Publicity, Privacy, and Power in Neronian Rome

by

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Introduction

This project began with the observation that the house and family played a prominent role in literary texts of the Neronian period, especially the houses and families of rulers. In a period of significant political and social change in the Roman world, and during the rise of monarchic and dynastic rule, Seneca, Lucan, Petronius, and (at a later date) Tacitus pay special attention to domestic life, the physical space of the house, and family bonds. The house and family, moreover, are fruitful objects of inquiry for the ancient world because we possess not only literary records but also material evidence for how the imperial family was identified and honored, as well as domestic art and architecture for numerous social classes and geographical locations. Yet the *domus* is also a particularly challenging category, because the Roman conception of "public" and "private" is very different from what we know or assume in the modern West. While it is not quite right to say that the Romans had no conception of privacy in the house, it is also well established that the house was not primarily a space of refuge, but a place where the *dominus*, the master of the house, could display himself to the community on his own terms.[1] I use literary and material sources from the early empire to examine Roman conceptions of public and private, and how these ideas are used to define the relationship between ruler and ruled. Focusing on the public/private dichotomy, I argue, reveals the complexity of the understanding of power relations in the early imperial period. The ruler is not

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[1] Wallace-Hadrill (1994) is the seminal work on this topic. On the display of the *dominus* within the house, see also Drerup (1959); Clarke (1991); Parker (2000); Leach (2004). On privacy in the Roman house, see Grahame (1997) and (2000); Anguissola (2010); Lauritsen (2012).

just an all-powerful father figure, but also a potential target, vulnerable to those closest to him and to the community at large. Furthermore, the vulnerability of the ruler is a concern both for him and for the security of the community. Ultimately, one-man rule produces an intimacy between ruler and ruled that results in the transformation or disruption of all other bonds between members of the polity.

I have brought together two separate threads of scholarship on political culture and the position of the emperor in the early imperial period. Using these approaches in concert, I argue, is necessary for illuminating the relationship between ruler and community and the conception of absolute power in Roman thought. The first thread uses the theater, the performance of actors in front of an audience, as a model for power relations and social intercourse under imperial rule. The most extensive treatment of this approach is S. Bartsch's *Actors in the Audience: Theatricality and Doublespeak from Nero to Hadrian* (1994).[2] Bartsch demonstrates that the interactions between emperor and subjects in the early empire may be understood in theatrical terms: the subject is the actor who performs to please the emperor, while the emperor sets the script and watches his subordinates to be sure that they are playing their roles correctly. The actor, however, must also observe his audience "to make sure his performance is giving rise to the desired effect."[3] The theatrical paradigm owes much to the work of sociologist E. Goffman, who studied face-to-face interactions and the constraints placed on them, particularly in the case of contact between individuals with different degrees of power.[4] Bartsch also draws on J. C. Scott's conception of the "public transcript" and the "hidden transcript" for analyzing

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[2] See especially her analysis in Chapter 1 of Tacitus' Neronian narrative (Bartsch [1994] 1-35). Two earlier and narrower applications of theatricality to Nero's reign are Manning (1975) and Woodman (1994). See also DuPont (1985); Edwards (1994); D'Arms (1999); Parker (2000); Purcell (2000). Scholarship on theatricality in the Roman world is discussed further in Chapter 2.

[3] Bartsch (1994) 11.

[4] Goffman (1959) and (1969).

communication between rulers and ruled. The "public transcript" is the "open interaction" between dominant and subordinate players, which constitutes "the self-portrait of dominant elites as they would have themselves seen;" the "hidden transcript," however, reveals the "discourse that takes place 'offstage,' beyond direct observation by power-holders."[5] The theatrical model is valuable not only for analyzing Roman notions of power in retrospect, but for understanding how the Romans themselves conceived of the relationship between ruler and ruled.

Theatricality has been a potent concept in the study of the Neronian age, in large part because of Nero's own predilections for theatrical display. In their biographies of Nero, M. Griffin and E. Champlin pay special attention to Nero the artist and actor: the emperor composed and recited his own poetry and took to the stage to perform the roles of Orestes, Alcmeon, and Oedipus.[6] Studies of texts that are traditionally assigned to the Neronian period, such as Seneca's *Thyestes* and Petronius' *Satyricon*, have drawn attention to the fact that characters in these works take on the roles of playwright and director as they attempt to control the events of the narrative, or self-consciously assert their status as actors before an audience.[7] In a study of the aristocratic project to define and shape autocratic rule in the first century CE, M. B. Roller identifies competing models of the principate, according to which the emperor played the role of master (*dominus*) or father (*paterfamilias*): one of the goals of Seneca's philosophical works was to establish the emperor in the role of father and benefactor rather than of tyrant and overlord.[8] As C. Star has shown, Seneca argues for the importance of consistently performing a single role,

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[5] Scott (1990) 2; 18; 4. Scott's division between the "public" and "hidden" transcript is not a simple dichotomy: "the frontier between the public and the hidden transcripts is a zone of constant struggle between dominant and subordinate--not a solid wall" (14).
[6] Griffin (1984) Chapter 9 and Champlin (2003), especially Chapter 3; see also Bartsch (1994) 36-62 on Nero's theatrical career; Koloski-Ostrow (1997) on the possible influence of Neronian theatricality on Roman domestic art.
[7] On Atreus in the *Thyestes*, see especially Schiesaro (2003) and Littlewood (2004); on Trimalchio in the *Satyricon*, see Zeitlin (1971), Slater (1990), Rimell (2002).
[8] Roller (2001).

rather than many different ones: life was a theater, each person an actor, and it was thus impossible to refrain from playing a part.[9]

The second thread of scholarship that informs my discussion addresses the significance of the family and the domestic space in Roman political life. Scholars have been especially interested in the development of the Julio-Claudian family as an institution during the reigns of Augustus and Tiberius. B. Severy, G. Rowe, and F. Hurlet have drawn on the evidence in texts, inscriptions, coins, and sculpture to define the structure of the imperial house, its status relative to other institutions such as the Senate, and the ways in which different classes and communities throughout the empire formed and expressed their ties with the ruling family.[10] One important consideration in these studies is the fluidity of the imperial *domus* in the early empire: rather than looking for objective criteria to determine who belonged to the Julio-Claudian family and the position of each member within it, we should see these issues as part of an ongoing process of negotiation among the emperor, his heirs, and his rivals, and between the ruling class in Rome and local elites in Italy and the provinces.

A related phenomenon, largely neglected in the study of the Roman world until the second half of the twentieth century, is the imperial court. The court included the family, freedmen, and slaves of the imperial *domus*, as well as members of the aristocracy who enjoyed the emperor's favor. As A. Wallace-Hadrill explains,

> The court and its membership had no "official" definition, for this was a social not a legal institution, private in its composition though public in its importance…membership was constituted by proximity to the emperor, and only social ritual could distinguish degrees of proximity…Nor was its location

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[9] Star (2012) Chapter 2, especially 65-9.
[10] Hurlet (1997); Rowe (2002); Severy (2003). See also Rose (1997).

> fixed…at all periods, the court (but not necessarily all courtiers) moved with the emperor.[11]

A. Winterling has argued for an increasing "institutionalization" of the court: over time, positions that were originally based on personal favor between the emperor and members of the aristocracy became established such that they continued regardless of the particular persons involved.[12] This process of institutionalization, however, took place over a long period, and was far from established in the days of the early empire. The Neronian period offers an opportunity to study the court when the political influence of the emperor's household was accepted (and, as I will argue, even valued), but when the rules for their participation in public life were far from settled.[13]

Although the court was developing and changing in the early empire, its structure and activities, as well as the significance of the court for promoting the authority of both the emperor and his courtiers, can be traced back to the aristocratic town house, or *domus*, one of the essential sites of political life in the Republic. Not only did the Republican aristocrat receive and entertain his dependents and supporters at his house, but in the late Republic there is evidence for the houses of particular leaders (especially Pompey and Caesar) operating as centers of political influence. R. Rilinger argued that promagistrates in the late Republic exerted their influence by maintaining large networks of supporters, and thus came to rely on members of their household

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[11] Wallace-Hadrill (1996) 285-6. See also Millar (1977) 58-122; Winterling (1999) and (2009); Paterson (2007). On the aristocratic *domus* of the late Republic as a proto-court, see Rilinger (2007; orig. 1997) 105-122. The institution of the court will be discussed further in Chapter 3.

[12] Winterling (1999). Notably, Winterling leaves the family members of the emperor out of his study, not because they had no political influence, but because their position at court was impossible to separate from their relationship to the emperor (6-7).

[13] Elias (1969; trans. 1983) is the seminal study of the court from a sociological perspective; his arguments are based on the court of Louis XIV, an atmosphere in which monarchic rule was much more established than it was at Rome in the first century CE. Nevertheless, his attention to the danger involved in negotiations between courtiers is valuable for the early imperial period: he is interested in "the ever-present danger, the element of risk integral to even the most powerful autocracy, and…the institutional measures by which the ruler and his central group, often without consciously realizing it, seek to counter this risk" (23).

staff to manage their visitors, especially at the daily *salutatio*. These great houses became increasingly difficult to integrate into the existing political system, and this problem culminated in the arrangement of the "First Triumvirate" who circumvented the standard political process: Pompey, Caesar, and Crassus made political decisions at the "private level of the *domus*," and excluded other members of the ruling class, and thus other households, from their negotiations.[14] In Rilinger's view, the administrative role of the emperor's household staff, and the authority they enjoyed in contrast with other aristocratic households, developed from this problem of "political integration" in the Triumviral period.[15] While F. Millar does not address the rise of the imperial court *per se*, he argues that the emperor carried out his daily business in Rome at estates that "all had as their origins, and largely retained, the character of luxurious town-houses of the Roman upper classes."[16]

The most prominent elite houses of the late Republic shared several additional features with the imperial court.[17] One of these was access to major financial resources, necessary for the kind of aristocratic display that facilitated a successful political career. Military campaigns in the East allowed Pompey to accumulate wealth and make significant monetary awards to his former troops; he also acquired properties in Spain and made personal contacts which gave him access to the provincial treasuries. Caesar also enriched himself through his campaigns in Spain, which allowed him to run for office and make gifts to his supporters.[18] The emperor's claims to divine

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[14] Rilinger (2007) 119: "auf der privaten Ebene der *domus*."

[15] Ibid.105-122. Rilinger identifies three functions of the aristocratic *domus* in the late Republic, all important for understanding the activity of the imperial court: the house was a manifestation of the social-political rank of the *dominus*; domestic interactions had consequences for political life outside the house; and there were opportunities for members of the household staff to gain power because of their proximity to the *dominus* (111).

[16] Millar (1977) 20. Millar traces the emperor's duties, and his competence to perform them, back to the position of promagistrates in the Republican period: he argues that the emperor functioned as "a supreme and permanent provincial governor" who exercised authority apart from direct engagement with institutions such as the Senate (17).

[17] Potter (2011) 59-80.

[18] Pottter (2011) 67-9.

favor, like the association of Augustus and Nero with Apollo, also have Republican precedents. Scipio Africanus claimed that Neptune had led him to victory over Carthage in 209, while Sulla called himself "Felix" and "stressed…that Fortune had played a crucial role in his success."[19] In important respects, such as the role of the imperial household, the vast financial resources available to the emperor, and the privileged relationship between the emperor and the gods, the imperial court can be traced back to the *domus* of the most prominent figures of the late Republic.[20]

Although the courts of the early empire show significant connections with the great houses of the late Republic, the imperial court was not simply the house of a Republican senator on a grander scale. In the age of the Triumvirate, Pompey and Caesar had faced real competition from those outside their own households, but the singular focus on the emperor posed a new problem. As one household became the exclusive center of power, competition took place within the household, and thus threats to the emperor came largely from within his own house. Moreover, in the Julio-Claudian period, as one ruler and one family asserted themselves, the effects of competition might be understood to be magnified: no other established, powerful *domus* existed to exploit instability in the ruling house, and thus none was ready to take its place if it fell.

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[19] Potter (2011) 63-4.
[20] A further, indirect source of influence on the emperor's court derived from the court practices of the Hellenistic kings. Patterson (2007) 131 identifies the differentiation of visitors into separate groups for *salutationes* at the emperor's house as a Hellenistic practice, although Winterling (1999) 5 disputes the claim that there were different categories of admission to the emperor's *salutatio*. Lavish expenditures on imperial houses and banquets were also rooted in Greek customs, though the Roman court did not take these over directly from the Greek world: rather, "the imperial court continues in a direct line the 'hellenizing' tendencies of the aristocratic houses of the late Republic" (Wallace-Hadrill [1996] 293). Practices that originated in the Hellenistic world, therefore, were unlikely to have been marked as "Greek" in early imperial Rome, but rather as the standard of luxury and high culture, once Greek in origin but long since adopted by the Roman elite.

My principal concern in this project, however, is not the historical development of the ruling family or the court, but the role of the ruler's private life in political thought broadly understood. On this issue the most important recent work is K. Milnor's *Gender, Domesticity, and the Age of Augustus: Inventing Private Life* (2005). Milnor examines the tension between the public prominence of women in the Augustan age and the obsession in the same period with female virtue as it is displayed in the home. She argues that "it is not so much the fact of a gendered divide between public and private life which…was born under Augustus, but rather the celebration, negotiation, and continuous anxious return to that fact as a significant aspect of Roman culture."[21] Milnor demonstrates the importance of not taking familiar ideas (such as the association of women with domestic life) for granted, or dismissing them as tropes. It is my contention that the link between the life of the ruler and the life of the community as a whole, a major theme in early imperial literature, is not simply a commonplace, and that examining it is essential to understanding power relations and communal identity in the Neronian age.

My work builds on Milnor's and departs from it in two important ways. First, while Milnor pays special attention to the House of Augustus on the Palatine and to the domestic life of the first emperor, she is mainly concerned with the political significance of femininity and the domestic space, broadly conceived. In contrast, I focus on the houses and families of rulers (e.g., Nero's Domus Aurea, royal palaces and family bonds among the powerful in Senecan tragedy) to argue for the special role of the ruler and his house in both defining and threatening the community as a whole. While I also draw on archaeological evidence for domestic life at less rarefied levels of Roman society, I am interested in how this material illuminates Roman

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[21] Milnor (2005) 31.

attitudes toward power relations that inform and undergird the conception and representation of absolute rulers.

Second, Milnor frames the relationship between Augustus' house and the state as a kind of paradox: in her reading, Augustus was imagined to be the model *princeps* whose house was at once the center of the state and strictly distinguished from it, while Nero, famous for his "inability to maintain the boundary between public and private, between *domus* and *res publica*," represented the failure of the Augustan ideal.[22] I argue, however, that ancient accounts of Nero and literature associated with his reign reflect the understanding in the early empire that there could be no boundary between the community and the house of the absolute ruler: this was not a characteristic of bad rulers, but a defining feature of Roman conceptions of one-man rule.

Combining the two approaches outlined above, the theatrical model and the study of the family in the early empire, allows for a more comprehensive approach to the Roman conception of public and private and to how it was used to define the position of the emperor and the relationship between ruler and ruled. As noted previously, however, privacy is a problematic concept in the study of the ancient world: modern perspectives on the public/private dichotomy largely depend on a distinction between the private house, where the family lives, and the public square, where members of the community interact with one another.[23] The social and political function of the Roman house, however, undermines this distinction: the house was one of the key environments where elites received members of the community, courted supporters, and displayed their power and prestige.

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[22] Milnor (2005) 303.
[23] Cf. Arendt (1958; 2nd ed. 1998); Bobbio (1989). The essays in Weintraub and Kumar (1997) provide an overview of the development of these categories in contemporary theory.

Another problem for examining the categories of public and private in ancient Rome is the fact that the cognates *publicus* and *privatus* seem to suggest an easy translation for these terms from Latin to English.[24] For *publicus*, the *Oxford Latin Dictionary* gives us "of or belonging to the people corporately;" "authorized, provided, maintained, etc. by the state, official;" "of or affecting everyone in the state;" "common to all;" for *privatus*, "restricted for the use of a particular person or persons, private;" "not holding public office;" "of or suitable for a person having the status of an ordinary citizen." Although these definitions are not exhaustive with respect to the ancient connotations of these words, it is clear that *publicus* and *privatus* do not encompass the full range of modern uses of "public" and "private," and so we must be cautious when applying these terms to an ancient context.[25] Apart from the transformations of public and private from ancient to modern times, it is also important to consider the ways in which these terms changed in antiquity. A *privatus* in the Republic, for example, meant an individual who was not an officeholder; by the time of Tacitus and Pliny, "it came to be used of anyone, regardless of political or military position, who did not hold the ultimate 'public' role of emperor."[26] I define privacy in two ways: privacy is the ability to avoid scrutiny (i.e., to escape the public eye) and to act without public consequence (i.e., without ramifications for the

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[24] Cf. Winterling (2009) 60-68 for a history of the translation of *publicus* and *privatus* in English and German scholarship, and how the different connotations of these translations for German and English-speaking audiences shaped the scholarly debate over the development of Roman political institutions. On "public" and "private" in Greek literature, see Casevitz (1998).

[25] Arendt (1998) argues that, "in ancient feeling the privative trait of privacy…was all-important; it meant literally a state of being deprived of something, and even of the highest and most human of man's capacities;" "the public realm…was reserved for individuality; it was the only place where men could show who they really and inexchangeably were" (38; 41). As Arendt herself shows, the Roman valuation of domestic life goes beyond the "privative trait of privacy;" it is notable, however, that many ancient treatments of Nero emphasize the ways in which he used his position to express who he "really and inexchangeably [was]," to a degree not available to anyone else, and not practiced by emperors (such as Augustus and Vespasian) who are treated much more kindly in the historiographical tradition.

[26] Milnor (2005) 20 and 18-21; see Tac. *Agric*. 39.2; Pliny *Ep*. 2.1.2, 5.3.5. On the term *privatus* applied to the emperor, see Béranger (1958) (on Augustus) and Winterling (2009) 69-75.

community as a whole).[27] These definitions are not mutually exclusive: as I will argue in Chapter 1, by claiming that the absolute ruler cannot avoid the scrutiny of his subjects, Seneca emphasizes the ways in which the welfare of the ruler and of the community are intertwined. Both of these conceptions of privacy, I argue, became critical to defining the role of the emperor and the nature of power in the early empire. The emperor's lack of privacy, in both senses, ultimately pointed to the fragility of one-man rule.

Before I proceed with an overview of my argument, I want to provide definitions of a few more key terms for this discussion. The first is "the ruler." I use this term to mean not only the emperor, but also the leader, the dominant figure in a given community, who commands obedience from others and who can order the world in substantial respects to suit his own interests and desires. While Julius Caesar in Lucan's *Bellum Civile*, Atreus in Seneca's *Thyestes*, and Trimalchio in Petronius' *Satyricon* are not emperors, they are rulers. Second, "community" refers to all members of a polity; members of a community are those who are subject to the same ruler (although the ruler can be included in the community, I will often speak of the relationship between ruler and community).

The third term, "Neronian," is primarily used to refer to the reign of Nero, the years from 54 to 68 CE. Not all of the sources included in my discussion, however, can be dated to this brief period. Some of the material evidence I draw on, such as the House of Augustus on the Palatine and domestic frescoes from Campania, came into being well before Nero's reign but was known to later audiences. Seneca's *Apocolocyntosis* and *De Clementia*, Lucan's *Bellum Civile,* and the Domus Aurea are all certainly Neronian; in contrast, Seneca's tragedies may date to the reign of Claudius or even earlier, and Petronius' *Satyricon*, while typically regarded as a Neronian work,

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[27] On public/private in the sense of "manifest/secret" as opposed to "collective/individual," see Bobbio (1989), especially 17-21.

cannot be dated with certainty. While Tacitus' *Annals* contain the most extended

historiographical account of Nero's rule to survive from antiquity, they were most likely written

in the early second century CE, decades after Nero's death.[28] Nevertheless, all of these sources

are relevant for the study of the Neronian period for two reasons. First, my aim is not to argue

that Nero's rule was totally unlike the reigns of earlier emperors, or the political life of the

Republic, but to show how sources like the *Bellum Civile* and the Domus Aurea magnified or

developed to the extreme certain longstanding issues in the conception of power in the Roman

world: literature, art, and architecture produced under Nero's rule must be considered in the

broader context of Roman political life, not just as reflections of particular events at Nero's

court. Second, as Tacitus' account indicates, Nero's reign was regarded in later periods as critical

to understanding the development of monarchy in the Roman world and the distinctive

characteristics of this system of government more generally. The *Annals* reveal not necessarily

how Nero was perceived in his own time, but rather what he came to symbolize for later

audiences and the significance of his reign and the works associated with it for the development

of Roman attitudes toward absolute power. I use "Neronian," then, to refer both to the time when

Nero was emperor and to the period in which monarchic government was firmly established, but

when Rome was still analyzing and coming to terms with the position of the absolute ruler and

his house in the broader community. The years 54 to 68 CE, because of the youth of the emperor

and his reputation for extravagance and salacious behavior, must have been a particularly

challenging time for this process, and thus "Neronian" functions as a useful metonymy for

political culture in the early empire more generally.[29]

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[28] The dating of all of these texts will be discussed (with bibliography) further below.

[29] Cf. Milnor (2005) 33ff and 241-2, treating the Augustan age as "a set of ideas and ideals," rather than as the period in which Augustus ruled the Roman state (quote on 241).

In the first chapter, "Power in the Public Eye: Emperors and Palaces," I demonstrate that the exposure of the emperor and his house to the public eye was central to the conception of absolute power. First, I argue that accounts of the death of Claudius (the *Apocolocyntosis* and later versions in historical writing) reveal that the emperor was expected to be constantly available to public view. I then focus on two sources from the reign of Nero: Seneca's *De Clementia* and the Domus Aurea. Seneca, in his treatise on absolute power, defines the emperor as the foremost object of public attention, and so draws attention to the fragility of the new system of rule at Rome. The Domus Aurea uses the exposure of the emperor's private life to express the emperor's unique dominance and to establish an intimate relationship between the emperor and the people. I also discuss Augustus' House on the Palatine as a key predecessor to the Domus Aurea.

