl** then guides us through several late and post-Flavian literary works, exploring how authors use descriptions of imperial women to characterize an emperor as ‘good’ or ‘bad’ and to thereby associate an emperor with some emperors while distancing them from others. Ambühl performs a discourse analysis of the literary descriptions of the women at the Flavian court, from Flavia Domitilla and Caenis to Julia Berenica and Domitia Longina, and compares these to their Neronian counterparts, including Agrippina the Younger and Poppaea Sabina. Through this discourse analysis, Ambühl is able to argue that writers such as Pliny, Suetonius, and Tacitus produce stereotypical descriptions of women more so than truthful portraits. With these descriptions, the writers shaped the image of each individual emperor as ‘good’ or ‘bad’.

As other contributions to this volume also demonstrate, there is no consistent opposition between the characterization of Neronian versus Flavian members of the ruling family: Ambühl shows that, whereas we may indeed detect a stark opposition between Nero on the one hand and Vespasian and Titus, who avoid the Neronian model, on the other hand, this defined boundary collapses in writers’ depictions of Domitian’s relations with women, which are similar to and associated with depictions of Nero through the use of similar phrases and motifs. As such, Ambühl’s analysis leads to a better understanding of the biases of post-Flavian literature, and functions as a reflection on the potential difficulties of negotiating Flavian and post-Flavian retrojection when researching the Flavian emperors in relation to Nero and the Julio-Claudian dynasty.

Thus, by analysing different phases and aspects of the role of family in legitimizations and characterizations of Flavian rulers and rulership, the papers in this section re-evaluate the opposition between Nero and the Flavian emperors. Moreover, by examining the role of the synthesis and collapse of defined boundaries between the Neronian and the Flavian alongside an Augustan-Neronian-Flavian nexus, these contributions further our understanding of the evolution of contemporary conceptions of the position of the emperor and of the principate more broadly.

Building on Nero’s Rome

One of the most notorious and directly obvious ways to deal with the memories of an imperial predecessor was to erase their names and deeds, to damage their properties and busts, and to remove them from public display,

and to overwrite and build over their traces. Sometimes, such strategies may have been ordained by the Senate, but memory sanctions were not always that formal, and decisions about the commemoration of disgraced persons were often made on an individual and local level.¹⁸ In addition to memory sanctions such as erasure and removal, however, there were many more ways to navigate the physical traces reminiscent of predecessors: continuing their unfinished building projects and claiming them as your own, for example, or demarcating physical space and juxtaposing one's own buildings to theirs.

In the second part of this volume, Aurora Raimondi Cominesi and Eric Moormann explore how the different Flavian emperors navigated and negotiated the physical environment of Neronian Rome, and how, by doing so, they characterized their individual periods of rulership. Through paying attention to the building programmes of the Flavian emperors in relation to Augustus' establishment of the Julio-Claudian dynasty as well as to the initiatives of his successors, including Nero, these contributions complement and offer a counterpart to narratives offered by literary discourses, providing further nuance to interpretations of the Neronian-Flavian divide as an opposition. Just as we see in the first section of this volume, the Flavian emperors try to imitate Augustus and initially seem to distance themselves from Nero, but Nero's example is not always erasable or avoided. In the first section, Andrew Gallia already drew attention to the contemporary notion that Nero's Rome was restituted to its citizens.

Raimondi Cominesi and Moormann investigate how the Flavian emperors react to the private and inaccessible character of some of Nero's buildings and collections in different ways. They show how the Flavian rulers in fact sometimes benefit from some of Nero's buildings and possessions, which they reuse, repurpose, and even expand, for example through increasing access to imperial complexes and other constructions to the public, and by publicly displaying their spoils, which played an important role in the establishment and legitimacy of the Flavian dynasty, in clear imitation of Augustus' propagated world peace. Through case studies of the Palatine and the *Templum Pacis* respectively, the contributors question how such

¹⁸ See especially Flower (2006), whose volume on 'the art of forgetting' has been particularly formative to our understanding of memory sanctions in Roman culture. The term 'memory sanctions' emphasizes the variety of penalties designed to limit or erase the memory of someone, and as such better reflects ancient practices than the phrase *damnatio memoriae*, which is not ancient and inaccurately suggests a standardized practice: see Flower (2006) xix-xxi for a brief discussion on the usage of this term by scholars. On potential memory sanctions against Nero and Domitian, see e.g. Varner (2004).

appropriation of Neronian Rome works, ideologically, and they reflect on the difficulties of ideological interpretations based on material remains, warning against the dangers of the over-ideologization of, for example, art collections and statuary.

Aurora Raimondi Cominesi's chapter focuses on the development of the architecture on the Palatine Hill, the ever-expanding residence of the Roman emperors. Considering archaeological evidence alongside information gleaned from literary sources, this case study provides us with an overview of the individual ways in which each Flavian emperor dealt with Nero's remains on the Palatine, including the *Domus Transitoria* and the *Domus Aurea*. Thus, Raimondi Cominesi nuances our understanding of Vespasian's engagement with Neronian Rome by highlighting elements of continuity with the Neronian alongside Vespasian's and Titus' public displays of condemnation, which worked to diminish contemporary ideas of the Palatine as the emperor's private palace. When compared to his two predecessors, Raimondi Cominesi argues, Domitian's knowing engagement with and reuse of Neronian innovation in the palace complex is therefore not unprecedented – but it is unique in terms of scale and represents a new evolution of imperial building that resulted in a Domitianic palace that established the imperial residence as the no longer inappropriate home of the emperor, and, by extension, imperial rule as no longer questioned.

Another example of Flavian emperors ostensibly turning to Augustus while appropriating Neronian materials in service of the Flavian dynasty is the construction of the *Templum Pacis* or the 'Temple of Peace'. In his contribution to this volume, **Eric Moormann** discusses this temple as adhering to Augustus' model of the *Ara Pacis*, but simultaneously responding to Nero's *Domus Aurea*. By gathering and discussing all available information pertaining to the monument, from its archaeological remains to the works of art it may have held, Moormann assesses the functions and meanings of the *Templum Pacis* under the different Flavian emperors, questioning if and how the temple reflects Flavian politics, and if and how it can be understood as a reaction to Nero's political programme.

The answers to these questions are not straightforward. Moormann's analysis of the evidence suggests that the *Templum Pacis* showcased Flavian soberness combined with an increasingly popular display of *luxus* or luxury through the use of marble and the exhibition of works of art. This repurposing of Neronian materials as *spolia* in the service of *pax* presents us with another appropriation of the Neronian in the service of the Flavian dynasty: one that represents a restitution of Nero's Rome to its citizens, and one that leads us to interpret the *Templum Pacis* as an instrument for Vespasian

to strengthen his claim to rulership. Moreover, just as demonstrated by Raimondi Cominesi in her discussion of the imperial residences on the Palatine, we may recognize a difference in approach between Vespasian and Titus on the one hand and Domitian on the other hand. While Domitian furthers the Temple's accessibility and legibility as a public monument by adding administrative buildings, Domitian's addition of a library and its focus on art and literature leads Moormann to point towards the inescapability of Nero's memory.

Together, then, the papers by Raimondi Cominesi and Moormann provide nuance to existing ideas about the early Flavians' engagement with Neronian Rome by highlighting modes of reception of Nero that appropriate and integrate the Neronian in the service of the establishment and legitimization of the Flavian dynasty. This ideological assessment of material evidence is informed by methodological reflections on the difficulties of their interpretation, thus complementing Ambühl's reflections on the difficulties of navigating the biases of Flavian and post-Flavian literature. In the third part of this volume, scholars further examine Flavian responses to Nero's Rome in Flavian literature.

Literary Responses to Nero's Rome

Much work has been done recently on different aspects of Flavian literature, including on issues such as literary techniques, genre, and intertextual relations, and on the interpretation of these texts in their wider societal, political, and cultural contexts.¹⁹ Some of these studies have focused on specific ways in which the Flavian dynasty and Flavian society more generally relate to the Julio-Claudian past and/or to Roman cultural consciousness more broadly. The aforementioned volume on *fides* in Flavian literature, edited by Augoustakis, Buckley, and Stocks (2019), is a good example of this approach, which takes a particular concept or topic and investigates how this concept works to create a connection with some aspects of the Julio-Claudian dynasty but distances itself from others. Another recent and excellent example is offered by Ginsberg and Krasne's edited volume *After 69 CE – Writing Civil War in Flavian Rome* on the theme of *bellum civile* in Flavian literature.²⁰ This volume furthers our understanding of the enduring legacy of civil war in the Roman imagination and cultural consciousness

¹⁹ See p. 13 above.

²⁰ Ginsberg and Krasne (2018).

by examining its prevalence across many different genres, including and beyond epic, and by connecting Flavian civil war writing to Rome's civil war literature more broadly. As such, these edited volumes testify both to the singularity of the Flavian era, but also to continuities between the Julio-Claudian and the Flavian periods.²¹

This section builds on this recent work, examining different ways in which Flavian poets navigated memories and traces of Neronian Rome as represented in the works of Neronian authors. The papers bring us from a relatively early response to Nero's Rome, namely Valerius' Flaccus' *Argonautica*, to later Flavian poetic engagement with Neronian texts such as Lucan's *Civil War* and, as Nauta argues, Calpurnius Siculus' *Eclogues*. The analysis of intertextual relations underlies the readings of these texts and facilitates the scholars' examinations of Flavian mediations of Nero. Through their close readings, the papers in this section showcase different (and divergent) uses of intertextuality, exploring its role in the creation of identity confusion and interpreting this phenomenon in various ways, for example as a reflection of traumatic civil war experiences and, conversely, as more ludic engagement with earlier literature in the context of poetic rivalry. Overall, the papers in this section present us with reflections on the use of mythological poetry to explore contemporary and historical Roman realities, and, more broadly, with considerations of the relation between genre and historical, social, and cultural reality.²²

Firstly, **Mark Heerink** examines the Cyzicus episode in Valerius Flaccus' *Argonautica*. In this episode, Jason and the Argonauts, having visited King Cyzicus and the Doliones, are driven back to the Cyzican coast by a sea storm. Failing to recognize each other, the parties engage in battle and many people die. In his contribution, Heerink analyses this episode's interactions firstly with Virgil's *Aeneid* and Lucan's *Civil War*, and secondly with other civil war narratives in Valerius' *Argonautica*, which evoke and repeat elements of the Cyzicus episode. Building on recent studies of the *Argonautica's* civil

21 See also e.g. Ginsberg (2016), who, in her study of the *Octavia*, combines intertextual analysis with cultural memory theory to explore the roles played by literature in the transition between the Julio-Claudian and Flavian dynasties.

22 On Flavian genres and their relation to Roman realities, see most recently Bessone and Fucecchi (2017). See Bernstein (2016) for a valuable discussion of the ways in which Flavian epics comment on recent historical developments. See also Rebeggiani (2018) for a thorough and nuanced discussion of Statius' *Thebaid* and its relation to cultural and political life in Rome under Domitian, in which Rebeggiani pays attention to the influence of the memory of Nero on Flavian Rome and to the importance of civil war in imperial ideology and Latin literature.

war episodes by Buckley and Landrey,²³ Heerink suggests that Valerius' intertextual interaction muddles the distinction between good and evil, thus problematizing these concepts and contributing to the poem's depiction of civil war. Moreover, the *Argonautica's* repetitions of civil war narratives, Heerink argues, immortalize the *experiences* of civil war – instead of the actual, 'unspeakable', historic events – for later generations. As such, this early Flavian epic reflects Valerius' traumatic experiences of the civil wars of 68–69 CE, thus forming a marked contrast to Lucan's narration of the actual civil war events that brought about the end of the Roman Republic.

Tim Stover then provides us with an examination of another Flavian epic that comments on historical civil war through myth, namely Statius' *Thebaid*. Stover performs a close reading of a significant passage from the first book of Statius' epic (1.114–164), in which Tisiphone sows division between Eteocles and Polynices in Thebes. The beginning of the *Thebaid*, Stover argues, engages with Lucan's *Civil War* in a sustained manner: the spectre of Lucan's Caesar haunts this passage, including the epic's first simile, and enhances the epic's theme of identity confusion. But where Heerink's contribution on Valerius' *Argonautica* focuses on the topic of identity confusion as an aspect of traumatic experiences of civil war, Stover shows how, in the opening of the *Thebaid*, this 'ludic allusion' functions in the context of poetic rivalry, injecting playfulness into this generally sombre epic. Through this close reading, then, Stover advances our understanding of fraternal warfare as a trope in Roman poetry, and argues that myth is a superior and safe vehicle for exploring Roman realities.

Finally, **Ruurd Nauta** explores the relation between Calpurnius Siculus and the Flavian poets. Through the careful analysis of parallels between Calpurnius' *Eclogues* on the one hand and the works of Silius Italicus, Statius, and Martial on the other hand, Nauta argues that Calpurnius wrote in Neronian times, thus establishing Calpurnius' importance as a developer of the bucolic genre in ancient literature. This analysis leads Nauta to explore the different ways in which Flavian poets interact with Calpurnius' work: where Statius and Silius Italicus engage with Calpurnius mostly when navigating the relation between epic and bucolic poetry and mediating these genres' associations with war and peace, respectively, Martial primarily draws on Calpurnius' work when centralizing his need for patronage. Notably, most Flavian poets largely avoid the use of Calpurnius' panegyric when praising Domitian. Nauta seeks an explanation for this avoidance in late Flavian negative attitudes towards Nero and in the differences in imperial

23 Buckley (2010); Landrey (2018).

self-representation between Nero and Domitian – despite their perceived similarities. The fourth section of this volume examines the topic of imperial (self-)presentation in detail, closely investigating elements of continuity and discontinuity between the Flavian and Julio-Claudian dynasties and within the Flavian dynasty as a family unit more specifically.

Presenting the Emperor in Early Imperial Rome

In the first section of this volume, ‘Family Matters’, Gallia and Ambühl demonstrate the important role family played in the Flavian emperors’ legitimizations and characterizations of their individual eras of rulership. Building projects and literary evidence are indicative of (self-)representations of the Flavian dynasty as a family unit, presenting us with images and narratives of father Vespasian to be succeeded by his experienced – but relatively young – sons, Titus and Domitian. This section advances our understanding of these (self-)representations by exploring the similarities and differences between multimedia representations of the Flavian emperors on the one hand and Nero, and the Julio-Claudian dynasty more widely, on the other hand. By focusing on imperial (self-)representations, and particularly on their engagement with the theme of youth, Wolsfeld and Cordes take a thematic approach to imperial portraiture and a range of generic literary discourses, thus exploring the role and importance of age in representations of imperial power and legitimizations of imperial rulership.

In the paper ‘How to Portray the *princeps*: Visual Imperial Representation from Nero to Domitian’, **Anne Wolsfeld** takes a close look at imperial portraiture in statuary and coins. By guiding us through imperial (self-)representations of the three Flavian emperors and examining their relation to Neronian visual imagery, Wolsfeld interprets changes in portraiture as reflective of the evolution of the Flavian dynasty, viewing them as part of the development of portraits from the very beginning of the principate. Crucially, Flavian coinage and statuary do not present us with unequivocal opposition to or dissociation from Neronian imperial imagery. Instead, Flavian responses to Neronian visual representation are multifaceted, unique to each emperor, and subject to change over the course of their respective reigns.

Wolsfeld demonstrates, for example, how Titus’ and Domitian’s accession portraits show dissociation from Nero, the last youth represented in imperial portraiture before them, while still incorporating iconographical fashion trends that we also recognize in – and that were introduced by – Neronian imagery. These selective choices, Wolsfeld argues, served firstly to set the

Flavian emperors apart from Nero's reign and secondly to consolidate their dynasty. Using perspective and narrative offered by this portraiture, Wolsfeld is therefore able to show that the ways in which the Flavians dealt with Neronian portraiture are not simply a matter of continuation or break, but rather that they form part of a calculated process of adaptation to meet the specific challenges faced by the new and developing Flavian dynasty. Overall, Wolsfeld suggests, these developments in Flavian visual imagery indicate increasing acceptance of the elevated position of the *princeps*.

Lisa Cordes complements Wolsfeld's analysis of imperial portraiture by discussing the different ways in which Nero's youth was treated by Neronian, Flavian, and later writers. Through close reading relevant passages from Seneca, Calpurnius, the *Octavia*, Tacitus, and panegyric poetry, Cordes demonstrates how these writers use the category of age to characterize individual emperors and to comment on their ability to rule. Cordes begins by analysing the presence of different interpretations of youthful age already in Neronian literary discourse: some authors criticized Nero's youth, pointing to his lack of relevant experience, whereas others construed his youth as indicative of his innocence and malleability.

Subsequent, Flavian interpretations of imperial youth are similarly divergent. Cordes demonstrates that early Flavian discourse emphasizes the youthful Nero's failures in the military realm and his ability to live up to the expectations of empire, thus problematizing his effectiveness as a ruler and contrasting him to the older and more experienced Vespasian. Later Flavian texts, however, present us with positive evaluations of imperial youthfulness when they emphasize the young Domitian's outstanding military *virtus* even prior to his coming to power, thus contrasting him to and distancing him from the inexperienced Nero. Conversely, post-Flavian texts depict Domitian as a second Nero. This constant recoding of the emperor's age, Cordes argues, not only contributes to writers' characterizations of emperors and their ability to rule, but also reflects contemporary concerns with the political system of the principate, especially regarding issues of dynasty and succession.

As such, the theme of imperial youth in visual representation and literary discourse alike enables us to consider the transmission of imperial power, and to recognize the Flavian emperors' emphasis on experience rather than on heredity as a principle of succession at a time when succession was still legally unregulated.²⁴ Moreover, the adaptability of this theme and

24 See Klaassen (2014) for an examination of the transmission of imperial power in the absence of succession laws or procedures in Tacitus' *Histories* and *Annals*.

its presence in both imperial (self-) representations and texts provide us with another example of the repeated and selective synthesis and collapse of defined boundaries between the Neronian and the Flavian that we can recognize across this volume. Furthermore, the contradictions between late Flavian and post-Flavian interpretations of Domitian's youth and his relation to Nero remind us of the factors that we need to take into account when interpreting ancient evidence relating to the Flavian period, an issue that is also explored by Verena Schulz in the final contribution to this volume.

Looking Back

In this volume's final chapter, Verena Schulz deals with the earliest reception of the Flavians by the late and post-Flavian historiographers and biographers Tacitus, Suetonius, and Cassius Dio. Because nearly all Flavian historiography has been lost, the works by these authors form a very important source for our studies of the Flavian emperors and the ways in which they constructed their dynasty in relation to Nero and to the Julio-Claudian dynasty more widely.²⁵ Schulz systematically examines the ways in which Tacitus, Suetonius, and Cassius Dio respectively fashion Nero's memory in relation to the Flavian emperors, for example, by creating thematic links between Nero and Domitian, 'the bald Nero'. Their narratives generally seem more concerned with creating distance between the Flavian emperors themselves – dissociating Vespasian and Titus from Domitian – than with constructing a link between Domitian and Nero.

Moreover, despite this similarity in the historiographers' texts, they differ in their details: throughout her analyses, Schulz emphasizes the different contemporary circumstances, points of view, and interests that informed these authors' texts. This observation is then underlined by Schulz' brief discussion of Philostratus' *Vita Apollonii* and early Jewish-Christian literature, which treat the Flavian emperors quite differently from the historiographers, for example, by emphasizing Vespasian's and Titus' roles as persecutors in the Jewish-Roman wars. Thus, Schulz' paper underlines the importance of taking into account the cultural, political, and societal circumstances that may have led writers, sculptors, artists, and craftspeople more generally to create associations between certain emperors while

25 On post-Flavian narratives of the empire's dynasties, and the relation between the Julio-Claudian and Flavian dynasties in particular, see also e.g. Wilson (2003) and Schulz (2019).

distancing them from others. In doing so, her chapter acts as a closural piece for this volume.

Together, the contributions to this volume show that Flavian responses to Nero's Rome were not uniform, and that they did not consistently oppose Nero. Rather, the complementary examinations of archaeological remains, material evidence, and literary discourse undertaken by the scholars in this volume show that distinctions between Nero's period of rulership and those of the Flavians were repeatedly deconstructed and reconstructed, often in service of the (de)legitimization and characterization of the individual Flavian emperors and their rulership. Overall, then, this volume demonstrates the variety of Flavian ways of remembering Nero, thereby providing nuance to our understanding of the relation between the Flavian dynasty and Julio-Claudian Rome. We therefore hope that this volume's explorations of breaks and continuities between the Julio-Claudian and Flavian eras advance our understanding of the Flavian era both as an identifiable and unique period and as part of the evolution of the principate more widely.

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I

Family Matters

2 Nero's Divine Stepfather and the Flavian Regime

Andrew Gallia

Abstract

This chapter considers the issue of continuity and rupture between Neronian and Flavian policies in light of Vespasian's efforts to revive official cult honours for the deified Claudius. Re-examination of the evidence for the status of Divus Claudius during the reign of Nero suggests that the most salient feature of Claudius' divinity was the glory it conferred upon his successor's patriline. Accounts that stress the Flavians' rejection of Neronian precedents thus fail to offer adequate justification for the renewed emphasis that Claudius' cult received under Vespasian. A better explanation can be found in the ideological importance of the imperial cult itself, as the new dynasty sought to build on the example of Divus Claudius as a precedent for its own claims to charismatic authority.

Keywords: apotheosis; imperial cult; religious policy; Claudius; Nero; Vespasian

(De)Constructing Nero's Legacy

In the second epigram of the *De Spectaculis*, Martial gives a tour of the area surrounding Rome's new amphitheatre that is specifically crafted to highlight the contrast between the urban policies of the Flavian dynasty and those of Nero, whose infamous Golden House once occupied that quarter of the city. As Kathleen Coleman explains in her commentary, 'Our poem is like a palimpsest: it supplies a map of the contemporary area, but at the same time we see traces of the same district under Nero.'¹ This polemically

¹ Coleman (2006) 19.

loaded process of chronological displacement can be traced throughout the poem, from the *sidereus colossus* ('starry colossus', 1), which has taken the place of the *invidiosa feri* [...] *atria regis* ('hated halls of a cruel king', 3), to the amphitheatre itself, which rises on the site of the former *stagna Neronis* ('pools of Nero', 5–6), to the new *thermas* ('baths', 7), which mark a spot where housing had been arrogantly expropriated to the imperial estates, and ultimately to the shade of the *Claudia* [...] *porticus* ('Claudian [...] portico', 9), used to establish the furthest extent of Nero's abolished palace.² This sequence of retrospective antitheses, keyed to the repeated phrase *hic ubi*, or simply *ubi*, is meant to condemn Nero's building programme as much as it praises the new edifices of the Flavians. The message, which Martial proclaims at the end of the poem, is *reddita Roma sibi est et sunt* [...] / *deliciae populi, quae fuerant domini* ('Rome has been returned to itself and [...] what had been the pleasures of a master are now the pleasures of the people', 11–12).³

And yet, from the very first line, we encounter a problem with the dichotomy Martial claims to be mapping out between the two regimes. As it happened, the colossus described as standing along the route of the *Sacra Via* was not originally intended as a Flavian monument. We know from Pliny the Elder (*HN* 34.45, cf. Suet. *Ner.* 31.1) that this work of the sculptor Zenodorus was originally commissioned as a statue of Nero, but was completed after

- 2 Hic ubi sidereus propius videt astra colossus
 et crescunt media pegmata celsa via,
 invidiosa feri radiabant atria regis
 unaque iam tota stabat in urbe domus.
 hic ubi conspicui venerabilis Amphitheatri
 erigitur moles, stagna Neronis erant.
 hic ubi miramur velocia munera thermas,
 abstulerat miseris tecta superbus ager.
 Claudia diffusas ubi porticus explicat umbras,
 ultima pars aulae deficientis erat.
 reddita Roma sibi est et sunt te praeside, Caesar,
 deliciae populi, quae fuerant domini.

'Here, where the starry colossus sees the constellations close at hand and a lofty framework rises in the middle of the road, the hated halls of a cruel king used to gleam, and in the whole city there was only one house standing. Here, where the awesome bulk of the amphitheatre soars before our eyes, once lay Nero's pools. Here, where we marvel at the swift blessing of the baths, an arrogant estate had robbed the poor of their dwellings. Where the Claudian portico weaves its spreading shade marks the point at which the palace finally stopped. Rome has been restored to herself, and with you in charge, Caesar, what used to be the pleasure of a master is now the pleasure of the people' (Mart. *Spect.* 2, trans. Coleman).

3 Charlesworth (1937) 54–55; Ramage (1983) 213; Ripoll (1999) 144–148; Darwall-Smith (1996) 36–38; Gallia (2016) 154–155; cf. Moormann (2003) 387 and in this volume.

that emperor's death and condemnation as a dedication to the sun.⁴ The redesign of the statue and the demolition of the surrounding vestibule of the Golden House would have changed the interpretative context somewhat, but as Anne Wolsfeld elucidates in greater detail below, this monument cannot be used to establish a straightforward division between the restored Rome of the Flavians and its Neronian counterpart.⁵

The divergence between the actual history of this monument and the significance that Martial attempts to impose upon it reveals that, even in its earliest phases, the nature of the Flavian response to Nero (or in this case Nero's Rome) was never one of absolute binary opposition, in which the Flavians simply tore down whatever their predecessor had done and proceeded to do the opposite. This would seem to be an obvious point, for however bad an emperor Nero may have been, and however much worse his successors made him out to be, there inevitably would have been some things worth keeping, such that the Flavians would have to be clever – and occasionally bend the truth a little – in squaring the continuation of advantageous policies within an overarching narrative of salvation from the horrors of Nero's tyranny. The corollary but somewhat less obvious point is that the logic of being against Nero did not in itself necessarily underpin apparent shifts away from Neronian precedents. If we want to understand the policies of the Flavian regime, therefore, we must interpret their aims in broader terms than the mere desire to set themselves apart from the last of the Julio-Claudians.

The topic with which I will attempt to bring this issue into focus in this chapter relates to the last item in Martial's list of supposedly 'Flavian' monuments, the 'Claudian portico' that stood around the Temple of Divus Claudius on the Caelian Hill. The completion of Claudius' temple and its porticoes, which Martial indicates stood at the southern boundary of the demolished palace complex, is generally recognized as one of the major building projects with which Vespasian sought to set himself apart from the

4 Albertson (2001), also La Rocca (2017) 197–201 and Varner (2017) 255.

5 This objection does not necessarily apply to the amphitheatre itself, which may be regarded as a distinctly Flavian idea – or, according to Suetonius (*Vesp.* 9.1), originally an Augustan one. We might want to be sceptical of the *velocia munera thermas* ('swift blessing of the baths', Mart. *Spect.* 2.7), however. Noting that the orientation of the Baths of Titus corresponds to that of the Oppian wing of the Golden House, Coarelli (2007) 186–187 and Ball (2003) 250 suggest that the remarkably rapid construction of these baths points to the completion of a pre-existing Neronian project, rather than the execution of an entirely new design. On the Flavian redevelopment of this portion of the Golden House, see further the discussion of Raimondi Cominesi in this volume.

priorities of his decadent predecessor.⁶ Because of its religious and dynastic implications, the restoration of the temple and of Claudius' cult generally represents a more complex and potentially self-contradictory aspect of the response to Nero's legacy than the 'rhetorical sleight of hand' with which Martial and the Flavians attempted to expropriate credit for other Neronian works.⁷ Beyond the apparent contrast with Nero's fecklessness, sufficient explanation for this undertaking has not yet been offered.

We know that Vespasian was adept in his selection and manipulation of earlier precedents, and that he had frequent recourse to the example of Augustus in particular in establishing a new dynasty for himself and his sons, all the while denigrating Nero's memory.⁸ In this case, however, why did he choose to reaffirm, and even actively promote, the divinity of Nero's adoptive father? Such a course of action appears counter-intuitive and perhaps even risky in hindsight. For many years, Nero's position had been linked with that of Claudius. Although these ties began to break down in the latter part of Nero's reign, the Flavian rejection of Nero need not have led to an affirmative celebration of Divus Claudius. The accounts of Tacitus and Suetonius testify to the mixed legacy of Claudius' reign as well as the hostility with which a significant portion of the elite continued to regard his memory.⁹ The new emperor therefore needed a more compelling reason to countermand the judgement passed on Claudius' divinity by Seneca in the *Apocolocyntosis* than the fact that Nero was also thought to have impiously rejected his father's cult. It is the purpose of this chapter, therefore, to reopen the question of the place of Divus Claudius within the broader ideological programme of the Flavian regime.

Templum Divi Claudii

We can begin with the temple. Its status as a Flavian monument is affirmed by Suetonius, who says that the project was begun by Agrippina the Younger, but cancelled by Nero (presumably following his mother's murder) when the structure was torn down, even to its very foundations (*Vesp.* 9.1, cf. *Claud.* 45). Our ability to check this final claim against the archaeology of the temple's remains has not advanced much since the publication of Colini's study of

6 Darwall-Smith (1996) 48–55; Griffin (1994) 312.

7 Coleman (2006) 33.

8 Levick (1999) 73; Hurllet (1993); Ramage (1983) 209–214.

9 Syme (1958) 436–437, 439; Griffin (1990) 482–484; also McAlindon (1957); Taeger (1960) 303.

the topography of the Caelian Hill.¹⁰ It was already clear then, however, that the eastern facade of the temple platform was Neronian in date. This wall, still visible along the modern Via Claudia, was ornamented with a series of niches containing sculptures and fountains. Water was supplied to this *nymphaeum* through a spur off of the Aqua Claudia, also constructed under Nero (as discussed by Frontinus, *Aq.* 2.76).¹¹ The preservation of these features points to some degree of continuity between Nero's designs for this area of the city and the final form of the temple as it was completed by the Flavians.¹²

The current state of the archaeological evidence makes it impossible to assess the full extent of this continuity, but it must also be conceded that Suetonius' claims about Nero demolishing the temple would have made little sense if there had not at least been a significant change in the direction of the construction work carried out on the Caelian. The nature and purpose of these changes is inevitably intertwined with the chaotic dynastic politics of Nero's reign, which further complicate our source tradition. Suetonius' attribution of the temple's initial phase of construction to Agrippina appears to be supported by recent excavations on the western side of the hill that point to two phases of construction under Nero, which would be consistent with an alteration to the plan following Agrippina's death.¹³

In the Tacitean account of Claudius' apotheosis, the historian emphasizes Agrippina's deliberate imitation of Livia, whose exalted position she sought to rival (*Ann.* 12.69.3). One of the honours Agrippina received from the Senate was therefore to be made a priestess of her deified husband, just as Livia had been for Divus Augustus (*Tac. Ann.* 13.2.3, cf. *Cass. Dio* 56.46.1). This evidence is taken more or less at face value by Anthony Barrett, who regards Claudius' deification as 'an important personal triumph for Agrippina', and in some ways a validation of policies she had had a hand in shaping during her time as empress.¹⁴

10 Colini (1944). See also Buzzetti (1993); Darwall-Smith (1996) 50–52; Von Hesberg (2011) 109–110; Coarelli (2019) 279.

11 The arches of this line of aqueduct, approaching the southern edge of the temple platform, appear on fragment 4a of the Severan Marble Plan: Rodríguez Almeida (1981) 63–65; Tucci (2006).

12 Also noted by Raimondi Cominesi in this volume. Barrett (1996) 148 offers similar arguments about the western facade. Cf. Von Hesberg (2011) 110 and Varner (2017) 251, who suggest that the temple was in fact completed under Nero, and Vespasian 'only rededicated the monument', but also as Moormann (2003) 383–384, who argues that construction of the temple was never even begun under Nero.

13 Cioncoloni and Sorella (2019).

14 Barrett (1996) 148; Eck (1993) 51; also Turcan (1998) 165.

While there is no reason to doubt the essential truth of these accounts, I suspect that Agrippina's role in securing Claudius' divinity may also have been played up by Nero and his allies following her death. Agrippina's unprecedented power under Claudius and as dowager empress in the early years of Nero's reign, to which the deaths of prominent figures like Lollia Paulina and Statilius Taurus (under Claudius) and M. Iunius Silanus (in the first year of Nero's reign) could be attributed, proved useful in establishing a rationale for her murder.¹⁵ As Nero abandoned the construction of the temple and moved away from his own stake in Claudius' divinity, the producers of this hostile tradition would have been able to further impugn Agrippina's memory by highlighting the perversity of her attempt to gain personal glory through the deification of a husband whose murder she was also thought to have arranged (Cass. Dio 60.35.2, cf. Tac. *Ann.* 12.66–67, Plin. *HN* 22.92).¹⁶

Certainly Agrippina's connection with the worship of Divus Claudius cannot have had anything to do with Vespasian's decision to complete the temple. If what Suetonius says about Vespasian being in danger during the early years of Nero's reign because of Agrippina's hostility toward the friends of Narcissus (*Vesp.* 4.2) is true, there would have been little incentive for him to honour his persecutor by completing a project that she had begun.¹⁷ More importantly, as Annemarie Ambühl explains in another chapter of this volume, Agrippina's legacy as a preeminent figure within the imperial household (itself a reflection of Livia's unprecedented position under Augustus and Tiberius) was a legacy of the Julio-Claudian sexual politics that the Flavians (at least Vespasian and Titus) purposefully eschewed in their response to Nero's principate.

Agrippina's role in this narrative is ultimately incidental to the problem we must confront in trying to understand why the Flavians chose to revive the cult of Divus Claudius, however. The rationale behind Claudius' deification had not simply been to glorify Agrippina as the widow of a deified emperor;

15 Lollia: Tac. *Ann.* 12.22.1–3; Statilius: *Ann.* 12.59.1; Silanus: *Ann.* 13.1.1–2, Cass. Dio 61.6.4–5, cf. Plin. *HN* 7.58. Cf. Tac. *Ann.* 14.11.1–3, Luke (2013).

16 This is not the place to relitigate the question of whether Claudius was, in fact, murdered: see the discussion in Aveline (2004). Important evidence for Agrippina's association with Claudius' cult is provided by the beautiful basanite sculpture, now in the museum of the Centrale Montemartini, showing Agrippina with her head veiled, apparently performing a sacrifice in her role as *flaminica* of her deified husband: see Talamo (2007); Gradel (2007). Flower (2006) 194 suggests that this statue, which was discovered in pieces on the Caelian, stood in Vespasian's temple of Claudius. Varner (2004) 97–99 is more likely correct in suggesting that it went up under Nero and was subsequently smashed as part of public attacks on Agrippina's memory following her murder (see Cass. Dio 61.16.2a).

17 Nicols (1978) 21–22.

it was also, no doubt more recognizably, about establishing Nero as the son of one.¹⁸ Like Livia before her, Agrippina played an important role in creating this link between father and adoptive son, but the person whose position and authority were ultimately best served by Claudius' divinity was Nero himself.

Nero as *Divi Filius*

Imperial titulature announces Nero as the son of Divus Claudius, a claim to charismatic authority with solid roots in the precedents established by Octavian and Tiberius.¹⁹ At some point, however, Nero lost interest in tying his own image to that of his adoptive father. Unlike Tiberius, who continued to style himself as the son of a god throughout his reign, Nero dropped the words *divi filius* from his titles on the imperial coinage within a few years of Agrippina's death.²⁰ Suetonius (*Ner.* 33.1) states that Nero was openly hostile to Claudius' memory, joking that he had ceased 'to play the fool' among mortals (punning on a mispronunciation of *mōrari*, 'to linger') and overturning his decrees and legal rulings. The biographer does not say anything explicit about abolishing the cult, however, although his comment that Nero enclosed the site of Claudius' funeral pyre (and thus his apotheosis) with nothing but a flimsy earthen wall suggests a measure of disrespect, if not total disregard, for his divinity.²¹ The supposed demolition of the Caelian temple would be consistent with this position, as would the toleration of such explicitly hostile assessments of Claudius' divinity as those found in the *Apocolocyntosis* or Junius Gallio's remark that Claudius

18 Osgood (2011) 247, 250–251. It is worth noting that the empress was herself honoured as [θεᾶς Ἀγριππῆς]-πείνης [μητρ]ῶς ('[goddess] mother Agrippina', *InMag* 158) in some parts of the empire, both during Claudius' lifetime and after his deification (*RPC* I 1017, 2386–2388, 2349, 2685). Note especially *IGR* 4.560, which designates Nero as υἱὸν φύ[σ]ει [θ]εᾶς [Ἀγριππίνης] ('the son born of a goddess [Agrippina]'), on which see Hahn (1994) 186–197; Rose (1997) 47. So far as we know, Agrippina's worship ended with her death and was not revived under the Flavians.

19 *AE* 1968.549; *IGR* 4.1124; *ITralles* 54; *RIC* I² 150–151 nn. 1–7, 10. Rose (1997) 46; Hekster (2009) 104, (2015) 50–51; Hopkins (1978) 202. A full genealogy, listing Nero's maternal grandfather Germanicus and great-grandfather Divus Augustus in addition to Divus Claudius, is typically adduced: *CIL* 2.4719 (= *ILS* 225), *AE* 1995.1633, *CIL* 2.183 (= *ILS* 5640), *CIL* 2.4884, *RIB* 92. Note especially *CIL* 6.40307, in which Nero is presented as part of a family group that also included Agrippina as *divi Cl(audi) uxori* ('wife of deified Claudius').

20 Hekster (2015) 52–53; Levick (1990) 187.

21 Cf. Strab. 5.3.8 (on Augustus' *ustrinum*), with Cass. Dio 56.42.2–4 (on his funeral). Price (1987) 75–76, 93–97; Fishwick (2002) esp. 346–349.

had been hauled up into heaven by a hook (Dio [Xiph.] 60.35.2–4).²² As I have already suggested, Agrippina's close association with Divus Claudius may have been used to paint her as insincere and power-hungry following her murder, a line of attack that could be pursued more effectively as the emperor distanced himself from the cult.

Insofar as these attitudes coalesced into anything resembling a formal policy of denigration, the marginalization of Claudius' divinity under Nero was slow to take form and was never systematically enacted. The inscriptions of the Arval Brethren securely document sacrifices offered to Divus Claudius at the start of the year 60 (*CIL* 6.2042 = *CFA* 28de) and again after Otho became emperor in January of 69 (*CIL* 6.2051 = *CFA* 40), but these records are too fragmentary to say whether or for how long the practice continued during the interval between these dates.²³ In 61, two years after the assassination of Agrippina, Tacitus (*Ann.* 14.31.4) records that the cult was still going strong in Britain, as the extractions used to fund the Temple of Divus Claudius in Colchester became a catalyst for the rebellion of Boudicca.²⁴ Combined with the continued prevalence of references to divine paternity elsewhere in the epigraphic record, this evidence suggests that no move was made to abandon the cult until after Nero's divorce from Octavia in 62, at which point Nero's break with the Claudian legacy was complete.²⁵

Although Nero's status as *divi filius* had disappeared from coins emanating from the imperial mint, Divus Claudius nevertheless continued to appear on the local coinages of Cappadocia and Syria until late in the reign.²⁶ Nero's status as the son of the deified emperor also continues to turn up in inscriptions set up outside of Rome after 62.²⁷ Perhaps the most interesting case is a double statue base from the town of Luna in Campania, which dates to 67 (*CIL* 11.1331 = *ILS* 233). The first dedication begins with Nero's full titles:

22 Osgood (2011) 251–256. I will not deal with the issue of the date of the *Apocolocyntosis* here. The consensus view, elaborated by Nauta (1987), associates it with the *Saturnalia* of 54, shortly after Claudius' death.

23 References to Claudius as a *theos* in the edict of Ti. Julius Alexander (under Galba, *OGIS* 669 = *IGR* 1.1263, 1.26, 27–28, 29) are likewise imperfect evidence for continuity of practice under Nero, but at least demonstrate that his divinity was not altogether forgotten before the Flavians came to power.

24 Fishwick (1972).

25 *CIL* 2. 4888, *CIL* 3.6123, *IRT* 341, *AE* 1999.1397, *AE* 1913.193, *RMD* 4.202 (all datable to 61). Cf. Tac. *Ann.* 14.60–64, Cass. Dio 62.13.1.

26 *RIC* I² 186 nn. 619–622; *RPC* I.3647, 3652–3653; *RPC* I.4122–4123.

27 *RMD* 2.79 (65), *AE* 1969/70.443 (66), *CIL* 11.1331 (67), *CIL* 10.8014 (67–68?).

Imp. Neroni Claudio divi Claudi f. Germ.
 Caesaris n. Ti. Caesaris Aug. pron. divi Aug. abn.
 Caesari Aug. Germ. p. m. tr. pot. XIII imp. XI cos. IIII

For Emperor Nero Claudius Caesar Augustus Germanicus, son of Divine Claudius, grandson of Germanicus Caesar, great-grandson of Tiberius Caesar Augustus, great-great-grandson of Divine Augustus, pontifex maximus, with tribunician power for the thirteenth time, imperator eleven times, consul four times.²⁸

The companion inscription is headed:

Divae Poppaeae Augustae
 Imp. Neronis Caesaris August(i)

For Divine Poppaea Augusta, wife of Emperor Nero Caesar Augustus.

Beneath each of these titles, identical texts in a smaller script identify the sponsor of these dedications as L. Titinius Glaucus Lucretianus, whose full *cursus honorum* as an equestrian administrator is provided, along with an explanation that the monument was erected *ex voto suscepto pro salute Imp. Neronis* ('from a vow undertaken for the well-being of Emperor Nero') which had been pledged in 65, while Glaucus was still serving as *praefectus pro legatus* in the Balearic islands.²⁹

Titinius Glaucus elsewhere credits Divus Claudius with involvement in his elevation to the duumvirate (*CIL* 11.6955 = *ILS* 8902: *primus creatus beneficio divi Claudii*), so it is plausible that some measure of personal devotion lies behind his continued invocation of Claudius' divinity so long after its obsolescence at Nero's court. It must also be noted, however, that this devotion does not portend any alienation from the current emperor. Glaucus' career as a mid-level imperial functionary had continued to advance to new heights under Nero even after the elimination of Agrippina and Octavia. As a local priest of the imperial cult, *flam(en) Romae / et Aug(ustorum?)*,

²⁸ As noted above, n. 19, the tracing of Nero's lineage back to Germanicus, Tiberius, and Divus Augustus is not uncommon in Nero's titulature. In the context of this inscription, it is worth noticing how the use of conventional patronymic formulas obscures the fact that these connections were matrilineal, thereby facilitating the erasure of Agrippina from Nero's dynastic legacy. Unless otherwise noted, translations are my own.

²⁹ On the career, see Demougin (1992) 489–492; Fentress (2003) 58–61. Eck (2010) 137 comments on the self-promotional aspect of the inscription.

Glaucus is likely to have been well informed on current policy regarding the divinity of Nero's closest kin. Such awareness is confirmed by the decision to commemorate the deification of Poppaea, which took place in the same year as the original vow for the emperor's safety (Tac. *Ann.* 16.6.1, cf. 16.21.2). Whether this vow was prompted by the apotheosis of Poppaea itself or a need to advertise loyalty in the aftermath of the Pisonian conspiracy is unclear (although the two issues were not unrelated: see Tac. *Ann.* 16.22.3).³⁰ However one looks at it, the inclusion of the formula *divi Claudii filio* in Nero's titlature can only be interpreted as a gesture of respect intended to bolster the emperor's claim to charismatic *auctoritas*. Whether it would have been received as such does not really matter – this is the ideological work that the emperor's subjects thought Claudius' divinity was supposed to do for Nero.

Divinization and 'Faith'

Glaucus' case is instructive, because one of the primary arguments regularly given for the renewed emphasis on Claudius' divinity under the Flavians is that Vespasian, whose rise to power began with a posting as legionary legate during the conquest of Britain (where he earned triumphal insignia: Suet. *Vesp.* 4.1–2), felt a personal affinity for his former commander-in-chief.³¹ This may well have been the case, although it is worth remembering that Josephus' account of those early campaigns emphasizes the unearned glory that Claudius obtained through Vespasian's hard work (καὶ τῷ πατρὶ Κλαυδίῳ παρέσχε χωρὶς ἰδρωτός ἰδίου θρίαμβον καταγαγεῖν, 'he permitted his [sc. Nero's] father Claudius to celebrate a triumph without sweat of his own', *BJ* 3.5). More to the point, the careers of the Flavians had advanced under Nero as well (and far more spectacularly than Glaucus), yet we do not expect Vespasian to show gratitude for the imperial favour he had received under Nero.³²

Whatever credence one might give to stories about Vespasian nodding off at Nero's recitals (Suet. *Vesp.* 4.4, Tac. *Ann.* 16.5.3), attempting to divine the sincerity of private, affective motivations is not a very useful, let alone reliable, way to explain an emperor's treatment of his predecessors. This is not to say that sincerity of feeling is irrelevant to the question of an emperor's posthumous divinity, however. While Christianizing notions of 'faith' are

³⁰ Cf. Demougin (1992) 492 n. 8.

³¹ Charlesworth (1937) 56; Levick (1990) 190, (1999) 73; Birley (2005) 232–233. Cf. Philostr. *VA* 5.29.2.

³² See Nicols (1978) 22–34; also Levick (1999) 21–25.

best avoided in discussions of the imperial cult, Pliny does emphasize the importance of personal belief when discussing the deification of Nerva in the *Panegyricus*.³³ Specifically, he contrasts Trajan's motivations with those of previous emperors in these terms:

Dicavit caelo Tiberius Augustum, sed ut maiestatis crimen induceret; Claudium Nero, sed ut irrideret; Vespasianum Titus, Domitianus Titum, sed ille ut dei filius, hic ut frater videretur. Tu sideribus patrem intulisti non ad metum civium, non in contumeliam numinum, non in honorem tuum, sed quia deum credis.

Tiberius declared that Augustus was divine, but in order to justify charges of treason. Nero did this with Claudius, but in order to mock him; Titus did this with Vespasian, and Domitian Titus, but one in order to appear as the son of a god, the other as the brother of one. You raised your father to the stars not to terrorize citizens, nor in contempt for the divine, nor for your own honour, but because you believe him to be a god. (Plin. *Pan.* 11.1–2)

For this discussion, the cynical rationales that Pliny ascribes to earlier rulers are just as important as his claims about Trajan's motivation for deifying Nerva. Presaging sentiments that find fuller articulation in the early books of Tacitus' *Annales* (1.73, 4.34), Pliny accuses Tiberius of using Augustus' divinity as a pretext for launching accusations under the *maiestatis crimen* against those who insulted the divinity of his predecessor.³⁴ He then conflates the gist of the *Apocolocyntosis* with the early policy of Nero's reign, saying that Nero only deified Claudius in order to mock him. Finally, he attacks the Flavians for doing what modern historians still typically assume emperors were up to in deifying their predecessors, which is to say basking in the reflected glory of a divine father, or in Domitian's case with Titus, a brother.³⁵

At the end of this unsettling list of dubious motivations, Pliny comes to Trajan, whom he claims had no other motive than the sincere conviction that Nerva was a god. It must be conceded that none of Pliny's explanations can fit what Vespasian was doing in restoring the honour of Divus Claudius except, perhaps, this last one. Seeing as how Trajan also acquired a measure of personal glory through the deification of Nerva (and later his natal father as well), it seems

33 Schowalter (1993) 63–65; Price (1987) 81–82. Cf. Price (1984) 7–15; Fishwick (1987) 33; Gradel (2002) 4–7 and *passim*.

34 See Bauman (1974) 71–85, 99–104.

35 Price (1987) 80; Levick (1990) 187; Gradel (2002) 329–330.

that we should move beyond the question of belief, which even if sincere could still be deployed as ideological cover for other aims.³⁶ The problem persists, therefore. If anything, Pliny's claim that Nero's deification of Claudius had been an act of ridicule makes Vespasian's policy more difficult to understand. Why decide to take seriously what had come to be regarded as an impious joke?

Claudius as *Exemplum*: Emperor and *Divus*

A somewhat more promising way of framing the previous argument is suggested by the so-called *lex de imperio Vespasiani*, the monumental inscription that preserves the latter part of a *lex saturna* through which Vespasian was formally vested with power following the capture of Rome by Flavian armies in late December of 69 (*CIL* 6.930 = *ILS* 244).³⁷ As is well known, this law is arranged into a series of clauses that enumerate the particular powers and prerogatives granted *en bloc* to the new *princeps* at the time of his accession. Most of these clauses also provide specific reference to the individual emperors to whom similar authority had previously been granted, namely Augustus, Tiberius, and Claudius. As we should expect, Nero is not mentioned among these precedents, and neither is Caligula.³⁸ Among the trio of acknowledged imperial predecessors, Claudius is the only one to be cited individually, when in the fifth clause of the surviving tablet (lines 14–16) he is invoked as a precedent for expanding Rome's *pomerium*, a privilege Vespasian would ultimately avail himself of in 75 (*CIL* 6.31538a-c = *ILS* 248, cf. *CIL* 6.1231a-c = *ILS* 213, *Tac. Ann.* 12.23.2).³⁹ Like the censorship that Vespasian and Titus held in 73, this was one of several Claudian innovations revived by the Flavians, which point to his importance as a model for the new regime as they went about asserting their position at the top of the Roman social order.⁴⁰ This exemplary status might also have had something to do with the deference shown to Claudius' divinity, but it cannot in itself explain the policy.

Before we can account for the relationship between Claudius' divinity and his role as a precedent in the Flavian ideology of governance, there is some

36 Bickermann (1929) 30.

37 See, in general, Brunt (1977); Crawford (1996) 549–553.

38 Hurlet (1993) 268; Peachin (2007) 84–85; Osgood (2011) 256, cf. 76. The omission of Galba, who would later be cited by the Flavians as a precedent (González [1986] 153 Table IIIA l. 20), relates to the as-yet unresolved nature of that emperor's memory at the end of the year of four emperors: Gagé (1952); Zimmerman (1995) 60–62; cf. *Tac. Hist.* 4.40.1, *Suet. Galb.* 23.

39 Levick (1999) 71.

40 Griffin (1994) 312–313.

longstanding confusion about the way he is described in this law that needs to be cleared up. As a number of scholars going back to Charlesworth have pointed out, Claudius is not described with the epithet *divus* in the *lex de imperio Vespasiani*, despite the fact that Augustus is consistently described in these terms.⁴¹ This has been taken either as evidence for senatorial opposition to the notion of Claudius' divinity at the start of Vespasian's reign, or as a sign of initial uncertainty and/or ambivalence on the part of the Flavians regarding their plans to renew the cult. While I do not want to diminish the extent to which there were elements in the Senate hostile to both the memory of Claudius and the idea of his worship, this inscription cannot be used as proof of these senators' influence at the time of Vespasian's accession or, for that matter, as any kind of statement about the status of Claudius' divinity at this crucial juncture.

Comparison with Flavian municipal legislation suggests that the omission of the title *divus* in this context is less significant than has sometimes been imagined. Throughout the *tabula Irnitana*, our most extensive example of these laws, we find the same collocation of *Divus Augustus* with (the non-divine) *Tiberius Claudius Caesar Augustus*, generally in limiting clauses that prohibit officials from acting contrary to the laws of the Roman people, *senatus consulta*, and the edicts, decrees, and decisions of previous emperors.⁴² What is remarkable about these legal texts is not the omission of *divus* from the titulature of Claudius, but rather its absence in the names of Vespasian and Titus.⁴³ As we have them, these laws were promulgated under Domitian, and it is impossible to imagine that the emperor who dedicated not only a temple of Vespasian and Titus on the Capitol, but also the *Templum Divorum* in the *Campus Martius* and the *Templum Gentis Flaviae* on the *Quirinal* meant to leave any doubt about the divine status of his father and brother.⁴⁴ In fact, he did not, for whenever these laws specify that someone should swear an oath, he is required to do so not just

41 Charlesworth (1937) 58; Levick (1990) 191; Griffin (1994) 311.

42 González (1986) 153 Table IIIA ll. 17–22: *dum ne quit eorum / omnium, quae supra scripta sunt, adversus leges plebescita senatus- /ve consulta edicta decreta constitutiones divi Aug(usti) [Ti(beri) I]uli Caesa- /ris Aug(usti), Imp(eratoris) Galbae Caesaris Aug(usti), Ti(beri) Claudi Caesaris Aug(usti), Imp(eratoris) Vespasia- /ni Caesaris Aug(usti), Imp(eratoris) Titi Caesaris Vespasiani Aug(usti), Imp(eratoris) Caes(aris) Domitiani / Aug(usti), pontif(icis) max(im)i, p(atris) p(atriciae) fiat*, also 32–37; VA 10–15; IXA 24–28.

43 Cf. González (1986) 153 Table IIIA ll. 1–2: *ex edicto [I]mp(eratoris) Vespasiani Caesaris Aug(usti) Imp(eratoris)ve / T(it)i Caesaris Vespasiani Aug(usti) aut Imp(eratoris) Caesaris Domitiani Aug(usti)*, also 24–25, 48–49, IIIB 1–2. Cf. the *lex Salpensana* (CIL 2.1963 = FIRA I² 23) 6–7, 14–15.

44 Scott (1936) 61–83; Darwall-Smith (1996) 153–178; Tuck (2016) 118–123.

by Jupiter, but by Divus Augustus, Divus Claudius, Divus Vespasianus, and Divus Titus, as well as the *genius* of Domitian himself.⁴⁵

At this stage in the development of Roman ideas about deified emperors, therefore, it appears that legal formulations were essentially consistent with patterns observed in literary texts, for example, those of Tacitus, in which Claudius is only described as *divus* twice: when discussing the invasion of Britain in the *Agricola* (13.3) and when explicitly referring to the operation of his cult in the *Annales* (14.31.4; cf. 12.65.3, 13.5.1).⁴⁶ The deeds of Claudius' principate were sometimes retroactively associated with his posthumously acknowledged divinity (cf. *CIL* 6.1257–1258 = *ILS* 218), but there was nothing pointed about the omission of the title in a non-religious context. In contrast to the extraordinary case of Augustus, whose divinity was invested with so much force that it regularly inserted itself into discussions of the accomplishments of his lifetime, for Claudius, as for Vespasian and Titus, there was a conceptual as well as a legal difference between the *princeps*, whose position other mortals might seek to attain, and the *divus*, whose nature and ideological function was of a substantially different order.⁴⁷ While posthumous divinity might have been regarded as a consequence of virtuous rule (e.g. Plin. *HN* 2.18–19), it was not a prerequisite for inclusion among the canon of imperial predecessors upon whom the Flavians grounded their authority. This is why Tiberius was also invoked as a precedent in the *lex de imperio Vespasiani* and again in the *tabula Irnitana* (along with Galba), despite the fact that he had never been consecrated.⁴⁸

The importance of this distinction between an emperor's mortal *acta* and his posthumous divinity becomes even more pronounced when we consider the decidedly ambivalent legacy of Claudius as *princeps*. This Claudius represented as much a negative exemplum of what to avoid as a positive model for imitation.⁴⁹ Although the Flavians embraced Claudius as a useful precedent

45 González (1986) 156 Table IIIB ll. 40–43: *iurato in con-|tione per Iovem et divom Aug(ustum) et divom Claudium et divom Vespasi-|anum Aug(ustum) et divom Titum Aug(ustum) et genium Imp(eratoris) Caesaris Domitiani | Aug(usti) deosque Penates*, also VB 32–35, VIIA 3–5, VIIIA 18–20, VIIIB 37–39, VIIIC 54–56. Cf. the *lex Salpensana* (*CIL* 2.1963 = *FIRA* I² 23) 30–31 and the *lex Malacitana* (*CIL* 2.1964 = *FIRA* I² 24) 15–19.

46 Charlesworth (1937) 59; Levick (1990) 187. Cf. Ascon. *Sc.* 45 (p. 27 Clark), Suet. *Vesp.* 9.1. Claudius as *divus* occurs more frequently in Pliny the Elder (*HN* 2.99, 3.141, 146, 5.20, 8.37, etc.), but the title is still frequently omitted (cf. 2.92, 3.119, 7.159, etc.), especially in citations of Claudius as an author (5.63, 6.27, 6.31, etc.).

47 Gradel (2002) 332. Cf. Price (1987) 80 on the status of *divi* in Roman inheritance law.

48 *CIL* 6.930 (= *ILS* 244) 2, 5, 20, etc., González (1986) 153 IIIA 19, etc. (quoted above, n. 42).

49 Griffin (1994) 311: 'his reputation was too complex to allow Claudius to become the kind of model that Augustus was'. See especially McAlindon (1957).

for their assertions of imperial power, they generally distanced themselves from the most obvious mistakes of Claudius' reign. Such unpopular features as his overinvolvement in the courts (*Sen. Apocol.* 7.4–5, *Tac. Ann.* 13.4.2), his reliance on freedmen in high-ranking posts (*Sen. Apocol.* 13.2–3; *Plin. HN* 33.134–135, 36.60), and especially the prominence granted to his wives (*Plin. HN* 35.201, *Philostr. VA* 5.32.2) were notably absent from Vespasian's reign.⁵⁰ Once we acknowledge that the Flavians' invocation of Claudius as a source of authority was necessarily partial and selective, it also becomes clear that their interest in the divinity of Claudius needs to be understood on its own terms, rather than as part of a wholesale programme of Claudian restoration.

Divus Claudius and the Imperial Cult

To go further, I propose that the restoration of the temple and cult of the divine Claudius was ultimately motivated less by any perception of that emperor's individual merit than by the importance of the category to which he belonged. As one of only three deified Caesars and the only one who was not a member of the *gens Julia*, Divus Claudius provided above all else an important precedent for the eventual apotheosis of members of the Flavian dynasty. To put this in terms that Pliny might have used, Vespasian honoured the deified Claudius so that he too might become a god. The prospect of deification would have been of obvious importance as a source of charismatic authority for the Flavians, who lacked the prestige of familial *nobilitas* enjoyed by the Julio-Claudians and Nero in particular.⁵¹ The expansion and elaboration of the imperial cult in the provinces continued under Vespasian in sites ranging from Baetica to Gallia Narbonensis to Africa Proconsularis to Lycia.⁵² The trajectory led to apotheosis for Vespasian, and the eventual proliferation of cult activity surrounding the emperor and his family witnessed during the reign of Domitian.⁵³ The restoration of Claudius' cult and temple in Rome marked a renewed commitment to the importance of emperor worship, both as an institutional safeguard for the stability of the empire as a whole and as a source of inherent authority for the emperor himself.⁵⁴

50 Griffin (1994) 314; Levick (1999) 83, 132.

51 Taeger (1960) 329–330, cf. *Suet. Vesp.* 7.2. See also Scott (1936) 3–17; Hopkins (1978) 232.

52 Fishwick (1965) 155–167, (1987) 221, 241, 257–258; Deininger (1965) 28–31.

53 Scott (1936) 61ff.; Taeger (1960) 334, 338–354; Friesen (1993); Elkins (2014); Laird (2015) 147–165; Tuck (2016) 118–123.

54 In this regard, there may be a potential connection between Domitian's *Templum Gentis Flaviae*, which was built on the Quirinal on the former site of his father's house (*Suet. Dom.* 1),

Scholars have come to think of posthumous deification as a routine feature of the transmission of imperial power from one ruler to the next.⁵⁵ In this manner we adopt the perspective of the third-century historian Herodian, who prefaced his account of the apotheosis of Septimius Severus with the statement ἔθος γὰρ ἐστὶ Ῥωμαίοις ('it is a custom among the Romans', 4.2.1, cf. App. *B Civ.* 2.148). As a matter of fact, however, this tradition was only really institutionalized under the Flavians.⁵⁶ Of the five Julio-Claudian emperors, only Augustus and Claudius were deified, and, as we have already seen, serious doubts about the status of Claudius' divinity had been raised before the end of Nero's reign. The 'long year' 68–69 introduced three additional occupants of the imperial office, but all of these remained mortal to posterity. At the time of Vespasian's accession, therefore, it was by no means inevitable that the imperial cult would take the form it did over the course of the next century and a half, with the imperial *divi* worshipped alongside the *numen* and/or *genius* of the living emperor, and forming what in hindsight might be regarded as a kind of 'canon' of meritorious rulers.⁵⁷ The apotheosis of Vespasian provides the critical link for establishing this chain, and it in turn rested upon the precedent provided by Nero's father, Claudius.

Last Words

Like Claudius' apotheosis, the deification of Vespasian presents a number of challenges to the modern interpreter.⁵⁸ One with particular relevance for the present discussion is the meaning of Vespasian's deathbed pronouncement, *vae*, [...] *puto deus fio* ('Alas, [...] I think I am becoming a god', Suet. *Vesp.* 23.4,

and the temple of Claudius, which Coarelli (2000) suggests (on the basis of Suet. *Claud.* 6.2 and *Tib.* 48) stood on the site of Claudius' former residence on the Caelian.

55 Hopkins (1978) 203; Beard, North, and Price (1998) 209–210, 253; Gradel (2002) 287–288.

56 Hekster (2009) 104.

57 Bickermann (1929) 2–4, 28–31; Price (1987) 87–91; Peppel (2003) 72–75. My omission of the deified female members of the imperial household from this narrative is admittedly arbitrary: see Hahn (1994); McIntyre (2016) 3–4, 93–109. First-century *divae* differed from *divi* in important ways, however, insofar as they did not have their own temples in Rome and, with the notable exception of Diva Augusta (Livia), their worship did not typically outlast the reign of the emperor who deified them. Reliance on patronymic formulas such as *divi filius* also meant that a woman's divinity did not contribute to the prestige of her heirs in the same way that a deified father did.

58 The most important of these is perhaps the problem of its date. A delay of several months, established by Buttrey (1976), may have had something to do with Titus' decision to abolish prosecutions for *asebeia* (Dio [Xiph.] 66.19.1–2): see Gallia (2019).

Dio [Xiph.] 66.17.3), which appears to confirm his plans for posthumous divinization.⁵⁹ Manfred Schmidt has called attention to the echo of the final words ascribed to Claudius in the *Apocolocyntosis*: *vae me, puto, concacavi me* ('Alas, I think I crapped myself', 4.3, cf. Tac. *Ann.* 12.67.1).⁶⁰ In light of what Suetonius reveals about the disease that led to Vespasian's demise (*Vesp.* 24, cf. Dio [Xiph.] 66.17.1), the allusion can be read as a form of gallows humour about diarrhoea, which of course represented one of the leading causes of death in premodern Europe (as it remains today in places without access to clean drinking water and advanced medicines).⁶¹ The scatological register of this joke is in keeping with the biographer's observations about Vespasian's sense of humour, which Suetonius describes as *etsi scurrilis et sordidae, ut ne praetextatis quidem verbis abstineret* ('sometimes clownish and dirty, since he did not even refrain from lewd words', *Vesp.* 22). Schmidt nevertheless argues that the statement was spuriously attributed to the dying emperor by someone who wished to disparage Vespasian's apotheosis by connecting it with Seneca's mockery of Claudius' divinity. But perhaps we should not be so suspicious of a self-deprecating joke.⁶² If Vespasian's statement can be accepted as authentic, it offers a remarkably clear-sighted expression of the point I have attempted to articulate in this chapter, revealing that it was possible to embrace Claudius' importance as a model for imperial apotheosis while simultaneously acknowledging even the most execratory elements of the anti-Claudian tradition. In so doing, Vespasian and his sons managed to preserve and transform the complicated legacy of Nero's divine stepfather.⁶³

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59 Scott (1936) 18–19; Taeger (1960) 330; Fishwick (1965) 155; Hopkins (1978) 216.

60 Schmidt (1988); followed by Levick (1999) 197–198.

61 Harper (2017) 84.

62 Even Augustus could joke about his own divinity: Suet. *Aug.* 71.3, Quint. *Inst.* 6.3.77. Price (1984) 114–116.

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3 The Flavians and Their Women: Rewriting Neronian Transgressions?

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Abstract

The chapter focuses on the role played by the imperial women in the definition of Flavian vs. Neronian Rome by comparing and contrasting the literary depictions of the mothers, wives, daughters, and mistresses of the three Flavian emperors with their Neronian counterparts. However, as these are mostly retrospective constructions by post-Flavian writers (Pliny the Younger, Tacitus, Suetonius), the opposition between Flavian and Neronian tends to collapse. While Vespasian and Titus are characterized as positive figures through their dealings with women, Domitian is construed as a 'bad' emperor like Nero. In depicting the Flavian emperors' relations with women, the sources thus rewrite Neronian transgressions in both senses, by overwriting them with appropriate behaviour as well as by repeating and perpetuating them.

Keywords: historiography; biography; discourse analysis; women; gender stereotypes

Introduction

Habet hoc primum magna fortuna, quod nihil tectum, nihil occultum esse patitur; principum uero non domus modo sed cubicula ipsa intimosque secessus recludit, omniaque arcana noscenda famae proponit atque explicat. [...] Multis inlustribus dedecori fuit aut inconsultius uxor adsumpta aut retenta patientius: ita foris claros domestica destruebat infamia, et ne maximi ciues haberentur, hoc efficiebatur, quod mariti minores erant.

This is the main characteristic of high status, that it allows nothing to be hidden from view; and in the case of emperors it opens not only

their houses but even their bedrooms and most intimate retreats, and it reveals and displays every secret for rumour to learn. [...] For many famous men were put to shame because they married a wife without proper consideration or kept her too long due to indulgence. In this way their disgrace deriving from family matters destroyed their public and political reputation, and their unsuccessful role as husbands prevented them from being regarded as the best among the citizens.

(Plin. *Pan.* 83.1 and 4)¹

With this cautionary tale Pliny the Younger addresses the emperor Trajan in his *Panegyricus*, delivered in the Senate in 100 CE. However, as Pliny duly adds, Trajan does not need such warnings at all, for he himself sets the example for the exceptional modesty and self-restraint exhibited by his wife Pompeia Plotina and his sister Ulpia Marciana (*Pan.* 83–84).² In praising his addressee's irreproachable public as well as private conduct and contrasting it (albeit only by implication) with the notorious transgressions of his predecessors, Pliny exhibits literary strategies of panegyric and elite self-fashioning, stereotypes of gender and class, and political biases that are typical of Latin imperial literature. At the same time, with his reference to rumour (*fama*), Pliny betrays his audience's interest in the private lives of the emperors and their families, a preoccupation observable also in the writings of contemporary historians and biographers such as Tacitus and Suetonius. The quote from Pliny may thus serve as a good point of departure for an inquiry into the ways in which the female members of his predecessors' dynasties were represented and how this reflects upon the overarching topics of this volume, especially the construction and almost immediate deconstruction of a dichotomy between 'Neronian' and 'Flavian' in Flavian and post-Flavian writers. While the ideological repercussions of the transition from Nero, the last Julio-Claudian emperor, to the Flavians have attracted a fair amount of scholarly debate, the role played by the imperial women (or rather their constructed images) in this process has been somewhat underrated compared to the attention paid to the emperors themselves.³ The present chapter therefore continues the

1 All translations of Latin texts are my own.

2 On the image of Trajan's wife and sister and his other family members in Pliny's *Panegyricus* and in visual propaganda, see Roche (2002).

3 On the Flavians' programmatic self-distancing from Nero, see e.g. Leithoff (2014) 134–147. Varner (2017) focuses on Nero's visual and monumental legacy in Flavian Rome (cf. also the contributions by Moormann and Raimondi Cominesi in this volume). Generally on the retrospective 'invention' of Nero from Flavian times onwards, see Schubert (1998) and the relevant

focus on the ‘family matters’ that were introduced in Gallia’s study (in this volume) related to the Flavians’ complex negotiations with the legacy of Nero’s deified stepfather Claudius (for example, the dynastic importance of Agrippina as the widow of one emperor and the mother of another), but it turns the focus more decidedly from the male family members to the female ones and their roles in complicating any simple opposition between the Julio-Claudian and the Flavian dynasties.

The present chapter does not aim at a historical reconstruction of the actual roles fulfilled by the imperial women, but rather at an evaluation of their discursive functions as constructed by various media.⁴ For the present purpose, iconographic testimonies such as portrait busts, statues, and coins that reflect their images in official discourse will be left aside, although in the light of the opposition construed by the (later) literary sources, it might be illuminating to ask whether the Flavians actually wanted to create a new programmatic image of their female family members in order to distance themselves from Julio-Claudian practice.⁵ Instead, this chapter will focus on the literary depictions by comparing and contrasting the mothers, wives, daughters, and mistresses of the three Flavian emperors with their Neronian (and other Julio-Claudian) counterparts.⁶

contributions in edited volumes on Nero, especially Ripoll (1999) in Croisille, Martin, and Perrin (1999); Rubiés (1994) on Tacitus and Barton (1994) on Suetonius in Elsner and Masters (1994); Hurley (2013) on Nero’s biographers in Buckley and Dinter (2013); Pausch (2013) on Suetonius in Walde (2013); Grau (2017) on Nero in Roman historical writing in Bartsch, Freudenburg, and Littlewood (2017); cf. Gowing (1997) on Nero in Cassius Dio. See also below, n. 9.

4 For representations of the imperial women in public media, see Wood (1999) and Alexandridis (2004); specifically on the Flavian women, cf. Alexandridis (2010) and Wood (2016). For their (more or less) official roles in imperial patronage (or matronage), see Hemelrijk (1999) and some of the contributions in Kunst (2013).

5 On the contrary, the public representation of the female members of the imperial family seems to have evolved more or less continuously from the Julio-Claudians to the Flavians, although with a temporary setback under Vespasian. Cf. Alexandridis (2010) 223: ‘The Flavian women’s public image becoming (at least ideologically) a normality thus attests to the progressing institutionalization of the principate.’ For similar developments regarding the representation of imperial women on coins, see Hekster (2015) 111–159.

6 Comprehensive treatments of the ‘empresses’ of Rome, or rather the ‘first ladies’ and other female members of the imperial family, include Temporini-Gräfin Vitzthum (2002), Burns (2007), and Freisenbruch (2010). Among monographic studies of individual Julio-Claudian women, cf. Barrett (2002) and Kunst (2008) on Livia, and Roller (2018) on her connections with allied royal women; Fantham (2006) on Julia the Elder; Eck (1993), Barrett (1999), and Ginsburg (2006) on Agrippina the Younger; Holztrattner (1995) on Poppaea (with an appendix on Acte); Strong (2016) 80–96 on imperial concubines such as Acte and Caenis. Studies of Nero’s wife Octavia (and of Poppaea) mainly focus on the pseudo-Senecan historical drama *Octavia*, which will not be considered here. On the women at Trajan’s court, see also Temporini (1978), on Hadrian’s wife

Yet such an investigation encounters several problems, first of all a problem connected to the nature of the sources. Due to a lack of contemporary testimonies (with the partial exception of some Greek epigrams from the Neronian period and poems by Statius and Martial),⁷ the texts we are dealing with are mostly retrospective constructions of both Neronian and Flavian women by later writers active under yet another generation of emperors, the so-called adoptive emperors.⁸ As the passage from Pliny quoted at the outset of this chapter illustrates, the strategies by which the new Flavian dynasty distanced itself from their predecessor Nero were repeated after the assassination of Domitian, when the last Flavian emperor came to figure as the *bête noire* from the perspective of Nerva and especially Trajan.⁹ When interpreting these post-Flavian texts, we therefore have to take into account a double process of construction and deconstruction, whereby Flavian responses to Nero's Rome have been reflected, filtered, and possibly distorted to some degree through Trajano-Hadrianic responses to such Neronian and Flavian issues, an inevitable methodological problem that will also be addressed by Schulz (this volume, Chapter 11) in her contribution on the historiographical and biographical sources.

Moreover, as recent studies of gendered stereotypes in Latin historiography and biography have convincingly argued, the portraits of the imperial women in Tacitus and Suetonius mainly serve to characterize their male counterparts as 'good' or 'bad' emperors, respectively, depending on the level and success of control they exercise over the female members of their households.¹⁰ Another critical factor is the part played by the women in

Sabina Augusta, see Brennan (2018). Specific bibliographical references for individual Flavian women will be given below.

7 For (indirect) references to contemporary Julio-Claudian women in the writings of Seneca the Younger, see Balasa (2002). Plutarch, too, has a few notes on imperial women in his *Lives* of Galba and Otho.

8 Generally on the literature under Nerva, Trajan, and Hadrian, see König and Whitton (2018).

9 On the use of Nero as a model for Domitian, see the contributions in Bönnisch-Meyer et al. (2014), especially Nauta (2014) on the concept of the 'bad emperor', Müller (2014) on Nero and Domitian as Hellenistic 'Eastern-style' monarchs, and Schulz (2014) on Cassius Dio's characterization of both emperors as transgressors; see also Schulz (2016, 2019), and her contribution to this volume, as well as the monographs by Cordes (2017) and Rebeggiani (2018, esp. 38–92 on reflections of Domitian's reception of Nero in Statius' *Thebaid*); cf. also Charles (2002) and Nauta (2010). On internal parallels between Suetonius' *Lives*, especially the ones of the 'bad' emperors, see Charles and Anagnostou-Laoutides (2010a); Hurley (2014); Power (2014); Hulls (2014).

10 For the literary and cultural stereotypes shaping the representations of the imperial women, see Fischler (1994). Critical discourse analyses of the representation of Agrippina in Tacitus can be found in Späth (2000a, 2000b, 2012), Ginsburg (2006, esp. 112–132 on Agrippina as *saeva noverca*, *dux femina*, and sexual transgressor with imputations of incest and adultery), and Santoro L'Hoir

the transmission of imperial power from one generation to the next, as is evident in Agrippina's crucial role as wife of Claudius and mother of Nero.¹¹

Such biases inherent in the ancient narratives have to be taken into account in any scholarly inquiry. Still, the aim of the present study is not a rehabilitation of the allegedly 'wicked' imperial women (as has been attempted for the 'bad' emperors Nero and Domitian),¹² let alone the recovery of the historical truth behind their images, but rather a discourse analysis which discusses on a meta-level the leitmotifs and stereotypes employed (sometimes in a self-conscious way) by the ancient writers and the functions they assume in defining the distinctions between the Julio-Claudian and the Flavian dynasties. In this context, 'transgressions' are to be understood as deviations from the discursively constructed 'norms' (especially related to sexual behaviour) that are stated explicitly or implicitly in the ancient texts.¹³ Therefore, as a first step the opposition constructed in the literary sources between the Neronian and the Flavian women will be analysed as part of the strategy of representing the Flavians as a fresh start after the reign of Nero and the year of the four emperors. But this construction is quickly deconstructed again, as the opposition between 'Flavian' and 'Neronian' collapses in hindsight.¹⁴ Soon the stereotypes associated with Nero's and other Julio-Claudians' transgressive relations with women return again. While

(2006, esp. 111–195 on *muliebris impotentia* and the rhetorical topos of the adulterer-poisoner); cf. also Foubert (2010); Milnor (2012); Panoussi (2018); Dirksen (2020); Düsenberg (2020). On the roles of imperial wives in Suetonius, see Riemer (2000) and Chong-Gossard (2010) esp. 307–320.

11 On the representation of this function in Tacitus, see Klaassen (2014); cf. also the contribution by Gallia in this volume.

12 Among attempts to free Nero from the prejudices of his later reception and to place his 'enactments' of his personality and his power in his own cultural context, see Champlin (2003); Sonnabend (2016); Merten (2016); Drinkwater (2019). For critical reassessments of Domitian's character and his political agenda, see Jones (1992); Southern (1997); Gering (2012); Morelli (2014); cf. also the special issue of *Illinois Classical Studies* (*Undamning Domitian: Reassessing the Last Flavian princeps*) edited by Augoustakis, Buckley, and Stocks (2019). On interdependencies between Nero's and Domitian's images, see above, n. 9.

13 See Gilhaus et al. (2020) on the complex negotiations concerning norms and their transgressions in ancient societies, including the contribution by Düsenberg (2020) on transgressive women in Tacitus and, more specifically, Steenblock (2013) on the tight connections between sexual morality and political stability drawn in Republican and Augustan literature. Cordes (2017) esp. 2 applies a different definition of transgression in the sense of an ambivalent crossing of boundaries, especially between the human and the divine realms, that can be used in a positive sense in panegyrics of emperors as well as in a negative sense in invectives against tyrants (on specific connections with the topic of youth, cf. also her contribution to this volume); sexual transgressions are thereby treated only in passing.

14 Various issues of continuity with and dissociation from Nero in the Flavian age and generally the problematics of periodization are discussed in the volumes edited by Boyle and Dominik

Vespasian and Titus are characterized mainly as positive figures through their dealings with women, the last Flavian emperor, Domitian, is construed as a 'bad' emperor in analogy to the last Julio-Claudian emperor Nero, not in the least through his problematic relations with his wife and his alleged incestuous relationship with his niece.¹⁵ In depicting the Flavian emperors' relations with women, our sources thus rewrite Neronian transgressions in both senses, by overwriting them with seemingly appropriate behaviour as well as by repeating and perpetuating their negative patterns.

Neronian Women and the Year of the Four Emperors: Transitions

Readers of Tacitus and Suetonius (along with the pseudo-Senecan *Octavia* and Cassius Dio, respectively his epitomator Xiphilinus) are familiar with Nero's problematic and even transgressive relations with the women in his life, and many modern scholars and writers have constructed their own, more or less sensational narratives based on these sources.¹⁶ It is interesting to see how the same texts have been received in widely differing ways, from misogynist reproductions of the ancient male writers' prejudices to feminist readings fascinated by the powerful imperial women of ancient Rome.¹⁷ Yet in the end it is important to realize that the power ascribed to them (especially in Tacitus' imaginative account) ultimately derives from the

(2003; with Boyle's introduction, 1–67), Kramer and Reitz (2010), and Zissos (2016; cf. the editor's introduction, 1–14).

15 Cf. Winterling (2018) 61–63 on sexual perversion (especially incest) ascribed to the 'bad emperor' in defamatory sources. Charles and Anagnostou-Laoutides (2010a) focus on Suetonius' depiction of Domitian's sexual depravity; they argue that the motifs of 'wife-stealing, passive sexual conduct [...] and incest' (175) link him with Caligula and Nero, while the tyrannical topos of hypocrisy manifest in his 'deceitful attempts to repress sexual misconduct' (173) connects him with Tiberius.

16 On Nero's women in the historical and literary record, see the recent overviews of Alexandridis (2016) and Barrett (2017); cf. Mordine (2013) on the imperial household. The commented collection of sources by Barrett, Fantham, and Yardley (2016) also contains sections on Nero's mother, Agrippina, (55–76) and on the emperor's wives (171–189). For studies of individual Neronian women, see above, nn. 6 and 10.

17 On the problematic issue of female political power, see the volumes edited by Kunst and Riemer (2000), Kolb (2010) and Bielman Sánchez, Cogitore, and Kolb (2016), as well as some of the contributions in Feichtinger and Kreuz (2010); cf. Bielman Sánchez (2019) on power couples. Note also the difference between the suggestive title of the US edition of Freisenbruch (2010), *Caesars' Wives: Sex, Power, and Politics in the Roman Empire* (cf. Barrett [1999]), and the less sensational title of the UK edition, *The First Ladies of Rome: The Women Behind the Caesars*. Vout (2007) focuses on the male emperors' erotic power and their male or female objects of desire.

male emperors, and that with a few notable exceptions these women were not empowered to take their own decisions concerning political matters or even their own private lives.¹⁸ Unfortunately, Agrippina's memoirs, which could have painted a different picture (or perhaps not?), have not been transmitted.¹⁹

The basic outline of the Neronian story starts with Agrippina the Younger, the power-obsessed mother who after murdering her husband-uncle Claudius helps her young son Nero to the throne and does not refrain from incestuous advances in order to keep her influence on him. But to no avail, as she is finally killed by her own son. Nero's wives and mistresses undergo similar fates. To mention only the most notorious examples: his first love, the freed-woman Claudia Acte, is drawn into the power play between Agrippina and her son but then disappears from the literary record, only to reappear as one of Nero's last faithful followers at his burial. In contrast, the political marriage to his stepsister Octavia was doomed from the start, ending with her exile and death. His second wife, Poppaea Sabina, whom, according to one version, he had stolen from Otho, he allegedly killed by kicking her while she was pregnant. Finally Antonia, another daughter of Claudius and a sister of Octavia, who refused to marry Nero after Poppaea's death, was executed under the pretence of a conspiracy, while Nero killed the husband of his third and last wife, Statilia Messalina, in order to marry her, not to mention his extravagant marriages to his 'wife' Sporus (alias Sabina) and his 'husband' Pythagoras (according to Tac. *Ann.* 15.37.4) or Doryphorus (according to Suet. *Ner.* 29).

In this narrative, parricide, incest, adultery, and other sexual transgressions constitute an interesting mixture, and these are exactly the ingredients that will make a reappearance (if sometimes only *ex negativo*) in the biographies of Nero's successors. In the context of the transition from Nero's reign to Vespasian during the year of the four emperors, the role of women is not very prominent, but probably not by coincidence, they mainly pop up in ominous connection to Nero.

In Tacitus' *Histories*, despite the good examples set by loyal mothers and wives as announced in the prologue (*Hist.* 1.3.1), women play a much less

18 In a recent manifesto, Mary Beard (2017) critically reviews the problematic relation between women, power, and free speech in the public (male) perception from antiquity to date (although with no direct reference to the Roman imperial women). Cf. the revealing comment by Tacitus on Agrippina's loss of influence upon Nero, that 'nothing is as unstable as the reputation of a power that does not rest on its own strength' (*nihil rerum mortalium tam instabile ac fluxum est quam fama potentiae non sua ui nixae*, Tac. *Ann.* 13.19.1). Cf. below, n. 22.

19 Cf. Hemelrijk (1999) 186–188.

conspicuous role than in the *Annals*, yet here, too, they function as signposts in the turbulent phase of transition from Nero to the Flavians. The affair involving Otho as Nero's rival in love for Poppaea Sabina is evoked in order to demonstrate Otho's 'likeness to Nero' (*Neronis ut similem*, *Hist.* 1.13.3–4).²⁰ After becoming emperor, Otho has the statues of Poppaea officially resurrected in memory of his love for her; as a (perhaps consciously intended) side effect this evokes the memory of Nero, too, whereupon he is greeted as 'Nero Otho' by the populace (*Hist.* 1.78.2). Tacitus also notes that Otho lusted for the sexual transgressions that were common under Nero's reign and was encouraged by his freedmen and slaves to usurp power in order to indulge his desires for 'the luxury of Nero's court, adulteries, multiple marriages and all the other lusts fit for kings' (*aulam Neronis et luxus, adulteria matrimonia ceterasque regnorum libidines*, *Hist.* 1.22.1). In this context it does not come as a surprise that Nero's former '*magistra libidinum*', Calvia Crispinilla, was protected by Otho, as well as by Galba and Vitellius (*Hist.* 1.73).

Vitellius himself is characterized negatively, too, through his indirect association with Nero, who had mixed private and political matters in his crimes, which were connected to his love life (*Hist.* 2.63–64). First, Vitellius has Dolabella murdered, the hated soon-to-follow new husband of his ex-wife, Petronia, which was received 'with great indignation and considered a (bad) first sign of the new principate' (*magna cum invidia noui principatus, cuius hoc primum specimen noscebatur*, *Hist.* 2.64.1).²¹ This impression is confirmed by the 'unwomanly' cruelty of his brother's wife, Triaria, who (from the perspective of a later reader who can compare both works) is depicted as a second 'quasi-male' Agrippina by subtle verbal parallels with the *Annals*: Triaria is 'fierce beyond a woman' (*ultra feminam ferox*, *Hist.* 2.63.2), just like Agrippina and her alleged 'fierceness' and 'lack of restraint' (*contra ferociam Agrippinae*, *Ann.* 13.2.2; *Agrippina ferociae memor*, *Ann.* 13.21.2; *ferox atque impotens mulier*, *Suet. Ner.* 28.2).²² The negative example of Triaria is then contrasted with Vitellius' own wife, Galeria, and his mother,

20 For the different versions of this story, see below, n. 46.

21 There might also be a parallel with the murder of Agrippa Postumus at the outset of Tiberius' reign, where the involvement of Tiberius himself and Livia was suspected, 'the first crime of the new principate' (*primum facinus noui principatus*, *Tac. Ann.* 1.6.1). See below, the section 'Some Conclusions and Perspectives'.

22 Cf. the 'quasi-male' character of Agrippina's 'rule', for 'everything was obedient to a woman' (*cuncta feminae oboediebant, [...] adductum et quasi uirile seruitium*, *Tac. Ann.* 12.7.3). On the implications of this terminology, see Ginsburg (2006) 37–38; Späth (2012) 441, 447–448, 453; Milnor (2012) 469–470; Düsenberg (2020) 146–150. Not by coincidence, the quotes from the *Annals* frame Agrippina's rise in Book 12 and the beginning of her fall in Book 13.

Sextilia, who are characterized as paragons of modesty and ‘old-fashioned virtue’ (*antiqui moris*, *Hist.* 2.64.2).²³ The contrasting images of Vitellius’ female family members thus sketch an ambiguous picture of his principate that could develop in different directions.

It seems very likely that also in the remainder of the *Histories* Tacitus highlighted the role of the imperial women in order to mark the rise and fall of the Flavian dynasty, just as he does when treating the Julio-Claudian dynasty in the *Annals*, although this is impossible to prove due to the loss of most of the *Histories’* Flavian books. From this perspective, the denigrating remark about Domitian ‘playing the emperor’s son through sexual transgressions and adulteries’ (*stupris et adulteriis filium principis agebat*, *Hist.* 4.2.1) right at his first rise to power after Vitellius’ downfall, even if his behaviour is partly excused by his young age at the time, may have functioned as a teaser to introduce a topic that was to be elaborated further in the later books.

A similar picture emerges from Suetonius. In the *Life of Galba* (5.1), the marriage theme is introduced first in a mainly positive sense, for Galba, after losing his wife Lepida and two sons by her, abstained from remarrying. But even while his wife was still alive, he was stalked by the freshly widowed Agrippina, who tried to seduce him so shamelessly that she was slapped by Lepida’s mother in front of the gathered matrons. Although this anecdote plays a long time before Galba was to become emperor and even before Agrippina’s marriage to Claudius, the memory of Nero’s mother is planted early in the *Life* as a sign that Galba was probably not to bring the change Rome was hoping for.

With Otho, the associations with Nero and his women become much more prominent, just as in Tacitus. After reporting rumours that Otho had wormed his way into Nero’s court by pretending love for an influential but old freedwoman and even may have had homosexual relations with Nero himself (*Otho* 2.2), Suetonius has his dubious role in Nero’s murder of Agrippina and his love affair with Nero’s mistress Poppaea Sabina (*Otho* 3) mark the beginning of his career, while the suicide note addressed to his fiancée, Statilia Messalina, Nero’s widow, signals its end (*Otho* 10.2). Otho is thus characterized as Nero’s successor not only in politics but also in love. Vitellius, on the other hand, who had had intimate relations with the emperors from Tiberius to Nero (*Vit.* 3–5), is associated with Neronian kin-murdering habits through the rumour that he murdered his own son,

23 In contrast, Cassius Dio (64.4.2) paints a very different picture of Galeria’s arrogance mirroring that of her husband, when she derides the alleged lack of luxury in Nero’s *Domus Aurea*.

whom he had by his first wife, Petronia (*Vit.* 6.1); he thus even surpasses Nero, who had his young stepson, Rufrius Crispinus, Poppaea's son, killed (*Ner.* 35.5).

So both in Tacitus and in Suetonius, the turbulent transitional period from Nero's death to the rise of the Flavian dynasty is marked by uneasy reminiscences of Nero, especially of his transgressive relations with women and the concomitant crimes, ranging from adultery to murder of kin.²⁴

Flavian Women and Neronian Transgressions under Vespasian and Titus: It's All Different Now

It is up to the first Flavian emperor, Vespasian, to really make a new start, coming as he does from a relatively obscure family without potentially risky ties to the Julio-Claudians.²⁵ The only time that a woman from Nero's family, in this case Agrippina, is mentioned by Suetonius, Vespasian is immediately distanced from her, as it is stated that during the early reign of Nero he feared her, because of her influence over her son and her lasting hatred for his former friend Narcissus (*Vesp.* 4.2). Vespasian's wife, Flavia Domitilla, plays the part of the good Roman matron, who bears his three children and otherwise is not subject to gossip (*Vesp.* 3).²⁶ Interestingly enough, Suetonius quite neutrally glosses over the facts that she had once been the 'mistress' (*delicatam olim*) of a Roman knight some time before her marriage to Vespasian, and that Roman citizenship was only awarded to her after a lawsuit brought by her father, a clerk fulfilling a low position in the hierarchy.²⁷ Such matters that potentially might reflect badly upon Vespasian himself would have gained much more attention in *Lives* of other emperors, where they could serve to confirm an overall negative image. But in this case, the distance of Vespasian's wife from the high society associated with Nero's court works to her and her husband's advantage.

24 From a different perspective, Leithoff (2014) 141–145 reaches similar conclusions by studying the responses to Nero exhibited by his immediate successors; according to her, the continuities with Nero visible in the policies of Otho and Vitellius show that the distancing strategy adopted by the first Flavian emperor, Vespasian, was by no means the only strategy available to deal with Nero's legacy; cf. also Gering (2012) 62–70. On the literary sources, see Carré (1999) and Duchêne (2014).

25 On the Flavians' origins and their rise, see recently Vervaeke (2016).

26 Cf. the dictum attributed to Julius Caesar when divorcing his wife Pompeia, that Caesar's wife must be above suspicion (Plut. *Caes.* 10.9).

27 Differing solutions to the issue of Domitilla's citizenship are proposed by Barrett (2005) and by Charles and Anagnostou-Laoutides (2010b).

Likewise, Vespasian's former mistress Caenis, a freedwoman of Antonia the Younger, stays decently in the background, and when after his wife's death, which occurred before he became emperor, Vespasian openly resumes their relationship, she is treated as a respected member of the family, although not officially as his wife, even during his principate (*Vesp.* 3).²⁸ This at least neutral, if not outright positive description (*paene iustae uxoris loco*: 'having almost the rank of a lawful wife') stands in implicit contrast to Nero's aspirations to marry the freedwoman Claudia Acte. In that case Suetonius' wording implies a strong negative judgement: *Acten libertam paulum afuit quin iusto sibi matrimonio coniungeret, summissis consularibus uiris qui regio genere ortam peierarent* ('He almost went so far as to take the freedwoman Acte in lawful marriage, by producing as witnesses former consuls who swore falsely that she was born from a royal family', *Ner.* 28.1). In face of the outrageously false claims concerning Acte's lineage, the issue of Flavia Domitilla's citizenship, too, appears as a minor matter.

The black sheep of the Flavian family is Domitian, who refused Caenis' 'usual welcoming kiss upon her return from Histria and offered her his hand instead', which reflects badly on *his* 'antisocial character, which he had exhibited from his youth', not on her position as 'his father's concubine' (*ab iuuenta minime ciuilibus animi [...] Caenidi patris concubinae ex Histria reuersae osculumque ut assuerat offerenti manum praebuit*, Suet. *Dom.* 12.3). Also Vespasian's other amorous relations, which he took up after Caenis' death, in no way threaten his reputation as an emperor but are the subject of anecdotes and jokes (Suet. *Vesp.* 21–22).

With Vespasian's elder son and successor Titus, at first it seems as if it would be a different story²⁹:

Praeter saeuitiam suspecta in eo etiam luxuria erat [...], nec minus libido propter exoletorum et spadonum greges propterque insignem reginae Berenices amorem, cui etiam nuptias pollicitus ferebatur [...], denique propalam alium Neronem et opinabantur et praedicabant. at illi ea fama pro bono cessit conuersaque est in maximas laudes neque uitio ullo reperto et contra uirtutibus summis.

Besides cruelty, he was also suspected of a luxurious lifestyle [...], and not to a lesser extent also of lustful behaviour because of his swarms of

28 For the sources on Caenis, cf. Charles and Anagnostou-Laoutides (2012) and Tatarkiewicz (2012).

29 On the characteristics of Suetonius' *Life of Titus* compared to other *Lives* and the accounts of Tacitus and Cassius Dio, see Tatum (2014).

male prostitutes and eunuchs as well as because of his well-known love for queen Berenice, to whom he was even said to have promised marriage. [...] Eventually public opinion openly declared him to be a second Nero. But this reputation changed for the better and turned into the greatest praise, as no vice was found in him but, on the contrary, the highest virtues. (Suet. *Tit.* 7.1)

Through his debauched lifestyle and especially his sexual escapades, the young Titus is linked so explicitly with Nero that it is feared that he would turn out to be 'another Nero' (*alium Neronem*).³⁰ In the case of the eunuchs this can be read as a reference to Nero's relations with Sporus (Suet. *Ner.* 28). In the case of Titus' concubine Berenice, however, the analogy seems less straightforward, for the parallels with Nero's futile attempts to legitimize his planned marriage to the freedwoman Claudia Acte are not very close.³¹ As we learn from Tacitus (who in *Hist.* 2.2 gives a similar sketch of Titus' evolution from his youthful exuberance to his moderation as an emperor), Flavius Josephus, and Cassius Dio, Julia Berenice was a queen from the Hellenized Herodian dynasty, who together with her brother Herodes Agrippa ruled the client kingdom of Judaea and supported Vespasian and Titus during the Jewish revolt; she possessed Roman citizenship and had lived together with Titus after the death of his first wife, Arrecina Tertulla, and the divorce from his second wife, Marcia Furnilla (Suet. *Tit.* 4.2).³²

But Titus' plans to marry his oriental mistress did not find favour with the Romans (cf. Cass. Dio 66.15.4). These hostile reactions against an oriental queen recall a famous Julio-Claudian precedent: Julius Caesar's love affair with the last Ptolemaic queen, Cleopatra, and the rumours that he planned to rule together with her as a king after transferring the capital of the Roman Empire to Alexandria (Suet. *Iul.* 79.3), not to mention Mark Antony's even more 'un-Roman' involvement with her. Berenice's visit(s) to Rome and her cohabitation with Titus might have resulted in the hitherto unprecedented marriage of a

30 For more extensive discussions of the varying positive and negative encodings of youth in literary and visual portraits of Nero, Titus, and Domitian, see the contributions by Wolsfeld and Cordes in this volume.

31 Might Poppaea's Jewish connections have played a role here, too, which are mainly attested by Josephus Flavius (cf. Edelmann-Singer [2013])? Tacitus notes that 'her dead body was not cremated as would have been the Roman custom, but embalmed with spices after the fashion of foreign royalty before it was laid to rest in the family tomb of the *gens Iulia*' (*corpus non igni abolitum, ut Romanus mos, sed regum externorum consuetudine differtur odoribus conditur tumuloque Iuliorum infertur*, Tac. *Ann.* 16.6.2).

32 On Julia Berenice, see Ambühl (2016) 167–175 and Wilker (2016) with overviews of the history of scholarship; cf. also Murison (2016) 83–86.

Roman emperor to an eastern and moreover Jewish queen, but ‘immediately he sent Berenice away against his will and against hers’ (*Berenicen statim ab urbe dimisit inuitus inuitam*, Suet. *Tit.* 7.2). The literary associations evoked by the tale of the separation of Titus from Berenice, a tragic romance that was to reach its full bloom only in the early modern age, cannot be discussed in detail here, but in any case it is remarkable that Suetonius gives an almost poetic touch to the unwilling farewell by a subtle intertextual allusion to the famous line uttered by Aeneas at his last meeting with Dido in the underworld, ‘against my will, my queen, I leave your shore’ (*inuitus, regina, tuo de litore cessi*, Verg. *Aen.* 6.460), itself a near-quotation from Catullus’ rendering of Callimachus’ *Coma Berenices*, where a lock of hair is separated against its will from the head of another queen Berenice (*inuita, o regina, tuo de uertice cessi, / inuita*, Catull. 66.39–40).³³ Through such subtle literary reminiscences Berenice is associated with seductive eastern queens like Dido or Cleopatra, which casts Titus in the role of the Roman leader who has to resist the temptation for the sake of Rome. By renouncing his love for Berenice he thus refuses to become a second Nero, but rather turns out a second Julius Caesar, who likewise ‘after receiving Cleopatra in Rome sent her back’ (*quam denique accitam in urbem [...] remisit*, Suet. *Iul.* 52.1) – or even a second Augustus.

While in Suetonius such an implication is conveyed only covertly by the allusion to Virgil’s Aeneas, who can in some ways be read as an *alter ego* of Caesar-Augustus, the comparison is made explicit in Cassius Dio. Shortly after mentioning Titus’ change of behaviour upon taking over the emperorship from his deceased father, which is confirmed by his final dismissal of Berenice (Cass. Dio 66.18.1), he compares Titus’ brief reign to Augustus’ long rule that ensured the popularity of both emperors, for Augustus became milder with time, whereas Titus might have lost his good reputation if he had ruled longer (66.18.4–5).³⁴

In this way the Flavian dynasty, at least as far as the reign of Titus is concerned, is presented as a return to the ‘good old times’ under Augustus, a conceit that Suetonius stresses by means of a ring composition marking

33 For the implications of the intertextual allusion, see, recently, Anagnostou-Laoutides and Charles (2015); Macrae (2015); Ambühl (2016). Wilker (2016) 318 is more sceptical regarding an association of Berenice with Cleopatra via Dido. However, the point here might rather be Titus’ association with Augustus via Aeneas. On the contrary, according to Tzounakas ([2020] esp. 109), similar echoes of Virgil’s *Aeneid* in Tac. *Hist.* 2.2–4 link Titus with Julius Caesar as a more problematic role model in order ‘to “correct” the Flavian emphasis on the Augustan precedent’.

34 On the implicit and explicit comparisons of Titus with Augustus in Suetonius and Cassius Dio, see Tatum (2014), who shows that Suetonius’ judgement of Titus is more favourable than Dio’s.

off the *Lives* of the Flavian emperors (Book 8).³⁵ At the beginning of the *Life of Vespasian*, he states programmatically:

Rebellionem trium principum et caede incertum diu et quasi uagum imperium suscepit firmavitque tandem gens Flavia, obscura illa quidem ac sine ullis maiorum imaginibus sed tamen rei p. nequaquam paenitenda, constet licet Domitianum cupiditatis ac saevitiae merito poenas luisse.

The empire, which for a long time had been unstable and almost wavering through the rebellion and murder of three emperors, was finally taken over and stabilized by the Flavian family, admittedly an obscure one and without any portraits of ancestors. Still, the state did not have to regret it at all, although it is not to be doubted that Domitian deserved the punishment he suffered for his lust and cruelty. (Suet. *Vesp.* 1.1)

Thus the generally positive picture of the Flavian house is marred only by the decline of its third and last representative. The implied move from the depraved last Julio-Claudian to a new, better generation of emperors is repeated at the end of the *Life of Domitian*, which is at the same time the very last sentence of the *Lives of the Caesars*:

ipsum etiam Domitianum ferunt somniasse gibbam sibi pone ceruicem auream enatam pro certoque habuisse beatiorem post se laetioremque portendi rei publicae statum, sicut sane breui euenit abstinentia et moderatione insequentium principum.

Domitian himself is said to have dreamed that a golden hump grew on the back of his neck, and he was sure that this portent announced a happier and more prosperous condition of the state after his death; and indeed after a short time this came true thanks to the self-control and moderation of the succeeding emperors. (Suet. *Dom.* 23.2)

So the cycle starts all over again, at the same time laying bare the ideological mechanisms that inform the construction of Suetonius' *Lives* with its two parallel cycles of dynastic rise, decline, and fall.³⁶

35 Leithoff (2014) 176–214 studies the Flavians' responses to Augustus' principate from a historical perspective.

36 A bad omen pointing to a (fictive) third cycle of *Lives* might be planted right at the beginning of the *Life of Domitian* with the 'rumours that the young Domitian was "buggered" by his later

Flavian Women and Neronian Transgressions under Domitian: It's All the Same Again

With Suetonius' portrayal of Vespasian and Titus and their sober relations with women, the ghosts of Nero's transgressive women apparently had been banned. This is soon to change again with Domitian. A first disquieting sign comes near the end of the *Life of Titus*, when Suetonius reports speculations about the one thing that Titus regretted having done in his life:

quidam opinantur consuetudinem recordatum quam cum fratris uxore habuerit, sed nullam habuisse persancte Domitia iurabat, haud negatura si qua omnino fuisset, immo etiam gloriatura, quod illi promptissimum erat in omnibus probris.

Some people believe that he remembered the love affair he had had with his brother's wife, but Domitia swore solemnly that they did not have sexual relations, and she would not have denied it, if there had been any such relation at all; yes indeed, she would have boasted of it, as she was absolutely ready to do with respect to all her sexual transgressions. (Suet. *Tit.* 10.2)

The motifs of adultery, incest, and the rivalry between brothers that might even lead to fratricide evoke uncanny memories of Nero, in particular the murder of his stepbrother Britannicus and the allegations of incest with his own mother. In Suetonius' *Life of Domitian*, these motifs reappear more overtly in connection with Domitian's relations with his wife Domitia Longina and his niece Julia, Titus' daughter.³⁷ Suetonius paints a dark picture that stands in stark contrast to the positive image of the Flavian dynasty in the encomiastic poetry by Statius and Martial, where its living (including Domitian's beloved *puer delicatus* and freedman Flavius Earinus) as well as its deceased and deified members all live together in harmony in the palace and the temple of the *gens Flavia*.³⁸

successor Nerva, too' (*nec defuerunt qui affirmarent, corruptum Domitianum et a Nerua successore mox suo*, Suet. *Dom.* 1.1). This parallels the ominous link to Nero at the beginning of the *Life of Otho* (*Otho* 2.2; cf. *Vit.* 3.2); see above, the section 'Neronian Women and the Year of the Four Emperors: Transitions'. However, such rumours are also reported by Suetonius in the case of Julius Caesar and Octavian (*Aug.* 68).

37 For critical reviews of the sources concerning Domitian's wife and niece, see Vinson (1989) and Levick (2002), a paper which assumes the imaginative form of a speech delivered by Domitia herself.

38 On Domitian and his family in contemporary panegyric poetry, especially Statius' *Silvae* (e.g. 1.1.94–98) and Martial's epigrams (e.g. 4.3, 9.1, 9.20, 9.34; see also below, n. 51), see Nauta

In Suetonius, Domitian's wife Domitia Longina, far from being a paragon of virtue supporting Domitian's moral reforms and his revival of the Augustan marital laws (*Dom.* 8.3), is depicted as the bad, adulterous wife, who in the end even turns into the husband-murdering wife (*Dom.* 14.1), evoking again the Neronian paradigm of Agrippina. In the passage quoted above, the truthfulness of her claim that she did not have an incestuous affair with her brother-in-law is paradoxically confirmed not by her chastity, but on the contrary by her self-proclaimed reputation for sexual transgressions. According to Suetonius and Cassius Dio, his wife's 'passionate love affair with the actor Paris' caused Domitian to divorce her and to murder Paris and other people associated with him (*eandem* [*sc. uxorem Domitiam*] *Paridis histrionis amore deperditam repudiauit*, Suet. *Dom.* 3.1, cf. 10.1; Cass. Dio 67.3.1). However, 'after a short while he took her back because he could not bear to be separated from her, pretending that the people demanded it' (*intraque breue tempus inpatiens discidii quasi efflagitante populo reduxit*, Suet. *Dom.* 3.1).

Whatever the real (dynastic and/or political) reasons behind the divorce and the reconciliation may have been,³⁹ the passionate affair of the emperor's wife with an Egyptian actor of pantomimes called Paris (from the elite Roman point of view a disreputable profession often associated with Eastern 'decadence')⁴⁰ almost sounds too good to be true, for it inevitably evokes the mythical paradigm of the Trojan prince Paris stealing Helen, the wife of king Menelaus. Interestingly, such an association seems to have been current already at the time or shortly afterwards, to judge from a passing remark in Suetonius on the prominent victims of Domitian's cruelty: the emperor is said to have executed the son of the senator Helvidius Priscus, who had been put to death by his father, Vespasian, on the suspicion that he had criticized his divorce from Domitia in a play (perhaps a mime or an Atellana) on the myth of Paris and his first wife, Oenone (Suet. *Dom.* 10.4).⁴¹ Moreover, the fate of the actor Paris may recall that of his Neronian

(2002); Lorenz (2002); Leberl (2004). On Earinus (cf. Stat. *Silv.* 3.4; Mart. 9.11–13, 9.16–17, 9.36) and other *pueri delicati* from the Julio-Claudian and Flavian periods, see Pollini (2003); Vout (2007) 52–212 (on Sporus, Earinus, and Antinous); Charles and Anagnostou-Laoutides (2010a) 184–186.

39 On the 'dynastic principle' and the problem of succession under Domitian, see Gering (2012) 100–116.

40 On the profession of actors at Rome and their (alleged) influence on emperors and affairs with imperial wives (cf. Messalina's and Poppaea Sabina the Elder's affairs with the pantomime Mnester), see Leppin (1992) 60–61, 67–70, 117–119, 261–262; on the topicality of such charges against imperial ladies, see Vinson (1989) 439–445.

41 'He also sentenced to death Helvidius the son for allegedly having criticized his divorce from his wife under the mask of Paris and Oenone in a play brought to the stage' (*occidit et Heluidium*

homonym Lucius Domitius Paris, a freedman of Neros' paternal aunt Domitia Lepida. According to Tacitus (*Ann.* 13.19–22), Agrippina accused Domitia of 'staging' a political intrigue against her with the help of this actor in order to get rid of her as a rival in influence over Nero.⁴²

Besides such possible indirect Neronian resonances of Domitia's alleged affair with the actor Paris, the charges of adultery levelled against an imperial wife and resulting in a divorce – although not in the death of the woman in question (an option at least considered by Domitian according to Cass. Dio 67.3.1) – evoke Julio-Claudian paradigms in a more direct manner: Claudius' openly adulterous wife Messalina as well Nero's wife Octavia, who was 'put to death on shamelessly false charges of adultery' (*occidit sub crimine adulteriorum adeo inprudenti falsoque*, Suet. *Ner.* 35.2; cf. Tac. *Ann.* 14.60.2–3).⁴³ But whereas Nero, according to Tacitus, was forced by 'the people's many and open protestations' (*crebri questus nec occulti per uulgum*) to at least pretend that he had 'called his wife Octavia back home, regretting the disgraceful act' (*his *** tamquam Nero paenitentia flagitii coniugem reuocarit Octauiam*, Tac. *Ann.* 14.60.5),⁴⁴ Domitian finds himself exactly in the reverse situation,

filium quasi scaenico exodio sub persona Paridis et Oenones diuortium suum cum uxore taxasset, Suet. *Dom.* 10.4). It is not entirely clear how a political allegory or a criticism construed by a suspicious emperor (Bartsch [1994], 78–79 with 237–238 n. 19 and 240 n. 37; on political criticism in early imperial Atellana cf. Manuwald [2011] 177) would have worked in this particular case. Did Domitian ironically play the part of Paris here, who repudiated his wife Oenone for Helen? However, the identification of Helen with Julia Titi is by no means as obvious as suggested by Jones (1992) 187, for in Suetonius' narrative Domitian's affair with his niece is mentioned much later (*Dom.* 22) and is not connected to his divorce from and reconciliation with Domitia as in Cassius Dio (67.3.2). It might therefore seem easier to identify the mythical Paris with the actor Paris who 'stole' Domitia alias Helen (cf. Gallia [2012] 129 with n. 7), and Domitian with Helen's cuckolded husband Menelaus (see below, n. 45) – but who was to play Oenone's part then? Moreover, the audience might be reminded of the poignant fact that Domitian himself had 'stolen' Domitia from her former husband and was thus a kind of Paris himself.

42 'Now she stages a play as it were through the actor Paris' (*nunc per [...] histrionem Paridem quasi scaenae fabulas componit*, Tac. *Ann.* 13.21.3). This Paris was a favourite of Nero's (Tac. *Ann.* 13.20.1; cf. 22.2 and 27.3), only to be put to death by him a few years later out of professional jealousy (Suet. *Ner.* 54; cf. Cass. Dio 63.18). For the sources on Paris I and II, see Leppin (1992) 270–275.

43 See Holztrattner (1995) 55–125 for the various sources on Octavia's fall; Tacitus' account in *Ann.* 14.60–64 and the ways in which it evokes sympathy for Octavia are discussed by Murgatroyd (2008).

44 The precise wording is lost due to a lacuna in the text, so that Nero's remorse might be framed as a rumour. In Suetonius, 'the people's protests against the divorce' combined with the fact that they 'did not refrain from insults' seem to have had the reverse effect, for as a reaction Nero 'banished Octavia on top of that' (*improbante diuortium populo nec parcente conuiciis etiam relegauit*, Suet. *Ner.* 35.2).

taking back an openly adulterous wife by pretending to obey ‘the people’s wishes’ (*quasi efflagitante populo*, Suet. *Dom.* 3.1).⁴⁵ Thus his act of mercy (or infatuation) is tarnished by an echo of Nero’s crime.

Even more clearly, the circumstances under which Domitian had ‘taken Domitia away to marry her while she was still the wife of Aelius Lamia’ (*Domitiam Longinam Aelio Lamiae nuptam etiam in matrimonium abduxit*, Suet. *Dom.* 1.3; cf. *post abductam uxorem*, 10.2) recall several Julio-Claudian precedents. The most recent among them is Nero’s marriage to Poppaea, which involved stealing her not from one but from two men, her former husband Rufrius Crispinus and her lover Otho⁴⁶:

item Poppaeam Sabinam tunc adhuc amicam eius, **abductam** marito demandatamque interim sibi, nuptiarum specie recepit nec corrupisse contentus adeo dilexit ut ne riualem quidem Neronem aequo tulerit animo.

Also Poppaea Sabina, who was at that time still Nero’s mistress after she had been taken away from her husband and entrusted in the meantime to him [*sc.* Otho], he accepted under the pretext of marriage, and not contenting himself with seducing her, he loved her so much that he could not even calmly put up with Nero as his rival. (Suet. *Otho* 3.1)

Ultimately of course, this practice evokes Augustus’ own marriage to Livia, whom he ‘took away at once from her husband Tiberius Nero even while she was pregnant’ (*statim Liuiam Drusillam matrimonio Tiberi Neronis et*

45 Cf. the ‘people begging’ in Cassius Dio 67.3.2 (δηθεντος του δήμου). According to Suetonius, Domitian, ‘when bringing his wife back home after the divorce, proclaimed that he had called her back to his divine couch’ (*in reducenda post diuortium uxore edicere reuocatam eam in puluinar suum*, *Dom.* 13.1). Besides posing as a god, might Domitian also have stylized himself as a second Menelaus, who forgives his wife Helen after the death of Paris and the Fall of Troy and takes her back home with him? In any case, a precedent for such mythological self-fashioning was set by Nero, who consciously presented himself on stage as an Oedipus and an Orestes in order to defend his (alleged) incest and his matricide, as Champlin (2003) 84–111 argues.

46 While Suetonius’ version agrees with the one found in Tacitus’ *Histories* (1.13.3), the *Annals* (13.45–46) have a different version, according to which Poppaea was actually married to Otho as her second husband when the affair with Nero started; cf. Holztrattner (1995) 8–39; Devillers (2008). In the chapter on Nero’s wives in the *Life of Nero*, Suetonius passes over the circumstances of Nero’s marriage to Poppaea, but mentions instead that Nero killed the husband of his third wife, Statilia Messalina, in order to take possession of her (Suet. *Ner.* 35.1); according to Tacitus (*Ann.* 15.68.3), however, Nero has him killed because of his recent marriage to Statilia, who already was Nero’s mistress at that time. Domitian, too, has Aelius Lamia killed *after* marrying his wife Domitia, supposedly because of some innocent jokes he made about the affair (Suet. *Dom.* 10.2).

quidem praegnantem abduxit, Suet. *Aug.* 62.2; cf. 69.1),⁴⁷ not to mention the wife-stealing habits of Caligula, who according to a tradition reported by Suetonius (*Calig.* 25.1) himself adduced the examples of Augustus and Romulus' rape of the Sabine women.⁴⁸ Likewise, the rumours that Domitia Longina took an active part in the conspiracy to murder her husband (Suet. *Dom.* 14.1) inevitably recall Agrippina's murder of her husband Claudius, although in Domitia's case, the motive could not have been the securing of her son's succession, for the couple did not have any surviving children.⁴⁹

Among Domitian's evil deeds against his own family, Suetonius dwells especially on his incestuous love affair with Julia, the daughter of his brother Titus, whom he had refused to marry when she was still a virgin because he was devoted to his wife Domitia at that time:

non multo post alii **conlocatam** corruptit ultro et quidem uiuo etiam tum
Tito. mox patre ac uiro orbatam ardentissime **palamque** dilexit, ut etiam
causa mortis extiterit coactae conceptum a se abigere.

But shortly afterwards, when she had been married to another man, he seduced her himself, and indeed while Titus was still alive. Then, after

47 Cf. Tacitus' sample of criticisms levelled against Augustus after his death, among them domestic matters: 'Nero's wife taken away and the high-priests consulted as a sham whether the marriage was lawful if she had conceived but not yet given birth' (*abducta Neroni uxor et consulti per ludibrium pontifices an concepto necdum edito partu rite nuberet*, *Ann.* 1.10.5). In his obituary of Livia, Tacitus leaves open whether she herself consented with the abduction: 'Then the Caesar, who desired her beauty, took her away from her husband (it is unclear whether against her will or not), in such a haste that he did not even grant her the time to give birth but brought her into his own home while she was pregnant' (*exin Caesar cupidine formae aufert marito, incertum an inuitam, adeo properus, ut ne spatium quidem ad enitendum dato penetibus suis grauidam induxerit*, *Ann.* 5.1.2).

48 'He took away with him Livia Orestilla, who was marrying C. Piso, [...] right from the wedding banquet and proclaimed the next day that he had found a marriage for himself after the example of Romulus and Augustus' (*Liviam Orestillam C. Pisoni nubentem [...] statimque e conuiuio abduxisse secum ac proximo die edixisse matrimonium sibi repertum exemplo Romuli et Augusti*, Suet. *Calig.* 25.1). On the ambiguity of Augustus' morality in Suetonius' *Augustus*, especially in relation with the female members of his own family, that also sets a precedent for subsequent *Lives*, see Langlands (2014), and on the political resonances of such abduction stories, see Strunk (2014).

49 On Livia as another precedent, see below, the section 'Some Conclusions and Perspectives'. In late antique sources such as Aurelius Victor (*Caes.* 11.7) and the *Epitome de Caesaribus* (11.11), Domitia's participation in the conspiracy is linked to her love for the actor Paris, suggesting personal revenge as a motive. For repeated narrative patterns in the assassination scenes of Julius Caesar, Caligula, and Domitian in Suetonius, see Ash (2016), who, however, does not discuss rumours about husband-murdering wives.

she had lost her father and her husband, he loved her passionately and openly, so that he even caused her death by forcing her to abort a child she had conceived of him. (Suet. *Dom.* 22)

In Suetonius, such incestuous relations within the imperial family take up a good old Julio-Claudian tradition. Caligula is said to have had sexual relations with his three sisters (Suet. *Calig.* 24), among them Drusilla, whom ‘soon after her marriage to the former consul Lucius Cassius Longinus he abducted and treated openly as his lawful wife’ (24.1: *mox Lucio Cassio Longino consulari conlocatam abduxit et in modum iustae uxoris propalam habuit*). The same emperor spread a rumour about Augustus’ incestuous relationship with his own daughter Julia, from which his own mother Agrippina the Elder allegedly was born (*Calig.* 23.1). An even more notorious case in point are Agrippina the Younger’s marriage to her uncle Claudius (Suet. *Claud.* 26.3) and the incestuous overtones of her relationship with her son Nero (Suet. *Ner.* 28.2; cf. Tac. *Ann.* 14.2). In comparison with Ptolemaic sibling-marriage, such incestuous relations might be seen as a means to mark the imperial family off as a self-contained unit with divine associations (following the model of Jupiter and Juno), but from the Roman point of view, and especially from the perspective of senatorial writers, they serve to denigrate the ‘bad’ emperors.⁵⁰ In Domitian’s case, the allegations of incest with his niece therefore are likely to be constructions by later authors in order to corroborate their negative image of the last Flavian emperor.⁵¹

Once again this strategy may be reinforced by an implicit association with Nero, who is said to have caused the death of his pregnant wife, Poppaea (Suet. *Ner.* 35.3), just as Domitian is blamed for Julia’s death.⁵² Moreover,

50 Müller (2014) 308–309 sees anti-tyrannical stereotypes at work here rather than a programmatic assimilation to Hellenistic endogamy on the part of Domitian himself.

51 So Vinson (1989). Besides Suet. *Dom.* 22, cf. also Juvenal (2.29–33), Pliny the Younger (*Ep.* 4.11.6), who draws a cynical contrast with Domitian’s cruel punishment of the Vestal virgin Cornelia because of her alleged incest (cf. Gallia [2012], 97–106), and Cassius Dio (67.3.2). Charles and Anagnostou-Laoutides (2010a) 183–184, too, take the paragraph on Domitian’s moral reforms (Suet. *Dom.* 8.3) as a starting point for their analysis of Domitian’s ‘sexual hypocrisy’ in Suetonius, who may have drawn an implicit parallel between the punishment of Vestal virgins mentioned there and Domitian’s incest with his niece. Some scholars (e.g. Garthwaite [1990]) have read Martial’s two epigrams on the recently deified Julia from his sixth book (6.3 and 6.13) as covert attacks meant to unmask Domitian’s hypocrisy in the context of a cycle of epigrams on his moral reforms and marital laws, which, however, is highly speculative (cf. the discussion in Nauta [2002], 430–436; more sceptical Jones [1992] 38–40; cf. also Grewing [1997] 86; Lorenz [2002] 152–162; Leberl [2004] 285–288, 306–310).

52 Note also the false charge used by Nero as a pretence to banish and eventually kill Octavia, that she had ‘out of a bad conscience aborted a child conceived in an adulterous affair’ (*abactos partus conscientia libidinum*, Tac. *Ann.* 14.63.1).

Domitian's improvised funeral (Suet. *Dom.* 17.3) shows clear verbal echoes of Nero's funeral (Suet. *Ner.* 50). In both cases the emperor's nurses play an important role, and while at Nero's funeral his former beloved Acte is present, Domitian's ashes are secretly mingled with those of Julia in the temple of the *gens Flavia*.⁵³

So especially through the motifs of wife-stealing tyrants, adulterous and husband-murdering wives, and incestuous relationships within the imperial family, the last Flavian emperor, Domitian, is linked closely with Nero and the other 'bad' Julio-Claudians, coming round full circle after the more promising start with the first two Flavians. It is no surprise then that another motif associated with Nero's reign especially in Tacitus and Suetonius also comes to full bloom again, namely 'parricide and murder' (*parricidia et caedes*, Suet. *Ner.* 33.1). Domitian's political murders of his cousins Flavius Sabinus (Suet. *Dom.* 10.4), Julia's husband, and Flavius Clemens (Suet. *Dom.* 15.1; cf. Cass. Dio 67.14.1–2), who was married to the daughter of Domitian's sister Flavia Domitilla, fit this pattern well. So Suetonius quite literally deconstructs the *gens Flavia* in the course of the *Life of Domitian*, as its members are killed off one by one, not in the least because of their (self-) destructive relations with the women of the imperial family.

Some Conclusions and Perspectives

From the passages discussed above it should have become clear that these depictions of the Neronian and Flavian women in (mainly) post-Flavian writers are not direct reflections of historical reality, but rather discourse models that employ literary patterns, gender stereotypes, and political agendas in order to construct highly biased versions of history.⁵⁴ Such

53 Domitian's funeral: 'His nurse Phyllis cremated his corpse [...] at her suburban estate on the Via Latina, but the remnants she secretly laid to rest in the temple of the *gens Flavia* and mingled them with the ashes of Julia, Titus' daughter, whom she had raised, too' (*cadaver eius [...] Phyllis nutrix in suburbano suo Latina uia funeravit sed reliquias templo Flaviae gentis clam intulit cineribusque Iuliae Titi filiae, quam et ipsam educarat, commiscuit*, Suet. *Dom.* 17.3). Nero's funeral: 'His nurses Egloge and Alexandria together with his concubine Acte deposited his remnants in the family tomb of the *gens Domitia*' (*reliquias Egloge et Alexandria nutrices cum Acte concubina gentili Domitiorum monumento condiderunt*, Suet. *Ner.* 50).

54 It might also be worthwhile (although inevitably a matter of speculation) to investigate the fictional female characters in Neronian and Flavian poetry and their possible interconnections with the historical imperial women. Among the topics that have gained much attention recently is the ideology of motherhood in early imperial literature; cf. Augoustakis (2010), McAuley (2016, esp. 28–52 for possible interactions between history and literature from the Augustan to the

typological correspondences and contrasts structure the narrative of the Julio-Claudian dynasty through internal parallels and cross-references, and the resulting matrices of good or bad behaviour by male and female characters can then also be transferred upon the subsequent dynasties.⁵⁵ Prominent examples are charges of adultery brought against female members of the imperial family that result in their banishment or execution, from Augustus' daughter and granddaughter, the elder and the younger Julia, to Messalina, Octavia, and Domitia Longina. Likewise, the alleged involvement of the emperor's wife in complots surrounding her husband's death and the choice of a successor starts right from the rumours that Livia herself may have had a hand in Augustus' death and the murder of his potential heirs Lucius and Gaius Caesar and Agrippa Postumus, in order to secure the succession of her son Tiberius.⁵⁶ This pattern is then applied to Agrippina the Younger and, once again, Domitia Longina. Ironically enough, Trajan's wife Pompeia Plotina, who in Pliny's *Panegyricus* is stylized as a paragon of virtue, as we have seen at the outset of this chapter, is accused in later sources, such as Cassius Dio (69.1.2–4), of having tampered with Trajan's testament and having thus secured the succession of her favourite Hadrian, with whom she is even said to have been in love.

Such analogies also work in the reverse direction, as interpretative models applied to the Flavians may have been projected back onto the Julio-Claudians, notably in Tacitus' *Annals*, which were written after his *Histories*.⁵⁷ A comparative analysis of the representations of Flavian and

Flavian periods), and several contributions in Hackworth Petersen and Salzman-Mitchell (2012) and Sharrock and Keith (2020). The problematics of family relationships in Latin imperial epics, too, might be read in the light of Julio-Claudian and Flavian dynastic politics: cf. Dominik (1994) 176–179; Bernstein (2008) 18–20; Manioti (2016; with the editor's brief remarks, 4–6); Rebggiani (2018) 72–84. Specifically on gender and civil war in Flavian literature, see Ginsberg and Krasne (2018; with the editor's summary, 17–18), and especially Keith (2018) 302–303. On (non-imperial) women in Flavian Rome, see Van Abbema (2016).

55 Hausmann (2009) studies such internal cross-references in Tacitus' *Annals* Books 1–6 and 11–12 on Tiberius and Claudius as a means to guide reader responses, among others, through the stereotyped characterization of female characters. On structural parallels between the 'tragedies' of Agrippina and Octavia as well as on a bigger scale between the books on Tiberius and Nero, cf. also Seng (2013). On the 'parallel lives' of Julio-Claudian women in Tacitus, see also Foubert (2010); for Agrippina as 'a more corrupt version of Messalina' in 'a narrative that dramatizes the decline of empire', cf. Panoussi (2018) esp. 222; for Livia as a 'prototype' of Agrippina, cf. Dirksen (2020).

56 Cf. Tac. *Ann.* 1.3 and 1.5–6 and especially the phrase 'a mother bearing heavily on the state, a stepmother bearing heavily on the house of the Caesars' (*gravis in rem publicam mater, gravis domui Caesarum nouerca*, 1.10.5).

57 In the case of Plotina just discussed, Temporini (1978) 120–125 and 150–159 sceptically reviews the hypothesis that Tacitus may have modelled Livia's involvement in the death of Augustus

Neronian imperial women is thus complicated by the fact that the picture of the Neronian (and indeed all the Julio-Claudian) women has largely been shaped by the same writers who also treated the Flavian emperors in retrospect. While the stock motifs associated with the imperial women, such as social status derived from male relatives and marriage versus adulterous sexual relationships or divorce, remain largely the same, by subtle manipulations and re-evaluations of single elements within this framework Tacitus and Suetonius manage to impress their ideologically shaped images upon the reader.⁵⁸ The 'good' (and posthumously deified) emperors Vespasian and Titus are explicitly or implicitly contrasted with Nero, whereas Vespasian's immediate predecessors and then again Domitian are linked with Nero and his women through parallel motifs and verbal echoes.

To some degree these literary constructions may actually reflect the individual Flavian emperors' different responses to Nero's Rome, for it is remarkable that, either by biographical coincidence or by conscious choice, the first two Flavians, Vespasian and Titus, had no wife at their side during their emperorship, and that their female companions Caenis and Berenice seem to have been pushed more or less to the background. It is under Domitian that we witness a full return to and further evolution of the Julio-Claudian programme of promoting the living or deceased and divinized female members of the imperial family.⁵⁹ While Domitian himself thus seems to have reappropriated some Neronian precedents in the official representation of his female family members, post-Flavian writers such as Tacitus and Suetonius in the reverse sense reinforce their negative image of Domitian through a reappropriation of the negative patterns associated with the 'bad' Neronian women.

and the succession of Tiberius after the events surrounding Trajan's death, which he witnessed himself.

58 For such a biased selection of topics in the case of Suetonius, see Chong-Gossard (2010) and Riemer (2000).

59 Following the pattern set by the official divinization of Livia as Diva Augusta under Claudius (preceded by Caligula's deification of his sister Drusilla), Nero had his wife Poppaea and their young daughter Claudia deified after their deaths (the highly interesting papyrus fragment P. Oxy. LXXVII 5105 contains the remains of a Greek hexameter poem on the apotheosis of Poppaea; cf. Schubert [2011]; Gillespie [2014]; Capponi [2017]). Among the Flavians, it was Domitian who had his mother Domitilla (for this identification rather than as Domitian's sister, see Wood [2010]; *contra* Gering [2012] 75–76), his prematurely deceased son by Domitia and his niece Julia consecrated; cf. Alexandridis (2010) 223 and Bechtold (2011) 242–251. Generally on the cult of the Flavian imperial family as a continuation of Julio-Claudian dynastic cults, cf. also McIntyre (2019) 37–39; on the complex Flavian negotiations with the precedent of Claudius' deification, see Gallia's contribution to this volume.

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II

Building on Nero's Rome

4 Flavian Architecture on the Palatine: Continuity or Break

Aurora Raimondi Cominesi

Abstract

This paper analyses the use made by Flavian emperors, especially Domitian, of the Palatine Hill and surrounding area. The area where Nero's Domus Aurea had once stood was used by the Flavians as a vehicle to bring back Augustus' memory while erasing Nero's. A careful examination shows, however, that the boundaries between Augustus, Nero, and the Flavians on the Palatine may not have been so clear-cut. Reuse and repurposing coexisted with more public displays of condemnation, serving a different ideology each time. The result was a new house, the Domus Flavia, that would stand the test of time and become the 'imperial palace' we now see standing.

Keywords: Domitian; Palatine Hill; Domus Flavia; Domus Aurea; Roman architecture; imperial palaces

*The past is not destroyed by the present but survives in it as a latent force.
No phase of history should be treated as irrevocably finished.*

– E. Wind, *Art and Anarchy*, 16

Introduction¹

At the moment of his ascension, Vespasian faced a dilemma shared by his opponents of the year 68–69 CE: what was to be done with the memory of

¹ Translations included in this paper are from the Loeb Classical Library, unless otherwise stated.

Nero? Crucially, he understood, unlike Otho or Vitellius, that Nero's claims to power did not lie in his *persona* but rather in his family. Nero was, after all, the last existing link to Augustus, at a time when a connection with Augustus remained the strongest (if not the only) claim to the imperial seat. In order for the Flavians to rise, Nero had to fall, not his heritage. The Flavians, thus, exploited the memory sanctions against Nero, declared *hostis* by the Senate, as positive reinforcements to replace him as a member of the Julio-Claudian family. By doing this, they validated the new dynasty by anchoring it to the Augustan line, now cleansed of Nero's negative deeds.² The image of Nero, instead of being radically obliterated, as might have been expected, was taken over and reshaped by the Flavians, a reformulation so successful that it was perceived as eradication. Examples of this policy of appropriation rather than elimination affected many aspects of Flavian rule, both material and immaterial, as recently discussed in the work of scholars such as Eric Varner and Harriet Flower.³ As appropriations we should read, for example, the Flavian revival of Julio-Claudian style portraiture, with the specific tendency to rework portraits of Nero into representations of Vespasian, Titus, or Domitian, when not of Augustus and Claudius (fig. 4.1).⁴ The latter especially was elevated to the role of 'official' predecessor to the Flavian emperors. The contributors to this volume add significant evidence to the discussion by demonstrating the impossibility of setting defined boundaries between the Neronian and Flavian, neither in the literature that has survived, nor in the art and architecture that we still get to enjoy. At the same time, all contributions make it apparent that all three Flavian emperors used Nero's memory, when possible, to build a bridge towards Augustus.

The aim of this paper is to analyse the impact of Nero's memory, and the actions taken by the Flavians to reinforce it or erase it on the Palatine Hill, where Nero's residences had once stood, first the Domus Transitoria, followed by the so-called Domus Aurea. Nero's dwellings had dominated and shaped the entire space of the hill and surrounding areas, and each Flavian emperor

2 On Nero as *hostis*, see Suet. *Ner.* 49.2, Dio. 63.27.2b. See also Champlin (2003) 1–9, 49–51; Flower (2006) 199; De Jong and Hekster (2008) 88–89. The declaration of *hostis* does not imply any official memory sanction, and it remains doubtful whether one was ever issued against Nero; see Champlin (2003) 29–30. On memory sanctions as means to assure continuity, see Whitling (2010) 88; Omissi (2016) esp. 174–175.

3 Flower (2006) esp. 199–275 (Flavian period); Varner (2017).

4 Varner (2000) 12, cat. no. 27–28; Boyle (2003) 5. On two portraits of Nero re-carved as Vespasian at the Cleveland Museum and the Walters Art Museum in Baltimore: Pollini (1984). The exploitation of the image of Claudius was also carried out, for example, through the completion of the Templum Divi Claudii on the Caelian Hill: see Flower (2006) 209, and Gallia in this volume. See also Wolsfeld in this volume on imperial portraits.

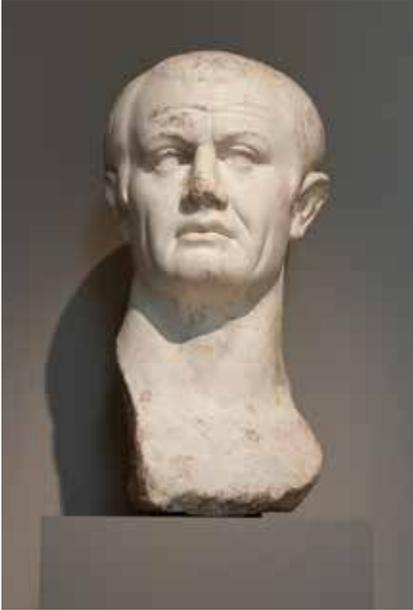


Figure 4.1 Portrait of Nero reworked as Domitian © State Collections of Antiquities and Glyptothek Munich, inv. no. GL 418 WAF. Photo: Renate Kühling.

dealt in his own way with the physical remains, the innovations, and the memory of Nero in this crucial part of imperial Rome. Nero was replaced there as well by the Flavians not through destruction, as Republican customs would have allowed, but by making sure that a sense of continuity with the Julio-Claudians and their presence on the Palatine was safeguarded.⁵

The Palatine under the Julio-Claudians

The Palatine had been the preferred residential quarter of the Roman aristocrats well before Octavian Augustus came to power.⁶ It is thus not surprising that in 36 BCE, Octavian himself acquired a series of properties on the same hill and turned them into his main residence. Following aristocratic traditions, the Augustan complex consisted of a series of separate units used as official living quarters by his close family members.⁷ The main characteristic of Augustus' complex-unit was its links: first, to the hut of

5 On destruction of private dwelling versus continuity of use during the Republic and the empire: Davies (2000) 37–38.

6 For an overview of aristocratic *domus* on the Palatine around the mid-first century BCE: Papi (1998).

7 Papi (1998) 47. On the Augustan complex, see Coarelli (2012) 347–395 and, most recently, Pensabene (2017).

Romulus (before 36 BCE); then, to the temple of Apollo Palatinus (after 36 BCE), dedicated by Octavian Augustus to his divine protector; and, finally, to the *domus publica*, the functions of which were transferred from the Forum Romanum and the House of the Vestals to the Palatine residence. The connection with the Palatine and its Augustan *lieux de mémoire* and charged spaces was, however, seemingly abandoned by Tiberius.⁸ Augustus' successor and adoptive son preferred the peace of his Capri retreat, Villa Iovis, where he retired in 27 CE, to the chaos of the city. On the Palatine, however, he left his nephew Caligula, the next Julio-Claudian emperor in line, residing in what was the first nucleus of the Domus Tiberiana, situated on the northern slope of the hill and facing towards the Forum Romanum.⁹ Indeed, in 38 CE Caligula is described in a fragment of the *Acta Fratrum Arvalium* as sacrificing to the gods *domo sua quae fuit Ti. Caesaris avi*, i.e. in the house that had been Tiberius'.¹⁰ The building, to be identified now with the Domus Gai, underwent significant expansions under Caligula once he became emperor, with the addition of a new monumental entrance through the Temple of Castor and Pollux in the Forum.¹¹ By the time of this emperor's demise, however, the Palatine residence still mainly consisted of separate units, as testified by the historian Flavius Iosephus. In reference to Caligula's death, he wrote that each Roman emperor had been 'building his own house [*domus*] next to the ones already in existence'.¹² Despite a first attempt at monumentalizing part of the buildings on the Palatine, therefore, it seems that in 41 CE the complex still retained a somewhat uneven status, even though the association of the hill with the Julio-Claudians was seemingly established by this point. It was only under Claudius that the first platform for the erection of a more unitarian complex was created on the site of the Domus Tiberiana.¹³ And although archaeological proof remains elusive, to Claudius belongs as well the layout of a more structured political and bureaucratic system surrounding the emperor and settled on the Palatine.

With emperor Claudius, the Palatine acquired a more definite political function, but it was only with his successor, Nero, that a single, unified

8 On the religious and traditional component of the Palatine as exploited by Augustus: Wulf-Rheidt (2012a).

9 For the Domus Tiberiana, I refer to the publications of its excavator, Clemens Krause: Krause (1994); Krause (1995); Krause (2004).

10 CFA 12 c, 2.38–44; as cited in Coarelli (2012) 456.

11 Suet. Calig. 22.2, Cass. Dio 59.28.5. See Hurst (1995); Coarelli (2012) 457.

12 Joseph. *AJ* 19.117 (as translated in Sojc, Coret, and Götz [2012] 114). See also Cecamore (2002) 218–220; Krause (2009) 264.

13 Tomei and Filetici (2011) 118–120. See also Krause (1995) 195; Coarelli (2012) 463–464.

building complex was built. According to Suetonius and Tacitus, Nero's first residence, known as *Domus Transitoria*, encompassed the Palatine and Esquiline Hills up to the Gardens of Maecenas: *Palatium et Maecenatis hortos continuaverat*.¹⁴ Although the definition of *transitoria* is debated, many scholars interpret it as a reference only to a new building connecting the two hills, allowing the visitor to 'transit' from the Palatine to the Esquiline Hill. What is clear, however, is that Nero's imperial residence extended well beyond the limits of the Palatine and was meant to unify the buildings on the Esquiline (whether pre-existing or not) to the ones on the Palatine, while covering both sites.¹⁵ Neronian structures erected before the fire of 64 CE – an opportunity Nero took to build an even grander residence – have survived only occasionally, but they have nonetheless been documented and appear to encompass various locations on and around the Palatine Hill. They include the remains of a nymphaeum under the triclinium of the *Domus Flavia*¹⁶; a series of interventions in the *Domus Tiberiana* (period II, phases II.1–2) and a group of structures beneath the *Aula Regia*¹⁷; a few traces at the junction between *Nova Via* and *Clivus Palatinus*, as well as on the *Velia*, under the *San Pietro in Vincoli*.¹⁸ The existence of a pre-64 CE phase for the pavilion on the *Oppian Hill* remains debated.¹⁹ Nonetheless, even though the pavilion might have only been created after the fire, it still proves that within a few years Nero's architects, Severus and Celer, had conceived a project which expanded well beyond the limits of the Palatine Hill and incorporated whatever property surrounded it.²⁰

14 Tac. *Ann.* 15.39.1. See also Suet. *Ner.* 31. According to Suetonius (*Ner.* 38), Nero watched the fire of 64 CE from a tower in the *Horti Maecenatis*: *Hoc incendium e turre Maecenatiana prospectans*.

15 For the *Domus Transitoria* as a mere connective building, see Champlin (1998) 333. The term *transitorium* is used for the first time in reference to Nero's *domus* and only appears a second time to describe Domitian's new forum (*Forum Transitorium*, subsequently renamed *Forum Nervae*); see Bauer and Morselli (1995) 307–311; Champlin (2003) 269.

16 For the early Neronian dating of the nymphaeum: Carettoni (1949) 66–70, 77; Cassatella (1986) 535–539; Cassatella (1990b) 166; Tomei (2011) 123–135.

17 Knell (2004); Krause (2004) 116–117; Tomei (1996) 186–189.

18 Here Nero may apparently have included in his new residence the remains of his paternal dwelling (*Domus Ahenobarbi*); see Coarelli (2001) 228–229; Perrin and Royo (2009) 51; Beste (2011) 154.

19 In favour of a pre-64 CE phase for the *Oppian pavilion* (especially the west wing) are, among others, Fabbrini (1986); Ball (1994); Beste (2011) 154. More cautious in drawing a distinction between a pre- and post-fire phase are Meyboom and Moorman (1994); Moormann (1995); Meyboom and Moormann (2013) 19–22.

20 For Severus and Celer as *magistri* and *machinatores* of the *Domus Aurea* (Tac. *Ann.* 15.42), possibly also of the *Domus Transitoria*, see Ball (1994) 231–233.

By 68 CE, Nero's residence, although not completed, had come to encompass not only the Palatine Hill but it certainly stretched towards the Esquiline, the Velia, and the Caelius. In the valley between the hills, Nero had built not only his vestibule, at the junction between the Sacra Via and the road running from the Circus Maximus to the Esquiline, but an artificial lake as well.²¹ Possibly more similar to a basin than an actual lake, with porticoes all around it, the Stagnum Neronis, as it is known from ancient sources, nonetheless 'looked like a sea' (*mari instar*).²² The reference was probably to artificial *stagna* in other Neronian residences, the one at Baiae in particular, but also the large complex at Subiaco.²³ Beside the 'lake', the three residences also had a well-manufactured rendition of nature in common, with green fields, vineyards, pastures, and woodlands (*rura insuper arvis atque vinetis et pascuis silvisque varia*), all within the limits of the imperial property.²⁴ Whereas this natural park is not surprising at Subiaco, located in Rome's hinterland, it is quite unusual in the *villa maritima* at Baiae and absolutely unprecedented in Rome beyond the space of the senatorial *horti*.²⁵ For the first time, the pleasures – and extravaganzas – of Roman *otium villas* were transferred to the heart of the city on such a monumental scale.²⁶ The 80-hectare park, as described by Andrea Carandini, thus included a *domus-villa* on the Palatine and a *villa-domus* on the Esquiline²⁷; a monstrosity in the eyes of Nero's contemporaries, with Nero accused of having turned the entire city into his own house.²⁸ According to Suetonius, there had been

21 Panella (2011).

22 Suet. *Ner.* 31: *item stagnum maris instar, circumsaeptum aedificiis ad urbium speciem*. For its translation as 'sembrava un mare', see first Zevi (1996); also, Meyboom and Moormann (2013) 16–17.

23 A reference to *stagna Neronis* is in Mart. *Spect.* 2.5–6. For the Lacus Baianus (a natural inlet shaped by an artificial canal and architectonic structures: Tac. *Ann.* 14.4) and its likeness to the Stagnum in Rome, see Zevi (1996). For the constructions in the villa at Subiaco, see Tomei (1984); Mari (2015).

24 Suet. *Ner.* 31. On the Domus Aurea being designed as a park, see in particular Viscogliosi (2011).

25 For the villa at Subiaco as antecedent for the 'artificial nature' of the residences in Baiae and Rome, and the *silva* at Baia as represented in a series of late-antique pilgrim flasks produced in Puteoli (carrying the legend *STAGNV(m) PALATIV(m)* and *STAGNV(m) NERONIS BAIAE*), see Zevi (1996); Mari (2015). For the connection of both lake and crafted nature to Hellenistic royal *paradeisoi*, see Gros (2009) 92. On the aristocratic *domus* in the *Horti* already conceived as *villae*, see Cic. *Quint.* 2.4.14: *nunc domus suppeditat mihi hortorum amoenitatem* (as cited in Settis [2002] 41).

26 Lafon (2001) 83.

27 Carandini (1990) 13–14.

28 Suet. *Ner.* 39.2: *Roma domus fiet: Veios migrate, Quirites, / si non et Veios occupat ista domus*; Tac. *Ann.* 14.37.1: *totaque Urbe quasi domo uti*; Mart. *Spect.* 2.4: *unaque iam tota stabat in urbe*

‘nothing [...] more ruinously wasteful than his project to build a house extending from the Palatine to the Esquiline’.²⁹ According to the emperor himself, however, ‘he had at last started to live like a man’ (*quasi hominem tandem habitare coepisse*, Suet. *Ner.* 31).

The Palatine under the Flavians Between 69 and 81 CE

Following Nero’s death, work on the imperial *domus* was resumed by Otho: the short-lived emperor is said to have invested 50 million *sestertii* towards the completion of Nero’s project.³⁰ For this act he was posthumously condemned, and the house was left incomplete once again. The house had not appeared ‘suitable’ to Galeria, Vitellius’ wife, when the imperial couple had taken up residence in it. As far as the story goes, Galeria seems to have found the house ‘ugly’ and ‘unadorned’.³¹ As both Otho and Vitellius were positioning themselves in Nero’s footsteps, the house (and their living in it) might have been part of a rehabilitation process of Nero’s image. Such a policy might have seconded the favour of the *plebs* towards the later emperor. Indeed, their appreciation of the imperial residence may have differed from that of the senatorial elite, whose houses had been confiscated to make space for Nero’s ‘grand’ plan, as did their regard for the emperor himself.³² Nero had remained a popular figure among his subjects, as proved by the appearance, up to 20 years after his death, of a series of imposters or ‘false Nero’s’, and many other manifestations of public affection.³³

As Vespasian needed to distance himself from his two ‘predecessors’ of the year 69 and improve his ties to the Senate, he may have regarded Nero’s

domus; Plin. *HN* 36.111: *bis vidimus urbem totam cingi domibus principum Gai et Neronis, huius quidem, ne quid deesset, aurea*. As in Champlin (1998) 333 n. 6. See also Elsner (1994) 117; Von Hesberg (2004) 61–62. The concept of Nero’s home coinciding with the city should not be surprising if we believe Suetonius when he says that Nero had planned to rename Rome *Neropolis*, following Greek-Hellenistic customs: Suet. *Ner.* 55.1; see Welch (2018).

29 Suet. *Ner.* 31: *Non in alia re tamen damnosior quam in aedificando domum a Palatio Esquilias usque fecit, quam primo transitoriam, mox incendio absumptam restitutamque auream nominavit*.

30 Suet. *Otho* 8.18, see also Suet. *Otho* 71. On the occupancy of the house after Nero, see Ball (1994) 227; Shotter (2008) 123; Meyboom and Moormann (2013) 1.

31 Cass. Dio 64.4.1–2 (as in Meyboom and Moormann [2013] 1). Dio’s account does not necessarily refer to the Esquiline wing, as frequently assumed.

32 For the displacement of the elites rather than the ordinary citizens after the fire of 64 to make way for Nero’s new residence, see Von Hesberg (2004) 61–62; Flower (2006) 230–232. On the moralistic condemnation of Nero’s private way of life and his house, despite it being a continuation of the Julio-Claudian villa culture, see Elsner (1994) 112–127.

33 Champlin (1998) 108; Champlin (2003) 1–35; Flower (2006) 200–201.

house as off-limits, despite the close ties between Augustus (Vespasian's model) and the area of the Palatine. Indeed, Vespasian's first action had been to break off the continuity of Nero's house from the Palatine to the adjacent hills, and to erect a series of new buildings as replacements to the previous entertainment pavilions: the Amphitheatrum Flavium, in the depression between the Velia, the Esquiline, and the Caelian Hills; the Temple of Divus Claudius, on the Caelian; the Forum Pacis, in the area of the former *macellum* that was taken over by the Domus Aurea. The Amphitheatre filled in the space that was designated for the Stagnum Neronis (yet to be completed). Thus, a project was resumed that had already been initiated by Augustus, as Suetonius informs us.³⁴ The Templum Divi Claudii rested on the remains of a nymphaeum that was already destined by Nero to be the basis for the temple of this adoptive father; this project, never finished, was resumed and monumentalized.³⁵ All three examples display a clear intention to claim back space appropriated by Nero's residence by making it public again. According to Martial, they belonged by right of the law and traditional customs 'to the people of Rome' and had now been returned to it.³⁶

With such actions Vespasian surely confirmed, if not possibly fabricated, the claim that Nero's residence was not meant to be accessible to his subjects but had rather been designed for the sole amusement of the emperor. The new emperor was thus feeding into the existing image of Nero's excesses and bad rule, and purposefully made his repurposing of the area into a spectacle. Yet some elements of continuity remained, for example, if we believe that the area of the *stagnum* had also been conceived by Nero as a space for the entertainment of the populace, contrary to Vespasian's public claims.³⁷ Tacitus, indeed, accuses Nero of having turned Rome's populace into his *necessitudines*, his intimate friends.³⁸ Nero's Colossus was repurposed rather than removed, with the portrait of the deceased emperor turned into a representation of Apollo-Sol.³⁹ The whole area

34 Suet. *Vesp.* 9.1. On the project of the *stagnum*, see Suet. *Ner.* 31.

35 Constructions for the temple of the deified Claudius were started by Agrippina but interrupted by Nero, according to Suet. *Vesp.* 9. See Buzzetti (1993); Darwall-Smith (1996) 48–55; Moormann (2003) 383–385.

36 Mart. *Spect.* 2.11–12: 'Now Rome is restored to Romans' (trans. Cooley [2015] 196, in reference to the Amphitheatrum Flavium). See also Vasta (2007) 122; Lovatt (2016) esp. 362–363.

37 Flower (2006) 230; De Jong and Hekster (2008) 88. On the possible accessibility of Nero's *horti* to the public, see Moormann (2003) 387. On the symbolic connections between Colosseum and Domus Aurea, see Welch (2007) esp. 158–162.

38 Tac. *Ann.* 15.36.3, as cited in Champlin (2003) 206.

39 The *corona radiata* of the Colossus recurs in Vespasianic coins: see Elsner (2003) 216; Mar (2009) 316. For a different opinion, see Flower (2006) 229, for whom the statue never represented

effectively remained an imperial property and was never returned to the people of Rome nor to those senators who had lost their lands to Nero's expropriations.⁴⁰ According to P. J. E. Davies, the Flavian building programme in Rome might indeed be interpreted as an improvement and a rehabilitation of spaces rather than a mere 'anti-Neronian manifesto'.⁴¹ One of the most spectacular achievements of Neronian architecture, for instance, remained untouched during the Flavian period. I am referring to Nero's public baths in the Campus Martius, the *Thermae Neronianae*, which maintained their standing and their name under the Flavians, possibly due to their already public function, but even more likely for their enormous popularity.⁴² Nero's baths had been a treasure trove of innovations, and the first to offer better amenities, more bathing comfort, glass windows, and larger spaces to the masses.⁴³ The role of next 'provider of baths' was then taken up by Titus, who may have restored the baths of Agrippa, located in the Campus Martius next to Nero's.⁴⁴ Martial's comment on Nero's baths is emblematic of their impact (7.34.4–5): *Quid Nerone peius / Quid thermis melius Neronianis?*; 'What is worse than Nero / What better than his baths?'⁴⁵ As discussed in this volume by Gallia, the construction of the 'Claudian portico' around the Temple of Divus Claudius may have also preserved a certain degree of continuity with Nero's designs, as the emperor's plans for the divinization of his stepfather were resumed but also adjusted to Flavian ideology.

None of the new Flavian constructions, moreover, interfered with the buildings on the Palatine Hill. On the contrary, the breaking off of the previous units of Nero's house served the purpose of bringing back the

Nero. On the *Equus Domitiani* and his similarities to the Colossus, showing a certain continuity between Neronian and Flavian Rome, see Muth (2010) 488–493; followed by Moormann (2018a) 168–169.

40 Flower (2006) 232.

41 Davies (2000) 42; see also Mar (2005) 142–143. The inauguration in 95 CE of the *Via Domitiana*, from Puteoli to Sinuessa, as portrayed by Statius (*Silv.* 4.3), may be viewed in the same line, i.e. as a successful version of Nero's canal project: see Flower (2006) 256.

42 On Nero's bath complex, see Nielsen (1990) vol. 1, 45–46, vol. 2, 2 (C.2); Ghini (1999); Davies (2000) 31; Fagan (2002) 11–112, 123; Moormann (2003) 378.

43 The advancement in engineering technologies, for instance in the construction of vaults, made monumental enterprises such as Nero's baths more affordable, thus prompting a booming of *thermae* and large-scale buildings in the Neronian period: Wulf-Rheidt (2012c); Flohr (2016) 22.

44 Fagan (2002) 112. The *Thermae Agrippae* had to be repaired after the fire of 80 CE (Cass. Dio 66.24), and the fact that Martial mentions them as being quite frequented (3.20.15; 36.6) points towards a Flavian restoration. For the Baths of Agrippa, see Ghini (1999).

45 As cited in Elsner (1994) 119.

focus to the Palatine alone by confining there all of its functions. Vespasian does not appear to have claimed the space of the Palatine for himself: he preferred to conduct his life in the area of the Quirinal, between the Horti Sallustiani (inherited, as emperor, from the Julio-Claudians) and his family house on Pomegranate Street (*ad malum punicum*, Suet. *Dom.* 1).⁴⁶ There he is said to have followed a ‘frugal lifestyle’, somewhat reminiscent of Suetonius’ ideal characterization of Augustus’ house and way of life.⁴⁷ His house was, moreover, accessible to ‘anybody who desired to see him, not only senators but also people in general’, in apparent contrast to Neronian habits.⁴⁸ According to Boyle, the function of Augustus’ Temple of Apollo Palatinus as dynastic temple was mirrored by Vespasian in the newly built Templum Pacis in the heart of the emperor’s personal forum (similarly equipped with libraries).⁴⁹ There, Vespasian offered to public view Nero’s magnificent collection of art, taken from his house and now exhibited as war spolia of sorts.⁵⁰ Both house and temple appear, somehow, as dislocations, or rather copies, of the Palatine, in ways all connected to the figure of Augustus and his manner of self-display. Vespasian’s house is presented as the abode of a ‘modest’ lifestyle, as Augustus’ had been⁵¹; the Temple of Peace functioned as a dynastic temple, a symbol of the power of the emperor and a display of his interests. Indeed, what Vespasian’s house and temple seem to take away from the Palatine is its connotation as the emperor’s private dwelling, and how he wished to be seen. The memory aspect of the Templum Pacis and its connection to Augustus are well discussed by Moormann in this volume. Moormann significantly points out how a return to Augustus and ‘Augustan’ ideology meant dealing with the inescapable presence of Nero and Neronian constructions in the

46 On the Horti Sallustiani as imperial *patrimonium*, possibly acquired by Nero, see Millar (1977) 23; Talamo (1998); Hartswick (2004) 10–12, 100, 155 no. 85 (*CIL XV 7270a*); Acton (2011) 108. Portions of the house of the Flavii on the Quirinal have been discovered via XX settembre 12, Rome, under the Caserma dei Corazzieri: See de Vos (1997) 57–98.

47 Cass. Dio 65.11.1: ‘In short, he was looked upon as emperor only by reason of his oversight of the public business, whereas in all other respects he was democratic and lived on a footing of equality with his subjects.’ On Augustus’ modesty and *humilis domus*, see Suet. *Aug.* 72–73; Flower (2006) 209. On Vespasian ‘frugal’ life, especially in comparison to Nero, see Acton (2011) 106–108.

48 Cass. Dio 65.10.4, as cited in Millar (1977) 23.

49 Darwall-Smith (1996) 55–68, 73; Coarelli (1999); Boyle (2003) 5. See also Moormann in this volume.

50 On Nero’s art collection as war spolia, see Boyle (2003) 5. On the works of art owned by Nero, see Moormann (2003) 381–382. See additionally Welch (2007) 157–158 on the public access to Nero’s collection while on display in his *domus*.

51 On Augustus’ frugal life and modest living: Suet. *Aug.* 72.1.

area. The *Templum Pacis* cannot but end up representing a ‘monumental response’ to Nero’s *Domus Aurea*,⁵² despite the efforts to make it a replica of Augustus’ *Ara Pacis*.

Vespasian’s example of setting his own private dwelling away from the Palatine and redesigning the area around this hill was followed by his son Titus, who is believed to have taken up residence, once his family came to power, in a complex along today’s *Via Merulana*, not far from the Neronian pavilion on the Oppian Hill. Archaeological remains confirm that significant interventions were carried out during the Flavian period in the area of Nero’s complex and surrounding *horti*. For example, it is in the area of the *Horti Maecenatis* (already a property of Tiberius) that the famous statuary group of the *Laocoon* was found, the same group that, according to Pliny, belonged to the *Domus Titi*.⁵³ In the same area Titus built his private baths, known as *Thermae Titi*, which he wished would open at the same time as the amphitheatre (they did).⁵⁴ The baths, of which little survives, have also been connected to the *Esquiline* wing of the *Domus Aurea*, with some scholars suggesting interpretation of Titus’ baths as a persistence of the baths of Nero’s house.⁵⁵ The mention in Cassius Dio (66.15.3–4) of Titus scandalously living ἐν τῷ παλατίῳ, in the palace, with Berenice, sister of Herod Agrippa, king of Judaea, sometime in the 70s, when she had come to Rome, should be taken with caution: Dio’s choice of words may simply have been influenced by the later identification of the imperial palace with the Palatine, and so Titus and Berenice may equally have shared the same roof in the *domus* on the *Esquiline* Hill.⁵⁶

By locating their private abodes away from the hill, the Flavians were able to dissociate themselves from Nero’s monumental complex, which

52 Varner (2017) 252, as cited by Moormann in this volume.

53 Plin. *HN* 36.4.37: *sicuti in Laocoonte qui est in Titi imperatoris domo*. For the identification of the find place of the *Laocoon* (currently preserved at the Vatican Museums, inv. no. 1059) with the *Horti Maecenatis* rather than the *Domus Aurea*, as previously believed, see Häuber (2006); Slavazzi (2007); Parisi and Volpe (2009). For the *Horti Maecenatis* as part of Nero’s residential complex (*Tac. Ann.* 15.39.40); Häuber (1996); Moormann (2003) 386. On the standing of the *Domus Titi*, the *Thermae*, and the Flavian dating of parts of the *Esquiline* wing, where Flavian interventions maintained the same orientation of the preceding Neronian buildings, see Ball (1994); Fabbrini (1995) 61; Caruso (1999) 66–67; Caruso and Volpe (2000) 50–56; Ball (2003); Boyle (2003) 11; Meyboom and Moormann (2013) 2.

54 For the erection of new baths under Titus: Cass. Dio 66.25.1, Suet. *Tit.* 7.3, as cited in Fagan (2002) 112. On the *Thermae Titi*, see Nielsen (1990) vol. 1, 46–47, vol. 2, 2 (C.3); Wulf-Rheidt (2012c) 3 fig. 2c, 11–13.

55 For this theory, see Nielsen (1990) vol. 1, 46–47 (followed by Coarelli [2001a 211]). See also Champlin (1998) 342.

56 Acton (2011) 109.

was much disliked by the Roman elite. However, if on the one hand the Palatine had become the embodiment of Nero's arrogance, it was also the place chosen by Augustus to set up his seat of power, making it essential for the Flavians to deal with the memory of Nero if they wanted to preserve that of Augustus. While the surrounding area was repurposed, Neronian structures on the Palatine escaped strict sanctions, as would have been allowed by Republican custom (for example, by levelling it to the ground or at least leaving it uninhabited), and the hill continued to be used by the Flavians.⁵⁷ Cassius Dio informs us that Vespasian 'lived but little in the palace, spending most of his time in the Gardens of Sallust'.⁵⁸ The statement, though failing to provide any detail on Vespasian's living arrangements on the Palatine, informs us that the official residence was indeed considered to be located there. The same can be inferred from Suetonius' remark that Vespasian had a dream once which took place in the *vestibulum* of his *Palatinae domus*.⁵⁹ Under this emperor, therefore, it seems that the Palatine lost the private connotation it had taken up during the Julio-Claudian rule as the official residence of the emperor, or at least that a more private, domestic dimension away from the Palatine was created by the Flavians alongside their official arrangements on the hill.⁶⁰ Such repurposing would justify Domitian's presence on the hill as early as the year 69, when, Tacitus informs us, he had taken up 'the seat and the name of Caesar'.⁶¹ The move was probably related to the official duties taken up by Domitian in Rome while his father, and brother, were still absent from it: indeed, upon Vespasian's arrival in Rome in 70 CE, Domitian seems to have immediately moved back into his father's household (Suet. *Dom.* 2.1).⁶²

In recent years, a building phase has been identified that follows the construction of Neronian edifices on the Palatine and predates the monumental

57 On the power of the sanctioned lingering through the emptiness of the house, see Davies (2000) 38; Elsner (2003) 219. On the reuse of the hated and rearrangement of charged spaces, see Elsner (2003) 224–225.

58 Cass. Dio 65.10.4.

59 Suet. *Vesp.* 25. The *vestibulum* may have been that of the *Domus Tiberiana* or *Gaiana*: see Iacopi and Tedone (2009) 245 n. 11.

60 In addition to Vespasian's *Quirinal domus* and Titus' own private dwelling on the Palatine, Domitian is said to have frequently resided and even conducted public affairs in his Albanum retreat (Castel Gandolfo): see Darwall-Smith (1994); Von Hesberg (2006); Von Hesberg (2009); Mar (2009) 334.

61 Tac. *Hist.* 4.2: *Nomen sedemque Caesaris Domitianus acceperat*. As cited in Iacopi and Tedone (2009) 242; Krause (2009) 264.

62 Acton (2011) 109–110.

complex commissioned by Domitian once he became emperor. Ulrike Wulf-Rheidt and Evelyne Bukowiecki have recently published a convincing article in which they challenge the notion that Domitian's palace was the result of a uniform project started in 81 CE and completed by the date of the emperor's death in 96. By studying a series of brick stamps collected in the south-eastern area of the Palatine as well as in the constructions in *opus testaceum* that pertain to the Flavian phases of the buildings known today as the Domus Severiana, the Palatine stadium (or *Gardenstadium*), the Domus Augustana, and the Domus Flavia, the two authors have concluded that Domitian must have incorporated into his new residence parts of previous Flavian structures.⁶³ The example is also illustrative of an additional, significant phenomenon observed by Wulf-Rheidt and Bukowiecki: the layout of Domitian's palace as it has been described by modern literature not only owed part of its elements to architectural interventions dating prior to 81 CE, but it was also consistently modified both by Trajan and Hadrian.⁶⁴ Many of the features believed to be characteristic of Domitian's time, such as the connection between the imperial residence and the Circus Maximus, were in reality introduced only later, while a series of terraces and rooms opening towards the Circus were already implemented during Nero's reign.⁶⁵

Additional pre-Domitianic interventions are attested around the Aula Regia (Domus Flavia) and on the platform of the Domus Tiberiana.⁶⁶ Although the question remains open with regard to the extent to which the Neronian project of the Domus Aurea on the Palatine had been completed by the time of Vespasian's rise to power, the early Flavian building phase on the hill displays a certain coherence with recognized, pre-existing Neronian structures. This is the case, for example, with a series of peristyles which replaced Nero's *porticus triplices miliariae* but maintained the same orientation.⁶⁷ The alignment was dropped in the later project.