Chapter 2, "Visibility and Power: The House on Stage," argues that the house of the ruler was conceived of as a theater, with the ruler on stage. N. Elias's notion of *gloire*, the absolute ruler's obsession with prestige to ensure his security, is critical for understanding the role of the subject in a monarchical society.[30] I argue that the ruler is not only subject to the public eye, but requires an audience to demonstrate and reinforce his position, and that his need to be seen in fact points to the power that the subject enjoys. I discuss domestic wall paintings from the first centuries BCE and CE, which feature likenesses of theatrical sets and scenes from tragedy. In order to demonstrate their authority, aristocratic householders required an audience, and theatrical paintings emphasize the importance of the spectator. Depictions of the palace in Seneca's tragedies also complicate the standard theatrical paradigm for the interaction between ruler and ruled, according to which the ruler is understood as the spectator, and his subjects as

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[30] Elias (1983) 134ff.

the actors who must perform to please him. Comparing Seneca's tragedies with examples of domestic art reveals how Seneca's treatment fits within the broader landscape of power relations in the Roman world.

In Chapter 3, "Family, Court, and State," I turn to the significance of the ruler's family life for the life of the community. The emperor was the ultimate source of power in the Roman world, and thus there could be no real distinction between his interactions with his family and his public activities: anything he did, no matter where he was, had ramifications for the life of the state. While the emperor has been typically understood, in the model of Augustus, as the father of the family and head of the state, portrayals of ruling houses also demonstrate the influence which members of the ruler's family enjoyed, and suggest the potential weaknesses of the ruler himself. Membership in the *domus Augusta*, the Julio-Claudian family, was not determined on the basis of objective characteristics, but rather was a tool for the emperor (and his rivals) to use to legitimate claims to power. Dynastic statue groups and inscriptions honoring the imperial family show how local elites throughout the Mediterranean contributed to defining the structure of the ruling house. The account of Nero's court in Tacitus' *Annals* demonstrates that members of the emperor's family could exercise authority apart from their relationship to the emperor himself: Nero's mother Agrippina, because of her ties to deceased members of the imperial house, was able to retain supporters even as she fell out of Nero's favor. The vulnerability of the ruler to the members of his family is also central to the representation of power in Seneca's tragedies: when the ruler is in danger, the community is threatened with upheaval.

In the fourth chapter, "Fantasy Tours and Power Trips: Three Case Studies on the Empire in the House," I examine the relationship between the state and the physical house of the ruler. C. Geertz argues that the king derives his power from his proximity to the "center," the essential

ideals, institutions, and modes of expression of a given society, and that the royal progress, in which the king travels through his territory, dramatizes the king's claim to inhabit the center.[31] I look at three sources that stage a progress through the Roman world within a domestic setting. Paintings from Villa A at Oplontis on the Bay of Naples allude to the Roman conquest of the Hellenistic East, and so allow the viewer to take a fantasy journey to distant regions of the empire. In the *Satyricon*, the wealthy freedman Trimalchio recreates the empire within his house by bringing the goods of the entire empire (agricultural produce, luxury items, and slaves) to his estate. In Lucan's *Bellum Civile,* an epic poem on the civil war between Caesar and Pompey, the action shifts between the vast geographical extent of the Roman empire and the confined space of the ruler's house. While the ruler may use his house to mark his dominance over a larger territory, the act of domination can threaten the community with instability.

Finally, in Chapter 5, "Intimate Politics: Ruler and Ruled in the Roman House and the *Bellum Civile*," I argue that one-man rule was conceived of not only as the elevation of the ruler above the rest of the community, but as the creation of an intimate bond between ruler and ruled. Because intimacy is a problematic category in an ancient context, I look at how domestic space in the Roman world shaped the relationship between the *dominus* and his visitors: I demonstrate that the house not only advertised the authority of the master, but also served to include privileged guests as members of the household, and thus to establish an intimate bond between the *dominus* and outsiders. I then focus on bonds of obligation and affection between the ruler and the community in Lucan's *Bellum Civile,* and show that Caesar, Pompey, Cato and their followers perform obligations for one another that are usually associated with kinsmen. Because the *Bellum Civile* was composed in the reign of Nero but narrates the fall of the Republic, it

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[31] Geertz (1983) 121-146.

treats the relationship between ruler and ruled both as part of an established tradition in Roman political life and as subject to transformation at the end of the Julio-Claudian era. In this epic, the mutual devotion between ruler and ruled gives rise to a new form of communal identity and redefines the meaning of the family and of the state.

Chapter 1. Power in the Public Eye: Palaces and Emperors

I. Introduction

In Tacitus' account of Nero's first address to the Senate, the new emperor makes a series of promises about his coming reign: he declared that "he would not be the judge of all affairs, nothing in his household would be up for sale or accessible to canvassing; house and state would be kept separate" (*non…se negotiorum omnium iudicem fore…nihil in penatibus suis venale aut ambitioni pervium; discretam domum et rem publicam*, *Ann*. 13.4). This speech, aimed at winning the Senate's approval, provides a picture of the views of the early imperial elite on what constituted good rule.[1] While Nero's insistence on *discreta domus et res publica*, a separate house and state, served in part to underline his disavowal of bribery and canvassing, this idea has a much broader significance for making sense of Nero's rule. In the literary context of the *Annals*, Nero's proclamation that he would uphold the division between his house and the state looks backward to Claudius' reign and ahead to Nero's. The speech aims to distinguish Nero from his predecessor: Tacitus observes that Nero "especially avoided those things which had recently caused a flare-up of ill will" (*ea maxime declinans, quorum recens flagrabat invidia*, 13.4), and Claudius' rule had been overrun by imperial freedmen and the women of his

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[1] The audiences of Nero's speech and of the *Annals*, while separated by roughly half a century, were both composed of the highest strata of Roman society, and Nero's claims that he would respect tradition and avoid inappropriate influence would likely have appealed to both mid-first and early-second century elites.

household.[2] Tacitus' audience, however, was well aware that Nero had failed to keep house and state separate; they would have recognized the irony of Nero's proclamation, and anticipated the course of the narrative.

Tacitus' presentation of the reigns of Claudius and Nero, however, does not merely call attention to the failings of these particular emperors, or to the perniciousness of the women of the Julio-Claudian house. While Nero holds up the division between house and state as a principle of good rule, the development of one-man rule called into question the possibility of a boundary between the private life of the ruler and public affairs. As Nero's and Tacitus' audiences knew, the emperor was a public figure whose activities were always of interest to the community as a whole. If an emperor was attacked for allowing his private concerns to influence public business, the attacks themselves demonstrate that the emperor's privacy, or his ability to avoid scrutiny and act without public consequence, was considered problematic.

Thus, the discrepancy between Nero's professed ideal of a boundary between his house and the state and his inability to maintain this boundary not only characterized him as a bad ruler, but also suggested the inherent difficulty of maintaining such a boundary in a dynastic monarchy.[3] In this chapter I focus on the publicity of the emperor's house and of the emperor himself, and I argue that exposure to public view became central to the understanding of the emperor's power and position in the early imperial period. First, I show how criticism of Claudius and reports of the events following his death emphasize the public nature of the emperor's role. Second, I look at how Augustus' residence in Rome functioned as part of a

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[2] E.g., the debate between the freedmen over a suitable new wife for the emperor (12.1-3); Tacitus' pronouncement after Claudius' marriage to Agrippina that "the state was transformed from that point and all things were obedient to a woman" (*versa ex eo civitas et cuncta feminae oboediebant*, 12.7).

[3] Cf. Milnor (2005), who argues that Nero's "inability to maintain the boundary between private and public…brought down both his own reign and that of the Julio-Claudian house" (300); Ginsburg (2006) 9-54 on the relationship between female power and the weakness of the state in Tacitus' Neronian narrative. Winterling (2009) briefly notes that "no emperor would have been able to pursue this program" of *discreta domus et res publica* (71).

public space, and I argue that the Domus Aurea transformed the traditionally private leisure activities of the emperor into part of public life in Rome. Third, I examine the radical exposure of the absolute ruler in Seneca's *De Clementia*. In this text, the absolute ruler is distinguished not only by his authority, but also by his vulnerability, and potential dangers that the ruler must face also threaten the community as a whole.

II. Death in the Public Eye

While Tacitus does not identify the author of Nero's first address to the Senate (*Ann.* 13.4, discussed above), his comments on the composition of Nero's other speeches suggest that Seneca was responsible for it: Seneca was widely believed to be the author of Nero's eulogy for Claudius and of speeches he gave early in his reign in praise of *clementia* (13.3, 13.11). Seneca is also accepted as the author of the *Apocolocyntosis*, a work that, like Tacitus' version of Nero's speech, celebrates the accession of the new emperor by drawing a sharp contrast between him and his predecessor.[4] In this satirical text, the Olympian gods hold a mock Senatorial assembly to decide if Claudius should be accepted into their ranks.[5] Through its caricature of Claudius and encomium of Nero, the *Apocolocyntosis* aims to prove that "Nero's accession could be detached from the moral taint of his mother's contrivance, and…that Claudius was gone for good, leaving the ambiguous fact of the succession to be accepted as a new political reality."[6] The depiction of Claudius focuses on his physical grotesqueness and overzealous prosecution of his enemies, but the influence of Claudius' household in his regime, and the idea that he is unsuitable for life in

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[4] On the title, date, and author of this work, see Eden (1984) 1-8.
[5] On the variety of genres of the *Apocolocyntosis*, see Damon (2010).
[6] Leach (1998) 216; see also Sullivan (1985) 50.

the public eye, also play an important part in the critique. In this satire, the dead emperor is presented as both unfit for a public role and unable to escape public view.

When Claudius arrives before the assembly of the gods, he observes that his position on Olympus is different from the one he enjoyed in Rome: "he understood that no one at Rome had been equal to him, but there he did not enjoy the same favor" (*intellexit neminem Romae sibi parem fuisse, illic non habere se idem gratiae*, *Apocol.* 7.3). Yet while Claudius believes that his earthly dignity was exceptional, other voices in the satire question the effectiveness of his authority back on earth, as when the narrator observes that "you would think they [the gods] were all freedmen of his, they we paying him so little attention" (*putares omnes illius esse libertos: adeo illum nemo curabat,* 6.2). The imperial freedmen might be expected to treat the emperor with respect, but Claudius' freedmen had the same attitude as the Olympian gods, in that neither group cared what the emperor had to say. While Claudius' subservience to Agrippina is not remarked upon in the satire (the mother of the new emperor was not an appropriate object of criticism), the emperor is also mocked for his weakness with regards to the women of his household. One of Claudius' opponents on Olympus, unidentifiable due to a lacuna in the text, slyly observes that Claudius hardly deserves to be entrusted with divine power, since "he will hardly know what he is doing in his own bedroom" (*quid in cubiculo suo faciat nesciet*, 8.3). No specific names or actions of imperial women are given here, but this remark probably alludes to Claudius' famous ignorance of the affairs of his wives, and therefore his inability to exert control over the women of the imperial house.[7] Seneca must be careful about the extent to which he criticizes the involvement of the emperor's household in his rule because, as Nero's tutor, he was susceptible to this line of attack. Despite Seneca's caution, however, Claudius' lack of authority

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[7] On Claudius' cluelessness about "his sexual partners' affairs," see Eden (1984) *ad loc.*

over members of his household emerges as part of a broader characterization of the emperor's

weakness: the fact that Claudius was not master in his own house suggests that he could not be

master of the empire.

Not only Claudius' subservient position in his household but also his physical

deficiencies help to make the case that he was unfit for public life. At Claudius' first appearance

in the *Apocolocyntosis*, he is limping his way to the heavens (*non passibus aequis*, 1.2). Apollo,

in contrast, praises Nero's beauty and grace in epic verse (4.1).[8] Almost immediately following

the glowing description of the new emperor, the satire returns to Claudius, who disgraces himself

on his deathbed by crying out, "alas, I've shat myself" (*uae me, concacaui me,* 4.3). This

mockery not only provokes laughter at Claudius' expense, but also shows that the former

emperor was wholly unsuited to occupy his office. Claudius' last moments on earth might be

shameful for anyone, but they are particularly inappropriate for a man whose station demands a

certain dignity. While private citizens die without concern for how others might perceive their

last words or actions, the emperor was a public figure, meant for all to see: as Apollo observes at

the close of his account of Nero's virtues, "such a Caesar is here, such a Nero Rome will now

look upon" (*talis Caesar adest, talem iam Roma Neronem/ aspiciet,* 4.1.30-1). The emperor

whose death follows Apollo's speech was not fit for public view; the new emperor provided

Rome with a more suitable object of attention.

The fact that Claudius' physical presence is objectionable and inappropriate for the

majesty of a public position reflects poorly on Rome itself. After his death, Claudius arrives on

Olympus, where Hercules cannot tell whether he is man or beast: when the great hero caught

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[8] Robinson (2005) 252-4 argues that the placement of the panegyric between sections devoted to the abuse of Claudius and thematic similarities between the panegyric and the rest of the satire (in particular images related to time) suggest that the panegyric is also satirical.

sight of the monstrous body of the former emperor, "he thought that his thirteenth labor had come to him" (*putauit sibi tertium decimum laborem uenisse*, 5.3).[9] The misshapen body of the emperor "evokes the distortion of civic life" which occurred during his tenure.[10] While Rome has become ugly and crippled under Claudius, the beautiful new emperor with his shining face (*flagrat nitidus fulgore remisso/ uultus*, 4.1.31-2) will usher in a Golden Age. The emperor's physical self, then, in some sense represents the community he rules: he is both an object of public view and a symbol of the community as a whole.[11] In the *Apocolocyntosis*, Claudius' body and the sound of his voice become issues not of personal embarrassment but of communal embarrassment.

The satirical account of the death and afterlife of Claudius emphasizes the aspects of his appearance and behavior that were especially disgraceful for an individual subject to the public eye. This interest in the emperor as a public figure also appears in later accounts of Claudius' death and its aftermath, which focus on the attempts to conceal his passing from public knowledge, and on the role of private figures in determining the future of Rome. The Claudius of the *Apocolocyntosis* dies in the presence of comic actors, a particularly lowly group to witness the emperor's final shameful moments.[12] The comic actors may actually have been summoned not for Claudius' entertainment before his death, but to conceal the truth that he had already died: Suetonius describes how "his death was hidden until everything was arranged for his successor. Thus vows were made as though on behalf of a man still ill, and comic actors were

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[9] *uidit noui generis faciem, insolitum incessum, uocem nullius terrestris animalis sed qualis esse marinis beluis solet, raucam et implicatam, putauit sibi tertium decimum laborem uenisse* (5.3).

[10] Braund and James (1998) 298. For a similar argument applied to Claudius' voice in the *Apocolocyntosis*, see Osgood (2007).

[11] Kantorowicz (1957; repr. 1997) is the classic work on the relationship between the king's body and the body politic. On the emperor's responsibility to set an example for his subjects, see Wallace-Hadrill (1983) 172-3.

[12] *Apocol.* 4.2. Naturally, the *Apocolocyntosis* does not make any suggestion that Claudius was murdered. See below for conflicting accounts of his murder.

brought in on account of the pretense, to delight him as if he desired it" (*mors eius celata est, donec circa successorem omnia ordinarentur. itaque et quasi pro aegro adhuc uota suscepta sunt et inducti per simulationem comeodi, qui uelut desiderantem oblectarent*, Suet. *Claud*. 45). Tacitus agrees that Agrippina hid the truth "while matters were arranged to strengthen Nero's rule" (*dum quae res forent firmando Neronis imperio componuntur*, Tac. *Ann*. 12.68). In Tacitus' description, Claudius' corpse even received medical attention (*exanimis vestibus et fomentis obtegeretur*), and Agrippina took care to issue regular proclamations about the emperor's improving health (*crebroque vulgabat ire in melius valetudinem principis*, 12.68).

These accounts of Agrippina's efforts to cover up the death of Claudius recall Livy's narrative of the death of Tarquinius Priscus, one of the last kings of Rome. Like Agrippina, Tanaquil, the wife of Tarquinius, wanted to see her choice become king of Rome: until Servius' accession was secure, she kept Tarquinius' body in the king's house and promised the people that he would recover.[13] While both Agrippina and Tanaquil may be read as standard portraits of conniving women who symbolize the enormous influence wielded by those close to the emperor, these narratives also suggest that the emperor's person and his house were expected to be subjects of common knowledge. Agrippina could not simply keep Claudius' body hidden: she needed to issue reports about his health, and invite outsiders (the comic actors) to promote the impression that there was nothing to hide. For Claudius to disappear from view, even for a short period, was apparently unthinkable. She also needed to take extensive precautions to keep Claudius' children inside the house and control access to the palace, as when she "delayed

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[13] Livy 1.41.4-5: *Cum clamor impetusque multitudinis uix sustineri posset, ex superiore parte aedium per fenestras in Nouam uiam uersas—habitabat enim rex ad Iouis Statoris—populum Tanaquil adloquitur. Iubet bono animo esse; sopitum fuisse regem subito ictu; ferrum haud alte in corpus descendisse; iam ad se redisse; inspectum uolnus absterso cruore; omnia salubria esse; confidere propediem ipsum eos uisuros; interim Ser. Tullio iubere populum dicto audientem esse; eum iura redditurum obiturumque alia regis munia esse.*

Britannicus with various contrivances from leaving the *cubiculum*. She also detained his sisters

Antonia and Octavia, and had all approaches shut off with guards" (*Britannicum…ac variis*

artibus demorari ne cubiculo egrederetur. Antoniam quoque et Octaviam sorores eius attinuit, et

cunctos aditus custodiis clauserat, 12.68).[14] To judge from the portrayal of the events following

Claudius' death, it does not appear that the emperor's house was normally isolated or carefully

sealed-off; rather, Agrippina has to take exceptional care to control movement in and out of the

house, beyond the kind of precautions expected in normal circumstances.[15] Although we cannot

be certain that any of the particular events in accounts of Claudius' death actually occurred, the

more general features of these narratives (who lived in the emperor's house, who had access to it,

who had the authority to regulate traffic in the house), must have seemed to Roman audiences to

be a plausible likeness of life at court.[16] Whether or not Agrippina actually summoned comic

actors to entertain her dead husband, it is clear that keeping the emperor out of sight, and

restricting access to his house, were difficult tasks indeed.

Tacitus' narrative of Nero's accession to the throne further indicates that the closure of

the palace to conceal Claudius' death was an unusual event. When the day arrived for the

revelation of the new emperor, "the gates of the palace were suddenly drawn open, [and] Nero,

with Burrus accompanying him, went out to the cohort" (*foribus palatii repente diductis,*

comitante Burro Nero egreditur ad cohortem, 12.69). It is the opening of the doors of the palace,

and Nero's emergence into the public eye, that signal the beginning of a new reign, and also a

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[14] While the entire story of Claudius' murder in the *Annals* appears to take place on the Palatine, Suetonius reports
two different versions of the locations of the poisoning. In one, the eunuch Halotus administered the poison when
the emperor was dining with priests on the Capitoline (*in arce*); in another, Agrippina herself poisoned him during a
banquet at home (*domestico conuiuio*). See Suet. *Claud.* 44. In any case, Claudius' corpse must have been
transferred to his residence where Agrippina could keep an eye on it.

[15] In Tacitus' account, Livia makes similar moves to conceal the death of Augustus: she also posts guards around the
house and sends out cheerful reports (1.5.4).

[16] See Winterling (1999) 9-11 on reading Roman historiography to understand the environment in which events took
place, rather than to establish the accuracy of the events as described.

return to familiar circumstances. During the uncertain times of Claudius' pretended illness and death, the emperor's house was kept shut, but with Nero's rise the exceptional measures taken to close the palace came to an end. The emperor was no longer concealed in his house: rather, he was exposed to public view and the palace was opened.

III. Public and Private in the Emperor's House

The openness of the emperor's house is an issue that needs to be investigated not only in light of Tacitus' narrative, but also with the archaeological evidence for the palaces in Rome. In this section, I look at how two major imperial buildings, the Augustan complex on the Palatine hill and the Domus Aurea, functioned as public spaces. Although the archaeological record may not necessarily answer the question of who had access to a given space, the architecture of both of these complexes allows us to reconstruct a relationship between the emperor's house and the city of Rome. I first examine the House of Augustus and its associated buildings, a key precedent for all subsequent imperial structures on the Palatine. The association of the house, temple, and libraries offered a kind of public access to the emperor's house that went beyond the norm of the aristocratic *domus*. Next, I show how the Domus Aurea, by evoking the luxury of a rural retreat in the capital city, embodied the total exposure of the emperor to the public eye.

It is not surprising that the emperor's house was not wholly a private space, as the traditional *domus* also played an important role in communal life. It has been repeatedly demonstrated that the Roman house was a setting for political and social activity, especially for interaction between the master of the house and his community: as A. Wallace-Hadrill put it, "a public figure went home not so much to shield himself from the public gaze as to present himself

to it in the best light."[17] The layout of the traditional Roman house was organized around the *atrium* where the *dominus* received his clients and other visitors. The paintings found on the walls of *atria*, especially those of the first and second styles, often feature elaborate architectural vistas which allude to the forms of public architecture (such as the theaters, temples, or basilicas), and these images could "evoke in the visitor the feel of something more than a private house."[18] Such visual allusions established the aristocratic house not as retreat from public life, but as an appropriate setting for it.

This is not to say that elite Roman houses offered no privacy for their inhabitants. Physical barriers and spatial arrangements divided guests from one another and from the occupants of the house, and these same boundaries could separate different categories of inhabitants.[19] The cubiculum, often translated as "bedroom" although not necessarily equivalent in function to the modern bedroom, is one example of a room which provided for needs beyond reception and display.[20] In a literary study of the term cubiculum, A. Riggsby has pointed out that this room, associated primarily with rest and sex, was "a place where at least some of the rules of public behavior [were] relaxed."[21] Nevertheless, privacy at home seems to have been exceptionally difficult to come by, even for members of the aristocracy. The younger Pliny exulted over the "unique privacy" he found in his country villa, a privacy which was afforded him by the size of the house, its layout, and the relative lack of visitors compared with what was

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[17] Wallace-Hadrill (1994) 5. Chapters 1-3 explain the layout and decoration of the Roman house and how it facilitated interaction between the *dominus*, members of his household, and visitors to the house.

[18] Ibid. 17 and Chapter 2.

[19] George (1998) 317. For a recent archaeological study of barriers in Pompeian houses, see Lauritsen (2012).

[20] See Chapters 2 and 5 for discussion of the problem of using terminology from literary sources to describe and interpret material remains.

[21] Riggsby (1997) 47. The association of these activities with the *cubiculum* was a way of exerting social control: "The assignment of different activities to different areas, and particularly the requirement that certain ones must (or must not) be carried out in public, provided an ideal map for the behavior of the Roman aristocrat" (53).

typical in a town house.[22] It is possible that seclusion within the home was so rare an experience in the Roman world that it was not widely conceived of as something to be desired. Although Nero's declaration that he would keep house and state separate should not be read as advertising his desire for privacy, the kind of boundary between public and private life suggested by *discreta domus et res publica* would have been unusual even for members of the ruling class.

The role of the *domus* in political life is especially evident in the case of elite residences on the Palatine, which served as both symbol and source of social prestige.[23] Among the most famous pieces of evidence for the social and political importance of Palatine property was the conflict over Cicero's estate, which Clodius seized during Cicero's exile in 58 BCE and used to dedicate a shrine to *Libertas*. In the *De Domo Sua*, in which Cicero argued for the return of his estate before the College of Pontiffs, he accused Clodius of taking possession of the property not for any public good, but because Clodius wanted a large and luxurious house (Cic. *Dom*. 116). Yet while the emperor's palace shared important similarities with the Republican aristocratic *domus*, the singularity of the emperor's role also put him and his household in a fundamentally different position from that of the leading political figures competing for power in the late Republic. First, while competition between aristocratic houses was a distinctive feature of political life in the Republic, the emperor's unique role meant that his house occupied a largely unchallenged position in Roman society. Second, the emperor's decisions and sympathies had public import no matter where he was: in this sense, no part of the emperor's house could be private, and this absence of privacy became key to the understanding and representation of imperial power. Both the House of Augustus and the Domus Aurea reflect this intertwining of the life of the emperor with the life of the community.

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[22] George (1998) 318.
[23] For a discussion of the topography and cachet of the Palatine hill during the Republic, see Royo (1987).

The house of Rome's first emperor serves as a prominent example of the problem of distinguishing public and private space in the imperial house. The development of Augustus' Palatine complex, like much of the topography of the Palatine hill, is a contentious issue, and the identification of the remains as the house of Augustus has been challenged; nevertheless, the broad outlines can be established.[24] Octavian's first Palatine house belonged to the orator Hortensius Hortalus, which he acquired sometime after the Battle of Philippi in 42 BCE.[25] In the next several years, Octavian purchased further Palatine properties (apparently contiguous with the house of Hortensius), at least some of which he dedicated to public use after his victory in the Battle of Naulochus in 36 BCE, and where he promised to dedicate a temple to Apollo.[26] In response to these dedications, the people voted to honor Octavian with a house built at the public expense.[27] It is generally believed that Octavian did not begin construction on the complex until after the battle of Actium: the Temple of Apollo and the Greek and Latin libraries (probably housed within a single building) were dedicated in 28 BCE.[28] In addition to the Temple of Apollo, two reliefs and a Tiberian coin type provide evidence for a round, ionic temple of Vesta on the Palatine.[29]

The Palatine complex as it stood after Actium was composed of the Temple of Apollo to the northeast, the house of Augustus west of the temple, and the library to the southeast (Fig. 1).

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[24] Recent major treatments include Royo (1999); Quenemoen (2001); Carandini (2010). See also *Lexicon Topographicum Urbis Romae (LTUR) II*, s.v. "Domus: Augustus (Palatium)."

[25] Suet. *Aug*. 72.1. Different dates, between 41 and 36 BCE, have been proposed for the acquisition of the house: see Quenemoen (2001) 13 and note 29.

[26] Vell. Pat. 2.81. Royo (1999) 120-121 and Quenemoen (2001) 14-21 discuss Octavian's interest in promoting the legality of his property acquisitions, in contrast to the practice of proscription.

[27] Dio 49.15.5: ἀλλὰ ταῦτα μὲν ἄλλως ἐθρυλεῖτο, τότε δὲ οἰκίαν τε αὐτῷ ἐκ τοῦ δημοσίου δοθῆναι ἔγνωσαν· τὸν γὰρ τόπον ὃν ἐν τῷ Παλατίῳ, ὥστ' οἰκοδομῆσαί τινα, ἐώνητο, ἐδημοσίωσε καὶ τῷ Ἀπόλλωνι ἱέρωσεν, ἐπειδὴ κεραυνὸς ἐς αὐτὸν ἐγκατέσκηψε. τήν τε οὖν οἰκίαν αὐτῷ ἐψηφίσαντο. Greek text throughout from the *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae*.

[28] On dating the beginning of construction, see Quenemoen (2001) 19-20. More recently, Gros (2009) and Carandini (2010) have argued for an earlier date of construction. For the dedication of temple and libraries, Dio 51.1.3; inscriptional evidence in Quenemoen (2001) 20n57.

[29] *LTUR V,* s.v. "Vesta, Ara, Signum, Aedes (In Palatio)."

Evidence for the portico of the Danaids, another element of the complex, is limited, but it was

remarked upon in contemporary poetic representations of the house, and four herms found in the

vicinity of the Temple of Apollo have been interpreted as belonging to the Augustan portico.[30]

Further major construction on the house of Augustus was undertaken in 3 CE, when the house

and the nearby temple of the Magna Mater were burned. In Dio's account, the people contributed

money to have the house rebuilt; Augustus then made the entire house public (τὴν οἰκίαν

οἰκοδομήσας ἐδημοσίωσε πᾶσαν), either as a response to the public donations or because as

Pontifex Maximus he was required to live "in a place that was at once private and public" (ἐν

τοῖς ἰδίοις ἅμα καὶ ἐν τοῖς κοινοῖς, Dio 55.12.4-5).[31] The organization of the complex itself

called into question the distinction between public and private spaces, or into spaces intended for

the use of the community and those intended for the residence of the imperial household.

While it is unlikely that all parts of the complex were accessible to the public, it is worth

considering whether the ancient viewer was actually meant to distinguish clearly between the

public and private structures. Certain features of the complex indicate that the House of

Augustus and the public buildings were meant to be perceived as intimately connected, rather

than as separate areas. The most remarkable feature of the house was a ramp, decorated with

frescoes, which allowed passage between the house and a square immediately in front of the

Temple of Apollo.[32] Military victors during the Republic also dedicated temples to advertise

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[30] Suet. *Aug.* 29.4 mentions a portico connected with the temple of Apollo; Dio 53.1.3 refers to the Temple of Apollo and its τεμένισμα. Propertius 2.31.3-4 and Ovid *Tr.* 3.1.61-2 describe the statues of the Danaids. See Quenemoen (2006) for a recent reconstruction of the portico on the terrace of the Temple of Apollo.

[31] Dio 54.27.3 reports that Augustus made part of his house public when he became *pontifex maximus* in 12 BCE. The extent of the rebuilding after the fire of 3 CE is difficult to establish.

[32] On the connection between house and temple, see Zanker (1983) 21-27, Carettoni (1988), and *LTUR I* s.v. "Apollo Palatinus." The temple occupied a terrace 9 meters above the house. The ramp was closed after the death of Augustus. Barton (1996) 92 argues that the rooms of Augustus' house nearest the ramp were intended to be the formal reception rooms of the house, and that proximity to the temple would have drawn attention to the public

their successes and honor their patron gods, but this close connection between the temple and the

house of the dedicant is unprecedented.[33] It is improbable that anyone outside of Augustus'

household would have been permitted to use the ramp between house and temple, but the

presence of the ramp nevertheless emphasized the interdependency of the two structures.[34] The

very fact that the effort was made to construct such an unusual passageway suggested that,

without it, house and temple would be incomplete: the house became a component of the temple,

and the temple because a component of the house.

Even if visitors to the temple were unable to use the ramp, they would likely have been

struck by the unusual relationship between the temple and Augustus' house. While the temple

itself was probably only open on the occasion of religious festivals, those visiting the porticoes

and libraries on other occasions would still have encountered the temple, and observed its

relationship to the house of the *princeps*.[35] Literary evidence points to an awareness of the

relationship between house and temple in antiquity. In the *Fasti*, Ovid divides the complex

among Augustus, Apollo, and Vesta.[36] In Ovid's third book of *Tristia,* in which the book

narrates its own journey up the Palatine hill, Augustus' house is described as "the house of great

Jupiter…always beloved of the Leucadian god" (*magni…Iouis esse domum...Leucadio semper*

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function of these rooms. I suggest that the presence of the ramp would have influenced the perception of Augustus' house as a whole, not just these particular rooms.

[33] Zanker (1983) 22. On Hellenistic precedents (especially Pergamon), see Zanker (1983) 22-25 and Nielsen (1999) 171-180.

[34] Carettoni (1983) 45 argues that the ramp was the original entrance to the Temple of Apollo; Royo (1999) 164 suggests that the ramp contributed to the confusion between the dwelling of the *princeps* and that of the god. In contrast, Quenemoen (2001) 269 doubts that the ramp ever functioned as a primary entrance to the temple, or that it was even visible from the entrance of the room that led to the ramp. It seems unlikely to me that Octavian would go to the trouble to have this unusual architectural feature constructed only to conceal it from public knowledge, but I agree with Quenemoen that the placement of the ramp argues against its use as a main approach to the temple.

[35] Egelhaaf-Geiser (2007) 211, 214-218 on traffic at the Temple of Apollo Palatinus.

[36] Ov. *Fast.* 4.949-950: *Phoebus habet partem, Vestae pars altera cessit:/ quod superest illis, tertius ipse tenet*. On the temple of Vesta on the Palatine, see note 29 above.

amata deo est).[37] Here, the association between Jupiter and Augustus makes the house into a kind of temple in itself. The idea that Apollo loves Augustus' house may be a specific reference to the passageway between the buildings; in any case, it draws attention to the connection between them.

Appreciating the association between the temple of Apollo and the house of Augustus, however, did not require a visit to the Palatine hill. Those looking up to the Palatine from below would have been influenced by the massing of the complex, that is, the joining of different buildings in the structure to present a continuous façade. As C. Quenemoen has argued, massing encouraged a viewer to see the complex as a whole, rather than to pick out the individual structures, and so emphasized the connection between the House of Augustus and the other parts of the complex.[38] The massing of the complex and the elevation of the Temple of Apollo called attention to the relationship between the temple and the residence of the *princeps*, but what sort of relationship was it? P. Zanker argues that the complex advertised the connection between Apollo and Octavian, the deity's protégé, in the tradition of the Hellenistic kings, and that the architecture thus blurred the line that divided god from man.[39] Conversely, Quenemoen suggests that, because the Temple of Apollo stood at the highest point of the complex, it "defined Octavian's position within the Roman social order--elevated above fellow citizens, second to Apollo."[40] Whatever relationship Octavian intended to communicate between himself and the divine, the proximity of the house to the temple was not interesting only for its religious significance: the complex also drew attention to the role played by the house of the *princeps* in

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[37] Ov. *Tr.* 3.1.38-42. Ovid especially admires the oak wreath (*querna corona*, 39) decorating the house, and suggests that the love of Apollo is one of the reasons for its presence.
[38] Quenemoen (2001) 263-5.
[39] Zanker (1983) 22ff.
[40] Quenemoen (2001) 265.

the life of the community more generally. Temples in the Roman world served as meeting places

and museums, and (as in the case of the Palatine complex) were often associated with libraries

and courtyards.[41] Pliny lists famous works of Greek sculpture that were kept in the Temple of

Apollo, including a Diana of Timotheus.[42] Both Suetonius and Servius report that the Senate was

convened on the Palatine during the reign of Augustus, though it is not clear exactly where the

meetings were held. According to Servius, the Senate met *in Palatii atrio*, and Suetonius'

account could refer to the Temple of Apollo, the library, or a portico nearby.[43] The Temple of

Apollo, therefore, provided a setting not just for religious activity, but also for cultural

enjoyment and possibly official business. Visitors to the complex, aware of the presence of the

emperor's house, might have considered the house as an extension of a multi-purpose communal

space, as well as a sign of the relationship between god and *princeps*.

For the ancient viewer who approached the Palatine from the southwest, the Temple of

Apollo, the Danaid portico, and the entrance to the House of Augustus "were prominently

articulated on the southwest façade of the building."[44] It is not universally accepted, however,

that the complex was designed to be viewed from the southwest, and the advantages of an

approach from the Forum Romanum have also been noted. The building projects of Caesar and

Augustus, as T. P. Wiseman argues, "had turned the Forum Romanum into a great dynastic

monumentum, dominated by the temple of the Divus Julius," and the visitor coming to the

Palatine complex from the forum would see it as the culmination of these projects.[45] The Temple

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[41] Stambaugh (1978) 586-588.
[42] Pliny *NH* 36.24, 32.
[43] Servius *ad Aen*. 11.235; Suet. *Aug*. 29.3. See Thompson (1981) 335-9.
[44] Quenemoen (2001) 276. Quenemoen points out that the residential rooms of the complex, on the ground floor and second story, would have been hidden from outside view, but the view of the entrance to the house would have been sufficient to establish a relationship between the house of the emperor and the temple.
[45] Wiseman (1985) 405. See Wiseman's note 58 on the dominance of Julio-Claudian monuments in the forum during this period.

of the Divus Julius and the Arcus Augusti between the Palatine and the Regia transformed the

forum into a monumental vestibule for Augustus' palace.[46] While an approach from the forum

sacrificed the dramatic view of the temple of Apollo, it nevertheless situated the House of

Augustus among major public buildings, as the viewer traveled to the Palatine.

An anecdote from Seneca's *De Clementia* supports the view that the different parts of the

complex were not necessarily strictly distinguished in antiquity. In this story, Seneca reports that

Augustus, when he was asked to participate in an investigation of attempted parricide, declined

to call the meeting at his own house, but rather visited the house of the intended victim. The

emperor's decision was noteworthy because if he had called the trial at his own house (*meam*

domum), Augustus, rather than the father, would have been in charge of the investigation

(*Caesaris futura erat cognitio, non patris*, Sen. *Clem.* 1.15.3). Although it is not certain which

part of the Palatine complex was meant by *meam domum*, the anecdote nevertheless sheds light

on the conception of the emperor's house. If *meam domum* referred to the House of Augustus,

then the emperor's house was a place where he exercised his authority as emperor, not only as

dominus or *paterfamilias* of his own household; if *meam domum* referred to another part of the

Palatine complex, this suggests that even spaces to which the public enjoyed access could be

considered part of the emperor's house.

The House of Augustus was seen and understood as part of a public space, in a more

extreme sense than the typical elite *domus*: his house was not simply a setting for social

reception and for his political and business dealings, but functioned as part of a complex

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[46] Royo (1999) 136. Despite his emphasis here on the significance of the relationship between forum and palace, Royo argues that the complex itself was designed to privilege the southwest side of the Palatine over the area near the forum (43). If Augustus had wanted to remain near the traditional center of political power in Rome, he had a number of properties near the forum to choose from: he could have remained in his father's house, in the house of Calvus Macer where he lived earlier in his career, or (like Caesar) in the domus publica as pontifex maximus (144).

dominated by structures (the temple, library, and portico) that were dedicated to communal

benefit and enjoyment. As the first house of an emperor in Rome, Augustus' Palatine complex

set an important model for all others to follow or reject. I now turn to a very different imperial

palace in Rome: Nero's Domus Aurea. While Augustus' household was noted for its modesty

and correct observance of traditional Roman values, the Domus Aurea embodied the luxury of a

villa retreat, and offered access to a part of the emperor's life that was traditionally removed

from the public sphere. In this section, I outline the two main scholarly approaches to the Domus

Aurea, which treat the palace either as a tyrannical intrusion on public space or as a villa for the

people. I argue that parts of the Domus Aurea were intended to accommodate public events, and

I show how the palace represented both the status of the emperor and his relationship to his

subjects. This complex makes exposure and scrutiny key parts of the life of the emperor, and so

undermines the idea that the emperor could have a private life.

Nero, accused in antiquity of starting the Great Fire in order to acquire land for his new

palace, began building the Domus Aurea in 64 CE.[47] Exactly what construction should be

treated as part of the Domus Aurea is a matter of debate. The literary sources speak of the

Domus Aurea as a single house, but the details of their descriptions and material remains of the

house show that Nero's new palace included a number of separate structures.[48] The main body

of the Domus Aurea (Fig. 2), in what today is the Colosseum valley, consisted of a large

vestibule housing the Colossus statue, extensive porticoes, and a large lake, the Stagnum

Neronis, surrounded by cultivated fields, woods, and buildings "that looked like cities" (*ad*

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[47] See Carandini (2010) 239ff for a discussion of Nero's previous residences, including the Domus Transitoria.
Champlin (2003) 178-91 assesses the evidence that Nero started the Great Fire, and comes down on the side of
Nero's accusers.
[48] Tac. *Ann.* 15.42; Suet. *Nero* 31; Martial *de Spect* 2.

urbium speciem, Suet. *Nero* 31.1).[49] The *stagnum* itself was an artificial, rectangular pool that

later became the site of the Flavian amphitheater, or Colosseum. Remains of the foundations of

porticoes, dated to the Neronian period, have been excavated in the area of the Colosseum (Fig.

3).[50] Neronian cement works discovered in the foundations of Hadrian's Temple of Venus and

Roma have confirmed that the vestibule of the Domus Aurea previously stood on the site of the

temple: Suetonius describes the vestibule as the home of the colossal statue of Nero, which

Hadrian was compelled to move in order to construct his temple. The remains of an ancient road

between the Temple of Venus and Roma and the Colosseum would originally have connected the

vestibulum of the Golden House (the western end of the Temple of Venus and Roma) with the

pool.[51]

Nero also built a *nymphaeum* on the Caelian hill near the Temple of Divine Claudius and

a residence on the Oppian spur of the Esquiline hill, usually interpreted as the site of the rotating

cenatio, a splendid banquet hall with a revolving ceiling.[52] Remains of Neronian construction on

the Palatine hill have also been assigned to the Domus Aurea, although E. Champlin has argued

that neither the structures on the Palatine nor the Esquiline should be included in what is called

the Domus Aurea. Suetonius indicates that the Domus Aurea took the place of the Domus

Transitoria, which occupied the area between the hills; thus, in Champlin's view, only the

construction between the Palatine and Esquiline hills, not the structures on the hills themselves,

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[49] *LTUR II,* s.v. "Domus Aurea: Area Della Stagnum," "Domus Aurea: Vestibulum," on the vestibule and the construction near the Stagnum Neronis**.** The nature of the buildings around the Stagnum Neronis is uncertain, though they may have included a rebuilt Temple of Fortuna (Pliny *NH* 36.163).

[50] The archaeological evidence for the pool, porticoes, and cement works is discussed in Panella (1990) 67-73; Panella (1996) 181-188.

[51] See *LTUR* references in note 50.

[52] Suet. *Nero* 31. *LTUR II*, s.v. "Domus Aurea: Il Palazzo Sull'Esquilino."

should be identified as the Domus Aurea.[53] Ancient criticism of the expansiveness of Nero's

house, however, indicates that inhabitants of Rome may not have distinguished so clearly

between the Domus Aurea proper (the structures that replaced the Domus Transitoria) and the

emperor's other building projects. A popular poem, reported in Suetonius, advised the residents

of Rome to move to Veii to escape the sprawl of Nero's house.[54] The most detailed ancient

accounts of the house depict it as "the world in miniature," emphasizing its vastness and its

inclusion of nature.[55] In Tacitus' view, the most remarkable features of the Domus Aurea were

not "gems and gold, already customary and commonplace through excess" (*gemmae et*

aurum…solita pridem et luxu vulgata), but rather the "fields and pools and, in the likeness of

wilderness, woods here and open spaces and vistas there" (*arva et stagna et in modum*

solitudinum hinc silvae inde aperta spatia et prospectus, *Ann.* 15.42). Suetonius uses similar

language when he describes the Stagnum Neronis as a "sea" (*stagnum maris instar*) and the

nearby parkland with its "fields and vineyards and pastures and woodlands" (*arvis atque vinetis*

et pascuis silvisque, Nero 31.1). While Nero may have intended the Domus Aurea to be limited

to the Colosseum valley, viewers probably associated it with neighboring imperial lands and

buildings.

One of the standard readings of the Domus Aurea is that the house was symptomatic of

Nero's tyrannical overreach. In the literary tradition, the Domus Aurea appears as the

manifestation of Nero's megalomania, an exclusive pleasure palace that the emperor built after

he evicted the Roman people from their homes. Nero's crime, then, was in setting up a luxury

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[53] Champlin (2003) 205. On the extent of the Domus Transitoria, see Suet. *Nero* 31.1 (*domum a Palatio Esquilias usque fecit, quam primo transitoriam, mox incendio absumptam restitutamque auream nominavit*) and Tac. *Ann.* 15.39 (*domui eius, qua Palatium et Maecenatis hortos continuaverat, ignis propinquaret*).
[54] Suet. *Nero* 39: *Roma domus fiet: Veios migrate, Quirites,/ si non et Veios occupat ista domus*.
[55] Milnor (2005) 303.

villa in the city, although the villa was a type of building that belonged in the country.[56] There is little evidence, however, to suggest that the areas that Nero built up had been densely populated before the fire.[57] The grand constructions on the Esquiline, for example, stood on land that had been imperial property (the Horti Maecenati), or that was occupied by the elite. Remains of tabernae and bath buildings from the Julio-Claudian period have been found in the Colosseum valley, but the sources that criticize the Domus Aurea do not report popular outcry against the Domus Transitoria, the house Nero built in the same valley prior to the fire.[58] Even Nero's behavior in the aftermath of the crisis (despite the story that he performed the "Sack of Troy" while Rome burned) does not suggest that he was indifferent to the plight of the populace or to their ill will towards him.[59] In Tacitus' generally hostile account, Nero opens his own gardens for those displaced by the fire (*hortos quin etiam suos patefecit*), builds temporary housing, and has provisions brought in from neighboring towns (*Ann.* 15.39).

This kind of imperial hospitality, furthermore, was in keeping with Nero's character.[60] Before the Great Fire and the construction of the Domus Aurea, Tacitus reports that Nero "put on parties in public places and used the whole city as his house" (*publicis locis struere convivia totaque urbe quasi domo uti*, 15.37). For one of these opulent festivities, the emperor had a fleet of ships built, and put them out to sail in the Stagnum Agrippae, Agrippa's pool in the Campus Martius. On the main boat of the fleet, Nero staged a wedding with his slave, and Nero himself played the bride (15.37). As E. Champlin has observed, the Domus Aurea included a site able to accommodate displays of this kind: the Stagnum Neronis in the Colosseum valley. The Stagnum

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[56] Boëthius (1960); Purcell (1996) 128-35; Zanker (2002) 111.
[57] On the literary evidence, see Morford (1968) 158-70.
[58] For pre-Neronian remains in the Colosseum valley, see Panella (1990) 59-61.
[59] Tacitus (*Ann.* 15.39) reports that Nero was accused of singing an epic poem on the sack of Troy during the Great Fire; Suetonius (*Nero* 38.2) has a similar story.
[60] On Nero's penchant for populism and theatricality, see Griffin (1987) and Champlin (2003).