63 Bukowiecki and Wulf-Rheidt (2015) 329–331 [Domus Severiana]; 345–348 [*Gardenstadium*]; 367–371 [Domus Augustana: sunken peristyle]; 385–386 [Domus Flavia]. For a reappraisal of Domitian's palace as a project developed in different phases, see also Wulf-Rheidt (2015). On the Palatine under Vespasian, see also Mar (2005) 142–153 figs. 75–80.

64 Bukowiecki and Wulf-Rheidt (2015); Wulf-Rheidt (2015).

65 For the Neronian structures, see Cassatella (1990a) 91–104; Bukowiecki and Wulf-Rheidt (2015) 415–416. For the Trajanic interventions on the façade towards the Circus Maximus, see Wulf-Rheidt (2013) 291–292; Pflug and Wulf-Rheidt (2018) 166–168.

66 For the area around the Aula Regia, see Iacopi and Tedone (2009). For the area of the Domus Tiberiana, see Krause (1994); Krause (2009); Wulf-Rheidt (2015) 6–8.

67 Iacopi and Tedone (2009) 241–242; see also Coarelli (2009a) 86–90.

The Palatine under Domitian after 81 CE: The New Domus Flavia, Augustana, and Severiana

When Domitian succeeded his brother in 81 CE there seems to have been no doubt that he would continue to reside on the Palatine. Conveniently for the new emperor, in 80 CE a fire had spread over the hill, destroying much of what was left of Nero's buildings, together with the interventions carried on between 69 and 80 CE. Like Nero after the great fire of 64 CE, Domitian seized this opportunity to build a grander, newer residence, a task which he entrusted to the architect Rabirius.⁶⁸ Domitian's palace was indeed impressive in its innovations, but it was more of a work in progress than a clearly defined project. The absence of a ground-breaking plan for the new imperial *domus* left space for the reuse of Neronian models, which had profoundly shaped the outlook of the Palatine, to have influenced also the creation of Domitian's palace. Evidence seems to indicate that Domitian's architect must have had a thorough knowledge of the vast project of the last Julio-Claudian emperor, and parts of its ground plan were integrated in the new living quarters or taken as inspiration for the new project for the Palatine *domus*.

Correspondences can be found in various elements. First of all, for instance, in the separation between two seemingly separate units, one traditionally known as Domus Flavia, the other as Domus Augustana, to which we can now add the area of the so-called Domus Severiana as part of the Domitianic project. The Domus Flavia is commonly indicated as the residence's *pars publica*, with larger-built rooms, the Domus Augustana (and so now the Severiana as well) as its *pars privata*, with smaller rooms and panoramic triclinia.⁶⁹ Following Paul Zanker, room functions cannot be interpreted unanimously, and the private and public sphere of a residence might not have been so strictly differentiated: Domitian, as the other emperors before him, is said to have received senators in his *cubiculum* and embassies in the gardens.⁷⁰ However, Nero's residence was also most likely divided into a more public section for official receptions, possibly represented by the building components on the Palatine, and a more private unit, which could be identified with the area of the pavilion on the Oppian

68 For the duration of Domitian's project and the official inauguration of the new residence in 92 CE, see Bukowiecki and Wulf-Rheidt (2015) esp. 418; Wulf-Rheidt (2015) 3.

69 Darwall-Smith (1996) 209–212; Packer (2003) 194–197; Vössing (2004) 267; Wulf-Rheidt (2012b) 106–108; Wulf-Rheidt (2015) 7; Pflug and Wulf-Rheidt (2018) 160–162.

70 Suet. *Dom.* 37; Zanker (2002) 111.

Hill.⁷¹ This division may have been replicated on the Palatine when the residence was once again limited to its perimeter under Domitian. The existence of two separate areas thus poses interesting questions about accessibility, court protocols, and architectonic models.

The Palatine under Domitian after 81 CE: Ground Plan and Architecture

The well-known but understudied *Domus Flavia* and *Domus Augustana*, and with them the area of the *Domus Severiana*, have become the subject of German research over the last two decades under the guidance of Ulrike Wulf-Rheidt and Natascha Sojc, who have both published various important studies, and a few co-edited volumes.⁷² According to the German researchers, the area of the south Peristyle in the *Domus Augustana* is the result of an integration of its ground plan with the pre-existing Neronian and early-Flavian structures, and it appears to be the first area of the new Domitianic residence to be built.⁷³ It was in this area, closer to the temple of Apollo and the House of Augustus, that Nero had built a series of garden reception areas, among which the so-called ‘nymphaeum of the *Domus Transitoria*’.⁷⁴ Found in the eighteenth century under a vast waterwork, seemingly belonging to the second phase of Neronian buildings on the Palatine, the area of the nymphaeum was finally occupied by the Triclinium of the *Domus Flavia*.⁷⁵ The nymphaeum was most likely destroyed by the fire of 64 and, therefore, probably never seen by Domitian, which might explain why the new Flavian units built on top have a slightly different orientation. What is interesting, however, is that the nymphaeum-triclinium belonged to an area characterized by porticoes, greenery, and water games, in addition

71 Moormann (1998) 451.

72 See in particular Wulf-Rheidt and Sojc (2009); Sojc (2012b); Sojc, Coret, and Götz (2012).

73 Sojc (2005–2006) 345–348; Iacopi and Tedone (2009) 240–244; Wulf-Rheidt and Sojc (2009) 268–269; Pflug (2012) 70–72; Sojc (2012a) 23; Pflug (2013) 190–193; Pflug (2014) 3653–3667; Wulf-Rheidt (2014) 11–12; Wulf-Rheidt (2015) 6–8; Bukowiecki and Wulf-Rheidt (2015) 417–418; Pflug and Wulf-Rheidt (2018) 166. Less conclusive for the precise dating of the pre-Flavian constructions in this area is the study of brick stamps: Bukowiecki and Wulf-Rheidt (2015) 366–367.

74 For the positioning of the nymphaeum in the area of the Temple: Carandini, Bruno, and Fraioli (2011) 139 fig. 3. The connection with Augustus’ original *domus* was retained in the name *Domus Augustiana* or *Augustana* that marked the whole area and only later was circumscribed to one part of the Flavian residence. See, for instance, Mar (2005) 1661–1667; Coarelli (2012) 494.

75 For the nymphaeum, see Carettoni (1949); Cassatella (1986); Cassatella (1990b); de Vos (1995); Tomei (2011). For the Flavian Triclinium, see Gibson, DeLaine, and Claridge (1994).

to a larger *aula*, which we find replicated in the Domus Flavia, where we see the construction of the Aula Regia and the Cenatio Iovis, also a garden triclinium. We can therefore conclude that this sector of the Palatine kept the same purpose as before. Natascha Sojc convincingly argues that this section of the Domus Augustana, which she dates to the early Flavian age, served as a public space, with *cenationes* of various dimensions to accommodate guests in a flexible way, according to the number invited.⁷⁶ This means that the emperor could invite as many people as he wanted, but divided them over adjacent rooms, next to the principal *cenatio*. In the Domus Augustana we have three rooms in one row which exemplify this use, but the principle of using triplets or even larger numbers of adjacent rooms for receptions is also clear in what remains of the Domus Aurea (fig. 4.2). The octagonal hall in the Domus Flavia has a strong affinity with the Neronian octagonal room (128) on the Oppius, a prominent space in the pavilion, which has long been mistaken with the famous *praecipua cenationum* mentioned by Suetonius (*Ner.* 31). The four triclinia, radially placed around room 128 'return' so-to-say in the Flavian palace.⁷⁷ Besides the ground plan, the affinity between the octagonal suites in the Oppian pavilion and in the Flavian palace extends to the use of a dome as ceiling, an innovation of Neronian domestic architecture: the use of a dome to cover an octagonal space is unprecedented before the appearance of such an architectural innovation in the Esquiline wing of the Domus Aurea, and its replication in the octagonal room in the Flavian residence.⁷⁸

Certainly, Domitian also created larger dinner spaces in the Domus Flavia (the rooms now known as Aula Regia, Basilica, and Lararium), which we do not know from the Golden House.⁷⁹ The rooms in the Oppius pavilion, indeed, do not exceed 100 sq. m., while the Aula Regia, the largest of the rooms in

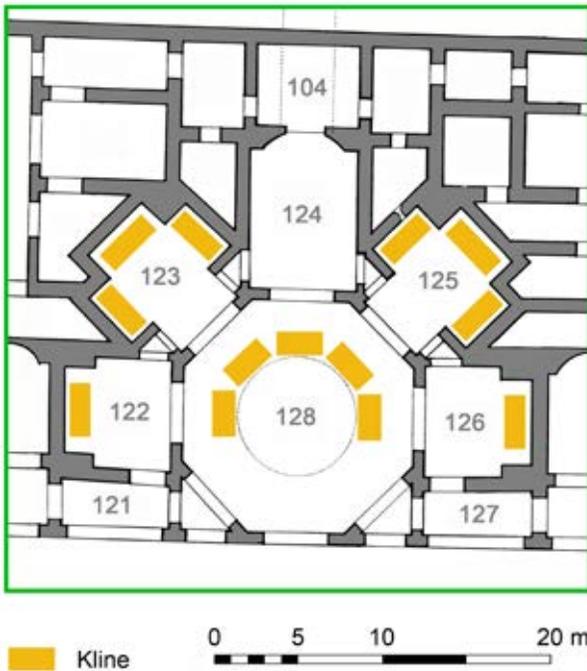
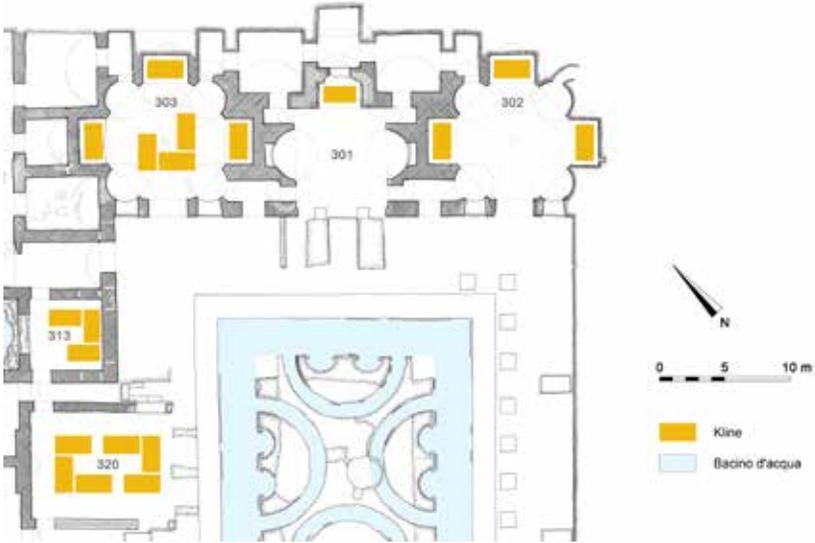
76 Sojc (2005–2006) 344–349. See also Pflug (2014) 374–378; Wulf-Rheidt (2015) 6–7.

77 Sojc and Winterling (2009) esp. figs. 6 and 7; Sojc (2005–2006) 340.

78 For a more general comparison between domes and vaulted ceilings in the Neronian and Flavian complexes, and the history of this technology, see Wulf-Rheidt (2012c) esp. 2: 'As far as palaces are concerned, no dome constructions are yet known to us from the pre-Neronian era, either on the Palatine or in the imperial villas outside Rome. It can therefore be assumed that spaces covered by domes first appeared in palatial architecture during Nero's reign.' For the dome in the octagonal room of the Domus Aurea, see especially p. 5. For vaulted and domed ceilings as a Neronian innovation, see additionally Ball (2003) esp. 24, 259.

79 For the Domus Flavia, evidence shows that unlike what happened in the area of the Domus Augustana, the pre-existing Neronian and early Flavian structures appear to have been completely obliterated without influencing the design of the new rooms, see Bukowiecki and Wulf-Rheidt (2015) 385–386. For a preliminary study of the over 50 rooms of the Domus Flavia, see Sojc, Coret, and Götz (2012).

Figure 4.2 (a) Suite of rooms in the Domus Augustana, 'sunken peristyle' with dining arrangements; (b) suite of rooms around the octagonal room (128) in the Domus Aurea © Sojc 2009, 298-299, figs. 6-7.



the Domus Flavia, measures over 1000 sq. m.⁸⁰ The larger and more official reception halls of Nero's residence, however, could have been accommodated on the Palatine, where we simply do not have enough archaeological remains dating to Nero's time to prove it.⁸¹

With regard to the exterior appearance of the new Domitianic structures, the buildings of the south peristyle display surprising differences in shape between the exterior and the interior of the room: the outside may have given the suggestion of rectilinear walls, the inside contained curved walls, niches and the like.⁸² This characteristic was long believed to be an innovation of Flavian baroque architecture. It is, however, no Flavian invention, as the same interplay between plain façade and lively interior is already present in some of the rooms preserved in the Neronian Oppian pavilion: the suite of rooms along the south side of the peristyle, for instance, has alternating apsidal and rectangular niches. In the section of room (86) and surrounding spaces we can observe inserted niches and semi-circular walls constructed within rectangular spaces. As for the exterior façade of the Domus Augustana and Flavia, a recent reconstruction by Ulrike Wulf-Rheidt shows a combination of portico and large windows comparable to the one in the Oppian pavilion.⁸³ No satisfactory reconstruction can be made due to the Trajanic additions to the exterior, which obliterated the original outlook; at the same, time, however, the visible fuga of door openings connecting the preserved rooms suggests a playful use and widening of space with attractive views replicated from Neronian architecture in Domitian's new *domus*.⁸⁴

The design presents a good reflection of villa architecture with panoramic views, a comparison used by Natascha Sojc to explain the similar outlook of the Domus Augustana.⁸⁵ It would be hard to believe that Domitian and his architect Rabirius were not aware of the connection already existing between the Domus Aurea and villa architecture. Although the expression *rus in urbe* was first used by Martial in an epigram describing Domitian's palace, the elements of villa architecture were in fact introduced by Nero into the urban context of Rome, his house having been repeatedly associated with the *villae maritimae* in Baiae, with the Stagnum Neronis replacing the

80 The Cenatio Iovis equally reaches 800 square metres: see Wulf-Rheidt (2015) 10–11. For a description of spaces and their measures in the Oppian pavilion, see Moormann (1998).

81 For the pre-Domitianic architectonic remains: Cassatella (1990a); Cassatella (1998).

82 Sojc (2005–2006) 339–350.

83 Wulf-Rheidt (2015) 8 fig. 5.

84 Meyboom and Moormann (2013) 22.

85 Sojc (2005–2006) 342 fig. 3. The author curiously overlooks the example of the Golden House as a precedent.

Lacus baianus.⁸⁶ The same model that was repeated in the row of triclinia of the Domus Severiana faced not only towards the Circus Maximus, as did the Domus Flavia and Augustana, but also, and most interestingly, onto a pond, with windows opening directly at the level of the water surface.⁸⁷ Nero's and Domitian's Rome were thus intermingled. The key element in both cases was a quest for scenic openings; through them the emperor could not only see his subjects but, more importantly, he could be seen by them. Pliny's definition of Nero as *imperator scaenicus* could just as well apply to Domitian, the more so since Domitian as well did not refrain from carefully staging his image as emperor.⁸⁸ When Statius, a contemporary author, describes a Saturnalia banquet in which he took part in the new imperial house, Domitian appears, in the flattering words of the poet, to be playing the role of a god, remote and inaccessible on his 'pedestal'.⁸⁹ Another memorable (more private) dinner party was held in a room decorated like a cemetery.⁹⁰ Ultimately, it is significant that in Pliny's *Panegyricus* to Trajan the two figures – Nero and Domitian – are depicted in similar, negative terms. In retrospect, they must have shown more correspondences than Domitian might ever have intended to display.

The Palatine under Domitian after 81 CE: Garden Architecture

Part of the 'scenic' programme was also represented in both houses, Nero's and Domitian's, by the implementation of garden architecture, and the use of innovative panoramic solutions. In the Domus Aurea, the most spectacular of these innovations must certainly have been the dining room described by Suetonius as a circular eating space revolving night and day like the earth (*praecipua cenationum rotunda, quae perpetuo diebus ac noctibus vice mundi circumageretur*; Suet. *Ner.* 31). For a very long time, this room was interpreted as a sort of planetary room with a moving ceiling or dome and was identified as the octagonal room in the Oppian pavilion. The attribution was based on the presence of a dome with an oculus, and, among other considerations,

86 Mart. 12.57.21. The expression *rus in urbe* was used for the first time in connection with Nero's Domus Aurea in Boëthius (1960) 205.

87 The pond was surrounded by a 4.5-metre-wide columned porticus: see Wulf-Rheidt (2015) 11–12 fig. 8 (with a comparison to the Domus Aurea); Pflug and Wulf-Rheidt (2018) 161. A columned porticus of 4 m. also encircled Nero's *stagnum*: see Medri (1996); Panella (2011) 166.

88 Plin. *Pan.* 46.4. See Edwards (1994) 83.

89 Stat. *Silv.* 6.1.

90 Cass. Dio 67.9. See Frederick (2003) 211–213.

the lack of any decoration, which hinted at a room clad with marble, precious artworks and possibly a rotating wooden structure connected to the ceiling.⁹¹ Despite its fortune, this theory often came into question, the main point raised being that the room on the Oppian Hill would have been too remote from the centre of the *domus*, still on the Palatine, and thus hardly the principal (*praecipua*) dining room. Recent excavations by the École française de Rome on the site of the so-called Vigna Barberini, on the north-eastern slope of the Palatine, have indeed unveiled an imposing Neronian structure more likely to be identified with the room described by Suetonius. According to the reconstruction of the archaeological remains proposed by Françoise Villedieu, it would not have been the dome which was moving, but rather the floor, enabling the entire room, and the diners in it, to move with it and have a 360° view over the Stagnum Neronis, all the way towards the Colli Albani, the Palatine, and the valley of the Forum.⁹²

We are not informed of what happened to this construction after Nero's death: was it torn down for ideological reasons, or was it affected by the fire of 80 CE, or even by an earthquake that occurred in 68 CE, as has been suggested by the French excavators?⁹³ What we do know is that it was not part of Domitian's complex in this area of the Palatine; we see however that the terrace on top of which new structures were erected maintained the same orientation as the Neronian one, and it was likewise occupied by a garden. Indeed, under Domitian the north-west terrace appears to have been used as a 'hanging garden', surrounded by porticoes and ending in a large semicircle, forming an impressive façade (comparable to that of the Domus Augustana) towards the valley of the Colosseum.⁹⁴ A suggestive interpretation locates here the famous Adonea (a garden with planted pots) where Domitian, according to Philostratus, had met the philosopher Apollonius of Tyana.⁹⁵ Water basins, *vivaria*, and a green garden also featured in the single-storied cryptoporticus that characterized the Flavian phase of the

91 Prückner and Storz (1974).

92 The archaeological remains consist mainly of a massive substructure showing a complex mechanism that would have enabled the floor above to rotate; as the floor would have been a wooden one, nothing of it remains today. See Villedieu (2010); Villedieu (2011a); Villedieu (2011b); Villedieu (2012). See also Tomei (2011) 134.

93 Villedieu, Antré, and del Tutto (2007) 97. No clear traces of fire have been found which can be connected to the fire of 64 CE. See also Coarelli (2012) 503.

94 Villedieu, Antré, and del Tutto (2007) 98–99; see also Wulf-Rheidt (2015) 12.

95 Phil. *Vita* 7.32.1. On the archaeological finds in the area, see Villedieu (2001) 71–72. For an overview of the discussion regarding the location of the Gardens of Adonis or *aulé Adonidos*, see Coarelli (2012) 515–532.

Gardenstadium.⁹⁶ All in all, it is evident that a relationship between Nero's architecture and that of the Flavian palace, in its different phases, existed.

The Palatine under Domitian after 81 CE: Main Entrance

Domitian chose to retain the main entrance to his palace in the same location as Nero's, at the entrance of the Via Sacra, in the north-eastern slope of the Palatine. Interestingly for our research, the entrance to the imperial residences on the Palatine had changed continuously under Domitian's predecessors. Augustus planned for his house mainly to be viewed, and possibly accessed, from the Forum Boarium, exploiting the historic significance of this site. Caligula subverted the Augustan relation of a house-temple complex (with the house subordinate to the Temple of Apollo), and turned the entrance of a temple (Castor and Pollux in the Forum Romanum) into the *vestibulum* of his house. Claudius probably used Augustus' entrance to the Palatine complex, the one famously adorned with the *corona civica*, but as he also created the first nucleus of the Domus Tiberiana, another access and focus point should be located in this area.⁹⁷ Finally, Nero had moved the main forecourt of his house to the opposite side of the hill, at the location of ancient Palatine gate, closer to his artificial lake, which is also where he placed his magnificent Colossus. Domitian proceeded to build a new, spectacular ramp (now open again to the public to provide quick access from the Palatine to the Forum), connected to the area of the Domus Tiberiana, where the entrance to Caligula's and Claudius' complexes was located, but he also most likely kept the entrance first engineered by Nero as main entrance to his own new complex.⁹⁸ This entrance coincided with the traditional access way to the Palatine from the Forum, through the Clivus Palatinus. In Nero's case its connection with the heart of his urban park was evident; with Domitian, things are a little more uncertain, as the entrance has not been yet clearly located nor the buildings around it entirely excavated.⁹⁹

96 Riedel (2008); Wulf-Rheidt (2015) 12.

97 On Claudius hanging a *corona navalis* next to Augustus' *corona civica*, see Suet. *Claud.* 17.5, as cited in Coarelli (2012) 397–398 (*area Palatina*). The entrance to the Domus Tiberiana is referred to as *postica pars Palati*: see Suet. *Otho* 6.2; see also Suet. *Claud.* 18.2 (*posticum*), Tac. *Hist.* 1.27, Plut. *Vit. Galb.* 24.7. See Coarelli (2012) 399.

98 Wiseman (1987) 411; Packer (2003) 177–178.

99 See, for example, Finsen (1969) 8; Zanker (2002) 107–108; André, Thébert, and Villedieu (2004) 119–121; Zanker (2004) 96; Sojc, Coret, and Götz (2012) 116–117; Mar (2009) 257–261; Wulf-Rheidt and Sojc (2009) 269. It has been recently and tentatively suggested to interpret the structures

The shift towards the same area of Nero's monumental entrance, however, seems to have been inevitable, as the centre of Flavian Rome coincided with the area covered by Nero's house. A new entrance here would have been another step towards the appropriation of Neronian Rome.¹⁰⁰ Along the Via Sacra and on the road leading up to the Palatine, in fact, Domitian completed and erected three arches celebrating his family: the arch dedicated to the *divus* Vespasianus in *Sacra Via summa* (the stretch of the road between the Velian Hill and the building of the Regia); the arch for the *divus* Titus; and the arch for the living Domitian, at the entrance to his *domus*.¹⁰¹ Despite being positioned on the Via Sacra, these arches should be viewed, effectively, as part of the entrance way to Domitian's residence, celebrating his dynasty rather than his military triumphs, as Coarelli claims.¹⁰² Because they were connected to adjacent Augustan monuments, the three arches were also linked to Domitian's rebuilding of the Augustan Meta Sudans, located at the junction between the Clivus Palatinus and the road connecting the Circus Maximus to the Esquiline Hill.¹⁰³ Like the arches, the Meta significantly functioned as a reminder of Augustus's Rome, and was aptly employed by the Flavians to rebrand as 'Augustan' a site previously destined to Nero's *stagnum* and Colossus.¹⁰⁴

between the Domus Flavia and the Vigna Barberini, the so-called 'no man's land', as the vestibule to Domitian's residence: see Wulf-Rheidt (2012b) 99–105; Wulf-Rheidt (2014) 8–9 fig. 3; Wulf-Rheidt (2015) 9–10.

100 On Neronian changes to the Via Sacra, with the first phase of a porticoed road, see Carandini et al. (2011) 144. On Vespasian's alteration to the area of the Via Sacra in order to regain the space occupied by the Neronian vestibule, see Coarelli (2012) 474–486, esp. 478.

101 On the interpretation and positioning of the arches, as represented on the relief of the Haterii (Vatican Museums, inv. no. 9998), see Coarelli (1983) 26ff., followed by Torelli (1987) 573–579. For a more recent discussion on the *status quaestionis*, see Coarelli (2012) 478–483. See also Mar (2005) 163–166 figs. 86–87.

102 Coarelli (2012) 482.

103 On the Flavian Meta Sudans as emerged from recent excavations: Panella (1996a); Panella (1996b); Zeggio and Pardini (2007). For its value within the Flavian building programme, see among others Torelli (1987) 573; Darwall-Smith (1996) 216–217; Mar (2009) 328; Torelli (2016); Moormann (2018a). In Longfellow (2011) 37, it is suggested that construction of the Meta may have been already initiated by Titus.

104 On the pre-existing Neronian structures in relation to the Flavian Meta Sudans, see Panella (2011). For Augustan public building programmes as a model for the Flavians, see also the dedication of the *sodales Titii* to the emperor as 'conservator of public ceremonies and restorer of temples' (*CIL* VI.934): see Torelli (1987) 574; Coarelli (2009a) 69. More generally for Flavian architectonic connections to Augustan Rome, see Packer (2003).

The Palatine under Domitian after 81 CE: Decorations

Another form of correspondence between Neronian and Domitianic elements can be found in the decorative apparatus of their imperial dwellings. The now bare walls of the Flavian buildings on the Palatine were originally clad with mortar as a support for marble veneer. The only remaining fragments of wall paintings were found decorating the upper zones of otherwise marble-cladded walls.¹⁰⁵ The use of marble as decoration in the Flavian residence is confirmed by a passage in Suetonius' *Life of Domitian*, where it is said that the emperor had the walls of a peristyle covered with lustrous phengite marble.¹⁰⁶ From Pliny we know that this particular stone was discovered in Cappadocia during Nero's reign and used in his *aurea domus*.¹⁰⁷

Indeed, the use of marble cladding in the Golden House has since long been established, and if we look at a map of the decorative apparatus in the 140 rooms of the Oppian pavilion we will notice a distribution of marble veneer that can be explained by taking into consideration the hierarchy of the rooms.¹⁰⁸ The largest and centrally positioned rooms were decorated with marble veneer only, whereas there was a degrading scale in the rooms' importance in accordance with the degrading amount of marble applied. The same may have counted for the decorations of floors with *opus sectile* rather than *opus tessellatum* mosaics: precious fragments found on the Palatine probably testify to similar floors in Nero's properties. Nero was the first, as far as we know, to have used marble veneer on such a large scale, and not only in his second residence, but already in his first, as attested by the decoration in the nymphaeum of the Domus Transitoria.¹⁰⁹ With its floors in *opus sectile*, its marble-clad wall, the *tarsiae* (marble figurines inserted in the marble veneer of the walls), and its painted decoration confined to the ceilings and the vaults, the nymphaeum is a perfect example of

105 Rooms 334 and 340 (latrine): Sojc (2005–2006) 340 fig. 2; Pflug (2012) 57; Sojc (2012a) 23 figs. 10 (room 334) and 11 (room 340). For a comparison between room 340 and room 71 in the Oppian pavilion of the Domus Aurea (Flavian period), see Esposito and Moormann (2021). For the decoration in room 71 alone, see Meyboom and Moormann (2013) 189–190.

106 Suet. *Dom.* 14.4: *Tempore uero suspecti periculi appropinquante sollicitior in dies porticum, in quibus spatium consuere, parietes phengite lapide distinxit, e cuius splendore per imagines quidquid a tergo fieret prouideret.* 'He became more anxious day by day as the time of the danger he suspected grew near. So, he put a facade of phengite stone on the walls of the portico where he usually walked, so that he could see in advance, from reflections in its polished surface, whatever might happen behind him' (translation: Frederick [2003] 211).

107 Plin. *HN* 36.163.

108 Peters and Meyboom (1993) 60 fig. 1; Meyboom and Moormann (2013) 71–73.

109 Bragantini (2011) 193–196; Tomei (2011) 129; Meyboom and Moormann (2013) 74–76.

Pliny's statement that marble had completely overshadowed painting as the preferred form of decoration.¹¹⁰

Flavian wall paintings appear to have continued the style of Neronian decorations, making it difficult to draw a clear line between Neronian and Flavian enterprises.¹¹¹ Other fruitful comparisons between Domitianic and Neronian decorations can be deduced by studying Neronian private buildings outside Rome, such as Nero's suburban villas at Subiaco and Arcinazzo, both located in the immediate surroundings of the city. Investigations on both sites have been conducted in the past by Maria Antonietta Tomei, who fittingly compared the decoration of the exedra in Domitian's Palatine residence with the decoration of a room in the Neronian villa at Arcinazzo.¹¹² Once again, we see elements developed at Nero's time make their way into Domitianic buildings without a real attempt at innovation or differentiation.

Conclusions

I believe I have presented enough evidence to support my initial statement that the Flavian palace on the Palatine owed many elements to Neronian architecture, and that a certain continuity with the Julio-Claudian presence on the hill is undeniable. To Domitian we are indebted for laying down the structures that have later come to embody the model for the Roman 'imperial palace', but this accomplishment might never have occurred without the precedent of Nero's extensive villa in the heart of Rome. The impact of Nero's

110 Plin. *HN* 35.2: *primumque dicemus quae restant de pictura, arte quondam nobili – tunc cum expeteretur regibus populisque – et alios nobilitante, quos esset dignata posteris tradere, nunc vero in totum marmoribus pulsa, iam quidem et auro, nec tantum ut parietes toti operiantur, verum et interraso marmore vermiculatisque ad effigies rerum et animalium crustis* ('and first we shall say what remains to be said about painting, an art that was formerly illustrious, at the time when it was in high demand with kings and nations and when it ennobled others whom it deigned to transmit to posterity. But at the present time it has been entirely ousted by marbles, and indeed finally also by gold, and not only to the point that whole party walls are covered – we have also marble engraved with designs and embossed marble slabs carved in wriggling lines to represent objects and animals'). On the decoration in the Palatine nymphaeum: Carettoni (1949); Dohrn (1965); Bastet (1971); Bastet (1972); de Vos (1990); de Vos (1995); Bragantini (2011); Tomei (2011).

111 For an overview of Flavian wall paintings in the Oppian pavilion, Domus Flavia, and Domus Augustana, see Esposito and Moormann (2021). For post-Neronian decorations in the Esquiline building, see also Meyboom and Moormann (2013) 96. An attempt to define a 'Flavian style' as distinguished from Neronian wall paintings was made in Thomas (1995) 136–155; Strocka (2010); Esposito (2014) 151–152. More sceptical on the possibility of such a division remains Moormann (2018b) 11.

112 Tomei (1993).

intervention on the landscape of Rome had reached such a scale that it was impossible for the Flavians to go back not only to the traditionally charged spaces and buildings of the Republic, but even to the status of Augustan Rome, despite their attempts at claiming as much.¹¹³ The reality of a century of building programmes on the Palatine could not be ignored. Nero's plan of a *nova urbs* had transformed the Palatine into the centre of the city, and thus the empire, in ways that had profoundly shaped the topography as well as the concept of the city.¹¹⁴

Sources indicate that politically, and possibly personally, Domitian did not look up to Nero as a model, rather preferring, for instance, Tiberius' example of private reserve. Partly, this reserve was reinforced by the Flavian emperor in his Palatine residence, where he sought to distance himself as much as possible from his subjects, not unlike Tiberius in his Capri retreat. By reading Statius and Martial, we see a portrait emerging of an emperor who wishes to be admired from a distance, within reach but never too close, as in the notorious banquet described by Statius, in which Domitian towers over his guests as Jupiter from the heavens.¹¹⁵ Ultimately, in the grand halls of his house, with ceilings as high as a temple, Domitian delighted in being represented as a god, and he certainly liked to think of himself as a god-in-waiting, with his father, his brother, and even his infant son already ascended to the heavens.¹¹⁶ An attitude which comes much closer to Nero's example than Tiberius', or even Augustus', who is ultimately Domitian's unattainable model. Many clues scattered throughout the sources point to a continuous striving, on Domitian's part, to imitate Augustus, whereas in the eyes of his contemporaries he is dangerously, perhaps inadvertently, treading in the footsteps of Nero. It almost seems that while he is consciously attempting to replicate Augustus' golden age, he unconsciously ends up imitating Nero's version of it.

113 Frederick (2003) 205–207; Flower (2006) 232.

114 For the new value of the Palatine, see Mar (2009). For the Neronian *nova urbs* (Tac. *Ann.* 15.43) as a model, see Palombi (2013) 31.

115 Stat. *Silv.* 4.2. The hall in which the banquet took place is usually identified with the so-called Cenatio Iovis in the Domus Flavia; on its ideological value and 'distancing effect', see Bek (1983) 91; Zanker (2002) 117–119; McCullough (2008–2009); Mar (2009) 341–345.

116 Stat. *Silv.* 4.2.18–23: *Tectum augustum, ingens, non centum insigne columnis / sed quantae superos / caelumque Atlante remisso / sustentare queant. Stupet hoc uicina Tonantis / regia teque pari laetantur sede locatum / numina* ('A huge and august building, distinguished not with a hundred columns, but with as many as could support the gods and heaven, giving Atlas a rest. The nearby palace of Jupiter is stunned, and the gods delighted that you have a home just like theirs') (translation: Frederick [2003] 215). On Domitian as god and a god in his own house, see Mart. 12.15.6–10; Mart. 8.39, as cited in Darwall-Smith (1996) 203.

In the case of the Palatine residences, it appears likely that Nero's buildings provided the best model for the architectural innovations that were expected at the time. From a practical point of view, it was only logical that Domitian's architect Rabirius would integrate Neronian inventions within the new palace he was building. Ideologically, however, Domitian and Rabirius were also able to make sure the new *domus* would be part of a 'physical and cultural matrix', by reusing the history of the Palatine to the emperor's advantage.¹¹⁷ We see a glimpse of this strategy of evoking the past recorded by Martial in epigram 8.80.7–8: *Sic nova dum condis, revocas, Auguste, priora / Debentur quae sunt quaeque fuere tibi*, 'Thus, Augustus, while founding the new, you bring back the old. What is and what was alike are owed to you.'¹¹⁸

Indeed, where Nero's building policies with regard to his private residence had failed,¹¹⁹ Domitian's enterprises succeeded, and the moral condemnation of his rule did not affect the appreciation of his residence. Surely, Statius' and Martial's exaggerated praises of his house while Domitian was alive turned into harsh accusations of grandeur at his death, yet an undeniable fact remains. All following emperors will continue to live in the splendid house that he had built, if necessary, enlarging rather than reducing it, unlike what Vespasian had done with Nero's Domus Aurea. It almost seems as if the Flavian policy of erasing Nero's memory while using its innovations, especially those somehow connected to Augustus and the 'good' Julio-Claudians, had proved so successful that ensuing emperors, and their followers, deemed it wise to replicate this policy: they condemned Domitian, but not his achievements.¹²⁰ These were taken over and absorbed into the public displays of following principates in new attempts to bring back the memory of Augustus. The inescapability of Nero's Rome had become the inescapability of Domitian's, on an even larger scale, while Domitian's attempts to cover his innovations with an Augustan patina proved an opportunity too good to be missed.

The public value of Domitian's Palatine house, thus, overcame the condemnation for the private excesses of the emperor, as two separate spheres: while Domitian started to be depicted as a *calvus Nero* (Juv. 4.38) or a *dimidius Nero* (Tertull. *Apol.* 5.4), Domitian's *arx inaccessa* became

117 On the concept of 'usable past' in architecture, see Stern (2011) 1.

118 Translation: Rosati (2006) 54.

119 On the moralistic condemnation of Nero's houses, see Elsner (1994) 123 ('Nero only became an outrageous and prodigal builder when he fell from power'); Flower (2006) 229.

120 On the similar faith of Nero' and Domitian's public remembrance after their death, see Wiseman (1987); Charles (2002); Flower (2006) 198–199. See also Schulz in this volume.

Trajan's communal house.¹²¹ In the *Chronicle of 354*, Domitian's house is cited as one of the emperor's public works¹²²: it is the public value of the house, indeed, that we see perpetuated by Domitian's successors. Continuity, of both the imperial rule and the imperial residence symbolizing it, was no longer at stake in 96 CE.¹²³ After over a century of rule, the time was finally ripe for the Roman emperors to live in a 'palace'. Domitian had made sure they would have the best architecture to do so.¹²⁴

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121 On Domitian's inaccessibility and Trajan's availability to their courts and visitors, see Plin. *Pan.* 48–49; on Domitian's building 'mania', see Plut. *Vit. Public.* 15, as cited in Darwall-Smith (1996) 203. On the contraposition between Domitian's reclusiveness and Trajan's openness in particular, as described in ancient sources, see Braund (1996).

122 *Chronicle of 354*, part 16; as cited in Jones (1992) 81; Cooley (2015) 191.

123 Flower (2006) 235.

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5 Some Observations on the Templum Pacis: A Summa of Flavian Politics

Eric Moormann

Abstract

In this contribution I want to assess the specific cultural and propagandistic functions of the Templum Pacis on the basis of its composition, such as architecture, use of material, and art treasures. We will put to the test whether the Templum Pacis can be considered a Flavian reaction to both Nero and his politics and Augustan art and architecture, and consider how the temple's symbolism relates to wider Flavian politics and imperial ideology. Can we interpret this temple as a symbol of eternal peace bestowed by an archetypal 'wise emperor'? And does the construction of the Templum Pacis indeed suggest a restitution of Rome's treasures to the citizens of Rome, as formulated by Pliny (*HN* 34.84)?

Keywords: Flavian Rome; Templum Pacis; Domitian; Vespasian; Titus; Nero

The past is not destroyed by the present but survives in it as a latent force. No phase of history should be treated as irrevocably finished.

– E. Wind, *Art and Anarchy*, 16

*Atque et omnibus quae rettuli clarissima quaeque in urbe iam sunt dicata a Vespasiano principe in templo Pacis aliisque operibus uiolentia Neronis in urbem conuecta et in sellariis domus aureae disposita.*¹

¹ Plin. *HN* 34.84: 'Of all things I have told about, some of the most famous ones in town have already been dedicated by the Emperor Vespasian in the Temple of Peace and in other of his buildings. Nero had violently brought them to Rome and exposed them in the rooms of his Golden House.'

Introduction

When the emperor Tiberius had Lysippos' Apoxyomenos or Scrapper brought from the Baths of Agrippa to his private bedroom in his residence, probably situated on the Palatine, there rose such a fervid protest among the citizens of Rome that the emperor decided to return it to the baths. Apparently, he was deeply impressed by the people's indignation about the stealing of a public work of art for private pleasure and was forced to remedy his inappropriate deed immediately.² No such detailed stories about theft from and restitution to the public domain have been transmitted about subsequent emperors in written sources, but the huge art collection of Nero, displayed in the pavilions belonging to his Golden House, can also be considered a set of treasures stolen from public property, regardless of whether this is true or not.³ Pliny tells us that Nero possessed numerous statues, many of which came to the Templum Pacis and other public spaces like the arcades of the Colosseum after the emperor's death, thus becoming public property in the process.⁴ Clearly, the accusation is closely connected to Nero's bad reputation. And, although Pliny does not explicitly say so, this action made the objects some sort of justified *spolia* taken away from a despised and justly removed emperor, and rightly given back to the citizens and displayed in public spaces. Many of these *spolia* were housed in the Templum Pacis, making this one of the principal functions of the large monument erected on the Velia by Vespasian after he took power in 69 CE.⁵ Another metaphoric use of *spolia* was the opening of Nero's Golden House properties to the public by installing the Amphitheatrum Flavium in its centre.

If we can believe the written sources, Vespasian was a rustic and military man, acting according to old Roman traditions, and portrayed as a late Republican elderly and experienced citizen rather than as the eternal youth as which the, admittedly younger, Nero had himself represented.⁶ He could

2 See Plin. *HN* 34.62. Briefly mentioned by Miles (2008) 259 and Wellington Gahtan and Pegazzano (2015) 12; Liverani (2015) 73. Liverani (2015) gives a good overview of public collections.

3 Miles (2008) 252 shares Nero under the 'Verrine emperors' and discusses his thefts (pp. 255–259), criticized precisely because of the exportation of works of art from the public domain. At Delphi alone, he would have stolen 500 statues (Paus. 10.6). Cf. Wellington Gahtan and Pegazzano (2015) 9–15, esp. 14.

4 Pliny also mentions two works of which the whereabouts after Nero's death are not recorded by the encyclopaedist: a bronze Amazon by Strongylion (*HN* 34.82) and a bronze Alexander the Great that he wanted to be gilded (*HN* 34.63).

5 Darwall-Smith (1996) 20, 254; Miles (2008) 259–265.

6 Our image of Vespasianus in this respect mainly relies on Suet. *Vesp.* See ultimately various contributions in Coarelli (2009) and Zissos (2016).

not be accused of having possessed a fine sense or a great zeal for collecting works of arts. For him, assembling precious bronze and marble figures from past and present in a public location with a strong Flavian connotation was a triumphal action, as if they were *manubiae* or *spolia*, conquered at the expense of Nero. As a matter of fact, the construction of the complex was financed *ex manubiis* as was the Colosseum, but we do not have an inscription to substantiate this.⁷ All these actions can be seen as actions of imperial ideology, creating an abyssal distance from Nero.

Begun by Vespasian in 71 CE as a triumphal remembrance of the reach of power and the ‘pacification’ of Judaea, the Templum Pacis or, as Procopius called it, Ἀγορὰ or Φόρος Εἰρήνης was completed as soon as 75.⁸ It would be embellished and enlarged during the reign of his second son, Domitian, from 81 onwards: Domitian installed a library as one of the main additions realized by him, so the complex in its final state can be considered a Domitianic project as well. Vespasian wanted to underline that the *pax* venerated here was a military peace, which had found its culmination in the victory over Judaea and other liminal areas of the empire. In this way he created a peace monument similar to Augustus’ Ara Pacis Augustae, be it on a much grander scale.⁹ The inventory of the Templum Pacis included real war spoils, viz. the treasures from the Temple of Jerusalem that were put on display in this complex (see below). These exhibits evidently fitted the emperor’s down-to-earth reputation and were self-explanatory. Although there are certainly strong correspondences between the Templum Pacis and the Forum Augustum,¹⁰ the complexes differ in concept, for although the Forum also commemorated victories against internal enemies without exhibiting spoils, it served to display the ancestry of the Julii and the connection with the *uiri illustres* of Rome’s glorious past. In the Templum Pacis, the exposition of Neronian treasures met with the urgency to demonstrate internal peace and the restitution of (Augustan) peace and order, whereas ancestry did not play a role.¹¹ The Flavians had to find other ways to justify

7 Darwall-Smith (1996) 32.

8 Joseph. *BJ* 158–162, Cass. Dio 66.5.1, Procop. *Goth.* 8.21.12. See Miles (2008) 263–265.

9 See Goldman-Petri (2021) 45–46 for this comparison worked out more extensively.

10 Ideologically, see Naas (2002) 438–440; conceptually and architectonically, see, most recently, Tucci (2017) 76–101.

11 The recent excavations of parts of the monument hidden under the Via dei Fori Imperiali and immediate surroundings have generated a vast bibliography. I have made use of the following studies (and those mentioned in subsequent notes): Darwall-Smith (1996) 55–68; Coarelli (1999); Köb (2000) 305–324; La Rocca (2001) 195–207; Naas (2002) 440–443; Meneghini and Santangeli Valenzani (2006); Meneghini and Santangeli Valenzani (2007) 61–70; Coarelli (2009) 71–75; various contributions in Coarelli (2009) 158–201; Taraporewalla (2010); Bravi (2009, 2010, 2012,

their imperium and must have sought the means to place themselves at a great distance from Nero.

Many new archaeological data on the *Templum Pacis* have come to light thanks to excavations in the south-eastern part of the complex in 1998–2000, more or less under the modern *Via dei Fori Imperiali*, in front of the SS. Cosmas and Damian, and at the backsides of the *Basilica Aemilia* in the *Forum Romanum* and the *Basilica of Constantine* on the *Velia* (figs. 5.4–5.5). In the following sections the main elements of this complex will be discussed and interpreted in the light of the main question of this paper, that is, how the temple's symbolism related to wider Flavian politics and imperial ideology. As a result, one can see parts of the original pavement, the cella, the flight of steps of the south-western portico, and columns belonging to both construction phases (fig. 5.4).¹² The archaeologists of the municipal superintendency have done a good job in visualizing the remains in situ and providing the scholarly world with a rapid stream of publications. This does not exclude critical assessments of the results presented. Recently, the discussion has been given new input by the extensive and extremely detailed publication by Pier Luigi Tucci, who approaches the reconstructions proposed by the Roman archaeologists as a professional architect, in an often harshly critical and caustic as well as verbose treatment, providing lengthy comments on earlier suggestions next to his alternative solutions. It is by no means the purpose of my contribution to provide thorough technical assessments of the data and the interpretations of the Roman archaeologists, let alone a new reconstruction, matters of which I am not capable.¹³ Yet, we will discuss some of the possibilities offered by various scholars, with a focus on the connections with the existing Augustan and Neronian topography and architecture.

2014); Rea et al. (2014); Leithoff (2014) 197–205; Meneghini (2015) 49–67; La Rocca, Meneghini, and Parisi Presicce (2015); Tucci (2017).

12 In modern cinema, this newly excavated and reconstructed area has achieved a Fellini-like momentum through a brief passage in Paolo Sorrentino's 2018 film *Loro* on Silvio Berlusconi's policy: a huge dustcart tries to avoid killing a passing rat and falls into the hole created by the excavation at the end of the last millennium. It loses its trash, which expands all over Rome and changes into ecstasy pills in a luxurious swimming pool.

13 For reviews, see Packer (2018); Moormann (2019); Laurence (2020). In his review, Santangeli Valenzani (2018) is more sceptical, which is understandable due to his involvement in the excavations of the complex and its further investigations. Tucci replied to Packer (2018) (*Journal of Roman Archaeology* 31 [2018] 722–729) and Santangeli Valenzani (2018) (*Bryn Mawr Classical Review* 2018.12.39).

The Topography of the *Templum Pacis*

The *Templum Pacis* is situated in the old city centre, amidst crowded living quarters and venerable public spaces (figs. 5.1–5.2 on p. 133). It covers the northern slope of the *Velia*, formerly occupied by the Republican *Macellum*, which was destroyed in the large Neronian fire of 64. It is unlikely that this ruined complex would have remained completely empty until the 70s, unless we take into account the turmoil of 68–69. If we are allowed to assume the presence of still usable remains when the *Templum Pacis* was built, this would imply that restorations (at least partial ones) had been made to secure a continued use until the *Macellum*'s demolition in 71.¹⁴ The structure of the *Macellum*, a square peristyle with large open spaces in the middle, might even have influenced the shape of the *Templum Pacis*. At the north-eastern side, the *Templum Pacis* was flanked by the *Argiletum*, the main passage from the *Forum Romanum* to the *Subura*, a large and busy space which would become Domitian's lavishly adorned *Forum Transitorium* (fig. 5.2a on p. 133). At the south-western side it was flanked by the *Basilica Aemilia* in the *Forum Romanum* and at the north-eastern side by the *Subura*. In the north-western and south-eastern porticoes there were *exedras*, one of which is nowadays under the *Torre dei Conti*.¹⁵ Concerning the south-eastern side, it is not clear if the *Templum*'s back wall stood on the terrain of Nero's Golden House, the western border of which ran on top of the *Velia*.¹⁶ Large sections of this huge Neronian *rus in urbe* were now occupied by the *Amphitheatrum Flavium* and the Baths of Titus.¹⁷ All these interventions testify to the erasure of the Neronian urban landscape by the new Flavian urban space. Huge interventions in other areas of the town, especially in the *Campus Martius*, have obliterated previous buildings, among which Neronian ones, to create a new Flavian Rome.

Functionally and topographically, the *Templum Pacis* stands apart, since its high-rising enclosure wall fenced the complex off from its surroundings and created a closed character and isolated position, while at the same time forming a huge border area within the densely packed urban space. This might be explained as a means to mark the distinction between the former Neronian private properties and the civic public areas in an act of

14 Taraporewalla (2010) 153–154; Scaroina (2015). On the *Macellum* itself, see *LTUR* III s.v. *Macellum* (pp. 201–203); Tucci (2017) 15 (it might have been part of Nero's Golden House), 19.

15 Diebner (2001). On earlier work here, see Colini (1937), who refers to an excavation in 1890 and quotes an old report; also in Tucci (2017) *passim*. One of the main finds was a marble statue base with a Greek inscription referring to a work by Polykleitos (see Table 5.1 no. 19 on p. 159).

16 See Moormann (2018) and Varner (2017).

17 Millar (2005); Varner (2017); Moormann (2018).

monumentalization similar to the construction of the Amphitheatrum Flavium, which enabled a *damnatio memoriae* of Nero through the destruction of his Golden House. Due to this block-like and closed nature, the Templum Pacis did not constitute an enlargement of the Forum Romanum. This is also true functionally, since there are no commodities for commerce and administration integrated into the complex. Neither could the Templum Pacis be seen as an expansion of the Forum Iulium and the Forum Augustum, which commemorated the triumph over old internal enemies of the state and where the grandeur of the two military chiefs in question was at stake. Nevertheless, the religious element is present in all three forums, with temples rising against the back wall of each portico. In this particular instance, its principal function evinces from its name, Templum Pacis; indeed, much more than in the parallel cases and in the imperial fora, its form covers its name in that the complex was an enclosed religious area – (*templum*; in Greek: τέμενος¹⁸), in which an *aedes* was the focus.

The orientation of the monument, with the main sections at the south-eastern side, has nothing to do with the demands posed by the terrain. The setting might be a mirror image of the Forum Iulium, with the Temple of Venus at the rear end of the north-western side, whereas the Templum Pacis has the actual Temple of Pax also at the rear end, in this case the south-eastern side. Both stood more or less at a square angle with the Temple of Mars Ultor, standing against the rear northern wall of the Forum Augustum. The south-eastern side of the Templum Pacis might have been chosen for this purpose of temple rotation as well, but, more importantly, the south-east was the direction from which Vespasian came to Rome as an emperor. Yet, being within the precinct, many visitors would no longer bother about the orientation. What might be more relevant for them to appreciate the monument is that the best light would fall on this principal side in the afternoon, at the time when most people would have had occasion to stroll through the Templum's gardens after finishing their duties.

In 192 CE the Templum Pacis burnt down, and under Septimius Severus a reconstruction was created, which was probably completed in 203 CE.¹⁹ This included the instalment of the *Forma Urbis Romae* on the outer wall of the south-eastern hall (nowadays the church of SS. Cosmas and Damian), which might have substituted a predecessor. This wall was the interior, south-western wall of the hall flanking the cella of the shrine of Pax, and

18 See *ThesCRA* IV, 1–4 (on the Greek *temenos*); 340–344 (on the Roman *templum*).

19 Cass. Dio 72.24.1–2. On the date of 191 or 192 CE, see Dix and Houston (2006) 692 n. 151 with bibliography. On 203 CE, see Tucci (2017) 349.

Figure 5.1 Plan of the Forum Pacis area with the *Forma Urbis Romae* fragments integrated. After Colini (1937) pl. 3; redrawn by R. P. Reijnen, Radboud University.

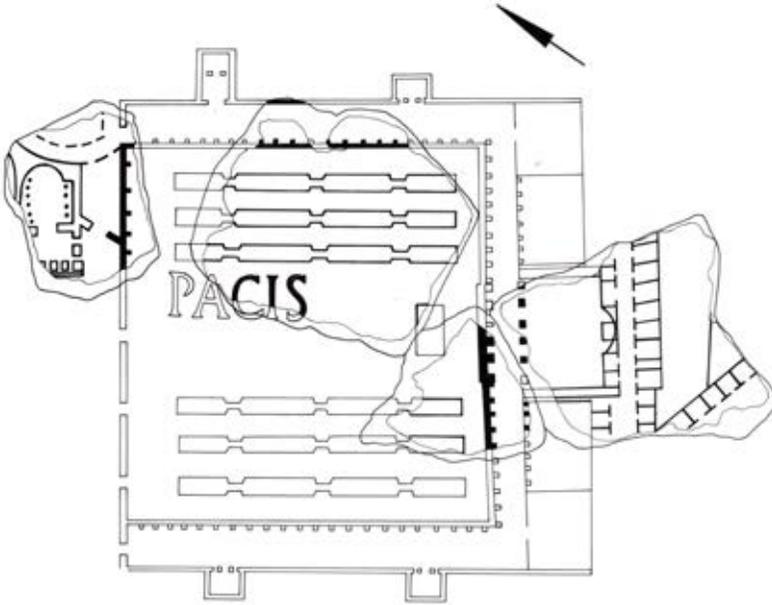


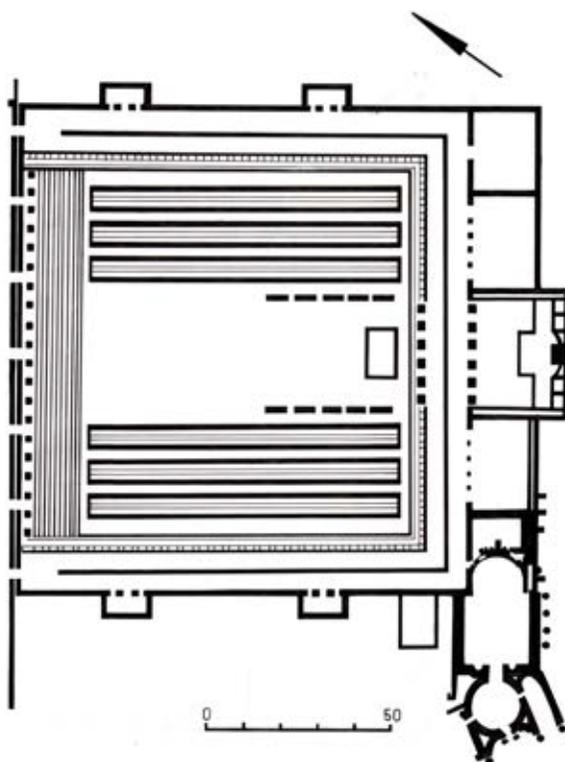
Figure 5.2 Fragments of the *Forma Urbis Romae* displaying the plan of the Forum Pacis.



is now in view from the Via dei Fori Imperiali. We will not discuss this reconstruction, of which the complex of the monastery and church of SS. Cosmas and Damian are the principal remains.²⁰ Yet the Templum Pacis'

²⁰ The bibliography on the Forma is vast. I refer to Meneghini and Santangeli Valenzani (2006); Meneghini (2014); De Caprariis (2016) and Tucci (2017) for recent updates.

Figure 5.3 Plan of the *Templum Pacis*. After Tucci (2017) fig. 22; redrawn by R. P. Reijnen, Radboud University.



plan as known from four fragments of the *Forma Urbis Romae* will form the basis of our reflections, as it must have remained more or less the same (figs. 5.1–5.2).

The *Templum*'s shape (fig. 5.3) was that of a traditional *porticus*, a type introduced on the *Campus Martius* in the third century BCE as the circumference of temples built after military victories; and it became popular over the centuries in variants, another being the Theatre of Pompey on the *Campus Martius*, which was also full of green spaces, water basins, and works of art.²¹ Other clear predecessors for this traditional and widely spread form are the 'Nordmarkt' in Miletus, the Temple of Zeus Soter in Megalopolis,

²¹ On the type, see Gros (1996) 95–120; 38 *porticus* in Rome are discussed in *LTUR* IV s.v. *Porticus* (pp. 116–153). On the *porticus* of Pompey, see inter alia *LTUR* IV s.v. *Porticus Pompei*

and the Porticus Vipsania and the Porticus Liviae in Rome.²² All these monuments fulfilled important functions in their environment, but also had an isolated and marked position thanks to their blind, exterior walls. Tucci has worked out the possible connections of the *Templum Pacis* with antecedents in a much more extensive way and, apart from recalling some of these examples, he deservedly stresses the connection with the Forum Augustum.²³ The *Templum Pacis* itself was a possible source of inspiration for the Library of Hadrian in Athens.²⁴

Let's cast a glance at the *Templum's* shape and building elements. The enclosure measured 135 x 145 m, with the main openings at the north-western side, towards the Argiletum, and subsidiary openings at the north-eastern and south-western sides (figs. 5.1–5.3).²⁵ The four-aisled hall circumscribed a large piazza at whose south-eastern side the shrine dedicated to Pax dominated the centre (figs. 5.2c on p. 133, 5.4 on p. 137). Its front was the central higher section of the portico, with columns of 50 feet (14.78 m), and at the back of this shrine was the acrolithic statue of Pax, probably a figure of 5 to 7 m, of which a hand seems to have been found, who sat on a 4 m high podium.²⁶ A large altar was erected in front of the shrine.²⁷ At the north and south sides of the *aedes* double halls were added under Domitian, of which only a part of the south-eastern section has been more or less preserved within the complex of SS. Cosmas and Damian.

A bone of contention is the interpretation of the two sets of three rows of longish rectangular shapes on the *Forma Urbis Romae*, running from east to west along an open central stretch and the side porticoes (figs. 5.2b, 5.5). Most often, it has been argued that these would represent beds of flowers or shrubs, which have also been regarded as representations of

(pp. 148–150); Miles (2008) 231–237. Ancient evocations of the garden are in Prop. 2.32.12–13; on the works of art, see inter alia Plin. *HN* 36.41.

22 La Rocca (2001) 203–204 figs. 22–24.

23 Tucci (2017) 76–101. The comparison with the Forum Augustum was briefly made earlier by Millar (2005) 110.

24 Colini (1937) 36; La Rocca (2001) 203.

25 Most recently Tucci (2017) 14. Other dimensions are given as well (e.g. Naas [2002] 441: 110 x 135 m; Millar [2005] 110: 140 x 150 m). Whereas the openings in the Argiletum wall can more or less precisely be reconstructed on the basis of the still partially standing north-eastern wall of the Forum Transitorium, the other sides lack evidence concerning entrances.

26 Meneghini (2009) 83–84. As to the cult statue, Meneghini follows Packer (2003) 171–172. For more detail, see Pinna Carboni (2014).

27 Tucci (2017) 240–241 suggests that the Cancellaria Reliefs, found near the Cancellaria palace on the Campus Martius, formed the altar's revetment. They would have been removed, when the recarving of Domitian's head into that of Nerva after 96 did not have a satisfactory result. This interesting suggestion, however, cannot be substantiated.

'botanical imperialism'.²⁸ An alternative would be that they were *euripi*, channel-shaped water basins like the ones in some large residences in the Vesuvian area.²⁹ Eugenio La Rocca suggested a mix of the two, that is six *euripi* and a series of 'rose galliche' ('Gallic roses'), of which numerous flower pots were found.³⁰ On the basis of the find of vestiges of the three south-eastern rectangular spaces corresponding with the figures on the *Forma Urbis Romae*, the excavator Roberto Meneghini argued that they would not have been real basins but marble plateaus with raised borders covered by a permanent layer of water. Like La Rocca, Meneghini and his team reject the idea of gardens, but point at a botanical element in the shape of the *ollae foratae* or plant pots with holes for drainage. According to them, the remainder of the open area was partly paved with marble plaques and partly covered with gravel or hardened earth (*terra battuta*).³¹ Tucci excludes the above-mentioned water installations since according to him they could not be combined with an earth-covered square. The water pipes found seem to have only served to water the plants and/or as drainages. Tucci is so cautious as not to give another proposal and returns to the flower bed option.³² Although it cannot be demonstrated on the basis of the available data, it seems most unlikely that a lavish courtyard like the Templum Pacis would have had parts of the area only 'covered' by a mass of sand. I think that we simply have no evidence for this idea, as the area was stripped in later ages, and that the entire space was covered with marble veneer. Stone constructions clad with marble and surrounded by lines of flower pots (with or without ingenious waterworks) would have given a fancier aspect to the otherwise empty space (cf. note 37).

Many statues and other objects (to which I will return shortly) would have stood in the porticoes and on two series of at least five bases flanking the middle stretch leading towards the shrine of Pax.³³ If the number of

28 Tellingly expressed in the title of Pollard's 2009 article: 'Pliny's *Natural History* and the Flavian *Templum Pacis*: Botanical Imperialism in First Century C.E. Rome'.

29 E.g. the longish basin in the grand peristyle of the Villa of the Papyri in Herculaneum, with the many statues exposed, and the similar channel in the garden of the House of Octavius Quartio in Pompeii, referred to in some of the Templum Pacis publications, e.g. Meneghini (2009) 94–95.

30 Coarelli (1999); La Rocca (2001) 175–176; cf. Neudecker in Wellington Gahtan and Pegazzano (2015) 130. On the various options, see also Taraporewalla (2010) 151, with bibliography in n. 30.

31 Meneghini (2009) 79–81 figs. 83–85; Meneghini and Santangeli Valenzani (2006) fig. 54, reproduced in Tucci (2017) 55 fig. 21.

32 Tucci (2017) 58–61.

33 Meneghini (2009) 92–93 suggests that the single figures might have stood in the porticoes and the groups – for instance, the defeated Gauls – on the bases along the *euripi* in the middle of the piazza.

Figure 5.4 Area of the Templum Pacis: remains of the opus sectile flooring at the south-eastern side. Photo: M. van Deventer, December 2017.



Figure 5.5 Area of the *Templum Pacis*: remains of the southern portico and the flower beds. Photo: L. Peters, July 2020.



these sculptures was as high as suggested by Pliny, this space seems rather limited. For that reason, one may ask whether the *euripi* could not have accommodated statues next to the plants,³⁴ in which case the idea of a garden or ‘domesticated’ rural space filled with mythical figures could be suggested. To give a comparable case, the Porticus of Pompey had been a garden filled with many statues.³⁵ What is more, the statues would get more attention standing in a free space, so that they could be admired from all sides.

Architecture and the Impact of Building Materials

There was a certain tradition of material display in public architecture from the late first century BCE onwards. One of the ways in which Augustus’ building politics were characterized was as a metamorphosis of Rome from a town in brick (or maybe tuff as well) into a marble city.³⁶ His Forum Augustum was, much more than that of Julius Caesar, a sea of different types of marble, and in that way a collection of *spolia* from all parts of the empire, while the Forum Romanum was marmorized as well in an extensive way

34 So Tucci (2017) 60. The suggestion of statues exposed here was already made by Millar (2005) 110 and Corsaro (2014) 325, quoted by Packer (2018) 727 n. 13.

35 See the bibliography quoted in n. 20; Rutledge (2012) 154, 222.

36 Suet. *Aug.* 29.

during his reign.³⁷ Therefore, the fact that Vespasian created a new collection of marble, enlivened by works of art in all kinds of materials (bronze and marble statues, wooden panel paintings, fabric *historiae pictae*) and greenery, was nothing new. The materials used represented the spheres of the world dominated by Rome, as had been the case with the flooring of the Forum Augustum, but the programme of *Templum Pacis* was more pointed thanks to the greater stress laid on the materials as expressions of the concept of triumphal geography and display of dominion (see also below). To begin with, red granite columns from Egypt supported porticoes on three sides; some of them would be replaced by higher *cipollino* columns in its Severan restoration.³⁸ For the construction of the halls *lapis Albanus* or *peperino* was used on a large scale,³⁹ comparable to the high back wall of the Forum Augustum, which was meant to protect the structure from the danger of fire in the Subura. The tuff walls of the porticoes and other standing wall structures must have been cladded at the inner sides with marble veneer. The porticoes as well as the cella of the *aedes* of Pax contained floors in opus sectile in various marbles, which were taken away in late antiquity.⁴⁰ The excavators could reconstruct circles of 2.54 m in various kinds of marble: pavonazetto, red porphyry, and granite (fig. 5.4 on p. 137). As we have seen, the floor of the courtyard was probably covered with more humble materials, that is nearby local marble, dug in Luni. All these choices may have been made on ideological grounds. The grey tuff material, although largely invisible and adapted on practical grounds as well, referred to ancient building traditions. As to the open square, the visitors were meant to walk on 'international' marbles, from foreign, now conquered, areas, as in the Forum Augustum, instead of in the luxurious gardens of Nero's Golden House.⁴¹

To avoid the notion of *luxuria* in the allegedly sober Flavian programme, it must have been clear from the outset that the marble elements used as a decoration of walls and floors were *spolia*, probably stemming from Neronian buildings torn down or stripped. The fact that the *Templum Pacis* was constructed only within four years indeed strongly suggests a large

37 See most recently the overview of studies in Goldbeck (2015) 17–47.

38 For an extensive and critical treatment of this topic, see Tucci (2017) 45–50.

39 Tucci (2017) 270–274.

40 Meneghini (2009) 83. For Tucci (2017) 37–38 figs. 13–14 this is not yet proved, since a *cocciopesto* floor was what the excavators found. See the subsequent suggestions made in the run of the superintendency's research quoted in Tucci (2017) 420 n. 95. But it is a safe guess to assume the presence of floors in plaques of variously coloured species of marble.

41 See how Pliny (*HN* 36.111) compares farming and utility gardens with luxurious palace and villa gardens. On this passage, see Carey (2003) 103.

reuse of material as well. The nearest source of large quantities of precious marble was the pavilion of Nero's Golden House on the adjacent Oppian Hill, still partly in use and partly decorated with fresh and simple white-ground paintings, but for the greater part empty.⁴² Of course, we cannot prove that the marble here was stripped from floors and walls for this reason, since another occasion to spoil the building would have been the construction of the Baths of Trajan on top of it after 104 CE. But the fact that a number of rooms received a plaster cover in lieu of the marble plaques makes it likely that the spoliation of Neronian marble started as early as 71–72 CE in certain parts of the edifice and was at least not entirely carried out as late as 104 for the construction of the Baths of Trajan.

Even if the (re-)conquest of Judaea was one of the deeds to be commemorated, the building did not display materials that were specific to that region, such as wood from Lebanon. Yet, most of the golden objects from the Temple in Jerusalem on view may have had their impact as precious curiosities thanks to their religious peculiarities and preciousness, and added a negative value to Nero's collections. In sum, I would suggest that the material conveyed a clear message of appropriate Flavian soberness in combination with the display of the luxurious Neronian and Judaeian material, which now served a higher goal: peace. People entered contrasting realms, on the one hand the pure, old, agricultural Italy and on the other the former extravagance of Nero as well as exoticism from the border areas of the empire.

Art as Monuments of Victory ...

Art works or, here, true *opera nobilia*,⁴³ play a major role in the Templum Pacis. As we can glean from the motto of this paper, Pliny refers to the complex with respect, as an ideal place for the exhibition of statues, in contrast with Nero's *sellaria* or private quarters. This need not to be a surprise, since the public servant, military man, and dilettante writer Pliny had a clear Flavian agenda as their public and military servant: he dedicated his magnum opus to Titus, and made special mention of works of art visible in Roman complexes, especially those connected with Vespasian

42 Varner (2017) sees the remains of the Golden House as a 'dilapidated ruin', which I think cannot be substantiated, since we know that a couple of interventions in the building were carried out under the Flavians: Meyboom and Moormann (2013) I, 96: rooms 7–16 (almost nothing preserved), 19 (*lararium* painting), 24, 26, 38, 42, 48, 49, 50, 62, 71, and 116. On the simple paintings, see Esposito and Moormann (2021).

43 Hallett (2018) 275, 277–278.

and Titus.⁴⁴ The same is true for Flavius Josephus, who had taken a reputable intermediary position between his kinsmen and the Roman invaders. For him, the *Templum Pacis* offered the entire spectrum of world art so that the visitor did not need to go elsewhere to learn more about art history next to appreciating its imperial ideology: πάντα γὰρ εἰς ἐκεῖνον τὸν νεῶ συνήχθη καὶ κατετέθη, δι' ὧν τὴν θεάν ἀνθρωποὶ πρότερον περὶ πάσαν ἐπλανῶντο τὴν οἰκουμένην, ἕως ἄλλο παρ' ἄλλοις ἦν κείμενον ἰδεῖν ποθοῦντες ('for all objects were brought together and exposed in the temple and to see them people once wandered all over the world [*oikoumene*], longing to see them while they were lying in various places').⁴⁵ Eric Varner defines the *Templum Pacis* as 'a monumental response to integral aspects of the *Domus Aurea*, intended to instantiate an architectural dialectic between *Templum* and *Domus*'.⁴⁶ He is right to point at the replacement of art works from Nero's to Vespasian's construction, and to refer to architectonic similarities.

Neither Pliny nor other sources provide a full catalogue of the works of art on display. As a matter of fact, Pliny's rare specific references only refer to great artists (see Table 5.1 nos. 2–6, 9, 12–15, 18, 21–23 on pp. 158–159). *In situ*, little has been found to fill this lacuna of information. In the area of the library a small bronze bust of Chrysippus, used as *segnalibri* (bookmarkers), and ivory statuettes of Septimius Severus and Julianus Apostata have come to light, the Severus in the guise of a teacher or philosopher.⁴⁷ More informative are some statue bases with inscriptions containing the names of famous Athenian sculptors. According to La Rocca these bases belong to the Flavian phase of the *Templum Pacis* (Table 5.1 nos. 8–9, 16, 19–20).⁴⁸ The famous classical artists Naukydes, Myron, Polykleitos, Kephisodotos, Praxiteles, and Leochares were praised by Pliny in his *Natural History*, but only Leochares appears in both the inscriptions and Pliny (Table 5.1 no. 8). Parthenokles and Boethos as well as the makers of the Gaul statues (Antigonos, Epikouros, Phylomachos, Stratonikos)

44 See Isager (1998) 103 on this passage in the context of the discussion of bronzes (pp. 80–108). See also Naas (2002) 443–446; Neudecker (2018) 150, 157.

45 Joseph. *BJ* 7.160. See inter alia Neudecker (2018) 152. On Flavius Josephus and the Flavian emperors, see Mason (2003); Den Hollander (2014); and Mason (2016), who also mentions briefly the *Templum Pacis* (pp. 38–39).

46 Varner (2017) 252. A similar comparison between Nero and Domitian is made by Isager (1998) 224–229 and Neudecker (2018) 150–152.

47 Meneghini (2009) 89–91 figs. 104 (Chrysippos), 105 (Severus); Bravi (2012) 169; Spinola (2014) 165–172 (the first to mention the ivory portrait of Julian Apostata); Tucci (2017) 188 fig. 61 (Chrysippos), 238 fig. 64 (Severus). Spinola mentions a marble bust of Sophokles with the name [Σοφ]όκλης, found in the area of the Villa Rivaldi which might have belonged to the *Templum Pacis* as well (p. 165).

48 La Rocca (2001) 196–200. See in contrast *DNO* IV no. 1848: on the basis of the letter shapes, the inscriptions might belong to bases erected after the fire of 192 for the statues already there.

date from the decades negatively evaluated by Pliny between 296–293; the 121st Olympiad (*cessavit ars*) and 156–153, the 156th Olympiad (*reuxit ars*).⁴⁹ La Rocca argues that this artistic lacuna detected by Pliny referred to bronze work and that the marbles made by Parthenokles – and, I would add, the other ones as well – would probably have met with Pliny’s approval.⁵⁰

The selection exposed in the *Templum Pacis* apparently concentrates on remarkable works of art, and most of them are classical or Hellenistic Greek sculptures and paintings; new works (Table 5.1 nos. 1, 3: Pax⁵¹ and Nile) are rare. We cannot establish a conclusive iconographic programme and the selection criteria employed by Vespasian and his advisors, but will try to determine the connection between the works of arts and their presence in the *Templum Pacis* as expressions of (military) peace and further imperial ideology. We must assume that many more works were on display, and those we know from these testimonies must have been conspicuous pieces as well. As to Pliny, we observe objects of artists he praises elsewhere, whereas Procopius was especially struck by the lifelike animals by Myron and Pheidias (Table 5.1 nos. 10, 17), which Pliny does not even mention. The other literary references (Stattius on Pax, Photios on Helena’s Alexander, Pausanias on Naukydes’ wrestler) can be connected with the text’s contexts and barely provide clues to the artistic value of these works. The list given in Table 5.1 contains 23 sculptures and paintings, the low number of which only demonstrates that we have an extremely narrow overview of what was exposed in the *Templum Pacis*. As a consequence, we should remain very circumspect in further interpreting these objects.

But even these *disiecta membra* are making a statement: it is not very likely that the collection was assembled according to specific ‘art historical’ rules. As a rule, in the Roman tradition of exposing booties the value of a statue as a work of art and, what is more, its provenance from Nero’s Golden House was much more relevant than its artistic quality and value within the history of sculpture. The paintings in the collection belong to the highest achievements of art and formed a category of Greek works that were collected by members of the Roman elite for centuries⁵²: Protogenes, Timantes, and Nikomachos especially receive extensive attention in Pliny’s work. Helena is hailed for the quality of her work, but since female artists are

49 Plin. *HN* 34.52. See also the following note.

50 La Rocca (2001) 196–200. Cf. Isager (1998) 97–98 for a similar explanation and Naas (2002) 99–101 for a critique of snobbism. On the composition of the collection, see Kellum in Friedland, Sobocinski, and Gazda (2015) 426; Shaya (2015) 630–632.

51 See above, n. 23.

52 See the many cases described in Plin. *HN* 35, analysed by Isager (1998) 115–122, 135–136.

rarely mentioned in Pliny's and other overviews of artists, Helena's gender may have played a role in this appreciation as well.

Due to the amazingly wide spectrum of objects collected, there are scholars who ignore specific iconographic programmes. As Paul Zanker has observed: 'This clearly non-programmatic approach permitted a more open response in contrast to the fora of Augustus and of Trajan and even the Forum Iulium.'⁵³ Tucci has made the same suggestion.⁵⁴ On the other hand, Steven Rutledge has focused attention on the political impact of public art collections; according to him, the Templum's artworks were the result of '[t]he Restoration of Cultural Property', regardless of whether they had been stolen previously.⁵⁵ In her extensive research concerning the ensemble of art works on display in the Templum Pacis, Alessandra Bravi distinguishes three large semantic domains covered by the statuary programme: (1) *uirtus* and the Roman world, (2) the world beyond the empire as a world without civilization, and (3) the religious realm.⁵⁶

Although all these suggestions may have hit the mark in some way, I think that we cannot arrive at sound conclusions, mainly because of the scarcity of works listed. Apparently, this was not a systematically formed collection of art works, arranged according to style and artists, but a wild array of diverse objects. The random display of monuments offers the opportunity for the visitor to make their own associations, without being forced to cope with one and the same more or less prescribed *Bildprogramm*. That vagueness does not mean that some objects could not be connected with a Flavian agenda. This mainly concerned peace, in a Roman context interpreted as the end of physical warfare and the return to flourishing agriculture and economics. A bucolic theme like the Heifer of Myron might have been a good example of that return to the countryside,⁵⁷ and the same goes for the plants in or around the *euripi* on the square.

53 Zanker (1997) 187. Also observed by Rutledge (2012) 272 n. 121.

54 Tucci (2017) 217–218. He notes that Pliny mentions 150 ancient works of art in diverse locations in Rome, not singling out specifically the Templum Pacis.

55 Rutledge (2012) 52. At p. 55 he recalls Vespasian, but he does not refer to the Templum Pacis itself.

56 Bravi (2010) 537–546. In particular (1) 537–541, (2) 541–543, (3) 544–546. See also Bravi (2009), (2012) 167–181, (2014) 203–226. The 2012 and 2014 monographs are almost identical apart from the language; in the later Italian version no reference is made to the earlier one, which was presented as a *Habilitationschrift* in Heidelberg under the aegis of Tonio Hölscher (see his preface in the 2012 version). Her reconstruction of the position of the objects differs slightly, but this is not explained: cf. Bravi (2012) 168 fig. 30 with Bravi (2014) 206 fig. 17.

57 Zanker (1997) 188 fig. 18 (marble cinerary urn in the Capitoline Museums showing a cow on a base adorned with garlands as a possible rendering of Myron's work of art). Cf. Bravi (2012)

The Jewish *spolia* have received much scholarly attention, although nothing more specific is known about the components listed by Flavius Josephus, and we have very few depictions of the sacred objects, aside from well-known depictions on the Arch of Titus and some coins.⁵⁸ The description in Josephus' *Bellum Judaicum* included garments of the high priest, vessels, and jewellery, as well as furniture and utensils. Furthermore, there were (a copy of?) the Law and the 'veil of the Temple'. With Trevor Murphy we may see them as expressions of 'Triumphal Geography', known from Pliny's *Natural History*'s books on geography; Rutledge aptly speaks of specimens of 'Displaying Domination'.⁵⁹

The fact that the *historiae pictae* shown during the triumph were displayed next to the works of art underlines why these objects were in Rome and, hence, were shown in the Templum Pacis. And what is more, the spoils were a tangible and visible record of the great triumph of 71 CE, which was an ephemeral event that would fade away fairly soon, even if it was fresh in the memory at the time of construction of the Templum Pacis.⁶⁰ In an excellent study, Taraporewalla has stressed this memory aspect as a means of establishing Vespasian's *auctoritas* and *maiestas*, which he lacked due to his modest ancestry and his military rather than political career.⁶¹ In a way, he had to rival the Julio-Claudian consequent appeal to ancient roots, regardless of whether the emperor was good (Augustus) or bad (Nero). As I hope to make clear in this paper, the Templum Pacis formed an ideal instrument to strengthen the first Flavian emperor's authority and is sound proof of Taraporewalla's thesis.

Whereas most spoils from Jerusalem were accommodated in the Templum Pacis, it is an enigma why the Law and Curtains of the Shrine were singled out as private possessions, to be brought to Vespasian's residence⁶²: was it

179–180; (2014) 219–220: heifer as a symbol of *pietas* (in virtue of being offered) and rural prosperity. For sources referring to the heifer, see *DNO* II nos. 751–816, with comment on the statue itself at pp. 84–92.

58 Millar (2005); Miles (2008); Rutledge (2012) 123–157 figs. 4.8–9 (Arch of Titus); 275–280.

59 Murphy (2004) 128–164, esp. 154–156; Rutledge (2012) 123 (title of Chapter 4). Cf. Östberg (2009) on the many components of conquest and power on view during the *triumphi*.

60 On the triumph and Josephus' description, see Beard (2003). Naas (2002) 460–469 analyses Josephus' description in tandem with Pliny's passages on art in the *Naturalis Historia*.

61 Taraporewalla (2010) 146–149. For his career, see Vervaeit in Zissos (2016) 43–59.

62 Joseph. *BJ* 7.161–162: ἀνέθηκε δὲ ἐνταῦθα καὶ τὰ ἐκ τοῦ ἱεροῦ τῶν Ἰουδαίων χρυσὰ κατασκευάσματα σεμνυόμενος ἐπ' αὐτοῖς. τὸν δὲ νόμον αὐτῶν καὶ τὰ πορφυρὰ τοῦ σηκοῦ καταπετάσματα προσέταξεν ἐν τοῖς βασιλείοις ἀποθεμένους φυλάττειν ('Here he also dedicated the golden vessels from the temple of the Jews, while priding himself on that, but he ordered that their law and the purple curtains of the shrine should be systemized in the palace'). See inter alia Meneghini (2009) 92;

their more modest appearance, as they were not studded with jewels or made out of gold like the other sacred objects?⁶³

To see the world as settled by the Flavians, the visitor needed some more references to specific *loci* which had played a role in Flavian taking of power. Rutledge distinguishes three realms as markers of the various ‘worlds’, one more concrete than the other: ‘defeated Judaea, conquering Rome, and Hellenistic culture’.⁶⁴ He connects a statue of Venus (Table 5.1 no. 2) with the oracle of Paphos that had announced bounty to Vespasian during his visit to the sanctuary. Yet, the ancient sources mentioning the visit and used to endorse his theory do not give thought to this association.⁶⁵ Maybe the traditional, Roman view of Venus or the link with the nearby Forum of Augustus is more likely to explain her presence.⁶⁶ The Gaul statues by Antigonos, Epigonos (or Isigonos), Phylomachos, and Stratonikos (Table 5.1 nos. 4, 6, 18, 22) have been interpreted as the original Galates from Pergamon erected within the Pergamene sanctuary of Athena, which date from the early second century BCE, or the Small Gauls from the Acropolis in Athens.⁶⁷ If so, they would have been transported to Rome at an unknown moment. Here, in the *Templum*’s context, they would not have functioned as a reference to Pergamon and Asia Minor, but to the submission of the German tribes at the Rhine borders.⁶⁸ In this way, the Gaul statues in the *Templum*

Tucci (2017) 225–231. For the *realia judaica*, see Yarden (1991). Millar (2005) 169 suggests the palace on the Palatine as the new accommodation of these objects. He rightly asks whether these items were visible for the public as well.