Agrippae has been seen as a model for Nero's complex of pool and porticoes in the Colosseum.[61] Like the pool in the Domus Aurea, the Stagnum Agrippae was an artificial pool set in a large park, the Horti Agrippae, which had been made public after Agrippa's death. The pool resembled a common feature of a seaside villa, such as those depicted in Pompeian wall paintings, which show arrangements of porticoes surrounding rectangular pools; the colonnaded pool from Nero's own villa at Baiae is represented on a glass flask from the third or fourth century CE.[62] Recent treatments of the Domus Aurea have argued that the Stagnum Neronis, like the Stagnum Agrippae, was intended as a public space, and was thus an expression not of Nero's megalomania, but of his populism.[63] The Domus Aurea, according to this interpretation, was meant to evoke the *villa maritima* not only for the benefit of the emperor, but also for the people of Rome.

Evidence for the usage of the Domus Aurea, however, is limited, and while the idea of the Stagnum Neronis as a public park is an intriguing one, it is not the only way in which the new palace could have been made available for public use. Even without dedicating their estates for public use, aristocrats could court popular favor by opening their *horti*, their luxurious and quasi-rural estates in Rome, for public banquets. A military victor during the Republic could offer an *epulum publicum* (public feast) in the Forum Romanum and Forum Boarium as part of his triumphal celebration, but *horti* like those of Lucullus or Pompey have also been proposed as possible venues for "politically oriented feasting on a grand scale."[64] J. H. D'Arms identified several instances in the late Republic when the most powerful Roman leaders invited the people to enjoy their urban estates. Pompey is known to have received the people in his gardens in 61

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[61] Hemsoll (1990) 15; Champlin (2003) 207. On the Gardens of Agrippa, Grimal (1969) 193-6.
[62] Panella (1996) 182-3.
[63] Hemsoll (1990) 14-16; Davies (2000) 40-42; Champlin (2003) 205-208.
[64] D'Arms (1998) 37; Coarelli (1983) 215-217.

BCE, where he distributed bribes during a consular election (Plut. *Pomp.* 44.3). After the battle

of Munda in 45 BCE, Caesar took the opportunity of his fifth triumph to throw a banquet for the

plebs Romana at his gardens across the Tiber (the same gardens which he later willed to the

people).[65] While we have no accounts of Nero opening the Stagnum Neronis for public use or

even for occasional public entertainments, his doing so would be consonant with his previous

behavior and with the tradition of large-scale festivities and public works that powerful Romans

undertook in order to secure popular support.[66] It is important to note, moreover, that Nero died

only a few years after he began to build his new house, and the construction in the Colosseum

valley appears to have been unfinished.[67] In the final years of his reign, the emperor was also

frequently absent from Rome. The complex, then, like Caesar's gardens a hundred years earlier,

could have been designed to accommodate public occasions, even if there was little opportunity

to use it.

The Domus Aurea provided an environment not only for Nero's personal enjoyment, but

for contact between Nero and the inhabitants of Rome.[68] If Nero had intended the Domus Aurea

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[65] Val. Max. 9.15.1, following the interpretation of D'Arms (1998) 40-42. D'Arms also cites an inscription assigned to the *fasti* of 45, albeit in need of heavy restoration, as evidence for the event.

[66] Champlin (2003) 208-9 also suggests that aristocratic *horti* in Rome offered a model for the Domus Aurea, but he does not note the public functions of these *horti* in the late Republic: he sees the Domus Aurea as a public park and thus as an innovative fusion of the private *hortus* and the public *domus*. I think it is more likely that public access to the Domus Aurea took place under the same limited conditions as the public feasting in the *horti*. Unlike the leaders of the late Republic, however, Nero had little need to compete for attention.

[67] Panella (1990) 73.

[68] One further piece of evidence warns against treating the Domus Aurea as Nero's gift to the people, his version of the Horti Agrippae: a four-line epigram from the poet Lucillius (*AP* 11.184), in which a character called Meniskos is burned alive for stealing Zeus's apples from the Gardens of the Hesperides. Robert (1968) argues that this epigram is not about Meniskos and Zeus, but is rather a satire that refers to the immolation, in the amphitheater, of a thief who stole apples from Nero's Domus Aurea (280-8). This reading of the poem has been criticized on several grounds, but the strongest objection is that the epigram cannot be dated with certainty: some scholars argue that Lucillius was active early in Nero's rule, and thus this epigram would predate the Domus Aurea; see Griffin (1987) 146-7; 273n31. Griffin also emphasizes that (as Robert himself notes) satire usually deals with archetypes, rather than with specific historical individuals, and so for Lucillius to discuss a particular instance of crime and punishment would be an unexpected choice. Nevertheless, Robert's interpretation aligns with other evidence for mythological play-acting in the arena, where criminals were costumed and executed to evoke famous crimes and punishments from mythology; see Coleman (1990), especially 60-1 on executions modeled on the myths of Hercules. It is

to be a secluded sanctuary, he did a poor job of it. As M. Griffin points out, the area must have

experienced considerable traffic. Nero rebuilt the Temple of Fortuna as part of the Domus Aurea;

markets, some built by Nero, stood in close proximity to the new palace; the Sacra Via, which

Nero also rebuilt, "finished at his front door."[69] The position of Nero's estate in the midst of the

city served to express and promote his power: he proclaimed the importance of his role in the

community by making his house an unavoidable element of the urban environment. The

constructions in the Colosseum valley in particular included two main roads, so that those

making their way to the forum "were forced to cross the new imperial estate…becoming part of

Nero's crowd."[70] Nero's palace was located not to provide him with a retreat in the midst of the

city, but to attract attention to his house, and thus to himself. Whether they actually visited the

park in the Colosseum valley, or were simply required to confront it as they moved through the

city, the Domus Aurea reminded the inhabitants of Rome of the emperor's prominence.

The Domus Aurea presented the emperor to public view in a particular way: it revealed

him as he was at his luxury villas on the Bay of Naples, a world that was typically distinguished

from political activity in the city of Rome. Broadly speaking, the palace imitated the essential

features of aristocratic country life: leisure time spent in grand gardens with views of the water.[71]

A degree of the luxury and natural scenery associated with the emperor's private life, that is,

difficult to reconcile Robert's reading of the Lucillius epigram with the argument that the Domus Aurea was a public park, but his interpretation does not preclude the idea of limited public access to Nero's palace: presumably, although Caesar welcomed the people to his *horti* to celebrate his triumph, theft was not permitted. Indeed, if this epigram refers to the Domus Aurea, it suggests that it was possible to enter the grounds of the palace (and probably not too difficult, or simply getting a taste of the imperial apples would not be worthy of the effort). Although the size, location, and design of the Domus Aurea argue against the view that it was meant to be concealed or closed off, access to the grounds was probably regulated, permitted at certain times but prohibited at others.

[69] Griffin (1987) 139-40. On the Temple of Fortuna, Pliny *NH* 36.163. On access to temples, see Stambaugh (1978) 554-608.

[70] Davies (2000) 41.

[71] Champlin (2003) 208-9; Carandini (2010) 256-260. For the argument that Nero intended to recreate Baiae for the people of Rome, see Champlin (2003) 156-60.

with his time away from politics and from Rome, now became part of the city. The Domus Aurea recreated the kinds of activities that were essential elements of the emperor's country life, and thus it put Nero's private life on display so that the city could see it, and, on occasion, take part in it. Yet this imitation villa was not simply a reflection of Nero's efforts to court the people's favor. Rather, by building a mock coastal retreat in Rome, the emperor declared that he lived constantly in the public eye, that his every move, no matter where it occurred, was a point of concern for the community as a whole.

Furthermore, Nero did not actually have to be present in the Domus Aurea in order for visitors to appreciate how the palace allowed them access to the emperor's private life: the complex itself staged a relationship between Nero and his subjects, whether or not Nero could be seen there. In a study of the architecture of the Tetrarchy, von Hesberg has demonstrated that the main architectural forms of the period (the *aula*, the amphitheater, and the bath) constructed a relationship between the emperor and his subjects by emphasizing the distance between the emperor and the viewer. While the emperor was often absent from his place or places of residence, Tetrarchic architecture reminded the viewer of the emperor's position at the top of the social hierarchy, and held out the promise of his return.[72] Von Hesberg's interpretation of Tetrarchic architecture is also useful for considering how the Domus Aurea established a particular understanding of the role of the emperor. By modeling the leisure activities of the emperor for the public, the Domus Aurea established a relationship between the emperor and the rest, although in this case the relationship was one of proximity rather than distance. This is not to say that visitors would think of themselves as the emperor's equals: the enormous statue of the

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[72] von Hesberg (2006) 137; 159; 164-5.

emperor in his *vestibulum* would remind anyone in doubt of who was master of the estate.[73]

Nevertheless, to visit the grounds of the Stagnum Neronis was to gain some experience of the life of the emperor away from the familiar venues of circus, theater, or Senate house.[74]

The populist function of the Domus Aurea, then, was paradoxically also an expression of the emperor's power. The elements of the Domus Aurea that recalled a maritime villa opened up the refuge of the country estate for public consumption, and so showed that even this traditional retreat from politics played a role in the life of the community. It is true that other members of the ruling class also endured a degree of exposure, but the emperor held the greatest authority, and thus he was necessarily the primary object of attention. Insofar as the Stagnum Neronis evoked the world of the emperor in his country retreats, it also served to flaunt the relevance of the emperor's private life, of his activities outside the city, for his subjects: only Nero's villa was worthy of such scrutiny, and the Domus Aurea brought it to Rome where it could be seen. While the Domus Aurea might allow the people to enjoy the luxuries typically reserved for the highest elite, the intimacy that Nero's new palace established between himself and the people was in fact a reflection of his own importance. Nero's palace was a reification of a principal characteristic of the absolute ruler in the *De Clementia*: Seneca warned Nero, "you cannot depart from your station; it haunts you and follows you wherever you go" (*aberrare a fortuna tua non potes; obsidet et te quocumque descendis magno apparatu sequitur*, *Clem.* 1.8.2). I turn to Seneca's treatment of the radical exposure of the absolute ruler in the next section.

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[73] On the Domus Aurea as the palace of the sun, see L'Orange (1973; originally published in 1942); his thesis was rejected by Boethius (1960), but revived by (among others) Hemsoll (1990) and Champlin (1998) 335-6, who argues that the Domus Aurea was presented simultaneously as a god's house and the house of the Roman people.

[74] Griffin (1987) 140 suggests that Nero held audiences in the Domus Aurea in lieu of attending the meetings of the Senate, which (as Tacitus reports in *Ann.* 15.52-3) he avoided from fear of assassination.

IV. Power, Publicity, and Vulnerability in the *De Clementia*

In a famous anecdote from Velleius Paterculus, the first-century BCE tribune Marcus Livius Drusus rejected plans for a house that would seclude him from onlookers (*liber a conspectu immunisque ab omnibus arbitris*). Drusus demanded of the architect "if you have any talent, build my house so that whatever I do, everyone can see it" (*si quid in te artis est, ita compone domum meam, ut, quidquid agam, ab omnibus perspici possit*, Vell. Pat. 2.14). In the *De Domo Sua*, a source more contemporary with Drusus than Velleius' first century CE report, Cicero called attention to the fact that "my house is in view of nearly the whole city" (*in conspectu prope totius urbis domus est mea*, Cic. *Dom.* 100). Whether or not the house was actually visible to the entire city (its exact location is disputed), the rhetorical force of Cicero's statement is clear: a man of Cicero's stature, like Drusus, required a house which could be seen by all.[75] In the electioneering handbook attributed the Cicero's brother Quintus, the author urges the candidate to "take care that approach to you is open day and night, not only by the gates of your house but even in your face and your brow, which is the gate of the soul" (*curaque ut aditus ad te diurni nocturnique pateant, neque solum foribus aedium tuarum sed etiam vultu ac fronte, quae est animae ianua*, *Comment. Pet.* 44). Quintus simply assumes that a man seeking high office would keep his physical doors open; it is the access to the spirit that he treats as something beyond the norm of aristocratic behavior.

Like Drusus, Nero rejected the idea that his house should be built to protect him from public view. The ideal ruler in Seneca's *De Clementia* is "easy to approach and to access" (*aditu accessuque facilis*), a characterization that resembles Quintus' portrait of the successful candidate for political office (Sen. *Clem*. 1.13.4). All of the sources discussed above, however,

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[75] Milnor (2005) 68 suggests that Cicero is in fact alluding to the story about Drusus, but in any case the sentiment is one that he expects to resonate with his audience.

describe the expectations for the ruling class in the context of the town house, which allowed the community access to the *dominus* in order to further his public career: when Cicero stayed in one of his villas away from Rome, his brother's advice to make himself available day and night did not apply. In this section, I look at the association between absolute power and radical exposure in Seneca's *De Clementia*. Seneca describes the ruler as a public figure who is always exposed to the community, not only in specific locations or on specific occasions; the ruler is constantly visible because loss of privacy is a necessary result of absolute power. I argue that lack of privacy is central to the conception of absolute power, and that the ruler's constant exposure to the public eye was understood to threaten the community he ruled.

The *De Clementia*, composed around 56 CE and addressed to Nero, is an unusual text that draws on a diverse selection of genres.[76] The Hellenistic kingship treatise is one particularly attractive source for Seneca's vision of imperial authority: the ruler's power over life and death in the *De Clementia* (1.1.2), for example, also appears in the *Letter to Philocrates* of Pseudo-Aristeas.[77] Yet while Seneca was probably influenced by Hellenistic texts, they were not his only models. Seneca uses tactics that are also found in panegyrics of the late Republic and the later imperial period, which praise the good qualities of the ruler in order to sketch an ideal of appropriate behavior. The repeated assertions in the text that the teenage emperor is already an expert in clemency and self-control serve a protreptic function: Seneca treats Nero as a paragon of virtue in order to encourage him to be virtuous in the future.[78] It is also important to consider Seneca's own position when he composed the work: as the imperial tutor, Seneca aimed both to

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[76] On the dating of the work, see Mortureux (1989) 1641-5. On genre, see Braund (2009) 16-30.
[77] Fears (1975) 492. Adam (1970) 12-20 argues that Seneca drew on two types of Hellenistic "mirror of princes" (*Fürstenspiegel*) literature: historical accounts of great rulers and theoretical models of the ideal prince.
[78] Braund (1998) 55, 71-74.

justify the position of his young charge and to suggest his own influence and ability to control him.[79]

Scholarly approaches to the *De Clementia* have typically focused on the problem of the definition of *clementia*, and its application for the Stoic *sapiens*, the judge, and the absolute ruler.[80] Seneca's praise of *clementia* is not easily reconcilable with the standard ethical philosophy of the Stoics, for whom mercy was an injustice, in that the judge who granted mercy failed to uphold the penalty required by law.[81] In Book 2 of the *De Clementia*, Seneca argues that clemency is a virtue for the *sapiens*: he distinguishes between *clementia*, or clemency, which he associates with appropriate moderation and restraint, and *misericordia*, or pity, which is "the vice of a petty mind that gives way at the sight of the suffering of others" (*uitium pusilli animi ad speciem alienorum malorum succidentis,* 2.5.1). This attempt to rehabilitate *clementia* as a characteristic of the *sapiens* may represent a genuine innovation in the Stoic ethical system.[82] The exercise of clemency in Seneca's text, however, is associated mainly with the role of ruler and judge, rather than with the Stoic *sapiens*. According to T. Adam, Seneca uses the language of clemency to establish the absolute ruler as a judge in a courtroom, and so binds the emperor to traditional institutions of power.[83]

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[79] Leach (1989) 227. Griffin (2002) sees the *De Clementia* as a contribution to political thought on the proper education of the ruler. Rawson (1989) observes that, while philosopher-advisors were typical companions for good kings in the Greek tradition, Greek sources show little interest in "Roman amateur Stoics" like Seneca; in Roman historiography, Seneca is depicted as a tutor of rhetoric, not philosophy (247).

[80] For the development of the concept of *clementia*, see Mortureux (1989) 1658-64; Dowling (2006), especially 18-28 (late Republic) and 194-212 (under Nero); Braund (2009) 30-44. Büchner (1978) insists that Seneca's idea of *clementia* has no bearing on the legal sphere or the activities of the judge, but is instead a virtue directed towards the health of the community (192-6, 207-211).

[81] Dowling (2006) 202.

[82] Griffin (1976) 154-170; Dowling (2006) 195-203.

[83] Adam (1970) 128-30.

While the ruler in the *De Clementia* acts as a judge, the subjects also judge their ruler: when he judges them with clemency or cruelty, they judge whether he is a king or a tyrant.[84] The fact that the ruler must face the judgment of his subjects is an essential feature of the characterization of the ruler in the *De Clementia*. I argue that public judgment of the ruler extends far beyond his role as a judge; the unique publicity of the absolute ruler shapes his relationship with the people and determines the fate of the community as a whole. In Seneca's account, the ruler is exposed to public view and thus occupies a precarious position, and his vulnerability ultimately threatens the community he rules.

At the opening of the work, Seneca imagines Nero addressing himself, as the new emperor, and identifying the qualities that set the ruler apart from his subjects. The emperor's power is initially characterized in terms of his authority over life and death for human beings, cities, and nations: Seneca imagines Nero asserting that,

> *ego uitae necisque gentibus arbiter; qualem quisque sortem statumque habeat, in mea manu positum est…quas nationes funditus excidi, quas transportari, quibus libertatem dari, quibus eripi… quae ruant urbes, quae oriantur, mea iuris dictio est* (*Clem*. 1.1.2).

> "I am the judge of life and death for the nations; what fate and standing each person shall have is set in my hand…which nations shall be utterly destroyed, which moved, which shall be given liberty and which shall lose it…which cities shall fall, which shall rise, is under my jurisdiction."

It is this stern definition of imperial power that requires Seneca to discuss the importance of clemency and how it benefits both the ruler's subjects and the ruler himself: *clementia* becomes a means of protection for the ruler who cannot escape the judgment of his subjects.[85]

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[84] Star (2012) 121-130. Favez (1960) demonstrates that Seneca does not share the aversion of his contemporaries for the word *rex*: a *rex* is a good monarch, while a *tyrannus* is a bad one.

[85] *Clementia*, especially in the case of Julius Caesar, has been interpreted as a mark of tyranny: in showing mercy to his enemies, the ruler actually asserted his own superiority to them. For this view, see Dowling (2006) 17-24.

The emperor's great power, however, is not the only difference Seneca sees between the ruler and his subjects: he also distinguishes them according to the publicity that each must confront. In an extended metaphor in which he likens the emperor to the sun, Seneca contrasts the exposure of the ruler with the anonymity of the private citizen. He observes that,

> *nostros motus pauci sentiunt, prodire nobis ac recedere et mutare habitum sine sensu publico licet; tibi non magis quam soli latere contingit. multa contra te lux est, omnium in istam conuersi oculi sunt; prodire te putas? oreris* (*Clem.* 1.8.4).

> "Few perceive our movements, we are allowed to go out and come back and change our clothes without the public noticing; it is no more your lot to remain hidden than the sun's. There is much light facing you, all eyes are turned towards it; you think that you are going out? You rise."[86]

Comparison between the ruler and the sun was a standard feature of Greek and Roman ruler cult.[87] Yet while the Hellenistic kings, and later Nero, used sun imagery to associate themselves with Helios or Sol, the celestial metaphor in this text serves a different purpose.

Although the grandeur of the metaphor does suggest the extent of the emperor's power, it primarily emphasizes his visibility. The ruler is like the sun not because of his beauty, brilliance, or crucial role in sustaining human life, but because none of his movements or changes in appearance pass without comment. Nevertheless, although the sun in this passage is not primarily a symbol of dominance, the more typical resonances of the sun in Greek and Roman ruler cult would have been familiar to Seneca and his audience. Seneca, then, may be deliberately up-ending the traditional view of the ruler's relationship to the sun. Comparisons

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Konstan (2005), however, argues that the Roman aristocracy understood *clementia* as a positive virtue, not a tyrannical one.

[86] I have adopted Braund's translation of *contra te lux est*, a phrase that has caused some concern for commentators. While Lipsius emended *contra* to *circum*, the manuscripts uniformly read *contra*; see Braund (2009) 252 for a discussion of a fragment from Ecphantus of Syracuse, who (like Seneca) portrays the king as both equivalent to the sun and facing the sun.

[87] Grimal (1971) traces Seneca's use of solar imagery to Egyptian sources, and identifies the *De Clementia* as "the first official affirmation of a solar theology of power" in Nero's reign ("la première affirmation officielle d'une théologie solaire du pouvoir" [214]). On the sun in ruler cult more generally, see Braund (2009) 250-52.

between the ruler and the sun that emphasize the ruler's power are not necessarily wrong in Seneca's view, but they miss the point, or at least an important part of it: the exposure which the emperor endures is essential to his role as absolute ruler. By using the image of the sun, traditionally associated with the ruler's power, Seneca merges his focus on the visibility of the ruler with traditional representations of absolute power.

While the *De Clementia* opens with Nero's declaration of the privileges of absolute power, Seneca soon reminds the emperor that "you cannot depart from your station; it haunts you and follows you wherever you go with great fanfare" (*aberrare a fortuna tua non potes; obsidet te et quocumque descendis magno apparatu sequitur*, 1.8.2). That the ruler is always exposed to the public eye makes him uniquely susceptible to rumor. Seneca explains that "it is another situation for those who are concealed in the crowd they do not depart from, whose virtues struggle for a long time to become visible and whose vices lurk in the darkness. Rumor takes hold of your deeds and words" (*alia condicio est eorum qui in turba quam non excedunt latent, quorum et uirtutes ut appareant diu luctantur et uitia tenebras habent; uestra facta dictaque rumor excipit*, 1.8.1). The ruler is simultaneously more powerful than private citizens and more limited in his freedom of action: everyone notices, comments on, and is concerned with his behavior, both good and bad. The relationship between rumor and the absolute ruler in this passage provides an interesting contrast to *Epistle* 43, when Seneca warns his nephew Lucilius, a magistrate in Sicily, about the influence of rumor (*Ep.* 43.1). Lucilius' problem is that he is a big fish in a small pond: "anything that stands out among its neighbors is great in the place where it stands out…you are now great in the province, although you look down on yourself" (*quidquid inter uicina eminet magnum est illic ubi eminet…tu nunc in prouincia, licet contemnas ipse te, magnus es*, *Ep.* 43.2-3). The ruler's position in the *De Clementia* is not qualified in this way.