63 The materiality of the other objects made them precious spoils. Cf. Östenberg (2009) 115.

64 Rutledge (2012) 281. For what follows, see pp. 281–283. This leads to what is aptly formulated in Bravi (2010) 537: the *Templum Pacis* is the *oikoumene* in a nutshell.

65 Rutledge (2012) 281, with reference to Tac. *Hist.* 2.2–3 (visit of Titus to a Temple of Venus Paphia in Syria). Plin. *HN* 36.27, also used as a testimony for this suggestion by Rutledge, does not refer to Paphos. On the portents fostered by Vespasian, see Tarapoweralla (2010) 148.

66 Bravi (2012) 172: she connects Venus with Pax, as was a practice from Augustus onwards. See also Bravi (2014) 224–226 on this statue.

67 For the connections of these sculptors with the unknown makers of the lost originals, see the discussions resumed in the various *DNO* entries quoted in the following. Epigonos’ horn player (*tubicen*) has been identified as *The Dying Gaul* in the Capitoline Museums (*DNO* IV no. 3443), while the Gaulish woman has been associated with the dying Amazon with child in the Archaeological Museum in Naples, originally part of the Athenian Acropolis monument (*DNO* IV no. 3444).

68 A similar change of meaning by a change of context had happened in the 50s BCE, when Caesar erected a monument for his conquest of Gaul by making copies of the same statues in Pergamon (cf. previous note), probably *The Dying Gaul* in the Capitoline Museums, and the *Ludovisi Gaul* (depicting a Gaul and his wife committing suicide) in Palazzo Altemps. On these statues as Roman creations (but not connected with Gaul specifically), see, most recently, Ridgway (2018).

Pacis (not taken into account by Versluys) complement the mapping of the Flavian empire within the city of Rome. In this case Domitian's activities could be at stake, since according to Flavius Josephus and Suetonius he served as a young officer in the Rhineland during this period, although it is doubtful whether he really was in this area at all.⁶⁹

The Alexander painted by Helena from Alexandria (Table 5.1 no. 7) would have played a role in this geopolitical aspect as well due to the relation of the topic – Alexander's defeat of Darius – with the Near East and Egypt, presenting Vespasian as the great military genius who defeated the East, not unlike the Macedonian ruler.⁷⁰ But because Vespasian was proclaimed the new emperor in Egypt, I think that, indeed, the topographical connection with the Near East and Egypt is extremely relevant to the Templum Pacis, since the area made Vespasian's ascension to the throne possible and gave a justification to Vespasian to become emperor. The same goes for the large statue of the Nile, with the 16 *putti* who represent the *cubiti* of the river. We must recall Pliny's remark that this statue of the Nile was made of the largest known piece of basanite.⁷¹ Taraporewalla observes that, among all works of art in the Templum Pacis, this statue was the only new one, commissioned by the emperor, which gives it extra importance within the set of sculptures.⁷² Materially, it forms a direct hint at the geographical environment of both Nile and stone, as do the building materials we have briefly analysed before. Versluys has suggested that the Nile statue was important indeed, but that the references made to Egypt in the contemporary Iseum Campense were much more relevant for the Flavians, and that the two complexes might have served as pendants, by means of which power over two complementary parts of the Roman Empire was claimed.⁷³ This is an attractive proposal, which

69 Joseph. *BJ* 7.76–88; Suet. *Dom.* 2.1: action undertaken to be not less a good officer than his brother Titus. According to Tac. *Hist.* 4.86, however, he did not come farther than Lyon (cf. Southern [1997] 20–21). In various contributions in the recent Flavian companion edited by Zissos, this revolt is always 'settled' by Petillius Cerialis and Domitian is not recorded at all (Zissos [2016] 66, 151, 212, 213, 219, 264, 284–285). Yet there may have been another occasion in 88, when Domitian's general L. Antonius pacified Germania superior (Suet. *Dom.* 6.2). On his overall successful military activities, see Galimberti in Zissos (2016) 97–99; Dart (2016) 212–214. For these statues, see Coarelli (2009) 19 fig. 30; Bravi (2012) 175–178; Bravi (2014) 209–211 (Galates as *furor barbaricus*). In Bravi ([2012] 168 fig. 30) the Gauls stand in the middle of the area, whereas in her later version of the same study ([2014] 206 fig. 17), they occupy another place.

70 Bravi (2012) 173; Bravi (2014) 213–214.

71 Plin. *HN* 36.58. Βασανίτης λίθος is a type of greywacke. See also Bravi (2012) 171–172; Bravi (2014) 211–213.

72 Taraporewalla (2010) 156–157. However, we do not know whether the cult statue of Pax was a new creation or an old work reused in a new context.

73 Versluys (2017) 284–285.

also makes sense when we contemplate the building policy of the Flavian emperors as a whole, as they transformed the town into a Flavian 'edition' of Augustan Rome and cancelled that of the hated predecessor Nero.⁷⁴

... and Encyclopaedia of the World

The encompassing of the whole cosmos within one tangible monument can be seen as one of the major aspects of Vespasian's and Domitian's political agenda, which created an encyclopaedic concept that was similar to the written 'world' conceived by Pliny in his contemporary *Naturalis Historia*.⁷⁵ This universality, which was stressed by Flavius Josephus as well as Pliny, would have been the strongest quality of the Templum Pacis collection.⁷⁶ The advantage of this project, in contrast to that of Nero's Golden House, where the (happy few) visitors would have found a similar artistic and mythical encyclopaedia, is that it concerned public *mirabilia* rather than private *luxuria*. Thanks to the new Flavian dynasty, all objects together were transformed into a huge anathema for Pax. The broad range of topographical references in the materials used and the provenance of the exposed works reflect Pliny's appropriation of the world as subjected to Roman rule.⁷⁷

Like other scholars, Bravi stresses the all-encompassing qualities that these paintings and sculptures convey as symbols for cultural concepts of Roman society, representing widespread Roman conceptualizations of peace, nature, and human influence in the cultural sphere.⁷⁸ Art has an edifying quality, not serving as a form of mere divertissement or ornamentation, bringing *congruens* and *aptum* back to the people thanks to the established peace.⁷⁹ For this reason it might be somewhat forced to see in every work of

74 On the Flavian urbanization, see most recently Moormann (2018), with references to further literature. Among the older important studies, see Darwall-Smith (1996); Coarelli (2009).

75 Joseph. *BJ* 7.158–162; Plin. *HN* 36.101–102. As is common knowledge, the references to the Flavians in the *Naturalis Historia* are manifold. See inter alia Isager (1998) 18–23 and Naas (2002) 86–94 on the 'encyclopédie partisane'. On Pliny's listing works of art in Rome, see Carey (2003) 79–101; Bounia in Wellington Gahtan and Pegazzano (2015) 81–82.

76 Rutledge (2012) 272–284.

77 On Pliny's 'Empire in the Encyclopedia', see Murphy (2004), who uses this expression as his book's subtitle, as well as Naas (2002) and Carey (2003) 17–40. Murphy's work does not discuss Pliny's chapters on art which also have an encyclopaedic flavour, for which see Isager (1998) and Naas (2002), who at pp. 371–393 discusses Rome as the ideal and imperial locus to show the wonders of the world.

78 Bravi (2010) 535.

79 Bravi (2010) 537. Cf. Joseph. *BJ* 7 (see above) and Plin. *HN* 34.84 (quoted at the beginning of this chapter).

art a reference to Flavian policy. To give some examples, Bravi has proposed that Leochares' Ganymede personified the favour given by Jupiter to the Flavians, whereas the athletes sculpted by Naukydes and Polykleitos would have symbolized them as victors and shown a touch of *uirtus* or *arête*.⁸⁰ In the first case we may observe that 'ideal' nude representations of athletes had come to Rome as originals and were copied by the thousands, becoming emblems of good taste and popular references to Greek culture. Ganymede and Jupiter are solely a mythical couple without political implications; here the *opus nobile* notion is much more attractive than Bravi's suggestion presented before. In sum, the quality of the art works as such seems to be what matters, rather than the specific interpretations that have been put forth.⁸¹ Meneghini suggests that the choice of artworks indicates that there existed a connection with Athens.⁸² Yet the sculptures and paintings known from the sources stem from various places and do not betray a specific relationship with the 'classical' culture fostered in Athens, which moreover should be avoided in an anti-Neronian way, since Nero had fostered a particular relation with all things Greek.

A peculiar case is Protogenes' painting of Ialysos: the work was extremely highly praised by Pliny and Plutarch as well as other authors, but we do not know how the man was represented exactly. Apparently, he was the founder of Rhodes and, therefore, of a new dynasty. For Rutledge, this quality would create a link with Vespasian, a view we find back in Tucci's work.⁸³ By contrast, Bravi connected the pairing of Ialysos and Skylla with victories on land and sea, respectively; in this interpretation Ialysos serves as a mythic huntsman.⁸⁴ Rutledge's association is far-fetched and not substantiated by sources, Bravi's consideration is so generic that it also does not seem very strong as a specification of Flavian qualities. So, it seems better not to speculate too much about a possible specific meaning apart from being an extremely precious work of art. A point unfortunately unsolved as well is the remark made by Plutarch that the painting was destroyed by fire. Since we have no further information about a disaster before the 191 CE

80 Bravi (2012) 173; Bravi (2014) 220–224.

81 There was a high degree of connoisseurship in the Flavian elite. Miles (2008) 265–270 and Wellington Gahtan and Pegazzano (2015) 14–15 discuss some collectors, esp. Nonius Vindex.

82 Meneghini (2009) 94. Cf. La Rocca (2001) and Bravi (2009).

83 Rutledge (2012); Tucci (2017) 219.

84 Bravi (2012) 193–195; Bravi (2014) 216–219. Neither she nor other authors take into account the ship elements carried through Rome in the Triumph of 71, which refer to maritime and other watery victories, which might have got a place in the *Templum Pacis* as well (see Östenberg [2009] 32).

fire, we cannot substantiate it, whilst there are post-Plutarch references still full of admiration.⁸⁵

Library

Domitian added literature as a new element to this polymorph setting. This commodity is known from references in the works of Aulus Gellius, Galenus, and Trebellius Pollio in the *Historia Augusta*.⁸⁶ The Templum Pacis' library became the first public library in Rome after that of Asinius Pollio.⁸⁷

Some authors argued that its original position cannot be reconstructed.⁸⁸ As suggested by Colini, and as followed by Meneghini, a candidate might be the hall adjacent to the shrine of Pax, that is, the eastern hall of the two rooms at the south-eastern corner of the Templum Pacis (cf. figs. 5.2c, 5.3).⁸⁹ After the reconstruction in the Severan age, its rear wall was clad with the famous marble *Forma Urbis Romae*, for which reason this room might have housed the cadastre in combination with the office of the *praefectus urbi*. If there was a Flavian predecessor of the *Forma*, as has been assumed in a series of studies on the basis of analogy and even some fragments of older city maps, the Severans continued to use the hall as an administrative building. In the Flavian context, the encyclopaedic character of the library area would have been strengthened by the focus on Rome's urbanism and on the many interventions made by the Flavians in the urban space, but also by the use of worldwide building materials.⁹⁰

It has often been thought that this south-western hall (which would be transformed into the Church of SS. Cosmas and Damian) was a Severan

85 See the thorough discussion in Falaschi (2018).

86 See extensively Tucci (2017) 174–192.

87 Expressively praised for its public status by Plin. *HN* 35.9–10. On libraries, see Palombi (2014).

88 See most recently Dix and Houston (2006) 691–693.

89 Colini (1937); Meneghini (2009) 85–90 fig. 102. He suggests the presence of the cadastre here, but we should take for granted that a huge marble plan could not have practical purposes, not giving space for updates due to property changes and building activities. Another function might be the office of the *praefectus urbi*, all in combination with the library. Here the fragment of large *statua loricata* came to light (Meneghini [2009] 80–81 fig. 86), compared with the famous Mars in the Capitoline Museums (his fig. 70), which also might stem from here.

90 Darwall-Smith (1996) 64–65; a previous *Forma Urbis Romae* thanks to fragment 1a, which does not fit well into the Severan plan. It might show the Flavian enlargement of the *pomerium*. And, we may add, the many projects realized by Vespasian, Titus, and Domitian. On the presence of a predecessor, see Miles (2008) 262; Meneghini (2009) 87–88; Tucci (2017) 130–131; Versluys (2017) 284.

addition after the fire of 192,⁹¹ but Tucci's reconstruction, which is complex but sustained by many technical observations, seems very likely (fig. 5.3). In a lengthy argumentation, he has posited that the first, Vespasianic phase of the *Templum Pacis* included a large rectangular hall on this spot, accessible from the south-eastern portico.⁹² During restructuring under Domitian, the wall facing and closing off the Forum Romanum was opened up, and an apsidal hall was added to serve as a library.

The contents of the library are not known, but we may infer the presence of works from Nero's library or libraries, of which we do not know the contents either, which were transferred for the same reasons as the art works. Elsewhere in Rome, there were large collections of Greek and Roman literature, including scientific literature, especially on medicine. In the case of the *Templum Pacis*, the inclusion of medical literature has – perhaps unnecessarily – been connected with the existence of a *schola medicorum*. As told by himself, Galen would teach in this area and lose his library in the fire of 192.⁹³

With the instalment of the library, Domitian followed illustrious predecessors: the library in Asinius Pollio's Atrium Libertatis and that next to the Temple of Apollo on the Palatine as part of Augustus' residence.⁹⁴ Tucci suggests that the library gave shelter to books from other, partly dilapidated commodities, which makes Domitian's addition to the *Templum Pacis* a purely practical matter.⁹⁵ But there might be personal involvement as well, that is, Domitian's own keen interest in literature. As we know, he organized literary competitions and wrote some works before he became an emperor.⁹⁶ Domitian's interest in Greek theatre was expressed by plays given in the new Greekish *odeion* next to the (also Greek-style) *Agon* that is now Piazza Navona. In these things he might have imitated and emulated Nero, who was also known for his personal literary ambitions and his interest in Greek culture, but we must not forget that Greek matters had always played a great role in Roman elite culture and that, therefore, the reference to Nero is not so specific at all.

91 Tucci (2017) 154–153, 374–413. The rotunda, known as Temple of Romulus, would be added as a monumental entrance in the age of Constantine (see pp. 406–407 figs. 159–160). Tucci's second volume focuses on the complex of the monastery and the church.

92 Tucci (2017) 116–125.

93 Gell. *NA* 5.21.9; 16.9.2; SHA *Tyr. Trig.* 31.10. Cf. Millar (2005) 110–111; Meneghini (2009) 85, esp. n. 21; Tucci (2017) 193–209.

94 See the brief discussion of these monuments in Tucci (2017) 176–182.

95 Tucci (2017) 191–192.

96 See, for example, Coleman (1986); Nauta (2002) 328. I thank Olivier Hekster and Claire Stocks for these references.

Conclusions

Overall, despite the presence of a conspicuous shrine dedicated to Pax, the *Templum Pacis* cannot be considered as a purely religious space uniquely focusing on the cult of this abstract goddess. As the other sanctuaries *cum foro* constructed by Vespasian's admired predecessors Caesar and Augustus, the *Templum Pacis* combined the religious aspect with that of a museum dedicated to the all-encompassing Roman fostering of the world, as made possible by Vespasian and his sons. In this way it displayed aspects of *otium* rather than *negotium*.⁹⁷ If we would assume that there was a mix of administration (that of the *praefectus urbi*), library, and public museum, the latter aspect undoubtedly achieved the greatest impact.⁹⁸ This stress laid on the public realm constituted a clear contrast with Nero's former private seclusion. As Meneghini puts it⁹⁹:

[I]l complesso vespasiano era infatti un santuario e insieme un luogo di studio e di meditazione oltre che un museo pubblico, secondo un ideale di diffusione della cultura caratteristica dell'epoca e del quale si ritrovano le tracce anche nell'opera di Plinio là dove tesse le lodi di Asinio Pollione, in quanto fondatore della prima biblioteca pubblica nell'Atrium Libertatis, o di Marco Agrippa, come autore di una orazione sulla necessità di rendere i dipinti e le statue di pubblica proprietà.

As a matter of fact, Vespasian's complex was both a sanctuary and a centre of study and contemplation, next to being a public museum, following an ideal of spreading the culture characteristic of the period, of which we also find traces in Pliny's work when he hails Asinius Pollio as the founder of the first public library in the Atrium Libertatis, or Marcus Agrippa as the author of a speech on the necessity to make paintings and statues public property.

The *Templum's* connection with Augustus is clear from its architectural shape, its architectural 'quotations', and artistic furnishings, whereas the link with Nero is defined by the artistic *spolia* from the Golden House brought to

⁹⁷ Darwall-Smith (1996) 66–67.

⁹⁸ Meneghini (2009) 94–95.

⁹⁹ Meneghini (2009) 94. It is a matter of debate, however, if the Golden House properties were accessible or not. See Panella (2011) 162–163 and the contribution by Raimondi Cominesi in this volume.

the edifice itself. Vespasian could give a positive twist to the project by the restitution of 'Nero's' treasures to the public. Domitian gave a new turn towards literary activities by adding the large library at the south-eastern corner, and like his father he imitated and emulated the above-mentioned predecessors.

The Templum Pacis, in sum, shows a shift of focus towards the display of artistic treasures. Whereas Nero had collected works of art on account of his *luxuria*, Vespasian did the same while moved by *liberalitas* and functioning as a new Agrippa by regaling alleged imperial property to the people¹⁰⁰: the objects were taken out from their hiding places within Nero's private properties and exposed to daylight in the public space of the Templum's precinct. One may ask whether the visitor was aware of this significant shift; they may have been instructed and 'helped' by inscriptions as sources of information. The objects as such are a *Sammelsurium*, a hotchpotch, not the result of a programmatic collecting activity. Therefore, it is better to refrain from reading too deeply into the specific pieces of which we are aware, not only because of their small number, but also due to the way that they were exhibited in the Templum's grounds. Versluys' suggestion to see the Templum Pacis and the Iseum Campense as counterparts, displaying Flavian (cultural) policy by covering different areas of the empire, may have played a role as well in the selection of the art works exhibited in these monuments, although not on a systematic and programmatic level as he suggests.

The new data on the Templum Pacis yielded by recent excavations as well as by recent studies have made clear that the complex was no simple old-fashioned *porticus* like those on the Campus Martius. It combined the traditional elements of these early constructions, including a shrine and collection of spoils, with the notion of political messages on display in the imperial fora next to the Templum's area. Clearly, Vespasian wanted to build a traditional world of soberness and simplicity, while adopting the increasingly popular display of luxury by using different sorts of marble and exhibiting works of art. The precious spoils from the Jewish Temple in Jerusalem were on view next to classical Greek bronze and marble statues. The size of the complex was not modest at all and its position next to venerable *loci* in town was paramount. The seclusion created by a virtually completely blind outer wall enhanced the suggestive impact of the unique statues. Even if the area was open to the public, the visitor was obliged to cross a marked border before entering this realm of Flavian power and *luxuria*, which provided illustrations of the *superbia* of Nero and the liminal inhabitants of the empire like the Jews and the Germans. On the one hand, Augustus is present, most importantly

100 See Isager (1998) 224–229 and Varner (2017).

as a source of inspiration for the building, and less through the reference to Pax, which Vespasian could have adopted from the Ara Pacis Augustae.

On the other hand, Nero was unavoidable. Despite attempts to annihilate his memory, he played a much greater role under Vespasian than the emperor probably would have liked, being present in a clear way by virtue of the exposition of his former possessions. The same is true for Domitian, who may have turned things deemed bad into something deemed good by adding a literary dimension, which was as dear to him as it was to Nero.¹⁰¹ In this way he opts for an expansion à la Nero in a complex founded by his father and brother. While the older phase tried to create a certain distance between Flavians and Nero, he recreates a bond with the last Julio-Claudian. In sum, the Templum Pacis is full of this type of tensions and will remain a discussion topic in Flavian studies for a long time to follow.

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Appendix

Table 5.1. List of Works of Art

No.	ARTIST (P = Painter; S = Sculptor)	WORK	SOURCE
1	Unknown; see Kephisodotos S	Cult statue of Pax	Stat. <i>Silv.</i> 4.3.17; Darwall-Smith (1996) 62–63; Packer (2003) 171; Meneghini (2009) 83–84; Bravi (2014) 220; Pinna Carboni (2014); Tucci (2017) 217, 237, 239; Varner (2017) 253 note 52
2	S	Venus	Plin. <i>HN</i> 36.27; Rutledge (2012) 281; Bravi (2012) 172; Bravi (2014) 224–226; Corsaro (2014) 320; Tucci (2017) 224; Varner (2017) 253 note 52
3	S	Nile	Plin. <i>HN</i> 36.58; Taraporewalla (2010) 148; Bravi (2012) 171–172; Bravi (2014) 211–213; Corsaro (2014) 320; Tucci (2017) 223–224; Versluys (2017) 285
4	Antigonos S	Gaul	Plin. <i>HN</i> 34.84; <i>DNO</i> IV no. 3470; Tucci (2017) 220–221; Varner (2017) 254
5	Boethos from Karchedon S	Boy strangling a goose	Plin. <i>HN</i> 34.84; <i>DNO</i> IV no. 3503; Corsaro (2014) 317; Tucci (2017) 220–221; Varner (2017) 254
6	Epigonos S	Gaul	Plin. <i>HN</i> 34.88; Bravi (2012) 175–178; Bravi (2014) 209–211; <i>DNO</i> IV no. 3442, 3444; Corsaro (2014) 317, 320; Tucci (2017) 220–221; Varner (2017) 254
7	Helena P	Battle at Issos	Phot. <i>Bibl.</i> 190 (p. 149b); Coarelli (2009) 178; Bravi (2012) 173; Bravi (2014) 213–214; <i>DNO</i> IV no. 3052; Corsaro (2014) 320; Tucci (2017) 220–221
8	Isigonos: Epigonos Kephisodotos the Elder or the Younger S Κηφι[σοδότου] / Ἀθηναίου]	Gaul Base of statue (of Eirene?)	See under Epigonos <i>SEG</i> 51, 1443; La Rocca (2001) 198–200 fig. 19C; Noreña (2003); Meneghini (2009) 93 fig. 108; <i>DNO</i> III no. 1848; Tucci (2017) 223 fig. 63, 237
9	Leochares S Γανυμήδης / Λεωχάρους / Ἀθηναίου	Ganymede. Combined with base in Florence, Museo Archeologico (inscription)	Plin. <i>HN</i> 34.79; Juv. 9.22–24; Tatianus, <i>Ad Gr.</i> 34.8; <i>Anth. Pal.</i> 12.221; <i>IG</i> 16.1523; La Rocca (2001) 197–198 fig. 17; Bravi (2012) 173; Bravi (2014) 224–226; <i>DNO</i> III nos. 2042–2046; Corsaro (2014) 317 fig. 3; Tucci (2017) 222 fig. 63, 234; Varner (2017) 253 note 52
10	Lysippos: Pheidias Myron S	Bull Heifer	See under Pheidias Procop. <i>Goth.</i> 8.21.12–13; Darwall-Smith (1996) 61; Bravi (2012); Bravi (2015) 219–220; <i>DNO</i> II no. 761; Corsaro (2014) 317; Tucci (2017) 232–234; Varner (2017) 253 note 52

No.	ARTIST (P = Painter; S = Sculptor)	WORK	SOURCE
11	Naukydes S	Wrestler Cheimon from Argos	Paus. 6.9.3; Bravi (2012) 179–180; Bravi (2014) 220–222; <i>DNO</i> II no. 1333; Corsaro (2014) 317; Tucci (2017) 222; Varner (2017) 253 note 52 [mistakenly: painting]
12	Nikomachos P	Apollo and Artemis	Plin. <i>HN</i> 35.108; <i>DNO</i> IV no. 2721
13	Nikomachos P	Magna Mater	Plin. <i>HN</i> 35.108; <i>DNO</i> IV no. 2721
14	Nikomachos P	Bacchantes	Plin. <i>HN</i> 35.108; <i>DNO</i> IV no. 2721
15	Nikomachos P	Skylla	Plin. <i>HN</i> 35.109; Bravi (2012) 173–175; Bravi (2014); <i>DNO</i> IV no. 2722; Corsaro (2014) 320; Tucci (2017) 219
16	Parthenokles S Παρθενοκλέους[] / Ἀθηναίου[]	Statue basis; Severan	<i>SEG</i> 51, 1444; La Rocca (2001) 198–200; Noreña (2003); Meneghini (2009) 93 fig. 108; <i>DNO</i> IV no. 3110; Corsaro (2014) 321 fig. 7; Tucci (2017) 218, 237
17	Pheidias or Lysippos S	Bull	Procop. <i>Goth.</i> 8.21.12–13; <i>DNO</i> II no. 1029; <i>DNO</i> III no. 2238; Corsaro (2014) 317; Tucci (2017) 232; Varner (2017) 253 note 52
18	Phyromachos S	Gaul	Plin. <i>HN</i> 34.84; <i>DNO</i> IV no. 3148; Tucci (2017) 220–221; Varner (2017) 254
19	Polykleitos S Πυθοκλής / Ἡλεῖος / πῆνταθλος. / Πο] λυκλείτου / Ἀργείου	Pythokles. Base found in 1891, now Musei Capitolini	<i>IG</i> 14.1523; Paus. 6.7.10; Colini (1937) 19; La Rocca (2001) 196–197 fig. 18; Bravi (2012) 179–180; Bravi (2014) 220–222; <i>DNO</i> II nos. 1232–1233 [on Pythokles, not our piece]; Corsaro (2014) 320 fig. 7; Tucci (2017) 223 fig. 63, 234–235; Varner (2017) 253 note 52
20	Praxiteles S [---]μ[---] / [Πραξι] τέ[λους] / Ἀθη[ναίου]	Statue basis; Severan	<i>SEG</i> 51, 1442; La Rocca (2001) 197–198 fig. 19A; Noreña (2003); Meneghini (2009) 93 fig. 108; <i>DNO</i> III no. 1990; Corsaro (2014) 320 fig. 7; Tucci (2017) 236
21	Protogenes P	lalysos	Plin. <i>HN</i> 35.102; Ael. <i>VH</i> 12.41; Bravi (2012) 173–175; Bravi (2014) 218–219; <i>DNO</i> IV no. 3007; Corsaro (2014) 320; Tucci (2017) 219; Falschi (2018)
22	Stratonikos S	Gaul	Plin. <i>HN</i> 34.84; <i>DNO</i> IV no. 3465; Varner (2017) 254
23	Timanthes P	Hero	Plin. <i>HN</i> 35.74; <i>DNO</i> II no. 1625; Corsaro (2014) 320; Tucci (2017) 218; Varner (2017) 253 note 52

III

Literary Responses to Nero's Rome

6 Civil War and Trauma in Valerius Flaccus' *Argonautica*

Mark Heerink

Abstract

Valerius Flaccus' Flavian epic *Argonautica* is replete with civil war. In this chapter I will look at one of the most obvious evocations of civil war in the *Argonautica*, the Cyzicus episode in Book 3, which is tainted by the civil wars that followed Nero's death in 68 CE and brought the Julio-Claudian dynasty to an end. In dealing with these traumatic experiences the narrator is inspired by Lucan's Neronian epic on the civil war between Caesar and Pompey, which was written just before the civil wars of 68–69 CE and almost seems to predict what was to happen after the death of Nero.

Keywords: civil war; Valerius Flaccus; Lucan; trauma; Virgil; Cyzicus; intertextuality

Introduction¹

In his ground-breaking book *Acts of Silence: Civil War, Tyranny, and Suicide in the Flavian Epics* (1997), McGuire observes that in Valerius Flaccus' *Argonautica* civil war breaks out, or threatens to do so, at almost every stop

¹ This chapter builds – and is partly based on – Heerink (2016) (see also below). Except when indicated otherwise, the following translations were adopted (and sometimes slightly adapted): Braund (1992) (Luc.); Fairclough and Goold (1999) (*Virg. Aen.*). Translations of Valerius Flaccus' *Argonautica* are based on Mozley (1936). I add **bold** to mark intertextual contact between passages. When more than one text is alluded to, I also underline and *italicize* words to differentiate between intertexts. I am very grateful to Monica Palmeira, who further developed my initial ideas on reading the Cyzicus episode as trauma literature in her BA thesis (2020), which in turn inspired my own reading of the episode.

along the *Argo's* voyage – at Iolcus, where Jason and Aeson both entertain thoughts of leading a revolt against Pelias (1.71–73 and 1.761); at Lemnos (2.107–310); during their visit with Cyzicus (3.15–332); and at Colchis (all of *Argonautica* 6).²

In this sense the Flavian epic differs markedly from Apollonius of Rhodes' Hellenistic *Argonautica*, Valerius' most important model with regard to plot.³ This omnipresence of civil war suggests a contemporary relevance: written in the Flavian age and dedicated to Vespasian (*Arg.* 1.7–21), Valerius' civil wars seem to be a reaction to the devastating civil wars that followed the death of Nero in 68 CE and brought the Julio-Claudian dynasty to an end.

In this chapter I will look at one of the most obvious evocations of civil war in the *Argonautica* – the Cyzicus episode in Book 3 – to see how these events impacted Valerius' epic, and in particular his reception of his second most important model: Virgil's *Aeneid*. As I will argue, Lucan's recent, Neronian epic on civil war plays a crucial role in this respect. Stover's book *Epic and Empire in Vespasianic Rome* (2012) provided the first systematic account on Valerius' intertextual relationship with Lucan's Neronian epic *Bellum Civile*.⁴ Stover intends to show that the *Argonautica* 'reflects the restorative ideals of Vespasianic Rome, which attempted to restore order following the destructive civil war of 68–69 CE. This proposition sets it apart from the largely "pessimistic" readings of other scholars.⁵ As part of this 'poetics of recovery', Valerius, according to Stover, engages with and corrects Lucan's epic and its destructive poetics on both a poetical level (as an anti-epic) and a historical level (as an anti-imperial poem). Thus, Valerius restores epic after Lucan and supports Vespasian's restoration of the principate after Nero's death and the ensuing civil war. Stover has shown that Lucan is a far more relevant intertext for the *Argonautica* than has previously been recognized, and his book is important for putting the study of Lucan's influence on Valerius in particular and Flavian epic in general more firmly into the research agenda.⁶ In this chapter, however, I will propose a different, pessimistic reading of the influence of Lucan on Valerius, which follows the lead of two articles on

2 McGuire (1997) 92.

3 On civil war in the *Argonautica*, see esp. McGuire (1997) 88–146; Buckley (2010); Bernstein (2014); Seal (2014); Landrey (2018); Penwill (2018).

4 For excellent earlier case studies, see Zissos (2004) and Buckley (2010). See also Stover (2014); Fucecchi (2018); Landrey (2018); Penwill (2018) on Valerius and Lucan.

5 Stover (2012) back cover. Cf. p. vii.

6 For Lucan and Statius, see Stover in this volume, with n. 1 for more bibliography. For Lucan and Silius Italicus, see Marks (2010).

the other two major civil war episodes in the *Argonautica*: Buckley's (2010) interpretation of the influence of Lucan on the war in Colchis in Book 6, and Landrey's recent interpretation of the Lemnos episode as trauma literature.⁷ As I will try to show, the Cyzicus episode is informed by the events of 68–69 CE, and in dealing with these traumatic experiences the narrator is inspired by Lucan's poem, which was written just before the civil war and almost seems to predict what was about to happen after the death of Nero.

Lemnos and the Trauma of 68–69 CE

The impact of the civil wars of 68–69 CE on the Roman population must have been enormous and devastating, and if we accept that Valerius' epic was written under Vespasian's rule, so in the 70s of the first century CE, as Stover has convincingly argued,⁸ the events were fresh in the memory when Valerius wrote his epic. We can see their impact on the *Argonautica* in several of its civil war narratives. Landrey (2018) has recently shown how the Lemnos episode in Book 2 evokes the recent civil wars in ways that resemble what happens in the Cyzicus episode in the following book, as we will see later, as well as the war in Colchis in Book 6.⁹ In this context, Landrey deals with a fascinating passage in the Lemnos episode, its first apostrophe, in which 'the poet's personal connection to his subject matter casts the episode as a trauma ripped from the recent past'.¹⁰

Unde ego tot scelerum facies, tot fata iacentum
 exsequar? heu vatem monstris quibus intulit ordo!
 quae se aperit series! o qui me vera canentem
 sistat et hac nostras exsolvat imagine noctes!

7 Landrey (2018) 229–234.

8 Stover (2012) 7–26 (= 2008). I find his thesis attractive, as it would explain, without alteration of the text, why the proem is addressed to a living Vespasian (who died on 23 June 79 CE), while the epic elsewhere (*Arg.* 4.507–11) contains a clear reference to the famous eruption of Mt. Vesuvius, which occurred on 24 August 79 CE. Stover's idea is controversial, however, and there are other attractive theories for dating the epic, on which see e.g. Stover in this volume and the convenient overview by Zissos (2008) xiv–xvii.

9 For the way in which the war in Book 6 of the *Argonautica* reflects contemporary Rome, see Buckley (2010).

10 Landrey (2018) 231. Incidentally, the apostrophe also features the by now familiar strategy of combining allusion to both Virgil (*Aen.* 2.361–362; 7.44) and Lucan (7.552–555) (Landrey [2018] 232 n. 22 and n. 25).

How shall I record all those forms of wickedness, all the deaths of the fallen? Ah, to what monstrous deeds the story has brought the bard! What a sequence of horrors unfolds itself! Oh, that someone would stop me in my true song and free my nights of this vision! (*Arg.* 2.216–219)

As Landrey¹¹ suggests,

[t]he eye-witness atmosphere suggested by his phrasing rhetorically collapses the distance of space and time standing between the Flavian poet and Heroic Age Lemnos. Unlike the *Thebaid's* narrator, who selects his subject matter from a wide array of Theban crimes [...] the “sequence of the story” in Valerius’s plot [...] thrusts him into personally traumatic territory.

Indeed, this striking apostrophe seems to reveal the traumatic impact of historical events on the narrator. We are thus entering the domain of literary trauma theory, which is a huge field of research. Suffice it to say for our purposes here that scholars used to think that trauma was impossible to narrate (e.g. Caruth [1996]), but that it has become clear that, while it is difficult to narrate experienced traumatic events directly, it is possible to narrate the *experience* of trauma. As Forter puts it¹²:

Critics deploying the category of trauma have stressed in particular the power of texts that seek less to represent traumatizing events – since representation risks, on this view, betraying the bewildering, imperfectly representational character of traumatic memory – than to transmit directly to the reader the experience of traumatic disruption. Here the study of trauma joins a more general contemporary interest in writing that performs or enacts what it has to say rather than (or in addition to) conveying it representationally.

In this respect the narrator’s remark that he is singing *vera*, ‘real events’, which appear in his nightmares (218), is fascinating; this does not mean that the bloodbath on Lemnos *really* happened, but that the events are narrated in a *realistic* way, i.e. they reflect real-life, traumatic experience with the

¹¹ Landrey (2018) 232.

¹² Forter (2007) 260, reacting to Caruth (1996). Cf. also Pederson (2014). I am grateful to Monica Palmeira (2020) for these references.

civil wars of 68–69.¹³ We could then perhaps even see this traumatic impact as the motivation for writing the epic, which deals with historic events but is veiled in a mythological guise.

Cyzicus I: Virgil and Lucan¹⁴

Cyzicus is the next episode in the *Argonautica* that is cast as a civil war, and the first in which the Argonauts themselves are directly involved.¹⁵ Upon arrival at the city state of Cyzicus, at the end of Book 2, the Argonauts are welcomed by the eponymous king of the Doliones, Cyzicus. After enjoying three days of hospitality, the Argonauts decide to set sail, which is where Book 3 begins. The Muse Clio is then invoked to explain the origins of the disaster that is about to be narrated. The cause is identified as Cybele's anger at the young King Cyzicus, who had unwittingly shot one of the goddess's lions while hunting (14–31). The Argonauts set sail at night but accidentally return to Cyzicus when their helmsman Tiphys falls asleep (32–42). In the darkness, Cyzicus mistakes the Argonauts for his archenemies, the Pelasgians, and the two sides engage in battle at night. In a lengthy and bloody war, first in the harbour and then in the city itself, various Argonauts display their martial prowess, killing many Doliones. The king himself is fatally wounded by a spear thrown by his former guest Jason (43–248). Finally, Jupiter brings an end to the battle. When it gets light, the Argonauts, realizing their terrible error, are horrified (249–272). Burial of the dead follows, and the Argonauts experience a long period of depression, until finally the priest Mopsus conducts a purification ritual for his comrades, by which their spirits are restored (274–458). The Argonauts promptly set sail and engage in a rowing contest to boost morale (459–480).

13 Cf. Spaltenstein (2002) 36: '*Vera* ne saurait signifier que Val. se représente, dans ses rêves, ces meurtres comme s'ils étaient vrais' ('*Vera* could only mean that Valerius imagines, in his dreams, these murders as if they were true'); Landrey (2018) 232 n. 24: 'In asserting that he sings *vera*, therefore, Valerius insists that the Lemnian episode is historical and like real life, even if it didn't exactly happen.' The remarks of Harper Smith (1987) 104 ('The detail is exaggerated and overdone') and Poortvliet (1991) 137 ('To our taste this certainly is a bit much, but Valerius' age may well have thought otherwise') thus miss the mark, as does the interpretation of the passage by Hardie (1993) 118: 'The poet [...] confuses the night of the Lemnian slaughter with the nights of his poetic labour filled with the theatre of his imagination (*imagine*).'

14 This section is based on Heerink (2016).

15 For the way the Cyzicus episode is set up as a sequel to Lemnos through Hypsipyle's gifts to Jason upon departure, see Landrey (2018) 244–247.

As McGuire rightly notes, the episode ‘is not, strictly speaking, a civil war’.¹⁶ But because the Doliones and the Argonauts are emphatically described as friends and even relatives through what Bernstein calls ‘created kinship’,¹⁷ we are dealing with what is framed as an actual civil war. This is also emphasized by the wording, as the battle is called *infanda proelia* (‘unspeakable battles’, 14), *impia bella* (‘impious wars’, 30) and *nefas* (‘horror’, 258), which is typical of civil war and brings to mind Lucan’s recent epic specifically.¹⁸ The influence of Lucan on Valerius’ Cyzicus episode has been the subject of a chapter in Stover’s 2012 book, in which it is interpreted as follows¹⁹:

But although Valerius evokes Lucan’s epic to establish that his battle narrative is in fact a *bellum civile*, one to be read with Lucan’s text in mind, what he delivers is a most un-Lucanian civil war. The winning unambiguously possesses a moral superiority over the defeated. The episode is indeed tragic, but it is not a senseless tragedy.²⁰

So the civil war at Cyzicus recalls Lucan’s *Bellum Civile*, but can we be dealing with a ‘correction’ of Lucan here?²¹ Does civil war in the *Argonautica* really ‘have a positive function’? Does it ‘bring about positive change’ and ‘mark a new beginning, thus leading to the establishment of a better era of world history’?²² Following the lead of Buckley’s (2010) interpretation of the war in Colchis in Book 6 and Lucan’s influence on it, I rather think that Valerius’ war brings only destruction and death, in which respect it seems very Lucanian. Furthermore, the obviously grim worldview that pervades this episode, according to which a god is responsible for an arbitrary, useless and tragic battle, also evokes Lucan.²³ Of course, there is no divine motivation for civil war in Lucan, where the gods are not involved and do not care, but what is worse: no gods or the ones that

16 Cf. McGuire (1997) 92 n. 4.

17 Bernstein (2008) 48, 52 (see also n. 53 below).

18 Cf. Stover (2012) 123: ‘By portraying the Greeks and Phrygians as culturally indistinguishable and by stressing the strength of their alliance, Valerius has arranged things such that, when the two sides clash, the battle has all the trappings of a *bellum civile*.’ For the Cyzicus episode as a civil war, see Manuwald (1999) 159; Schenk (1999) 269ff.; Stover (2012) 113–148; Heerink (2016).

19 Stover (2012) 113–148 (‘Gigantomachy and Civil War in Cyzicus’).

20 Stover (2012) 125.

21 Stover (2012) 148. See also the quote below.

22 Stover (2012) 114.

23 Cf. Bernstein (2014) 159: ‘As in Lucan’s *Bellum Civile* and Statius’ *Thebaid*, the narrator emphasizes the arbitrariness of the reasons for the collective punishments levied by angry goddesses at Lemnos and Cyzicus.’

Valerius presents to his readers?²⁴ The impression is thus created that Valerius has incorporated into his epic the divine apparatus that is operational in his main model, Virgil's *Aeneid*, but looks at it through a Lucanian lens.

In fact, Valerius seems to set up the Cyzicus episode as a miniature *Aeneid*. Cybele's anger against Cyzicus, for instance, is described in terms that recall Juno's anger towards Aeneas, which motivates the entire plot of the *Aeneid*: *tantae non immemor irae* ('remembering how great her anger was', *Arg.* 3.27) ~ *saevum memorem Iunonis ob iram* ('because of the fierce and unforgetting anger of Juno', *Aen.* 1.4).²⁵ Furthermore, an important intertext for Valerius is again, as in Colchis, the second half of the *Aeneid*, where Ascanius' shooting of a stag results in the civil war in Latium, for Cyzicus' shooting of Cybele's lion results in civil war as well.²⁶ Valerius, however, seems to set up the episode as an *Aeneid* only to subvert it, for whereas the civil war in Latium can be said to have a positive outcome for the Roman cause in the end, this is not the case at all in the Cyzicus episode.²⁷

24 Cf. Buckley (2010) 439–440 on the gods' involvement in the war in Colchis: 'Valerius' *Argonautica* thus resurrects a "traditional" divine apparatus within his book of war-epic, only to collapse the oppositions of the "traditional" epic code through allusion to the anti-epicist Lucan; the intertextual presence of the *Bellum Civile* contaminates the ostensibly "straightforward" antagonism of Greeks and Colchians in the battle narrative "proper", and forges instead an innovative civil-war narrative that implicates even the gods themselves.'

25 Burck (1970) 180; McGuire (1997) 109. This intertextual link is not mentioned by Stover (2012). Compare also Valerius' address to Clio at the beginning of the episode (*Arg.* 3.14–5: *Tu mihi nunc causas infandaque proelia, Clio, / pande virum*, 'Clio, now unfold for me the causes of unspeakable battles between men') with Virgil's question to the Muse at the beginning of the *Aeneid* (*Aen.* 1.8: *Musa, mihi causas memora*, 'Tell me, Muse, the causes of her anger'), on which see e.g. Schenk (1999) 170; Spaltenstein (2004) 10.

26 See in particular the parallel between *Arg.* 3.21 (*ingenti praedae deceptus amore*, 'deceived by his enormous desire for spoils') and *Aen.* 7.496 (*eximiae laudis succensus amore*, 'fired with longing for chiefest honour'), noted by e.g. Burck (1970) 180; Schenk (1999) 160 with n. 177; Spaltenstein (2004) 12; Stover (2012) 129.

27 See Buckley (2010) 443 for a similar interpretation of the war in Colchis: 'Should we pay attention to the subversive role allusion to Lucan plays in this epic, we may suspect that the "foundation myth" Valerius Flaccus provides for his new dynasty is not just a straight-forward and optimistic account of exploration, conquest and gain: it also contains an alternative reading that seeds civil war as the originary myth of the Flavians.' Incidentally, Valerius' immediately following episode (on Hylas), which constitutes the second half of Book 3, is closely connected to the Cyzicus episode in several thematic ways, for instance, in its reaction to the *Aeneid*. As I have argued before (Heerink [2015]), Valerius' Hylas episode is initially set up as a miniature *Aeneid*, as it is orchestrated by Juno, who closely resembles her Virgilian counterpart, and Hylas is hunting a stag (like Ascanius in *Aeneid* 7) instead of fetching water for Hercules, as is the case in all previous versions of the story. The expectation that the episode will turn into a second half of the *Aeneid*, however, is thwarted as Hercules and the Ascanius-like (and thus potential epic hero) Hylas are elegized and left behind, much to Jupiter's regret. The parallels with the Cyzicus episode are striking.

Apart from the episode in general and the divine motivation that determines the events in it, Valerius' technique of inverting and subverting the *Aeneid* is also visible on a micro-level, in specific passages in the text. The night-time battle at Troy between the Greeks and Trojans in *Aeneid* 2, for instance, is an important intertext for Valerius' entire Cyzicus episode,²⁸ but when Valerius turns from the first battle scene in the harbour to the battle in the city, it becomes particularly relevant:

at magis interea diverso turbida motu
 urbs agitur. Genyso coniunx amoverat arma;
 ast illi subitus ventis vivoque reluxit 115
 torre focus: telis gaudes, miserande, repertis.
linquit et undantes *mensas* infectaque pernox
sacra Medon; chlamys imbelli circumvenit ostro
 torta manum strictoque vias praefulgurat ense.
tal ***is in arma ruit*** nec vina dapesque remota 120
 statque loco torus inque omen mansere ministri.
 inde vagi nec tela modis nec casibus isdem
 conseruere manu et longe iacuere perempti.

Meanwhile, more than before the confused city is shaken by various movements. The wife of Genysus had taken away her husband's weapons, when suddenly a gust and a still live brand lit up the hearth: poor man, you are glad to have found your weapons again. Medon, working through the night, leaves behind loaded tables and unfinished rites; a cloak, twisted up, enwraps his hand with its unwarlike purple, and he illuminates the path ahead with his flashing drawn sword. Thus he rushes into battle; the wine and the food are not cleared away, his couch still stands in its place, and his servants remained there, as a bad omen. Both then went their separate ways and joined the fight, unlike in fashion as in fortune, and far apart they lay killed. (*Arg.* 3.113–123)

Valerius immediately evokes *Aeneid* 2, as the italicized words indicate²⁹:

diverso interea miscentur moenia *luctu*,
 et *magis* atque *magis*

28 See e.g. Stover (2012) 122 n. 31 for a more extensive bibliography.

29 Langen (1896–1897) 215; Spaltenstein (2004) 43. The parallel is not mentioned by Stover (2012).

On every side, meanwhile, the city is in a turmoil of anguish; and more and more (*Aen.* 2.298–299)

One possible interpretation of this allusion is that it suggests that the Cyzicus episode presents us with a battle between a good and a bad side, as Stover argues on the basis of Valerius' use of gigantomachic imagery (on which see also below).³⁰ By analogy, however, the Doliones, the inhabitants of Cyzicus, which resembles Virgil's Troy, would be the Virgilian Trojans and thus the 'good guys', and not the Argonauts. Is this an inversion of Virgil again? This notion is reinforced a few lines later (117ff.), when the Dolion priest Medon interrupts his ritual and enters the battlefield, just like the Trojan priest Panthus in *Aeneid* 2.317ff.³¹

But Valerius in this passage more clearly alludes to another Virgilian passage involving Greeks and Trojans. When the Trojans arrive at Palanteum, later the site of Rome, in *Aeneid* 8, the ritual performed by Euander in honour of Hercules is interrupted; everyone participating wants to see who has arrived, and for a moment a confrontation is threatening. Pallas, however, forbids his people to stop the ritual and goes to meet the strangers (compare the underlined words):

cuncti relictis
consurgunt mensis; audax quos rumpere Pallas
sacra vetat

and all rise up, quitting the feast. But Pallas, undaunted, forbids them to break off the rites (*Aen.* 8.109–111)

By not breaking off the rites and by communicating with the Trojans, Pallas prevents a tragic misunderstanding, and the Greeks and Trojans become allies. But Valerius' Medon *does* interrupt his ritual and he *does* unwittingly fight his friends and allies, thus inverting the *Aeneid's* narrative of allyship to a narrative that regresses from allyship to (civil) war. To underline this inversion of Virgil, Valerius' *talīs in arma ruit* in *Arg.* 3.120 alludes to Lucan³²:

30 See e.g. Stover (2012) 114: '[E]ven in the midst of *bellum civile*, there is a clearly defined "right side" and a clearly defined "wrong side". In Valerius' civil war narratives, the distinction between good and evil does not collapse, as is the case in Lucan's *Bellum Civile*.' Cf. p. 141, where Stover speaks of 'good and evil' and p. 145, where he states: 'Valerius employs gigantomachic imagery to distinguish the Greeks from the Phrygians, the heroes from the villains.'

31 See Burck (1970) 184; Schenk (1999) 222 for this parallel.

32 Langen (1896–1897) 216.

ille, dei quamvis cladem manesque minentur
maior in arma ruit certa cum mente malorum

He [Pompey], though gods and shades threaten calamity,
 more resolutely races to war, his mind certain of disaster. (Luc. 3.36–37)

Although Pompey has just been warned by the shade of his former wife Julia that he will get involved in a useless war against family that will result in death, he nevertheless goes into battle *maior*, ‘greater’ literally, with a pun on Pompey’s *cognomen* Magnus. I read Valerius’ *talis*, which replaces Lucan’s *maior*, as an instance of self-reflexive annotation³³: in such a way, i.e. just like Pompey, Valerius’ Medon goes into battle to meet his death. This allusion emphasizes that the battle at Cyzicus is a useless, Lucanian civil war. The allusions to Virgil, on the other hand, only highlight the difference with the civil wars in *Aeneid* 2 and the second half of the *Aeneid*, which can be said to have a positive outcome eventually.

Valerius further emphasizes the Lucanian futility of this Cyzican civil war by questioning and problematizing the traditional distinction between good and evil in such war narratives. He does so through engaging with gigantomachic imagery, as can be recognized in his detailed description of the warrior Phlegyas, who is killed by Hercules:

ecce gravem nodis pinguique bitumine quassans
 lampada turbata Phlegyas decurrit ab urbe. 125
 ille leves de more manus aciemque Pelasgum
 per noctem remeasse ratus pulsumque requires
 saepe sibi vano Thamyrum clamore petebat
 arduus et late fumanti nube coruscus.
 quantus ubi immenso prospexit ab aethere Typhon 130
 igne simul ventisque rubens, quem Iuppiter alte
 crine tenet. **trepidant** diro sub lumine **puppes**.

There comes Phlegyas running from the troubled city, brandishing a torch heavy with knots and thick pitch. He thought that Pelasgian troops, light-armed and ready for battle, had returned by night as usual; looking for Thamyris, whom he had often beaten, and calling out his name in vain, he tried to attack him, standing erect and flashing far and wide

33 See Hinds (1998) 1–16 on this phenomenon of self-reflexive annotation or signposting intertextuality in Latin poetry.

through the cloud of smoke, huge as Typhon when he looks down from the measureless sky, red with fire and tempest, while Jupiter holds him aloft by the hair; beneath the ominous glow the ships shudder. (*Arg.* 3.124–132)

In the last three lines of the passage, Phlegyas is compared to the Giant Typhon. Gigantomachic imagery is often used to distinguish the good (the gods) from the bad (the rebellious Giants), but as Stover remarks in his book, Lucan had completely subverted and confused the imagery in his *Bellum Civile*, 'making it impossible at times to distinguish the Giants from the Olympians'.³⁴ Valerius' comparison of Phlegyas with a Giant functions in a similar way: after the set-up of Valerius' scene as a tragic and useless civil war between friends and relatives, and following Valerius' characterization of the Argonauts as the bad guys through allusion to *Aeneid 2*, as I have suggested, now the Cyzican Phlegyas is cast as the bad guy through comparison with the Giant Typhon. Thus, Valerius' Lucanian application of gigantomachic imagery here shows how unsuitable the mythological paradigm is for this civil war, in which there is no good and evil and there are no winners, just losers.³⁵

This problematization of good and evil is further suggested by Valerius' description of the ships shuddering beneath the ominous glow caused by the conflict between Typhon and Jupiter (*trepidant diro sub lumine puppes*, *Arg.* 3.132), which recalls Lucan's description of Caesar's tempestuous passage across the Adriatic³⁶:

tunc rector **trepidae** fatur **ratīs**: 'aspice, saevum
quanta paret pelagus.

Then says the helmsman of the quivering boat: 'Look at what the cruel sea has in store.' (Luc. 5.568–569)

In a replay of Virgil's famous storm scene in *Aeneid 1*, the helmsman of the boat carrying Caesar across the Adriatic from Brundisium to Epirus warns him to return to Italy because of the impending storm. Caesar, however,

34 Stover (2012) 115. For his treatment of the passage itself, see Stover (2012) 142–147.

35 I thus disagree with Stover ([2012] 115), who argues that 'in his desire to "correct" Lucan's confusion of gigantomachic imagery, Valerius achieves a level of orderliness that is not found in Vergil. His deployment of gigantomachic motifs is far more stable and consistent than Vergil's.'

36 Cf. Manuwald (2015) 102.

like a Giant opposing the gods,³⁷ despises the storm, wants to sail on, but fails and nearly drowns. But this Giant will eventually win, in the battle of Pharsalus, on the eve of which the losing Pompeians – instead of the winning Caesarians – are compared to the Olympians (Luc. 7.144–150).³⁸

So, just as Lucan, Valerius is problematizing and confusing good and bad in his civil war at Cyzicus, and along these lines one should also read Hercules' as well as Jason's feats on the battlefield. In the past, this problematization has not been fully recognized. For example, Hershkowitz has interpreted Jason in the Cyzicus episode as a 'recuperation' of his Apollonian predecessor. According to her, Jason 'shows the skills of an experienced warrior, recalling a Homeric hero', and when he kills Cyzicus, 'who has been set up as something of a guilty party', Jason 'acts as an instrument of divine vengeance'.³⁹ But to interpret Jason, successfully killing his best friends, in this optimistic way cannot be the purpose of the story. Valerius' allusions to the *Aeneid* – and in particular Lucan – rather point in another direction – and inevitably so, for allusion to Lucan's dark *Bellum Civile* almost automatically creates negative energy.⁴⁰

So what is the point of Valerius' allusions to both Virgil and Lucan? By the time Valerius wrote his *Argonautica*, Virgil's perfect, Augustan picture of a future Rome, emblematically envisaged on Vulcan's Shield at the end of *Aeneid* 8, had been shattered by Nero and the ensuing civil war.⁴¹ Behind Valerius' depictions of civil war lies a pessimistic and disappointed world view; Valerius does not believe in an *imperium sine fine* ('an empire that will know no end'), as famously prophesied by Jupiter in the *Aeneid* (1.254–296) anymore. In fact, Jupiter strikingly does not mention the Romans as the new rulers of the world in his prophecy in the *Argonautica*, which is clearly modelled on that of Virgil's Jupiter.⁴² Writing under Vespasian,

37 See Stover (2012) 100–102 for Lucan's Caesar as a 'gigantomachic mariner' in this episode.

38 Stover (2012) 114–115.

39 Hershkowitz (1998) 120. Incidentally, Stover (2012) does not treat Jason's *aristeia* in the Cyzicus episode.

40 Cf. Barchiesi (2001) 323 (quoted by Zissos [2004] 23 n. 13) on the influence of Ovid, Lucan, and Seneca versus that of Homer and Virgil on Flavian epic and Statius, in particular: 'Ovidio, Lucano e Seneca tragico si distinguono nel sistema letterario di età Flavia dai modelli canonici dell'epos, Omero e Virgilio, e Stazio li utilizza come una sorte di fonte di energia alternativa' ('Ovid, Lucan and the tragic Seneca are distinguished in the literary system of the Flavian age from the canonical epic models, Homer and Virgil, and Statius uses them as a kind of source of alternative energy').

41 This paragraph is based on Heerink (2014) 95.

42 Cf. e.g. Bernstein (2014) 160. See Stover (2012) 27–77 (Ch. 2: 'The Inauguration of the "Argonautic Moment"') for a different, i.e. optimistic, interpretation of the 'Jovian programme' (p. 28)

who fashioned himself as a new Augustus,⁴³ Valerius at first sight seems to follow suit and replay the *Aeneid* when he addresses the emperor in his proem and associates him with Jason and the Argonauts, just as Virgil associates Aeneas with Augustus. But Valerius is not slavishly following Virgil; his *Argonautica*, which initiates a new but harsh Iron Age, reveals a disappointed attitude concerning the principate and shows that an *Aeneid* in the Flavian age is not possible anymore. One can understand the optimism of the Augustan age, when the first *princeps* had ended more than half a century of traumatic civil wars, but one can equally understand Valerius in not believing in the Augustan dream anymore and siding with Lucan as his prophet.

Valerius expresses his position programmatically at the beginning of the Cyzicus episode, in his address to the Muses, where he asks Jupiter in despair, alluding to the first wars of the *Aeneid* again (*Arg.* 3.16–17)⁴⁴: *cur talia passus / arma [...] / Juppiter?* ‘Why did Jupiter permit such *arma*’, i.e. ‘instead of Virgilian ones’? A few lines later, immediately after Cybele has entered the stage (in line 27), evoking Virgil’s Juno, as we have seen already, Valerius does something similar:

quae postquam Haemoniam tantae non immemor irae
 aerisono de monte ratem praefixaque regum
 scuta videt, **nova monstra viro**, nova funera volvit,
 ut socias in nocte manus utque impia bella
 conserat et saevis erroribus implicet urbem.

When she [Cybele] saw the Haemonian ship and the shields of the kings attached to its hull from her cymbal-clashing mountain, she remembered how great her anger was and devised unprecedented deaths and horrors for him: how to commit allied hands to nocturnal combat and impious war, how to entangle the city in cruel error. (*Arg.* 3.27–31)

The goddess alludes to the opening of the *Aeneid* here (*arma virumque cano*, ‘I sing of arms and of the man’), but instead of *nova arma* she speaks of *nova monstra* (‘unprecedented horrors’) for this *vir*, and of *nova funera*

in Valerius’ *Argonautica*, including Jupiter’s prophetic speech and the transition from the Golden to the Iron Age.

43 See also e.g. Boyle (2003) 4–6 and Moormann in this volume.

44 Stover (2012) 148 interprets this question quite differently by answering it: ‘Jupiter allowed these things to transpire because the Doliones are out of step with the Jovian dispensation.’

(‘unprecedented deaths’), in short Lucanian *impia bella* (‘impious wars’). In fact, Valerius’ *nova monstra* even alludes to the *Bellum Civile*⁴⁵:

ultricesque deae dant in **nova monstra** furorem

and the avenging goddesses give him [Pothinus] frenzy for new horrors.
(*Luc.* 10.337)

So just as in the address to the Muses a few lines earlier, Valerius here, at the beginning of the Cyzicus episode, states programmatically what he will do in the remainder of this episode and the epic, that is, to read the *Aeneid* through Lucan’s lens and subvert Virgil’s teleological view of civil war. At the same time, these programmatic words *nova monstra* open up a reading of the Cyzicus episode as reflecting experienced trauma, as I will argue in what follows.

Cyzicus II: The Trauma of 68–69 CE

The phrase *nova monstra* (‘unprecedented horrors’) not only alludes to Lucan, as I just showed, but also refers back to the traumatic apostrophe in the Lemnos episode discussed earlier (*Arg.* 2.216–219). The fact that the Lemnian civil war is described with the same word (*monstris*, ‘monstrous deeds’, *Arg.* 2.217) already suggests that the civil war in Cyzicus can be read in a similar way. In fact, in the apostrophe a few lines earlier, the narrator has already spoken of ‘unspeakable battles’:

tu mihi nunc causas infandaque proelia, Clio,
pande virum.

Clio, I beg you, now unfold for me the causes of unspeakable battles
between men. (*Arg.* 3.14–15)

Whereas this address to the Muses is quite conventional, clearly alluding to comparable scenes in the *Aeneid*,⁴⁶ it is precisely in calling the ensuing civil

45 The repetition of *nova* in this same line could also be a Lucanian technique: cf. the analysis of Virgil’s and Lucan’s proems by Tarrant (1997) 66: ‘Virgil’s introduction encapsulates the movement of the poem as a whole from Troy (1) to Rome (7). [...] Lucan negates any sense of progress, obsessively repeating with variation the single idea of civil war.’

46 See Manuwald (2015) 67–68, who mentions *Aen.* 7.37–45; 9.525–528; 12.500–504, as well as *Aen.* 1.8, for which see n. 23 above.

war 'unspeakable' that Valerius' text diverges from Virgil's, pointing in the direction of experienced trauma. The paradox that unspeakable things are in fact told in what follows becomes understandable from this perspective: the traumatized narrator cannot directly sing 'real events', which haunt him in his nightmares, as we have been told in the Lemnos episode (*Arg.* 2.218–219), but is able to describe the *experience* of what actually happened in the guise of a mythological story.

The most extensive and striking example of psychological trauma reflected in the text appears later in the episode. After Jupiter has ended the battle and the Argonauts realize what they have done (249–272), they lament and bury the dead (274–361), as they did in Apollonius' version. Then, however, Valerius diverts dramatically from Apollonius' plotline, where adverse winds keep the Argonauts in Cyzicus; only after performing a ritual to appease the goddess Rhea they can sail on (1.1078–1152). The situation is completely different in Valerius' epic, where the winds are favourable, but the Argonauts get so apathetic and depressed that they do not want to leave:

At non inde dies nec quae magis aspera curis
 nox Minyas tanta caesorum ab imagine solvit.
 bis zephyri iam vela vocant: fiducia maestis
 nulla viris; aegro adsidue mens carpitur aestu,
 necdum omnes lacrimas atque omnia reddita caesis
 iusta putant; patria ex oculis acerque laborum
 pulsus amor segnique iuvat frigescere luctu.

But neither the following day nor the night, which sorrow made harder to bear, set the Minyae free from the haunting image of the slain. Twice already do the west winds invite the sails, but the heroes' grief forbids assurance; their sick minds are relentlessly vexed by worries, and they do not yet feel that all their tears are shed, or all dues paid to the slain ones; lost to view is their homeland, forgotten the keen love of the enterprise, and their joy is to grow cold in the languor of mourning. (*Arg.* 3.362–368)

When Jason turns to Mopsus in despair (372–376), the seer provides a religious explanation as well as a solution (377–416), and with an elaborate ritual Mopsus cleanses the Argonauts of their guilt and appeases the slain Doliones (417–458). When Mopsus sees that the ritual is successful, he

immediately orders the Argonauts to board the *Argo* and not look back. The men happily comply and get back to business:

continuo puppem petere et considerare transtris
 imperat Ampycides nec visum vertere terrae:
 exciderint quae gesta manu, quae debita fatis.
 illi alacres pars arma locant, pars ardua celsis
 insternunt tabulata toris oriturque tremementum
 remorum sonus et laetae concordia vocis.

462 celsis *C*: *om.* γ: summis *L*: raptis *Kramer*

At once Mopsus orders them to make for the ship and take their seats on the thwarts, and not to turn their gaze toward the land; they should forget what their hands have done, what was owed to fate. Briskly some put the shields in place, some cover the lofty deck with high-piled bedding, and there rises the sound of quivering oars and of voices raised in joyful concord. (*Arg.* 3.459–464)

I agree with Stover that ‘Valerius’ narrative focuses attention on the deep psychological trauma that participation in civil war produces.⁴⁷ In his fascinating book *Achilles in Vietnam: Combat Trauma and the Undoing of Character* (1994), Jonathan Shay confronts his own experiences in dealing with Vietnam veterans with PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder) with the behaviour of warriors in Homer’s *Iliad*. He says, for instance, that Vietnam veterans often suffered from apathy after combat, thus providing a meaningful parallel for the state of the Argonauts after the battle at Cyzicus (*segnique iuvat frigescere luctu*, ‘and their joy is to grow cold in the languor of mourning’, *Arg.* 3.638):

A deplete state of apathy, an inability to *want* anything, to will anything, often persists into life after combat, when it is no longer needed as a survival skill.⁴⁸

47 Stover (2012) 170. What follows is partly inspired by discussions with Monica Palmeira and by one chapter of her BA thesis (2020) on the Cyzicus episode as trauma literature.

48 Shay (1994) 176.

Many veterans also felt they already died in Vietnam and therefore did not want to return home, just like the Argonauts (*patria ex oculis acerque labor / pulsus amor*, 'lost to view is their homeland, forgotten the keen love of the enterprise', *Arg.* 3.367–368). As one of Shay's patients is quoted as saying:

In my wildest thoughts I never expected or wanted to return home alive, and emotionally never have.⁴⁹

Shay also stresses the importance of shared grief in dealing with (combat) trauma to prevent or diminish PTSD ('griefwork'),⁵⁰ and he notices a marked contrast in this respect between Vietnam veterans and Homeric warriors:

Any blow in life will have longer-lasting and more serious consequences if there is no opportunity to communalize it. This means some mix of formal social ceremony and informal telling of the story with feeling to *socially connected others* who do not let the survivor go through it alone. The virtual suppression of social griefwork in Vietnam contrasts vividly with the powerful expressions of communal mourning recorded in Homeric epic.⁵¹

Valerius' Argonauts, who share their grief both among themselves and with the Doliones, and who eventually participate in Mopsus therapeutic ritual together, may be compared to Homer's warriors and their successful way of dealing with the traumatic experiences at Cyzicus. This interpretation seems to be confirmed when during the ensuing rowing contest the positive sense of community among the Argonauts is stressed (*Arg.* 3. 463–464; also quoted above): *oriturque trementum / remorum sonus et laetae concordia vocis*, 'and there rises the sound of quivering oars and of voices raised in joyful concord'.⁵²

49 Shay (1994) 53.

50 Shay (1994) 55: 'There is a growing consensus among people who treat PTSD that any trauma, be it loss of family in a natural disaster, rape, exposure to the dead and mutilated in an industrial catastrophe, or combat itself, will have longer-lasting and more serious consequences if there has been no opportunity to talk about the traumatic event, to express to other people emotions about the event and those involved in it, or to experience the presence of socially connected others who will not let one go through it alone.'

51 Shay (1994) 39.

52 On trauma in Homer and collective suffering in particular, see Gardner (2019).

As Stover convincingly suggests, Mopsus' purifying ritual brings to mind a passage from Lucan's epic, which describes the traumatic impact of the climactic battle of Pharsalus on Caesar and his troops:

exigit a meritis tristes victoria poenas,
 sibilaque et flammam infert sopor. umbra perempti
 civis adest; sua quemque premit terroris **imago**:
 ille senum voltus, iuvenum videt ille figuras,
 hunc agitant totis fraterna cadavera somnis,
 pectore in hoc pater est, omnes in Caesare manes.

Victory exacts a hideous punishment deservedly, and slumber
 Brings on flames and hissing. The ghost of a murdered citizen
 stands there; each man is tormented by a terrifying vision all his own:
he sees faces of old men, *he* the forms of younger men,
he in all his dreams is harried by his brother's corpse,
 in *this* breast is his father – all these shades are in Caesar. (Luc.
 7.771–776)

As Stover remarks, 'there will not be this type of lingering mental anguish for Valerius' Argonauts'.⁵³ I do not agree, however, with his ultimate, positive interpretation of Valerius' episode. Identifying Mopsus as a *mise en abyme* of the narrator, Stover concludes:

I suggest that this episode more than any other symbolizes the critical role envisioned by Valerius for *vates* in the aftermath of the civil war that brought down the Julio-Claudian dynasty, leading to the establishment of the Flavian regime. In this, the *vates* Valerius shows the way. As for the Argonauts, so too for Valerius' Roman reader, it is time for amnesty, time to forget.⁵⁴

But can that truly be the point of the Cyzicus episode? The Lucanian intertext just quoted also brings to mind the narrator's apostrophe just before the start of the Lemnian massacre, in which he declared to be tormented by nightmarish visions at night, thus revealing his trauma, as we have seen (compare the words in bold)⁵⁵:

53 Stover (2012) 175.

54 Stover (2012) 179.

55 As Esther Meijer suggests to me, this passage may also evoke the nightly (*per obscuram noctem*) appearance of the 'image of his country in distress' (*patriae trepidantis imago*) to Caesar

o qui me vera canentem
sistat et hac nostras exsolvat **imagine** noctes!

Oh, that someone would stop me in my true song and free my nights of this vision! (*Arg.* 2.218–219)

But the narrator is not freed from his traumatic experience; already in the ensuing Cyzicus episode he deals with another civil war. Indeed, after Mopsus' purifying ritual 'the Argonauts are able to forget and move on',⁵⁶ as Stover observes, but only for now: the most extensive, most explicit, and most Lucanian civil war, in Colchis, is yet to come, for the Argonauts as well as the narrator.⁵⁷ I would thus interpret the Lucanian intertext just quoted in a negative way, in line with my previous readings of Lucan's influence on Valerius. At first sight the Argonauts seem to forget and move on, and Valerius' Flavian readers can comfort themselves with the idea that the Flavian regime has ended the civil wars and started a new era, just as Augustus had done a century earlier. But Valerius replays the unspeakable horrors of the recent civil wars in nightmarish, mythological guises over and over again in his *Argonautica*.⁵⁸ In similar fashion to Lucan after the battle of Pharsalus, Valerius thus states that the traumatic events of 68–69 will live on in the memory of those who experienced them. Furthermore, by writing his epic he has also immortalized these *experiences* of civil war – instead of the actual, 'unspeakable', historic events – for later generations, in marked and telling contrast to Lucan, who, a hundred years after the events that he narrates,⁵⁹ was able to comment explicitly on this function of his epic with these famous words⁶⁰:

o sacer et magnus vatum labor! omnia fato
eripis et populis donas mortalibus aevum.
invidia sacrae, Caesar, ne tangere famae;

at the beginning of Lucan's epic, when he is about to cross the Rubicon, setting the civil war in motion (*Luc.* 1.186–87).

56 Stover (2012) 177.

57 See Buckley (2010) 434 for the 'contaminating' influence of Lucan on the Colchis episode: '[I]f we pay attention to Valerius' allusive relationship with Lucan, we obtain a vantage point from which to view the *Sinnlosigkeit* of the war in Colchis as in itself, at least partly, the "point" of Valerius' battle-narrative.' Cf. the passage quoted in n. 25 above.

58 Perhaps the repetition of civil wars in the *Argonautica* also reflects the repetitive nature of the civil wars of 68–69 CE and the concomitant shifts of emperor.

59 See Walde (2011) for Lucan's epic as 'literature of trauma', more specifically, an instance of 'postmemory' (i.e. the indirect experience of traumatic events by the 'generation after').

60 Cf. Stover (2012) 177, who also quotes other, similar passages in Lucan.

nam, siquid Latiis fas est promittere Musis,
 quantum Zmyrnaei durabunt vatis honores,
 venturi me teque legent; Pharsalia nostra
 vivet, et a nullo tenebris damnabimur aevo.

O how sacred and immense the task of bards! You snatch everything
 from death and to mortals you give immortality.
 Caesar, do not be touched by envy of their sacred fame;
 since, if for Latian Muses it is right to promise anything,
 as long as honours of the Smyrnaean bard endure,
 the future ages will read me and you; our Pharsalia
 shall live and we shall be condemned to darkness by no era. (Luc.
 9.980–986)

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7 *Imitatio, aemulatio*, and Ludic Allusion: Channelling Lucan in Statius' *Thebaid* 1.114–164

Tim Stover

Abstract

In this chapter I examine Statius' appropriation of Lucan in *Thebaid* 1.114–164. I show that Lucan's Caesar haunts the opening of Statius' *Thebaid*, infusing it with diabolical energy and enhancing the theme of identity confusion. I also demonstrate that Statius' engagement with Lucan often takes the form of a poetic rivalry. Moreover, despite the overwhelmingly sombre nature of Statius' epic, I argue that he is capable of injecting playfulness into his poem by way of allusion to Lucan's narrative. I aim to reveal that Statius' allusive interaction with Lucan's work is programmatic, sustained, and skilful, as he poses not just as an imitator of his Neronian predecessor, but as a competitor whose *Thebaid* ultimately outdoes the *Bellum Civile*.

Keywords: Lucan; Statius; allusion; intertextuality

Introduction

A reader who wishes to examine traces of Lucan's *Bellum Civile* in Book 1 of Statius' *Thebaid* occupies an enviable position. In addition to Caviglia's useful commentary, which has been supplemented by Briguglio's edition on *Thebaid* 1.1–389,¹ a number of recent studies explore the relations between the two epics and offer much food for thought.² These studies have revealed

1 Caviglia (1973); Briguglio (2017).

2 See, for example, Henderson (1993) 165–166; Malamud (1995) 21–27; Lovatt (1999); Micozzi (1999); Delarue (2000) 30–33, 91–116; Micozzi (2004); Lovatt (2005) 38–39, 202–211; Gibson (2008) 91–94; Rosati (2008) 184–193; Manolaraki (2012) 301–304; Gervais (2015); Roche (2015); Briguglio

that in the *Thebaid* Statius engages in a complex strategy of *imitatio* and *aemulatio* ('rivalry') with respect to his epic predecessor, a strategy that is in essence announced right from the poem's opening line. As has long been noted, the *Thebaid's* first two words, *fraternas acies* ('fraternal warfare', *Theb.* 1.1), conjure up Lucan's *cognatasque acies* ('warfare among kinsmen', *Luc.* 1.4).³ This programmatic gesture prompts the reader to consider the Lucanian dimensions of Statius' treatment of Theban dysfunction,⁴ which is advertised as a Flavian reboot, so to speak, of the Neronian civil war epic.⁵ Whereas in the *Thebaid's* epilogue Statius poses as a successor to Virgil (*Theb.* 12.816–817), he begins the epic by posing as a successor to Lucan. Statius thus frames his poetic enterprise as a *mélange* of Augustan and Neronian antecedents, which he refashions into something at once recognizable and unique. This feature of the *Thebaid* exhibits the broader Flavian tendency to blend elements drawn from the beginning and the end of the Julio-Claudian dynasty, an aspect of the era that emerges clearly from the other papers in this volume, and one which will be on display below when I examine Statius' combinatorial imitation of Virgil and Lucan.

In what follows, I aim to complement the growing body of scholarship on Statius' deft appropriation of Lucan for his depiction of fraternal warfare in Thebes by examining the densely packed allusions to the *Bellum Civile* at *Thebaid* 1.114–164. In this passage, the Fury Tisiphone, summoned by Oedipus' insidious prayer (1.56–87), arrives in Thebes to create strife between Eteocles and Polynices. My primary objective is to offer a close reading of this passage, thereby teasing out some of the implications of Statius' allusive

(2017) 6–10, 25–34; Rebergiani (2018) 153–196. Although interest in Statius' engagement with Lucan has picked up steam recently, this is of course not a new subject of investigation: in his influential work on Statius, Vessey (1973) describes the Flavian poet as 'an avowed devotee of Lucan' (p. 11). Given that the present volume examines responses to Neronian Rome in Flavian culture, it is also worth noting that Lucan's influence on the two other Flavian epic poets has garnered increasing attention as of late. On Lucan and Valerius Flaccus, see Baldini Moscadi (1999); Schenk (1999); Fuà (2002); Zissos (2004); Buckley (2010); Stover (2012); Stover (2014); Heerink (2016); Krasne (2018); Penwill (2018); Heerink in this volume. On Lucan and Silius Italicus, see Mills (2009) 54–62; Marks (2010); Augoustakis (2011); Bernstein (2016); Marks (2018).

3 All texts and translations of the *Thebaid* are taken from Shackleton Bailey (2003). Texts and translations of Lucan's *Bellum Civile* are taken from Duff (1928).

4 See Jal (1963) 402; Caviglia (1973) 87; Roche (2015) 393–394; Briguglio (2017) 106.

5 Given the events of 68–69 CE, Flavian authors were somewhat obsessed with the theme of civil war, making allusive interaction with Lucan's indelible portrait of internecine conflict a natural and common practice. This feature of Flavian literature is also the focus of Heerink's contribution to this volume, while Nauta's piece examines Flavian reworkings of the Neronian Calpurnius Siculus' poetic project. On civil war in the Flavian writers, see also Ginsberg and Krasne (2018).

strategies vis-à-vis Lucan. I demonstrate that the spectre of Lucan's Caesar haunts the opening of Statius' poem, infusing the *Thebaid* with the diabolical energy of Lucan's anti-hero and enriching a theme of some importance in the epic, namely the theme of identity confusion. I also show that Statius' approach to his Neronian predecessor frequently takes the form of rivalry, both in regard to the superiority of mythological epic over historical epic and in regard to the fact that the lunacy that drives the *Thebaid's* plot trumps the madness at the heart of Lucan's *Bellum Civile*. Moreover, despite the overwhelmingly lugubrious nature of Statius' text, I demonstrate that he is capable of injecting playfulness into his poem by way of allusion to Lucan's epic. Overall, I hope to show that Statius' engagement with Lucan's work is sustained, intricate, programmatic, and skilful, as he poses not just as an imitator of Lucan, but as a competitor whose poem ultimately outdoes the *Bellum Civile*.⁶

The Spectre of Lucan's Caesar and the *Thebaid's* First Simile

I begin my analysis with a relatively well-known echo of Lucan's *Bellum Civile* at *Thebaid* 1.128–130. As Statius describes the deleterious effects of Tisiphone's arrival in Thebes, we hear that the brothers Eteocles and Polynices are afflicted by 'ambition intolerant of second place, hankering to stand at the top alone' (*iurisque secundi / ambitus impatiens, et summo dulcius unum / stare loco*). Statius' wording here conflates two separate passages of Lucan's epic. The first is Luc. 1.124, where part of Caesar's motivation for waging war against Pompey is attributed to his 'fortune that brooked no second place' (*impatiensque loci fortuna secundi*).⁷ The second passage evoked by Statius is Luc. 1.144–145, where we read of Caesar's restless energy: *nescia virtus / stare loco* ('manly excellence ignorant of how to stand still').⁸ Statius' allusions to the *Bellum Civile* reveal that a Lucanian narrative is set in motion as Tisiphone arrives in Thebes to infuriate Oedipus' sons and incite them to civil war and suicidal madness. The troubling spectre of Lucan's Caesar,

6 Statius' effort to one-up his Neronian forerunner can be seen as analogous to attempts by Domitian to use the imperial residence and the Templum Pacis to outdo Nero at his own game, rather than to create distance from him. On these issues, see the contributions to this volume by Raimondi Cominesi (Domus Flavia) and Moormann (Temple of Peace).

7 See Caviglia (1973) 107; Roche (2009) 178; Briguglio (2017) 210. Caviglia (1973) 107 also notes that the structure of *Thebaid* 1.126–130, with its series of nominal phrases in coordination varied by usage of the substantive infinitive, is largely modelled on Luc. 1.160–170.

8 See Ahl (1986) 2825–2826 and Briguglio (2017) 210.

that quintessential agent of *nefas* ('unspeakable crime'), lurks just beneath the surface of Statius' narrative, as if he has accompanied the Fury on her journey from Hell to haunt Statius' Thebes.

These echoes of Lucan's Caesar set the stage for the *Thebaid's* first simile, a passage of great importance for the poem as a whole and, I suggest, of great importance for understanding the nature of Statius' engagement with Lucan more specifically.⁹ Eteocles and Polynices are likened to bulls that are yoked to a single plow but that pull in opposite directions, thereby causing confusion in the field:

sic ubi delectos per torva armenta iuencos
 agricola imposito sociare affectat aratro,
illi indignantes, quis nondum vomere multo
 ardua nodosos cervix descendit **in armos**,
 in diversa trahunt atque aequis vincula laxant 135
 viribus et vario confundunt limite sulcos:
 haud secus indomitos praeceps discordia fratres
 asperat

So when a farmer essays to yoke two bullocks chosen from the fierce herd at one plough, they rebel; not yet has many a ploughshare bowed their lofty necks into their brawny shoulders. They pull opposite ways and with equal strength loosen their bonds, perplexing the furrows with motley track. Not otherwise does headlong strife enrage the tameless brethren. (*Theb.* 1.131–138)

This simile is interesting for a number of reasons, not least of which is that it intertextually causes confusion regarding what kind of animals the brothers are, thus mimicking the confusion created by their inability to work together. That is, are the brothers like bulls, as the text has it on the surface, or are they like horses, as the intertexts activated by Statius' allusive gestures imply?

The *Thebaid's* first simile evokes the build-up to the first epic simile of the *Aeneid*, in which Neptune calming the stormy sea is likened to a pious man whose words are able to calm a riotous mob (*Aen.* 1.148–156). For example, the phrase *illi indignantes* (*Theb.* 1.133) recalls *Aeneid* 1.55, where

9 On similes in the *Thebaid*, see Dominik (2015), who demonstrates their programmatic and thematic importance for the overall design of the epic. On the poem's bull similes in particular, see Hershkowitz (1998) 271–277.

these same words, in the same metrical position, are used to refer to the indignant storm winds in their prison house¹⁰:

hic vasto rex Aeolus antro
 luctantes ventos tempestatesque sonoras
 imperio premit ac vinclis et carcere frenat.
illi indignantes magno cum murmure montis
 circum claustra fremunt

Here in his vast cavern, Aeolus, their king, keeps under his sway and with prison bonds curbs the struggling winds and the roaring gales. They, to the mountain's mighty moans, chafe blustering around the barriers. (*Aen.* 1.52–56)

Caviglia, who notes the echo, suggestively yokes Statius' allusion to Virgil's storm winds to a simile that appears at *Thebaid* 1.193–194 in which Eteocles and Polynices are likened to winds 'at war' with each other.¹¹ Thus, the Virgilian intertext is not in doubt. But what has gone unnoticed with respect to Statius' allusion to the *Aeneid* is that Virgil's storm winds are metaphorically spirited horses that Aeolus must 'rein in' (*frenat*) as they are poised to burst through the barrier at the beginning of a racetrack (*carcere*).¹² In fact, the equine imagery activated by Statius' allusion to Virgil's storm winds with the words *illi indignantes* has already been prepared for by Statius' evocation of Lucan's Caesar with the words *stare loco* (*Theb.* 1.130, cited above). This is so because Lucan's own model for the phrase *stare loco* is Virgil's *Georgics* 3.84, where it is used in reference to a warhorse eager for battle¹³:

tum, si qua sonum procul arma dedere,
stare loco nescit, micat auribus et tremit artus,
 collectumque fremens voluit sub **naribus ignem**.
 densa iuba, et dextro iactata recumbit **in armo**.

10 The texts and translations of both the *Aeneid* and the *Georgics* are taken from Fairclough (1999).

11 'Even as chill Boreas pulls canvass one way and cloudy Eurus another and the vessel's fate wavers between' (*qualiter hinc gelidus Boreas, hinc nubifer Eurus / vela trahunt, nutat mediae fortuna carinae*). See Caviglia (1973) 107–108.

12 On *frenare* and horses, see *OLD* s.v. 1. On *carcer* as the 'barrier at the start of a racetrack', see *OLD* s.v. 3. Virgil's depiction of the winds as horses is picked up a few lines later: *imposuit regemque dedit, qui foedere certo / et premere et laxas sciret dare iussus habenas* ('and [Jupiter] gave [the storm winds] a king who, under fixed covenant, should be skilled to tighten and loosen the reins at command', *Aen.* 1.62–63).

13 See Roche (2009) 189.

Again, should he but hear afar the clash of arms, he cannot keep his place; he pricks up his ears, quivers in his limbs, and snorting rolls beneath his nostrils the gathered fire. His mane is thick and, as he tosses it, falls back on his right shoulder. (*G.* 3.83–86)

Statius' allusion to Lucan with the words *stare loco* takes us back to Lucan's Virgilian model, a process that lays the groundwork for the equine subtext of the ostensibly 'bullish' first simile of Statius' poem, triggered by his usage of the phrase *illi indignantes*. Consequently, this passage offers an excellent example of Statius' penchant not only for combinatorial imitation, a feature of his poetic technique elucidated brilliantly by Hardie,¹⁴ Smolenaars,¹⁵ and Micozzi,¹⁶ but also of his fondness for highlighting the Virgilian dimensions of Lucan's text in order to create new effects. This procedure often entails Statius' activation of Lucan's Virgilian models, thereby creating a web of references that conjures up both Lucan and Virgil at the same time.¹⁷ In fact, in the *Thebaid's* first simile Statius underscores that he is engaging in this very process with his reference to the discordant bulls' shoulders. The line ending *in armos* (*Theb.* 1.134) echoes a line ending in the same passage that has already been evoked by Statius' combinatorial imitation of Lucan's usage of the Virgilian collocation *stare loco*, namely *Georgics* 3.86, where we read of the warhorse's mane falling onto his shoulder (*in armo*). There is thus some intertextual horseplay going on here.

As noted earlier, one effect of this allusive complex is that it intensifies the confusion that Statius' first simile describes. For when Statius depicts Eteocles and Polynices as bulls that 'perplex the furrows with motley track' (*vario confundunt limite sulcos*, *Theb.* 1.136), his first simile recalls Statius' earlier demarcation of his poem's theme: *limes mihi carminis esto / Oedipodae confusa domus* ('let the limit of my song be the troubled house of Oedipus', *Theb.* 1.16–17). As a result, Statius' first simile foregrounds the programmatic importance of the motif of confusion for the poem as a whole. The Lucanian and Virgilian texts mobilized by Statius' intricate allusivity create confusion over what type of animals the brothers are similar to, bulls or horses. This process dovetails with a specific kind of confusion

14 Hardie (1989) 3–5, 9–14.

15 Smolenaars (1994) xxvi–xlii.

16 Micozzi (1999); Micozzi (2004).

17 See Micozzi (1999) 349–350. On Statius' combining of allusions to Lucan and the *Georgics* in particular, see Micozzi (2004) 140. On relations between the *Thebaid* and the *Georgics* more generally, see Paratore (1943); Pagán (2015); Briguglio (2017) 38–42. On the reception of the *Georgics* in the early imperial period, see Thibodeau (2011) 202–243, 248–256.

given great prominence in the *Thebaid*, and in the mythological tradition concerning Thebes generally, namely the confusion of identity.¹⁸ In this regard, Statius' conflation in lines 1.128–130 of Luc. 1.124 and Luc. 1.144–145 to characterize Eteocles and Polynices creates a scenario in which the two Theban brothers are intertextually linked to the singular Caesar, and beyond him they coalesce into the singular warhorse of Virgil's *Georgics*. As a result, even as the two brothers, like discordant bulls, try to pull in opposite directions, try to create separation and distinction between the one and the other, they are intertextually prefigured as too similar, too desirous of being Caesar, as it were, engaging in civil war to achieve sole rule. In fact, the Caesarian nature of Eteocles and Polynices is reinforced shortly after the *Thebaid's* first simile. At 1.155–156, the narrator turns to address the brothers, asking them *quo tenditis iras, a, miseri?* ('Alas you wretches, to what end do you stretch your wrath?'). Statius' wording here recalls Luc. 1.190, where the image of Roma asks Caesar *quo tenditis ultra?* ('To where do you march further?').¹⁹ In addition to the verbal echo of Lucan's text, the act of the narrator addressing his characters is a Lucanian touch.²⁰ Thus, Statius' intertextual engagement with Lucan and Virgil within his poem's first simile and its immediate aftermath appropriates and underscores a process at the heart of Lucan's epic project, namely the means by which civil war reduces an original multiplicity to a unity in the form of the lone victor, the singular Caesar (*omnia Caesar erat*, 'Caesar was everything', Luc. 3.108).²¹

Enrichment of the theme of identity confusion is therefore one of the effects of Statius' allusive programme here. However, I suggest that the intertextual nexus created by Statius' combinatorial allusion to Lucan and Virgil also imports to the passage a kind of meta-confusion that is perfectly suited to this 'confused' moment in the *Thebaid*. The brothers' enmity threatens to send the poem hurtling off track, messing up the lines that Statius wishes to trace in his narrative, a feature of the text pointed up by the first simile's echo of the epic's proem, as we have seen (*vario confundunt*

18 For confusion of identity in the *Thebaid*, see, for example, 3.127–28 and 12.22–37. For the notion that such confusion is a hallmark of Oedipus' family, see Seneca's *Phoenissae* 134–137, with Frank (1995) 117, a text that exerted significant influence on the *Thebaid*. Henderson (1993) 168–169; Hershkowitz (1998) 275–277; and Braund (2006) 268–271 contain important discussions of this theme in Statius' epic generally, while Ganiban (2007) 185–195 and Marinis (2015) 353–358 offer excellent examinations of how Statius highlights confusion of identity during the brothers' climactic duel in *Thebaid* 11.

19 See Briguglio (2017) 228.

20 On apostrophe as a hallmark of Lucan's epic, see Roche (2009) 60–64.

21 On this aspect of Lucan's epic, see Bartsch (1997) 58–61.

limite sulcus, 1.136 ~ *limes mihi carminis esto* / *Oedipodae confusa domus*, 1.16–17). Our attention is thus drawn to the fact that fratricidal insanity is a theme that by its very nature resists order and lends itself to confusion on many levels. The fact that Statius advertises this aspect of his civil war poem by evoking Lucan's epic is fitting, given that confusion on numerous levels (thematic, ideological, linguistic, etc.) is seen by many to be a hallmark of Lucan's poetics of dissolution and deconstruction.²²

Fire-Breathing Bulls, Dragon's Teeth, and Civil War in Myth and History

At the risk of pressing my analysis too far, I want to go just a bit further, since I believe we can say even more about the imagery, allusive depth, and meta-textual self-reflexivity inherent in Statius' first simile. Virgil's focus on the warhorse's fiery nature with the phrase *naribus ignem* (*G.* 3.85) recalls an earlier moment in the *Georgics* where this same line ending is used to describe the fire-breathing bulls that Jason had to yoke in Colchis²³:

haec loca non tauri spirantes **naribus ignem**
 invertere satis immanis dentibus hydri,
 nec galeis densisque virum seges horruit hastis

Never was our country ploughed by fire-snorting bulls for the sowing of the grisly dragon's teeth; nor have its fields bristled with the helmets and serried lances of warriors. (*G.* 2.140–142)

The sowing of dragon's teeth evoked by Statius' engagement with the Lucanian-Virgilian collocation *stare loco* is pertinent to the thematic economy of the *Thebaid*: as Statius mentions at the outset of his poem, Thebes was founded by Cadmus, who sowed dragon's teeth and watched the Sown Men engage in 'civil war' until only five remained²⁴:

longa retro series, trepidum si Martis operti
 agricolam infandis condentem proelia sulcis
 expediam penitusque sequar

22 See, for example, Henderson (1988); Bartsch (1997) 48–72; Micozzi (1999) 372.

23 See Thomas (1988) 54.

24 On the various traditions concerning this myth, see Gantz (1993) 467–471.

Far back goes the tale, were I to recount the affrighted husbandmen
of covered soldiery hiding battle in unholy furrows and pursue to the
uttermost what followed (*Theb.* 1.7–9)

Statius here follows Lucan in emphasizing that the foundation of the city that is the prize of his civil war narrative coincided with fratricidal bloodshed:

nec gentibus ullis
credite, nec longe fatorum exempla petantur:
fraterno primi maderunt sanguine muri.
nec pretium tanti tellus pontusque furoris
tunc erat: exiguum dominos commisit asylum

Search not the history of foreign nations for proof, nor look far for an instance of Fate's decree: the rising walls of Rome were wetted with a brother's blood. Nor was such madness rewarded then by lordship over land and sea: the narrow bounds of the Asylum pitted its owners one against the other. (*Luc.* 1.93–97)

In this passage, Lucan notes that Romulus' foundation walls were drenched with the blood of his brother, Remus. Thus, just as Lucan uses the story of Romulus and Remus and the fratricidal origins of Rome as an etiology for the civil war between Pompey and Caesar, Statius alludes to the story of Cadmus and the Spartoi and the fratricidal origins of Thebes as an etiology for the enmity between Eteocles and Polynices.²⁵ Consequently, the civil war between Eteocles and Polynices is just the latest example of a madness that has infected Thebes from the beginning.²⁶ This is made especially clear in the following passage:

an inde vetus Thebis extenditur omen,
ex quo Sidonii nequiquam blanda iuveni
pondera Carpathio iussus sale quaerere Cadmus
exul Hyanteos invenit regna per agros,
fraternasque acies fetae telluris hiatu
augurium seros demisit ad usque nepotes?

25 See Micozzi (1999) 358–362.

26 See Bernstein (2008) 66–67.

Or does the ancient omen for Thebes extend from the time when Cadmus, ordered to search the Carpathian Sea in vain for the Sidonian bull's seductive freight, found in exile a kingdom in Hyantean fields and sent down fraternal warfare from the opening of pregnant earth as an augury to his remote posterity? (*Theb.* 1.180–185)

Here Statius refers yet again to Cadmus' sowing of the dragon's teeth and does so while echoing his poem's opening words (*fraternas acies*, 1.1 ~ 1.184), thus linking the foundation of Thebes in civil war with *this* civil war and Statius' rendition of it.²⁷ In what constitutes a meta-textual gesture on Statius' part, the 'unholy furrows' (1.8) of the city's foundation give way to the confused furrows created by the brothers-as-bulls in the narrative present (1.135–136).

Moreover, the sowing of dragon's teeth by Cadmus and the sowing of dragon's teeth by Jason, the subject of Virgil's first usage of the phrase *naribus ignem* at *Georgics* 2.140, are frequently linked in the literary tradition. Ares and Athena are often said to have given only half the teeth to Cadmus while giving the other half to Aeetes, who eventually compels Jason to plant them when he arrives in Colchis.²⁸ Lucan, for his part, explicitly connects these two stories:

sic semine Cadmi
emicuit Dircaea cohors ceciditque suorum
volneribus, dirum Thebanis fratribus omen;
Phasidos et campis insomni dente creati
terrigenae missa magicis e cantibus ira
cognato tantos inplerunt sanguine sulcos,
ipsaque, inexpertis quod primum fecerat herbis,
expavit Medea nefas.

Thus from the seed sown by Cadmus the Theban warriors started up and were slain by the swords of their kinsmen – a dismal omen for the Theban brothers; and thus in the land of the Phasis the sons of Earth, who sprang from the teeth of the sleepless dragon, filled the vast furrows with kindred blood, when magic spells had filled them with fury; and Medea herself was appalled by the first crime which her herbs, untried before, had wrought. (*Luc.* 4.549–456)

27 See Caviglia (1973) 89; Micozzi (2004) 145; Bernstein (2015) 140; Briguglio (2017) 248.

28 See Gantz (1993) 359.

In this passage, Lucan cites both Cadmus' and Jason's sowing of dragon's teeth as exemplary of the suicidal madness that Vulteius and his men engage in, a passage that offers a snapshot of *bella plus quam civilia* ('wars more than civil wars', Luc. 1.1) in miniature.²⁹

That Statius' multifaceted allusive programme has led at least this reader to this moment in Lucan's narrative opens the door for contemplation of the boundaries that separate myth and history, and the blurring of those very boundaries. For what we find Lucan doing in this passage is using myth to comment on, and to act as a model for, historical civil war. Statius' allusions to Lucan reverse this scheme, using the Lucanian intertext as a way to comment on, and act as a model for, mythological *bellum civile*. Statius' evocation of Virgil's fire-breathing bulls by way of combinatorial imitation also plays a role in this process: for here too we see a comparison between myth and history, since Virgil claims that historical Italy is nothing like mythical Colchis. Or is it? A reader of Lucan's *Bellum Civile* cannot be so sure, since for him Colchis and Thebes offer paradigms for the suicidal insanity characteristic of the Roman civil war Lucan so vividly depicts. Statius' allusions to Lucan suggest that just beneath the surface of the Theban brothers' story there lurks an all too real Roman reality.³⁰

Statius' practice of evoking Lucan so repeatedly and programmatically in the service of a mythological epic is an interesting topic. In fact, Statius' choice to compose a mythological epic has led some scholars to suggest that the Flavian poem lacks the punch created by the immediacy of his Neronian predecessor's epic project. For instance, Henderson has suggested that Statius 'loses the *edge* of Lucan's *Bellum Civile*, its ambition to represent the ultimate epic amplification [...] as it disjoins its readers from its subject' by recourse to the legends of Thebes rather than the pages of Roman history.³¹ While I take Henderson's point, Statius' decision to compose mythological epic while so insistently evoking Lucan's historical poem can be construed differently. For example, Malamud regards the *Bellum Civile*'s immediacy itself as a potential shortcoming and has thus

29 See Asso (2010) 210–211. On Statius' engagement with Lucan's deployment of the Spartoi myth more generally, see Micozzi (1999) 361, 364–370 and Delarue (2000) 97–98.

30 On this aspect of the *Thebaid*, see Henderson (1993) 165; Hardie (1993) 95; Braund (2006); McNelis (2007) 2–5; Newlands (2009).

31 See Henderson (1993) 165. In a similar vein, see also Micozzi (2015) 329: 'The presentation of the literary nature of what the poet is saying indeed introduces into the poem a critical dimension, a distance, which invites reflection and irony.'

interpreted Statius' choice to write a *Thebaid* as a criticism of Lucanian poetics:

Statius' critique of Lucan is founded upon his reading of the *Bellum Civile* as an epic that fails to escape complicity in the construction of the very ideology it condemns. Statius' decision not to write historical epic may be related to this critique and based on a determination to escape from the ideological trap both analysed in and exemplified by Lucan's text.³²

Seen from this perspective, the use of myth to probe issues of central importance to Roman society of the early imperial period has an empowering effect, not an enfeebling one.³³ I agree with this view, and I would like to take it a step further. If, as Johnson has suggested, part of Lucan's poetic enterprise was devoted to demythologizing Caesar and everything that he stands for, laying bare for all to see what he 'truly' was/is,³⁴ then we can regard Statius' engagement with Lucan's text as a project designed in part to mythologize Lucan's historical poetics. Indeed, the historical nature of Lucan's epic has been regarded as an ideological move, since it enabled him to compose the *Bellum Civile* in reaction to Caesar's account in the *Commentarii de bello civili* and/or a Caesarian version of the past, and thus to act as a corrective to Caesar's version of events.³⁵

But, one might reasonably ask, why would Statius wish to mythologize Lucanian poetic modes? I suggest that Statius' project of mythologizing Lucanian poetics arises not only from a desire not to emulate the *Bellum Civile*'s 'complicity in the very ideology it condemns', as Malamud puts it, but also from the view that myth in and of itself is a superior, and indeed safer, vehicle for exploring Roman realities. In fact, the *Thebaid* offers evidence of this notion. In the dedicatory proem of the epic, Statius makes a big show of choosing a mythological theme over an historical, Roman, contemporary one:

limes mihi carminis esto
Oedipodae confusa domus, quando Itala nondum

32 Malamud (1995) 22.

33 On this issue, see also the succinct remarks of Rosati (2008) 182: 'It goes without saying that the myth of Thebes offered an ideal framework, the most obvious and symbolically transparent one, to reflect not only on the drama of the civil war which had shaken Roman history from Sulla to the year of the four emperors, but also on the deadly conflicts which, in the specific environment of the family, had marked the Julio-Claudian dynasty in the passage of power from one emperor to another.' On Thebes as a symbol of Rome, see also the works cited in n. 30 above.

34 See Johnson (1987) 120–121.

35 See Masters (1992) 11–42 and Rossi (2001) 315–316, 320–325.

signa nec Arctos ausim spirare triumphos
 bisque iugo Rhenum, bis adactum legibus Histrum
 et coniurato deiectos vertice Dacos
 aut defensa prius vix pubescentibus annis
 bella Iovis.

Let the limit of my song be the troubled house of Oedipus. For not yet do I dare breathe forth Italian standards and northern triumphs – Rhine twice subjugated, Hister twice brought under obedience, Dacians hurled down from their leagued mountains, or, earlier yet, Jove's warfare warded off in years scarce past childhood. (*Theb.* 1.16–22)

In the process of advertising his choice of Theban myth over Roman history, Statius engages in an innovative application of a time-honoured rhetorical trope, the *recusatio* ('refusal'). Traditionally, the *recusatio* turned on a refusal by the poet to compose epic verse in favour of producing poetry of a 'lesser' genre, such as love elegy. That is clearly not what is at stake here. Statius does not choose between epic and another poetic genre; rather, he foregrounds the narrative possibilities offered by the epic genre per se, that is, either mythological material or historical subject matter.³⁶ That Statius chooses myth over history for the poem that he clearly considered his *magnum opus*, an epic that he believed could rival Virgil's *Aeneid* (*Theb.* 12.810–819),³⁷ is telling and prompts us to realize that Statius regarded myth, and particularly the myth of Thebes, as the better vehicle for probing issues of relevance for contemporary Rome.³⁸ Thus Statius' mythologizing of Lucanian poetics can be seen as an act of poetic *aemulatio*, of one-upmanship, whereby the Flavian poet incorporates the energy of the *Bellum Civile's* examination of Roman history into the mythological framework of the Theban saga.³⁹ In doing so, Statius repurposes the potent immediacy of Lucan's historical epic,

36 In this, Statius followed his Flavian contemporary Valerius Flaccus, in whose *Argonautica* the poet chooses the myth of Jason and the Argonauts, while leaving to another poet the composition of an epic on the recent military exploits of Vespasian and Titus (*Arg.* 1.5–14). Statius does something similar at the outset of the *Achilleid*, where he once again advertises his decision to write mythological epic, this time about Achilles, rather than an historical poem on Domitian's accomplishments (*Achil.* 1.14–19). On the *recusatio* in Flavian epic, see Galli (2013).

37 For this interpretation of Statius' ostensibly humble veneration of the *Aeneid* in the *Thebaid's* epilogue, see Rosati (2008) 175–179, with further bibliography.

38 For an elaboration of this view, see Dominik (1994) 130–180.

39 On Statius' rivalry with Lucan, see Malamud (1995) 21; Rosati (2008) 184–193; Manolaraki (2012) 307; Roche (2015) 393–394, 407. On Statius' agonistic relations to the epic tradition in general, see Micozzi (2015).

putting it in the service of his dynamic examination, through the medium of myth, of themes all too familiar to Rome's complicated history: familial dysfunction, tyrannical rulers, civil war, and cyclical violence.⁴⁰

Ludic Allusion and Outdoing the *Bellum Civile*: Lucan's Crassus and the Impoverished Nature of Statius' Thebes

Another interesting sequence from our passage occurs just after the *Thebaid's* first simile. Statius describes the attempt by Eteocles and Polynices to reach an agreement concerning the rule of Thebes. Both brothers will rule the kingdom, but in alternate years. Statius then goes on to reveal that the prize over which the brothers are squabbling is unworthy of their great hatred:

haec inter fratres pietas erat, haec mora pugnae
 sola nec in regem perduratura secundum.
 et nondum crasso laquearia fulva metallo,
 montibus aut alte Graeis effulta nitebant
 atria, congestos satis explicitura clientes;
 non impacatis regum advigilantia somnis
 pila, nec alterna †ferri statione gementes†
 excubiae, nec cura mero committere gemmas
 atque aurum violare cibis: sed nuda potestas
 armavit fratres, pugna est de paupere regno.

This was brotherly love between the two, this the sole stay of conflict, one that would not endure till the second king! And not yet did panelled ceilings shine fulvous with thick metal or lofty halls propped upon Greek marble, with space to spread assembled clients. There were no spears

40 There is an interesting parallel for Statius' usage of myth rather than history to probe issues of central importance to contemporary Rome in the pages of Tacitus' *Dialogus de oratoribus* (2.1–3.3). There we hear of one Curiatius Maternus, whose recitation of a tragedy on a Roman historical subject, Cato the Younger, caused anger among powerful men in Vespasian's court, apparently because the author too vehemently expounded upon the martyrdom of Cato and his role as an enemy of Caesar(ism), as Mayer (2001) 95 suggests. When Julius Secundus tries to persuade Maternus to revise the text of his *Cato*, not only does Maternus refuse to alter the text of that play, but he says that anything left unsaid by the *Cato* will be voiced in the play that he is currently working on, a *Thyestes*. Thus Maternus implies that a tragedy based on the myth of Atreus and Thyestes will be an even better vehicle for treating issues that may anger those in power, and thus clearly issues of contemporary political relevance, than a tragedy based on the life and death of the historical Cato.

watching over the restless slumbers of monarchs nor steel-bearing sentinels in alternating station,⁴¹ nor were they at pains to trust jewels to wine and pollute gold with victuals: naked power armed the brethren, their fight was for a pauper crown. (*Theb.* 1.142–151)

Stattius' *haec mora pugnae / sola nec in regem perduratura secundum* echoes a passage from early in Lucan's *Bellum Civile*⁴²:

nam sola futuri

Crassus erat belli medius mora. qualiter undas
qui secat et geminum gracilis mare separat Isthmos
nec patitur conferre fretum, si terra recedat,
Ionium Aegaeo frangat mare.

For Crassus, who stood between, was the only check on imminent war. So the Isthmus of Corinth divides the main and parts two seas with its slender line, forbidding them to mingle their waters; but if its soil were withdrawn, it would dash the Ionian Sea against the Aegean. (*Luc.* 1.99–103)

Here Lucan is explaining the causes of the war between Caesar and Pompey, one of which was the death of Crassus, who is depicted by Lucan as a barrier between the two other members of the Triumvirate. In fact, Statius' allusion to the image of Lucan's Isthmus-like Crassus is prepared for earlier in the passage. As Tisiphone arrives in the upper world, the hissing of her snaky hair causes various disruptions to the Greek mainland. One of these is a weakening of the Isthmus of Corinth, which now has trouble acting as a barrier between the two seas: *dubiamque iugo fragor impulit Oeten / in latus, et geminis vix fluctibus obstitit Isthmos* ('the sound pushed Oeta's unsteady range sideways and Isthmos scarce withstood twin waves', *Theb.* 1.119–120). Statius' *et geminis [...]* *Isthmos* occupies the same metrical positions as Lucan's *et geminum [...]* *Isthmos*.⁴³

Another aspect of Statius' allusions to Lucan's Crassus that to my knowledge has not been recognized in previous scholarship is the playful manner in which Statius draws our attention to his Lucanian source at this moment. After evoking the image of Lucan's Crassus in lines 1.119–120 and again in lines 1.142–143, Statius employs the adjective *crasso* ('thick')

41 The translation here reflects Shackleton Bailey's suggestion that we read *alterna ferrum statione gerentes* in line 148.

42 See Ash (2015) 208 and Briguglio (2017) 219.

43 Briguglio (2017) 204 notes this intertext but does not connect it to Lucan's Crassus.

to modify *metallo* ('metal') while describing the paltry state of the Theban palace. Now although this is a perfectly natural usage of the term *crasso*, I suggest that the adjective also slyly advertises Staius' appropriation of Lucan's Crassus for the description of what delayed civil war in his own poem, that is, an agreement according to which Eteocles and Polynices would rule over Thebes in alternation (1.138–143). Thus I suggest that line 1.144 contains the type of deeply encoded signposting of an allusion that is expertly elucidated by Hinds.⁴⁴ For as I have noted, the term *crasso* is right at home in its Staiian context, but given the echoes of Lucan's Crassus in lines 1.119–120 and 1.142–143, it also functions as a self-reflexive 'wink and a nod' drawing our attention to Staius' engagement with his Neronian predecessor.⁴⁵ Moreover, given that verse 1.144 marks the beginning of a passage that stresses the impoverished nature of Thebes, Staius also may be playfully alluding to Crassus' legendary wealth.⁴⁶ From this example, we can see that despite the predominantly dark and sombre nature of Staius' text, he is not averse to injecting a bit of intertextual playfulness into his poem, a strategy he carries out here by way of ludic allusion to Lucan's *Bellum Civile*.⁴⁷

The fact that Staius emphasizes the impoverished nature of Thebes in lines 1.144–151 offers yet another interesting example of his engagement with Lucan. Staius' reference to the relative unimportance of the prize of the Theban brothers' civil war recalls Luc. 1.96–197, where Lucan mentions the paltry state of Rome when the brothers Romulus and Remus fought for control of it: *nec pretium tanti tellus pontusque furoris / tunc erat: exiguum dominos commisit asylum* ('nor was such madness rewarded then by lordship over land and sea: the narrow bounds of the Asylum pitted its owners one against the other').⁴⁸ Lucan's usage of *tunc* ('then') reveals that, unlike the civil strife engaged in by Romulus and Remus, the war between Pompey and Caesar, the struggle that forms the basis of the poet's subject matter, had the highest stakes possible. The prize for the winner of the war between Pompey and Caesar was, in Lucan's hyperbolic terms, the entire world.⁴⁹ By contrast, in

44 See Hinds (1998) 3–16.

45 On Staius' penchant for drawing attention to his allusive gestures, see Micozzi (2015).

46 Crassus' enormous wealth is one of the primary themes of Plutarch's biography of him.

47 Staius' playfulness with Crassus' name is reminiscent of his penchant for punning on names in the *Silvae*, on which see Nisbet (1978) 8; van Dam (1984) 207–208; Nauta (2002) 224 n. 112, 230 n. 134.

48 See Caviglia (1973) 108 and Briguglio (2017) 220.

49 On the massive scale of the war, see, for example, Luc. 7.134–137, 617–619, 632–637, 639–640. See also Luc. 1.72–82, with Roche (2009) 148–149, who supplies further passages and bibliography on this aspect of Lucan's depiction of the war. On Lucan's penchant for hyperbole generally, see Martindale (1976) and Roche (2009) 57–58.

order to emphasize the utter foolishness of Eteocles and Polynices, Statius reverts to the image of Lucan's Romulus and Remus squabbling amongst themselves for an insignificant plot of land, a worthless trophy, so to speak (see also *Theb.* 4.356–360). However, it should be noted that Statius' claim here is undermined by the poem itself. Statius' assertion that the brothers fight only over an insignificant and paltry kingdom is 'incongruous with our experience as we read through this hyperbolic epic, telling of a war which becomes every bit as cosmic as those of Lucan and Silius'.⁵⁰ Be that as it may, Statius does go out of his way to stress the impoverished nature of Thebes, something he was certainly not compelled to do by the mythological tradition. Seneca, for example, imagines the Theban brothers fighting over a 'rich kingdom': *Labdaci claram domum, / opulenta ferro regna germani petant* ('let my brothers strive with the sword for Laius' glorious house and his rich kingdom', *Phoen.* 53–54).

By having Eteocles and Polynices go to war against each other over a worthless kingdom, Statius evokes his Neronian forerunner to highlight the absolute senselessness of his poem's subject matter. Indeed, we see here yet another example of Statian *aemulatio* vis-à-vis Lucan: Lucan's epic of civil war recounts a tragic and horrific episode in Roman history, but at least the stakes were high, not high enough to justify the war, to be sure, but high enough to provide some rationale for the actions of Pompey and Caesar. In contrast, Statius' allusive gestures have the effect of making the *Thebaid* result from a senselessness that trumps Lucanian *furor* ('madness'), thus rendering his poem of fratricidal insanity even more absurd than the 'wars worse than civil wars' (*bella [...] plus quam civilia*, Luc. 1.1) recounted by Lucan.⁵¹ When it comes to depicting the lunacy and foolishness of civil war Statius proclaims, somewhat paradoxically, that his epic of *fraternas acies* will upstage and outshine Lucan's.

Moreover, it is fitting that Statius makes this intertextual declaration of superiority over Lucan by way of a list of things *not* present in Thebes: there were no panelled ceilings gleaming with gold, no huge halls supported by marble

50 Hardie (1993) 95.

51 See Henderson (1993) 165–166, who also notes the *Thebaid's* more circumscribed geographical scope, as the poem 'spatially constricts itself to little Nemea, as against the worldwide dashes of Lucan's Caesar' (183). In fact, Statius' inversion of Lucan in this regard may further enhance the contemporary relevance of the *Thebaid*. For whereas the civil war between Caesar and Pompey recounted by Lucan has a geographical scope that goes well beyond the confines of Rome itself, and indeed the poem reaches its climax in Greece, Statius' Thebes, evocative of Romulus and Remus' fight over an impoverished city, more closely resembles the civil wars of 68–69 CE, since the climax of those wars was a battle between Vitellians and Flavians right in the heart of the city of Rome. In this way, Statius' appropriation of Lucan could signal that the most recent round of Rome's *bella civilia* was even more senseless than its predecessors, a point Statius wishes to emphasize by recourse to the myth of familial dysfunction in Thebes.

columns, no armed guards keeping watch over the palace, no jewelled cups, no golden plates (*Theb.* 1.144–150, cited above). This kind of catalogue, in which a poet itemizes things that are missing, is a hallmark of Lucan's epic technique.⁵² As Statius inventories all the things that are absent from Thebes, he yet again channels his Neronian predecessor. In this inventory of absences, we feel the presence of Lucan, whose text is never far from the surface of Statius' *Thebaid*.

Conclusion

By offering a close reading of *Thebaid* 1.114–164, I hope to have complemented the growing body of scholarship on Statius' masterful and programmatic appropriation of Lucan's *Bellum Civile* for his depiction of fraternal warfare in Thebes. By concentrating on Statius' engagement with Lucan within a small portion of text from near the opening of the *Thebaid*, I have attempted to highlight some of the implications of Statius' allusive strategies vis-à-vis Lucan and thus to elucidate the nature of the *Thebaid's* response to Lucanian poetics more broadly. This response is frequently marked by combinatorial imitation of Lucan and Virgil, a process that evinces the broader tendency of Flavian culture to blend Augustan and Neronian elements to form something both recognizable and new, familiar and strange. We have seen that Statius appropriates the image of Lucan's Caesar both to infuse his epic with the nefarious energy of Lucan's anti-hero and to enrich a theme of some prominence in his Theban epic, the theme of identity confusion. We have also seen that Statius' allusive interaction with Lucan often takes the form of a rivalry, as he proclaims the superiority of mythological epic over historical epic and boasts that the madness that drives the *Thebaid's* plot outstrips the insanity at the heart of Lucan's *Bellum Civile*. Finally, we have seen that despite the overwhelmingly grim nature of Statius' text, he is not averse to injecting playfulness into his poem by way of allusion to Lucan's epic, since he can be said to 'wink' slyly at his audience when drawing attention to his appropriation of Lucan's Crassus. Statius' engagement with Lucan's epic is sustained, intricate, programmatic, and skilful, as he poses not just as an imitative successor to his Neronian forerunner, but as a rival whose dark work paradoxically outshines the *Bellum Civile*.⁵³

52 See especially Esposito (2004), and also Zissos (2003) 669 n. 32 and Roche (2009) 123. On Statius' imitation of this aspect of Lucan's style in this passage, see Briguglio (2017) 220–221.

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8 Calpurnius Siculus in the Flavian Poets

Ruurd Nauta

Abstract

This contribution has two aims. The first is to systematically refute E. Courtney's argumentation that Calpurnius Siculus imitated the Flavian poets (and Juvenal) rather than the other way around. The second, enabled by the first, is to undertake a first exploration of the reception of Calpurnius by the Flavian poets. It turns out that much revolves around the bucolic genre, which all the poets treat as constituted by *both* Virgil *and* Calpurnius. Statius and Silius understandably focus on the relation with epic, whereas Martial is mostly concerned with the poetics of a 'small' genre and with the need for patronage. Calpurnius' Neronian panegyric, however, is scarcely used for panegyric of Domitian, either by Martial or by Statius in the *Silvae*.

Keywords: Calpurnius Siculus; Silius Italicus; Statius; Martial; literary imitation; pastoral

Introduction

The discussion on the date of Calpurnius Siculus is relevant not only to the study of Neronian poetry, but also to that of Flavian poetry.¹ For, if Calpurnius is Neronian, he may be used in the interpretation of Flavian

¹ The Neronian date, first established by Sarpe (1819) and generally accepted since Haupt (1854) = (1875) 358–406, was rejected in favour of a date in the third century by Champlin (1978) and since then most notably by Champlin (1986); Armstrong (1986); Courtney (1987); Horsfall (1997). Although the majority of scholars, especially in Europe, have remained faithful to the Neronian date (see Nauta [2021] 1–2 for a survey), Anglophone scholarship is usually agnostic or accepts the late date, explicitly or implicitly; e.g. in a recent collection of sources on Nero (Barrett, Fantham, and Yardley [2016]), Calpurnius is not even mentioned in the section 'Nero as the Object of Contemporary Poetry' (258–264).

poetry, whenever a significant relationship with his text can be established, but if he is late antique, he may not be so used, and any such relationship should be interpreted as dependence of Calpurnius on the Flavian poet in question. The latter situation obtains according to the only article that has been devoted to a systematic investigation of the question, Edward Courtney's influential 'Imitation, chronologie littéraire et Calpurnius Siculus' (1987). As is apparent from the title, Courtney is concerned with chronology rather than with consequences for interpretation, and hence uses a very broad concept of 'imitation', meaning any similarity between a passage from author A and one from author B that is explicable only if author A has read author B or the other way around, whether or not the imitation is conscious and whether or not it contributes to the meaning of the imitating text. I will use this same broad concept, since my first aim is to examine, and, as it will turn out, to refute, Courtney's view of the chronology, but once I have done this, I will also consider the question which of these imitations may count as allusions, and how recognizing these allusions may contribute to an understanding of Flavian responses to the Neronian poetry of Calpurnius Siculus.

Courtney does not state how he has collected his parallels; most of them are to be found in the apparatuses of *loci similes* in Schenkl (1885) and Korzeniewski (1971), but Courtney has added a few of his own.² I have added a few more that happened to have caught my attention for one reason or another, but I have not undertaken a systematic search, and I do not doubt that there is more material waiting to be discovered. In assessing his parallels, Courtney applies three 'criteria' ('critères'), which it is necessary to briefly review beforehand.³ In the first two of these he employs a distinction between 'major' and 'minor poets' ('poètes majeurs' and 'mineurs'), without defining these terms, but treating Calpurnius as minor, and Silius, Statius (both the epicist and the writer of the *Silvae*), and Martial as major (he lists no instances from Valerius Flaccus).⁴ Apparently, it is not the position of

2 Schenkl (1885) and Korzeniewski (1971) give many further *loci similes* not discussed by Courtney, but these are not cases of 'imitation' in the sense I have just defined, with one exception (see n. 25).

3 Courtney credits these criteria to various studies by Bertil Axelson, collected in Axelson (1987), but they are not in fact to be found there; cf. nn. 5 and 6 below (nor is there a trace of them in Güntzschel [1972], to which Courtney also refers). The first two criteria, but not the third, are accepted, with slight reformulations, by Horsfall (1997) 178–181, but he does not actually work with them.

4 For a survey of the use of the terms 'minor poetry' and 'minor poets' in the study of Roman literature, see Edmunds (2010). It is to be noted that from Burmannus (1731) onwards, Calpurnius

the genre in the ancient hierarchy of genres that is at issue, for in that case both Martial and Statius in the *Silvae* would have to be ‘minor’. Rather, it seems to be some kind of intrinsic quality, as is also suggested by Courtney’s remark that he qualifies Silius as major ‘for the needs of my essay’ (‘pour les besoins de notre essai’, 149) – seemingly without realizing that this is lethal to any claim of ‘method’ (‘méthode’, *ibid.*). One might, of course, argue for Calpurnius’ status as a major poet, but that is not necessary, since Courtney’s criteria are not valid in any case, whatever definition of ‘major’ and ‘minor’ one adopts. According to the first criterion, two major poets will not independently imitate the same passage in a minor poet.⁵ This would imply that a major poet, about to imitate a passage in a minor poet, would have to know whether this passage had already been imitated by another major poet, and, if so, to refrain from the imitation. Equally unfounded is the second criterion, which specifies that a major poet will not twice imitate the same passage in a minor poet.⁶ To be taken more seriously, however, is the third criterion, which does not employ the terminology of ‘major’ and ‘minor’, but states that if in a certain passage, there is imitation between poets A and B, and if in that same passage, A, but not B, imitates a third poet C, then B imitates A, and the chronological order is C-A-B. Against this, it may be objected that it could be the case that A imitates both B and C, and then the order would be B-C-A or C-B-A, but if this possibility can be shown to be less likely than its alternative, the criterion does apply, and I will indeed employ it, but to arrive at conclusions opposite to those of Courtney, who in considering Calpurnius (A) and a Flavian poet (B) often omits to take into account the passages from which Calpurnius derives (C). But otherwise, I will not use any pre-established criteria in assessing the likelihood of B imitating A rather than vice versa.

Courtney orders his instances according to their occurrence in Calpurnius, and I will refer to them as ‘Courtney (1)’, ‘Courtney (2)’, etc. However, for my purpose it makes more sense to discuss each Flavian poet separately. I choose the order Silius Italicus – Statius – Martial, thus moving from epic, by way of

was included in collections of *Poetae latini minores*, and that Anglophone students often read Calpurnius in a Loeb edition entitled *Minor Latin Poets* (Duff & Duff [1935]).

5 This may have been inspired by Axelson (1930) 27 = (1987) 38, who argues that it is unlikely that both Martial and Statius imitated mediocre poems like the *Elegiae in Maecenatem* and the *Consolatio ad Liviam*. Whatever one thinks of Axelson’s reasoning here, he is not concerned with imitation of the same passages.

6 This may have been inspired by Axelson (1930) 6 = (1987) 22, who argues that it is unlikely that Ovid would imitate the *Consolatio ad Liviam* over and over again; here, too, Axelson is not concerned with imitation of the same passages.

the *Silvae*, to epigram.⁷ I will not deal with all of Courtney's 19 instances, as this would take up too much space and lead to needless repetition, but will leave out those instances he himself considers doubtful, unless they throw light on the imitation of Calpurnius by the Flavian poets as I see it. In each section, after having discussed Courtney's instances, I will add a few of my own.

Silius Italicus

The problems surrounding this type of enquiry may well be illustrated from one of the two parallels between Calpurnius and Silius Italicus discussed by Courtney. I will first present the texts as laid out by him in his (3).⁸ Courtney states that all three of his texts deal with comets, but Lucan speaks of lightning, even though in a context also featuring comets.

numquid utrumque polum [...] **igne cruento**
spargit et ardenti *scintillat sanguine lampas*?

does it [...] scatter gory fire over both poles and flash like a torch with flaming blood? (Calp. 1.80–81)

sanguineum spargens ignem [...] **scintillat sidus**

scattering bloody fire [...] the star flashes (Sil. 1.462–464)

sparso lumine⁹ **lampas**

like a torch with scattered light (Luc. 1.532)

To this, Courtney applies his first criterion, that two major poets may not imitate the same passage of a minor poet. I have already said that I do not

7 As I have said, Courtney lists no instances from Valerius Flaccus, and I have not undertaken a search of my own.

8 I add **bold** to bring out verbal correspondences between the passages under discussion and underline for words of similar meaning; for correspondences between Calpurnius and texts imitated by him, I use *italics* and dotted underline, respectively. I have also added translations, which, here and elsewhere, are my own.

9 Courtney mistakenly prints *sanguine*, as in the passage from Calpurnius.

hold the criterion to be valid, and I see no a priori reason why not both Lucan and Silius could take account of Calpurnius. But, apart from that, and apart from the question whether we must indeed assume imitation between Lucan and Calpurnius, I believe that, by considering the contexts and backgrounds of the passages in Calpurnius and Silius, it may be shown that Calpurnius is independent of Silius, whereas Silius may or may not imitate Calpurnius.¹⁰

In Calpurnius, the comet is said to announce the peaceful accession of a new ruler, and is contrasted with the comet that after the murder of Julius Caesar portended further civil war (82–83); earlier in the eclogue, we have a picture of Bellona, with her hands bound behind her back (recalling the similar picture of Furor in *Aeneid* 1.294–296) as a guarantee that Rome will never again have to lament Philippi, which denotes civil war in general (46–51). This combination of motifs, but with Discordia in the position of Bellona, occurs in the section on comets as presaging civil wars at the end of the first book of Manilius' *Astronomica*; moreover, in terms of vocabulary, we there find *lampas*, *scintillare* and *cruentus* (the latter word not used of the comets themselves, but of the leaders in the civil wars).¹¹ So, it would seem that the passage in Calpurnius is inspired by Manilius, but this still leaves the expression *igne cruento / spargit*, which is not paralleled in Manilius, but is close to Silius' *sanguineum spargens ignem*. It will be necessary to look more closely at what Silius does in the passage in question.

In Silius, the description of the comet occurs in a simile, illustrating the brightness of the plumes on Hannibal's helmet:

crine ut flammifero terret fera regna cometes
 sanguineum spargens ignem; uomit atra rubentes
 fax caelo radios, ac saeva luce coruscum
 scintillat sidus terrisque extrema minatur.

As with flame-bearing hair a comet frightens brutal reigns, scattering bloody fire; it vomits ruddy rays in the sky, like a murky torch, and glittering with savage light the star flashes and threatens the world with the end. (Sil. 1.461–464)

10 My argument will focus on Silius, in accordance with the topic of this paper. Even a Neronian Calpurnius might imitate Lucan (depending on when precisely in the Neronian period he is dated), but I have argued elsewhere that at least between Calpurnius' first eclogue and Book 1 of the *Bellum Civile*, the direction of imitation is from Calpurnius to Lucan (Nauta [2021]).

11 Civil war and Philippi: 906–909; Discordia bound like Furor in the *Aeneid*: 923–924; *lampas*: 847 (*lampadas*); *scintillare*: 849 (*cum uaga per nitidum scintillant lumina mundum*); *cruentus*: 908 (*ducibus [...] cruentis*).

Silius here conflates a number of sources, some of them immediately recognizable: *crine* [...] *flammifero* comes from the apotheosis of Julius Caesar at the end of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (*flammiferum* [...] *crinem*, 15.849 – *scintillat sidus capping stella micat*, 850), while *sanguineum* [...] *rubentes* evokes the simile in Virgil that Silius here imitates (*cometae / sanguinei lugubre rubent*, *Aen.* 10.272–273).¹² In addition, *terret* [...] *regna cometes* recalls Lucan's *mutantem regna cometem* (1.529), and *terrisque* [...] *minatur* could be from Manilius (*terrisque minantur*, 1.893) – but so could *scintillat*. Nothing forbids the belief that Silius also threw Calpurnius' *igne cruento / spargit* into the mix, yielding *sanguineum spargens ignem*, but, as neither the association of comets with blood nor the juncture *spargere ignem* in the context of comets is particularly original, it is not even necessary to assume imitation at all.¹³ Whether we assume imitation of Calpurnius or not, it is obvious from the passage in Silius that Courtney's generalization, introducing his first criterion, 'The minor writer, often weaker, tends to make a cento' ('L'écrivain mineur, souvent plus faible, tend à faire un centon'),¹⁴ applies just as well to major writers: 'multiple reference' or 'multiple allusion' has long been recognized as characteristic of, among others, Catullus and Virgil, and even more so of Statius and indeed Silius.¹⁵

A clearer case of imitation between the two poets is to be found in the second pair of parallel passages adduced by Courtney, his (13). Both passages are about robbing snakes of their venom: in Calpurnius we read *obtusio iacet* [scil. the snake] *exarmata ueneno* ('it lies disarmed of its now blunted poison', 5.94), in Silius *serpentem diro exarmare ueneno* ('to disarm a snake of its dire poison', 1.411). The juncture seems sufficiently unique and specific

12 In Silius the comparison is triggered by *letiferum nutant fulgentes uertice cristae* (1.460), in Virgil by *ardet apex capiti* [scil. of Aeneas] *cristisque a uertice flamma / funditur* (*Aen.* 10.270–271). Harrison (1991) 145–146 and Conte (2009) read Faernus' *tristisque* for *cristisque*, which may be right, although it is apparently not what Silius had in his text.

13 For comets and blood, cf., apart from the passage from Virgil just quoted, Sen. *Q Nat.* 7.17.3 *cruenti quidam minaces<que>, quia omen prae se futuri sanguinis ferunt*. For *spargere ignem*, apart from the passage from Lucan just quoted, Sen. *Q Nat.* 1.15.4 *horum genera sunt [...] lampades et alia omnia, quorum ignis in exitus sparsus est*.

14 Courtney (1987) 149, perhaps inspired by Axelson (1960) 111 = (1987) 297: 'Lygdamus, with his musical technique that is typical of imitators' ('Lygdamus mit seiner für Nachahmer typischen Musivtechnik') (cf. [1930] 16 = [1987] 29 'opus quoddam tessellatum').

15 Influential publications have been Thomas (1982) (for Catullus 64) and (1986) (for Virgil's *Georgics*), both reprinted in Thomas (1999) and Smolenaars (1994) (for Statius' *Thebaid*). For Silius, see e.g. Van der Keur (2013) xviii and passim.

to assume imitation (unless there is a lost common model), but who imitates whom cannot be independently established.¹⁶

More illuminating are two cases not mentioned by Courtney, both concerning passages in Silius that bear a distinctly bucolic character. In Book 13, the god Pan appears on the scene to assuage the fury of the Romans after the capture of Capua, persuading them to spare the city and the surrounding countryside. After having accomplished his mission, the god returns to his familiar haunts:

Arcadiae uolucris saltus et amata reuisit
Maenala, ubi argutis longe de uertice sacro
dulce sonans calamis ducit stabula omnia cantu.

He swiftly returns to the uplands of Arcadia and his beloved Mount Maenalus, where sweetly sounding far and wide on tuneful reeds, he leads all the flocks down from the sacred peak by his song. (Sil. 13.345–347)

Arcadia with its *saltus* and Mount Maenalus evoke Virgil's *Bucolics*, as does the reference to making pastoral music on *argutis* [...] *calamis*.¹⁷ But *dulce sonans* evokes another bucolic intertext, where we also find flocks and pastoral song. This is the passage from Calpurnius' fourth eclogue where Corydon asks Meliboeus to be to him what Maecenas was to Virgil:

tu mihi talis eris, qualis qui **dulce sonantem**
Tityron e siluis dominam **deduxit** in urbem
ostenditque *deos* et 'spreto', dixit, 'ouili,
Tityre, rura prius, sed post **cantabimus** arma.'

You will be for me such as he was, who led sweetly sounding Tityrus from the woods to the ruling city, showed him the gods, and said: 'We will scorn the sheepfold, Tityrus, and first sing of the countryside, but afterwards of arms.' (Calp. 4.160–163)

If imitation is admitted, one might argue that a late Calpurnius pointedly inverts the normal situation that is pictured in Silius: Corydon, rather than

16 Courtney also notes *cecidisse minas* from the same passage in Calpurnius (92) ~ *cecidere minae* (Stat. *Theb.* 11.313), and applies his first criterion, but he himself admits that *cecidere minae* is too banal a formula to admit of conclusions.

17 Cf. especially 8.22–24: *Maenalus argutumque nemus* [...] *Panaque, qui primum calamos non passus inertis*, but also 2.32–33 (Pan, *calami*, flocks) and 10, where *Arcadia* (26 *Pan deus Arcadiae*; cf. 31, 33) and *Maenala* (55) are both mentioned, as well as *Arcadia's saltus* (57; cf. 9).

returning to his flocks and lead them singing, wants to abandon them, to be led himself and to sing not bucolic, but georgic and ultimately epic poetry. However, Calpurnius' inversion is not dependent on Silius, but rather on Virgil's first eclogue, where Tityrus goes to the *urbs* and is there authorized by the 'gods' (*diuos*, 41; cf. *deus* 6, 7, 18) to continue his existence as a bucolic singer.¹⁸ It is not an inconceivable scenario that Silius remembered a striking poetological passage in Calpurnius, and managed to concentrate four of its expressions into one verse (*dulce sonantem ~ dulce sonans, deduxit ~ de [...] ducit*,¹⁹ *ouili ~ stabula, cantabimus ~ cantu*), and still have room not only for the *calami*, which in Calpurnius' fourth eclogue are repeatedly used to denote the bucolic genre (19, 23, 59, 76, 131), but also for a bilingual pun on Πάν (*omnia ~ πᾶν*).

In Book 14, there is also a small bucolic episode, in which the bucolic world is likewise contrasted with the world of war.²⁰ In the naval battle between the Syracusans, helped by the Carthaginians, and the Romans, one of the participants on the Syracusan side is Daphnis, *deductum ab origine nomen / antiqua* ('a name derived from an ancient origin', 462–463), a descendant of the homonymous inventor of bucolic poetry.²¹ In the battle, this latter-day Daphnis perished in the fire that destroyed the Carthaginian galley on which he served: *progeniem hauserunt et nomen amabile flammae* ('the flames devoured the descendant and his lovable name', 476). In this, he is contrasted with his ancestor: *at princeps generis quanto maiora parauit / intra pastorem sibi nomina!* ('but the first of his line, how much greater the name he acquired for himself while remaining a herdsman', 465–466). The herdsman's fame, of course, was due to his bucolic poetry, which Silius characterizes at some

18 See Nauta (2007) 10–12 and (2021) 21–22. The passage will be discussed at greater length in the section on Martial.

19 *deduxit* seems part of Calpurnius' strategy of inversion with respect to Virgil's *Bucolics*: whereas *deductum [...] carmen* in Verg. *Ecl.* 6.5 (a passage alluded to shortly before, in Calp. 4. 155–156) is the result of a movement from epic to bucolic, here the verb leads in the opposite direction; cf. Karakasis (2016) 81. A few lines later, the word is used in the same pastoral sense as in Silius (168 *nunc ad flumen oues deducite*).

20 A further scene, in Book 15 (700–708) on the rich sheep owner Rutilus, killed by Canthus (Canthus is the name of the young shepherd in Calp. 6), is more Horatian in character, but also has a clear echo of Calpurnius: *mille sub altis / lanigeræ balant stabulis* (702–703) ~ Calp. 2.68 *mille sub uberibus balantes pascimus agnas* (deriving from Verg. *Ecl.* 2.21: *mille meae [...] agnae*). Silius imitates or is imitated by the likewise Horatian Stat. *Silv.* 4.5.17: *non mille balant lanigeri greges*.

21 In a bucolic context, it is inevitable that *deductum [...] nomen* evokes Virgil's *deductum [...] carmen* (*Ecl.* 6.5), as noted by Augoustakis (2012) title and 139. As *deductum [...] nomen* is here said of the latter-day Daphnis who moves from the bucolic to the epic world, we have the same kind of inversion as in Calpurnius (see n. 19).

length (466–475). There is thus a contrast between the bucolic world in which the original Daphnis acquires a name and the epic world of warfare in which his descendant loses his. Antony Augoustakis has shown that this contrast is underscored by references to the death of the mythical Daphnis in Theocritus' first idyll and Virgil's fifth eclogue, but he also suggests that Silius is indebted to Calpurnius for his vision of 'the ineffectiveness and irrelevance of the pastoral world'.²² In this context, he mentions Corydon's wish to leave the bucolic world for that of epic in the passage from the fourth eclogue just quoted, suggesting that Silius' latter-day Daphnis is analogous to Calpurnius' Corydon. Against this, it may be noted that we do not see in Calpurnius the destruction of the bucolic world by military violence, which is rather a Virgilian theme, especially in the first and ninth eclogues. Nevertheless, if we look (as Augoustakis does not) at the language employed by Silius to characterize the bucolic poetry of the original Daphnis, we will see a conscious combination of Virgilian and Calpurnian elements.²³

This begins immediately with the introductory words: *Daphnin amarunt / Sicelides Musae, dexter donauit auena / Phoebus Castalia* ('Daphnis is loved by the Sicilian Muses, propitious Phoebus gave him his Castalian reed', 467–468).²⁴ *Sicelides Musae* of course evokes the famous opening of Virgil's fourth eclogue (*Ecl.* 4.1), but *amarunt [...] donauit auena* is close to Calpurnius: *me Silvanus amat, dociles mihi donat aenas* ('I am loved by Silvanus, he gave me my skilful reeds', 2.28). The *auena* is a few lines later specified as a sevenfold pipe: *ille ubi septena modulatus harundine carmen / mulcebat siluas* ('when he by playing a song on his sevenfold pipe soothed the woods', 471–472). Although Virgil does mention the sevenfold pipe (*Ecl.* 2.36), he does not use the word *septenus*, unlike Calpurnius, who combines it with the verb *modulari*: when Corydon imagines what his life would be like if he had been sent off to Gades (Cádiz), at the farthest end of the world, he says: *irrita septena modularer sibila canna* ('unavailing would be the whistling I play on my sevenfold reed, Calp. 4.45).²⁵ The only other occurrence

22 Augoustakis (2012); 146–148 on Calpurnius; quotation at 146. For his interpretation of Calpurnius, Augoustakis refers to Karakasis (2011) 239–279.

23 Some of the verbal correspondences with Calpurnius are noted by Vinchesi (1999), but she does not pay systematic attention to them.

24 The *auena [...] Castalia* finds its only parallel in Stat. *Theb.* 6.338 *Castaliae [...] cannae*, where there is a reference to the story of Apollo's invention of bucolic poetry when herding Admetus' cattle (or horses); see below, in the section on the *Thebaid*. I think that Silius consciously harmonizes Statius' version with the more current version that Daphnis was the inventor.

25 The parallel with Silius is noted in the apparatus of *loci similes* in Schenkl (1885) and Korzeniewski (1971).

of *septenus* to describe the pastoral pipe is in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, in the story of Apollo herding the cattle of Admetus: *onusque fuit baculum siluestre sinistrae, / alterius dispar septenis fistula cannis* ('a woodland staff was the burden of your [scil. Apollo's] left hand, of the other an unequal flute with sevenfold reeds', *Met.* 2.681–682). Here, *septenis* [...] *cannis* corresponds to Calpurnius' *septena* [...] *canna*, and it seems obvious that Calpurnius imitates Ovid. However, the same passage in Ovid is also likely to have been Silius' source, because it continues *dumque amor est curae, dum te tua fistula mulcet* ('and while you are occupied with your love, while your flute soothes you', *Met.* 2.683), using the same verb (*mulcere*) for the effects of the music.²⁶ Silius' *modulatus harundine carmen* probably derives from another passage in the *Metamorphoses*, on Pan: *modulatur harundine carmen* (*Met.* 11.154),²⁷ so that it is possible to explain Silius without recourse to Calpurnius, although it is no unreasonable assumption that he may have wished to acknowledge the combination of *septena* and *modulari* in the bucolic poet.

That this is indeed the case is suggested by some other features of Silius' text. First, in describing the soothing effect of bucolic song on nature, he stresses the silence produced (470 *silere*, 474 *tacueret*), a motif which is not found in Virgil, but is present in, and indeed characteristic of, Calpurnius.²⁸ In both bucolic poets, the effect manifests itself in animals and elements of the landscape such as trees and rivers, and so it does in Silius (470–472), but in the epic poet, in accordance with the contrast he draws between the bucolic and the epic worlds, the stress is on the well-known epic antagonists located on or near Sicily: the Sirens, Scylla and Charybdis, and the Cyclops (472–475). Of the latter, Silius writes: *et laetus scopulis faudiuitq̄ iubila Cyclops* ('and gladly on the cliffs the Cyclops subdued his yodelling', 475).²⁹ The rare word *iubila* is absent from Virgil, but is used twice by Calpurnius to characterize bucolic song, which apparently might be punctuated by a

26 This passage was already imitated by Silius in the description of Pan in Book 13 (*pastorale deo baculum, pellisque sinistrum / uelat grata latus*, 334–335). The word *mulcere* also occurs there (in the compound form *permulsit*, 344), of Pan's effect on the Romans' destructive intentions. It should be noted that this verb (simple or compound) is not found in either Virgil's or Calpurnius' *Bucolics* (although it is used in Verg. *G.* 5.510 of Orpheus).

27 Exactly the same wording also in Ov. *Rem. am.* 181 and *Culex* 100. Cf. also Verg. *Ecl.* 10.51 *carmina* [...] *modulabor auena* (and Calp. 4.63 *modulabile carmen auena*).

28 Calp. 2.16–17, of the effect on nature of the song contest between Idas and Astacus: *desistunt tremulis incurrere frondibus Euri / altaque per totos fecere silentia montes*. On silence and bucolic song in Calpurnius, see Baraz (2015).

29 Because the other Sicilian monsters are all said to cease making their usual sounds, it is likely that this is also the case for the Cyclops; hence Delz (1987) obelizes *audiuit*, suggesting in his apparatus Gronovius' *sedauit* and his own *leniuit*. If *audiuit* is kept, the *iubila* are Daphnis'.

kind of yodelling as a refrain.³⁰ Polyphemus is of course a bucolic singer, even if a less sophisticated one than Daphnis, whose superior art he now acknowledges by his joyful silence.³¹ Finally, immediately after the passage about Daphnis, Silius introduces a character called *Ornytos* (478), a name which occurs in (inter alia) Virgil and Horace, but which is also borne by one of the herdsmen in Calpurnius' first eclogue (in fact by him who uses the word *iubila*). All of this shows that Silius deliberately combines references to the bucolics of both Virgil and Calpurnius.³² In this manner he testifies that for him the tradition of the Sicilian genre of bucolic encompasses not only its Syracusan founder Theocritus and the first Latin votary of the *Sicelides Musae* Virgil, but also Virgil's successor Calpurnius, whose very name makes him a *Siculus*.³³

Stattus: *Thebaid*³⁴

As in the *Punica*, we find in Stattus' epic a parallel with Calpurnius in a passage that, however short, has a bucolic character. It concerns the expression *sibila canna* from the fourth eclogue (45) that I already quoted in my

30 Calp. *Ecl.* 1.30 (of the prophecy of Faunus, written in a higher register): *nec montana sacros distinguunt iubila uersus*, 7.3 (of Corydon's absence from the bucolic world) *tua maerentes exspectant iubila tauri*. See Vinchesi (2014) 120; Beron (2021) 180–181.

31 For Polyphemus as a bucolic singer, see inter alia Theocr. 6 (where he is mocked by a Daphnis) and 11, Verg. *Ecl.* 9.39–43 (which he sang sitting on a *scopulo* according to Serv. *ad* 39), Ov. *Met.* 13.784–869. That he is now *laetus* contrasts with his habitual *agrestem uiolenti pectoris iram* mentioned earlier in the book (224).

32 The same technique is to be observed in the very brief bucolic vignette in Book 7, of Paris as *pastor* judging the goddesses on Mount Ida: *errantes dumosa per auia tauros / arguta reuocans ad roscida pascua canna* (438–439); *dumosus* is in Virgil (*Ecl.* 1.76), but not in Calpurnius, while Calpurnius has *errare uides inter dumeta capellas* (5.5), and the only parallel to *roscida pascua* is also to be found in his fifth eclogue: *frigida nocturno tanguntur pascua rore* (5.54); moreover, *canna* is not used by Virgil, but thrice by Calpurnius (2.31, 4.45, 101). There is one further pastoral scene in Silius, the description of the Libyan herdsmen on Hannibal's shield (2.437–445), but this derives from the *Georgics* (3.339–448) rather than the *Bucolics*, and hence has no room for Calpurnius. The Falernus episode (7.162–211) is not bucolic (in spite of von Albrecht [1964] 155–157), but georgic.

33 On the uncertainties surrounding the name *Siculus*, see Vinchesi (2014) 23–24; perhaps the present passage provides an argument that the name is authentic or at least was already current in Silius' time.

34 I will not discuss Courtney (4) (Calp. 1.86 ~ *Theb.* 3.669), (7) (Calp. 2.60 ~ *Theb.* 12.267–268) and (14) (Calp. 6.24 ~ *Silv.* 5.5.26), all of which Courtney himself dubs 'douteux', nor (1), where his argument is limited to a 'semble'; of all these passages little more can be said. I also omit (13), for which see above, n. 16. Courtney adduces no instances from the *Achilleid* (but cf. n. 68).

discussion of Silius' Daphnis episode. Later on in that eclogue, the herdsman Corydon uses the phrase again, with minimal modification: *Parrhasiae* [...] *sibila cannae* ('the whistling of a Parrhasian reed', 4.101); this is juxtaposed by Courtney in his (12) with *Castaliae* [...] *sibila cannae* ('the whistling of a Castalian reed') in Statius, *Thebaid* 6.338, but his only comment is 'doubtful' ('douteux'). However, a good case can be made for Calpurnius' priority, if the contexts of both passages are taken into consideration.

In Calpurnius' fourth eclogue, two herdsmen, Corydon and Amyntas, praise *Caesar* (not otherwise named) in an amoebaeon, a competitive song exchange. Corydon begins by invoking Jupiter (82–86), Amyntas responds by invoking Apollo (87–91). Corydon then reverts to Jupiter, depicting him as listening to the songs of the Curetes on Crete in language suggesting bucolic poetry: *uiridique reclinis in antro / carmina Dictaeis audit Curetica siluis* ('reclining in a verdant grotto, he listens to Curetic songs in the Dictaeon woods', 95–96).³⁵ Amyntas' response is lost,³⁶ but it is likely to have reverted to Apollo as Corydon reverted to Jupiter, and it must have included the word *Caesar*, as is apparent from Corydon's next strophe:

aspicis ut uirides **audito** Caesare siluae
conticeant? memini, quamuis urgente procella,
 sic nemus immotis subito requiescere ramis,
 et dixi: 'deus hinc, certe, deus expulit Euros.'
 nec mora, Parrhasiae sonuerunt **sibila cannae**.³⁷

Do you notice how the verdant woods are silent upon hearing 'Caesar'? I remember how, although a storm was brewing, just like this the forest was suddenly becalmed, its branches motionless, and I said: 'It is a god, certainly a god, who has driven the east winds hence.' And without delay, the whistling of a Parrhasian [i.e. Arcadian] reed resounded. (Calp. 4.97–101)

A comparison with the following response by Amyntas shows why Heinsius' emendation *Parrhasiae sonuerunt* must be right: there, too, beginning with

35 *reclinis in antro* recalls *proiectus in antro* (Verg. *Ecl.* 1.75), and *silua* is the code word for the bucolic genre.

36 This is evident from the system of respension in the amoebaeon; see Giarratano (1924) 67 and, at length, Castagna (1982) 159–165, followed by Vinchesi (2014) 290–291.

37 *Parrhasiae sonuerunt* is Heinsius' palmary emendation; the manuscripts have the meaningless and unmetrical *Pharsaliae soluerunt*, which is nevertheless kept by some editors, including Korzeniewski (1971) and Vinchesi (2014). The truth was clearly explained by Haupt (1854) 20 = (1875) 383 and Heslin (1997) 590–591.

aspicis ut (102 = 97), the speaker notices a numinous effect of Caesar on nature; he is then reminded (*memini*, 105 = 98) of an earlier occasion, when he had noticed a similar phenomenon, and it was said (*dixisse*, 106 ~ *dixi*, 100) that a god had come upon the scene: Pales in the following strophe, here, as restituted by Heinsius, Arcadian Pan, playing on his reed pipe.

The similar passage in Statius' *Thebaid* has a completely different context. At the beginning of the long section on the chariot race in Book 6, Statius describes the horses of the competitors; of the mares of Admetus, king of Thessaly, he says that they are worthy to be believed to come

de grege Castaliae stupuit qui **sibila cannae**
laetus et **audito** contempsit Apolline pasci.

from the herd that was stunned with joy by the whistling of a Castalian reed and upon hearing Apollo disdained to graze. (Stat. *Theb.* 6.338–339)

The imitation, undeniable, concerns not only *Parrhasiae-Castaliae* [...] *sibila cannae*, as adduced by Courtney, but also *audito Caesare-Apolline* as well as the motif of nature falling silent in awe of a god or of the emperor compared to a god. Statius' reference is to the famous episode, already present in Homer, that Apollo pastured the mares of Admetus.³⁸ But at the same time he alludes to a different version of the story, which we already encountered above in connection with Ovid, and in which Apollo served Admetus as a cowherd, playing on the bucolic reed pipe.³⁹ Nature coming to a standstill upon hearing the music from that pipe is a motif we already met in Silius' excursus on Daphnis; it was originally connected with Orpheus, but applied to bucolic song by Virgil (*Ecl.* 8.1–5; cf. 6.27–30, 70–71) and Calpurnius (2.15–20).⁴⁰

If we now ask in what direction the imitation is likely to have gone, we must first note that in Calpurnius the motif of the silence of nature is not only central to this strophe and its response, but closely bound up with the theme of the amoebaeon as a whole, which celebrates in ever new

38 Hom. *Il.* 2.763–767. These mares are said to be the best horses before Troy, and that may have been Statius' inspiration for introducing Admetus here, who otherwise plays no role in the *Thebaid* (at 5.435 he is merely mentioned in Hypsipyle's story as one of the Argonauts).

39 Since Euripides' *Alcestis*, this is the standard version (Callim. *Hymn* 2.47–49 is the only other passage to put Apollo in charge of horses); see Williams (1978) 49.

40 With *stupuit* one may compare *stupefactae carmine lynces* (Verg. *Ecl.* 8.3), while *contempsit* [...] *pasci* is close to *neglecta* [...] *pascua* (Calp. 2.18). Statius' *laetus* shows his awareness that the motif is more often used in bucolic poetry to characterize the animals' mourning (Theocr. 4.14, [Mosch.] 3.23–24, Verg. *Ecl.* 5.24–26).

variations the beneficial effects of the emperor's numinous power on the herdsmen's world. In Statius, on the other hand, the motif occurs only in a mythological footnote to a completely different story. It seems much less likely that Calpurnius has expanded on a brief reference in Statius than that Statius, in making the reference, has recalled the context in Calpurnius. This last scenario becomes even more probable if one realizes that the lost preceding strophe in Calpurnius may well have dealt with Apollo's stay with Admetus, already alluded to at 88–89 (*montes [...] / quos et Phoebus amat*, 'the mountains beloved by Phoebus too'), because it was during that stay that the god, according to an ancient tradition competing with that about Daphnis, invented bucolic poetry⁴¹; the story would then have been used by Amyntas as an incitement to Caesar to support this poetry, in emulation of Corydon's strophe, where Caesar was invited to listen to bucolic song just as Jupiter did. But even if this speculative reconstruction is not admitted, the argument for Calpurnius' priority still holds.

Another case that Courtney labels 'doubtful' ('douteux'), but where it is, I think, possible to come to a conclusion, is his (2). In Calpurnius' first eclogue, the prophecy of Faunus announces a return to the reign of Numa, who

pacis opus docuit iussitque silentibus *armis*
inter *sacra tubas*, non inter **bella**, sonare.

taught the work of peace and commanded that, the arms being silent, the trumpets should sound amid sacred rites, not amid wars. (Calp. 1.67–68)

It is surprising that Courtney, himself editor of the *Fasti*, does not mention the famous passage from the beginning of that work to which Calpurnius here unmistakably alludes⁴²:

Caesaris *arma* canant alii: nos Caesaris aras
et quoscumque *sacris* addidit ille dies. (Ov. *Fast.* 1.13–14)

Let others sing of Caesar's arms: I will sing of Caesar's altars and whatever days he has added to the sacred rites.

41 Aelius Donatus in the introduction to Virgil's *Bucolics*: *alii* [scil. ascribe the origin of *bucolicum carmen*] *Apollini νομῆω pastorali scilicet deo, qua tempestate Admeto boues pauerat* (*Vita Donatiana* 53; the same formulation in Philargyrius; see Σ Theocr. *Prol. lat.*, pp. 18, 20 W.). For Silius' reconciliation of both versions, cf. above, n. 24.

42 See Fucecchi (2009) 58–59.

Moreover, the *tubae* also come from the *Fasti*, from another evocation of *Pax*, the description of the *Ara Pacis* at the end of the first book: *canteturque fera nil nisi pompa tuba* ('may nothing but processions be sung by the fierce trumpet', 1.716).⁴³ In the *Thebaid*, at the beginning of the footrace in Book 6, running is called

**pacis opus, cum sacra uocant, nec inutile bellis
subsidium** (Stat. *Theb.* 6.552–553)

a work of peace, when holy rites call, but in war not a useless aid

Again, we have only a brief remark (although thematically significant),⁴⁴ whereas in Calpurnius the opposition between *pax* (42, 54, 58) and *bella* (50, 52) structures a large stretch of the prophecy; moreover, we do not find in Statius the imitation of the *Fasti* that explains the text of Calpurnius.

In the same context in Statius, we find Courtney's (6). The first contestant to present himself for the footrace is Idas: *prior omnibus Idas* ('first of all, Idas', 553). This is close to Calp. 2.27 *prior incipit Idas* ('as the first, Idas begins'), where the reference is to the singing match between Idas and Astacus. Calpurnius' text follows bucolic convention: Virgil has *incipit, Mopse, prior* (*Ecl.* 5.10), and the first Einsiedeln eclogue *incipit, Lada / tu prior* (20–21).⁴⁵ Thus, Calpurnius' phrase is perfectly explicable without reference to an unrelated context in the epicist; Statius' phrase, in its turn, is understandable without reference to Calpurnius, but if imitation there is, Statius must be the imitator. Thus, there is no reason to assume, as Courtney does, that Calpurnius has taken the name *Idas* from Statius: the name is indeed not attested in earlier bucolic poetry, but the same holds for *Astacus* and many other names in Calpurnius, and various figures called *Idas* occur in earlier Greek and Latin sources.⁴⁶

A similar case for Calpurnian priority can be made in Courtney (15). In Book 9 of the *Thebaid*, the horse of the boy-warrior Parthenopaeus is described:

**nemorisque notae sub pectore primo
iactantur niueo lunata monilia dente**

43 Cf. also *Pax aderit Ecl.* (Calp. 54) ~ *Pax, ades* (Ov. *Fast.* 1.712), *toto [...] orbe* (Calp. *Ecl.* 49, Ov. *Fast.* 1.), as well as the comment on the triumph in both contexts (Calp. *Ecl.* 51, Ov. *Fast.* 1.713).

44 For the games as a peaceful preparation for war, see Lovatt (2005) 257–275.

45 Duly noted by Vinchesi (2014) 182.

46 See Wendel (1900) 56 for *Idas* and 56–58 for other non-bucolic names in Calpurnius. If, conversely, Statius thought of Calpurnius, it may not be accidental that the name of his second contestant, Alcon, also occurs there (four times in 6.1–20; from Verg. *Ecl.* 5.11).

and as a token of the forest, under the top of its breast is tossed a necklace with a snow-white, moon-shaped tusk⁴⁷ (Stat. *Theb.* 9.688–689)

This is closely parallel to a passage in Calpurnius, where Astylus describes a stag that he stakes as a prize in a singing contest:

rutiloque *monilia* torque
 extrema ceruice natant, ubi *pendulus* apri
 dens sedet et niuea distinguit pectora luna.

and a red-gold twisted necklace swims on the end of the neck, where a hanging boar's tusk is set and marks the breast with a snow-white moon. (Calp. 6.43–45)

Astylus' ecphrasis as a whole (of which this is but a small excerpt) is inevitably inspired by the descriptions of Silvia's stag in *Aeneid* 7 and Cyparissus' stag in *Metamorphoses* 10; in the words just quoted, it is especially Ovid who is present⁴⁸:

pendebant tereti gemmata *monilia* collo;
bullae super frontem paruis argentea loris
 uincta mouebatur

a jewelled necklace was hanging on the rounded neck; a silver *bullae*, bound over the forehead by small straps, was moving to and fro (Ov. *Met.* 10.113–115)

At Rome, a golden *bullae* was worn by boys before the transition to manhood (here it is silver and worn by the stag of Cyparissus, himself a boy who will never make that transition) and contained an amulet or was itself considered an amulet.⁴⁹ Crescent-shaped amulets (*lunulae*) were likewise worn by boys (as well as girls and women), but also by animals, especially horses, and this explains why Calpurnius varies Ovid's *bullae* with a *luna*.⁵⁰ It is likely that

47 Dewar (1991) translates *lunata monilia* as 'a crescent-shaped necklace' (similarly Shackleton Bailey [2003] 'crescent necklace'), but rightly notes that *lunata* is a transferred epithet (188). It is the tusk which is crescent-shaped, and it hung down from the necklace.

48 *tereti* [...] *collo* is taken up a few lines earlier in Calpurnius (6.38), as is the word *bullae* (6.41), but in a different sense (bosses on a belt; see Vinchesi [2014] 452).

49 On the *bullae*, see Goette (1986).

50 On *lunulae*, see Wrede (1975). Wrede's evidence shows that *lunulae* were not limited to girls, as is sometimes assumed.

Stattius, too, means to direct his reader's attention to the Ovidian passage, as Parthenopaeus, like Cyparissus, dies before reaching manhood, and moreover, dies mourning for his beloved mount.⁵¹ Stattius' and Calpurnius' formulations are so close that imitation is undeniable, so that we have either Stattius combining Ovid with Calpurnius or Calpurnius combining Ovid with Stattius. Courtney's first criterion does not, as we have seen, provide a reason to exclude the former hypothesis, which in fact explains the data well: Calpurnius took the *monilia* and amulet from Ovid but changed the amulet, whereupon Stattius transferred the description from a stag to a horse and turned Calpurnius' amulet into a trophy from the hunt. Perhaps Stattius was prompted by the juxtaposition in Calpurnius of the ecphrasis of the stag (32–45) with a competing ecphrasis of a mare (49–56).⁵² Both the stag and the mare are epic elements unparalleled in bucolic, so that Stattius here chooses for imitation not simply bucolic, but bucolic already in dialogue with epic.⁵³

Stattius: *Silvae*⁵⁴

Apart from the parallels discussed so far between the *Thebaid* and Calpurnius, Courtney also adduces, as his (11), an interesting parallel with the *Silvae*, a work in a 'smaller' genre, like Calpurnius' *Bucolics*, and mainly concerned with the praise of individuals, like the panegyric eclogues in that collection. In the amoebaeon of the fourth eclogue, already discussed in connection with the *Thebaid*, the herdsman Amyntas invokes both Apollo and Caesar: *me quoque facundo comitatus Apolline Caesar / respiciat* ('me too may Caesar regard, accompanied by eloquent Apollo', 87–88). The only other occurrence of the juncture *Apolline Caesar* is found in a related context in Stattius' *Silvae*, where the poet, about to celebrate the merits of the deceased Priscilla, likewise

51 *Theb.* 9.878–879: *moriensque iacentem / flebat equum* – although presumably the horse did not in fact die (see Dewar [1991] 187, 218).

52 It may be relevant that Calpurnius in writing of the mare (*ungula, qua uiridi sic exultauit in aruo, / tangeret ut fragiles, sed non curuaret, aristas*, 55–56) alludes to Virgil's Camilla (*Aen.* 7.808–809), who is among the models for Stattius' Parthenopaeus, and to Ovid's Atalanta (*Met.* 10.655), who is his mother.

53 On the dialogue between bucolic and epic in the two ecphrases, see Karakasis (2016) 235–239, who also points out that Virgil in the episode of Silvia's stag and Ovid in that of Cyparissus' stag, themselves already engage in dialogue with bucolic.

54 I will not discuss Courtney (17) (*Calp.* 7.35–38 ~ *Silv.* 2.2.42–44), which he rightly calls 'douteux', while Courtney (8) and (19) both also involve Martial, and will be dealt with in connection with that author.

adds Caesar (in his case Domitian) to Apollo, because Priscilla's husband, Abascantus, was one of the most prominent freedmen in the emperor's service: *modo dexter Apollo / quique uenit iuncto mihi semper Apolline Caesar / adnuat* ('if only Apollo be propitious, and Caesar, who always comes to me joined by Apollo, grant his favour', 5.1.13–15). Courtney also adduces the beginning of Juvenal's seventh satire, where it is claimed that it is Caesar only (here Hadrian) who *Camēnas / respexit* ('has regarded the Camēnae', 2–3), which in its turn is paralleled, as noted in Courtney (10), by Calpurnius somewhat earlier in the same eclogue, where Corydon says that, if he had gone to Spain, *nec quisquam nostras [...] Camēnas / respiceret* ('nor would anyone regard my Camēnae', 46–47). How is this nexus to be untied? According to Courtney's first criterion, Juvenal, being major, cannot have imitated Calpurnius (minor), when Statius, being also major, had already done so, and therefore Calpurnius must be the imitator of both. However, if one does not accept the criterion, there is no reason not to believe that Statius and Juvenal both imitated Calpurnius. Statius, in a context of poetical inspiration for a panegyric poem for an imperial addressee, uses a fitting expression from Neronian panegyric – perhaps inadvertently, since Flavian poets generally avoided associating Domitian with his abominated predecessor.⁵⁵ Juvenal, in a satire concerned with the patronage of poets by the emperor and others, would have taken up a poem about precisely this theme.⁵⁶ Further on in the seventh satire, he harks back to the same passage from the fourth eclogue in his imitation of a passage of Martial which itself is an imitation of Calpurnius, but this will have to be discussed in the next section.