While Lucilius attracts attention on a small scale and in a restricted environment, this kind of scrutiny is a constant concern for the absolute ruler.

The emperor, moreover, must be concerned not only with how inappropriate behavior affects his reputation, but also with how others might perceive even his virtuous actions. When recounting Augustus' concern for his reputation, Seneca observes that "any of us ought to have had enough faith in good conscience against negative opinions; rulers have to pay a great deal of attention even to rumor" (*quilibet nostrum debuisset aduersus opiniones malignas satis fiduciae habere in bona conscientia, principes multa debent etiam famae dare*, *Clem.* 1.15.5). While Seneca claims that dictates of conscience should be respected over public opinion, this idea was far from self-evident for his aristocratic audience, who saw glory and reputation as essential features of social and political life.[88] Seneca's focus on internal values, rather than public esteem, in the *De Clementia* and in other works has been interpreted as an effort to re-shape the ethical system of the elite: M. B. Roller argues that, because opportunities for public glory were limited under the principate, "Seneca declares that *conscientia* is the only authoritative moral judge and is superior to any external judges."[89] The ruler, however, remains a special case in Seneca's argument that elite behavior should be judged by internal rather than external standards. Because the ruler is always in the public eye, he has no choice but to concern himself with public judgment.

The *De Clementia,* in which the ruler must endure the attention of his subjects, offers a notable alternative to the "theatrical paradigm" for the interaction between ruler and ruled, according to which the ruler is the constant spectator, while his subjects are the actors who must

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[88] Winterling (2000) 9-33 demonstrates the persistence and significance of these values for imperial society, when opportunities for real political power were greatly restricted but elite status was still required to hold public office.
[89] Roller (2001) 84.

perform to please him: we see "the dominant one watching for the subordinate's correct performance, the subordinate watching to make sure his performance is giving rise to the desired effect."[90] Each of the participants in this interaction observes the other, but it is the gaze of the ruler that restricts the freedom of action of the ruled. The subordinate is forced to act in a certain way because he is being watched; he watches the ruler only to be sure that he has played his part appropriately. In the *De Clementia*, on the other hand, it is the ruler who is exposed to the gaze of his subjects, while his subjects may retreat from view. This is not to say, however, that the idea of the emperor as the spectator and his subjects as actors is never applicable to Roman understanding of absolute power. In her reading of Tacitus' Neronian narrative, S. Bartsch observes that subordinates are often unable to escape the view of the emperor and are forced to act so as to suit him, as at the dinner party when Britannicus died from poisoning or (more literally) at Nero's theatrical performances.[91] But the construction of the emperor as a public figure, uniquely susceptible to the view of private citizens and limited in his powers because of their gaze, is also an important element of the Roman conception of the relationship between ruler and ruled, and one that allows us to consider how Roman imperial discourse perceived the weaknesses and potential for instability in a system of imperial rule.

The descriptions of the constraints on the ruler's behavior serve to create a particular portrait of Nero's prospective reign, and of monarchic rule, for Seneca's aristocratic audience. In Seneca's text, the ruler restrains himself because he recognizes that the ramifications of his actions are far greater than in the case of private citizens. Seneca warns Nero, "you cannot speak without all peoples hearing your voice; you cannot become angry without everything trembling,

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[90] Bartsch (1994) 11. Cf. Scott (1990), who argues that, in an interaction between a dominant and subordinate agent, the dominant player "sets the tone of the encounter…power means not having to act, or, more accurately, the capacity to be more negligent and casual about any single performance" (29).
[91] On the death of Britannicus, see Bartsch (1994) 13-16; on Nero's theatrical career, 3-10; 38-50.

since you do not strike anyone unless everything around him shakes" (*loqui non potes nisi ut uocem tuam, quae ubique sunt gentes, excipiant; irasci non potes nisi ut omnia tremant, quia neminem adfligere nisi ut quidquid circa fuerit quatiatur*, 1.8.5).[92] In part, restrictions on the ruler's behavior were due to "expectations of others about what kind of conduct was appropriate to the most honorific person in society."[93] While private citizens can easily resort to physical violence in their dealings with each other, "for a king, shouting and even intemperance in speech is not in accordance with his majesty" (*regi uociferatio quoque uerborumque intemperantia non ex maiestate est*, 1.7.4). The ruler, however, is confined not only by his need to protect his reputation, but also because his lack of self-control would be uniquely destructive. The absolute ruler must actually impose limits on himself, or he risks bringing himself down along with his subjects: "a cruel reign is turbulent and darkened by shadows…while not even he who has upset everything is undisturbed" (*crudele regnum turbidum tenebrisque obscurum est...ne eo quidem qui omnia perturbat inconcusso,* 1.7.3). Even if the ruler is unconcerned with upsetting the entire world, he must realize that by exercising his power without restraint he makes his own position a precarious one. In addition to advising Nero of the benefits of clemency and moderation, Seneca also aims to persuade his senatorial readership that, when the absolute ruler understands the risks he faces if he abuses his power, he will check himself.

While the *De Clementia* opens with an account of the emperor's authority, hints of the risks that accompany the emperor's position also appear early in the text. Nero proclaims that he has always been merciful, insisting that "whenever I had found no cause for pity, I spared myself" (*quotiens nullam inueneram misericordiae causam, mihi peperci*, 1.1.4). The idea that

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[92] Translation adapted from Braund (2009).
[93] Roller (2001) 194. This argument is indebted to Lendon (1997), who argues that the emperor needed to augment his honor (that is, act in such a way that others would honor him) in order to secure his position.

the ruler spares himself by exercising *clementia* indicates that *clementia* protects not only the subjects who face punishment, but also the ruler who may earn the enmity of his subjects if he assigns harsh penalties. A warning to the ruler to avoid being too harsh a judge was particularly appropriate for the early Neronian period, when Claudius was attacked for his "passion for litigation, particularly his eagerness to sit in judgment himself whenever possible."[94] In the *Apocolocyntosis*, Augustus reprimands Claudius in the assembly of the gods for putting the accused to death without trial; when Claudius arrives in the underworld, a parade of his victims comes out to greet him, and Rome rejoices at his death.[95] The ruler who wants to protect himself from hostility and backlash must limit his exercise of power by showing *clementia* toward those he rules, just as he must control himself in the face of constant public scrutiny. When he highlights the ways in which a ruler can gain approval, Seneca also suggests that the ruler is vulnerable and in need of goodwill.

The use of military language in the text underscores the idea that the ruler is under threat from the community he rules and that he must win the loyalty of his subjects in order to protect himself. Seneca claims, "I can go alone into any part of the city without fear, although no companion follows me, although I have no guard, no sword at my side; you must live armed in your own peace" (*possum in qualibet parte urbis solus incedere sine timore, quamuis nullus sequatur comes, nullus <custos> sit mihi, nullus ad latus gladius; tibi in tua pace armato uiuendum est*, 1.8.2). The personal bodyguard, a typical characteristic of the tyrant in ancient literature, emerges here as a sign of the emperor's vulnerability rather than of his tyrannical behavior.[96] In one passage, Seneca imagines clemency as a fortress, superior even to a physical

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[94] Braund and James (1998) 306. Cf. Tac. *Ann.* 13.4, when Nero promises "not to be the judge of all affairs."
[95] *Apocol.* 10.4, 13.4, 12.2.
[96] Cf. Peisistratus and Deioces in Herodotus 1.59; 1.98.

structure. For the ruler who practices clemency, "there is no need to build up lofty citadels or to fortify hills that are steep to climb…or to surround himself with multiple walls and towers: clemency will keep the king safe even in the open" (*non opus est instruere in altum editas arces nec in adscensum arduos colles emunire nec…multiplicibus se muris turribusque saepire: saluum regem clementia in aperto praestabit*, 1.19.6).[97] There is no question here that the absolute ruler is exposed and requires exceptional defenses; the only concern is how he will build them. The ruler who is concerned for his subjects' wellbeing can rely on them to defend him; he will find that they "are completely prepared to throw themselves on the sword-points of attackers on his behalf, and to cast down their bodies, if it is necessary to make him a road to safety through human carnage" (*obicere se pro illo mucronibus insidiantium paratissimi et substernere corpora sua, si per stragem illi humanam iter ad salutem struendum sit*, 1.3.3). This image of the bodily sacrifices of faithful subjects serves to remind the ruler not only of the importance of clemency, but also of the fact that he must contend with hostile opponents.

Seneca returns to the issue of the ruler's weakness and vulnerability with the metaphor of the "king" bee, which he treats as nature's model for kingship. The king of the hive has the finest living quarters and exceptional physical beauty, but he is also unarmed (*inermem*) and thus unable to seek revenge (1.19.2-3). Seneca calls this combination of splendor and vulnerability "a prodigious model for great kings" (*exemplar…magnis regibus ingens*), and his reading of the position of the king bee corresponds to the other metaphor he draws from nature, of the king as the sun. By comparing the king to the sun, he emphasized the king's visibility and exposure; the comparison between ruler and king bee similarly points to the vulnerability of the ruler as well as his power. While Seneca notes that the king bee is central to the survival of the hive, his singular

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[97] Translation adapted from Braund (2009).

importance does not cancel out the fact that nature has left him without a stinger to defend

himself (*sine aculeo*).[98] For human rulers, *clementia* is the strongest defense, and S. Braund

notes that the absence of the stinger symbolizes *clementia* in the bee world:[99] nature has devised

a king who has no choice but to show clemency to his subjects. The king bee, then, is merciful

by default, because he is too weak to attack his fellow-bees, and his weakness is inextricably tied

to his defenses: *clementia* is both a product of his vulnerability (his lack of a stinger) and the

thing that protects him from the anger of his subjects (according to Seneca, bees are

pugnacissimae, especially prone to fighting). Like the king bee, the human ruler in Seneca's text

is uniquely vulnerable: he is exposed to the view of the community, and a target of their

displeasure.

In Seneca's portrait of absolute power, the ruler occupies a precarious position, and the

successful ruler must rely on clemency as a means of self-defense. The difference between the

good king and the bad tyrant is not only in their conduct toward their subjects, but also in the

ways in which they protect or endanger themselves through their actions. Seneca advises Nero:

"for kings safety is more certain as a result of mildness, since frequent vengeance restrains the

hatred of a few, but provokes the hatred of all" (*regibus certior est ex mansuetudine securitas,*

quia frequens uindicta paucorum odium opprimit, omnium irritat, 1.8.6). He even distinguishes

between tyrants and kings in part according to the lengths of their lives: the cruelty of the tyrant

and the clemency of the king explain "why kings grow old and pass down their kingdoms to their

children and grandchildren, while the power of tyrants is detestable and brief" (*cur reges*

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[98] At 1.4.1, Seneca cites Vergil, *G*. 4.212-13 to show the suffering the hive experiences if the king is lost. This verse appears to have been a favorite of Seneca's: as Braund and other commentators have observed, he also cites it at *Apocol*. 3.2. Leach (1989) 221 points out that, unlike Seneca, Vergil does not see the beehive as a model for human societies. On the contrast between human rulers and king bees in the *De Clementia*, see Star (2012) 120-1.
[99] Braund (2009) *ad loc*.

consenuerint liberisque ac nepotibus tradiderint regna, tyrannorum exsecrabilis ac breuis

potestas sit, 1.11.4). Nevertheless, we should not read Seneca's argument for clemency as though

he believed that violent action taken by the ruler was never an effective strategy, or that rulers

never profited from harsh retaliation. Rather, this argument for the ruler to protect his interests

with mercy rather than with vengeance is aimed at promoting a particular vision of imperial

power, and at pointing to the risks involved in imperial rule. M. B. Roller has made the

interesting case that "aristocratic imaginings of the autocracy in which they live involve more

than just the attempt to comprehend the new power structure: they are also attempts to affect that

power structure."[100] The *De Clementia* is in part intended to convince Nero of the advantages of

clementia, but by focusing on the vulnerability of the ruler and how the emperor must secure the

goodwill of his subjects, Seneca draws attention to the fragility of the new system of rule at

Rome.

It may be argued that the correspondence between power, exposure to public view, and

vulnerability should be regarded as a trope: this group of themes appears in other texts, notably

Xenophon's *Hiero* and Seneca's own *Consolation to Polybius*. Xenophon stages a conversation

between Simonides, a Greek poet of the fifth century BCE, and Hiero, the tyrant of Syracuse, in

which the interlocutors expound on the fears and dangers that beset the tyrant: he must be armed

wherever he goes, his own city is especially hostile, and he requires elaborate defenses (*Hiero*

2.8-9, 4.8). These considerations bear close resemblance to Seneca's account of the precarious

position of the emperor (e.g. *Clem.* 1.8.2, 1.19.6). In the *Consolation*, an earlier work addressed

to a freedman of the emperor Claudius, Seneca reminds Polybius that his exalted position makes

it impossible for him to conceal his actions (*Polyb.* 6.2). It is significant, however, that Polybius'

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[100] Roller (2001) 10.

prominence, and thus the attention he receives, is due to his close relationship to the emperor: if Polybius were to fall out of imperial favor, he would escape the public eye.

Although the admonitions offered to Polybius and to Hiero have much in common with Seneca's warnings to Nero, the function of this conception of power in the *De Clementia* goes beyond the level of a literary trope. In the *De Clementia*, the exposure and the vulnerability of the emperor are especially important because they have ramifications for the stability of the community. As G. Mortureux argues, Seneca reduces the complexity of the empire to two elements, ruler and ruled, and it is *clementia* which unites these two parties and ensures the cohesion of the state.[101] When Seneca describes *clementia* as the only means to achieve security, he insists that "if anyone supposes that the king is safe where nothing is safe from the king, he is in error; security must be bargained for with mutual security" (*errat enim si quis existimat tutum esse ibi regem ubi nihil a rege tutum sit; securitas securitate mutua paciscenda est*, 1.19.5). If the security of the ruler and the security of his subjects are dependent on each other, then just as the king is not safe when nothing around him is secure, so nothing can be secure if the king is not safe. All eyes are on the ruler, and his behavior affects everyone; dangers to his position, either from his own carelessness or from external attacks, threaten to disturb not only the ruler but also the state.

Seneca offers another way of understanding the bond between ruler and ruled when he claims that the *princeps* and the citizen body are inextricably joined together: he notes that "Caesar so entangled himself with the state that one is unable to separate from the other without peril for both, for the former needs strength and the latter needs a head" (*ita se induit rei publicae Caesar ut seduci alterum non posset sine utriusque pernicie; nam et illi uiribus opus est*

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[101] Mortureux (1989) 1679. See also Manuwald (2002) 112, who notes that the absence of external restraints on the ruler's behavior makes the commonwealth wholly dependent on his character and decisions.

et huic capite, 1.4.3).[102] The portrayal of the state as a body is also a literary trope. One of the most striking examples of this trope is found in Livy, when Menenius Agrippa argues that the plebs, by seceding from Rome, are like a body rebelling against its stomach (the Senate).[103] His speech, however, suggests not only the foolishness of the plebs, but also two further elements of the relationship between the people and the ruling class. First, the desperation of the Senate for the *plebs* to return to Rome indicates that they are vulnerable to the body they ostensibly sustain. Second, the metaphor emphasizes the interdependency of rulers and ruled. When Seneca demonstrated the ways in which the ruler was vulnerable, he pointed to potential dangers for the community as a whole.

V. Conclusion

The promise with which Nero began his reign, to keep house and state separate, was in many ways alien to the practices of the late Republic and early Empire. Both literary and archaeological evidence demonstrates that the ruling class at Rome placed far greater emphasis on being visible to the community than in protecting its privacy. For Augustus, his claims to traditional practices and attitudes in his home life were crucial to his self-presentation and success in the public sphere: his "life as a private citizen was at the same time virtuously distinct from the pomp and circumstance of his role as a *princeps* and continuously implicated in it."[104] Yet beyond the importance of the aristocratic *domus* in Republican political life, and the

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[102] This passage recalls a similar analogy at 1.3.5, where Seneca suggests that the ruler is the mind (*animus*), while the people are the body (*corpus*). What is especially interesting is that the body obeys and protects the mind, even while the mind "stays hidden" (*in occulto*). The ruler/mind, then, cannot hide himself without the protection of the people/body.

[103] Livy 2.32.9-12. Braund (2009) 206-7 traces the history of this trope in Greek and Latin literature.

[104] Milnor (2005) 92.

centrality of domestic life in Augustan political ideology, we should ask to what extent the ruler was understood to enjoy any kind of privacy or private life. When Tacitus picked out the separate house and state, *doma discreta et res publica*, as an appropriate goal for the ideal ruler and an elusive one for Nero, he in fact drew attention to the difficulty, or even futility, of attempting to maintain a boundary between the ruler's house and the polity.

The emperor was understood to be not only a figure of extraordinary power, but also the primary object of public attention. The caricature of Claudius in the *Apocolocyntosis*, the later accounts of the efforts to conceal his death, and the depiction of absolute power in the *De Clementia* all treat the emperor as a figure exposed to public scrutiny. Imperial residences were not simply a setting for political transactions like the houses of the ruling class of the late Republic, nor did they function to provide the emperor with a retreat in the midst of Rome. Augustus' building project on the Palatine blurred the boundaries between the emperor's house and an architectural complex that was dedicated to public use. The Domus Aurea recreated the emperor's rural retreat in the heart of an urban environment, and thus asserted that the emperor was always visible to the community, even when he was engaged in leisure rather than traditional forms of political business. The absence of privacy in the case of the emperor, both his exposure to scrutiny and the great public import of his actions, became a critical part of the idea of absolute rule as it developed in the early imperial period. This loss of privacy, moreover, was not simply a point of interest for the absolute ruler himself: the emperor's subjection to the public eye raised the threat of vulnerability for the emperor, and thus of instability for the community as a whole.

Chapter 2. Visibility and Power: The House on Stage

I. Introduction

A collection of engravings from the eighteenth century has preserved a number of lost frescoes from Nero's Domus Aurea, including an image of an elaborate entranceway, framed by a series of two-story columnar arches.[1] Human figures stand at the center of the arches, and more arches and colonnades can be seen receding into the distance. One possible source for this image is the stage building, or *scaenae frons*, an architectural form that would have been familiar to the Roman viewer. Nero's own devotion to the theater likely bears some responsibility for the presence of theatrical motifs in the Domus Aurea: the emperor was infamous for his penchant for performing on stage.[2] Whatever Nero's personal tastes, however, theatrical frescoes in the Domus Aurea are particularly arresting for the way they symbolize the confluence of theatricality and power in the early empire. The image of the *scaenae frons* in the Domus Aurea should be associated with a broader cultural engagement with the relationship between visibility, performance, and power: it suggested that the ruler's house was a theater where he was put on display.

The relationship between theatricality and power in the Roman world, especially in the late Republic and early Empire, has been well studied in recent scholarship.[3] In the late Republic,

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[1] *Le antiche camere delle terme di Tito e loro pitture restituite al pubblico da Ludovico Mirri Romano* (Rome, 1776). Image reproduced in Leach (2004) Fig. 76.
[2] On Nero the actor, see Griffin (1984); Bartsch (1994); Koloski-Ostrow (2000); Champlin (2003).
[3] For example, Dupont (1985); Edwards (1994); Bartsch (1994); Parker (2000); Purcell (2000).

attending the theater posed a challenge for the Roman elite: the regulated system of seating, according to which Senators were closest to the stage, meant that elites were "wedged between the stage and the commons…[they] hoped for approval or feared attack from two directions."[4] This problem was magnified in the case of the emperor, who was always the most prominent recipient of popular praise or blame. S. Bartsch has made the influential argument that interactions between emperor and subjects in the early empire could be understood in theatrical terms. According to the "theatrical paradigm," the emperor was the spectator who observed his subjects to ensure that they played their roles appropriately. Yet subjects retained the ability to express their true opinions in public contexts, especially in the theater, where audiences could decide that a performer or dramatist was engaging in "doublespeak," and thus insist "that a given speech or verse [contained] a meaning other than the one dictated…by political convention or…by…fictional context and literary precedent."[5] By recognizing these alternate interpretations, crowds declared views which their social and political superiors did not sanction, and which elites were not always able to turn to their advantage; audiences at the theater and the games could express their will and even exert their influence over those who ruled them in other contexts.

Some treatments of the relationship between ruler and ruled, however, suggest that the authority of the subordinate player extended far beyond the confines of any particular space (such as the theater or amphitheater) or performance context. In the *De Clementia*, as I argued in the previous chapter, Seneca portrayed the absolute ruler as constantly exposed to the judgment of his subjects. In this chapter, I focus on visual and literary expressions of power that could have wider appeal than philosophical treatises like the *De Clementia*: theatrical imagery in wall

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[4] Parker (2000) 171.
[5] Bartsch (1994) 65.

painting and Seneca's tragedies. Central to my discussion is N. Elias's concept of *gloire*, the obsession with prestige that ensures the security of the absolute ruler. In his analysis of the court of Louis XIV, Elias argues that the king defended himself against real threats to his position through "his desire not only to possess power over others but to see it constantly recognized publicly in the words and gestures of others and so doubly assured."[6] The king was only king insofar as he continuously demonstrated his power to his subjects, and also insofar as they continuously recognized it. Images of the theater in Roman domestic art and the portrayal of royal palaces in Seneca's *Agamemnon* and *Thyestes* draw attention to the ways in which the powerful are dependent on their audiences, and thus emphasize the authority that spectators and subjects possess. While the ruler puts himself on display inside his house, he is also represented by it:[7] viewers of the house, both visitors to houses in Campania and the audience of tragic performances, gain a privileged knowledge of the ruler that is not available to them in other environments.