Before moving on to that, I would like to discuss two instances not mentioned by Courtney, both from *Silvae* 3.5, a poem intended as the conclusion of the *Silvae* thus far. In this poem, Statius exhorts his wife to accompany him to his native Naples, where he intends to spend his old age. Statius elaborates on the traditional association of his home town with *otium*:

pax *secura* locis et desidis otia uitae
 et numquam turbata **quies** somnique peracti.
 nulla **foro** rabies aut **strictae** in iurgia **leges**:
morum iura uiris solum et sine **fascibus** aequum.

55 See Nauta (2010) 254. I note there (254–255) that there is no imitation between Calp. 7 and *Silv.* 1.6, both on games in the amphitheatre, and that this is much easier to explain if Calpurnius is Neronian than if he is late-antique. Cf. also below, on Martial.

56 For more points of contact between *Juv.* 7 and *Calp.* 4, see Courtney (1980) 350 – then still attributing the priority to Calpurnius.

The place has carefree peace and the leisure of idle life and quiet never disturbed and sleep not cut short. No rage in the forum or laws unsheathed for conflicts: the people's manners grant justice and right is in no need of *fascēs*. (Stat. *Silv.* 3.5.85–88)

The language is fairly general, but closer inspection reveals unique correspondences with Calpurnius' first eclogue. The expression *pax secura* occurs nowhere else in Classical Latin poetry but in Calp. 1.42 *aurea secura cum pace renascitur aetas* ('the Golden Age is reborn with carefree peace'), while *quies* is connected with the absence of the need to unsheathe (*stringere*) literal or metaphorical weapons somewhat later in the same poem, still in the context of the return of the Golden Age⁵⁷:

plena quies aderit, quae stricti nescia ferri
altera Saturni referet Latialia regna

There will be complete quiet, which, ignorant of unsheathed iron, will bring back another reign of Saturn in Latium (Calp. 1.63–64)

In Statius, the Golden Age is evoked by the motif of the absence of laws (or of the need to appeal to laws), in a formulation that may recall the end of the second book of the *Georgics*, where Virgil opposes life in the country, as it was under *aureus* [...] *Saturnus* (538), to the strife and violence prevailing in the city: *nec ferrea iura / insanumque forum* ('nor iron justice and the frenzied forum', 501–502).⁵⁸ Yet the combination of words also recalls a further passage in Calpurnius' first eclogue: *nec uacuos fascēs [...] / accipiet consul; sed legibus omne reductis / ius aderit moremque fori [...] / reddet [...] melior deus* ('and the consul will not receive meaningless *fascēs*; but the laws will be brought back and justice be fully present, and a better god will restore the manner of the forum', 70–73). The meaning is here the return of the laws rather than the absence of the need for them, but the context is still the return of the Golden Age. It seems possible that Statius, in opposing Naples to Rome, has used not only a georgic description of Golden Age *pax*, but also a bucolic one.

57 The similarity is noted in Laguna (1992) 384, who speaks of 'un curioso paralelo', without further discussion.

58 The idea of the absence of the need for laws in the reign of Saturn is of course a common one; similarly close to Statius is Verg. *Aen.* 7.203–204 *Saturni gentem haud uin clo nec legibus aequam, / sponte sua ueterisque dei se more tenentem*.

This idea would gain in plausibility if Carole Newlands is right in detecting an allusion to Calpurnius in the very last verse of Statius' poem: *sine me tibi ductor aquarum / Thybris et armiferi sordebunt tecta Quirini* ('without me, the Tiber, commander of waters, and the houses of arms-bearing Quirinus will seem squalid to you', 111–112).⁵⁹ She argues for a presentation of Naples in the poem as 'pastoral', and in this context adduces not only Virgil's *sordida rura* ('the squalid countryside', *Ecl.* 2.28), but also Calpurnius' variation in the seventh eclogue, where the world of the herdsman Corydon is characterized by an interlocutor as *sordida tecta* ('squalid dwellings', 42).⁶⁰ The expression is not unparalleled, and is indeed used by Statius in the previous poem (3.4.33),⁶¹ but to assume an allusion here would not conflict with what I hope to have demonstrated about Statius' use of Calpurnius elsewhere. If there is imitation of Calpurnius here, it would, as in many of the other cases, have been motivated by a reflection on the bucolic genre.

Martial⁶²

Courtney (10) concerns three very similar passages, all consisting in a bitter admonition to an aspiring poet (in Martial it is Martial himself, represented by his Muse) to abandon his calling, because it will not earn him a livelihood (Calp. 4.23; Mart. 9.73.9; Juv. 7.27):

frange puer calamos et inanes desere Musas
frange leues calamos et scinde, Thalia, libellos
frange miser calamum uigilataque proelia dele

Break your reeds, boy, and abandon the futile Muses (Calp. 4.23)
 Break your light reeds and tear up your little books, Thalia (Mart. 9.73.9)
 Break your reed, poor one, and wipe out the battles of your wakeful nights
 (Juv. 7.27)

Placed in this order, the three passages form an understandable sequence. In Calpurnius the *calami* are the reed pipes of the bucolic singer, and

59 Newlands (2012) esp. 116–119.

60 More on this passage below, in connection with Martial.

61 Also Luc. 4.396; and cf. Hor. *Carm.* 2.10.7 *sordibus tecti*.

62 I will not discuss Courtney (9) (Calp. 3.48 ~ Mart. 9.54.1) and (16) (Calp. 7.26–27 ~ Mart. 3.63.7–8), both of which he qualifies as 'douteux', nor (5) (Calp. 2.10 ~ Mart. Spect. 24 [21].5–6), where there may not be imitation at all (not admitted by Vinchesi [2014] 173).

Martial wittily transforms them into the reed pens with which one writes in papyrus books (*libelli*); he also takes up Calpurnius' Muses, specifying Thalia, who is both the Muse of bucolic poetry and of the epigrams that he himself writes.⁶³ Juvenal then varies *scinde* with *dele* and *libellos* with *uigilata* [...] *proelia*, thus turning Martial's epigrammatist into a would-be epicist; he may hark back to Calpurnius in a 'window allusion' by reinstating the vocative (*miser* to correspond with *puer*) instead of Martial's adjective *leues*. But, one might argue, Calpurnius could be the last in the series, and have 'bucolicized' Martial and Juvenal.⁶⁴ This is unlikely, however, as Calpurnius' *calami* are already motivated by an earlier bucolic context. In Virgil's third eclogue, one herdsman accuses another of a spiteful act of vandalism:

cum Daphnidos arcum
fregisti et calamos

when you broke Daphnis's bow and his reeds (Verg. *Ecl.* 3.12–13)

Here the *calami* could be arrows, as interpreted by Servius, but might just as well be the pastoral flute.⁶⁵ Whatever is the case, Calpurnius takes up a half-verse from Virgil, and we may thus apply Courtney's third criterion, especially because the alternative is not attractive: *if* a late Calpurnius had imitated not only Virgil, but also Martial and Juvenal, the parallels with the latter two would have made invisible the parallel with the former, his generic model.

There are a number of further instances where a consideration of the bucolic background to Calpurnius' verses will make his priority highly plausible. I start with Courtney (8). Martial compares the *lanugo* on the cheeks of Dindymus, which easily comes off when rubbed, with the down on Cydonian quinces:

celantur simili uentura **Cydonea lana,**
pollice uirgineo quae spoliata nitent.

63 Thalia (as *Thalea*) is the Muse of bucolic poetry in Verg. *Ecl.* 6.2. For Thalia as Martial's Muse, see 4.8.12, 4.23.4, 7.17.4, 8.73.3, 9.26.8, 10.20.3, 12.94.3.

64 This is the position of Courtney and before him of Armstrong (1986) 128–129.

65 Servius *ad loc.*: *nam habent arma pastores*. But elsewhere in Virgil's *Bucolics* the *calami* are always the pastoral flute: 2.32, 5.2, 5.48, 6.69, 8.24 (and in the singular 1.10, 2.34). See Cucchiarelli (2012) 208 for discussion.

By similar wool ripening Cydonian quinces are hidden – by a girl's thumb they are robbed of it, and then shine. (Mart. 10.42.3–4)

This is very close to a passage in Calpurnius which is likewise concerned with the cheeks of an adolescent boy, where the young gardener Astacus commends his own beauty:

sic flore iuuentae
induimur uultus, ut in arbore saepe notau
cerea sub tenui lucere Cydonia lana.

my face is dressed in the flower of youth, just as I have often noted wax-coloured Cydonian quinces on a tree shine under thin wool. (Calp. 2.89–91)

The context is a singing match between Astacus and the shepherd Idas, where both boast of their qualifications for obtaining the favours of their coy mistress, Crocale. The entire passage imitates Virgil's second eclogue, and the lines just quoted take up Corydon's description of the rustic meal he promises to his reluctant Alexis:

ipse ego cana legam tenera lanugine mala
 [...] addam cerea pruna

I myself will gather quinces, pale with tender woolly down. [...] I will add wax-coloured plums (Verg. *Ecl.* 2.51–53)

The shared *cerea* makes it certain that Calpurnius imitates Virgil, varying *tenera lanugine* with *tenui [...] lana* (after already having used *lanugine* in 87) and explicating that Virgil with *mala* means *mala Cydonia*, as Servius comments: *mala dicit Cydonia, quae lanuginis plena sunt* ('he means Cydonian quinces, which are full of woolly down'). Moreover, Calpurnius shows that he recognized Virgil's variation of a passage in Lucretius, who has *lanugine malas* instead of *lanugine mala*.⁶⁶ Lucretius is discussing the difference

66 The hexameter-ending *lanugine malas* (or *malae*) afterwards occurs about a dozen times in Classical Latin, beginning with Virgil himself: *flauentem prima lanugine malas* (*Aen.* 10.324), of a character loved by a *Cydon* – an unmissable pun in spite of the difference in quantity between *Cydon* and *Cydonia*.

in speed of development between horses and men; at the age when horses already grow old,

tum demum pueris aeuo *florente iuventas*
occipit et molli uestit *lanugine* malas.⁶⁷

only then does youth begin for boys, in the flourishing of their years, and clothes their cheeks in soft woolly down. (Lucretius 5.888–889)

Calpurnius, exploiting Lucretius, applies Virgil's description of the down on quinces (*mala*) to the down on the cheeks (*malas*) of a boy, and this is then taken up by Martial, who adds further variation by introducing the motif of the down easily coming off. Courtney, however, assigns the priority to Martial, because there is also a passage from Statius involved, which allows him to apply his first criterion. At the end of *Silvae* 1.2, the epithalamium for Stella and Violentilla, the poet addresses the bride and urges her to love her husband: *sic flore iuuentae / perdurent uultus* ('so may your face remain in the flower of youth', 276–277). But Calpurnius' *flore iuuentae* clearly derives from Lucretius' *florente iuventas*, so, if there is imitation, it is Statius who is the imitator. As a consequence, it is also Martial who is imitating Calpurnius, not the other way around.

Courtney (18) is a large-scale imitation of an entire passage. In Calpurnius, Corydon is narrating a visit he had made to the city, where he had admired a new wooden amphitheatre and the spectacles there on show; an old man, his neighbour on the stand, had accosted him:

'quid te stupefactum, rustice', dixit
'ad tantas miraris opes, qui nescius auri
sordida tecta, *casas*, et sola mapalia nosti?
en ego iam tremulus et uertice canus et ista
factus in urbe senex stupeo tamen omnia certe.'

'Why do you wonder, rustic,' he said, 'that you are stupefied at such great riches, you who are not familiar with gold, but with squalid dwellings, cottages and lonely hovels? Look at me: I am already tremulous and white-headed and grown old in this city, and yet I am certainly stunned at all this.' (Calp. 7.41–44)

67 I accept Avancius' *pueris* for *puerili* and Marullus' *occipit* for *officit*, but this does not affect the argument.

Many of the same words and phrases are to be found in an epigram by Martial, in which he explains his decision to withdraw from the city to his rural Spanish *patria*:

Saepe loquar nimium gentes quod, Auite, remotas
miraris, Latia factus in urbe senex,
 auriferumque Tagum sitiam patriumque Salonem
 et repetam saturae **sordida** rura **casae.**

You wonder, Avitus, that I all too often speak of far-off peoples, I who have grown old in the Latian city, and that I thirst for the gold-bearing Tagus and my native Salo and go back to the squalid countryside of a well-stocked cottage. (Mart. 10.96.1–4)

It is obvious that there is imitation between the two poets, but also that both imitate Virgil's second eclogue (Corydon to Alexis): *O tantum libeat mecum tibi sordida rura / atque humilis habitare casas* ('O, if only you would like to live with me in the squalid countryside and humble cottages', 28–29). According to Courtney, 'evidently' ('de toute évidence') it is Calpurnius who imitates Martial; this phrase dispenses him of giving his reasons, but he probably thinks of the word *rura* shared between Virgil and Martial, but not Calpurnius. However, if Martial imitates Calpurnius, *rura* is a very common type of window allusion, by which the poet acknowledges his awareness of his source's source. In this way, Martial also signals that he reverts to Virgil's (or at least his Corydon's) preference for the country as against Calpurnius' (or at least *his* Corydon's) rejection of it in favour of the *Vrbs*. Martial knows what life in Rome would have in store for a poor person like Calpurnius' Corydon, whom he implicitly criticizes as naïve. But his own conversion to rusticity was naïve too, as he belatedly came to realize, when his life in his 'provincial solitude' (*provinciali solitudine*) failed to provide him with inspiration for epigram (Mart. 12.*ep.*) – an urban genre after all.

The last of Courtney's instances that I will discuss is his (19), which once more involves a triangulation with Statius.⁶⁸ When in Calpurnius'

68 In addition to what I discuss in the text, Courtney notes a number of further parallels to Calp. 7.77 *fors dedit et praesens uultumque habitumque notasti*: Ach. 1.810 (*fors dedit*, a common expression), Theb. 6.263 (*uultusque habitusque*, likewise common), Theb. 10.678 and Silv. 2.6.21 (*habitumque notauit, habitusque notauit*, but Di Salvo [1990] 135 points to Ov. *Trist.* 3.5.11 *uultus uisosque notauit*).

seventh eclogue Corydon has finished his report on the amphitheatre and its spectacles, his interlocutor exclaims *o felix Corydon* (73) and asks him whether he has seen the ‘god’, who was responsible for these wonders, from nearby:

nunc, tibi si **propius uenerandum cernere numen**
fors dedit et *praesens* uultumque habitumque notasti,
 dic age, dic, Corydon, quae sit mihi forma *deorum*.

CORYDON O utinam nobis non rustica uestis inesset:
uidissem propius mea **numina!**

Now, if your lot granted you to discern the venerable deity from nearer by and if in his presence you noted his face and his bearing, tell me, please tell me, Corydon, what the beauty of the gods is like.

CORYDON O, if I had not worn rustic clothes: I would have seen my deities from nearer by! (Calp. 7.76–80)

But unfortunately, he has only seen the emperor *longius* (83). The background to the entire poem and also to this passage is Virgil’s first eclogue, in which Tityrus praises a *deus* for restoring his *otia* (6), and, when Meliboeus asks him *iste deus qui sit, da, Tityre nobis* (‘say to me, Tityrus, who that god is’, 18), tells him of his journey to Rome, where it has been granted to him *tam praesentis [...] cognoscere diuos. / hic illum uidi iuuenem* (‘to get to know such present gods. / Here I saw that young man’, 41–42), to which Meliboeus reacts with the exclamation *fortunate senex* (‘fortunate old man!’, 46).⁶⁹ In his interpretation of this passage, Ian Du Quesnay has adduced an epigram by Martial, which, however, is even closer to Calpurnius than to Virgil.⁷⁰ Degis, brother of the Dacian king Decebalus, praises his good luck in having been sent to Rome:

‘sors mea quam fratris melior, cui tam **prope** fas est
cernere tam longe quem colit ille **deum**.’

69 Verg. *Ecl.* 1 as background to Calp. 7 has often been discussed; see Vinchesi (2014) 477–480 for a survey.

70 Du Quesnay (1981) 132–133. Canobbio (2011) 93–94 does not fail to note both Virgil and Calpurnius.

‘How much better is my lot than my brother’s, because to me it is allowed to discern from so near the god whom he worships from so far.’
(Mart. 5.3.5–6)

The same vocabulary, and especially the opposition between *prope* and *longe*, recurs in Statius’ *Silvae* 1.1, a poem that, like Martial’s epigram, belongs to the context of the triumph over the Dacians, but is a little later.⁷¹ Here Curtius, the guardian of the *lacus Curtius* in the Forum, reacts to the appearance of an equestrian statue of Domitian:

salve, [...]
auditum **longe numen** mihi. nunc mea **felix**,
nunc **ueneranda** palus, cum te **prope nosse** tuumque
immortale iubar uicina sede **tueri**
concessum.

Hail, [...] deity of whom I have heard from afar. Now my swamp is blessed, now it is venerable, now that it is permitted to know you from nearby and to behold your immortal radiance from my neighbouring seat. (Stat. *Silv.* 1.1.74–78)

It is obvious that Statius imitates Martial,⁷² but he may also hark back to Calpurnius in the use of *numen*, *felix*, *ueneranda* and *nosse*. In any case, there is no reason, beyond Courtney’s criterion, not to believe that Statius and Martial could imitate the same passage of Calpurnius. If they did so, they apparently did not feel that they were on dangerous ground in using formulas from Neronian panegyric, presumably because the motif of ‘beholding the godlike ruler’ was not identifiable as exclusively Neronian – it is indeed found in Virgil, as we saw, and also elsewhere.⁷³

If it is admitted that Calpurnius was Neronian, it will be possible to recognize his influence on Martial also in cases where verbal similarity is only slight, and hence has not led to inclusion in lists of *loci similes*. I will

71 On the date of Mart. 5, see Canobbio (2011) 32–40, on that of *Silv.* 1.1 Nauta (2002) 422 n. 141.

72 Also *laetus* [...] *praeside uiso* (*Silv.* 1.1.73) ~ *laetus* [...] *uiso* [...] *praeside mundi* (Mart. 5.3.3).

73 Du Quesnay (1981) 132–133 quotes Vell. Pat. 2.107.2, of a German elder approaching Tiberius: *nostra furit* [...] *iuuentus quae, cum uestrum numen absentium colat, praesentium potius arma metuit quam sequitur fidem. sed ego beneficio ac permissu tuo, Caesar, quos ante audiebam, hodie uidi deos, nec feliciorem ullum uitae meae aut optaui aut sensi diem*. Du Quesnay plausibly infers ‘a topos of encomiastic rhetoric’.

discuss three such cases, all of which come from the fourth eclogue. When Corydon announces that he will play on the flute of Tityrus, Meliboeus warns him that he attempts great things:

ille fuit uates sacer et qui posset **auena**
praesonuisse chelyn

he was a sacred bard, one who could on his oaten flute surpass the sound of the lyre (Calp. 4.65–66)

The *auena* here stands for bucolic and the *chelys* for ‘higher’ poetry, in particular, epic. A similar opposition between ‘lower’ and ‘higher’, or ‘smaller’ and ‘grander’, genres is to be found in a *recusatio* by Martial, where the Muse tells the poet⁷⁴:

angusta cantare licet uidearis **auena**,
 dum tua multorum uincat auena tubas.

never mind if you seem to sing on a narrow oaten flute, as long as your oaten flute outdoes many people’s trumpets. (Mart. 8.3.21–22)

Here the instrument associated with epic is the *tuba*, as elsewhere in Martial, but somewhat surprising is the bucolic *angusta* [...] *auena* to denote epigram.⁷⁵ One might suspect influence of Calpurnius here, the more so as Martial uses bucolic language elsewhere, not only in the context of generic poetics, but also in the context of patronage, the other concern of Calpurnius in his fourth eclogue.

An interesting case is the epigram with which Martial offers a collection of his poetry to Norbanus, who had been away as governor of Raetia and had been instrumental in suppressing the revolt of Saturninus in early 89 CE⁷⁶:

Cum tua sacrilegos contra, Norbane, furores
 staret pro domino Caesare sancta fides,
 haec ego Pieria ludebam tutus in umbra

74 On this poem as a *recusatio*, see Nauta (2006) 38–40.

75 For the *tuba* and epic, see Mart. 8.55 (56).4, 10.64.4, 11.3.8. *angusta* is a variation on *tenuis*, as in *tenui* [...] *auena* (Verg. *Ecl.* 1.2) or *tenui* [...] *harundine* (Verg. *Ecl.* 6.8).

76 On Norbanus and Martial, see Nauta (2002) 66, 77–78.

When your blameless loyalty, Norbanus, stood firm for our master Caesar
against sacrilegious fury, I wrote this in play, safe in the Pierian shade
(Mart. 9.84.1–3)

The form of the thought derives from the end of the *Georgics*, *cum [...] ego*
reproducing *dum [...] me*: ‘when Caesar was away campaigning, I enjoyed
poetic *otium*’ (4.560–564),

carmina qui lusi pastorum audaxque iuuenta,
Tityre, te patulae cecini sub tegmine fagi.

I, who in play wrote herdsmen’s songs, and in the boldness of youth sang of
you, Tityrus, beneath the cover of a spreading beech. (Verg. *G.* 4.565–566)

This, of course, cites the beginning of the *Bucolics*, to which Martial also
alludes⁷⁷:

MELIBOEUS Tityre, tu patulae *recubans* sub tegmine fagi
[...] *lentus in umbra*
formosam resonare doces *Amaryllida silvas*.
TITYRUS [...] *ludere quae uellem*

MELIBOEUS You, Tityrus, lying back beneath the cover of a spreading beech
[...] relaxed in the shade,
you teach the woods to echo ‘beautiful Amaryllis.’
TITYRUS [...] to play what I will (Verg. *Ecl.* 1.1–10)

Martial, however, changes *lentus* into *tutus*. This may be a reflection of the
commentary tradition on Virgil, which becomes visible for us only much
later in Servius,⁷⁸ but it may also reflect the way in which Calpurnius had
rewritten the beginning of the *Bucolics*, when he had Corydon address
Meliboeus thus⁷⁹:

per te secura saturi *recubamus in umbra*
et fruimur *siluis Amaryllidos*

77 Both allusions are recognized in Henriksén (2012) 329–330.

78 Serv. *ad Verg. Ecl.* 1.1: *inducitur pastor quidam iacens sub arbore securus*.

79 Cf. also, from the same eclogue: *amoena Faunus in umbra / securus recubat* (Calp. 4.133–134).

Thanks to you I lie back well-fed in the carefree shade and enjoy the woods of Amaryllis (Calp. 4. 37–38)

One reason why Martial chose to represent himself as a bucolic singer when talking of his epigrams may lie in the poetic career of Rome's greatest poet, Virgil, who started out as the author of the *Bucolics*, but then received the patronage of Maecenas, which enabled him ultimately to write the *Aeneid*. This exemplary career could be used by Martial in appealing to patrons, suggesting to them that if they would act as his Maecenas, he could make a similar generic ascent as Virgil had done. In the course of his books of epigrams we find a number of variations on this theme, but the most elaborate is poem 8.55 (56).⁸⁰ In this poem, Martial presents Virgil's career by means of a combinatorial allegorical interpretation of the ninth (Cremona), first (Tityrus, Galatea) and second (Alexis, Thestylis) eclogues, additionally introducing Maecenas, who does not figure in the *Bucolics*⁸¹:

iugera perdiderat miserae uicina Cremonae
 flebat et abductas Tityrus aeger oues:
 risit Tuscus eques, paupertatemque malignam
 reppulit et celeri iussit abire fuga.
 'accipe diuitias et uatum maximus esto;
 tu licet et nostrum' dixit 'Alexin ames.'
 [...]
 excidit attonito pinguis Galatea poetae
 Thestylis et rubras messibus usta genas;
 protinus Italiam concepit et arma uirumque

Tityrus had lost his acres near to poor Cremona, and wept in distress at his sheep having been led away. With a laugh the Tuscan knight [i.e. Maecenas] dispelled malicious poverty, commanding it to depart in quick flight. 'Here is wealth; now be the greatest poet', he said, 'you may even love my Alexis.'

[...]

80 Other poems using the Maecenas paradigm: 1.107, 11.3, 12.3 (4); see Nauta (2002) 82–85. On 8.55 (56), see further Nauta (2007) 8–12; Mindt (2013) 108–119.

81 In the commentary tradition Alexis is a slave of Asinius Pollio, not Maecenas: *Vita Donatiana* 9, Servius on *Ecl.* 2.1 and 15, Apul. *Apol.* 10. But Maecenas was sometimes given a role in restoring Virgil to his lands: *Vita Donatiana* 63, *Vita Servii* p. 2.7 Thilo (p. 152.8 Brugnoli-Stok).

The astounded poet forgot all about fat Galatea and Thestylis with cheeks burnt red by the harvests; straight away he conceived of 'Italy' and 'arms and the man'⁸² (Mart. 8.55 (56).7–19)

Such a reconstruction of Virgil's career and such a rhetorical use of this reconstruction in a bid for patronage is also to be found in the *Laus Pisonis* (230–248),⁸³ but it is in Calpurnius that we find much of Martial's language and narrative structure. Corydon is addressing his patron Meliboeus (part of the passage has already been quoted above, in connection with Silius):

uellit nam saepius aurem
inuida Paupertas et dicit 'ouilia cura'
 [...]

tu mihi talis eris, qualis qui dulce sonantem
Tityron e siluis dominam deduxit in urbem
 ostenditque deos et 'spreto' **dixit 'ouili,**
Tityre, rura prius, sed post cantabimus **arma.'**

for rather often malevolent Poverty pulls my ear, saying: 'Take care of your sheepfold!' [...] You will be for me such as he was, who led sweetly sounding Tityrus from the woods to the ruling city, showed him the gods, and said: 'We will scorn the sheepfold, Tityrus, and first sing of the countryside, but afterwards of arms.' (Calp. 4.155–163)

Here we find the *oues* or *ouilia* as associated with *paupertas*, the identification of Virgil with Tityrus, the intervention of Maecenas, who issues a transformative command (*dixit*), and the climactic *arma*. It seems that Martial saw in Calpurnius' *Bucolics*, and especially in the fourth eclogue, an inspiring treatment of poetics and patronage. However, there is a significant difference, in that the proposal to write of *arma* is not the poet's, as in Calpurnius, but the patron's, and is in fact rejected by the poet at the end of the epigram: *ergo ego Vergilius, si munera Maecenatis / des mihi? Vergilius non ero, Marsus ero* ('so I will be a Virgil, if you should give me the gifts of Maecenas? I will not be a Virgil, but a Marsus', Mart. 8.55(56).23–24),

82 The quotation marks around 'Italy' indicate that I take *Italiam* as quoting the second line of the *Aeneid*, just as *arma uirumque* quotes the first, but the word may be meant to refer to the *laudes Italiae* and hence by synecdoche to the *Georgics*, paralleling *rura* in the passage from Calpurnius; in that case no quotation marks should be printed.

83 This is not the place to discuss the date of the *Laus Pisonis*, but I consider it to be a real, not a fictional address to the conspirator of 65 CE.

Marsus being an Augustan epigrammatist. Where Calpurnius strove to leave behind the ‘smaller’ genre he practised, Martial intends to remain true to it.⁸⁴

Conclusion

In this contribution, I hope to have shown that Courtney, misled by the traditional view of Calpurnius Siculus as a ‘minor poet’, was wrong in denying that he could have been imitated by the Flavian poets. In fact, Calpurnius was sufficiently ‘major’ not only to have shaped the history of the bucolic genre in tandem with Virgil from Nemesianus onwards, but also to have been imitated by Silius Italicus, Statius and Martial, and, it should be added, Juvenal.⁸⁵ This imitation mostly (but not exclusively) occurs in passages engaging in dialogue with the genre of bucolic poetry, of which, even well before Nemesianus, Calpurnius’ in many ways innovative production is seen to be constitutive, alongside Virgil’s foundational reworking of Theocritus. The way this dialogue is carried out of course differs from poet to poet. In Silius, we find two passages, in Book 13 and Book 14, where a bucolic world is contrasted with the world of epic⁸⁶: in the first passage, the bucolic god, Pan, assuages the Romans’ drive to destruction in war, but in the second passage, the poetry of the bucolic founding *heros* Daphnis is abandoned by his homonymous descendant, who moves into the epic world of war, where he becomes one of the victims of the Roman conquest of Daphnis’ island of Sicily. The association of bucolic with peace, in opposition to the association of epic with war, is also to be seen in Statius’ *Thebaid*, but in more indirect ways. The most complex case is the description of the doomed Arcadian hunter Parthenopaeus in Book 9, where Statius alludes to a passage in Calpurnius which already brings together the worlds of pastoral and epic. More straightforward are the instances from the episode of the games in Book 6, where in the context of the chariot race, the soothing effect of bucolic poetry is taken up in a brief mythological gloss, while the characterization of the footrace as *pacis*

84 As he did in 8.3, of which the final words are quoted above, in connection with Calp. 4.65–66.

85 On imitation by Juvenal, apart from the material presented in the sections on the *Silvae* and Martial, see n. 56.

86 One may add smaller passages from Book 7 (437–440), where it is a brief bucolic scene (the judgement of Paris) that heads the genealogy of the Punic Wars (see n. 32), and from Book 15 (700–710), where a herdsman turned soldier *sero ingemuit stabulis exisse paternis* (see n. 20).

opus takes up Calpurnius' vision, in the first eclogue, of the restoration of peace after war – but in Statius, the work of peace prepares for war rather than ends it. The first eclogue seems also to be present in *Silvae* 3.5, in the characterization of Naples as a place of peace. These instances, together with the other ones I have discussed, show that Statius throughout his work engaged with Calpurnius, but they do not justify Schenkl's claim that nobody read and imitated Calpurnius more diligently than Statius⁸⁷: that distinction, I believe, belongs to Martial.

Martial seems to have felt a certain affinity with Calpurnius, because like him he worked in a genre that stood low in the hierarchy of genres and also like him was much concerned with the poetics of that genre, with the need for patronage, and with panegyric not only of his patrons, but also of the emperor. From the fourth eclogue, Martial takes up, at various points, the topics of the poverty of the poet, his need for patronage, the position of his genre in the hierarchy and his possible poetic career beyond that genre. From the seventh eclogue, he uses a central passage on the contrast between city and country to make a complicated allusion – complicated, because with respect to their home in city or country, the analogy between bucolic and epigram breaks down. Also from the seventh eclogue comes a motif of imperial panegyric, seeing the emperor from afar or nearby, which is surprising, because otherwise Martial avoids reusing Neronian panegyric for Domitian. We see the same thing in Statius' *Silvae*, where there is only one incidental and perhaps accidental case of such reuse. The explanation must be that Neronian imperial panegyric could have only a very limited presence in Domitianic imperial panegyric, because of the negative attitude towards Nero and the differences in imperial self-representation between the two emperors, in spite of their perceived similarities. This I have discussed elsewhere⁸⁸; here, it must suffice to state that of the triad poetics, patronage and panegyric, Martial takes from Calpurnius little inspiration for panegyric, more for patronage, and most for poetics. He even sometimes goes so far as to cast his self-presentation as an epigrammatist in bucolic terms, and these terms are, as in Statius and Silius wherever they engage with bucolic, not only those of Virgil, but even more so those of Calpurnius Siculus.⁸⁹

87 Schenkl (1885) xxxi 'neminem quantum scimus diligentius Calpurnium lectitasse et imitatum esse quam Statium'.

88 See Nauta (2010) esp. 253–258. For the reception of the literary representation of Nero in that of Domitian, see also the contribution by Cordes in this volume.

89 I thank the editors of this volume for their very helpful feedback on the first version of this contribution.

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IV

Presenting the Emperor in Early Imperial Rome

9 How to Portray the *princeps*: Visual Imperial Representation from Nero to Domitian

Anne Wolsfeld

Abstract

Contrary to literary tradition, reactions to Nero's Rome in the archaeological record of visual representation do not completely reject previous developments, but are multifaceted. In their self-representation the Flavians had different strategies to cope with their predecessor's images: they used the official concept of the portrait head to make statements against his rule and also to support the consolidation of their family. For the other iconographic elements and dimensions of imperial images, which were chosen by the commissioner of the respective monument, a continuous and stepwise development can be observed, even for those elements newly introduced under Nero. Apparently, there was no impulse to move backwards to a more traditional level, not even after the death of a condemned emperor like Nero.

Keywords: *damnatio memoriae*; portrait; hairstyle; coins; iconography

Introduction

In Roman historiography, Nero, who marks the end of the Julio-Claudian era, and his successor Vespasian, the founder of the Flavian dynasty, are portrayed very differently. In contrast to Vespasian, victor in Judaea and restorer of peace after the civil war of 69 CE, the vices and failings of condemned Nero appear even more unforgivable and inappropriate

– a behaviour unacceptable for a Roman emperor.¹ The authors of these historical writings, especially Tacitus, Suetonius, and Cassius Dio, were part of the Roman aristocracy, which in turn implies that they had very specific expectations of the *princeps* and his virtues regarding the still valued Roman Republican traditions.² In order to restore their honour, after their views and political position have been jeopardized, they aimed at depicting those emperors as *mali principes* and criticizing their seemingly more unconventional and non-traditional activities as befitting a tyrant.³

Because of the frequent bias of historiographical accounts – in particular those from the time following a *malus princeps*, as in the case of Nero – it seems promising to have a look at other contemporary representational media (e.g. public performance, archaeology, epigraphy, numismatics), and thus to allow for an expanded and differentiated view of the emperor's image.⁴ From these different media, this paper will focus on portraits, as they played a key role in the visual representation of the emperor. They were omnipresent throughout the empire, as we learn from a passage by Fronto.⁵ Furthermore, they were created with a representative purpose and as such they did not simply inform about the emperor's appearance, but were meant to communicate positive messages about his persona and the general outlines of his reign in a decisive and visually persuasive way.⁶ And, most importantly, as contemporary creations, they are a primary source of the views of the commissioners on the emperor and his rule. Thus, portraits

1 The essential historiographic evidence by Tacitus, Suetonius, and Cassius Dio, i.e. the main ancient biographies of Nero, is collected by Hurley (2013). For the literary evidence on the Flavians, see Hurlet (2016). For different explanations leading to the negative image of Nero, see Bergmann (2013) 353–358; Flaig (2014) 273–358.

2 Witschel (2006); Winterling (2007). Winterling (2003) 115–118, 175–180 discusses these mechanics for Caligula. See also the articles in Winterling (2011) dealing with changes in the historiography of the last centuries, distancing themselves from the seemingly pathological doings of the emperors, evoked by the ancient authors, and assuming instead a specific strategy behind these mentions.

3 For these mechanics, see Schulz in this volume; Schulz (2014) on alternated causal relations in Cassius Dio; cf. Cordes (2017) on the negative conversion of certain codes (*recoding*) in panegyric literature.

4 On representation and different media, see Weber and Zimmermann (2003), especially with the contributions of Niquet (epigraphy) and Wolters (numismatics).

5 Fronto, *Ep. ad M. Caes.* 4.12.4: *in omnibus argentariis mensulis pergulis tabernis protectis vestibulis fenestris usquequaque ubique imagines vestrae sint volgo propositae* ('in all money-changer's bureaux, booths, bookstalls, eaves, porches, windows, anywhere and everywhere there are likenesses of you exposed to view'). On the settings and contexts for imperial portraits, see Fejfer (2008) 373–429.

6 Schneider (2003) 59–63; Bergmann (2009) 166–173; von den Hoff (2011) 15.

provide valuable evidence for the reconstruction of the image of the emperor and its understanding within the socio-political context of the principate – especially when historiographical evidence stylizes untraditional *principes* as autocratic maniacs to contrast them with ‘good emperors’.⁷

After Nero’s *damnatio memoriae*, Vespasian was confronted with 80 years of Julio-Claudian representation. He had to decide on his policy and imagery in relation to the Julio-Claudian representation in order to establish himself and a new dynasty. How did he deal with his condemned predecessor’s images and how are his family’s portraits characterized compared to those of Nero? Can contrasts be detected similar to those implied by literary evidence? We should do more than contrast the more obvious emperors Nero and Vespasian. Since Nero as well as Titus and Domitian were of a young age when they succeeded an older emperor, are there any parallels in their imagery? Looking for breaks and continuity in imperial imagery from Nero to Domitian informs us about the acceptance and failure of certain iconographic elements and the introduction of new motifs. As much discussed evidence of Neronian self-representation, one other potential and exceptional monument, the Sol colossus, and Flavian responses to colossal dimensions and unconventional iconography will be examined in a case study at the end.

Finally, with a wider perspective, we ought to inquire how the characteristics of Neronian and Flavian imagery are to be interpreted not only in regard to each other, but in the context of the history of visual representation of the principate.

Portraits as Visual Medium

In all images representing the imperial family, i.e. statues, busts, reliefs, coins, the appearance of the portrait head constitutes the constant and essential part of the image. Established throughout the empire with an astonishing typological homogeneity, thus assuring recognition, we must conclude that for each portrait type there was a prototype serving as the role model for the replicas that have come down to us.⁸ Because of this standardization throughout the empire, we may assume that the prototype

7 See Schulz in this volume. Cf. Nauta (2014) on the categorization as *malus/pessimus princeps* and *bonus/optimus princeps*; in contrast to Nero or Domitian, see, for example, Suet. *Tit.* 1.1 with the characterization of Titus as *amor ac deliciae generis humani* (‘delight and darling of the human race’).

8 For the understanding of the relationship between prototype and replicas, see the graphic in Boschung (1989) 31.

was commissioned in Rome, with the emperor not necessarily involved, but at the very least aware of its creation.⁹ From this point on it served as the model for the 2D version on the obverse dies of the imperial coinage, and the prototype could be distributed as plaster or clay casts to all parts of the empire, where the copying work was done by local sculptors.¹⁰

The other image-constituting iconographic elements, such as different costumes like the toga or the cuirass, as well as attributes like wreaths, weapons, etc., show a much greater heterogeneity and must have depended on the different views of the commissioning parties related to their social, political, and cultural context.¹¹ Like the portrait head, the image bodies as such are semantic constructs from a variety of iconographic elements and convey specific, intendedly positive messages about the qualities of the represented person.¹² They basically relied upon the common virtues and roles an emperor could and should assume. Most certainly commissioners throughout the empire were aware of the political atmosphere at Rome and the official image, which gave clues to the emperor's preferences. The commissioning parties honoured the emperor and displayed their loyalty to support the *princeps*' position by choosing iconographically variable images, either reflecting their expectations towards the *princeps* or meant as offerings suggesting new ideas to represent the *princeps*.¹³ Due to the different commissioners and various functions that portraits could assume, an appropriate evaluation always has to consider these contextual conditions and the prevailing conventions of visual 'language' (*Bildsprache*); official public monuments erected by the conformist Senate, for example, are very different from images in houses of private citizens, which can have a more freely chosen iconography.¹⁴

9 On the creation of the portrait concept: Zanker (1990) 103–104; Brilliant (1991) 7–21; Lahusen (1997) 76–90; Schneider (2003) 59–63, 74–75.

10 On the relation of coin portrait and sculptured portrait, see lately Beckmann (2014) 39–50; on the copying process of three-dimensional portraits, see Pfanner (1989) 157–158, 219–220, 176–204. On production and dissemination, see Fejfer (2008) 404–425; on methodical questions, see Fittschen (2010).

11 Zanker (1990) 104–106; von den Hoff (2011) 20–22. On the different iconographic choices, see Lahusen (2010) 27–46. Cf. SHA *Opilius Macrinus* 6.8 on iconographically differentiated honorary statues for Septimius Severus and Caracalla.

12 See Fejfer (2008) 181–261, 393–404, 439–445; Koortbojian (2008); on iconographic codes and their semantics: Hölscher (2009).

13 The honorary function of the images is described by Dio Chrys. 31.149; Plin. *Pan.* 55.6–8. See also Zanker (1979) 359–360; Lahusen (1983) 129–143.

14 Bergmann (1998) 91–92 and Bergmann (2006) 144–146 observes the necessary distinction between images as self-representation and those attributed as honours, especially in case of divine or extraordinary themes. See also von den Hoff (2011) 17–20.

Thus the distribution and reception process of imperial images involved the emperor and his subjects, acting in different contexts, and was by no means a unilateral process. Given the medial function of images, imperial portraits should rather be considered as part of a communication system, albeit not a direct one, because the portraits commissioned by his subjects seldom reached the emperor himself, except maybe for those in Rome.¹⁵ By having a distinguished look at the different medial contexts, imperial images allow us to observe over a certain period of time the reactions of each involved party to some iconographic elements or roles: either they were gradually established in the iconographic conventions or they disappeared, thus showing the acceptance or failure of these elements.¹⁶

To sum up, the head prototype of Roman imperial portraits was created close to and with the approval of the emperor; thus it constitutes the most authentic source of imperial self-representation. Iconographic motifs on imperial coins also needed his consent for the coins to be issued. Even though motifs and types are likely to be chosen by the responsible mint magistrates as loyal and flattering offers to the emperor, they show a certain iconographical normativity serving the imperial and senatorial views.¹⁷ The following analysis will therefore focus on portraits and coins, as the most likely source of imperial self-representation, presenting a reliable basis for finding out how the Flavian emperors and the leading political group responded to Nero's Rome in imperial imagery in the first place.

*Damnatio memoriae*¹⁸: The Reworking of the Imperial Portrait

The most obvious public response to Nero and his rule was the tearing down of his images and their subsequent reworking into the portraits of his successors.¹⁹ For the analogous eradication of Domitian's memory, for example, we have literary records showing vividly how passionately the citizens

15 Cf. Zanker (1990) 46–50, 103–106; Fejfer (2008) 389; von den Hoff (2011) 15–26.

16 Cf. Witschel (2006) 124; von den Hoff (2009) 260–261 discussing the situation dealing with certain iconographic elements after Caligula.

17 Wolters (2016) 95–96; for a more detailed study: Wolters (1995) 290–308; see also Bergmann (1998) 91–98.

18 *Damnatio memoriae* is a modern expression for the 'eradication of the memory'. See the archaeological studies on this ancient phenomenon: Bergmann and Zanker (1981); Varner (2004).

19 Nero declared as public enemy: Suet. *Ner.* 23.1; 49.2; see Flower (2006) 196–271. For the relevant archaeological material, see Bergmann and Zanker (1981); Varner (2004) 46–85, 237–256.

and most of the senators must have pursued this work of destruction.²⁰ The idea of inflicting pain upon a stone work, conveyed by these literary sources, also illustrates how the portraits were treated as embodiments of the emperor's person.

The reworking usually took place in the time immediately following the death of a bad emperor, but the portrait heads, often created for insertion into the statue body, could also be stored and used when needed, sometimes even centuries later.²¹ For Nero's portraits, we have many examples that were reused for his Flavian successors.²² This is easily explained by the need for numerous portraits at a new emperor's accession and the existence of the former, bad, emperor's portraits, readily available to be reused. Additionally, the generous amount of marble required to create Nero's opulent appearance made the reshaping into another portrait not that difficult. Finally, the contours of the Flavians' portrait heads, with broad and fleshy facial features, were close to Nero's, and may have enhanced or at least simplified reworking.

These are most likely the explanations for the fact that almost all copies of the early portrait types of young Domitian derived from Nero's adult portraits (fig. 9.1a-b). Consequently, the reconstruction of the prototypes of Domitian's portrait types as a prince is disturbed by remnants of Nero's portraits.²³ This is the case especially for those parts cut deep in the marble, such as the eyes, or for protruding parts like the nose, where the stone material for a complete working-over was missing. Among the typological elements, the front hair generally was the easiest part to copy, thus constituting a reliable identification marker, but only in combination with facial features.²⁴

Reworked portraits often differ from the more reliable, newly created likenesses. Nevertheless, the occasionally awkward results of the reworked portraits apparently did not diminish the honour and reverence towards imperial images.²⁵ Even convincingly reworked portraits often bear some

20 Plin. *Pan.* 52.4–5; Suet. *Dom.* 23.1.

21 Cf., for example, Bergmann and Zanker (1981) 407–409 no. 47 fig. 64a-c.

22 See Bergmann and Zanker (1981) 335–410; Varner (2004) 52–61, 240–254.

23 For the three affected portrait types of Domitian, see below p. 258–259; on the reworking patterns: Bergmann and Zanker (1981) 349–360, who show, for example, that Nero's uncommonly long hair at the neck was always obliterated.

24 On the technical and sculptural compromises, pointing to a reworked portrait: Kovacs (2014) 25–29; cf. Fittschen (2012) 640–643 for a critical approach, asking for explicit remains of the former portrait.

25 This is made clear by a passage in Fronto, *Ep. ad M. Caes.* 4.12.4, commenting not only on the omnipresent but also often badly worked copies of the emperor's portrait. Nonetheless,

Figure 9.1a-b Portrait head of young Domitian, reworked from Nero, 72–75 CE. Munich, Glyptothek, inv. no. 418. Photos: A. Wolsfeld.



traces of the old version at the back of the head, as the traces of the former emperor were seldom erased completely.²⁶

The phenomenon of recycling portraits of condemned rulers has been described by Varner as ‘manifestations of the new emperor visually cannibalizing the power and images of his defeated predecessor’.²⁷ This interpretation is probably slightly exaggerated, but the reworking of portraits surely can be considered a visual statement towards the old regime, and in public places one must have been aware of the substitution of one imperial portrait by another.²⁸ For the transition from Nero to the Flavians as his immediate successors, the reuse must have been all the more effective. The creation of the dynasty was made possible only by Nero’s defeat, as reflected by his reworked images and by contemporary literature

Fronto feels animated to smile. That people were aware of those imperfections becomes clear from Arr. *Peripl. M. Eux.* 1.2–4, who sends for a new statue as substitution for an old one that did not resemble the emperor. The archaeological record provides us with such an unsatisfactory result, namely a portrait of Nero reworked subsequently into Domitian and then into Nerva: Varner (2004) 58, 117, 251 cat. 2.50, 263 cat. 5.13 fig. 61a–e.

²⁶ Cf. Bergmann and Zanker (1981) 379–380 no. 28 fig. 47a–d for a former portrait of Domitian remodelled into an excellent replica of Titus’s accession type, but still bearing undeniable traces of Domitian’s characteristic back hair.

²⁷ Varner (2004) 4, 9.

²⁸ Cf. Bergmann (2013) 339–340 for the observation that the portraits of young Nero, seen at that time as a new hope, had a better chance to survive than those from his late years.

contrasting Nero to the new and better emperor, Vespasian. Maybe the reworking can be best described as a kind of ‘conscious forgetting’ of the old regime, followed by the renaissance of the principate under the new ruler.²⁹

In short, the practice of reworking portraits illustrates the importance of a visual manifestation of the ruler's person through imperial images. In order to do so, the new emperor was in need of his own portrait type(s), with fixed iconographic features and characteristics, which were imposed upon his predecessor's images or applied to newly commissioned ones. We will now take a look at how the Flavians coped with their predecessor's portrait model, thereby positioning themselves in relation to Nero's rule.

Alternating Trends in the First Century CE

Until 59 CE, Nero's portrait concept³⁰ (fig. 9.2) had basically followed the Augustan model with a simple coiffure (short strands of hair altered over the forehead with so-called fork-and-pincer locks) and classicist physiognomic features.³¹ Following the death of Agrippina and the dismissal of his counsellors, a major change occurred in Nero's portraits, breaking with the imperial representation of the Julio-Claudians which had predominated the images of the Domus Augustana for nearly 80 years.³² On coins and in sculptures, Nero's portrait now appeared with an artificial coiffure with long sickle-shaped locks, running from a fork near the right temple to the left side of the forehead, followed to the top of the head by a second row of locks running the opposite direction and forming a crest over the front row (fig. 9.3). The hair at the nape of the neck was worn longer and combed to the front on either side of the neck.

29 Cf. Meier (2010) esp. 9–40, on different ways of coping with the past and the problem of forgetting.

30 Cf. Nero's portrait type ‘Cagliari’ with main replica in Cagliari, Museo Archeologico Nazionale, inv. no. 35.533. On Nero's early portrait types, see Boschung (2016) 82–84 figs. 1–2; lately Bergmann (2013) 332–335 figs. 20.1, 20.2. For a first typological analysis of Nero's portraits, see Hiesinger (1975) esp. pl. 17–18 with an overview on the development of the coin obverse portrait.

31 For the Augustan portrait model, see Zanker (1979) 361–362; Zanker (1990) 103–106; see also Boschung (2002) on the image of the *gens Augusta*.

32 On this break, see Schneider (2003) 63–68.

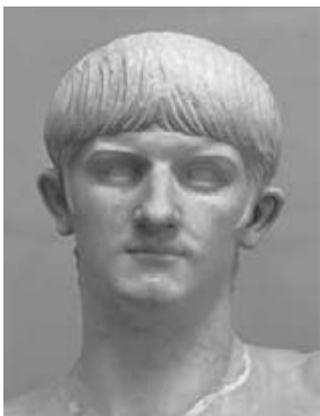


Figure 9.2 Portrait of Nero, 54–59 CE. Cagliari, Museo Archeologico Nazionale, inv. no. 35.533. Photo: Neg. D-DAI-ROM-66.1946R.



Figure 9.3 Portrait head of Nero, 59–64 CE. Rome, Museo Nazionale Romano, Palazzo Massimo alle Terme, inv. no. 618. Photo: H. Koppermann, Neg. D-DAI-ROM-62.536R.



Figure 9.4 Portrait head of Nero, 64–68 CE. Munich, Glyptothek, inv. no. 321. Photo: G. Fittschen-Badura, arachne.dainst.org/entity/174036.

In addition to the coiffure, the emperor's features had changed too: with a thick neck under a double chin and small eyes sunken in a fleshy face, he had transformed his whole appearance.³³ With his next portrait type, prevailing from 64 to his death in 68 CE, these characteristics became even more pronounced, the face becoming even fatter and his hairstyle now featuring a row of sickle-shaped locks, all running to his left and forming a sort of crown at the front (fig. 9.4).³⁴ Furthermore, some of his portraits, especially those on coins created after 59 CE, feature a short and neatly trimmed, fluffy beard covering mainly the cheeks; on marble portraits, it is occasionally painted instead of modelled plastically.³⁵

Hairstyles with a pattern of waves on top of the head and accurately sickle-shaped locks are described in ancient literature as *coma in gradus formata*³⁶ ('hair arranged in tiers of curls') and were styled with a curling iron. Because of the expenditure of time and care, such lavish hairstyles were associated with luxury and even with feminine behaviour. Consequently, because of Republican standards of modesty still relevant at this time, they were deemed inappropriate for male Roman citizens and were not used in their portraits.³⁷ In her study of Neronian-Flavian male portraits, Petra Cain has shown that long, lavish hairstyles were originally worn by young male servants as an expression of juvenile beauty and wealth; only as the first century CE progressed did similar luxurious coiffures appear in portraits, mainly in those of young adults.³⁸ Cain observed that after 80 years of static, monotonous, classicist imperial portraits, private citizens must have been eager for new forms of self-representation, going back not only to more realistic facial features, but also introducing a greater variety of coiffures like the *coma in anulos* or *in gradus* ('hair

33 Portrait type 'Thermenmuseum'. Cf. the main replica in Rome, Museo Nazionale Romano, Palazzo Massimo alle Terme, inv. no. 618. On the portrait type: Bergmann (2013) 336 fig. 20.6; Boschung (2016) 84–85 figs. 3–4. For the coin obverse portraits: Wolters (2016) 91 fig. 6.

34 Portrait type München-Worcester. Cf. the main replica in Munich, Glyptothek, inv. no. 321. On the portrait type; Bergmann (2013) 336–337; Boschung (2016) 85–87 fig. 5; Wolters (2016) figs. 13–14.

35 Convincingly: Bergmann (2013) 336–337.

36 Suet. *Ner.* 51.

37 For a first collection of the ancient sources and the discussion of the negative connotation, see Cain (1993) 88–92; recently: Bergmann (2013) 337–339.

38 See Cain (1993) 84–89 tracing the motif of the luxurious coiffures back to its origins for a better understanding of its semantics; on p. 68 she observes that until the time of Hadrian the focus for the wearing of these coiffures lay on young men.

arranged in ringlets or in tiers of curls') to their portraits.³⁹ According to Artemidoros, the idea of luxury, *otium* ('leisure') and well-being required for the care and styling of these coiffures was received positively.⁴⁰ The introduction of these iconographic elements in representative portraiture was then allowed by a change in lifestyle, to be observed since the middle of the first century CE. The initially negative attitude towards a life of *otium*, restricted until then to the leisure time in private villas out of town, changed, and the lifestyle became even more popular in public domains in the city.⁴¹

In imperial portraits, there had already been a certain tendency to show ageing realism under Claudius, and even some attempts at hairstyles arranged in tiers. But Nero was the first emperor to use a very opulent form of the *coma in gradus* in his official portraits. Complemented by a fat face, especially in his last portrait type, as a sign of *tryphé* ('lushness', 'indulgence'), he shows himself indulgent in a life of pleasure and of *otium*.⁴² Nevertheless, his facial traits are smooth and without wrinkles, and he is presented as the youthful ruler he in fact was. Like the coiffure, the short downy beard, growing in some of his portraits on the cheeks, can also be regarded as a sign of juvenile beauty,⁴³ as it was worn exclusively by young men too old for their first sprouts of stubble. As this sort of beard necessitated effort, it resembles luxury coiffures.

After Nero's death, the turmoil of the year of the four emperors saw different portrait concepts, which varied depending on the visual message one wanted to convey. For example, Otho followed Nero's portrait style to show his allegiance to his predecessor. The visual messages were by now based on a wider pool of iconographic elements, introduced step

39 For an elaborate and instructive overview on developing iconographic and stylistic variety in male portraiture in the second half of the first century CE, see Cain (1993). These temporary prevailing trends can be described as 'period face' ('*Zeitgesicht*'; Zanker [1982]) and serve the iconography of imperial as well as private portraits, exerting a mutual influence and thus resulting sometimes in very similar appearances: Fittschen (2010) 236–241; on the difference to 'imitative private portraiture' with intended assimilation to the imperial portrait; see also Bergmann (1982).

40 Cain (1993) 91–95, especially p. 94 with the citation of a passage by Artem. 1.22 on the rare positive reception.

41 On this change of lifestyle and the contextualization of Nero's Rome, see Bergmann (1994) 27–30; Bergmann (2013) 335–358.

42 Bergmann (2013) 339 considers the fat face as the predominating element, so that the intended message of his portraits must have been pleasure and 'not the production of abstract beauty'.

43 Cain (1993) 100–104; Bergmann (2013) 338–339; on literary depictions of Nero's youth, see the contribution of Cordes in this volume, especially the second section.

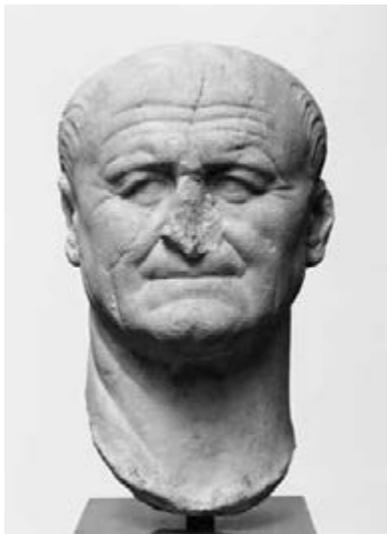


Figure 9.5 Portrait head of Vespasian, 70–79 CE. Copenhagen, Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek. Photo: Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek.

by step into the portraiture of imperial Rome.⁴⁴ Eventually, Vespasian would establish himself as the new ruler after Nero, and his choice of a portrait concept breaks with those of all his predecessors. This drastic change in iconography, which occurred with the founder of the new dynasty, has been much discussed and understood, surely correctly, as a clear distinction from the condemned predecessor Nero.⁴⁵ Vespasian, already aged at the time of his accession, went back to the traditionalist model of the old men with wrinkles, a seemingly toothless mouth, and very little hair (fig. 9.5). Contrary to most of the Republican portraits of old men, Vespasian sports not a bony, ascetic, and yet somehow elegant facial appearance, but a broad-faced, old and unpretentious look.⁴⁶ He thus represented the experienced and determined senior politician – in

44 Portraits of Galba, Otho, and Vitellius are known mainly from coin obverses: *RIC* II.1 263, 322, 340 (Galba); 3, 16, 18 (Otho); 121, 130, 136, 169 (Vitellius). On their portrait concepts, see Schneider (2003) 69–70.

45 On Vespasian's counter-image, see Schneider (2003) 70–74. See also Zanker (1979) 362–363, underlining the contrast to Augustus and his successors.

46 Main type with best replica in Copenhagen, Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, inv. no. 2585; on this main type, see Bergmann and Zanker (1981) 332–349 fig. 12a-c, while fig. 13a-c (Sevilla, Museo Arqueológico, without inv. no.) represents another rarer type with reduced ageing signs. The current assumption that the more idealized type followed the ageing type is challenged by Rosso (2010) 178–182, suggesting that the younger and more dynamic image was created in Alexandria and converted only in Rome to a more traditional appearance. On coin obverses this dominates from early on the older version: cf. *RIC* II.1 32, 49.

sharp contrast to Nero's more inexperienced young age – without lacking a citizen-friendly impression.⁴⁷

Thus, the immediate and natural response to Nero's youthful and luxurious self-fashioning was the formulation of an 'antithesis' in Vespasian's imagery,⁴⁸ as founder of a new dynasty. All the more surprising is the reaction of the sons of Vespasian, who deliberately did not follow their father's image, but again tried different iconographic paths. At first sight, such a decision could maybe be explained by their much younger age.⁴⁹ But as can be observed with Nero, Galba, Otho, Vitellius, and Vespasian, their portrait concepts had the intention of sending specific, well-considered messages with regard to their predecessors, crafted in the light of their socio-political positioning. For the iconographic choices of Titus and Domitian, it is therefore important to ask not only how they can be explained in the context of their family, but more so in relation to Nero, because he was the last youth to be represented in imperial portraiture before them.

Under their father's reign, Titus and Domitian were presented differently from each other, each representation aiming at a concept appropriate to their age and position. Titus, the elder brother and successor to Vespasian, was portrayed with a more elaborate hairstyle, consisting of small ringlets (*anuli*), neatly arranged on top of the head and mixed with small sickle-shaped locks at the front (fig. 9.6). His rectangular facial contours are accentuated by the receding hair on the forehead, fleshy cheeks, and a double chin; his traits are animated with a frown, contracted and raised eyebrows, a slightly crooked nose framed by deep nasolabial folds, and slightly upturned corners of the mouth.⁵⁰ Despite his more mature appearance, the hairstyle belongs to the aforementioned luxurious category that became fashionable at the middle of the century and was worn mainly by young men – but differing

47 The baldness and wrinkles are signs of old men and their experience (Cain [1993] 95–96), not necessarily relating to republican images (Zanker [1979] 362–363). Schneider (2003) 72 with the characterization as '*bürgerlich*', i.e. a man of the people.

48 Schneider (2003) 59.

49 At Vespasian's accession, Titus (*39 CE) must have been 32 and Domitian (*51 CE) 20 years old (cf. Kienast [2011] 111, 115). For the visual representation of Titus and Domitian, see my PhD thesis (Wolsfeld [2021]). The catalogue lists as far as possible all known portraits, as a basis for a complete revision of typology, and the analysis of the iconography of their images. Media categories allow a more differentiated look with regard to the historical background and the functioning of the representative system.

50 Type 'Neapel-Vatikan'. See the main replica from Herculaneum in Naples, Museo Nazionale, inv. no. 6059. On the type, see Daltrop et al. (1966) 18–29 pl. 10. 16d; Fittschen (1977) 64–65. Exemplary for coin obverses showing the type from 71–79 CE: *RIC* II.1 611 (Vespasian).



Figure 9.6 Cuirassed statue of Titus from Herculaneum, before 79 CE. Naples, Museo Archeologico Nazionale, inv. no. 6059. Photo: H. R. Goette.



Figure 9.7 Portrait head of young Domitian, reworked from Nero, 72–75 CE. Rome, Museo Nazionale Romano, Palazzo Massimo alle Terme, inv. no. 226. Photo: H. Schwanke, Neg. D-DAI-ROM-79.3925.

from the luxurious coiffure of Nero.⁵¹ Domitian, on the other side, wears a coiffure reminiscent of Julio-Claudian family members like Germanicus or Drusus Minor,⁵² with flat strands of hair alternated at the front with fork-and-pincer locks (fig. 9.7).⁵³ As far as we can reconstruct the prototype

51 See above pp. 252–254.

52 Cf. Boshung (2002) no. 5.3 pl. 27 no. 12.2–12.3 pl. 38.3–4, and no. 27.2 pl. 76.2.

53 Type 'Thermenmuseum-Stuttgart'. See main replica in Rome, Museo Nazionale, Palazzo Massimo alle terme, inv. no. 226. This main pre-accession portrait type has come down on us with a majority of copies: Bergmann and Zanker (1981) 349–360 with fig. 25a–d. By now there is evidence for two other early portrait types, with fewer replicas, related to the main type through comparable front hair motifs: Type 'Boston-Rom': see replica in Boston, Museum of Fine Arts, inv. no. 88.639; Fittschen (2006) 158–159 n. 1; cf. Bergmann and Zanker (1981) 356–359 fig. 30–31, listing them as simple variations of the main type. Type 'Braccio Nuovo-Montemartini': see replica in Rome, Centrale Montemartini, inv. no. 859; Fittschen and Zanker (2014) 50–51 no. 46 pl. 65. These three types correspond with coin types from 71–72 to 76–77 CE: cf. *RIC* II.1 492, 926 (Vespasian). Another independent type, also presumably pre-accession, can be discerned,

to his early portraits, his round face is young and smooth, with individual traits like straight eyebrows, a broad nose, and a large mouth.⁵⁴

While Titus's portraits sport a contemporary, stylish, and luxurious coiffure, Domitian's leads back to the reliable hairstyle of the last 'good' Julio-Claudians before Nero; apparently, fork-and-pincer hairstyles of the Julio-Claudians were still considered wearable. Furthermore, these portraits may intentionally link the young Flavian to the positive memories of the legacy of the former dynasty; Domitian's very young and promising age as well as his being a possible heir could have favoured an iconographical hint at figures like Drusus or Germanicus. Titus's portrait type on the other hand, with a lush coiffure and downy beard style, as worn mainly by young men, evokes the contemporary lifestyle of pleasure and *otium* – a civil lifestyle that contrasts with his former military life.⁵⁵

Like their father, they turned away from Nero's late appearance: indeed, Titus featured a luxurious coiffure, but another type categorized by its ringlets, not yet known in imperial imagery,⁵⁶ his face showing signs of corpulence, but not nearly so fat a face as Nero's. The hairstyles of Domitian's early portrait types can be seen in general as a reference to the Julio-Claudians, but they surely must be read in a positive way and thus not be paralleled with Nero's first portrait types.

Then, following their accession to the throne, each of them picks up an appearance very similar to Nero's later imperial representation. As a matter of fact, both Titus⁵⁷ (fig. 9.8) and Domitian⁵⁸ (fig. 9.9) start wearing the *coma in gradus formata* ('hair arranged in tiers of curls'). Their facial traits are dominated by fleshy cheeks and a double chin, indicating not only a square skull but also a slight corpulence. However, in detail there

already with a more elaborate hairstyle: Type 'Neapel': see replicas in Naples, Museo Nazionale, inv. nos. 6058 and 150–216; Bergmann and Zanker (1981) 360–363 figs. 33 and 35. This type can be associated with coin portraits from 77–81 CE: *RIC* II.1 330 (Titus).

54 As noted above, nearly all the replicas of Domitian's early portrait types are reworked from portraits of Nero: Bergmann and Zanker (1981) 350. On literary praise and critics on Domitian's youth, see the contribution of Cordes, especially the third section, in this volume.

55 Cf. Zanker (1990) 107–170 with Augustus turning to civil representation after Actium.

56 See Cain (1993) 70–74 on the so-called *coma in anulos* ('hair arranged in ringlets').

57 Type 'Erbach-Pantelleria'. See main replica in Pantelleria, Castello, without inv. no. 5857; see Schäfer (2004) 31–35 figs. 22–26; see also Fittschen (1977) 64–65 pl. 23 with the other main replica in Erbach, Castle, without inv. no.; cf. coin portraits from 79 CE on: *RIC* II.1 153.

58 Type 'Conservatori 2451–1156'. See main replica in Rome, Palazzo dei Conservatori, inv. no. 1156; Fittschen and Zanker (1985) no. 32 pl. 34, 36 and no. 33 pl. 35, 37 (other main replica); cf. coin portraits from 81–96 CE: *RIC* II.1 106. Despite their different appearances, the main replicas of Titus's as well as Domitian's portrait type must originally trace back to the same prototype, but they represent stylistic and fashionable counterparts (see footnotes below).

Figure 9.8 Portrait head of Titus from Pantelleria, after 79 CE. Pantelleria, Castello, inv. no. 5857. Institut für Klassische Archäologie der Eberhard-Karls-Universität Tübingen. Photo: T. Zachmann.



are several differences between the portraits of the Flavian siblings and those of Nero. Apart from a less obvious facial fatness, the hair is arranged in a more moderate, less lavish way.⁵⁹ Contrary to Nero's portrait types, the *gradus* hairstyle of the Flavians was realized in different ways, owing to a greater variety of the arrangement and the shape of the strands of hair.⁶⁰ For Titus's and Domitian's portraits the strands have their origin at the back of the head, from where long strands are then combed to the front, forming a wavy structure through alternation of direction on top. Compared to Nero, they form smaller and shallower segments, either leading directly into the front hair or laying in countermotion over the front row forming a small crest. The strands can either be discontinuous, with insertions of shorter locks or even ringlets, or they can run through from starting point to front hair.⁶¹ But mainly, the receding front hair of the Flavians together with a

59 Cf. Cain (1993) 60–61, observing that even among private portraits with hairs arranged *in gradus* technique, none of them imitates Nero's coiffure exactly, but rather they come along in a more moderate fashion.

60 Observed by Cain (1993) esp. 66–68. The arrangement and shape of hair strands should not be mistaken for contemporaneous stylistic changes, a problem which she discusses on pp. 38–57.

61 For variations, especially of Domitian's coiffure, compare the two main replicas in Fittschen and Zanker (1985) cat. 32 pl. 34, 36 and cat. 33 pl. 35, 37 as well as a third one with the face

Figure 9.9a-b Portrait head of Domitian, 81–96 CE. Rome, Musei Capitolini, Museo Nuovo, inv. no. 1156. Photo: G. Fittschen-Badura, arachne.dainst.org/entity/6680478; arachne.dainst.org/entity/6680480.



more appropriate length of hair at the neck and reduced corpulence gives them a less opulent appearance.

Commissioned in order to honour the represented person, the iconography of imperial portraits has to be understood in a positive way. Therefore, the similarity of Titus's and Domitian's portraits to Nero's is unlikely to have been intended as an explicit reference to their condemned predecessor.⁶² As Petra Cain established in her study on Neronian and Flavian private male portraits, the *coma in gradus* was one of the current hairstyles of young men in the second half of the first century CE.⁶³ Therefore, it seems likely that this choice for the Flavian siblings is due to the contemporary taste of portraying relatively young men, which thus supports the assumption of a continuity of fashion trends.⁶⁴ Nonetheless, the message conveyed by the use of these

reworked to Nerva at the University of Leipzig, now lost: Bergmann and Zanker (1981) 389 no. 31 fig. 52.

62 In contrast to the portraits of Otho and his intended reference to Nero: Schneider (2003) 69–70.

63 See above pp. 254–255.

64 Cf. Zanker (1982) and Bergmann (1982) on the so-called '*Zeitgesicht*'; otherwise Zanker (2009) 64, assuming that Titus and Domitian were only fashionable with their portrait choice without the intention of a special message.

iconographic elements stays basically the same since their introduction and, more importantly, there was no going back to the time before Nero's reign and representation. Consequently, it was difficult to forget in such a short time period that Nero's use of the *coma in gradus* and of a fleshy face were the utmost expression of pleasure and of a luxurious lifestyle.⁶⁵ By applying these elements in a more moderate way to their accession portraits, Titus and Domitian were on the one hand able to distance themselves appropriately from Nero's images, while keeping up with fashion trends. On the other hand, they could demonstrate their sympathy for a related and in the eyes of the Romans increasingly popular lifestyle, but with regard to fatness and opulence of hair not in such an exaggerated way.

To sum up, this choice of portrait concept did not occur immediately after Vespasian's accession, relying until that point on uncompromised iconographic elements with the simple Julio-Claudian coiffure or the *coma in anulos*. Only after a certain amount of time and the increasing establishment of the new dynasty did Titus come up with an alternative and also in private portraits more often used version of luxurious hairstyle, which was imitated a couple of years later by his brother.⁶⁶

Considering the strong reactions to the images and doings of condemned emperors, reported by archaeological or literary evidence, a visual distinction from the hated predecessor was recommendable, and this is precisely what Vespasian and his sons did at first. Obviously, after a certain period of time in which the counter-images promoted for Vespasian and his sons were followed, the iconographic elements of the *coma in gradus* in combination with fleshy faces seemed suitable again for imperial portraiture. This is supported by the fact that Domitian imitated his brother Titus's portraits, which makes sense only if they were positively received by the contemporaries.⁶⁷

After Domitian's *damnatio memoriae* in 96 CE, his successors Nerva and Trajan saw themselves confronted with the same problem that Vespasian had to deal with in 69 CE: they had to decide on their iconographical relation to their predecessors, and they opted for completely different portrait concepts without explicit connotations of *luxuria* and *otium*.⁶⁸

65 More so if Nero's self-stylization was 'closely linked to a process of change within the Roman value system as a whole [...] soon accepted by the wider public' (Bergmann [2013] 339, 355–357).

66 On the idea of an intended imitation, see below p. ## (18).

67 See p.## (13) below.

68 On the iconography of Nerva: Bergmann and Zanker (1981) 380–388 figs. 50–51; on Trajan: Gross (1940); see also Jucker (1984) 23–51.

Having discussed the iconographic portrait concepts for each emperor's rule from Nero to the last Flavian emperor, we shall now take a closer look at the importance of the Flavian family picture in contrast to Nero's lonely reign.

The Visualization of Family Ties and Roles

With the redefinition of the imperial image, Nero broke not only deliberately with a long tradition of classicist iconographic concepts, but also with his predecessors and his family, by formulating his own new image. Thus, in a visual sense he stood apart. His dynastic rule was solitary as well, because unlike his predecessors, Nero never had children.⁶⁹

After the death of Nero, Vespasian also went to drastic lengths to change the imperial image, this time to distance himself and his family from the condemned predecessor. As we saw, his example was not followed by the portraits of his sons for different reasons, but there is an important difference compared to Nero's isolation in the Julio-Claudian line. The Flavian emperors, although they introduced several portrait concepts, were connected to each other visually through some kind of dynastic facial features (figs 9.5–9.7). In fact, they have in common a square skull with a high forehead, close-set eyes, a broad, arched nose with a slightly overhanging tip, and a thin long mouth, followed by a pronounced, pointy chin and a double chin. Of course, Vespasian and his sons were the first successive emperors with biological family links, with a chance of real resemblances. But even if Roman portraits can not necessarily be understood in the modern sense of 'being portrayed', there can be no doubt that the overall impression evoked by these physiognomic parallels must be considered a family likeness and that this was intended by the portrait strategies.⁷⁰ Despite the differences in the portraits of father and sons, they are associated in an overall scheme through small details, representing them as a family union and setting them apart as an independent dynasty. The likeness of Titus's and Domitian's ruler portraits was not a random choice either (figs 9.8–9.9). Apart from the physiognomic resemblance, Domitian could have chosen any of the many

69 Except for a daughter, who died only three months after birth (Kienast [2011] 100); cf. Drinkwater (2013) 164, 168, who points out in his analysis on Nero's 'half-baked principate' that the emperor failed to produce an heir.

70 See also Wood (2016) 131–132, commenting especially on the resemblance of Vespasian and Titus.

possible hairstyles *en vogue* at that time, but he opted for exactly the same coiffure as his brother, altering only the variation in the front hair and the arrangement at the back of the head.⁷¹ The longer hair, combed toward the front from some low point at the back of the head or even from the neck, jokingly earned his haircut the term *coma in adulescentia senescens* ('the ageing of my locks in youth').⁷²

The importance of a visual family connection through shared iconographic motifs is well documented for the Julio-Claudians from Augustus to Claudius – and even for the first years of Nero's reign.⁷³ For some of them, explicit assimilation by means of identical front hair motifs or facial features was used to mark the link in an even more obvious way, for example, in the case of Augustus and his selected heirs, Gaius and Lucius.⁷⁴

In the case of Augustus, his adoptive sons and actual heirs successfully demonstrated for more than 80 years that a dynastic face can serve two purposes. In the first place, the visualization of a connection between different family members, which was not necessarily based on their real likenesses, signals *concordia*, the unity and mutual acceptance between these people and consequently the stability of their rule.⁷⁵ At the same time, potential successors can be highlighted through typological analogies linking them to the ruler, indicating his *providentia* (foresight) by the early choice. These dynastic connections become even more evident in portrait groups, when images are not only assembled in the same place, but their belonging together is also supported by visual effects like a dynastic face.⁷⁶ Therefore, it is no coincidence that Domitian, who apparently lacked his

71 While Titus's front hair is variated by a pincer motif over the left eye, Domitian's front locks form a continuous line from the fork at the right corner of the forehead to the left temple. At the back of Titus's portrait heads the strands originate from a cowlick around the middle, whereas for Domitian's portraits they start from a lower point just over the neck line.

72 Suet. *Dom.* 18.

73 On the phenomenon of Julio-Claudian family resemblances, see Boschung (2002) 180–192; further Massner (1982) speaking of '*Bildnisangleichung*' (image assimilation); see also Boschung (1993) with an overview on the family member's portrait types; see Giuliani (1986) 180 for antique text passages underlining the importance of physiognomic likenesses to demonstrate the affiliation to a *gens*.

74 See Boschung (1993) 52–54; on the assimilation phenomenon observed for Augustus's heirs: Boschung (2002) 184–190. An alternative choice was made, for example, by Tiberius (Hertel [2013]), whereas Caligula sought a closer link: von den Hoff (2009) 243–244.

75 Cf. Zanker (1990) 217–228.

76 This is especially the case for the Julio-Claudian family groups: Boschung (2002). Flavian groups are less numerous (cf. Deppmeyer [2008] cat. 1–28, with the review by Fittschen [2009]), but there is, for example, a statue pair of Vespasian and Titus from Misenum (Muscettola [2000] 81–87 figs. 3–6).

brother's popularity at his accession, approached Titus's image to show their family harmony, and therein to legitimize his position through the continuation of Titus's rule.⁷⁷

In terms of the creation of visual family connections, the Flavian emperors returned to the successful model of their predecessors, especially that of Augustus, counteracting the fate of Nero and the renunciation of his family. In the end, Domitian, as the last Flavian emperor, met the same fate as Nero. However, they had managed to stabilize their dynastic rule for nearly 30 years, and first Titus, and then Domitian, succeeded to their father's throne as the first biological sons of an emperor coming to power in the history of the principate.

When we look more closely at the portraits and their facial expressions, a sequence in the choice of iconographic elements and in facial expression seems to be detected, maybe reflecting differentiated roles within the Flavian family. Nero's nearly wrinkleless portraits show a relaxed face without much expression, the contraction of the eyebrows being accentuated a bit more only in very few portraits (fig. 9.3).⁷⁸ Cain has observed that minimal facial expression and a wrinkle-free face had been a current phenomenon with young men and rulers, maybe indicating their youthful carefreeness and innocence.⁷⁹ Therefore, in reaction to Nero, the portrait of Vespasian created the modest image of an old man with generically contracted and raised eyebrows and a vividly animated face (fig. 9.5). He is shown with the experience of age, determined to take action, and aware of his *cura imperii* ('effort for the empire').⁸⁰

Contrary to other portraits of youths, both of Titus's portrait types (figs 9.6 and 9.8) keep the stern and determined look with the raised and contracted eyebrows, probably as reminiscence of his father and expressing similar concerns about the empire.⁸¹ But the modesty has gone, the portraits now showing a luxurious coiffure and a well-fed, still relatively young appearance. Finally, Domitian's facial expression is calmer, and

77 There is even evidence for some presumably posthumous portraits of Titus, which were adapted even closer to contemporaneous portraits of Domitian in hairstyle and facial features: cf. this assimilation between Titus's portrait from Pantelleria (Schäfer [2004] 31–35 figs. 21–26) and Domitian's portrait in Rome (Fittschen and Zanker [1985] pl. 37).

78 Cf. the bronze portrait of Nero from Berlin, Collection Axel Guttman: Born and Stemmer (1996) figs. 1 and 9.

79 Cain (1993) 104–106.

80 On the different characterizations of Vespasian and Nero, see Schneider (2003) 72. On Vespasian's efforts to consolidate the empire, see Pfeiffer (2009) 20–32; Nicols (2016).

81 From 71 CE onwards he held the *tribunicia potestas*, and shared several consulships with his father as well as the office of *ensor* in 73–74 CE (Kienast [2011] 108–109, 111–112).

especially his accession type (fig. 9.9), following the *coma in gradus* of his brother, is nearly expressionless with horizontal eyebrows, no wrinkles at the forehead and gently resting lips. Like Nero, Domitian too is young and the relaxed facial expression appropriate. Compared to his brother Titus, they share the notion of luxury, which had become suitable again, but moreover Domitian can allow himself to be less severe and more relaxed. One seems to see the development of the Flavian portraits and their facial expressions as reflections of the principate's situation from Vespasian, who restored the empire and finances after Nero and the war, to Titus, who shares his father's concerns, but whose portraits are indicating an abundant and carefree continuation of the principate. Domitian in turn, as the second successor and the younger son, is promoting a worryless reign. The portraits of the Flavians and their facial expressions would thus respond to the changing, ameliorating situation and needs after the end of Nero and the civil wars.

This thesis of the visualization of the well-being of the rehabilitated empire after Nero can be supported by personifications on imperial coinage that echo an economic improvement.⁸² For the generally more extended repertoire of divinity coin reverses under Vespasian, motifs with personifications like *Felicitas*,⁸³ *Ceres*,⁸⁴ or *Annona*,⁸⁵ increase, symbolizing the (regained) abundance and fertility underlined by attributes like *cornucopiae* or corn ears. These personifications reappear, with the same or with varied motifs, under Titus and Domitian.⁸⁶ Under Vespasian and Titus, who actually were in charge of the rehabilitation of the economy, these motifs are issued amongst other more political topics, publicizing their efforts to stabilize the empire.⁸⁷ Meanwhile, Domitian's coinage highlights mostly his own military successes.⁸⁸ The diminishing use of respective topics for their coinage could therefore be seen in connection with the seemingly increasing luxury and relaxed expressions in their portraits from Vespasian to Domitian.

82 On economics cf. Launaro (2016) 196–203.

83 Cf. *RIC* II.1 62 (71 CE) with *caduceus* and *cornucopia*.

84 Cf. *RIC* II.1 259 (71 CE) with corn ears, poppy, and sceptre.

85 Cf. *RIC* II.1 876 (76 CE) with a sack of corn ears; cf. other unusual motifs indicating fecundity: *RIC* II.1 977–984 (77–78 CE): a goatherd milking a goat, a *modius* with corn ears, and a sow with three piglets.

86 Titus: *RIC* II.1 55 (*Annona*), 136 (*Annona*, alternative motif), 69 (*Ceres*), 141 (*Felicitas*). Domitian: *RIC* II.1 128 (*Felicitas*), 212 (*Annona*), 369 (*Annona* and *Ceres*), 245 (*quadrantes*: *Ceres*).

87 Cf. Vespasian's coinage, with key words like *LIBERTAS RESTITUTA* (*RIC* II.1 88), *ROMA RESURGENS* (*RIC* II.1 109) or *PAX AUGUSTI* (*RIC* II.1 380).