II. Theater in the House

Roman domestic painting is a key source for reconstructing the experience of viewing and the role of the spectator in the ancient world. In his influential analysis of the space and decoration of the Roman house, A. Wallace-Hadrill examined domestic art from the perspective of the *dominus*, who constructed a residential environment that suited his stature in the public sphere.[8] Yet while the preferences and objectives of the *dominus* played a deciding role in the

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[6] Elias (1983) 134.
[7] Bodel (1997).
[8] Wallace-Hadrill (1994), especially 1-16. Parker (2000) 168 argues that the house was the environment where the Roman elite had most control over their self-presentation to the community.

decoration of the house, other scholars have emphasized the multiplicity of interpretations which

domestic art, especially wall painting, offered to the ancient viewer.[9] Viewers might interpret

images differently depending on their physical posture (standing, sitting, reclining), activity

(walking or remaining in place), the order in which they saw the images and the length of time

spent with them, and the mythological, literary, and historical knowledge that they could bring to

bear. In this section, I argue that theatrical images in Roman wall painting promote a self-

conscious spectatorship that encourages the viewer (the visitor to the house) to reflect on his own

role vis-à-vis the *dominus*, the benefit that the *dominus* received from being seen, and the

privileges associated with spectatorship. The *gloire* that the absolute ruler requires to

demonstrate and to maintain his power also operated, although in a much more limited way, in

the relationship between patron and client, householder and visitor. Two types of theatrical

imagery are especially important for this discussion. First, images of the *scaenae frons* allude to

the role of the *dominus* as a sponsor of theatrical productions, and thus make the viewer into a

representative of the larger community whose goodwill the *dominus* endeavors to secure and

whose attention he requires in order to demonstrate his authority.[10] Second, depictions of scenes

from tragedy train the viewer to associate spectatorship with special access to the places where

power is exercised and the persons who hold it.

While the fresco from the Domus Aurea, described in the introduction to this chapter, is

an especially elaborate example of the *scaenae frons* motif, this type of theatrical imagery

appeared frequently even in houses that occupied a considerably lower position in the social

hierarchy. It is especially well-represented in second style painting, traditionally dated to the

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[9] For examples of this approach, see the numerous articles by Bettina Bergmann cited below and Platt (2002); on Roman viewing Elsner (1995) and (2007); Gazda (2010) xiv-xviii advocates for the need to consider audiences of Roman art other than the "elite male patron."

[10] On the *dominus* as a producer of games and theatrical productions, see Leach (2004) 100-104.

years between 80 and 15 BCE, as well as in fourth style painting, which flourished from the 40s

CE until the eruption of Vesuvius in 79 CE.[11] In its most basic form, this motif consists of three

doorways, one large doorway at the center with two smaller ones on either side; each doorway is

framed by columns. Some images also include the stage platform, or *pulpitum,* which is often

occupied by human figures in fourth style paintings.[12] Yet this motif is not universally

interpreted as a representation of a stage building. Grand doorways and columns could allude

more generally to the forms of public architecture characteristic of the second style, and while

Vitrivius identifies the *scaenae frons* as an element in the decoration of *exedrae* (7.5.2), his

testimony does not imply that all images that resemble the *scaenae frons* were meant to represent

theater buildings. While surviving ancient theaters in Rome and elsewhere in the Mediterranean

include stage buildings with columnar structures similar to those depicted in wall paintings, no

first-century wooden theaters, which presumably provided the models for second style imagery,

have survived from antiquity.[13] The motif of the *scaenae frons*, moreover, was not always

deployed to be reminiscent of a realistic stage building, although second style images are notable

for the use of perspective, which creates a "fully pictorial illusion of real buildings set in

space."[14] In room 23 of Villa A at Oplontis, the alternation of protruding columnar arches and

receding porticoes, and the view of a painted sky in the background, all create a sense of three-

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[11] Ling (1991) offers a standard approach to Pompeian painting based on the four styles. While I have chosen to retain the traditional terminology, the validity of the traditional style categories has been questioned. First, the evidence used to define these categories derives almost exclusively from the Bay of Naples, and it is unclear to what extent they have wider application in the Roman Empire. Second, styles associated with earlier periods continued to be preserved and used generations after they supposedly went out of fashion. I am indebted to Emma Sachs and Lynley McAlpine for raising these issues with me.

[12] Picard (1982) 55-6 on the *pulpitum* and human figures in frescoes featuring the *scaenae frons*.

[13] On the evidence for Roman stages, see Beacham (1991) 56-85. Beacham makes the interesting observation that "even an exact and faithful representation of a decorated stage set would present the viewer with, in effect, an illusion within an illusion. The written evidence indicates that the stage background itself might well contain illusionistic perspective painting representing imaginary architecture as part of its décor, and then, in turn, this stage has been illusionistically rendered by the wall painter" (70).

[14] Ling (1991) 29.

dimensionality.[15] In contrast, later examples of the motif, such as the multi-partite *scaenae frons* from the Domus Aurea, are distinguished by delicate architectural features (slender columns and very narrow archways), which make them less effective as optical illusions.

Some examples of the *scaenae frons* motif, however, are more pointedly associated with the theater than others. The architectural forms depicted in frescoes from room 23 of Villa A at Oplontis and the Room of the Masks in the House of Augustus are decorated with dramatic masks, and these masks support the interpretation of these images as theater buildings. The *scaenae frons* in a painting from the House of M. Pinarius Cerealis in Pompeii (III.4.4) includes human figures who have been identified as characters from a version of *Iphigenia in Tauris*: this image (discussed further below) represents not only the myth of Iphigenia but a performance of a tragedy.[16] Although the theater was not the only possible structure evoked by the *scaenae frons* motif, and these paintings need not have been representations of real stage sets, the world of the theater would have been among the most obvious interpretations available to viewers.

Representations of the theater building were particularly at home in second style painting, which is characterized by images that evoke the forms of public architecture.[17] Theatrical imagery played an important role in the self-presentation of the elite, as it suggested that the *dominus* was on display to the entire community even when he remained inside his house. In a frequently cited passage, Vitruvius observes that those with significant social status required impressive rooms in their houses, to do business and to receive their clients. For those who hold public office and must provide proof of their lofty position, "we must build high, regal

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[15] See De Franciscis (1975) Fig. 13 and http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Oplontis-6.jpg (accessed May 19, 2014).

[16] On this image see Beacham (1991) 79-80; Leach (2004) 117-18.

[17] On the characteristics of the second style, see Scagliarini (1974-6) 7-10; Ling (1991); Clarke (1991). Images of the *scaenae frons* in the houses of the elite, like real stage buildings, served to "create a backdrop against which action is to take place and transport the actors into a world suitable for their action" (Wallace-Hadrill [1994] 27).

entranceways, atria and the most spacious peristyles, woods and quite generous paths for walking, executed as befits their authority" (*faciunda sunt vestibula regalia alta, atria et peristylia amplissima, silvae ambulationesque laxiores ad decorum maiestatis perfectae*, Vitr. 6.5.1).[18] As A. Wallace-Hadrill demonstrated, motifs associated with public architecture served this purpose, as visitors to a house would be reminded of the world beyond it: "by concentrating the language of public architecture within a confined space, a feeling of rich luxury is generated, as if all the power and grandeur of the public figure…had been focused on a single spot."[19] The image of the *scaenae frons* asserted the prominence of the *dominus* both in his own house and in the larger community.

In recreating the forms of public architecture, and especially those of the theater, within the aristocratic *domus*, the *scaenae frons* motif expanded the walls of the house to include the community as a whole, for whose use and advantage public architecture was built. Theatrical imagery in the decorations of wealthy houses called to mind some of the real efforts of the elite on behalf of the community, especially building theaters and funding theatrical productions.[20] It is impossible to say whether any specific *scaenae frons* image was inspired by a real production that the *dominus* had produced, especially since many of these older paintings were preserved, and presumably valued, long after the death of their original owners. Yet whether or not images of the *scaenae frons* were meant to allude to actual buildings or theatrical productions, they do evoke the kind of theatrical experiences that the public enjoyed at the expense of the ruling class.

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[18] On Vitruvius as an ideological text, see Elsner (1995) 49-87; Milnor (2005) 94-139; on the problems of using Vitruvius as straightforward guide to archaeology, especially for the Greek house, see Nevett (1999).

[19] Wallace-Hadrill (1994) 28-9. This point addresses the effect of second style imagery in small rooms in particular, but his reading can be applied to the Roman house as a whole, which was a "confined space" in contrast to buildings in the public square.

[20] Leach (2004) 100-104.

The *scaenae frons*, then, expanded the audience for the interactions between the *dominus* and his visitors: they indicated that the visitor was a representative of the outside world, of the broader community that enjoyed the largesse and respected the authority of the elite householder. That the visitor played the role of the community in the house of his host endowed him with a certain authority in the household. The *dominus* needed to demonstrate that he was held in high esteem by the community, and his clients fulfilled this function.

The relationship between visitor and *dominus* did not depend only on the guest paying respect to his host (or, as in the accounts of Roman satirists, on the self-abasement of the client before his patron).[21] Instead, the *dominus* needed to show concern for and interest in his visitors in order to maintain their attention and goodwill. The association of patron and client was derived from an earlier Italic custom through which the client was actually adopted into the family of his patron; while the institution evolved into "a simple demonstration of political and economic loyalty and dependence," it was rooted in a more intimate bond.[22] In the late Republic, Quintus Cicero advised political candidates to cultivate and make known their special concern for clients and potential supporters:

> *mihi quidem nihil stultius videtur quam existimare esse eum studiosum tui quem non noris. eximiam quondam gloriam dignitatem ac rerum gestarum magnitudinem esse opportet in eo quem homines ignoti nullis suffragantibus honore adficiant...in salutatoribus, qui magis vulgares sunt et hac consuetudine quae nunc est <ad> pluris veniunt, hoc efficiendum est ut hoc ipsum minimum officium eorum tibi gratissimum esse videatur; qui domum tuam venient, iis significato te animadvertere (eorum amicis qui illis renuntient ostendito, saepe ipsis dicito).* (*Comment. Pet.* 28; 35)

> Nothing seems more foolish to me than to expect that someone you don't know will be devoted on your behalf. That man must have an exceptional reputation, status, and great accomplishments whom strangers will support even when he has no adherents….Among those who attend your *salutatio*, who are more common

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[21] Cf. Juvenal 5.

[22] Dwyer (2010) 27.

and who visit many, as is the custom nowadays, you must make it so that this smallest service of theirs seems to be most gratifying to you; for those who come to your house, show them that you take notice (point it out to their friends, who will tell them, and express it often to the persons in question).

While the dating and authorship of the *Commentariolum Petitionis* is disputed, it nevertheless points to a problem faced by the ruling class in the Roman world, and shows them how to solve it. They need to secure and retain the support of their followers, and they can accomplish this by showing their respect and appreciation for their visitors. The obligation of the *dominus* to attain the goodwill of his clients might well be magnified in smaller communities like Pompeii. It was to the advantage of the *dominus* to decorate his house not only to advertise his authority, but also to show his appreciation for the visitors who attended and favored him both inside and outside his house.

Images of theatrical architecture in a domestic setting pointed to the ways in which the *dominus* was reliant upon his visitors: he needed to be seen in order to demonstrate his position, and the *scaenae frons* motif set him up on the stage where he could be observed by his guests and (implicitly) by the wider community. A second kind of theatrical imagery, especially common in fourth style paintings dated to the Neronian and Flavian periods, featured representations of tragic performances, scenes either from known tragedies or from material suited to tragic subjects. While Romans on the Bay of Naples were likely familiar with a range of tragic works from the Greek and Roman traditions, we should not focus on drawing specific connections between works of literature and works of art: as E. W. Leach has argued in her discussion of landscape painting and ekphrasis, faithfulness to literary texts in artistic production was not so important to Roman audiences as it sometimes is for modern ones.[23] Many fourth style paintings, however, include figures that allude to, or are at least reminiscent of, characters

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[23] Leach (1988) 9ff.

known from tragedy, and viewers could have interpreted these images in a tragic context. Other

depictions of mythological scenes include images of viewers (sometimes called "supernumerary"

figures), who anticipate or imitate the actions of the actual audiences for these paintings.[24] Tragic

scenes emphasize the practice of viewing and the role of the audience, both within the painting

and beyond it, and so train audiences to reflect on the relationship between viewing and

privileged knowledge.

I have already mentioned an especially ornate *scaenae frons* painting from the House of

Pinarius Cerealis in Pompeii (III.4.4) that shows a scene from the myth of Iphigenia in Tauris.[25]

Iphigenia, dressed as a priestess, stands at the center of a stage building that has been adorned

with garlands. Two women, presumably fellow priestesses, stand on either side of Iphigenia and

turn towards her, while Iphigenia faces slightly to her right, perhaps evading the direct gaze of

the viewer. A set of male figures appears on each side of the panel: Orestes and Pylades on the

right, and King Thoas and an attendant on the left. Orestes looks off in the same direction as his

sister, while Pylades, King Thoas, and his attendant all face Orestes. While images like this one

cannot always be assigned to a specific tragedy, one interesting possibility has been proposed in

this case: Pacuvius' *Iphigenia*. The tragedy by Pacuvius, in contrast with Euripides' version of

the play, includes a scene with Iphigenia, Orestes, Pylades, and King Thoas, in which Iphigenia

performs a purification ritual and conceals the identity of the captives.[26]

The different postures and divergent gazes of the figures in the painting encourage the

viewer to distinguish between stage and audience and to consider his own role as an audience of

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[24] Michel (1979) argues that these supernumerary figures were an invention of Roman painters, who added them to paintings inspired by Greek models. On depictions of viewing and viewers in Pompeian wall painting, see Platt (2002) on the myth of Actaeon and Artemis and Elsner (2007) 132-76 on Narcissus.

[25] This painting is reproduced in Ling (1991) Fig. 131. Images can also be found at www.pompeiiinpictures.com, House III.4.b, Part 2.

[26] Leach (2004) 119; Cicero describes Pacuvius' version of this scene in *De Amicitia* 7.24.

this performance.[27] The tension created by the different lines of sight directs the viewer to be aware of his own position in the room. King Thoas, the king's attendant, Pylades, and the priestesses direct the viewer to look inside the painting. The viewer who follows the gaze of the king will focus on Orestes and the lower right-hand corner of the painting, just in front of the stage. If he adopts the perspective of the two priestesses, the viewer may focus on Iphigenia and the main entranceway of the *scaenae frons* itself. Orestes and Iphigeneia, however, who face ahead, looking beyond the viewer, draw attention to the physical environment in which the painting is located: the room where the viewer stands becomes the *cavea* (the audience seating) for the stage depicted in the painting. The perspective of Orestes and Iphigenia, therefore, in part disturbs the illusion of the tragic scene, in that it reminds the viewer of the world outside the painting, but also bolsters that illusion, in that the viewer becomes aware of his position as a spectator of the painted theater.

Another way in which this image draws attention to the role of the audience is through the organization of space, which divides the tragic characters on the basis of knowledge and ignorance. Iphigenia, who has just emerged from the temple, is the only character aware of both the identity of Orestes and how she will resolve the difficulties his arrival presents. Meanwhile, outside the temple, Thoas is unaware of Iphigenia's connection to Orestes and Pylades, and Orestes and Pylades are uncertain about their fate. Even the viewer of the painting is complicit in the division between knowledge and ignorance, as the perspective of the audience is more enlightened than that of any of the characters represented. It is also notable that this panel appeared in a small room (traditionally identified as a cubiculum) that was unlikely to have been

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[27] Cf. Michel (1979); Platt (2002); Elsner (2007) on self-conscious spectatorship prompted by depictions of viewers or by the content of particular myths.

one of the primary reception areas of the house.[28] A visitor who had been invited to this room

would know that he had entered a privileged area within the house, and thus that he enjoyed

certain degree of intimacy with or access to the household.[29] The viewer who was close enough

to these images to examine them, then, in fact enjoyed a kind of privileged knowledge, in that he

understood the contrast between known and unknown, hidden and revealed, that is represented in

the paintings. In a sense, the visitor to the house shared his privileged perspective with Iphigenia,

as the audience and the priestess in the tragedy were the best informed about the connections

between the characters and the events that led to their meeting. This painting, then, joins two

figures usually treated as outsiders, a woman and a visitor, through their shared knowledge and

the privileged perspective that each holds.[30]

A painting in the House of the Tragic Poet in Pompeii (VI.8.3), showing a scene from the

myth of Alcestis and Admetus, also represents outsiders in a privileged position (Fig. 4). The

scene depicted here ought to have been widely recognizable as a scene from the tragedy of

Alcestis, perhaps from Euripides' version, a work that enjoyed longstanding popularity in

Southern Italy.[31] The figures in this painting are far more prominent than the setting, however,

and so it is unclear whether the house shown in this image was meant to evoke the royal palace

from the myth or a *scaenae frons* that itself represented the mythical king's house. As in the case

[28] Recent scholarship has cautioned against applying terminology from literary sources to rooms in the ancient house: archaeological evidence suggests that spaces in the Roman house were multi-purpose, and this variety of uses cannot be encompassed by the traditional definition of terms like *atrium* or *cubiculum*. See Alison (2004) and Nevett (2011). On the wide semantic range of the term *cubiculum*, see Riggsby (1997).

[29] Cf. Wallace-Hadrill (1994) 58 for a similar observation on a complex of reception rooms in the House of the Vetii (VI.15.1).

[30] Cf. Bergmann's (2002b) discussion of an ensemble of images from the House of Jason (discussed below), which feature myths of knowledgeable wives (Helen, Medea, Phaedra) and their ignorant (and endangered) husbands (32). In another piece on these images, Bergmann (1996) points out that, unlike the women of Greek tragedy, women in Pompeii exercised meaningful influence beyond the confines of the house: women owned business and property very near to the House of Jason, and in the first century CE, special boxes were built at the theater so the priestesses could sit right next to the stage (211-213).

[31] The popularity of the play is attested by vase paintings. Accius also wrote a tragedy on Alcestis, in the 2nd century BCE. Discussed in Bergmann (1994) 234.

of the image of Iphigenia, the location of the Alcestis painting is an interesting one. If we adopt the traditional terminology for the rooms of the atrium-house, the Alcestis painting decorated the *tablinum*, the office of the *dominus*: it could function as a reception room like the atrium, but it was more selective in its intended audience. E. Dywer observes that the position of the *tablinum*, in front of the peristyle and behind the atrium along a direct axis from the door onto the street, meant that "the *tablinum* is well placed to observe all who enter and leave the inner parts of the house…[it] was the place from which the security of the house was controlled."[32] Visitors who had access to the painting of Alcestis in the *tablinum* of the House of the Tragic Poet would have been conscious of their special degree of access to their host and to his house.

The frescoes in the atrium of the House of the Tragic Poet featured a wide array of mythological characters which, as B. Bergmann has observed, were divided into two groups: "in the foreground, figures turn in space to create deep circular groupings, while active onlookers in the backgrounds inject a dramatic response" into the paintings.[33] The Alcestis image from the *tablinum* features a similar arrangement of figures, with one group occupying the foreground and another observing from the background; the setting of the scene is the house of Alcestis and Admetus, with the courtyard in the foreground and a covered porch (belonging to the hero's house) in the background. Alcestis is represented in a seated position in the courtyard, listening to a messenger whose back is turned to the viewer, while an agitated Admetus sits beside her.[34]

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[32] Dwyer (2010; orig. 1991) 27. See also Brown (1961) 14-15 on the atrium as the embodiment of paternal authority in the house, and Drerup (1959) on the atrium-*tablinum*-peristyle axis of the Roman *domus* which guides the *Durchblick* of the visitor (155-9).

[33] Bergmann (1994) 241. This group of paintings offers an important exception to Clarke's view of the goal of decorative ensembles in the *fauces*, atrium, and *tablinum*. He identifies these as "dynamic" spaces, meant to be experienced by walking viewers (as opposed to the "static" space of the peristyle or dining room, which accommodated seated viewers). He argues that the decorations of these rooms was thus intended for "quick pattern recognition" rather than extended contemplation of figures and themes (Clarke [1991] 16 and [2007] 39).

[34] Michel (1979) discusses other representations of this scene in South Italian vase painting: the arrangement of the three central figures (Alcestis, Admetus, messenger) is consistent in both media.

As viewers familiar with the myth would know, the messenger is there to report that Alcestis' husband Admetus is fated to die unless someone else takes his place. Apollo, who stands on the right hand side of the porch, wears a remarkably dreamy expression (it is unclear whether he is looking at Alcestis or gazing off into the distance), while Admetus' parents are depicted in distress on the opposite side of the porch.

The spatial distribution of the characters corresponds to some degree to the knowledge or ignorance that the characters possess. The characters on the right side of the image (Alcestis, Apollo, and the messenger) are the knowledgeable ones: the messenger delivers the information, Alcestis decides to sacrifice herself to save her husband, while Apollo enjoys a divine perspective on the proceedings.[35] Meanwhile, the characters on the left side of the image (Admetus and his parents) appear to be aware of the issues at stake, but unaware of how Alcestis herself will influence the course of events. As in the painting of Iphigenia in Tauris from the House of M. Pinarius Cerealis, here the most prominent female character and the audience possess the best understanding of the scene depicted in the painting. Alcestis, the wife of the hero, will be the deciding agent in the story, while the viewer can draw on his knowledge of myth to predict the events that follow. The visitor to the House of the Tragic Poet, an outsider in the household, is thus closely associated with Alcestis, who usually occupied a subservient position to her husband; the viewer and the wife are the most knowledgeable and thus the most powerful in the context of this image.

Just below the painting of Alcestis in the House of the Tragic Poet, a mosaic *emblema* takes up the same theme of knowledge and ignorance and reveals to the viewer a place that is

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[35] A female figure stands on the left of Apollo, but she has not (to my knowledge) been identified.

usually unknown: backstage at a theatrical performance.[36] The mosaic depicts a crowd of actors

and musicians in costume, who are preparing to perform in a satyr play. B. Bergmann has

pointed out the visual correspondences between the mosaic and the painting of Alcestis. Both

feature columns in the background, a central figure (Alcestis in the painting, an *aulos* player in

the mosaic) in the foreground, and also figures whose backs are turned to the viewer (the

messenger addressing Alcestis and a "satyr").[37] The satyr mosaic sheds some light on the

problem of whether the Alcestis painting represents a scene from myth or a scene enacted on the

tragic stage, as the mosaic encourages the viewer to interpret the painting in a theatrical context.

The different views of the world of the theater offered by the Alcestis painting and the mosaic of

the satyrs emphasizes the privileged position of the viewer and the fact that he has gained

unexpected insight into a world that not everyone is able to see.

While the backstage setting of the satyr *emblema* is unusual, it is also worth noting that

the episode depicted in the Alcestis painting takes place in a king's house, a common setting for

ancient tragedies. It is therefore hardly surprising that many tragic and mythological scenes from

domestic art of the early Empire are set in royal houses. A number of scenes from the frescoes at

the House of Jason in Pompeii (IX.5.18) are set in "the interior of a palace, that authoritarian,

patronizing space of a father or husband…also familiar from the Greek and Roman stage."[38]

Another scene set in a king's house, this one notable for its inclusion of painted viewers in the

image, appears in a painting of the wedding of Pirithous in the House of M. Gavius Rufus, also

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[36] Bergmann (1994) Fig. 20.