88 Wolters and Ziegert (2014) 55–56, 59–60.



Figure 9.10 Coin reverse (sesterce) with Titus and Domitian, cuirassed and standing each with *parazonium* and spear, 71 CE. Münzkabinett der Staatlichen Museen zu Berlin. <https://ikmk.smb.museum/object?id=18225168>.

In contrast to Nero's solitary and heirless rule, which led to the end of the Julio-Claudian dynasty, Vespasian constantly promoted very close family ties from the very beginning of his reign. Vespasian not only shared his power with his oldest son, Titus, but both his sons were presented on imperial coins as *principes iuventutis* ('first among the youths') from 71 CE onwards (fig. 9.10). In the first years of Vespasian's principate they are shown together in important political and military roles.⁸⁹ After 72 CE, Titus was honoured separately from his brother, with the same motifs used for his father, whereas Domitian, who had no part in the Judaeian victory, was represented with a singular riding motif, but not without emphasizing his princely role by a sceptre crowned with a bust.⁹⁰ Nonetheless, the family union was emphasized under Vespasian by the issuing of various coin series in the name of his sons, displaying their portraits on the coin obverses and attributing to them different roles on the reverses.⁹¹

Under Titus and Domitian, the family theme is less pronounced, caused no doubt by the fact that there were no male heirs to promote.⁹² One significant coin reverse from 80 CE emphasizes *concordia* between the two brothers, demonstrating how important a united and functioning family must have

89 On Titus's and Domitian's representation on imperial coins under Vespasian: Seelentag (2009) 88–100 figs. 1–9 (shared motifs).

90 For mutual motifs, see, for example: *RIC* II.2 363 (for Vespasian), 368 (for Titus); on separate motifs for Titus: Seelentag (2009) 93–89 figs. 9–10. For Domitian's riding type: e.g. *RIC* II.1 540.

91 Cf. Seelentag (2009) 98–100 with fig. 7 on the *spes augusta* resting on both *Caesares*.

92 Domitian's biological son died young and is probably commemorated on a special coin reverse: *RIC* II.1 152–153 (Domitian). On the problem of the unsolved succession under Domitian, see Witschel (1997) 104–105.

been.⁹³ Then, of course, Domitian emphasized the commemoration of the *Divi*, serving to legitimize the successor's rule. In fact, he was ruling as the son and brother of a *Divus*, thus compensating for his lack of the Flavians' legitimating glory of Judaea. All in all, he relied fervently on family connections and also divinized his dead son and wife.⁹⁴ After building the arch of Titus and the Porticus Divorum with the *aedes Divi Vespasiani et Titi*, he erected a monument to his family with the *Templum Gentis Flaviae*. Nero, on the other hand, had not managed to build a temple for his dead predecessor, Claudius; this temple was only finished under Vespasian.⁹⁵ Contrary to Nero, Vespasian and his sons had realized how important the visualization of family ties was in order to secure a successful succession within the family line and the establishment of a dynasty.

The Reception of Nero's New Images

With the resumption of the minting of *aes* in 64 CE, both obverse and reverse saw the introduction of some innovative iconographic elements and images, which inform us about the ideas developed for and close to the emperor.⁹⁶ Nero's portrait head, now showing the aforementioned later type 'München-Worcester' with unmistakable fatness and lavish coiffure, is enhanced by new attributes, the radiate crown and the *aegis*, indicated by the winged *gorgoneion* in front of his neck. These elements derive from godlike iconography, also known from the Hellenistic kings.⁹⁷ Until then, such elements were reserved for the divinized emperor or restricted to the panegyric language of cameos and poetry. Whereas the *aegis* alludes to the *princeps'* Jupiter-like rule of the world, the radiate crown can be understood as a solar attribute – originally belonging to the iconography of Sol – and as an honorary wreath at the same

93 *RIC* II.1 159 (Titus), complemented by the legend *PIETAS AUGUST*, connecting brotherly *concordia* to *pietas* towards their family duties.

94 On the divinization of family members under Domitian, see Rosso (2007) esp. 127–128; on the family monuments, see Coarelli (2009a) 75–77, 86–94; cf. the arch of Titus, erected also under Domitian as a consecration monument, but commissioned by the senate (Pfanner [1983] 98–99). On Flavian women and especially Domitian's relations to women, see the contribution by Ambühl to this volume.

95 Suet. *Vesp.* 23.4; Darwall-Smith (1996) 48–55. On the Flavian position to Nero's divine predecessor and his legacy, see the contribution by Gallia in this volume.

96 Wolters and Ziegert (2014) 52–53.

97 See Bergmann (1998) 174–175 pl. 34.2–3. As she points out, the globe had already become a more common attribute, but appears under Nero together with *aegis* and radiate crown in official images of the living emperor.

time.⁹⁸ Moreover, the radiate crown was introduced for Nero on the same coin types as earlier for Augustus, added only after his divinization. This parallelism seems to raise Nero to the same level as a *Divus*.

There were other new images connected to solar symbolism and that alluded to Nero's godlike status, which also appeared only in the late years of his reign in the official media. In her brilliant analysis, Marianne Bergmann shows that these solar elements must have been linked closely to his person and reign, because they disappear with his death.⁹⁹ However, the more generally adaptable elements like the radiate crown as honorary wreath and the *aegis* become part of his successor's, i.e. Vespasian's, image on the obverse of his coins. *Aegis* and *corona radiata* were worn by the portraits of all three Flavians, but whereas these attributes featured as an exception for the coin portraits of Vespasian and Titus, they became a standard with the majority of Domitian's images, sometimes even in combination on a single coin obverse (fig. 9.11).¹⁰⁰ This evidence is rendered even more interesting because the imperial coins are likely to have been issued in consent with the emperor and the Roman Senate, thus respecting also the traditionalist views of the latter.¹⁰¹ This extensive use of iconographic elements with divine connotations suggests a wider acceptance by the Senate and the Roman people, thus admitting an elevated rank for the *princeps*. It seems that, once bestowed upon an emperor, such honours could not be withdrawn for his successors, but must be offered on an equal level.

We should also have a look at another very prominent monument, which can be categorized as a symbol of Nero's self-representation: the Sol colossus on top of the *Velia*, which stood in the *vestibulum* of the Domus Aurea, thus inside Nero's home and not in a public space, even if it was surely visible from all over the Forum Romanum.¹⁰² As there is no evidence for an external commissioner, one must conclude that the homeowner chose its dimensions

98 See the fundamental study by Bergmann (1998) 112–132 (semantics and sign of the *Divi*), 214–231 (Nero).

99 For a concise overview: Bergmann (2013) 342–351; in detail: Bergmann (1998) 150–189. On Nero's divine status as *divi filius*, cf. the contribution by Gallia in this volume.

100 *Aegis* on Domitian's coin obverse constantly from 84 (*RIC* II.1 207) to 95–96 CE (example: *RIC* II.1 800); see Bergmann (1998) 231–242 on the radiate crown under the Flavians. First time in combination in 85 CE: e.g. *RIC* II.1 289. See Wolters and Ziegert (2014) 61–62 on the standardization of these elements after Nero.

101 See pp. ## (3–4) above.

102 Essential contribution on the Sol colossus, the literary and archaeological evidence for its reconstruction and context: Bergmann (1994) 7–17; see also Ruck (2007) 194–197. On how the Flavians dealt with the remains of Nero's Domus Aurea on the Palatine Hill, see the contribution of Raimondi Cominesi in this volume.



Figure 9.11 Coin obverse (sesterce) with a bust of Domitian with radiate crown and *aegis* in front of the neck, 86 CE. Münzkabinett der Staatlichen Museen zu Berlin. <https://ikmk.smb.museum/object?id=18204662>.

and iconography. About 30–35 metres high, it represented a naked Sol-like figure with a radiate crown, leaning on a support, with its right hand holding a steering rudder that rests on a globe (fig. 9.12). The latter attributes do not belong to Sol, but they allude to Fortuna, steering the fate of the world.¹⁰³ The statue was completed not under Nero, but only under Vespasian, and it thus received not the head of the former emperor, but evidently a head of Sol. No direct evidence exists that suggests that the colossus should have represented Nero himself but, according to Marianne Bergmann, it most likely did and, most of all, people would have made that association.¹⁰⁴

Vespasian's response to this colossal and iconographically provocative statue of his predecessor in the guise of Sol was not immediate and total destruction, but rather alteration into a proper image of Sol; this gave it a new purpose.¹⁰⁵ As mentioned above, this rededication could be best described as conscious forgetting: everybody must have been aware that it was intended as a statue of Nero and that it was finally reinstated as a statue of a real god.

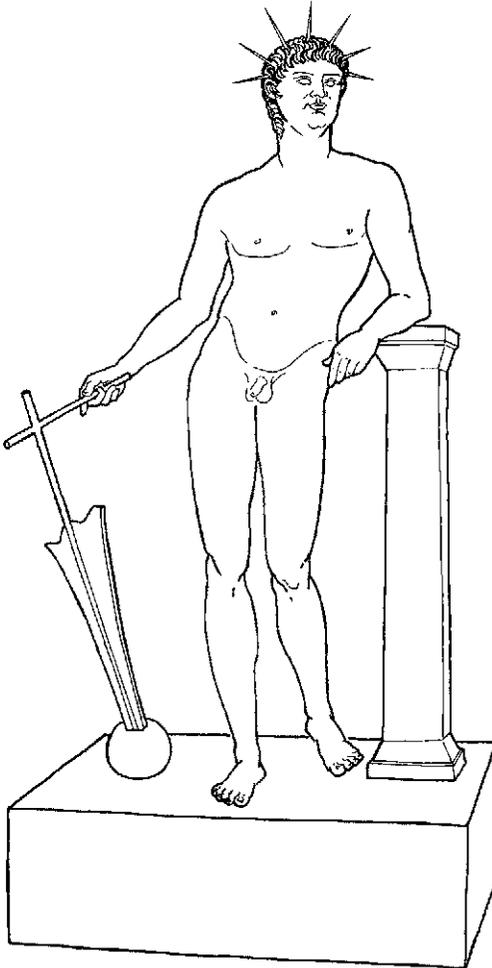
The Flavians did not adopt the colossus for their own representation. Nevertheless, it seems to mark the passage to a new sense of dimensionality and an iconographic extension of imperial images. Compared to pre-Neronian times, there is more evidence for larger-than-life-size images of the emperor and his family in Flavian Rome itself, whereas proof in western provincial

103 See Bergmann (1994) 11–12 text fig. 10 (reconstruction), mainly based on Gordian *multipla* reverses and a gem image in Berlin (pl. 2.1, 2.3).

104 Bergmann (1994) 9–10: The association would of course have been stimulated by various image allusions to Sol from his reign. Bergmann (2013) 349–350; see also Varner (2004) 66–67; cf. Smith (2000) 536–537, relativizing the identification.

105 Cf. its later fate with a relocation under Hadrian, the remodelling into Commodus-Hercules and finally the change back to an image of Sol: Bergmann (1994) 10–11.

Figure 9.12 Reconstruction of the colossal statue of Nero. Drawing after Bergmann (2013) fig. 20.16.



and Italian cities or the Greek east stays basically the same.¹⁰⁶ Whereas no evidence can be securely located for the reign of Vespasian, who apparently and according to literature kept a low profile,¹⁰⁷ the erection of larger-than-

¹⁰⁶ See Cancik (1990); Stemmer (1971) 578–579 on colossal dimensions as part of a Flavian stylistic sense.

¹⁰⁷ On the evidence, see Ruck (2007) 58–59, 215. Cf. Suet. *Vesp.* 23.3: Vespasian declined an offer for the erection of a colossal statue by opening his hand with the comment that the base (for the value in coins) is ready.

life-size images increases under Domitian,¹⁰⁸ and climaxes between 89–93 CE with the dedication of another extraordinary monument to the living emperor: the *equus Domitiani* (fig. 9.13).¹⁰⁹ Dominating the middle of the Forum Romanum with a height of approximately 12–15 metres, Statius reports that it was commissioned by the Senate and People of Rome as a monument honouring Domitian's victory at the Rhine.¹¹⁰ Contrary to the Sol colossus of Nero, it must be classified basically as an official honorary monument, not as imperial self-representation – although we can be sure that such a monument as the *equus* was planned with the consent of the emperor.¹¹¹

Since both the Sol colossus and the *equus Domitiani* are exceptional monuments in the image history of the city of Rome, an iconographic and contextual comparative analysis seems promising. In addition to its dimensions, the Sol colossus outshone all other known imperial statues erected in Rome since the Republican monuments for Octavian by its divine iconography.¹¹² The crux is, however, that it was realized in Nero's own home. Already in pre-Neronian times, there is evidence for images of the living emperor in a godlike (theomorphic) appearance, i.e. body types derived from the iconography of gods or heroes, commissioned in his honour in private and even public contexts throughout the empire. Some theomorphic types even increased in number under Nero and Domitian¹¹³ – but they did not make it into official imperial imagery supervised by the emperor and the

108 There are also Domitianic colossal portraits of Titus from Rome and its close surroundings: Daltrop et al. (1966) 87 pl. 21a-b (probably from Ostia), 94–95 pl. 15a; Ruck (2007) 117–118 (*quadriga*, arch of Titus), 216, 280 cat. 6; Coarelli (2009b) 442 cat. 33 (fragment).

109 Apart from the *equus maximus* there are two more headless *colossi* in Rome that can be attributed to Domitian: see Ruck (2007) 172–173, 198–199 cat. 7 pl. 15.3–4 (fragment of cuirassed statue) and 89, 280 cat. 8 pl. 16.1–3 ('Pompeius Spada'). Additionally, Mart. 8.69 reports a *Palatinus colossus*, which could be associated with the cuirass fragment found on the Palatine.

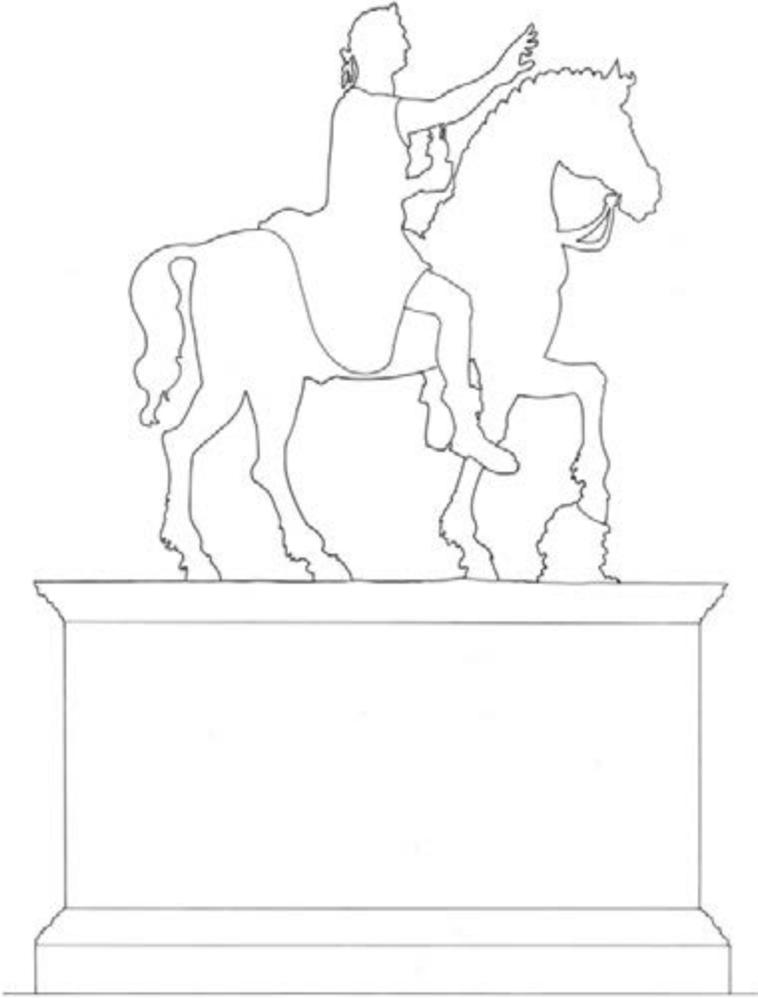
110 Stat. *Silv.* 1.1. A coin reverse image from 95–96 CE (*RIC* II.1. 797) can be associated with Statius's description and helps to reconstruct the monument's iconography. See Bergemann (2008) 16, 26–29 fig. 14 and 164 Kat. L31. On the date of erection; Coarelli (2009a) 80–83 fig. 17–21.

111 Stat. *Silv.* 1.1.99 (commissioned by SPQR); following Bergemann (1990) 42, it is very likely that the monument was influenced by Domitian; Klodt (1998) 23 even thinks of Domitian as the main agent in the planning process.

112 See Zanker (1990) 46–52 with figs. 29–32 on his outstanding public honorary statues.

113 With the increasing appearance of the completely naked statue types, featuring a greater attributive variety and a potential military connotation, the previously preferred hip mantle statues declined in number, obviously having become less appreciated by the commissioners. See Hallett (2005) 160–183; see also Post (2004) 370–371.

Figure 9.13 Reconstruction of the *equus Domitiani*. Drawing: E. Raming after Coarelli (2009a) 80 fig. 19.



Senate.¹¹⁴ Here, only isolated divine attributes succeeded, like the *aegis* from Nero's reign or the thunderbolt from Domitian's time onwards.¹¹⁵

114 Cf. an exceptional motif on Nero's coin reverses presenting him and his wife in a theomorphic manner: Bergmann (1998) 178–179. Rare exceptions are known from eastern mints, for example, RPC II 1924 (= *RIC* II.1 1550, Antiochia) alternating a common type of *PAXAUGUSTI* by the naked, Jupiter-like figure of Vespasian.

115 In 85 CE, a new coin reverse motif (e.g. *RIC* II.1 640) was introduced as part of a victory set: see Wolters and Ziegert (2014) 62 fig. 21. Domitian appears in military dress, crowned by

Hence, iconographic conventions regarding the use of divine elements existed and depended on the medial context. This is most likely the main reason that may have led to the different appearances of the urban *colossi* of Nero and Domitian, despite their topographical vicinity: contrary to the colossus' godlike body and attributes, Domitian's statue wore a military travel garment (*tunica* and *paludamentum*), his sword resting at his side, while the horse had a hoof set on top of the head of the defeated Rhine. It straightforwardly communicated military victory, and the only supernatural element was a statuette of Minerva, which he bore on his left hand as his supporting goddess.¹¹⁶ Considering the contextual circumstances, the more conservative iconography of Domitian's statue¹¹⁷ can be regarded as a compromise, for it was the Senate accrediting such a literally enormous public honour to Domitian. This is supported by the fact that in a very different context, at the compound of the *Augustales* at Misenum,¹¹⁸ another, more belligerent, riding statue of Domitian, endowed with divine symbols, could be created and even rededicated to his successor Nerva.¹¹⁹ However, the political centre of Rome's honorary monuments – despite some enhancements – held on to the more traditional qualities of the emperor.

Unlike the Sol colossus, the *equus maximus* met another fate and was destroyed completely after Domitian's death.¹²⁰ The destruction of the *equus* illustrates not only another discontinuity in imperial representation, but also shows how decisive a look at the monument's medial context can be. The officials chose not to rededicate it to Domitian's successor, but actually this was not solely due to its inappropriate dimensions or its iconography. It was more the problem of the location, since several years later, Trajan managed to have a very similar riding monument erected, but this time

Victoria and holding the thunderbolt as a sign of his Jupiter-like status. This motif, comparing emperor and Jupiter in a public medium, is repeated in the exact same way for Trajan: Woytek (2012) 320–321.

116 On the iconography of the monument: Bergemann (1990) 164–166 cat. L31.

117 Cf. the similar attire of Marcus Aurelius' equestrian statue: Bergemann [1990] 105–108 cat. P51 pl. 78.

118 On the *Augustales* in context, see Wohlmayr (2004) 49–57; Fejfer (2008) 73–89. They can be described as a semi-official association, inaugurated by the cities for taking care of the imperial cult. Although they were open to the public, representational conventions in the compound were surely less restrictive than on the Forum Romanum.

119 See Muscettola (1987) 39–66 pl. 1–8.; on the iconographical extraordinariness: Bergemann (1990) 82–86 cat. P31 pl. 56–58; on the reworking: Bergemann and Zanker (1981) 403 no. 41.

120 The only remnant is maybe a rectangular irregularity in the paving in the Forum's middle: Coarelli (2009a) 81–90.

more discreetly, in the middle of his own newly built forum.¹²¹ Therefore, it can be assumed that the location in the honourable political centre of Republican Rome was at that time considered unsuitable for an emperor's image (at least until the statue of Septimius Severus¹²²). And contrary to the colossus, the *equus* could not be altered into a god's likeness by the simple change of the head.¹²³

Breaks and Continuity in Imperial Imagery

Considering the historical rumours about Nero's madness and divine aspirations, one would assume that the more unconventional and trespassing iconographic introductions would have vanished with his death. It is beyond doubt that some immediate modifications were applied, such as the restructuring of the area of the Domus Aurea, the tearing down and the reworking of his statues, and the eradication of his name in inscriptions.¹²⁴ However, those singular counteracts must not be over-simplified, because it is possible to gain a more differentiated view on the relation of Neronian and Flavian visual representation.

Based on the analysis of the portrait heads, commissioned in Rome and acknowledged by the emperor, we can conclude that conceptual changes could be easily taken into account to demonstrate either continuity or demarcation in regard to the predecessor's rule.¹²⁵ Whereas Nero and then Vespasian took the opportunity for more drastic changes that aimed at a break with their predecessors, the other Flavians had a double agenda. On the one hand, they used the variation in the contemporary iconographic pool for different concepts, well adapted to their situation within the family dynasty and depending on their relative distance in time to Nero. On the other hand, they followed the Augustan concept of a face with recognizable family features, connecting father and sons, thus symbolizing inner dynastic continuity (*concordia*) and foresight (*providentia*) with regard to

121 On the *equus Traiani*, see Bergemann (1990) 42, 166 cat. L32 pl. 92h (= *RIC* II 291, 598). Cf. Ruck (2007) 107–109 on the choice of location.

122 Herod. 2.9.5–6; Bergemann (1990) 166–167 cat. L34.

123 The riding type as well as the Roman clothes are not compatible with divine imagery, whereas the Sol colossus' appearance was derived completely from divine iconography.

124 Cf. Bönisch-Meyer and Witschel (2014) 148–155 (inscriptions); Beste and Filippi (2016) 196–198 (Domus Aurea).

125 Cf. von den Hoff (2011) 26–31 with a concise overview, showing that in fact innovations and changes are very common to imperial portraits from Augustus to the third century CE.

their potential heirs. The strong Flavian family connection, displayed from the beginning on Vespasian's coins up to Domitian's family monuments, should be seen in contrast to Nero's solitary rule. It can be understood as a strategic move: by forming a solid union against the former dynasty and ensuring a stable dynastic succession, they wanted to avoid a similar end. If we agree that there was a consensus between emperor and Senate concerning the creation of coin reverse motifs, the promotion of the *principes iuventutes* and the stable continuation of the Flavian rule must have been in the interest of the Roman elite, too.

For the other iconographic elements and dimensions of imperial images, which were chosen by the commissioner of the respective representation, a continuous and stepwise development can be observed. In this paper, those developments, observed in different medial contexts, were exemplified with regard to the godlike iconography and divine attributes as well as colossal dimensions. We saw that nearly all the iconographic novelties and their semantic aspects comparing the emperor to specific gods were included in the successors' representation. Apparently, there was no impulse to move backwards to a more traditional level, not even after the death of a condemned emperor like Nero. This is even more significant considering the fact that a great amount of these changes occurred in a seamless transition from Nero to Vespasian in official imperial coinage, acknowledged by the new emperor and the Roman Senate. The Sol colossus is no official monument, but it surely had an impact on what was considered achievable in Rome. It coincides not only with the introduction of divine elements for the living emperor in imperial coinage but also with the beginning increase of larger-than-life-size images under the Flavians in Rome, climaxing during Domitian's reign. Of these monuments, the *equus Domitiani*, although destroyed after his *damnatio memoriae*, illustrates again how certain image elements could become part of the successor's representation – depending on a suitable choice of location for Trajan's equestrian monument. The continuation or introduction of specific honorary elements in official public images, treating the *princeps* no longer as *primus inter pares* but elevating him to a higher rank, suggests a wider acceptance by the senatorial class of the elevated position of the imperial family, as well as of the dynastic principle.

Contrary to literary tradition, reactions to Nero's Rome in the archaeological record of visual representation do not completely reject previous developments, but are multifaceted. The Flavians had different strategies to cope with their predecessor's images and they used their concept of the portrait head to make statements against his rule, and also to support

the consolidation of their family. The various image honours attributed to the emperor by the Senate and other commissioners showed instead an astonishing continuity, even for those newly introduced, more precarious elements like the *aegis*, etc. With regard to imperial representation, these observations underline not only the involvement of different parties, but also the fact that the image-making process is not static or unilateral, but rather flexible and elastic, thus an explanation for iconographical extensions, breaks, and continuity.¹²⁶

After Nero, Vespasian and his sons succeeded in establishing a new dynasty, reflecting the importance of the family connection not only in their portraits but also in other official images, mainly on coins. Despite the more nonconformist or even transgressive iconography that can be noticed in Nero's images, most of these transgressive elements are integrated step by step into the imperial representation of the Flavians – and even extended under Domitian. These developments in visual representation illustrate an increasing acceptance of the elevated position of the *princeps* and the dynastic principle, thus revealing a revision of the original idea of the principate.¹²⁷

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126 Cf. von den Hoff (2009) on Caligula, underlining that these developments (iconographical extensions, breaks, and continuity) become even clearer for rulers with a more untraditional image.

127 Cf. Sion-Jenkins (2000) 19–64 on the contemporaries' increasing awareness of the change of the political system. Cf. also discussions on the role of Domitian's rule for a monarchical evolution of the principate: Strobel (1994) 359–374; Witschel (1997) 106–108. I would like to thank especially Ralf von den Hoff, Alexander Heinemann, Lisa Cordes, Martin Kovacs, and Marianne Bergemann for their unfailing readiness to discuss Nero and Domitian on various topics and their expertly support in all matters of Roman imperial representation.

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10 *Iuvenis infandi ingeni scelerum capaxque: Flavian Responses to Nero's Youth*

Lisa Cordes

Abstract

The paper analyses how the category of age is used in the literary discourses that surround Nero and his Flavian successors. Focusing on the young *principes* Nero and Domitian, it analyses how their youth is depicted positively in the panegyrics of their lifetime and recoded negatively in the posthumous critical texts. Regarding the depiction of the emperor's age, we need to differentiate between earlier and later Flavian responses to the Neronian representation. While Vespasian uses his old age as a counterpoint, Domitianic poetry creates a contrast by encoding his youth differently from its Julio-Claudian anti-model. These different depictions concern not only the individual emperor, but also touch upon general questions relating to the political system of the early principate, in particular the topic of dynasty and succession.

Keywords: youth; encoding; recoding; imperial representation; succession

Introduction

What is the right age to engage in politics? In his essay *An seni respublica gerenda sit*, Plutarch answers this question by pointing out the responsibility of the aged: the experienced statesman must instruct those who are young, in order to moderate their fervency.¹ With this assessment, Plutarch is not alone. The view that a government should be led by experienced *senes*

¹ Plut. *An Seni* 11–13.

rather than by fervid young men was widespread in ancient times. It is reflected not least in the rules regarding the minimum age for the offices in the *cursus honorum*² and in the denomination of the highest deliberative body in Rome, the ‘Senate’. In Cicero’s dialogue *De senectute*, Cato refers to this denomination to argue that *consilium*, *ratio*, and *sententia* (reflection, reason, and judgement) are characteristic mental qualities of old men. He points out that entire states were shattered by young men and sustained and restored by the old.³ By emphasizing the threat that young men pose to a state’s stability, Cicero and Plutarch argue against the premise that old age disqualifies a man from political activity.⁴ From this perspective, the guidance of a *senex*, even if he has lost some of his vigour, is still preferable to the fervency of youth.

The debate reflected here does not only concern political theory. In imperial times it becomes relevant whenever a very young or a very old man comes into power. This is illustrated by an anecdote handed down to us in the *Historia Augusta*. According to it, after the death of the emperor Aurelian in 275 CE, the Senate acclaimed Tacitus, who was well into his 70s at the time. Referring to his old age, Tacitus expressed his doubts about becoming emperor. Yet, his fellow senators encouraged him to accept the offer. In particular, a certain Maecius Faltonius Nicomachus pointed out the gloomy alternative of having a young emperor:

enimvero si recolere velitis vetusta illa prodigia, Nerones dico et Heliogabalos et Commodos, seu potius semper Incommodos, certe **non hominum magis vitia illa quam aetatum fuerunt.**

And indeed, if you want to recall those monsters of old, a Nero, I mean, an Elagabalus, a Commodus – or rather, always, an *Incommodus* – you would assuredly find that **their vices were due as much to their youth as to the men themselves.**⁵ (*Hist. Aug. Tac.* 6.4)

According to Nichomachus, the depravity of emperors such as Nero, Elagabalus, and Commodus was due not only to their character, but also to their young age. Therefore, he argues, an aged emperor is to be preferred to such

2 For this, see the overview in Gizewski (1997).

3 Cic. *Cat.* 19–20.

4 For Plutarch, see Fornara (1966).

5 Text and translation from Magie (1932) with modifications.

'youthful monsters'.⁶ It is not surprising that Nero is mentioned here. The last Julio-Claudian emperor, famously depicted as a tyrant after his death, came to power shortly before his seventeenth birthday, thereby becoming the youngest Roman emperor so far. While Neronian panegyrics praise the emperor's age and glorify him as a divine youth who brings back the peace and prosperity of the *aurea aetas*, posthumous sources paint a more negative picture. As we will see, the *Historia Augusta* is not the only text that holds Nero's youth responsible for his tyrannical regime.

The present paper aims to show that age plays an important role in the critical as well as affirmative discourses that surround Nero and his Flavian successors.⁷ By creating a certain image of each respective *princeps* and his age, the literary texts engage both in discussions about an individual *princeps* and the quality of his rule and, by implication, in a more general debate concerning the right age to engage in (imperial) politics and, ultimately, the topic of hereditary succession. In the first part of the paper, I will concentrate on the literary depictions of Nero. I will analyse how his youth is depicted in the panegyric discourse of his lifetime, discernible in Seneca's *De clementia* and in the Neronian panegyric poetry, on the one hand, and in the posthumous critical discourse, in particular in the pseudo-Senecan praetexta *Octavia*, on the other.⁸ By looking at these texts, I want to demonstrate a particular kind of Flavian response to Nero's Rome: the negative re-evaluation, and recoding, of an element that was depicted positively in the earlier affirmative discourse.⁹ As I will show, the texts often do not discuss the emperor's youth per se, nor do they evaluate it explicitly, as Nichomachus does in the *Historia Augusta*. Rather, they encode it, positively or negatively, by evoking certain associations commonly connected with youth or by ascribing new significance to it. With that, the references to the

6 Schlumpf (2011) 301–302 points to the passage cited, emphasizing that in Herodian and the *Historia Augusta*, the young ages of Caligula, Nero, and Commodus are seen as a key to explain their missing abilities.

7 I use the term 'discourse' for the entirety of expressions concerning a topic (in this case: the emperor's age) in different media in a specified period of time (cf. Hose and Fuhrer [2014] 12–13, 20–21; Cordes [2017] 5–7; Schulz [2019] 38–39).

8 With regard to the difficult question of hidden criticism beneath the surface of panegyric praise (cf. Ahl [1984]), I prefer to concentrate on the 'preferred reading' of these texts, i.e. on the reading of a recipient who decodes the dominant panegyric code of the text in a non-oppositional way (cf. Hall [1980] and its application to imperial panegyric in Cordes [2014a, 2017]).

9 The panegyric and the critical texts differ in how undisputedly they present their respective interpretation of the emperor's youth. In general, however, there is a clear divide between positive and negative depictions, cf. Schulz (2019) 3: 'There is almost no middle way between praise and critique in texts about Nero and Domitian.'

emperor's age are made to convey a particular message about the emperor and about his ability to rule.¹⁰ It is worthwhile to ask which rhetorical strategies are used to do that in each case, and which connotations are foregrounded in different contexts.

The negative recoding and the deconstruction of Nero's imperial representation¹¹ was recently analysed in two studies.¹² The topic of his youth has not played a major role in these.¹³ For several reasons, however, it lends itself well to an analysis in the present context. First, as scholarship has emphasized, Nero was not doomed to be criticized after his death. The struggle for power in 68–69 CE was also a struggle over the interpretation of the past and over the question of what makes a man capable of being a good ruler.¹⁴ The rivals positioned themselves differently in this regard and showed this by their respective way of engaging with Neronian ways of representation. While Otho and, to a lesser extent, Vitellius adopted them in their coinage and portraiture, implying a continuance of Neronian politics, Galba and Vespasian distanced themselves strongly from their Julio-Claudian predecessor.¹⁵ Age played an important role in the rivals' different visual representations and it seems to have been an issue in contemporary debates concerning their eligibility to rule.¹⁶ Thus, when Vespasian seized power and promoted an image of the ruler and of imperial power that was based on its contrast with Nero, he emphasized his old age

10 For semiotic theory as a useful tool to analyse an emperor's literary depiction, cf. Hose and Fuhrer (2014) 20–21; Cordes (2017) 7–9; Schulz (2019) 35–38.

11 I use the concept of 'representation' as described by Schulz (2019) 33–38 as the image of an emperor broadcast in different media, giving a certain interpretation of his role as ruler. Cf. also Hose and Fuhrer (2014) 12–15.

12 In Cordes (2017), I analyse the encoding and recoding with regard to representational elements of an explicit transgressive nature, such as the splendour and the colossality of the emperor's buildings, or the presentation of his alleged divinity. Schulz (2019) concentrates on the deconstruction of the emperor's representation in historiography (Tacitus, Cassius Dio) and biography (Suetonius).

13 Stanley (2003) studies the literary construction of youth. Using the example of Nero, he demonstrates the ambiguous nature of *iuventus*. He presents an overview of Nero's divergent 'mythologies', without, however, analysing the rhetorical strategies used to create them and without embedding them in the political context. Eyben (1993) and Laes and Strubbe (2014) analyse youth in ancient Rome from the perspective of social history.

14 Elsner (1994) 122–123; Kragelund (2005) 71–72.

15 Cf. Schneider (2003) 69–74; Flower (2006) 199–201. For the struggle over Nero's memory as represented by Tacitus and Suetonius, see also the contribution of Schulz in this volume, and, with a focus on the depiction of the rivals' relation to women, the contribution by Ambühl.

16 See below, pp. 293–295.

to distance himself from his young predecessor.¹⁷ In the following I will analyse how this response to Nero's youth in visual media is reflected in contemporary literature.

Second, age is a clear point of difference between Nero and Vespasian, but a similarity that Nero shares with Titus and – even more – with Domitian. The youth of both brothers was emphasized in their visual representation, as Wolsfeld shows in her contribution to this volume. Titus, however, was, after all, 29 years old when his father seized power, and 39 when he succeeded him. His brother was younger, being only 17 when Vespasian was proclaimed emperor by his troops in the summer of 69 CE.¹⁸ He came to power at the age of 29 when his brother died unexpectedly after only two years as emperor. Domitian was hence not as young as Nero (or Caligula), when he became emperor, but was still the third youngest emperor up to that time. In the second part of the paper, I will concentrate on the literary depictions of his youth and compare them to what can be seen in the Neronian discourse. I will focus on Domitian because in his case, as in the case of Nero, we can compare the panegyric image of his youth, as presented in Martial's poetry and in contemporary epic, with later critical accounts, as can be found in the works of Tacitus and Suetonius. We will see that, with regard to the emperor's age, we need to differentiate between earlier and later Flavian responses to Neronian representation. While Vespasian uses his old age as a counterpoint to Nero, Domitianic poetry creates a contrast by encoding the *princeps'* youth differently from its Julio-Claudian anti-model.

The analysis will show how differently a seemingly hard fact such as age can be modelled and encoded in different contexts. It is thus a good example to show the persuasive potential of an emperor's literary depiction and of the linguistic encoding and recoding of elements of his rule.¹⁹ To be able to evaluate the strategies used to do so, it is expedient to take a short look at the nomenclature of ancient age categories. According to Varro, *puer* denotes a person up to 15 years; *adulescens*, someone up to 30 years; *iuuenis*, up to 45 years; *senior*, up to 60 years; and *senex*, a person older than 60.²⁰ In practice,

17 Schneider (2003) 70–74.

18 The indications of the emperors' ages are based on the dates in Kienast, Eck, and Heil (2017). The ages of the Flavian emperors are based on Vespasian's *dies imperii*, i.e. 1 July 69 CE, when he was proclaimed by his troops.

19 For the persuasive potential of an emperor's literary depiction in panegyrics, see Cordes (2017) 18 and *passim*; in historiography and biography, see Schulz (2019) 46–49 with reference to the historians' rhetorical training.

20 Cited by Censorinus, *DN* 14.2.

however, these terms seem to have been used more loosely.²¹ In the following, we will see that a man of 17–20 years could be called *puer*, *adulescens*, or *iuvenis*. These terms have different connotations: *puer* refers to the youngest of the categories named, usually to an age before or during puberty. It may carry negative connotations such as inexperience, immaturity and levity, but also positive ones like chastity, innocence and simplicity.²² The terms *adulescens/adulescentia* point to the age after *pueritia*, carrying rather negative connotations such as impulsiveness, fickleness and quick temper.²³ The term *iuvenis*, finally, refers to a man between an *adulescens* and a *senex*, able to engage in military and political affairs. It often connotes strength and energy, but it may carry a connotation of immaturity, as well.²⁴ In the following, we will see that these different connotations influence the choice of words more than the emperor's actual age.

Reassurance, Praise, Critique – The Literary Depictions of Nero's Youth: The Ambivalence of Nero's Youth

I want to start with a passage from Tacitus that seems to reflect a controversial discourse that arose when Nero came to power. It provides us with the background to evaluate the strategies of panegyric literature, which, as we shall see, respond to contemporary fears and critique. When Nero succeeded Claudius in the October of 54 CE, he was 16 years old and the youngest emperor Rome had ever seen. In second place came Caligula, who had ascended to power at the age of 24 and surely could not count as

21 Cf. TLL s.v. *iuvenis* 734.35–39 (for a man of less than 30 years), 735.63–64 (between 19 and 27 years), 736.31–36 (regarding Caesars between 12 and 14 years); TLL s.v. *puer* 2511.15–24 (definitions of *puer* ranging from an age of 14 to 18 years), 2512.26–40 (younger than 17), 2512.40–49 (older than 17), 2514.6–16 (regarding 19-year-old Octavian). For the loose use of terms for youth in Latin and Greek, see Laes and Strubbe (2014) 41–42; for the ancient understanding of age in general, see Binder and Saiko (1999).

22 Cf. TLL s.v. *puer* 2511.46–2512.10 (usage for infants, children up to puberty, and during puberty), 2514.58–2515.22 (usage connoting negative manners), 2515.23–50 (usage connoting positive manners). The adjective *puerilis* has by and large the same connotations, cf. TLL s.v. 2523.48–2524.33.

23 Cf. TLL s.v. *adulescentia* 797.64–71, 76–77 (for *adulescentia* following *pueritia*); 797.73, 77; 798.3, 5–25 (for connotations concerning behaviour).

24 Cf. TLL s.v. *iuvenis* 734.33–39, citing Varro in Censorinus, *DN* 14.2: *in tertio gradu qui erant usque quinque et quadraginta annos, iuvenis appellatos eo quod rem publicam in re militari possent iuvare*. Again, the adjective *iuvencilis* has by and large the same connotations, cf. TLL s.v. 733.9–36.

a positive example for a young ruler using his power responsibly.²⁵ Nero's young age seems to have posed a palpable difficulty for his legitimation in the early years of his reign. At the beginning of Book 13 of the *Annals*, Tacitus tells us why the first victim of Nero's reign, Iunius Silanus, had to die: Agrippina, who was responsible for the death of Iunius' brother Lucius, feared his revenge. Tacitus implies that her fear was not without cause:

verum Agrippina fratri eius L. Silano necem molita ultorem metuebat, **crebra vulgi fama anteponendum esse vixdum pueritiam egresso Neroni** et imperium per scelus adepto virum aetate composita insontem, nobilem et, quod tunc spectaretur, e Caesarum posteris: quippe et Silanus divi Augusti abnepos erat. haec causa necis.

It was rather that Agrippina, having engineered the killing of his brother Lucius Silanus, feared vengeance from him. **For it was now common talk that Silanus was to be preferred to Nero, who was scarcely beyond boyhood** and had gained power by a crime. Silanus, it was said, was a man of mature age, innocent character, noble birth, who was also one of the descendants of the Caesars, a point then regarded as important: Silanus was a great-great-grandson of the deified Augustus. This was the motive for the murder.²⁶ (Tac. *Ann.* 13.1.1–2)

Aside from Agrippina's alleged murder of Claudius and from Nero's ancestry, his young age is depicted as an obstacle for his acceptance as emperor. In his report of what Tacitus characterizes as widespread public opinion (*crebra vulgi fama*), he juxtaposes Silanus' fitting age (*aetate composita*) with that of Nero, whose youth is emphasized by the choice of words – he has barely emerged from boyhood (*vixum pueritiam egresso*), people say.

The *aula Caesaris* seems to have been aware of the difficulties that Nero's youth posed, and reacted to it. In his accession speech, allegedly written by Seneca, the *princeps* asserts that he has counsellors and *exempla* of great governance to model himself on (*Ann.* 13.4.1: *consilia sibi et exempla capessendi egregie imperii memoravit*). Moreover, he continues, his youth know nothing of civil war and domestic strife (*neque iuventam armis civilibus*

25 Caligula's youth is reflected in an anecdote told by Suetonius (*Calig.* 11). According to it, Tiberius said that in Caligula he was educating a Phaethon for humanity, cf. Degl'Innocenti Pierini (2007) 149–150. For Caligula's youth, cf. also Winterling (2003) 71–86. The literary depiction of his youth lies outside the scope of this study. To compare it to what can be observed with regard to Nero and Domitian would be worthwhile.

26 Text of Tacitus' *Annales* from Fisher (1906), translations by Yardley (2008).

aut domesticis discordiis imbutam). Nero presents himself as a modest and innocent *iuvenis*, old enough to engage in political affairs, but still malleable in the hands of his wise advisers.²⁷ With that, he creates a contrast with young Octavian, who notoriously did not show innocence in his early years – and who proved himself not at all as malleable in the hands of experienced statesmen as some might have hoped.²⁸

According to Tacitus (*Ann.* 13.6.2–3), the discussion on Nero's eligibility as emperor gained traction when, at the end of 54 CE, the Parthians invaded Armenia. People started to discuss whether the 17-year-old emperor would be able to avert the danger or if his teachers were supposed to 'administer' (*administrari*) even his battles and sieges. Others, Tacitus continues, countered that the current situation – having a young ruler guided by experienced men – was preferable to past conditions when decrepit Claudius was influenced by his freedmen. Moreover, the optimistic party held, the emperor was not missing much of the strength that the 18-year-old Pompey and the 19-year-old Octavian showed while fighting the civil wars.

The debates reflected here show the ambivalence of the emperor's youth. In his accession speech, Nero tries to dispel any concerns about it, by pointing at the supervision of Seneca and Burrus. In this perspective, the emperor's youth is a token of his innocence and an opportunity for the empire to be governed by wise men. In the second passage, Nero's age is discussed in the specific situation of a military threat. Here, the guidance by Seneca and Burrus is judged negatively, at least by one party to which Tacitus refers. From this point of view, a government made up of an inexperienced youth and two ministers is not apt to defend the empire against an invading enemy. In both discussions, Nero is compared to other men who were or could be in power. Depending on which side is arguing, the young emperor is negatively contrasted with the mature Silanus or positively with the decrepit Claudius. Octavian's early years prove to be a versatile element that can be adduced in different lines of argument. While the accession speech alludes to them

27 With this speech Tacitus has the young emperor publicly say what Seneca and Burrus allegedly hoped to achieve in the *princeps'* education. Cf. Tac. *Ann.* 13.2.1: 'These were the men guiding the emperor's youth. [...] The two worked together so they could more easily confine the unsteady age of the emperor' (*hi rectores imperatoriae iuventae [...] iuvantes in vicem, quo facilius lubricam principis aetatem [...] retinerent*).

28 Cf. the famous aphorism that Octavian should be 'praised, promoted to honours, and cut off' (*laudandum adulescentulum, ornandum, tollendum*) referred to in Cic. *Fam.* 11.20.1 (from D. Brutus to Cicero) and Suet. *Aug.* 12. Plutarch (*Cic.* 45–46) insinuates that, rather than being able to guide the young Caesar, Cicero was inveigled by Octavian's flatteries (see also Cic. *Att.* 16.9, 16.11). On politeness in the epistolary exchange between Cicero and Octavian and the treatment of the latter's youth in it, see Hall (2009) 182–183.

in order to highlight Nero's innocence, the optimistic voices at the end of 54 take them as proof that a young man can indeed be capable of showing military strength. The discussion Tacitus reflects here and the arguments produced in it are not projected onto Neronian times in hindsight. They can be found in the panegyrics of Nero's lifetime and in the early Flavian responses to his reign.

Reassurance, Praise, Critique – The Literary Depictions of Nero's Youth: Responding to Contemporary Fears in Seneca's *De clementia*

It comes as no surprise that Neronian panegyrics adopt a positive view of the emperor's youth.²⁹ They differ, however, with regard to the rhetorical strategies used to paint this positive picture. The way Seneca argues in *De clementia* seems to be influenced by contemporary concerns, as they are reflected in the work of Tacitus. While the treatise deals quite confidently with other – equally difficult – aspects of Nero's reign, such as the emperor's absolute power,³⁰ his youth is discussed more cautiously. Adopting a rather defensive tone, Seneca emphasizes that Nero does *not* act in the way that his young age might suggest. At the beginning of the treatise, he makes the young *princeps* ensure that, in his position of power, neither anger nor juvenile impetuosity incite him to impose unjust judgements:

In hac tanta facultate rerum non ira me ad iniqua supplicia compulit,
non iuvenilis impetus

In this position of enormous power, I have **not** been driven to unjust punishments by anger or **by youthful impulse**³¹ (Sen. *Clem.* 1.1.3)

At a prominent point of the work, Seneca links the emperor's youth to a potential lack of self-control. His depiction implies, however, that Nero is aware of his young age and the risks it entails. By making the emperor utter these thoughts

29 Osgood (2011) 246–247 emphasizes that the coins of 54 and early 55 CE did not disguise Nero's youth. On the issues from fall 54, Nero's portrait only appears with his mother's, whose name is alone to appear on the obverse. In the following year, Nero's portrait is given precedence over Agrippina's.

30 Cf. Cordes (2017) 213–218.

31 Text and translations of *De clementia* by Braund (2009) with modifications.

himself in direct speech, Seneca characterizes him as a reasonable young man capable of self-reflection. With this, he suggests that Nero's deliberations are genuine and that the promise underlying his speech will be kept.

Elsewhere, the panegyric strategy of *De clementia* is also based on emphasizing that Nero is a good ruler despite his young age. Contrasting Nero favourably with Augustus, Seneca says that no one would dare to compare Nero's great clemency with that of Augustus, even if the competition were between the latter's old age and Nero's youthful years (*Clem.* 1.11.1: *etiam si in certamen iuveniliū annorum deduxerit senectutem plus quam maturam*).³² As in the accession speech reported by Tacitus, Seneca hints at Octavian's bloody youth. When he praises Nero's clemency by comparing him to old Augustus, he implies that it is not worth mentioning that Nero surpasses *young* Augustus with regard to clemency. The fact that Nero rules without having shed any blood, Seneca continues, is all the more admirable, because no one ever came to power at a younger age:

et hoc, quod magno animo gloriatus es nullam te toto orbe stillam cruoris humani misisse, eo maius est mirabiliusque, quod nulli umquam citius gladius commissus est.

Your proud boast that you have not split a single drop of human blood in the entire world is all the more significant and amazing because no one ever had the sword entrusted to him at an earlier age. (*Sen. Clem.* 1.11.3)

Seneca concedes that Nero's youth conveys a risk. His panegyric-paraenetic strategy, however, which combines the praise with an underlying admonition to live up to it, consists of emphasizing that the danger is averted by Nero's inborn clemency and – a recipient might add – by Seneca's wise guidance.³³ Braund, in her general assessment of Nero's fictive monologue at the beginning of the treatise, emphasizes that it 'creates the impression for the rest of Seneca's audiences that they are spectators in a tutorial in clemency, a tutorial they are presumably intended to find reassuring'.³⁴

32 Braund (2009) 288–289 points to the fact that by speaking of *senectus plus quam matura* with reference to Augustus in his late 40s, Seneca enhances the difference in age between the two rulers.

33 Valette (1930) 698–699 sees Seneca's fears reflected in his praise. Seneca does mention a possible risk; his panegyric strategy, however, aims at dispelling any doubts about the young emperor's ability to rule.

34 Braund (2009) 56, cf. also Griffin (1976) 137–141, who emphasizes that Seneca combines his praise for Nero with reassurances for the public.

This can be said with regard to the present context as well: Seneca seems to react to contemporary fears. He tries to dispel them by hinting at Nero's positive character and his own role at the *aula Caesaris*.³⁵

Reassurance, Praise, Critique – The Literary Depictions of Nero's Youth: Praising Nero's Youth in Panegyric Poetry

In panegyric poetry, Nero's young age is treated without the defensive tone that we find in *De clementia*. The panegyric strategy does not consist of showing awareness for possible risks the emperor's age might entail, but, in contrast, of emphasizing his youth and using it for praise. Calpurnius Siculus regularly calls Nero *iuvēnis* in his *Eclogues*, making young age a characteristic feature of the otherwise unnamed emperor.³⁶ To encode it positively, he draws on a connotation that is commonly associated with a *iuvēnis*: presumably also alluding to Nero's name,³⁷ he associates it with the idea of physical strength and links it to Nero's alleged capability to rule. In the fourth *Eclogue*, the herdsman Corydon praises Nero's *iuvēnilis robor* (84: 'youthful strength'), and asserts that, with it, the divine emperor will rule the earth in eternal peace:

at mihi, qui nostras praesenti numine terras
perpetuamque regit iuvenili robore pacem,
laetus et augusto felix arrideat ore.

35 Cf. also Sen. *Clem.* 1.1.7: *Magnam adibat aleam populus Romanus, cum incertum esset, quo se ista tua nobilis indoles daret* ('Great was the risk that the Roman people were facing so long as it was unclear what direction that high-born disposition of yours would take').

36 Starting with Champlin (1978, 1986, 2003) who reads the praise as referring to Alexander Severus, the dating of the *Eclogues* was much debated. No final conclusion has been reached, but the majority of recent studies tends to the Neronian dating, cf. Karakasis (2011); Henderson (2013); Vinchesi (2014), who gives an overview of the argument on pp. 15–20. In this paper, I work with the early dating, because even scholars who prefer a late date of composition usually interpret the *Eclogues* as inscribing themselves in a Neronian discourse, cf. Horsfall (1997) 193: 'arguably "Neronian" colouring'; Feeney (2007) 136–137: 'create the impression of a dramatic date in Nero's reign'. In this perspective, the panegyric strategies in the *Eclogues* can be seen as positively encoding a Neronian image, which, in a second step, points to an unknown later emperor. On the date of Calpurnius and his imitation by Flavian poets, see also the contribution by Nauta in this volume.

37 Cf. Vinchesi (2014) 149 citing inter alia Suet. *Tib.* 1.5: ['Nero'] *significatur lingua Sabina fortis ac strenuus* ('In the Sabine language, "Nero" means strong and valiant.')

But may he whose present godhead rules our lands and **who with youthful strength rules the eternal peace**, smile for me glad and propitious with majestic face.³⁸ (Calp. 4.84–86)

The notion of physical strength is here connected with the idea of political stability. This line of thought recalls the ending of Faunus' prophecy in Calpurnius' first *Eclogue*. In a cryptic *vaticinium ex eventu*, the god predicts that the earth will face no disruption when the new emperor comes to power:

scilicet ipse deus Romanae pondera molis
fortibus excipiet sic in concussa **lacertis**,
 ut neque translati sonitu fragor intonet orbis

Assuredly the god himself shall take **with his strong arms** the burden of the massive Roman state so unshaken, that the world will pass to a new ruler without the crash of reverberating thunder (Calp. 1.84–86)

Calpurnius emphasizes the emperor's physical strength by pointing at his 'strong arms' (*fortibus lacertis*). Then, he interprets it in a figurative sense as a guarantee for the stability and peace of the empire. In doing so, he contrasts Nero with his predecessor Claudius, who was 65 at the time of his death.³⁹ From this perspective, Claudius' age and his physical deficits, prominently ridiculed in Seneca's *Apocolocyntosis*, are not just the subject of trivial jokes at the expense of the late emperor, but an essential token of his inability to rule. Nero, in contrast, seems to be an ideal ruler not despite his youth, but precisely because of it.

Another physical quality associated with youth that Neronian panegyrics use to encode the emperor's young age positively is beauty. In the *laudes Neronis* of the *Apocolocyntosis*, the emperor is compared with the young and beautiful god Apollo. Bergmann emphasizes that this kind of comparison provides the possibility of acknowledging not only the emperor's musical ambition but also his young age.⁴⁰ Nero's youth is not mentioned explicitly here, but his description by Phoebus brings to mind the picture of a handsome young man. In direct speech, the god affirms that the emperor resembles him in looks and beauty (4.1.22: *ille mihi similis vultu similisque*

38 Text of Calpurnius from Vinchesi (2014), translations by Duff and Duff (1934), with modifications.

39 Vinchesi (2014) 149.

40 Bergmann (2013) 343.

decore). The same association might be evoked by the mention of Nero's long hair in line 32 (*adfusio cervix formosa capillo*). In Calpurnius' *Eclogues*, Nero is prominently compared to Apollo as well, to the point where god and emperor even seem to be identified with one another.⁴¹ However, beauty and age do not play an explicit role in this comparison. Rather, it focuses on the emperor's musical ambition and the idea of a new *aurea aetas*.⁴² In one case, by way of an intertextual reference, the emperor's young age might be connected to Apollo. In *Ecl.* 7.6.6, Calpurnius makes Corydon call Nero *iuvēnis deus*. This term is used only once more in Latin poetry, referring to Apollo in Ovid's account of the god chasing Daphne (*Met.* 1.531). Yet, Apollo is shown here as an appetent youth moved by his desire for the nymph. This notion does not fit the context of *Eclogue* 7, which depicts Nero as residing over lavish games in his amphitheatre.⁴³

Nero's description as *iuvēnis deus* bears another intertextual reference, which is important in our context. It offers a potentially positive reading of the emperor's youth by connecting it to the idea of a renewed *aurea aetas*. Volker Langholf shows that by using this description for Nero, Calpurnius establishes a connection between his *Bucolics* and Virgil's first *Eclogue*.⁴⁴ In his *Eclogue*, Virgil speaks about a *iuvēnis/deus* residing in Rome, who is responsible for the *otium* and the peace that the herdsmen enjoy (Verg. *Ecl.* 1.6–10, 42–45). By using Virgilian vocabulary for Nero, Langholf argues, Calpurnius engages with a potential reading of Virgil, which, by way of a historical allegoresis, identifies the *iuvēnis* and *deus* with Octavian/Augustus. Instead of reading it this way, Calpurnius makes the words refer to Nero: 'In Calpurnius, the Virgilian *deus, iuvēnis* Caesar Augustus (= Octavian) has become the *iuvēnis deus* Caesar Augustus (= Nero). In the context of his panegyrics, the historical allegoresis has become a divinatory allegoresis, as if Virgil was prophetically speaking of Nero.'⁴⁵

41 Neronian panegyrics remain vague with regard to the question of whether god and emperor are to be identified with each other or merely share certain characteristics, cf. Cordes (2017) 113–120.

42 Apollo/Phoebus is mentioned seven times in Calp. 4 (ll. 9, 57, 70, 72, 87, 89, 159). In all cases the god is connected with the notions of music and poetry; only in l. 57 (*pulcher Apollo*) is his beauty mentioned.

43 We will see that sexual appetite is a connotation of youth that is used to draw a negative picture of Nero in the *Octavia*. In the present case, it has to be excluded, at least from a panegyric reading of the *Eclogue*.

44 Langholf (1990) 359–361. On this prophecy and its relation to panegyric prophecies in Augustan and Domitianic poetry, see also Cordes (2021).

45 Langholf (1990) 361: 'Der vergilische *deus, iuvēnis* Caesar Augustus (= Octavian) ist bei Calpurnius zum *iuvēnis deus* Caesar Augustus (= Nero) geworden; aus der historisch entschlüsselnden

The idea that Calpurnius reads cryptic passages and prophecies in Virgil's poetry as pointing prophetically to Nero can be pursued further. In Calpurnius' first *Eclogue*, Faunus depicts Nero's reign as a renewed Golden Age in which Peace and Justice will reign again (Calp. 1.42–59). With that, he makes the young emperor fulfil the prophecy of Virgil's fourth *Eclogue*.⁴⁶ By doing so, Calpurnius not only identifies Nero with the *iuvenis* and *deus* of the first *Eclogue*, but also with the *puer* of the fourth Virgilian *Eclogue* (Verg. *Ecl.* 4.4–10). Again, he modifies an interpretation of Virgil's poetry that reads the verses as a panegyric reference to Octavian/Augustus. With this way of glorifying the Neronian present by intertextually referring to the Virgilian poetry, Calpurnius' panegyrics do not only benefit from Nero's youth, but attribute positive significance to it: the fact that the new emperor is a *iuvenis* (and perhaps even a *puer*) is no reason to worry about his immaturity or temper; in contrast, it gives hope that the long-foretold youth who will bring peace and prosperity has finally arrived.⁴⁷

At this point it is worth noting that Calpurnius, despite the parallels to Verg. *Eclogue* 4, calls Nero *iuvenis* but never *puer*. As we saw earlier, and as we will see again when looking at Domitianic poetry, the emperor's actual age is not necessarily the reason for this – the term *puer* could be used for a young man of 18 or 19 years. Rather, it seems to be a cautionary measure that can be traced back to the Augustan imperial discourse. The question of whether Octavian was a *puer* or a *iuvenis* when he came to power appears to have been an important part of the debate on his capability to rule. Although Cicero calls Octavian a *puer* in different (critical and laudatory) contexts,⁴⁸ he criticizes Marc Antony for doing so in the 13th *Philippica*, saying that Octavian is not a *puer*, but a *vir*, and even a *fortissimus vir* (Cic. *Phil.* 13.24). What he seems to contradict, is the idea that Octavian did not have to be taken seriously because of his young age – *puer* here carries the connotations of inexperience and 'childish' immaturity. If we believe Servius, the matter was so delicate that it even provoked a senatorial decree. According to him, Virgil calls Octavian *iuvenis* in *Ecl.* 1.42 (*hic illum vidi iuvenem*) because the

ist im Rahmen der Panegyrik eine divinatorische Allegorese geworden, so als sei bei Vergil prophetisch von Nero die Rede.'

46 The parallels between Calp. 1 and Verg. *Ecl.* 4 have often been noted in scholarship. Cf. Küppers (1985) 347–349; Schubert (1998) 57–58; Vinchesi (2014) 127. In Cordes (2017) 258–270, I argue that, in Calpurnius' poetry, Nero is not only represented as a 'new and better' Augustus as is commonly asserted, but actually replaces the first *princeps* as the predicted bringer of peace.

47 Osgood (2011) 247–249 emphasizes that the idea of a new Golden Age was 'an effective way of turning Nero's greatest liability into an advantage' (p. 249).

48 Cf. e.g., Cic. *Att.* 14.12.2; Cic. *ad Brut.* 1.18.3 (26.3); Cic. *Phil.* 3.3.

Senate had forbidden the denomination *puer* in order not to diminish the empire's *maiestas*:

IUVENEM Caesarem dicit Octavianum Augustum: decreverat enim senatus, ne quis eum puerum diceret, ne maiestas tanti imperii minueretur.

He calls Caesar Octavian Augustus *iuvēnis*, 'youth', because the Senate had decided that no one should call him *puer*, 'boy', in order to avoid the majesty of the empire to be diminished.⁴⁹ (Serv. on Verg. *Ecl.* 1.42)

The idea that Servius implies, namely that the great Roman Empire could be governed by a child, seems to be avoided in Nero's praise as well. As we will see, it is highlighted in the later, critical discourse.

Reassurance, Praise, Critique – The Literary Depictions of Nero's Youth: Criticizing Nero's Youth in the *Octavia*

An example of a highly negative image of Nero and his young age can be found in the pseudo-Senecan praetexta *Octavia*, which has recently been dated convincingly to the early Flavian reign.⁵⁰ In this play, the emperor is not represented as a *iuvēnis deus* who brings back the longed-for Golden Age, but as a 'youth of monstrous nature and capacious crime' (152–153: *iuvēnis infandi ingeni, scelerum capaxque*).⁵¹ At the dramatic time of the play in 62 CE, Nero was 24 and had been reigning for several years, but the drama still presents his youth as a key reason behind his crimes and his tyrannical reign. According to it, any former fears concerning the aptitude of the young ruler were, in fact, justified. The *Octavia* thus responds to the positive and reassuring depiction of Nero's youth that we saw in *De clementia* and in the panegyric poetry, offering an alternative, entirely critical reading.⁵²

49 Text of Servius: Thilo (1887/1961), my translation.

50 Ginsberg (2017) 181–194. In her interpretation, the *Octavia* reimagines 'the Principate as a breeding ground for civil war' (p. 189) against the background of the events of 68–70 CE. Her reading adds new arguments to the discussion about the play's date. A composition under Vespasian was previously argued by Smith (2003) 426–430 and Boyle (2008) xiv–xvi, but scholarship has rather tended to a Galban date of composition, as is argued by Kragelund (1982, 1988, 2000, 2005); Flower (2006) 202–203; Wiseman (2008a). For the refutation of a Domitianic date, a proposal that has not found many supporters, see Cordes (2017) 12 n. 59.

51 Text and translations of the *Octavia* from Boyle (2008), with modifications.

52 That the *Octavia* responds to the Neronian imperial discourse and refutes the positive reading of its elements is stressed by Kragelund (2000, 2005); Cordes (2017). Ginsberg (2017)

While Calpurnius points to Nero's physical strength and praises his youth as a guarantee for the stability of the empire, the anonymous author of the *Octavia* draws on another, negative connotation of youth, emphasizing the emperor's amorous fervency.⁵³ In the play's first act, the nurse tries to calm Octavia, who sees her doom coming as Nero has chosen the *paelex* Poppaea over her. The nurse argues that Nero's love for Poppaea is just a consequence of his *iuvēnilis ardor* that will cool down quickly.⁵⁴ The love for his chaste wife, she ensures, will endure and, in the end, prevail:

Iuvenilis ardor impetu primo furit,
 languescit idem facile nec durat diu
 in Venere turpi, ceu levis flammae vapor.
 amor perennis coniugis castae manet.

A young man's passion rages in first flush but quickly wanes. It is no more lasting in immoral love than a fickle flame's heat. Love of the chaste wife abides forever. (*Oct.* 189–192)

Nero's youth is encoded negatively here. The nurse relates it to his sexual impetus and to indecorous behaviour in matters of love (*Venus turpis*). The character Seneca holds the same view. In the long dialogue between Nero and his teacher (440–592), the emperor defends his decision to marry Poppaea by pointing at the omnipotent power of Amor (554–556). To that, Seneca replies that Amor is just a 'great force of mind' (561: *vis magna mentis*) that originates from youth (562: *iuvēnta*). Once it is not nursed anymore, he argues, it will quickly lose its power and die (557–565). Again, Nero's young and fervid age is made responsible for his passion for Poppaea and, consequently, for his wrongful behaviour towards his wife. Nero is depicted as an unrestrained youngster, who gives free rein to his passions. In order to indulge them, he ignores what is ethical – and what is demanded by dynastical considerations and the interest of the state: as is shown by the people's riot that succeeds Octavia's divorce and the plan to exile her (780–819), the *princeps*' irrational behaviour threatens to destabilize the empire. The drama thus denies what

shows that the drama challenges the positive image of the Julio-Claudians as bringers of peace by intertextually engaging with different works of literature from the Julio-Claudian period.

53 For this connotation, see TLL s.v. *adulescens* 796.22–30.

54 Boyle (2008) 137 points to a parallel in Sen. *Tro.* 250, where Agamemnon rebukes the impetuous Pyrrhus: *iuvēnile vitium est regere non posse impetum* ('Young men have the failing of being unable to govern impulse'): 'Even the faintest suggestion of Nero as another Pyrrhus (young, impetuous, ignorant, illegitimate, bloodthirsty butcher) serves dramatic purposes.'

Calpurnius had promised in his panegyric poetry when he connected Nero's youth with his physical strength and made it ensure the empire's stability.

The playwright makes Nero's youth responsible not just for his wrongdoings concerning love and marriage, but for his tyrannical rule in general.⁵⁵ At the beginning of the dialogue, Nero orders his cousins, Plautus and Sulla, to be executed. Seneca ineffectively tries to dissuade him from his decision. He admonishes Nero not to kill his kinsmen 'hastily' (440: *temere*⁵⁶) and refers to his title as *pater patriae* (444: *servare cives maior est patriae patri*, 'Saving lives is greater for the State's Father'). By making Seneca mention the honourable title, the playwright draws a blatant contrast between the young ruler's great responsibility and his quick-tempered character. The passage seems to draw on the fact that Nero, in the beginning of his reign, refused to be honoured as *pater patriae* by pointing at his young age.⁵⁷ The play's narrative can be understood as a commentary on this *recusatio*: the emperor may have declined the honour at the very beginning of his reign, but he was still not worthy of it almost a decade after his accession.

The passage also alludes to the language of praise of the *pater patriae* Augustus. As Ginsberg has shown, the *Octavia* works with conflicting memories of the first *princeps*. While Seneca advises Nero to imitate an idealized version of clement and peace-loving Augustus – being well aware, however, of that emperor's violent past, as Ginsberg emphasizes – Nero prefers to model himself on the Octavian of the Triumviral period, i.e. on the powerful victor in a bloody civil war. This discussion of the Augustan model and of the politics of civil war reflects the way these topics are discussed in Neronian panegyrics specifically and in Julio-Claudian literature in general.⁵⁸ What is important in our context, is that age plays an important role in this discussion, as well. We saw that in *De clementia*, Seneca does not only contrast Nero's peaceful accession favourably with the bloodshed of Octavian's youth. He stresses that Nero's inborn *clementia* surpasses even the clemency of old Augustus (*Clem.* 1.11.1: *etiam si in certamen iuvenilium*

55 This evaluation is contrary to what Suetonius writes. According to him, Nero's vices were no consequences of his age but of his bad character (*Ner.* 26.1). However, in some passages Suetonius paints the picture of an unfit child who came to power. In *Ner.* 22.1, e.g., he recounts that, at the beginning of his reign, Nero played with *quadriga* figurines made of ivory every day.

56 The word describes a characteristic connected to *adulescentia*, cf. TLL s.v. *adulescens* 796.35, 84; OLD s.v. *temere* 1a.

57 Cf. Suet. *Ner.* 8.1; 10.2.

58 Ginsberg (2017) 61–114. She shows that the characters Nero and Seneca engage with a broad range of Julio-Claudian literature, offering different readings of them. Her observation that 'civil war and civil war memory remain paramount throughout [the Julio-Claudian dynasty]' (p. 114) matches the way the topic is used in Neronian panegyrics, cf. Cordes (2017) 257–263, 275–277.

annorum deduxerit senectutem plus quam maturam). This is in line with the reassuring rhetoric of *De clementia* which emphasizes that Nero will *not* behave as his young age might suggest. In the *Octavia*, in contrast, Nero shows that the paradigm of Augustus *senex* is of no interest for him. Instead, he chooses Octavian, another powerful and merciless youth, to model himself on.

That Nero's youth plays a major role in his depiction as a tyrant is shown clearly in a subsequent passage of the discussion between the emperor and his teacher. In this passage, Nero points out that he is old enough to make his own decisions:

Ne. Praecipere mitem convenit **pueris** senem.

Se. Regenda magis est **fervida adolescentia**.

Ne. **Aetate** in hac satis esse **consilii** reor.

Ne. A soft old man should be preaching to **boys**.

Se. It's **hot adolescents** who need schooling.

Ne. I'm **of age**, I think, **for my own judgements**. (*Oct.* 445–447)

The passage explicitly addresses the question of age. With their seemingly impersonal *sententiae*, Seneca and Nero discuss the emperor's need of guidance by fighting over the right denomination for him. The witty stichomythia is based on the question of whether Nero is a *puer* or an *adolescens* still in need of supervision and control – or whether he is old enough to show rational judgement in political affairs, a description which points to the definition of a *iuvenis*.⁵⁹ The play answers this question by showing what decisions Nero makes when he disregards his teacher's advice. Against this background, Nero's crimes – against Plautus and Sulla, against Octavia and also against the people of Rome, whose city he will burn in revenge of the public support for Octavia (820–843) – appear a consequence of his *fervida adolescentia*. With this depiction, the play sarcastically comments on the reassuring tone of *De clementia* – as it turns out, Seneca was *not* able to avert the risk that Nero's young age entailed.

59 See above, n. 24. Boyle (2008) 186 shows that this description is inverted by Tacitus. In *Ann.* 14.56.1, Nero denies Seneca's request for resignation by saying that his uncertain youth might still need his guidance in case it slipped (*si qua in parte lubricum adolescentiae nostrae declinat*). To describe his age, in Tacitus he uses the very word that he rejects in the *Octavia* (*adulescentia*). Schulz (2019) 78 shows how the *Annals* depict Nero's change from a rhetorically dependent youth to a self-confident and independent orator.

We can also recognize harsh criticism of Nero's young age in the monologue of Agrippina's ghost (593–645). The tyrant's murderous mother reproaches herself for having brought her son to power and paints a dark picture of him. After having given an account of his matricide, she describes how he rages against her name and destroys her images across the world – the world that she gave to a boy to rule:

simulacra, titulos destruit mortis metu
totum per orbem, quem dedit poenam in meam
puero regendum noster infelix amor.

Statues – monuments – smashed on pain of death across the world – **the world my hapless love gave a boy to rule for my destruction.** (*Oct.* 611–613)

In contrast to what we saw in the panegyric poetry, Agrippina calls 17-year-old Nero not *iuvēnis*, but *puer*. With this choice of words, she depicts him as youthfully as possible. The emphatic position of *puero* at the beginning of line 613 places additional emphasis on that. By calling Nero *puer* and at the same time mentioning the enormous task he was given when she entrusted to him 'the world to reign' (*orbem dedit regendum*), Agrippina highlights the contrast between the emperor's young age at the moment of accession and his vast power. With that, the *Octavia* emphasizes the very discrepancy that the texts of the early Augustan and of the Neronian discourse tried to conceal by avoiding calling the respective emperor *puer*. However, while in the latter discourse this seems to have stemmed from a desire to avoid the notions of childish inexperience and naive ineptitude, Agrippina makes the word *puer* lose the notion of innocence by pointing to his matricide. Nero might have been a 'child' when he came to power, but that did not keep him from the most horrific crime.

There is another peculiarity in Nero's description in the *Octavia*, which can be interpreted as a negative recoding of the panegyric image of his youth. In the play, the god Cupid/Amor is mentioned twice. Nero and Seneca discuss his power (554–565), and the chorus points to it in order to convince the people not to revolt on Octavia's behalf (806–819). Williams has shown that the god's descriptions resemble the way in which Nero himself is characterized: 'When Cupid is said to be "hot-headed, not slow to anger nor easy to be ruled" (*non est patiens fervidus irae facilisque regi*, 812–813), the description might equally apply to Nero's own hot-headed intemperance (cf. *regenda [...] est fervida adolescentia*, 446).'⁶⁰ Thus, while panegyric poetry assimilates

60 Williams (1994) 189. Cf. also Boyle (2008) 259.

Nero to the *iuvenis deus* Apollo, the playwright compares him to another god whose youth is topical: the *puer immitis* Cupid.⁶¹ Instead of transferring positive notions such as beauty and artistic talent to the young emperor, he uses the image of a fickle and uncontrollable yet enormously powerful child to illustrate the danger that Nero represents.⁶²

We see that the *Octavia*, just as the panegyric literature of his lifetime, elaborately discusses Nero's youth. The play rejects any positive judgement of it and offers an alternative, negative interpretation. While panegyric poetry relates Nero's youth to his physical strength and his innocence, emphasizing that it ensures peace and political stability, the drama makes it responsible for his sexual impetus and his fervid emotions. In this description, Nero's youth is a key reason behind his rule of arbitrary despotism, and even threatens to destabilize the empire. The playwright sets up the negative image of Nero's youth as a clear counterpoint to what was said in the earlier affirmative discourse. He describes Nero as *puer* and *adolescens*, using words which were avoided in panegyric literature. He assimilates him not to the young and beautiful Apollo, but to the powerful but volatile and dangerous god of love. Finally, by making Seneca unsuccessfully try to restrain the young emperor, he explicitly negates the reassuring picture of *De clementia*. The *Octavia* is not only concerned with the youth of Nero, though. With its discussion of the Augustan model, the play can be read as a more general reflection on what it means if a very young man comes into power. This is important if we consider the play's contemporary context.

Reassurance, Praise, Critique – The Literary Depictions of Nero's Youth: The *Octavia* as Part of the Early Post-Neronian Discourse

Scholarship has shown that the *Octavia* forms part of an anti-Neronian discourse that emerges after his death and that is recognizable in other contemporary media of imperial representation.⁶³ The discussion of the

61 Cf. with Boyle (2008) 261, Sen. *Phae.* 334.

62 Boyle (2008) 259–261 argues that the post-Neronian audience understood the reference to Cupid's flames that will quench the people's fire (808–810) as reference to the Great Fire in Rome that Nero alludes to later (820–843). By referring to the role that Cupid played in the Trojan War, the ode 'effects an appropriate transition to the ensuing act, in which Nero emerges as the incarnation of a vengeance-seeking Cupid, threatening flames and the destruction of Troy, i.e., Rome' (p. 259, referring to Kragelund [2005] 84).

63 The play does not explicitly engage with post-Neronian politics, but its political ideology draws on the representation of his successors. Kragelund (1982) 38–52; (1988) 503–508; (2000);

emperor's young age has to be seen in the same context. As the universal criticism of his reign, the negative verdict about Nero's youth (and of an emperor's youth in general) was not without alternative. During the struggle for power after Nero's death, the question of age seems to have played an important role in the debates about the rivals' eligibility as emperors. This is suggested by Tacitus. In his account of the events of 68 CE, the historian dwells on the old age of Galba and on the general public's criticism of it.⁶⁴ According to him, Galba, who turned 74 in the months he was in power and emphasized his age in his portrait,⁶⁵ was ridiculed by the *vulgus* 'who was used to the youth of Nero and accustomed to compare emperors only in regard to their beauty and physique' (*Hist.* 1.7.3: *ipsa aetas Galbae inrisui ac fastidio erat adsuetis iuventae Neronis et imperatores forma ac decore corporis, ut est mos vulgi, comparantibus*). The 36-year-old Otho, on the other hand, was persuaded that he would be called into imperial office by Galba because of his youth. Tacitus recounts that an astrologer named Ptolemy encouraged Otho to hope for power, as the general *rumour* favourably compared his youth with Galba's old age (*Hist.* 1.22.2: *Ptolemaeus [...] rumore senium Galbae et iuventam Othonis computantium persuaserat fore ut in imperium*).⁶⁶ In both cases, Tacitus attributes the favourable view on the emperor's youth to the general public.⁶⁷ In the first case he criticizes it by pointing at the superficial criteria the *vulgus* applies when evaluating an emperor. Yet the

(2005); (2016) 314–335 shows that the sympathy for the *populus Romanus*, discernible in the depiction of the people's riot in lines 228–299, 676–689, can be found in Galba's and Vespasian's coinage; the condemnation of Nero's *luxuria* corresponds with their ostentation of frugality. Ginsberg (2017) 186–190 agrees that the play responds to the slogans of 68 CE, but she doesn't take that as evidence for a Galban dating. According to her, there is no coherent response to Nero's representation under Galba and the play's concern with civil war should be seen in the context of the events of 68–70 CE as a whole.

64 Klaassen (2014) 65, 68, 77, 127–133.

65 Schneider (2003) 69. He emphasizes that with this representation Galba contrasted himself sharply with Nero: 'Galba formulierte in seinem Kaiserporträt [...] eine klare Antithese zu den Bildnissen Neros [...] durch den militärisch kurzen Haarschnitt, die gefurchte Stirn, die markanten Altersfalten und ein deutlich strafferes Gesicht', 'In his imperial portrait, Galba formulated [...] a clear antithesis to the image of Nero [...] through a short, military haircut, a furrowed forehead, prominent age wrinkles, and an evidently stricter face.'

66 These considerations can be seen in the context of succession. In his adoption speech in Tacitus' *Histories*, Galba points out that his successor, Piso, is of the right age. He is old enough to have 'escaped from the passions of youth' (Tac. *Hist.* 1.15.3: *ea aetas tua quae cupiditates adulescentiae iam effugerit*). To this, Klaassen (2014) 88 adds that he is young enough to be able to rule for a long time and possibly 'build a dynasty of his own'.

67 In *Ann.* 13.1.1–2, Tacitus describes how public rumour compared the 'mature age' of Iunius Silanus favourably with Nero's youth. If we believe Tacitus' accounts, we see that the age of a (potential) emperor was widely discussed and had a high importance for his acceptance.

passages suggest that the critical perspective on an emperor's youth that can be found in the *Octavia* was not without alternative.

When Vespasian seized power, however, the debate on the ideal age for an emperor was settled. The first Flavian emperor, who was 59 when he was acclaimed as emperor, used the difference of age to distance himself from Nero. As Schneider shows, no other imperial portrait shows traits of age in a way as radical as that of Vespasian. He is the first to display a bald patch and a drastic depiction of age with deep wrinkles on his forehead and cheeks and a sunken-in, toothless mouth. The emperor's actual age is not necessarily the reason for this. Schneider emphasizes that an ageless portrait like the one Augustus used until his death in 14 CE, was an iconographical alternative. It would have allowed a depiction of the emperor in his 60s without exhibiting traits of age in such a highlighted way. Vespasian's portrait can be seen as a clear and conscious counterpoint to Nero.⁶⁸ The latter's portrait had exhibited youthfulness and, with its carefully coiffed curls and blatant *tryphe*, opulence, and general prosperity. With that, it promoted an idea of rule and ruler that was also praised in the panegyric literature of the time. Vespasian's portrait, on the other hand, depicts the emperor as a wise 'elder statesman' by drawing on the republican portraits of old men. This emperor, it suggests, can correct what his young, luxurious predecessor left in disorder.

The contrast between Nero and Vespasian, as it is suggested by their portraits, is not limited to their age. As in the *Octavia*, the display of age is used to convey a message about the emperor and his respective way of living and reigning. While Nero's portrait promotes a life of artistry, indulgence, and 'luxurious self-grooming', as Bergmann describes,⁶⁹ Vespasian emphasizes his civic and military commitment to the *res publica*, as well as his political experience.⁷⁰ With its explicit discussion of Nero's youth, the *Octavia* takes up the contemporary debate about the right age for an emperor. By putting on stage an uncontrolled and quick-tempered youth who is made emperor by his mother, and by making his youth one of the prime reasons for his tyrannical behaviour, the play takes a stand in this debate. It vividly illustrates what Vespasian's (and Galba's) visual representation implied.

68 Schneider (2003) 70–74, especially 70: 'Ein krasserer Gegenbild zu den Porträts Neros hätte damit [...] kaum formuliert werden können', 'A stronger contrast to the portraits of Nero [...] could hardly have been formulated.' For this drastic change in iconography, see also Wolsfeld in this volume.

69 Bergmann (2013) 339; Wolters and Ziegert (2014) 50.

70 Schneider (2003) 72. The positive image of Vespasian might be reflected in Tac. *Hist.* 4.8.4, where he is called a *senex triumphalis*.