[37] Bergmann (1994) 254. Euripides' *Alcestis* was first performed in place of a satyr play (the fourth of the plays presented by the tragedian in Athenian festivals); the assembly of mosaic and painting may have reminded educated viewers of this historical circumstance.

[38] Bergmann (2002b) 28. The scenes depicted include Phaedra confiding in her nurse, Helen and Paris accompanied by *Eros*, Jason at the palace of King Pelias, and Medea contemplating the murder of her children.

in Pompeii (VII.2.16).[39] In this painting, Pirithous and a centaur are positioned at the center, while Hippodamia, the bride who is soon to be kidnapped by the visiting centaurs, stands on the left of the groom. A row of centaurs is lined up at the doorway, looking inside the king's house; they have been painted using lighter colors than the figures in the foreground, thus "reinforcing the effect of a crowd advancing into the picture-plane from a space beyond the immediate architectural environment."[40] Images of viewers, like the centaurs in the image of Pirithous, were common features in Campanian wall painting: often they play no role in the myth, and instead serve to make the real audience of the painting more aware of their own activity as viewers.[41] The painting of Pirithous decorated an *exedra* off the peristyle, a more secluded area of the house, and the centaurs who peered into the painted royal palace mimicked and modeled the actions of real viewers who had been granted privileged access to the *domus* and the *dominus*.

In his discussion of viewing in the Roman house, J. Elsner has argued that "Roman domestic viewing was an education. It taught the viewer how to be a *subject*--not only in the personal but also in the political sense."[42] One way in which theatrical wall painting provided training in "how to be a subject" was by encouraging the viewer to be conscious of the act of viewing and to appreciate the privileged knowledge that was a consequence of being a spectator. Scenes from tragedy pointed to the importance of the visitor and viewer, who, although an outsider to the household, nevertheless might enjoy an intimate relationship with his host. Likewise, if images of the *scaenae frons* suggested that the *dominus* performed on stage, then they also called attention to the master's reliance on an audience for demonstrating his status in

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[39] See Ling (1991) Fig. 126. One significant fragment from a Greek tragedy on Pirithous, attributed variously to Euripides and to Critias, has survived. See Cropp (2005) 286-7.
[40] Ling (1991) 125.
[41] See Michel (1979) 543-4 on how *Zuschauerfiguren* allow the Roman viewer to insert himself into the scene; she argues persuasively that these figures do not derive from Greek models, but are instead inventions of the Roman painters (540-62).
[42] Elsner (1995) 51.

the community. While the *dominus* exercised ultimate control in his house, these images reveal a more complex relationship between master and visitor, as they emphasized not only the status of the *dominus* but also the significance of his guests in securing his prestige.

The predominance of theatrical imagery in domestic art is also interesting because these houses served as locations for dramatic performances. Banquets or symposia were frequent occurrences in these households, and it has been suggested that images of the *scaenae frons* provided backdrops for actual theatrical performances in the house.[43] Representations of tragic scenes, however, would have been unsuitable for these performances, as they would have required actors to perform against the background of a populated stage. This development in the deployment of the *scaenae frons* motif has been linked to political trends of the Neronian and Flavian periods: images that could not be used for active performance instead emphasized "separating audience from actors, forcing a spectatorship that had become endemic to imperial society."[44] Even in the Neronian period, however, the *domus* still offered a setting for theatrical performance: Seneca, whose tragedies are the only Roman examples of the genre to survive intact, complained that in his day, "the private stage [resounded] throughout the city."[45] As I argue in the next section, the tension between knowledge and ignorance, and the connection between power and visibility, were important concerns in Seneca's tragic works as in the paintings of tragic scenes that were contemporary with them. While the exchange between Seneca and domestic art was unlikely to have been a direct one (i.e., literature and art did not represent exactly the same stories or themes), looking at both of them together illuminates the

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[43] Leach (2004) 105. On the feast as a spectacle in aristocratic houses, see D'Arms (2000).
[44] Leach (2004) 117.
[45] Seneca *Q. Nat.* 7.32.3, cited in Calder (1975) 35.

broader cultural milieu of the audiences of text and image, and these tragedies also point to the exposure of the king and the privileged knowledge of his spectators.

III. The Royal House on Seneca's Tragic Stage

Any study of Senecan tragedy must confront two main problems: Seneca's source material and the performance context of his plays. While Seneca was doubtless familiar with fifth-century Athenian tragedy, including works that are unknown to modern scholars, they were unlikely to have been his primary models.[46] The plot and treatment of the characters in Seneca's *Agamemnon*, for example, diverges in important ways from Aeschylus' tragedy. The first speaker in Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* is a palace watchman; Seneca's version opens with a prologue spoken by the ghost of Thyestes, Agamemnon's uncle and a representative of the previous generation of the house of Pelops. In Seneca's play, Clytemnestra argues with Aegisthus over whether she should return to her husband, and she is silent during his homecoming scene. Her behavior differs markedly from that of her Aeschylean counterpart, who traps her husband into an excessive display of regal arrogance when he returns to his palace. Seneca's portrayal of Cassandra also offers a striking contrast to Aeschylus' tragedy: Seneca gives Cassandra and Agamemnon an extended dialogue about her status in his household, and in the Roman version Cassandra does not predict Agamemon's murder but actually sees it as it is accomplished. Seneca's tragedy ends with the introduction of the child Orestes to the young

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[46] See Herrmann (1924) for an examination of the tragedies (Greek and Roman) that may have served as sources for Seneca. Herrmann compares the plot, characters, main themes, and choral songs of each Senecan tragedy to the surviving Greek works and Roman fragments.

Pylades, a move that L. Hermann attributes to the somewhat excessive cleverness of the playwright.[47]

Furthermore, as R. J. Tarrant has argued, the structure of Senecan tragedy and his dramatic techniques have little in common with those of the Greek tragedians: instead, Tarrant suggests that Seneca followed the rhetorical practices of the tragedians of Republican Rome.[48] Our evidence for Roman tragedy other than Seneca, however, is extremely limited, and any links between the fragments and Seneca's work must remain speculative. For his own *Thyestes*, Seneca likely drew on Varius' tragedy of the same name, a celebrated work in antiquity that was performed at the games in honor of Octavian's victory at Actium. While this work was certainly known to Seneca, only six words are extant, which Quintilian attributes to a speech of Atreus.[49] Seneca's *Thyestes* is in fact the only complete tragic treatment of the myth of Thyestes and Atreus to survive from antiquity, and I do not think it is an accident that the *Thyestes* has generally received the most praise (or least censure) of all of his tragedies: the fact that we have so little to compare it to makes us more likely to read the *Thyestes* on its own terms.

The question of whether Seneca's tragedies were intended for performance, and what kinds of performance were actually attempted in antiquity, has made these works a particularly problematic part of Seneca's literary output. There is no direct evidence for any performance of Senecan tragedy, and it has been argued (most notably by O. Zwierlein) that Seneca intended his tragedies for *recitatio*, to be delivered in a house or recital hall, rather than for the stage.[50] Seneca's plays are dominated by speech, rather than by action, and this characteristic has been

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[47] On the differences between Seneca and Aeschlyus, see Herrmann (1924) 305-312 and Calder (1976a), who regards Aeschylus as Seneca's chief model.

[48] Tarrant (1973).

[49] On Varius' *Thyestes* and the surviving fragment (quoted in Quintilian *Inst. Or.* 3.8.45), see Leigh (1996). On Republican tragedies on the Thyestes myth and their influence on Seneca, see La Penna (1979) 127-141.

[50] Zwierlein (1966); see Walker (1969) for a somewhat scathing review of Zwierlein and an overview of the evidence for tragic performance in the early empire.

used to support the argument that he intended his plays for recitation only. This point, however, seems to reflect the preferences of particular critics, rather than any real deficiency of the plays themselves: modern productions of Senecan tragedy have demonstrated that, while the plays' lengthy speeches may pose a challenge for directors and actors, they do not prevent successful performances. It is unlikely, moreover, that Seneca conceived his works specifically for the form of the *recitatio*, without interest in the concerns of a real performance demanded by the form of the tragedy itself. As G. Harrison observes, "plays are conceived as dramas, not as *recitationes*. As such, a performance text must receive priority over one for a *lector*, which must be considered as a derivative."[51] In other words, the very form of the work would have prompted Seneca to think of and therefore compose a play with the concerns of performance, rather than recitation, in mind. This is not to say, however, that the *recitatio* could not be a very effective method of performance: talented readers can evoke rich dramatic worlds even without sets, costumes, props, or much freedom of movement.[52]

It is also important to note that particular Senecan tragedies, and even certain scenes in his tragedies, are more suitable for performance than others. Beginning in the Hellenistic period, both Greece and Italy saw "public performances of extracts from tragedies...[which] took place in theatres, with costumes and props."[53] Given the multiple possibilities for dramatic performance in the Roman world, from the *recitatio* to full-scale productions, it seems unlikely either that Seneca intended his dramas to be limited to a particular mode of performance, or that the works of a prominent intellectual were never considered worthy of performance. A *graffito*

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[51] Harrison (2000) 138. For a recent treatment of the performance question, see Boyle (2011) xvii-xliii, who supports the argument that the tragedies were suitable for full-scale performance on the stage. Calder (1975) argues for performance by a household troop of actors (slaves).

[52] Hollingsworth (2001) argues that our evidence for the practice of *recitatio* suggests that Senecan tragedy was not intended for this mode of performance.

[53] Fitch (2000) 7.

from Pompeii even records one of Cassandra's lines from Seneca's *Agamemnon*, "I see the groves of Ida" (*Idaea cerno nemora*, *Ag.* 730); this suggests some degree of popular familiarity with Seneca's plays, and thus argues in favor of the view that they were staged in full or in part.[54] It is interesting that the line from the *Agamemnon* reproduced in the *graffito* concerns the act of viewing, which (as discussed above) was a common theme in domestic art from Pompeii.

The question of performance is a critical one if we are to know the nature of the audience for whom Seneca wrote his tragedies. It goes without saying that the audience for literary texts in the ancient world was small; if Seneca's tragedies were read aloud by slaves in elite households, the potential audience would be larger, but still quite limited. Public productions of Seneca's tragedies, or of scenes from his plays, would have been available to a far larger audience than those who were literate or who could rely on the services of a literate slave. It is true that tragedy did not occupy the same role in Roman public life as it did in Classical Greece: for the Romans, games were a far more common element of public festivals than tragic productions.[55] Yet whatever the nature of the audience that witnessed a performance of Seneca's tragedies, the important question is whether or not Seneca wrote with theatrical performance in mind: he could have intended his tragedies to be viewed or heard by a significantly larger audience than the one that took interest in philosophical treatises like the *De Clementia*.

One remarkable feature of Senecan tragedy is the frequency of extended descriptions of both natural and architectural landscapes. This technique is largely unknown in fifth-century Athenian tragedy, and O. Zwierlein considered these descriptive passages to be a symptom of Seneca's predilection for rhetorical display; these demonstrations of verbal skill were irrelevant

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[54] For the *grafitto*, see Lebek (1985). For a discussion of how Senecan tragedy could have been realized on the Roman stage, see Sutton (1986).

[55] Harrison (2000) 140.

to (or even impeded) the action of the drama.[56] Scholars endeavoring to rehabilitate Seneca's

reputation as a tragedian have shown how these passages pick up and advance key themes in the

tragedies in which they appear.[57] I argue that descriptions of the king's house in Seneca's two

main royal tragedies, the *Agamemnon* and the *Thyestes*, emphasize the relationship between

power and visibility, and are central to Seneca's treatment of power in these works. The

depictions of rulers and royal houses in the tragedies give spectators privileged access to the

ruler, and establish the king as both exposed to and dependent on public view.

Seneca's tragedies cannot be securely dated, and the chronology of composition is also

uncertain. On the basis of stylistic evidence, *Agamemnon* is generally agreed to be one of the

earlier efforts.[58] The play begins with a gruesome tour of the set, the house of the Atreid kings.

The leader of the tour is the ghost of Thyestes, the brother of Atreus and uncle of Agamemnon,

who has been recalled from the underworld to prophesy the latest blood-crime that his family is

to endure. Thyestes describes the elements of the royal house where the drama will take place:[59]

> *En horret animus et pauor membra excutit:*
> *uideo paternos, immo fraternos lares.*
> *hoc est uetustum Pelopiae limen domus,*
> *hinc auspicari regium capiti decus*
> *mos est Pelasgis, hoc sedent alti toro*
> *quibus superba sceptra gestantur manu,*
> *locus hic habendae curiae, hic epulis locus.* (5-11)

> "Behold my spirit quivers and fear strikes my limbs. I see the *lares* of my
> fathers--rather of my brother. This is the old threshold of the house of Pelops, here
> it is the custom of the Pelasgian kings to begin their reigns,[60] on this couch they
> sit on high, those who wave the scepter with a proud hand. This is the place for
> convening the senate, this is the place for banquets."

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[56] Zwierlein (1966) 113-117.
[57] Boyle (1983) 202; Faber (2007).
[58] For an overview of the debate concerning the dating of the play, see Schiesaro (2003) 28n3. Calder (1976) 30
argues that the prologue of the *Thyestes* served as a model for the prologue of *Agamemnon*, and thus that
Agamemnon is the later work, but this view is not widely accepted. See the objections in Shelton (1977).
[59] For the Vergilian allusions in this passage, see Tarrant (1976) *ad loc.* and Smolenaars (1998) 54-55.
[60] Translation adapted from Tarrant (1976).

Here, Thyestes not only establishes the setting of the action, but also connects the house with the main events and activities of rule, and with the specific history of the House of Atreus. Thyestes' description provides a kind of timeline of kingship, from the assumption of office (*hinc auspicari*), to the consideration of affairs of state (*hic habendae curiae*), to the grand banquets where the ruler displayed his wealth and authority (*hic epulus locis*). While some of these activities are imaginable in the context of Greek myth, it is clear that Seneca has transported this story to a Roman environment, with his references to the *lares*, taking auspices, and the *curia*. As for the specifically Atreid elements of the setting, Thyestes' focus on his brother's *lares* and on the palace as a place for banquets (*hic epulis locus*) reminds the audience of the ghastly meal his brother Atreus once served to him.[61] The palace, in Thyestes' view, is an embodiment of kingship, both in a general sense and for his particular experience.

Thyestes' prologue sets up the conflict between knowledge and ignorance that continues throughout the play.[62] Agamemnon does not suspect what fate he will meet on his return home, the chorus fails to anticipate it, and even Clytemnestra is in doubt as to what her course of action should be. In one scene, she agonizes over whether to give up her plan to kill Agamemnon: "Why, my lazy soul, do you seek out plans? Why do you hesitate?...Why do you speak of fearful deceit, and exile, and escape?" (*Quid, segnis anime, tuta consilia expetis? Quid fluctuaris ... Quid timida loqueris furta et exilium et fugas*, 108-109, 122).[63] The premise of Thyestes' opening monologue, however, depends on knowledge. It is he who reveals from the very

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[61] See Tarrant (1976) *ad loc.*

[62] This same tension drives the *Thyestes*; see discussion and citations below. Schiesaro (2003) 224 suggests that the conflict between the visible and the invisible animates the entire corpus of Senecan tragedy.

[63] Giomini (1956) 59-60 claims that Clytemnestra's hesitancy serves to humanize her and to emphasize her feminine nature, but scenes between female characters on the brink of criminality and their confidants are common in Senecan tragedy. Cf. Tobin (1966) on comparable scenes in the *Medea* and *Phaedra*.

beginning what Agamemnon will suffer (43), and it is he who explains the king's house, both its design and its significance for the family history, for the audience. In a staged production of the play, Thyestes would have been standing before a *scaenae frons*; the central door represented the door of the palace. Even during a domestic performance of the play, the audience would be familiar with the stage building and could imagine it as they watched Thyestes perform his monologue (he might also have performed in front of a painted image of the *scaenae frons*). As he gave his account of the king's house, Thyestes described the world concealed behind the doors of the stage building, and thus provided a kind of direct access for the audience to the royal house.

Expository prologues are common in Senecan tragedy, but Thyestes' specific prediction of the action to come in the *Agamemnon* differs sharply from the prologue in the *Thyestes*, when the precise nature of the crime is not revealed by either the ghost of Tantalus, the speaker of the prologue, or his interlocutor, the Fury.[64] As in the previous work, however, the physical space of the house is the main focus of the opening scene. Tantalus, like Thyestes in the *Agamemnon*, has been brought up from the underworld to witness the horrors wrought by his descendants.[65] The curse which unites the generations of Tantalus' family is discussed here in physical terms: Tantalus bemoans the fact that Minos, the judge of the dead, will never be unoccupied "while the house of Pelops stands" (*stante Pelopea domo*, *Thy*. 22). The Fury, who has summoned Tantalus to observe as she curses the house, also emphasizes the setting of the drama when she urges the ghost to "stir up the *penates*, summon hatred, slaughter, funerals, and fill the whole house with

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[64] See Hine (1981) for a discussion of the ways in which the prologue of the *Thyestes* anticipates the main themes of the drama and also links Tantalus to Atreus.
[65] On Tantalus and Thytestes as forces of psychological disorder, see Shelton (1977) 33-7.

Tantalus" (*misce penates, odia caedes funera/ accerse et imple Tantalo totam domum*, 52-3).[66]

As Tantalus objects to his presence on earth, and begs the Fury to return him to his underworld

punishments, she repeats the curse and continues to associate it with the structure of the house

itself. She orders the ghost to "upset the house" (*perturba domum*, 83) and to "spread this

madness in the whole house" (*hunc, hunc furorem diuide in totam domum*, 101). *Domus*, in this

case, does not apply only to the family of the Atreids (although it probably has this reference as

well), but to the physical house. The Fury tells Tantalus that "the house feels your approach and

shudders all over from the unholy touch" (*sentit introitus tuos/ domus et nefando tota contactu*

horruit, 103-4). When the royal brothers appear to have resolved their dispute, the chorus

describes the house itself as the agent of peace, rejoicing that "finally, the noble palace, the race

of old Inachus, has settled the brothers' threats" (*tandem regia nobilis,/ antiqui genus Inachi,/*

fratrum composuit minas, 336-8).[67] The apposition of *regia nobilis* with *genus* indicates that the

curse of the House of Atreus, as Seneca imagines it, involves not only the members of the

family, but the physical house as well. The house is both the object of the curse and the agent of

it: it is the repository of the evil forces associated with Tantalus, and the place where Atreus will

exact revenge against his brother Thyestes.

The current occupants of the house, Atreus and eventually Thyestes, are unaware that

Tantalus and the Fury have visited, and thus are ignorant of this iteration of the curse. The

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[66] Picone (1984) 19-20 suggests that when the Fury orders Tanatalus to upset his house and his *penates*, she is inverting Tantalus' proclamation that "the realms of Minos will never be empty so long as the house of Pelops stands" (*numquam stante Pelopea domo/ Minos vacabit*, 22-3). See Picone (1984) 20 and Hine (1981) 265 on *imple*, a word associated with eating (Thyestes will be stuffed with the flesh of his children later in the play) and divine inspiration, especially in the case of poets. In Picone's reading, the scions of Tantalus are in competition with one another to invent and enact *nefas*.

[67] The dramatic irony that results from the audience's awareness of events of which the chorus is ignorant is a standard feature of ancient tragedy; see Hine (1981) 262, 271 on Seneca's use of this technique. On the function of the chorus in Senecan tragedy more generally, see Hill (2000). For the argument that the chorus inadvertently sanctions Atreus' view of power, see Schiesaro (2003) 172ff.

audience has been given a special access to the royal house, as they are aware of its role in the

events to come while the participants in the story remain ignorant. The description of the house

in the *Thyestes* prologue, like the prologue in the *Agamemnon*, points to a contrast between

façade and interior. The Fury tells Tantalus,

> *ornetur altum columen et lauro fores*
> *laetae uirescant, dignus aduentu tuo*
> *splendescat ignis…*
> *ignibus iam subditis*
> *spument aena, membra per partes eant*
> *discerpta, patrios polluat sanguis focos,*
> *epulae instruantur.*   (54-62)

> "Let the high column be adorned and the joyous gates become lush with the laurel
> branch, let a fire blaze, worthy of your arrival…now with fires laid below let the
> cauldrons froth, send in torn up limbs, let blood pollute the ancestral hearths, set
> up the banquets."

As in the *Agamemnon*, the description of the palace is not merely a verbal substitute for an actual

stage building. Instead, this focus on the physical environment of the action makes the contrast

between known and unknown, seen and unseen, into one of the major issues in the play.[68] In G.

Picone's view, the entire prologue of the *Thyestes* evokes the contrast between truth and

deception that is the leitmotiv of the story; the Fury reveals that another terrible crime looms

over the Tantalids, but fails to explain the nature of this new *nefas*.[69] Most of the characters in

the *Thyestes* are unaware of Atreus' plan to take vengeance against his brother by serving him a

meal of his own children.[70] The contrast between the external appearance of the house, with its

ornamented columns and laurel branches, and the polluted hearths and sinister banquets within,

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[68] H. M. Hine (1981) suggests that the royal house is being prepared for the approach of a god: *aduentus*, here
applied to the arrival of Tantalus, "is used of the epiphany of a deity from Lucretius onward…*dignus aduentu tuo*
might intimate that Tantalus is a deity whose arrival is to be honored with laurel and sacrifice on the family altar"
(266). Cf. Lucretius 1.7.
[69] Picone (1984) 33-5.
[70] See Schiesaro (2003) who categorizes the characters in the play based on their "different degrees of textual
knowledge" (47).

draws attention to the special knowledge of the audience that far surpasses the awareness of the characters in the play.

The focus on revealed and unrevealed in the prologues is part of a broader conception of power in these tragedies: to be king is to live in the public eye. When Clytemnestra briefly wavers in her resolution to kill her husband, and the nurse suggests that she can conceal her crime, she observes that "every crime of the royal house shines out" (*perlucet omne regiae uitium domus*, *Ag.* 148). As in the *De Clementia*, when exposure and even vulnerability were defined as essential features of the role of the absolute ruler, power is understood here in terms of visibility and the inability to escape the public eye. Beyond the prologues, there are three further passages of extended description that give the audience a view into the interior of the king's house, and use the space of the house to communicate a particular idea of power. These interior views are of interest not only as impressive literary set pieces, but because they are essential to the treatment of power and high position in the work: in revealing the king's house to the audience, they suggest both that the king can never escape the public eye, and that being seen is essential to demonstrating his power.