Later Flavian Responses to Nero's Youth: The Case of Young Domitian

Against the background of how Nero's youth is evaluated in the *Octavia* and of what is implied about an emperor's right age by the visual representation of Vespasian, it is interesting to look at the representation of his youthful sons, Titus and Domitian. As said in the introduction, I will concentrate on the latter, because in his case we can analyse how his youth is depicted in the panegyric poetry of his lifetime, on the one hand, and in the posthumous negative discourse, on the other.

The contributions by Schulz, Ambühl and Wolsfeld in this volume show that Titus' youth plays a role in his visual representation and in the accounts in historiography and biography as well. A recurring theme in these depictions is that he is portrayed as young, but as more mature than his brother, Domitian. Wolsfeld shows that Titus and Domitian are portrayed differently under their father's reign, the former with a mature appearance and a fashionable elaborate hairstyle, the latter with an iconography reminiscent of Julio-Claudian figures like Drusus or Germanicus, emphasizing his very young and promising age and his position as a possible heir.⁷¹ Ambühl and Schulz show that Tacitus and Suetonius distance Titus from his younger brother and 'bad' successor Domitian, by depicting him as a positive figure who left his youthful debauchery behind when he became emperor.⁷² In the following, we will see that this role of Domitian as younger brother is emphasized in his representation as well, both in panegyric poetry and in posthumous negative discourse. In analysing these texts, I will ask how the depiction of Domitian's youth relates to the negative paradigm of the last Julio-Claudian.⁷³ As I will

71 See Wolsfeld, in this volume.

72 See Schulz in this volume, referring inter alia to Tac. *Hist.* 2.2.1 (*laetam voluptatibus adolescentiam egit, suo quam patris imperio moderatior*), and Suet. *Tit.* 7.1. Ambühl, in this volume concentrates on how Titus is depicted as a responsible leader when he renounces his love for the Jewish queen Berenice for the sake of Rome. Schulz argues that the creation of an intra-Flavian distance between Vespasian and Titus on the one hand, and Domitian, on the other, plays a greater role in the historiographic and biographic accounts than the deconstruction of Domitian's policy of distancing himself from Nero.

73 Domitianic praise is careful to not recall the Neronian paradigm: Nauta (2010) shows that it avoids the *aurea-aetas* myth to glorify the present. Newlands (2014) argues that in praising Domitian's literary activities, the poets emphasize the differences between him and the artist-emperor Nero. Statius' way of staging republican figures to praise the Domitianic present can be seen in the same context, cf. Cordes (2014b) 315–318. Wolsfeld, in this volume, shows how Titus and Domitian were able to distance themselves from Nero in their accession portraits while keeping up with contemporary fashion trends, which adopted elements from Neronian representation.

show, the strategies used to construe the positive and negative image of Domitian's youth differ from those we have identified in the discourse on Nero.

Later Flavian Responses to Nero's Youth – The Case of Young Domitian: Praising Domitian's Youth in Panegyric Poetry

Domitian's age does not play a significant role in the literary accounts of his own reign. Yet, it is strongly emphasized in the narratives concerning his involvement in early Flavian politics. We saw that Neronian panegyrics do not call the emperor *puer*, avoiding a depiction that could suggest that Nero is any younger than his position demands. In contrast, the Flavian poets exaggerate Domitian's youth when they speak about the events in the early Flavian reign. When Martial praises Domitian for successfully defending the Capitol against Vitellius' troops in 69 CE, he hyperbolically calls the 18-year-old prince a *puer* (Mart. 9.101.14: 'being a boy, he waged the first wars for his Jupiter', *prima suo gessit pro Iove bella puer*).⁷⁴ Similarly, Statius praises Domitian for having fought the *bella Iovis* 'when barely having reached puberty' (*Theb.* 1.21: *defensa prius vix pubescentibus annis*).

The poets equally emphasize Domitian's young age when they praise his involvement in Mucianus' military campaign against the Batavi in 70 CE. Martial writes that the emperor was worthy of the title *Germanicus* when he was just a 'boy' (Mart. 2.2.4: *puer hoc dignus nomine, Caesar, eras*). Silius Italicus makes age a decisive criterion when, in the third book of his *Punica*, he compares Domitian favourably to Vespasian and Titus. In a panegyric *vaticinium ex eventu*, Jupiter predicts the military successes of the three Flavian emperors. He starts with Vespasian who, after his activities in Britain, Germany, and Africa, will subdue Judea 'as an old man' (3.600: *palmiferamque senex bello domitabit Idumen*). Then he announces how Titus, whom he calls a *iuvenis* (603), will take over command and end the Judean wars 'in young years' (605–606: *hic fera gentis / bella Palestinae primo delebit in aevo*).⁷⁵ The climax of the prophecy is reserved for Domitian: he will surpass both his brother and his father, Jupiter predicts, as he will frighten the Batavians even as merely a *puer*:

at tu transcendes, Germanice, facta tuorum
iam puer auricomis praeformidate Batavo.

⁷⁴ Text and translations from Martial: Shackleton Bailey (1993) with modifications.

⁷⁵ According to Spaltenstein (1986) 250, Silius exaggerates the young age of Titus, who was 31 in 70 CE.

But you, Germanicus, will outdo the deeds of your family, **even in boyhood** dreadful to the yellow-haired Batavians. (Sil. 3.607–608)⁷⁶

By making age the *tertium comparationis* in the comparison of the Flavian emperors, Silius foregrounds Domitian's youth. Like Martial, he exaggeratedly calls the young prince *puer*. He combines the word with the rare *praeformidatus* ('very dreadful') and directly juxtaposes it with the defeated enemy (*auricomus Batavus*), thus emphasizing the extraordinariness of the 'boy's' achievement.

We see that, in contrast to Neronian panegyrics, the Flavian poets do not hesitate to call Domitian a *puer* and even put his 'childhood' at the centre of their praise. The reason for this difference is probably that, in his case, the poets speak about the prince, not the emperor Domitian. His *pueritia* lies well in the past at the moment of writing and thus does not form an immediate risk, as Nero's young age did when it was described in contemporary panegyric. In all instances, the poets encode Domitian's young age positively by relating it to his military *virtus*, a topic that is prominent throughout Domitianic panegyrics. As the passage from Silius shows, this depiction serves the purpose of putting Domitian in a context of dynastic continuation.⁷⁷ The poets hint at his affiliation with the Flavian family and emphasize that, already as a child, he was able to meet and even surpass the high standards that his predecessors' military victories set.

In addition, I argue, the image of the victorious *puer* can be seen in the light of the posthumous critique of Nero. In contrast to Domitian, Nero did not have any military experience when he ascended to power in 54 CE. Contemporary panegyrics try to interpret this positively, as a token of Nero's innocence and as proof of his perfection of the *Pax Augusta*.⁷⁸ Yet, alongside his youth, the lack of military experience could easily be seen as an insufficiency. We saw earlier how, according to Tacitus, the debates about Nero's eligibility flared up when the Parthians encroached in Armenia. Moreover, at the beginning of his reign, there is an increase in the number of privately dedicated statues that show Nero in a cuirass. We also find a high number of militarily connoted additions to the emperor's official title in inscriptions. These findings may indicate that there was a

76 Text of Silius Italicus from Duff (1934), translations by me.

77 Wolsfeld, in this volume, shows how family ties were visualized in the portraiture of the Flavian emperors in order to demonstrate the establishment of a new dynasty.

78 See above Cf. also Cordes (2017) 258–263.

strong wish for a militarily successful emperor that Nero could not fulfil.⁷⁹ In fact, Nero's alleged failure in the military realm, throughout his reign, is an important aspect in the posthumous critical discourse. Suetonius deridingly describes the artistic triumph that Nero celebrated after coming back from his grand tour of Greece (*Ner.* 25).⁸⁰ He adds that Nero did not give military orders except by letter or in speeches delivered by others, in order to save his singing voice. The image of Domitian's victorious *pueritia*, I argue, can be seen in this context: Domitian may have been as young as Nero when he entered the stage of imperial politics, the poets seem to argue, but unlike the last Julio-Claudian emperor – and yet, just like his Flavian predecessors – he was able to fulfil and even exceed what was expected of a *Caesar* and an emperor.

If we adopt this reading, we can differentiate between two kinds of Flavian responses to Nero's youth. In the early Flavian discourse, the positive notion of a young man in power – put forward with confidence in the Neronian poetry and, with more caution, but still optimistically in *De clementia* – is fundamentally challenged. The negative image of Nero's youth in the *Octavia*, and the representation of Vespasian as a militarily successful and experienced 'elder statesman', imply that a man of mature age should be entrusted with the responsibility of leading a world empire. In this perspective, youth is seen as conveying a great risk that cannot be properly constrained. In Domitianic panegyrics, in contrast, as in the visual representation of Titus and Domitian, the notion of a young man in charge is encoded positively. The poets concern themselves with the topic only with regard to the prince, not the emperor Domitian, but nonetheless the image of the victorious *puer* implies that a young man is able to assume great responsibility and accomplish extraordinary feats. If we read this depiction as responding implicitly (also) to the negative image of the 'bad' Julio-Claudian predecessor, the response consists in contrasting two young men: the first a failure in the military realm who was not able to live up to the expectations of empire, the second a youth of outstanding military *virtus* who exceeded these expectations even before he ascended to power.

79 Cf. Wolsfeld (2014) 190–198; Bönisch-Meyer and Witschel (2014) 103–108; Bönisch-Meyer et al. (2014) 440–441. On portraits as a visual medium, see also the general remarks by Wolsfeld in this volume.

80 Cf. Edwards (1994) 90 who calls Nero's triumph the 'greatest insult to the Roman military tradition'.

Later Flavian Responses to Nero's Youth – The Case of Young Domitian: Criticizing Young Domitian

As in the case of Nero, the panegyric image of Domitian's youth is rejected in the accounts written after his death. Tacitus and Suetonius deny that Domitian played a major (let alone successful) role in the military conflicts at the beginning of the Flavian reign. The counter-narratives about the events in the winter of 69 CE (Suet. *Dom.* 1.2–3; Tac. *Hist.* 3.74) are famous. According to these, rather than winning the *bella Iovis* with his extraordinary *virtus*, Domitian hid when Vitellius' troops captured the Capitol and escaped in disguise. What is important in our context is that Domitian's youth, emphasized in the panegyric depictions of the events, is highlighted in the critical accounts as well. Suetonius and Tacitus tell us that Domitian could escape only with the help of adults giving him refuge. In the case of Suetonius, the youngster flees to a 'classmate's mother' (1.2: *ad condiscipuli sui matrem*); in the case of Tacitus, he hides in the house of Cornelius Primus, 'one of his father's clients' (3.74: *apud Cornelium Primum paternum clientem [...] delituit*). As in panegyric poetry, Domitian is depicted here as a *puer*. In this case, he is no military wunderkind, however, but a regular child being helped by 'grown-ups'.

According to Tacitus, Domitian's youth posed a problem at the beginning of the Flavian reign. The historian describes how the prince was given the name and the residence of a Caesar after the Flavian victory, but was neither able nor willing to govern Rome while Vespasian and Titus were still in Alexandria. Instead, he spent his time committing adulteries:

Nomen sedemque Caesaris Domitianus acceperat, nondum ad curas intentus, sed stupris et adulteriis filium principis agebat.

Domitian had secured the title and the official residence of a Caesar, but did not as yet busy himself with serious matters. Instead, he played the role of the emperor's son by devoting himself to rape and adultery.⁸¹ (Tac. *Hist.* 4.2.1)

By paraphrasing Domitian's conduct as *filium principis agere*, Tacitus contrasts the title *Caesar* with the prince's own definition of being a *Caesar*,

⁸¹ The text of Tacitus' *Histories* is from Fisher (1911); translations by Fyfe and Levene (1997), with slight modifications.

i.e. being a *son* rather than being the son *of the emperor*.⁸² With this, the historian explicitly ascribes Domitian's shortcomings to his young age. As in the *Octavia*, the notion of youth is connected here with the ideas of sexual licentiousness, lack of self-control, and irresponsibility. According to Tacitus, Vespasian decided to transfer the Judean troops to Titus and to come to Rome because of Domitian's misconduct:

Vespasianus in Italiam resque urbis intentus adversam de Domitiano famam accipit, tamquam terminos aetatis et concessa filio egrederetur: igitur validissimam exercitus partem Tito tradit ad reliqua Iudaici belli perpetranda.

Vespasian now devoted his attention to the affairs of Italy and the capital, and received an unfavourable report of Domitian, who seemed to be trespassing beyond the natural sphere of an emperor's youthful son. He accordingly handed over the flower of his army to Titus, who was to finish off the Jewish war. (Tac. *Hist.* 4.51.2)

Vespasian's decision is depicted explicitly as a consequence (*igitur*) of Domitian's bad behaviour. Again, this behaviour is related to the prince's youth: he transgresses the bounds set by his age and the concessions he is granted as the son of the emperor (*terminos aetatis et concessa filio egrederetur*). Tacitus gives the impression that Vespasian's return to Rome is not only necessary to stabilize the newly gained power but that it is also an act of parenting. The picture he paints is that of a father who has to leave his elder son in charge, in order to put the younger, ill-mannered one in his place. This reading is supported by the following speech of Titus (4.52). In this, Titus begs his angered father not to be too severe in punishing Domitian. He argues that the number of children is a strong defence of imperial power and urges Vespasian to set an example of domestic *concordia*. Titus' arguments are purely political. Yet, the reaction of Vespasian, whom Tacitus describes as being 'delighted at Titus' brotherly affection rather than inclined to forgive Domitian' (*haud aequè Domitiano mitigatus quam Titi pietate gaudens*), evokes the notion of a father in a family dispute. He is mitigated by the elder son who stands up for his little brother to reduce the latter's punishment.

82 Already in the reign of Galba, the name 'Caesar' tended to designate the heir to the throne: cf. the overview in Kienast, Eck, and Heil (2017) 19–20 with further literature, *pace* Mommsen, *RStR* II 2, 770–771.

In the accounts discussed so far, Domitian does not assume responsibility because he is afraid or because he lacks interest. Elsewhere, he is described as causing problems by being over-motivated. When Tacitus speaks about the campaign against the Batavians, he compares how Mucianus and Domitian prepare to leave for Gaul:

simul Domitianus Mucianusque accingebantur, dispari animo, ille spe ac iuventa properus, hic moras nectens quis flagrantem retineret, ne ferocia aetatis et pravis impulsoribus, si exercitum invasisset, paci belloque male consuleret.

Meanwhile both Mucianus and Domitian made ready to start, but with very different feelings. Domitian was full of the sanguine haste of youth, while Mucianus kept devising delays to check this enthusiasm. He was afraid that if Domitian once seized control of the army, his youthful aggression and his bad advisers would lead him into action prejudicial to both peace and war. (Tac. *Hist.* 4.68.3)

This account explicitly contradicts what was said about the campaign in panegyric poetry. Far from winning the war against the Batavi as victorious *puer*, Domitian is described as an adolescent hothead who does not only fail to support Mucianus, but even deters him from concentrating on the war ahead.

Domitian's youthful 'hyperactivity' reaches a fever pitch when he attempts a coup against his father and brother. When arriving in Lyon, Domitian asks Cerialis to transfer the command of the army to him. The general ignores the request, however, treating it as a 'childish daydream'⁸³ (4.86.1: *Cerialis [...] elusit ut vana pueriliter cupientem*). This has a devastating effect on Domitian. When he realizes that he is not taken seriously, Tacitus recounts, he gives up even the insignificant duties he had taken on:

Domitianus sperni a senioribus iuventam suam cernens modica quoque et usurpata antea munia imperii omittebat.

Realizing that older men despised his youth, Domitian gave up even those limited functions of government which he had hitherto performed. (Tac. *Hist.* 4.86.2)

83 Cf. the translation by Fyfe and Levene (1997).

The passage that started by implying that Domitian planned a military coup, posing danger to the stability of the empire, ends with the image of a huffy teenager. Once he realizes that Cerialis won't yield to his wishes, Domitian loses every interest in political and military affairs.

Like the panegyric poets, Tacitus emphasizes Domitian's youth when he recounts the events of the early Flavian reign. By depicting the prince's misconduct as a consequence of his age, he contradicts the panegyric picture of the mature and victorious *puer*. Again, we see how differently the element 'youth' can be encoded. Although all the events Tacitus describes are dated to 69–70 CE, when Domitian was 18–19 years old; he is depicted once as a frightened boy in need of the help of adults – his youth connoting weakness and dependency; once as a youngster unwilling to engage in politics – his youth connoting irresponsibility and sexual fervency; and once as an adolescent hothead whose haphazard enthusiasm jeopardizes the empire's military campaigns. Like the anonymous author of the *Octavia*, Tacitus deconstructs earlier panegyrics by critically recoding the youth of the (later) emperor and explicitly contradicts what was said in it. There are differences, however, in how the youth of Nero and Domitian is discussed in each case. The *Octavia* puts on stage a dangerous young man whose quick temper and unrestrained passions pose a threat to those around him and to the stability of the empire. Tacitus, on the other hand, paints a rather derisive picture of Domitian.⁸⁴ He describes a youth who, first and foremost, fails to live up to the expectations of his dynasty. Even in the account of Domitian's attempt to overthrow his father's government, the notion of threat is quickly dispelled.

Conclusion: Youth and Dynasty

The differences in the literary depictions of young Nero and young Domitian presented in this chapter can be seen against the background of their respective dynastic situations. In the case of Nero, age mattered. This is true also for the time before he was made emperor: Klaassen shows that age played a major role in promoting Nero as a more suitable successor to

84 When evaluating such differences, one has to take into consideration the differences of genre. A more exhaustive assessment of them would have to look in more detail at Tacitus' description of Nero's youth. The observation that the negative image of Nero is dominated by a frightening element, while Domitian is often ridiculed in the posthumous discourse, can be made elsewhere, cf. Cordes (2017) 309–315.

Claudius than his biological son Britannicus. Britannicus was only three years Nero's junior, but, according to Tacitus and Suetonius, Agrippina and her supporters tried hard to make him appear much less mature than his adoptive brother.⁸⁵ Yet, when Claudius died, clearly both brothers were too young to be made emperor. Thus, when Nero ascended to power, his young age posed a problem for his acceptance. The way Nero's youth is treated in panegyric literature can be seen as reacting to contemporary reservations. The panegyrists show awareness of the risk that Nero's youth entails and devote considerable effort to encoding his youth positively. The frightening image of Nero as a youthful tyrant in the *Octavia* is strongly influenced by this earlier discourse. The playwright picks up the notion that Nero's youth posed a threat to the empire by depicting his tyranny as a consequence of his age. The drama explicitly contradicts the reassuring promises made in earlier panegyrics.

In the case of Domitian, age was no difficulty. We said that Domitianic panegyrics treat his age in 68–70 CE in a carefree way because, in his case, they talk about the prince, not the emperor. When Martial, Statius, and Silius are writing about the early Flavian years, these lie well in the past, so there is no need for caution when speaking about Domitian's age. For dynastical reasons, too, age was not a difficult factor for Domitian. Being the biological son of Vespasian, his position as prince was not challenged. When he ascended to power after his father and brother, he had reached the age of 29 and the Flavian dynasty was well established. This is probably why in the panegyric depictions of his own rule, age is irrelevant. The matter of course in which Domitian holds his position, and which seems to influence the way his youth is treated in contemporary panegyric, can be recognized in the negative discourse, as well. When Tacitus deconstructs the panegyric image of Domitian's early years, he depicts him not only as a frightened boy and irresponsible adolescent, but, first and foremost, as a youthful *son*. Repeatedly, young Domitian is depicted in relation to his father and brother, and to other 'grown-ups' associated with the Flavian family, like Vespasian's client or his generals. In the historiographic description, Domitian is not taken seriously by any of them. Thus, again, the negative discourse mirrors the earlier praise. While the image of the victorious *puer* aims at representing Domitian as a fully-fledged member of his military

85 Klaassen (2014) 285–295, 307–318. To promote Nero, his assumption of the *toga virilis* was sped up. The way the boys were dressed during the games celebrated on this occasion emphasized their difference in age.

successful dynasty, Tacitus uses the dynastical context to paint his derisive picture of Domitian as a failing second son.

These considerations suggest that the positive and the negative encodings of youth observed in this paper do not only concern the individual emperor, but touch upon general questions concerning the political system of the early principate – in particular, the topic of dynasty and succession. As the principate was represented as a restoration of the republic, there was no constitutional foundation for the position of the emperor, and thus no official system of succession. Nevertheless, the early principate showed strong dynastic tendencies. As Klaassen emphasized, almost all emperors during the first two centuries CE – those who came to power by usurpation, excepted – were related to their predecessors. As ‘this *de facto* hereditary principle was not recognized *de iure*’, however, ‘the question of succession remained legally unregulated’. This led to frequent challenges to the emperors’ positions and to ‘near-continuous’ debates about what was required of an emperor.⁸⁶ By looking at Tacitus’ *Annals* and *Histories*, Klaassen shows that age played an important role in these debates.⁸⁷

The depictions of age observed in this paper can be seen in the same context. While the texts do not discuss the hereditary principle in itself, the questions underlying the different encodings of youth touch upon the topic of dynastic succession: Can a young man be *capax imperii*,⁸⁸ capable of being emperor? How does an 18-year-old behave if kinship relations put him into a position of power and responsibility? Does a hereditary succession give stability and peace, or does it threaten to destabilize the empire? Thus, when Neronian panegyrics praise Nero’s youth, they implicitly legitimize the hereditary principle that made him a candidate for the emperorship in the first place.⁸⁹ Vespasian’s representation, on the other hand, implies that he is capable of being emperor because of his military experience and thus precisely because, in contrast to young Nero, he has proven his abilities.⁹⁰ Finally, we saw that both the panegyric and the critical image

86 Klaassen (2014) 13–17 (citation p. 15).

87 Cf. Klaassen (2014) 65, 77, 88, 127–133, 227, 286–292, 315–317.

88 The expression is used by Tacitus inter alia when speaking about Galba (*Hist.* 1.49.4), see Klaassen (2014) 104–105.

89 The *Octavia* does not criticize the hereditary principle. On the contrary, Nero’s depiction as *insitivus* (‘grafted on’) and the fact that he has no Claudian ancestry play an important role in his negative depiction, cf. Cordes (2017) 277–281.

90 The fact that the foundation of Vespasian’s own dynasty and the existence of biological heirs could be seen as granting political stability (cf. Klaassen [2014] 149) shows that the debate about imperial succession was ongoing.

of young Domitian are influenced by his dynastic situation. By depicting Domitian as a son and brother who is neither willing nor capable of taking on the responsibilities of empire, Tacitus shows the downside of a hereditary succession.⁹¹ The question of how the texts, and especially the panegyric literature, negotiate the relationships between age, succession, and dynasty would merit additional analysis. For the moment it suffices to say that age is not only a suitable subject to demonstrate different Flavian responses to Nero's representation. By analysing how it is treated in different texts and contexts we can also see how the literary discourse about an individual ruler could influence, and be influenced by, more general debates concerning the political system of the Roman principate.⁹²

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91 For the question of how Tacitus' discussion of succession can be seen in his contemporary context, cf. Klaassen (2014) 149–151, 406–409.

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V

Looking Back

11 Historiographical Responses to Flavian Responses to Nero

Verena Schulz

Abstract

This article focuses on the reception of the Flavian responses to Nero in post-Flavian historiography and biography. First, it analyses the passages in which Tacitus has the Neronian and the Flavian narrative interact in the *Annals*, the *Histories*, and the *Agricola*. Tacitus mainly represents the Flavian distance from Nero in the case of Vespasian (and Titus). Domitian, however, is not distanced from Nero. Second, the article shows how Suetonius presents a similar evaluation of the Flavian relationships with Nero in even clearer terms. Third, Cassius Dio is analysed as being interested in these emperors from the perspective of his contemporary history. Finally, the results drawn from the historiographical discourse are contrasted with Philostratus' *Vita Apollonii* and with early Jewish–Christian literature.

Keywords: Tacitus; Suetonius; Cassius Dio; Pliny; Philostratus

Imperial Questions and Responses

Nero's regime raised crucial questions about imperial behaviour, such as: Which forms of eccentric representation should be allowed for an emperor? Where are the boundaries of imperial behaviour if it contradicts traditional social, moral, and political norms? And how should one deal with Nero's memory? Especially after Nero's death, the answers to these questions were not at all clear.¹ The emperors of the year 68–69 CE experimented with both distance from and closeness to Nero. After the unsuccessful and

¹ The ambivalent reception of Nero through several centuries is well illustrated by Champlin (2003) 1–35.

short principates of Galba, Otho, and Vitellius, Vespasian answered these questions mainly by dissociating himself from Nero, and his sons followed him in doing so.² The Flavian response, the distance to Nero, as expressed in several media, is a conscious and well-calculated construction of Flavian identity.³ It is highly probable that Flavian historiography, which has not come down to us, portrayed Nero in a critical and negative way, too.⁴

This article focuses on the reception of this Flavian construction in post-Flavian Roman historiography and biography, namely in Tacitus, Suetonius, and Cassius Dio.⁵ These authors wrote in periods following changes of dynasty and under emperors who had to respond to previous regimes, as the Flavians had to do with regard to Nero and the Julio-Claudian dynasty. Nerva, Trajan, and Hadrian, under whom Tacitus and Suetonius wrote, reacted to Domitian and the Flavians.⁶ Septimius Severus and his successors, under whom Cassius Dio wrote, responded to Commodus and the Antonine dynasty. In portraying the Flavians, Tacitus, Suetonius, and Cassius Dio could not avoid engaging with the Flavian responses to Nero. To answer the question of how these historians and the biographer depicted this relationship of the Flavians and Nero, I shall look at direct and indirect comparisons of these emperors and at passages in which the Neronian and Flavian narratives interact or overlap. We will see that the most important relationship between Nero and the Flavians that the texts discuss is the one between Nero and Domitian.

First, we will analyse the passages in which Tacitus has the Neronian and the Flavian narratives interact in the *Annals*, the *Histories*, and the

2 See Gallia's contribution to this volume for the argument that the nature of the Flavian response to Nero was never one of absolute opposition.

3 See Leithoff (2014) 134–147 on Nero as a negative *exemplum* under the Flavians. Cf. Penwill (2003) 358–359; Gallia (2016); Tuck (2016). Nauta (2010), focusing on Domitian and Nero, points out that at least Domitianic literature was unmistakably negative about Nero, and that other media show no clear intention of recalling Nero. However, Nero's portrait was reused throughout the Flavian period; see Wood (2016) 132–133; cf. Nauta (2010) 247–248.

4 See Hose and Fuhrer (2014) 18 and Joseph. *AJ* 20.154155: 'On these matters, however, I forbear to write more. For many historians have written the story of Nero, of whom some, because they were well treated by him, have out of gratitude been careless of [the] truth, while others from hatred and enmity towards him have so shamelessly and recklessly revelled in falsehoods as to merit censure. Nor can I be surprised at those who have lied about Nero, since even when writing about his predecessors they have not kept to the facts of history' (trans. Feldman [1965]). For the *Historiae* of Fabius Rusticus and of Cluvius Rufus, see Peter, *HRRel.* II 112–115; Syme (1958) I: 289–303; Cornell (2013) 549–560, 568–572; Dewar (2016) 470–471.

5 See Ambühl's chapter in this volume for another discussion of post-Flavian constructions and deconstructions of a dichotomy between Flavian and Neronian.

6 On the interrelation of dynasty change and predecessor denigration, see Charles (2002), focusing on reactions to Domitian after his death.

Agricola. Tacitus mainly represents the Flavian distance from Nero in the case of Vespasian (and Titus). Domitian, however, is not distanced from Nero.⁷ Second, we will see how Suetonius presents a similar evaluation of the Flavian relationships with Nero in even clearer terms in the genre of imperial biography. Third, Cassius Dio, whose *Roman History* provides less material and fewer points of contact between Nero and the Flavians, will turn out to be interested in these emperors from the perspective of his contemporary history under the Severans. Finally, we will summarize the results drawn from the historiographical discourse and contrast them with Philostratus' *Vita Apollonii*, which presents Nero and Domitian as much closer to each other, and with early Jewish–Christian literature, which creates its own version of Neronian and Flavian history.

Early Senatorial Responses: Narrative Interactions in Tacitus

Tacitus was born in the first half of Nero's reign and was roughly ten years old when Nero died. It is well known that he started his career in Flavian times, continued it under Domitian,⁸ and later distanced himself from the regime that was by then regarded as tyrannical. Tacitus discusses Nero and the Flavians in his *Agricola* and in the extant parts of the *Histories* and the *Annals*. Domitian is to the fore in Tacitus' first work, the *Agricola*. The three Flavians were subject of Tacitus' *Histories*, finished around 110 CE. Only the first four books and roughly a quarter of the fifth book have come down to us, describing only the events from 69 CE to the beginning of the year 70 CE. Nonetheless, there are depictions of Vespasian, Titus, and Domitian in these early books. Nero's reign is discussed in Tacitus' later major work, the *Annals*, starting with Book 13 and breaking off in Book 16.⁹ Since Tacitus' texts create a coherent representation of historical events, we can reconstruct Tacitus' narrative concerning these emperors by combining the relevant passages. I will study passages in Tacitus' works in which the Neronian and the Flavian

7 For the Flavian emperors' different (historical) responses to Nero in material culture, see the chapters by Wolsfeld (on visual imperial representation and iconographical choices made by the different Flavian emperors) and Cordes (on age encoding and, briefly, Neronian and Vespasianic portrait types) in this volume.

8 For Tacitus about his own career under the Flavians, see Tac. *Hist.* 1.1.3 (in general), *Ann.* 11.1 (about Tacitus and Domitian's secular games).

9 Nero's description in the *Annals* breaks off in 66 CE, so we miss the two last years of his reign, including e.g. Tiridates in Rome, Nero's journey to Greece, the rebellion of Vindex, and Nero's death.

narratives overlap (e.g. Vespasian's presence at one of Nero's performances), and in which there are direct and indirect comparisons between Nero, Vespasian, Titus, and Domitian. We will analyse whom among these four Tacitus distances from whom, and which figures he associates with one another. Tacitus depicts their distance or closeness with each other either directly or indirectly, for example, by describing their respective behaviour towards third persons such as Agricola or the Neronian *delatores*.

In his description of Nero in the *Annals*, Tacitus paints the famous picture of the artist-emperor, who lives out his role as poet, singer, actor, and charioteer more and more over time (see, e.g., Tac. *Ann.* 13.3.3, 14.14.1, 14.15.4, 14.16.1, 15.44.5, 16.4) and who gets everyone out of the way who challenges his way of ruling such as Agrippina, Burrus, and Thrasea Paetus (see *Ann.* 14.1–9, 14.51, 16.33–35). Nero is depicted as a *princeps* who identifies himself and his reign with his artistic achievements and who has no interest in the traditional imperial tasks and patterns of behaviour.¹⁰ There is only one reference to a Flavian emperor, namely to Vespasian, in the extant books. At the beginning of Book 16, Tacitus discusses the *Neronia* of 65 CE. According to Tacitus, Nero ordered his men to check who was there and how everyone reacted to Nero's performances. There were harsh forms of punishment, and some people stayed in the theatre day and night, fell sick and died. Among the spectators, so goes the story that Tacitus reports, was Vespasian:

ferebantque Vespasianum, tamquam somno coniveret, a Phoebio liberto increpitum aegreque meliorum precibus obtectum, mox imminentem perniciem maiore fato effugisse.

People said that Vespasian was berated by the freedman Phoebus for dozing with his eyes closed, and was only with difficulty protected by the pleas of decent people. Later, they say, he avoided his oncoming doom thanks to his greater destiny.¹¹ (*Ann.* 16.5.2–3)

This anecdote introduces Vespasian into the narrative as a potential opponent of Nero.¹² We could say that Vespasian here gives the general criticism of Nero a well-known face. This also ties in with Tacitus' overall positive

10 On Nero's (subversive) artistic interests, see Edwards (1994) 83–97 and Champlin (2003) 53–83.

11 Translations of Tacitus' *Annals* are those of Yardley (2008).

12 By contrast, when Vespasian and Nero are first mentioned in relation to each other in the *Histories*, Vespasian is characterized as Nero's general in Judaea (*Hist.* 1.10.3). Even during the era of Nero the focus was on Vespasian as a military leader.

attitude towards the first Flavian emperor in the *Histories*, in which Tacitus has Helvidius Priscus describe him as a friend of Thrasea, Soranus, and Sentius, all opponents and victims of Nero (*Hist.* 4.7.2).¹³ However, Vespasian's distance from Nero is not a prominent feature in the preserved parts of the *Histories*, which rather depict Vespasian's distance from his son Domitian. This is underlined by the closeness between Vespasian and his other son Titus (e.g. *Hist.* 4.51–52), who figures – despite his youthful debauchery¹⁴ – as a positive character in the *Histories* (*Hist.* 2.1.2, 2.5.2, 5.1.1). His conduct is used as a positive foil to the description of the young Domitian, who is depicted as not taking part in the fighting (*Hist.* 3.74.1, 4.85.2) and as timid (*Hist.* 3.59.3, 3.86.3), as indulging in licentious behaviour (*Hist.* 4.2.1, 4.68.1), as libidinous and bold (*Hist.* 4.39.2), as someone who needs to be controlled (*Hist.* 4.51.2, 4.68.3), and as capable of dissimulation (*Hist.* 4.86.2).¹⁵

This portrayal of the young Domitian in the *Histories* is consistent with the portrayal of Domitian the emperor in the *Agricola*, where the focus is on the last character trait mentioned, Domitian's art of dissimulation. His outward appearance differs from his thoughts and feelings (*Agr.* 39.1, 42.2, 43.3). Domitian's military achievements are presented as fake (*Agr.* 39.1), and we are invited to think that this is why the *princeps* envies the virtues of others (*infensus virtutibus princeps*, *Agr.* 41.1). Tacitus' Domitian gets angry easily, and the more he conceals his anger, the more irreconcilable he is (*Agr.* 42.3). He plans his actions against his enemies thoroughly and prefers solitude (*secreto suo satiat*, *Agr.* 39.3).

In this first work of Tacitus, which paints Domitian in the darkest colours, we can conceive of the figure of *Agricola* as a link between Domitian, Nero, and Vespasian. While the focus of the work is on *Agricola*'s conduct

13 In Tacitus, Vespasian's only vice is his greed (*avaritia*) (*Hist.* 2.5.1). Vespasian is also depicted positively in the *Agricola*, in which he figures as a successful military leader (*Agr.* 17.1) and in the *Dialogus* (with a dramatic date of 75 CE, so under Vespasian), in which Tacitus has Aper praise Vespasian twice: *Vespasianus, venerabilis senex et patientissimus veri*, 'Vespasian [...], our aged and venerable emperor, who never shuts his eyes to facts', *Dial.* 8.3; *sextam iam felicitis huius principatus stationem, qua Vespasianus rem publicam fovet*, 'now the sixth stage of this auspicious reign in which Vespasian is making the country happy', *Dial.* 17.3 (translated by Peterson and Winterbottom in Warmington [1970]).

14 See *Hist.* 2.2.1: *laetam voluptatibus adulescentiam egit, suo quam patris imperio moderatior*, 'his youth was a time of happy self-indulgence, and he showed more restraint in his own reign than in his father's'. Cf. *Hist.* 5.11.2, where Titus is depicted as not averse to *opes voluptatesque*, 'wealth and pleasures'.

15 In addition to his intentional deceptions, he unintentionally misleads interpreters of the complexion on his face when he speaks: it is wrongly understood as modesty (*Hist.* 4.40.1). See also Tac. *Agr.* 45.2, cited below.

during Domitian's reign, we also learn about Agricola under Nero. Tacitus' father-in-law was in Britain under the last Julio-Claudian emperor, whose reign is characterized in terms that resemble Domitian's: *militaris gloriae cupido, ingrata temporibus quibus sinistra erga eminentes interpretatio nec minus periculum ex magna fama quam ex mala* ('a passion for military glory [...] – not welcome in those days, when distinction aroused unfavourable reactions and a great reputation was no less dangerous than a bad one', *Agr.* 5.3).¹⁶ This may be an allusion to Nero's general Corbulo, whose relationship with his emperor as depicted in the *Annals* shares some similarities with Agricola's relationship with Domitian¹⁷: both men show the virtues that the emperor is expected to exhibit himself, foremost military qualities, and loyal and modest behaviour towards an emperor who is depicted in each case as tyrannical and incapable of military commands and success.

Under Nero, Agricola consequently adapts his behaviour. He assesses and understands Nero's times correctly: he decides to spend the year between the quaestorship and the tribunate of the plebs, as well as the actual year as tribune, in quiet inactivity, which Tacitus evaluates as wise (*Agr.* 6.3). We briefly learn that later Vespasian and Agricola had a close relationship and that Vespasian promoted Agricola and marked him out for the consulship (*Agr.* 9.1), which contrasts sharply with the tense and dangerous relationship between Agricola and Domitian pervading the work. In the final passage of the work, Agricola is even congratulated for his early death (*Agr.* 44.5), which spared him from experiencing the last and worst years of Domitian's terror:

Nero tamen subtraxit oculos suos iussitque scelera, non spectavit: praecipua **sub Domitiano** miseriarum pars erat **videre et aspici**, cum suspiria nostra subscriberentur, cum denotandis tot hominum palloribus sufficeret saevus ille vultus et rubor, quo se contra pudorem muniebat. **Tu vero felix, Agricola**, non vitae tantum claritate, sed etiam opportunitate mortis.

Nero at least averted his gaze: he ordered crimes to be committed but did not look on. A special torment **under Domitian** was **to watch and to be observed**, our very sighs being noted down against us, and all the while that savage gaze was able to mark down so many who had turned pale with shock, that flushed face that saved him from blushing with shame.

¹⁶ Translations of Tacitus' *Agricola* are those of Birley (1999), sometimes slightly adapted.

¹⁷ See Corbulo's active role in the events in Parthia and Armenia in Tac. *Ann.* 13.6–9, 13.34–41, 14.23–26, 15.1–17, 15.24–31. For Corbulo's characterization, see Tac. *Ann.* 13.8.1, 13.8.3, 13.9.2. For Agricola, see Tac. *Agr.* 5.1, 18.2, 19.2, 22.4.

You were indeed blessed, Agricola, not only in the brilliance of your life,
but because of the moment of your death. (*Agr.* 45.2–3)

Here, we find one of the rare explicit, direct comparisons of Domitian and Nero: the last Flavian exceeds Nero in his cruelty. Nero had at least only ordered crimes, but did not watch them, whereas Domitian made people watch, and watched and observed them himself.

In the extant parts of the *Histories*, there is no such direct comparison between Nero and one of the Flavians, although Nero is always present and is mentioned several times. The straightforward comparison between Domitian and Nero in the *Agricola*, however, suggests that we might search out passages in the *Histories* in which Tacitus indirectly creates a closeness between Nero and Domitian, or a distance between Nero or Domitian and the first two Flavians. Scholarship has indeed already shown that the account of the first meeting of the Senate after the Flavian victory draws an indirect comparison between Nero and Domitian as well as between Vespasian and Trajan (*Hist.* 4.39–43). It discusses, among other things, Neronian *delatores*, informers who had spied on their contemporaries and reported them to the emperor. Since they were supported by Nero, the new regime, which distanced itself from the ‘tyrant’, had to decide how to treat them and their excuses for their former behaviour.¹⁸ As regards possible links between Domitian and Nero, in my view not only the first, but also the second meeting of the Senate (*Hist.* 4.44–45) is worth analysing:

Proximo senatu, inchoante Caesare de abolendo dolore iraque et priorum temporum necessitatibus, censuit Mucianus **prolixè pro accusatoribus**; simul eos qui coeptam, deinde omissam actionem repeterent, monuit sermone molli et tamquam rogaret. **patres coeptatam libertatem, postquam obviam itum, omisere.** Mucianus, ne sperni senatus iudicium et cunctis sub Nerone admissis data impunitas videretur, Octavium

18 See Nauta (2014) 34–35. At this first meeting of the senate after the Flavian victory, Domitian is *Caesar* and *praetor urbanus* and present in the senate. Curtius Montanus speaks against Aquilius Regulus, who was a successful *delator* under Nero. He argues against taking Nero as an excuse for everything a *delator* did during his reign (*Tac. Hist.* 4.42.3) and stands in for a strong decision against *delatores* (*Hist.* 4.42.6). Since Aquilius Regulus, as the reader of the *Histories* knows, was also a *delator* under Domitian and not punished afterwards, the subtext of this passage reminds the contemporary reader that Trajanic times face the same issue of how to deal with *delatores* of a past (namely Domitian’s) regime as Vespasian’s times did (with Neronian *delatores*).

Sagittam et Antistium Sosianum senatorii ordinis egressos exilium in easdem insulas redegit.

At the next sitting **Domitian opened** by recommending them to **forget their grievances** and grudges and the unavoidable exigencies of the recent past. Mucianus then at great length moved a motion **in favour of the prosecutors**, issuing a mild warning, almost in terms of entreaty, to those who wanted to revive actions which had been begun and dropped. **Seeing that their attempt at independence was being opposed, the Senate gave it up.** However, so that it would not **seem** as if the Senate's opinion was being flouted and **complete impunity granted for all crimes committed under Nero**, Mucianus forced Octavius Sagitta and Antistius Sosianus, men of senatorial rank who had returned from exile, to go back to the islands to which they had been confined.¹⁹ (*Hist.* 4.44.1–2)

The topic of this Senate meeting is still how to deal with the Neronian *delatores*. Tacitus describes how Domitian and Mucianus force through their milder attitude towards these *delatores* against the senators, who finally give up their *libertas*. What is shown here is an element of continuity among the senators in Neronian and Flavian times. The very same *delatores* under Nero are still there under Vespasian, and the *libertas* of the senators, a crucial aspect for Tacitus, is briefly reanimated, but immediately ceases to exist.²⁰ Interestingly, this meeting takes place under Vespasian's rule, but the focus is on Domitian, who is physically present, as *Caesar* and *praetor urbanus* at the time, and who actively influences the discussion.²¹ Hence Tacitus not only constructs a continuity of negative Neronian features in

19 Translations of Tacitus' *Histories* are those by Fyfe and Levene (1997).

20 On the loss of *libertas* in Vespasian's times as compared to Republican times, cf. Tac. *Dial.* 27.3: Maternus encourages Aper to use the freedom of speech (*libertas*) of ancient times when talking about ancient people, and adds that they themselves – in the times of Vespasian (the dramatic date of the *Dialogus* is 75 CE) – had degenerated from *libertas* even more than from eloquence (Tac. *Dial.* 27.3).

21 Domitian's role concerning his responsibilities shared with Mucianus is less prominent in the *Agricola*. Tacitus states there that at the beginning of Vespasian's reign Mucianus took care of political affairs in Rome (*statum urbis Mucianus regebat*) since Domitian was still young and took advantage of his father's position for his boldness only (*iuvene admodum Domitiano et ex paterna fortuna tantum licentiam usurpante*, Tac. *Agr.* 7.2). Tacitus hence uses Domitian's passivity in the passage in the *Agricola* to argue for his incapability of leadership and his activity in the scene in the *Histories* (Tac. *Hist.* 4.44–45) to show the negative results of Domitian engaging in politics.

Flavian times, his text also associates this with Domitian rather than with the actual ruling emperor at the time.

Tacitus complements this not exclusively positive picture of early Flavian times by pointing out the negotiations of Nero's memory. Of course, Nero is mainly represented as a negative figure, also in the *Histories* (e.g. *Hist.* 1.5.2, 1.20.1), but Tacitus acknowledges that Nero's memory in the years after his death was not completely one-sided. There are traces of positive Nero discourses, which illustrate that Nero still had his followers (*Hist.* 1.4.2, 1.51.5, 1.72.1), including the phenomenon of the *falsi Nerones* (*Hist.* 1.2.1, 2.8–9), imposters who claimed to be Nero.²² Nero is also excused for some of his deeds, because these were supposed to be incited by the even worse Tigellinus (*Hist.* 1.72.1). Most of the time, the admiration or longing for Nero is marginalized, as his popularity is attributed to lower levels of society that are not appreciated by the aristocratic authors, such as the *plebs* or the *vulgus* (*Hist.* 1.4.3, 1.7.3, 1.78.2) and soldiers (1.8.2, 1.25.2), or to Nero's court, which resembled the emperor (1.13.4). However, the threat of an unsuccessful emperor making more and other people miss Nero in these years is presented as realistic. Tacitus has Galba point out in his famous adoption speech that evil people will always long for Nero, and that he and Piso have to take care that good people will not long for him too (*Nero a pessimo quoque semper desiderabitur: mihi ac tibi providendum est, ne etiam a bonis desideretur*, 'evil men will always miss Nero: you and I must ensure that good citizens do not miss him too', *Hist.* 1.16.3).²³

The *Histories* thus show that after the death of an evil emperor the negotiation of his memory is still taking place and that the problem of how to deal with it is not immediately solved. Tacitus' Galba, Otho, and Vitellius find different, unsuccessful answers. Galba distances himself from Nero as much as possible, for example, in the adoption speech just mentioned. Otho, Nero's former friend and husband of Poppaea, is described as close to Nero and as Nero's follower, and he is perceived as such by the characters in the narrative (*Hist.* 1.13.2–4, 1.22.1, 1.30.1, 1.78.2, 2.11.1). He makes use of Nero's memory when it suits him (*Hist.* 1.23.1), but also distances himself when doing so seems the more fruitful strategy (*Hist.* 1.21.1). Vitellius is also depicted as an admirer of Nero (*Hist.* 2.71). Hence the *Histories* present a situation of negotiating imperial memory that shares some similarities

22 For the *falsi Nerones*, see Champlin (2003) 10–12: we know of three *falsi Nerones* appearing in March 69 CE in Greece, in 79–81 CE in Asia (Terentius Maximus) and in 88–89 CE.

23 For a similar antithesis referring to the reception of Vitellius' positive treatment of Nero's memory, see Tac. *Hist.* 2.95.1 (*foedissimo cuique versus apud bonos*).

with the times in which they were written when Hadrian and Trajan had to position themselves to the memory of Domitian.

To sum up, Tacitus constructs his own coherent narrative of the Flavian period. On the one hand, he creates continuity between the Neronian and Flavian periods, pointing to the ongoing lack of *libertas* in the Senate and to a positive memory of Nero among his former followers.²⁴ But this continuity is not presented as something that the Flavians aimed at. On the other hand, Tacitus responds to the dissociation from Nero for Vespasian and Titus, but not for Domitian, thus evaluating only the last Flavian as close to Nero and singling him out from his father and brother. We have seen that Tacitus' narrative represents the construction of distance from Nero, which all the three Flavians promoted, differently for each emperor: he confirms the distance in Vespasian's case and accepts and legitimizes it in Titus' case; but he deconstructs the distance with regard to Domitian. More precisely, Tacitus dissociates Vespasian, Nero's historical general, from Nero by pointing to his friendship with some of Nero's opponents and by including the episode in which Vespasian barely escaped the death penalty for not properly attending to one of Nero's performances. Titus is never directly compared to Nero. His tendency to licentious behaviour, which might have recalled Nero, is marginalized and confined to his years before the principate. Instead, Titus figures as a positive foil for the negative performance of his brother, Domitian, who is explicitly compared to Nero; Tacitus deems Domitian worse than Nero. By creating this contrast between Domitian and his brother, Titus, Tacitus indirectly distances Titus and Vespasian from Nero as well. Despite similarities in their behaviour, however, Nero and Domitian do not represent the same type of bad emperor according to Tacitus. They are very different figures: with Tacitus' Nero, what you see is what you get, an artist unsuitable for the role of *princeps*. Domitian, by contrast, is characterized by his technique of dissimulation (*simulatio*).

Domitian is also subtly associated with Nero in the *Panegyricus* of Tacitus' friend Pliny the Younger. Its central topic is the contrast between current Trajanic times and Domitian's past regime. Every possible motif is used to distinguish Trajan from Domitian with regard to their personalities, their social interactions, and their virtues and vices. Although the focus is on Trajan, the *optimus princeps*, against Domitian, the *pessimus princeps*, Pliny uses the antithetical terminology of *mali principes* versus *boni principes* – in the plural form – in his text. This is not only the first instance of this

24 This is in line with the *Agricola*, in which we learn that only Nerva has united *principatus* and *libertas*, two concepts that had been incompatible so far (*res olim dissociabiles*, *Agr.* 3.1).

antithesis in Latin literature and an important device to structure Pliny's text, but, as Ruurd Nauta has shown, the plural forms also construct two categories, good and bad emperors.²⁵ When talking about *mali principes* in the plural form, Pliny seems to think first and foremost of Domitian and Nero (*Pan.* 4.1, 53.2–4). He thus employs the terminology of the *mali principes* to put Domitian into the same category as Nero, the emperor from whom he tried to distinguish himself.²⁶

Early Biographical Responses: Structural Comparisons in Suetonius' *Lives*

At the same time as Tacitus was writing historiography, Suetonius wrote Roman imperial biography.²⁷ Although he does not write historiography in a strict sense, he gives a lot of historical information and is therefore usually included in studies of Roman historiographical writing.²⁸ But it cannot be pointed out clearly enough how much his purpose of writing and his literary style differ from Tacitus'. The main difference between Suetonius' biographical writing and that of the historian is that Suetonius is not pursuing a political or socio-philosophical agenda. Furthermore, instead of presenting all important historical events and figures, he rather presupposes his readers to have a good knowledge of these. In addition, Suetonius does not create one main narrative that follows a chronological order, his focus being rather on each emperor both as a ruler and as a personality. Finally, his literary framework is not senatorial politics, but the preservation and presentation of knowledge in a way similar to the encyclopaedic and miscellaneous literature of the second century and its aesthetic features.²⁹ After some general remarks on the structure

25 See Nauta (2014) 32–33. The specific reason for and context of creating this antithesis may be the attribution of the title *Optimus* to Trajan.

26 See also Nauta (2010) 243 on Plin. *Pan.* 53.3–4: the comparison of Domitian and Nero may well have been part of a hidden discourse under Domitian, but it could it be used in official discourse.

27 The exact chronology of their works is debated, see Townend (1967) 88–89; Wardle (1998) 431; Bowersock (1998) 206.

28 For historians' criticism on Suetonius see, e.g., Flach (1972); Gascou (1984); Dihle (1987).

29 Features that Suetonius shares with encyclopaedic and miscellaneous literature are techniques of ordering knowledge, the involvement of an active reader, and the combined purpose of information and entertainment; see Schulz (2019) 342–354. For Suetonius as partaking not only in the historiographical discourse, but also in other discourses typical of the second century, such as discourses of knowledge and erudition, see Pausch (2004) 237–275.

of Suetonius' *Lives*, we will go through the *Lives* of Vespasian, Titus, and Domitian, and analyse the passages in which Nero is mentioned.³⁰ Just as in our examination of Tacitus, we will ask whether Suetonius constructs distance or similarities between Nero and the Flavians, and among the Flavians themselves.

Structurally, Suetonius' biographies can be characterized as a mixture of more chronological passages on the one hand, presenting in particular the time before the ascent to the principate and the last days and death, and rubrics (*species*) on the other hand, illustrating the virtues, vices, and elements of representation of each emperor. The text offers two ways of reading: a continuous way of reading and a selective way of reading. Firstly, each *Life* or book of *Lives*, or the entire work, can be read on its own as one entity.³¹ Secondly, text passages that entail a specific piece of information the recipient is interested in can be selected for reading: for instance, the vices of Caligula (Suet. *Calig.* 22–49), Galba's eating habits (Suet. *Galb.* 22), or Vespasian's humour (Suet. *Vesp.* 22–23). In such a selective reading process, the rubric system allows the reader to compare parallel pieces of information in several *Lives*. These features of Suetonius' work prompt other strategies for presenting similarities or differences between emperors than those of Tacitus' writings. We can detect some direct points of contact, the most prominent of which is the comparison of Claudius and Nero with the Flavians, presented as a dream of Vespasian at the end of his *Life* (*Vesp.* 25). The comparison refers to the same amount of time that both dynasties were in power, and implicitly points to Domitian and Nero 'as the agents of dynastic extinction'.³² But most importantly, the text sets up intertextual relations by inviting the reader to compare the rubrics for each emperor and the structure of their biographies.

With these general remarks in mind, we will take a closer look at the Flavian *Lives* and their references to Nero. The emperor's relationship to Nero is an important element in the biographies of Galba, Otho, and Vitellius. As such, Suetonius testifies to the negotiation of Nero's memory that takes place during their principates (*Galb.* 10.1, 15.1, *Otho* 7.1, *Vit.* 11.2). Among these three emperors, Suetonius' Vitellius in particular shows many parallels with

30 There are no references to the Flavians in Suetonius' *Life of Nero*.

31 The *Lives* of Galba, Otho, and Vitellius form Book 7, and the *Lives* of Vespasian, Domitian, and Titus form Book 8. Cf. the new edition of Kaster (2016), whose arrangement of the text of the last six *Lives* mirrors this book structure.

32 Wilson (2003) 532.

and sympathy for Nero (*Vit.* 4.1, 12). By contrast, in the *Life of Vespasian*, Vespasian himself is distanced from Nero directly and indirectly in several passages.³³ Just as in Tacitus, there is an anecdote about Vespasian's risky behaviour in the theatre:

Peregrinatione Achaica inter comites Neronis, cum cantantem eo aut discederet saepius aut praesens obdormisceret gravissimam contraxit offensam prohibitusque non contubernio modo sed etiam publica salutatione secessit in parvam ac deviam civitatem, quoad latenti etiamque extrema metuenti provincia cum exercitu oblata est.

Travelling through Greece in Nero's entourage, when the emperor was singing he would usually leave or, if he did stay, would fall asleep. Having thereby fallen into the deepest disfavour and been banished, not only from the emperor's inner circle but even from his public receptions, Vespasian retired to a small and out-of-the-way town where he hid, fearing even the worst, until he was offered a province with an army.³⁴
(*Vesp.* 4.4)

We can see that Suetonius' version differs from Tacitus' in some interesting details: it takes place in Greece during Nero's grand artistic journey (and not in Rome during the *Neronia*); Vespasian leaves Nero's performances or falls asleep (instead of just dozing), and this happens several times (instead of only once); and finally, Suetonius' Vespasian is not berated by one of Nero's men and protected by others, but falls into the deepest disfavour, is banished, and hides away in a small town, fearing the worst. Suetonius' scene thus seems more dramatic for Vespasian than it does in Tacitus' narrative. On the one hand, the distance between Vespasian and Nero is hence greater in Suetonius, which is in line with Suetonius' focus on Vespasian in this passage, and not on Nero, as is the case in Tacitus' *Annales*. On the other hand, the same scene indirectly implies a closer relationship between Vespasian and Nero than Tacitus' version. The fact that Vespasian accompanies Nero to Greece *inter comites* indicates a rather intimate relationship, as does the fact that Nero offers him – after the alleged fall from grace – the military command of a province. There is a certain tension between Vespasian's connection to and his distance from

33 Cf. Luke (2009–2010) 515–516, 522–523, 535, 537 and his analysis of Vespasian's humour: Suetonius uses the depiction of Vespasian's humour to contrast him with Nero (and Caligula).

34 Translations of Suetonius are those of Edwards (2000), sometimes slightly adapted.

Nero in the text,³⁵ and such an ambivalence is typical of the biographer, who integrates different perspectives into his work.³⁶

The difference between Nero and Vespasian is also pointed out in the passage about Vespasian's *civilitas* and *clementia* (*Vesp.* 12–15), where his banishment from Nero's court and his fear are mentioned again (*Vesp.* 14), and where he is exculpated from the murder of Helvidius Priscus (*Vesp.* 15). Both emperors' death scenes (*Ner.* 40–49, *Vesp.* 24) differ enormously as well. Nero's long and delayed death, which shows him engaging more and more in his role as artist and dying as an artist (*Ner.* 40.2, 41.1–2, 43.2, 49.1), as he himself puts it, contrasts sharply with the quick death of Vespasian, who thinks that an emperor has to die standing on his feet (*Vesp.* 24).

Vespasian's son Titus was Suetonius' ideal *princeps*, and he is introduced as the 'love and pleasure of all mankind' (*Tit.* 1.1). This praise contradicts the image of him as another Nero:

denique propalam **alium Neronem** et opinabantur et praedicabant. at illi ea fama pro bono cessit conversaque est in maximas laudes neque vitio ullo reperto et contra virtutibus summis.

To sum up, people thought of him and even publicly spoke of him as **another Nero**. Yet this reputation turned out to be to his advantage for, when he was found to have no vices but instead the greatest virtues, it was succeeded by the greatest praise. (*Tit.* 7.1)

The text deploys two strategies to refute this idea of Titus the Neronian *princeps*. First, although Titus' *vitia*, his *saevitia* ('cruelty'), *luxuria* ('riotous living'), *libido* ('wantonness'), and *rapacitas* ('greediness') are acknowledged and mentioned (*Tit.* 7.1), they are confined to Titus' behaviour before he became *princeps*; at the start of his principate, these vices are even turned into virtues (*Tit.* 7.1). This *divisio* directly follows the reproach of Titus being an *alius Nero*, which is thus modelled as the peak of Titus' *vitia* but which is also immediately refuted. The second strategy that distances Titus from

35 For Vespasian's relationships with Caligula, which is not depicted in a one-sided way either, cf. Suet. *Vesp.* 2.3–5.3.

36 Scholarship has explained this by the influence of rhetorical thinking (see Lewis [1991] 3653, 3669) and by the influence of the philosophy of the New Academy (see Cizek [1977] 159–165).

Nero is his depiction as a close relation to Britannicus, Nero's brother, rival, and victim³⁷:

Educatus in aula **cum Britannico** simul ac paribus disciplinis et apud eosdem magistros institutus. quo quidem tempore aiunt metoposcopum a Narcisso Claudi liberto adhibitum ut Britannicum inspiceret constantissime affirmasse illum quidem nullo modo, ceterum Titum, qui tunc prope astabat, utique imperaturum. erant autem **adeo familiares ut de potione qua Britannicus hausta periit Titus quoque iuxta cubans gustasse credatur gravique morbo adflictatus diu. quorum omnium mox memor** statuum ei auream in Palatio posuit et alteram ex ebore equestrem, quae circensi pompa hodieque praefertur, dedicavit prosecutusque est.

He was brought up and educated at court **alongside Britannicus** in the same subjects and by the same teachers. They say that at that time a fortune teller had been summoned by Narcissus, Claudius' freedman, to inspect Britannicus and that he persistently asserted that it could not possibly be he but rather Titus, who was standing nearby, who would be emperor. Yet the boys were **so intimate that Titus, too, who was reclining beside him, is believed to have tasted the same drink which Britannicus finished off and then died, and to have been very ill for a long time. Later on, in recognition of all this**, he set up a golden statue to Britannicus on the Palatine and dedicated another one of him on horseback, made of ivory, which even now is carried at the head of the circus procession, himself attending it on its first appearance. (*Tit.* 2)

Titus' shared an education with Britannicus, their shared consumption of the same deadly drink, the private and public remembrance of all this, and finally the setting up of a golden statue for Britannicus, closely associates Nero's brother with Domitian's brother. This strategy raises the expectation that Suetonius will compare and draw parallels between the two pairs of brothers, Britannicus and Nero, and Titus and Domitian. This is not the case, however, as no direct comparisons or explicitly marked connections are made between Nero and Domitian.³⁸

37 For Britannicus as Nero's rival, see Suet. *Ner.* 6.4, 7.1, 33.2–3; see also Suet. *Claud.* 27.1–2, 43.

38 An exception is the episode about Nero's Epaphroditus (*Dom.* 14.4): Suetonius reports that Domitian kept Epaphroditus as a secretary and condemned him to death, because he was thought to have helped Nero in killing himself (*Dom.* 14.4). According to Suetonius, however, this has nothing to do with Nero: Domitian wanted to convince his household that they should

There are, however, two implicit ways in which Domitian is associated with Nero. The first is the lack of strategies that distance Domitian from Nero. Especially when we read Domitian's *Life* after the *Lives* of his father and brother, it is striking that Domitian is not contrasted to Nero in the way that Vespasian and Titus were in their respective *Lives*. Secondly, there are structural parallels with the *Life of Nero*.³⁹ Family background is one of them, and is important in both *Lives*, because it underlines the bad character of each emperor in the narrative even before their birth and upbringing are described.⁴⁰ Another structural parallel is presented by the clearly stated divisions into virtues and vices. The *divisio* in *Dom.* 3.2 (cf. *Dom.* 10.1) recalls the *divisio* in the *Life of Nero* (*Ner.* 19.3) as well as the one in the *Life of Caligula* (*Calig.* 22.1). All these three emperors are depicted as overall bad emperors in Suetonius, with Caligula being the worst. But the descriptions of their lives still include passages about virtues and positive actions, and in these sections we can see that Nero and Domitian did not share only negative features. In fact, their virtues are described by Suetonius in quite similar terms, as Suetonius discusses the *spectacula*, the institution of new games,⁴¹ the building programme, and the administration of both emperors.

Additionally, we can see structural similarities in the passages about their vices. When we compare the negative rubrics in both *Lives*, it becomes apparent that for both emperors Suetonius includes both their common tyrannical vices and their more characteristic, typical vices at a striking position, as shown in Table 11.1.

Nero has his very own, Neronian *probra* (*Ner.* 20–25), pertaining to his artistic or performance endeavours. After these, his vices of *petulantia* ('impudence'), *libido* ('wantonness'), *luxuria* ('riotous living'), *avaritia* ('greediness'), and *crudelitas* ('cruelty') are dealt with (*Ner.* 26–38) in *cre-scendo* style. The main part of the passage about Domitian's vices is about

under no circumstances try to kill their patron. For the same story interpreted as Domitian's revenge for Nero, see Plin. *Pan.* 53.4 with Nauta (2010) 243.

39 Cf. Nauta (2010) 245 for similarities in their physical description (except for their hairstyle), which suggest that Suetonius wanted the reader to recall Nero when reading the description of Domitian.

40 This effect of underlining the bad character in the context of family history is achieved differently in the *Lives* of Nero and Domitian. Nero's family history (*Ner.* 1–5), presented in detail because the *gens Domitia* has not been mentioned before, serves as a direct explanation for his own vices (*Ner.* 1.2). By contrast, the Flavian family history provides a contrasting foil to Domitian, who is the negative exception in the family (*Vesp.* 1.1).

41 Cf. Nauta (2010) 251 on the repeated phrase of *instituit et quinquennale certamen* ('he established a quinquennial contest') both in *Ner.* 12.3 and in *Dom.* 4.4, which draws a parallel between both accounts.

Table 11.1. Nero's and Domitian's vices in Suetonius' *Lives*

Nero	Domitian
20–25: <i>probra</i> (typical of Nero)	10–11: <i>saevitia</i>
26–29: <i>petulantia, libido</i>	12.1–2: <i>cupiditas</i>
30–32: <i>luxuria, avaritia</i>	
33–38: <i>crudelitas</i>	12.3–13: <i>arrogantia</i> (typical of Domitian)

his *saevitia* (*Dom.* 10–11), which corresponds to Nero's *crudelitas*. Then his *cupiditas* is treated (*Dom.* 12.1–2), which corresponds to Nero's *avaritia*, and finally his *arrogantia* (*Dom.* 12.3–13). So both emperors are characterized by two shared features that are typical of tyrants, i.e. *crudelitas/saevitia* and *cupiditas/avaritia*,⁴² and by one element that is typical of their respective personalities, namely Nero's artistic and Domitian's arrogant forms of self-representation, which are placed at the beginning and end of the respective passages dealing with their vices.

Led on by these structural correspondences, the reader is encouraged to consider Domitian as closer to Nero than to Vespasian and Titus. But it would be difficult to argue that closely associating Domitian with Nero is the paramount purpose of the text. As we have seen, there are some parallels, but there are also differences. The reactions to their deaths, for example, differ a lot in Suetonius' account: whereas Nero, despite the joy about his death, was favourably remembered by several individuals as well as by the Parthians, Suetonius' Domitian is missed only by the soldiers (*Ner.* 57, *Dom.* 23.1). Furthermore, there are direct references to other emperors as well, for instance, when Domitian is said to have repeatedly read only Tiberius' notebooks and records (*Dom.* 20). Suetonius' text more clearly deconstructs Domitian's relationship to Vespasian and Titus than that it constructs a link with Nero.⁴³ It reacts more clearly to the continuity exhibited by the historical Domitian with his Flavian predecessors than to his constructed distance from Nero. In the case of Vespasian and – even more – of Titus, however, Suetonius does confirm the Flavian construction of distance from Nero.

42 See also, for instance, Suet. *Tib.* 60–62, *Calig.* 32–34, *Galb.* 12, *Vit.* 13–14. On Suetonian *virtutes* and *vitia*, cf. Wallace-Hadrill (1983) 142–174; on the topics of rubrics and virtues and vices, see e.g. Lambrecht (1995) 512–513.

43 Important passages for this deconstruction are *Vesp.* 1.1, *Tit.* 9.3, *Dom.* 1.3–2.1, 2.3. Furthermore, the structure of the *Life of Titus* is in a diametrically different order compared to the *Life of Domitian*: whereas in Titus' *Life* vices are mentioned first and are confined to the time before he became emperor (see the *divisio* in *Tit.* 7.1), Domitian's *Life* proceeds from a mixture of virtues and vices in his early reign to vices only (see the *divisio* in *Dom.* 3.2).

Senatorial Responses under the Severans: Typological Relationships in Cassius Dio

More than a hundred years after Tacitus and Suetonius, in Severan times, the senator Cassius Dio wrote his 80 books of Roman history, covering the years from the earliest beginnings of Rome up to the reign of Severus Alexander. The depiction of his contemporary history is important to understand the whole work, and it also explains Dio's interest in Nero and Domitian, in particular.⁴⁴ The later books, from Claudius' reign onwards, including the reigns of Nero and the Flavians, have not come down to us directly; we only possess their *epitomai*, the most important of which were written by Byzantine monks in the eleventh and twelfth centuries CE. Cassius Dio provides us with fewer text passages and study points of contact between Nero and the Flavians. This may be partly due to the transmission of the text, but it can also be explained by a different interest in imperial history in the early third century.

As in Tacitus and Suetonius, the three *principes* after Nero are characterized not least by the way in which they fashion Nero's memory. Dio's Galba aims to distance himself from his predecessor (63[64].3.4¹), whereas Otho and Vitellius are described as even worse than Nero (63[64].8.2¹–3, 63[64].9.1, 64[65].4.1). With this and the appearance of the *falsi Nerones* under Otho (63[64].9.3) and Titus (66.19.3^b), Dio testifies to the ongoing negotiations of Nero's memory. The surviving epitomized text shows some, but not too many, efforts to distinguish Vespasian and Titus,⁴⁵ two emperors considered as overall good by Dio, from Nero.⁴⁶ Vespasian, for

44 See Gowing (1992) 293–294; Hose (2007) 465–467.

45 Dio defends the relationship between Titus and Vespasian as good when he exculpates Titus from the reproach that he is to blame for Vespasian's death (Cass. Dio 66.17.1). According to Dio, Titus gets much better when he is *princeps* (66.18.1), but his reign may only be satisfactory due to the fact that he did not rule long enough (66.18.4–5).

46 The anecdote about Vespasian's offensive behaviour during one of Nero's performances is presented twice by Dio, but has a different purpose than distancing Vespasian from Nero. According to Xiphilinos, our source for Dio's account of Vespasian's reign, Vespasian is said to have 'frowned when he saw the emperor behaving himself in unseemly fashion' (65[66].11.2), after which a certain Phoebus angrily bids Vespasian to leave. The story is introduced to illustrate Vespasian's mildness at a later meeting with Phoebus at which Vespasian, now emperor, does him no harm (65[66].11.2). Almost the same episode is told in the context of Nero's journey to Greece, in an excerpt from Petrus Patricius, but Vespasian's name is not mentioned. Nero, we are told, 'conceived a dislike for a certain man because, while he was speaking, the man frowned and was not over-lavish in his praises' (62[63].10.1^a). Assisted by the same Phoebus, Nero sent the man away and would not let him come near him. In this context, dealing with Nero, it is apparently not important, at least to the excerptor, that the man in question was allegedly Vespasian.

example, rescinds ‘a disfranchisement of those who had been condemned by Nero and succeeding rulers for acts of *maiestas*’ (65[66].9.1).⁴⁷ Vespasian’s way of dealing with finances is also completely different from Nero’s (65[66].10.3) and, just as Suetonius, Dio exculpates Vespasian from the death of Helvidius Priscus, who is criticized and thus cast in a more negative light than Thræsea Paetus, who was forced to die by suicide under Nero (65[66].12.1–3).

Other passages, however, seem to emphasize continuity between Nero and Vespasian: there are two complementary dreams, by Vespasian and Nero, respectively, about Vespasian as Nero’s successor. But they focus on the continuity of the principate, not on an association of Vespasian with Nero:

καὶ παρ’ ὀνείρατος ἔμαθεν ὅτι, ὅταν ὁ Καῖσαρ Νέρων ὀδόντα ἀποβάλη, αὐταρχήσει· καὶ τοῦτό τε τὸ κατὰ τὸν ὀδόντα τῇ ἐπιούσῃ ἡμέρᾳ συνηνέχθη, καὶ αὐτὸς ὁ Νέρων ἔδοξέ ποτε ἐν τοῖς ὕπνοις τὸν τοῦ Διὸς ὄχρον ἐς τὴν τοῦ Οὐεσπασιανοῦ οἰκίαν ἐσαγαγεῖν.

From a dream he [Vespasian] learned that when **Nero Caesar** should lose a tooth, he himself should be emperor. This prophecy about the tooth became a reality on the following day; **and Nero himself** in his dreams once thought that he had brought the car of Jupiter to Vespasian’s house. (65[66].1.3)

Dio also evokes continuity between Nero and Titus. He mentions that there were different opinions concerning the Colossus set up in 75 CE and the question whether it displayed the features of Nero or of Titus:

φασὶ δὲ αὐτὸν τὸ τε ὕψος ἑκατὸν ποδῶν καὶ τὸ εἶδος οἱ μὲν τὸ τοῦ Νέρωνος οἱ δὲ τὸ τοῦ Τίτου ἔχειν.

This statue is said to have been one hundred feet in height and **to have borne the features of Nero, according to some, or those of Titus, according to others.** (65[66].15.1)

The interpretation of the Colossus as picturing Titus’ features is supported by the fact that even Titus’ official portraits showed clear traces of Nero’s.⁴⁸

47 Translations of Cassius Dio are those of Cary (1925).

48 See Wood (2016) 133 on Flavian public images.

Dio could have excluded a statement about the interpretation of the Colossus' features if he had had an interest in dissociating Titus from Nero as much as possible. We have seen that Suetonius, by contrast, applies several strategies to dissociate Titus, the alleged *alius Nero*, from Nero.

The only dissociation that Dio really promotes is the one between Domitian and his father and brother.⁴⁹ But Dio does not investigate the relationship of Domitian and Nero, although there would have been opportunities. When Dio refers to acquaintances of both Nero and Domitian, for instance, he does not make use of this link to connect the two emperors. That Domitian married Domitia, the daughter of Corbulo, Nero's general and eventual victim (65[66].3.4), is not exploited. Dio also does not associate Domitian with Nero when he mentions that he killed Nero's Epaphroditos in order to terrify his own freedmen to prevent them from killing him (67.14.4). This action is rather used as an example of his suspicion of all mankind, which was a consequence of his own cruelty.

We can conclude that Dio, at least in the remaining *epitomai*, is less concerned with the question of how to evaluate the Flavian relationship with Nero than Tacitus and Suetonius were. The debate about this relationship seems to have been more relevant in Hadrian's and Trajan's times, in which there were still contemporaries who had lived under Nero and the Flavians. Rather, Dio is interested in Nero and Domitian as types of a bad emperor that resemble his contemporary *principes*, a focal point that we find neither in Tacitus nor in Suetonius. Dio does not connect Nero and Domitian directly. What relates them to each other is their potential to be a prefiguration of a contemporary bad emperor. Nero and Domitian (as well as Tiberius and Caligula) are presented in similar terms to Commodus, Caracalla, and Elagabalus. The reader recognizes patterns of behaviour that resemble each other, or is made aware of connections between earlier and contemporary emperors.⁵⁰ Nero foreshadows Commodus, who, for instance, also stages his own performances by directing his audience (73[72].20.2). Under Commodus, the murders committed with poisoned needles, which happened under Domitian, reappear, as Dio explicitly states (73[72].14.4). Caracalla is similar to Nero in that he performs as charioteer (78[77].10.1), reveres the cithara player Mesomedes (78[77].12.7), and learns to dance (78[77].21.2). Caracalla recalls Domitian in their common enmity towards their brothers and especially in their character trait of simulation (e.g. 78[77].12.6, 78[77].11.5). Under Elagabalus, a certain Aurelius, who is known

49 See Cass. Dio 65[66].2.3, 65[66].10.1, 65[66].12.1^a, 66.20.3, 66.26.2–4, 67.2.1–4.

50 For more examples, see Schulz (2014) 427–430.

for his large genitals, is brought to the emperor and receives an escort larger than that of Abgar under Severus or Tiridates under Nero (80[79].16.2). The similarity of Nero and Domitian to contemporary emperors is hence much more important for Dio than the similarity between the two of them.

Conclusion: Beyond the Historiographical Discourse

Tacitus, Suetonius, and Cassius Dio largely represent the distance from Nero that Vespasian and Titus sought to exhibit. They do not try to undermine it. In the case of Domitian, however, Tacitus and Suetonius, and to a lesser extent Cassius Dio, establish connections and similarities with Nero. They deconstruct Domitian's policy of distancing himself from Nero. Even more important in all three corpora, however, is the construction of an intra-Flavian distance between Domitian on the one hand and his father and brother on the other hand. Maybe the strategy to make Domitian recall Nero can even be considered a sub-strategy to distinguish Vespasian and Titus from both their successor and their predecessor. Direct comparisons or explicit drawing parallels between Nero and Domitian are rare.

In their details, however, the accounts of Tacitus, Suetonius, and Cassius Dio differ because they look at the emperors from different points of view, with different interests. Tacitus, writing in a time that had to deal with the memory of Domitian, depicts early Flavian times as still negotiating the memory of Nero. Suetonius, with his focus on the emperors as personalities, make a greater effort to distance Vespasian and Titus from Nero and to associate Nero and Domitian than Tacitus does in the remaining books of the *Annals* and the *Histories*. About a hundred years later, Cassius Dio does not seem to be concerned with the question of how distinct the Flavians were from Nero. Rather, he is interested in Nero and Domitian as tyrannical types that foreshadow his contemporary emperors of the third century.

In the direct comparison of Nero and Domitian in Tacitus' *Agricola* and in the concept of *mali principes* in Pliny's *Panegyricus* we find the two clearest associations of Nero and Domitian in texts that do not belong to the historiographical discourse in the strict sense. There is one other work that closely associates these two emperors and that is also not historiographical, namely Philostratus' fictitious *Vita Apollonii*. There, both Nero and Domitian are explicitly termed 'tyrants' (e.g. Philostratus, *VA* 7.1, 7.14.4). Their most important common feature in this text is their enmity towards philosophers, and towards Apollonius of Tyana in particular, a philosopher who knew both tyrants. Philostratus' Apollonius clearly approves of Vespasian and

Titus, but not of Domitian or Nero. When Vespasian asks Apollonius for his opinion of Nero (*VA* 5.28), the philosopher paints a negative picture of him. Apollonius is said to have behaved the same way towards the tyrants Nero and Domitian (*VA* 7.3). More explicit parallels between the two emperors can also be found. Both Nero and Domitian are, for example, said to kill their enemies with the same kind of fish, the seahare (*VA* 6.32.2). When Nero is directly compared to Domitian in a discussion about tyrants and philosophers that takes place under a plane tree in Cicero's villa, Domitian is even considered worse than Nero, whose musical activities are alluded to:

νυνὶ δὲ τίνι μὲν εὐφωνία, τίνι δὲ κιθάρα θύσομεν; ἄμουσα γὰρ καὶ μεστὰ χολῆς πάντα, καὶ οὐτ' ἄν ὑφ' ἑαυτοῦ ὄδε οὐτ' ἄν ὑφ' ἑτέρων θελχθεῖη.

But now what *bel canto*, what lyre shall we sacrifice to? Everything is unmusical and full of malice, **and the present ruler can be soothed neither by himself nor by others.**⁵¹ (*VA* 7.12.4)

As far as I can see, only some early Christian and Jewish texts associate Domitian, and even all three Flavian emperors, with Nero more openly than Philostratus. This illustrates that Nero and the Flavians could be represented in terms completely different from the historiographical discourse. In the *Fifth Sibylline Oracle*, Nero, the emperor under whom the apostles Peter and Paul were killed, becomes the destroyer of the temple in Jerusalem, although he had already been dead for two years when this happened (5Sib 150–154).⁵² The *Martyrdom and Ascension of Isaiah* and the *Book of Revelation* depict Nero as the Antichrist, or rather as a forerunner of the Antichrist.⁵³ The *Fifth Sibylline Oracle* depicts Vespasian as the murderer of all good people (5Sib 36) and Titus as the murderer of his own father (5Sib 38–39).⁵⁴ Contrary to their depiction in Roman historiography, the first two Flavians here appear as bad emperors. They are not distanced from Nero. By contrast, Domitian is depicted as a rather dreary figure who does not incite apocalyptic imagination in the *Fifth Sibylline Oracle* and in the *Gospel of Luke*, which is also quite unlike his image in Roman historiography.⁵⁵ The

51 Translations of Philostratus, *VA* are those of Henderson (2005).

52 See Champlin (2003) 14; Backhaus (2014) 384. Positive traits of Nero are, however, also emphasized in these texts: see Champlin (2003) 15 for the *Fifth Sibylline Oracle* and Backhaus (2014) 392 for the rabbinic *Babylonian Talmud*, *Gittin*.

53 See Champlin (2003) 17–19.

54 See Backhaus (2014) 390.

55 See Backhaus (2014) 390.

Twelfth *Sibylline Oracle* even depicts him in extremely positive terms (12Sib 124–142), contrary to Nero (12Sib 78–94). This strikingly positive image can be interpreted in the specific Jewish context of the Twelfth *Sibylline Oracle*: from a Jewish perspective, Vespasian and Titus, as well as Trajan and Hadrian, are much more connected with the Jewish–Roman wars and tensions than Domitian, whose reign in between these emperors seems relatively peaceful.⁵⁶

The Christian *Book of Revelation*, by contrast, which can be dated to Domitian's reign or shortly thereafter, closely associates Domitian with Nero, demonizing the emperor as a *Nero redivivus* and as the second persecutor of Christians.⁵⁷ In the context of the *Book of Revelation*, the Nero-like Domitian forms part of a strategy to support Christian group identity by defining enemies and persecutors and distancing the group from them.⁵⁸

Evidently, Domitian is made to recall Nero when they are both used as a foil to praise someone else – as in the case of Agricola and Apollonius, as well as Trajan in Pliny's *Panegyricus* – or when they are presented as comparable persecutors, in early Christian literature. Compared to these discourses, post-Flavian historiography in the proper sense exhibits a relatively small endeavour to make Domitian recall Nero and to deconstruct the distance that the last Flavian, just as his predecessors, tried to establish to the last Julio-Claudian emperor.

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⁵⁶ See Backhaus (2014) 392.

⁵⁷ For an in-depth analysis, see Backhaus (2014) 379, 395, who points out that the *Book of Revelation* should be read as documenting the perception of crisis of a certain group, but not as a typical document for the province of Asia under Domitian. See also Mucha (2015) 360–361 for Nero-Domitian analogies in the *Book of Revelation*.

⁵⁸ See Backhaus (2014) 379, 397–399.

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In this interdisciplinary volume, a team of classicists, historians, and archaeologists examines how the memory of the infamous emperor Nero was negotiated in different contexts and by different people during the ensuing Flavian age of imperial Rome. The contributions show different Flavian responses to Nero's complicated legacy: while some aspects of his memory were reinforced, others were erased. Emphasizing the constant and diverse nature of this negotiation, this book proposes a nuanced interpretation of both the Flavian age itself and its relation to Nero's Rome and offers a multi-faceted picture of Roman civilization at a crucial turning point.

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