The most compelling of these interior view passages describes the grove in the inner recesses of the palace of the Atreids, where the members of the royal house take the auspices to begin their reigns, consult the oracle, and display the spoils of war (*Thy.* 657-664).[71] A messenger describes this grove to the chorus, when he reports that Atreus has killed his nephews and served them to Thyestes in a sickening feast. His description is especially interesting for how it begins with the face the palace presents to the outside world, and gradually reveals the inner

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[71] Smolenaars (1991) details the Vergilian intertexts for this passage: the key models are the palace of King Latinus (Book 7), the temple of Apollo at Cumae, and Aeneas' descent into the underworld (Book 6). For an extended discussion of how this passage advances the broader themes of the play, see Faber (2007).

recesses that are supposed to be hidden from view.[72] The palace is far from a refuge for the

Tantalid kings to indulge in secret vices; rather, the terrible crimes committed there make it

impossible to conceal the royal house from the community.

The messenger begins by describing the house as it would appear to most viewers: it is a

mountain-like structure (*aequale monti*, 643), at the highest peak of the city (*in arce summa*,

641), with gilded beams and marble columns (646-7).[73] He then contrasts these features of the

house, the ones "known to the people" (*uulgo nota*, 648) with the secret regions of the palace: "a

secret place lies in the deepest recess, embracing an aged grove in a deep valley, the innermost

part of the kingdom" (*arcana in imo regio secessu iacet,/ alta uetustum ualle compescens*

nemus,/ penetrale regni, 650-2). The messenger's own speech, however, serves to break down

the distinction between the elements of the palace that are commonly known and those that are

supposedly secret. He gives a detailed picture of the very grove that he claims is exclusive to the

royal family, noting its density and darkness, identifying the types of trees present there, and

paying close attention to a great oak that overwhelms the other trees, the victory trophies that

hang on it, and a dank swamp that he likens to the river Styx (652-667). The report ends with a

description of the grove at night, when it is especially mysterious and unfamiliar: "it is said that

in the unseeing night here the gods of the dead groan, the grove sounds with shaking chains and

the ghosts wail" (*hinc nocte caeca gemere ferales deos/ fama est, catenis lucus excussis sonat/*

ululantque manes, 668-670). It has often been observed that the palace of the Tantalids brings

Tartarus to earth; the royal house confuses the boundary between the realms of the living and the

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[72] Picone (1984) 94 notes that the description of the palace begins from the perspective of the people of the city. Aygon (2004) 229-31 discusses the shifts in perspective in this passage, from high to low, exterior to interior, light to darkness. Schiesaro (2003) 85-9, taking a very different approach, argues that the secret grove represents the unconscious.
[73] *immane tectum, cuius auratas trabes/ uariis columnae nobiles maculis ferunt* (646-7).

dead.[74] While the messenger's speech serves in part to emphasize the dark forces at play in the house of Atreus, and to associate the gruesome nature of Atreus' crime with the very character of the land in which it takes place, it also demolishes the boundary between the palace and the community. With his speech, the messenger brings the palace down from its lofty position above the city so that the people can look inside it.

The depiction of the demonic grove is especially striking because the messenger purports to give information which is usually only available to a select few. In dividing his account between what is seen and what is unseen, between the exterior face of the palace and its most remote areas, he undermines this very idea, as what is in principle hidden from view is exposed to the chorus and to the audience. After the messenger recounts Atreus' perverted sacrifice of his nephews and Thyestes' repulsive meal, he informs his audience that, while night has fallen ahead of schedule in an attempt to conceal the events of the day, such efforts are futile: "nevertheless, it must be seen; all evils will be revealed" (*tamen uidendum est. tota patefient mala*, 788). Ultimately, there is no difference between *ista uulgo nota* (what is known to the people) and *penetrale regni* (the innermost part of the kingdom). The affairs of those in power, presumably secret, can never really be concealed: in the *Thyestes*, to rule is to be revealed to the public eye.

Yet perpetual visibility is not simply an inconvenient consequence of absolute power, but rather is essential to confirming the king's position. After the chorus responds in dismay to the messenger's speech, the doors of the palace are opened to reveal Thyestes dining on his own children. Atreus enters the stage in triumph, celebrating his success over his brother, who remains ignorant of what has befallen him. Nevertheless, as C. A. J. Littlewood has argued, Atreus is not satisfied simply by having accomplished his schemes: he needs his brother to bear

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[74] Tarrant (1985) *ad loc.* Piccone (1984) 133 argues that the *Thyestes* is a "total" tragedy: the crimes of Atreus joins past, present, and future, and the Tantalid palace includes the underworld, the realms of the living, and the heavens.

witness to them as well.[75] He gives orders for the doors of the palace to be opened, and describes

the scene within:

> turba famularis, fores
> templi relaxa, festa patefiat domus…
> miserum uidere nolo, sed dum fit miser.
> aperta multa tecta conlucent face.
> resupinus ipse purpurae atque auro incubat,
> uino grauatum fulciens laeua caput.
> eructat. o me caelitum excelsissimum,
> regumque regem!   (901-912)

> "Slaves, release the gates of the temple, let the joyous house be opened…I do not
> wish to see him wretched, but [to watch] while he is becoming wretched. The
> open house shines forth with great light! He lies back, reclining on gold and
> purple, supporting his head, heavy with wine, on his left hand. He belches. O, I
> am the most exalted of the gods, and the king of kings!"

This scene is of particular importance for the question of performance. Atreus' order appears to

be a stage direction, but probably not to open the doors of the stage building, which would have

been a unique approach in ancient stagecraft. Instead, scenes meant to take place on the inside

typically made use of the *eccyclema*, a wheeled platform representing the interior of the house,

which emerged from the main door of the *scaenae frons*. At this point, "the 'interior'

imperceptibly becomes the setting for the rest of the play."[76] While there is no reason that this

scene could not be realized in performance on the ancient stage, the shift from exterior to

interior, from the messenger's revelation of the activity inside the house to the opening of the

house itself, would also be apparent in a domestic performance. As in the description of the

grove deep within the royal house, the physical setting of this scene, the transfer of the action

from outside the house to inside of it, points to the relationship between power and visibility.

With the emergence of Thyestes on the *eccyclema*, the ruler and his house are fully exposed to

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[75] On Atreus as director of the action, see Littlewood (2004) 174-213 and Schiesaro (2003) 55ff.
[76] Tarrant (1985) on ln. 903-7. On the use of the *eccyclema* in Greek theater, see Dale (1969) 121-4.

the audience. At this horrific moment, Thyestes--a king even if he is subservient to his brother--does not have the power to hide himself, but is in fact increasingly revealed to public view.

Thyestes' return to his ancestral palace is equated with his return from exile to power; likewise, he cannot return to his house without resuming his previous position of authority. Early in the play, as Thyestes makes his way to the royal house, he expresses his doubts about accepting his brother's offer of reconciliation and returning to his former rank. The contrast between his life as a king and that as a lowly exile is expressed in architectural terms:

> *non uertice alti montis impositam domum*
> *et imminentem civitas humilis tremit*
> *nec fulget altis splendidum tectis ebur…*
> *nulla culminibus meis*
> *imposita nutat silua…*
> *sed non timemur, tuta sine telo est domus*
> *rebusque paruis magna praestatur quies.* (455-469)

"The lowly citizens do not tremble at my house, set on the peak of a high mountain and looming down, nor does brilliant ivory gleam in my lofty house, no woods wave, planted on my rooftops, but I am not feared, my house is safe without arms, and for modest circumstances great peace is assured."

The dangers of high position are a trope of ancient thought, and of tragedy in particular.[77] Thyestes' consideration of the risks associated with the grand house echo the earlier declaration of the chorus, that "whoever wants it should stand, powerful, on the palace's slippery slope; let me be satisfied with sweet peace, and may I, fixed in a low rank, enjoy gentle rest" (*stet quicumque uolet potens/ aulae culmine lubrico:/ me dulcis saturet quies;/ obscuro positus loco/ leni perfruar otio*, 391-5). Seneca's treatment of this trope is interesting, however, because it draws attention to the visibility of the king: as in the *De Clementia*, when Seneca manipulated the common image of the king as the sun to emphasize the visibility of the monarch (*Clem.*

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[77] This kind of attack against luxury is common in Latin literature. Cf. also Aeschylus *Agamemnon* 773-891; Sophocles *OT* 873-882. See Picone (1984) 95 on the parallels between the description of the palace of Pelops and Thyestes' description of power in this passage.

1.8.4), in the *Thyestes* he is chiefly concerned with how the royal house appears to the rest of the city.[78] The palace of the king, because of its height and splendor, becomes the primary object of attention for the town below. While in Thyestes' view the palace separates the king from his subjects, it is in fact the place where he will be most exposed, where he will be unable to hide his suffering.

Unlike Thyestes, Atreus appreciates the advantages of being seen: he orders the palace to be opened to reveal his wretched brother because his crime has no consequence if no one is aware of it. Atreus has been read as an author- or director-figure within the play, who has written the script for Thyestes' ruin and seizes control of the action of the tragedy.[79] He also functions as a model for the audience, in that he acts as a spectator to the tragedy and "presents himself as external to a dramatic illusion."[80] Atreus wants to attract the largest possible audience for himself and his actions: before he orders the palace to be opened, he proclaims, "would that I could detain the gods as they flee, and bring them down and urge them on so that they all would see the avenging feast; but it is enough, that the father sees" (*utinam quidem tenere fugientes deos/ possem, et coactos trahere, ut ultricem dapem/ omnes uiderent-- quod sat est, uideat pater*, 893-5). It is not clear whether Atreus knows that he has acquired a much larger audience for his crimes: his subjects, who heard the messenger's account of the murder and the banquet, and who might be able to see into the open doors of the palace. In any case, Atreus has no interest in concealing himself from view, and instead acknowledges the authority that emerges from being the object of attention.

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[78] Faber (2007) 432.

[79] See note 75 above. Schiesaro (2003) observes that Atreus is simultaneously author, director, and audience of his own drama: he "occupies the entire scenic space, with all its possible functions and points of view" (133).

[80] Littlewood (2004) 213.

W. M. Calder has argued that Seneca intended Atreus as a positive model for Nero, rather than as a warning figure for the corrupting influence of power. He argues that the use of negative *paradeigmata* is not a typical Stoic tactic, and thus if Atreus is to be any kind of model, he must be intended for emulation.[81] The uncertain dating of the play makes it difficult to establish for whom Atreus might have served as an ideal or as a warning. The *Thyestes*, however, was intended for a wider audience than a single emperor, and that audience would recognize Atreus not only as a model of behavior or misbehavior, but also as a representative of the nature of power. In the *Thyestes*, Atreus' servant attempts to dissuade him from his scheme to ruin his brother by asking him, "Does the people's hostile gossip not frighten you?" (*fama te populi nihil/ aduersa terret*, *Thy*. 204-5). Of course, Atreus is unconcerned with popular judgment, but he does not deny that his actions will be common knowledge. Atreus' acceptance of the relationship between power and visibility should be read as descriptive, rather than prescriptive: whether or not Atreus ought to desire an audience for his crimes, he must simply endure one.[82]

The final example of an interior view of the king's house occurs in the *Agamemnon*. After Agamemnon has returned from the war and disappears into the palace with Clytemnestra, Cassandra has a vision of his murder that is taking place inside.[83] In Aeschylus' tragedy, Cassandra has a predictive vision of Agamemnon's fate. In Seneca's version, however, she

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[81] Calder (1983) 192. To what extent Seneca's tragic works should be considered "Stoic" is a matter of debate. See for example Park Poe (1969); Lefèvre (1981); Boyle (1983); Rosenmeyer (1989); Schiesaro (2003); Littlewood (2004).

[82] Cf. Schiesaro (2003) 154-163 on Atreus as a representative of *Realpolitik*. The dialogue between Atreus and his *satelles* (discussed further in Chapter 3) "is in fact a dramatized contrast between two different conceptions of power, a losing and a winning one. It matters little which one holds the higher moral stature on paper: what really matters…is how they deal with each other, and what degree of credibility they are able to instill in the audience…Atreus embodies a view of power which in practice, if not in theory, is truly in keeping with the reality of Roman imperial rule" (163).

[83] Giomini (1966) 177 makes the delightful observation that Cassandra's monologue reveals her pride and satisfaction at the events she is witnessing. Livius Andronicus may have provided a model for Seneca's version of the vision, as his Cassandra seems also to be observing Agamemnon's murder as it takes place. See Giomoni (1956) 186.

experiences her vision as the murder occurs: she announces, "a great matter is being undertaken within" (*res agitur intus magna*, *Ag*. 867). Cassandra describes Agamemnon, reclining in a splendid Trojan garment; Clytemnestra, urging him to put on the clothes she wove for him; Agamemnon becoming entangled in his cloak; Aegisthus stabbing Agamemnon, and Clytemnestra attacking her husband with an axe: "she has it, it is done. The head, cut off, hangs with difficulty by a small flap and blood flows from the body here, the face lies there with a groan" (*habet, peractum est. pendet exigua male/ caput amputatum parte et hinc trunco cruor/ exundat, illinc ora cum fremitu iacent*, 901-3).

It is tempting to imagine that, in a stage production, Cassandra would have looked through the stage door and described what she saw, but (as noted above) this is an unlikely approach to staging, as the door of the *scaenae frons* seems typically to have remained closed. It is all the more striking, then, that her vision allows the audience to look into the house for themselves. In part, Cassandra's vision answers the prologue of the tragedy, when the ghost of Thyestes described the house and alluded to the wrongs that once took place there; in her speech, Cassandra renews the connection between house and crime for the present generation. Through her account of what she sees inside the house, Cassandra also demonstrates the truth of Clytemnestra's assertion earlier in the play: "every crime of the royal house shines out" (*perlucet omne regiae uitium domus*, 148). Furthermore, the interior view that Cassandra provides can be read as a pendant to the scene in the *Thyestes* in which Atreus orders that the palace be opened. In both plays, when the king is at his most wretched (Thyestes dining on his sons' flesh, Agamemnon dying in disgrace), he and his house are exposed to the audience. Yet it is also the revelation of their crimes that establishes the dominance of Atreus, Clytemnestra, and Aegisthus: their position as rulers depends on their being seen.

While the association between visibility and power is not such a central issue in Seneca's *Oedipus*, this play also includes a scene that addresses the power of seeing, and on some level also the difficulty of seeing what should be invisible. In this version of *Oedipus*, the prophet Tiresias is summoned to perform an *extispicium* to identify the murderer of the late king Laius. He is accompanied by his daughter, Manto, who describes the enactment of the ritual, the unusual responses of the fire and of the sacrificial animals, and the features of the animal entrails (*Oed.* 303-399). This scene has been used as evidence for the argument that Seneca's plays were not intended for performance, or at least that this particular scene could not have been realized on the stage: since Manto uses the first-person present and describes what she sees in great detail, the *extispcium* would have to be performed or somehow represented onstage. Various solutions have been offered in response to the performance problem. A bloody animal show would hardly have been an unusual event on the Roman stage, and so it is not unreasonable to imagine that the *extispicium* could have been performed. Actors could have used gesture and props to communicate the action to the audience. It has also been suggested that Manto looked offstage, and described the ritual as if she observed it being carried out.[84] This last proposal is especially difficult to square with the text, as Manto's speech suggests that she is performing the sacrifice herself: at one moment, she even describes the sensation of holding the organs in her hands (333-5).[85] The scene was most likely staged, or intended for staging, in different ways depending on the occasion and the resources involved in the production.

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[84] See Boyle (2011) *ad loc.* For the view that the *extispicium* was supposed to be taking place off stage, see Rosenmeyer (1993) 242-3.

[85] Although Manto does not identify whose *manus* she is referring to (ln. 354), body parts without a possessive pronoun usually belong to the speaker. Hollingsworth (2001) 142, however, believes the hands must belong to an attendant performing the sacrifice.

However the performance was actually carried out, this scene is clearly one of the most difficult to stage in Senecan tragedy. Yet the tension between Manto's description of what she sees and the difficulty of sharing this vision with the audience in fact highlights the importance of visibility in Seneca's tragedies. Tiresias, the blind prophet, emphasizes the value of seeing when he tells Manto, "you, daughter, guide your father who has no sight, and report the plain signs of the fateful ceremony" (*tu lucis inopem, gnata, genitorem regens/ manifesta sacri signa fatidici refer*, *Oed.* 301-2). Manto expresses horror when she sees omens that she does not expect to see, or that she should not see, but she nevertheless reveals them to her father and to the audience. However the *extispicium* was realized, this scene centers on the problem of seeing, especially seeing things that should not be seen or that are difficult to see. In the context of the drama, Manto's speech gives a blind man the power of sight. As to the performance of the scene, for Seneca to demand an *extispicium* on stage, or to require an audience to imagine the ritual during a *recitatio*, was to challenge the idea of what could and could not be seen.

IV. Conclusion

The paradox of power and visibility has been eloquently summed up by H. Parker, who observes that "the Romans found themselves in a culturally determined double bind: to be the object of others' sight was to be open to attack, yet to be publicly observed was proof of power."[86] The answer to this paradox was controlled performance, or careful regulation of how one was viewed by others. Seneca's tragedies, however, question whether this kind of control is feasible: the ruler's house becomes a stage, not simply because he is the object of attention, but because visibility is inescapable. The action of the *Thyestes* and the *Agamemnon* takes place in

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[86] Parker (2000) 167.

the king's house, and as events unfold, the audience gains an ever more penetrating view into the palace. This interest in visibility and the act of viewing is also evident in representations of the *scaenae frons* and tragic scenes in Roman wall painting. Paintings of the *scaenae frons* both brought to mind public life in a general sense, and, more specifically, suggested that the larger community had arrived to be an audience in the house of the *dominus*. Painted images from tragedy, or mythological scenes which could have been presented in a theatrical context, often serve to dramatize the act of viewing: the way that the figures observe each other, or are themselves observed, encourages the real viewer to reflect on the privileges associated with spectatorship.

Seneca's *Thyestes* and *Agamemnon* and theatrical imagery from Campanian wall painting are examples of efforts to represent, understand, and shape power relations in the Roman world. They are particularly interesting examples, moreover, because their common themes provide insight into conceptions of power that had deep resonance in Roman culture, beyond the interpretation of a particular text or image. Wall painting from Pompeii and Herculaneum, towns which belonged to a stratum of Roman society far less rarefied than aristocratic circles in the capital, demonstrate that the members of these communities were attuned to the visibility of the powerful, and to the dependence of the *dominus* on viewers and clients to see him and thus to acknowledge his authority. While we cannot say what kind of audience Seneca imagined or intended for his plays, to write a tragedy was to engage with a longstanding literary tradition that was directed at the community as a whole. The association between power and visibility that Seneca presents in the *Thyestes* and the *Agamemnon* would have been accessible, and familiar, to

an audience more diverse than the readers of philosophical texts.[87] The dramatic texts and

paintings give us access to a popular culture of power in the Roman world.

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[87] I do not mean that the tragedies are merely a poetic translation of Seneca's philosophy. For an elegant treatment of the relationship between Seneca's tragedy and his philosophical works, see Schiesaro (2003) 252-5.

Chapter 3. Family, Court, and State

I. Introduction

In the previous two chapters, I have treated privacy largely in terms of the first half of my proposed definition: privacy is the ability to retreat from view, to escape the public eye. Power entails the inability to avoid being seen, which is at once a position of great influence and of great danger.[1] I now turn to the second part of the definition: privacy is the ability to act without public consequence. This definition applies especially in the sphere of the family, and while we cannot draw a clear boundary between the private house and public space in the Roman world, the emperor's family represents a particularly challenging case for any effort to distinguish between house and state. I draw on representations of the ruling family and the royal court in Tacitus' *Annals*, in portraiture and inscriptions, and in Seneca's tragedies to argue that the emperor was understood to be dependent on and even vulnerable to those closest to him. The life of the community, furthermore, was inextricably bound up with the precariousness of the ruler's position.

I focus on representations of ruling families and the influence of members of royal houses beyond the ruler himself. The importance of the imperial family during the Julio-Claudian dynasty has received close attention in recent scholarship. B. Severy has analyzed the role of women in the promotion of the Julio-Claudian family, while F. Hurlet and G. Rowe have used

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[1] Cf. Parker (2000) on the tension between the need to be seen and the risks of subjection to the public eye in the Republican period.

sculptural and epigraphic evidence to show how the changing structure of the imperial family

was communicated to and by communities across the Roman world.[2] M. B. Roller argued that

elite authors aimed to represent the emperor as the *paterfamilias*, a more benevolent model for

the head of state than a *dominus*, and thus to influence the relationship between the emperor and

the rest of the elite.[3] K. Milnor has demonstrated the importance of rhetoric surrounding female

virtue and domestic life in restoring communal identity in the first century CE.[4] The primacy of

the family in political life was a critical development of the early imperial period, as the

activities of the emperor's family, especially the women of the household, were an essential

component of his public role. While some women from powerful aristocratic families enjoyed

considerable influence under the Republic, imperial women were essential to demonstrating the

emperor's membership in the ruling dynasty, and thus his ties to the women of that house were a

key source of his legitimacy and authority.[5]

Because the emperor was the ultimate source of power in Roman society, there was

effectively no difference between the emperor's actions in the context of his family and his

public activities: anything he did, wherever he was, had the potential to affect the larger

community. While the emperor was typically understood, in the model of Augustus, as the father

of the family and head of the state, we do encounter more complicated reflections on the

emperor's position. The emperor is the center of life at court and has the ultimate power to

determine who belongs to the imperial family, yet in Tacitus' *Annals*, members of his family

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[2] Hurlet (1997); Rowe (2002); Severy (2003).
[3] Roller (2001) 233-64.
[4] Milnor (2005).
[5] On the power of aristocratic women in the Republic, see Wikander (1991) and Hillard (1992). Hallett (1984) argues that elite Roman women exercised authority not simply because of their membership in a family, but because of their particular familial role (mother, daughter, sister). The transition from the Republican model of family membership, which was based on agnatic relationships (through the male line), to the broader category of the *domus*, which allowed for membership based on cognate relationships (through the female line), will be discussed further below.

attempt to seize that power from him, and to redefine the structure of the court. The archaeological record shows that the make-up of the imperial family was subject to a process of negotiation between Rome and local elites. In Seneca's tragedies, the ruler often proves to be a vulnerable figure, at the mercy of members of his household who are ideally placed to influence him and also the polity that he rules. When the ruler is vulnerable to danger, the community becomes vulnerable to upheaval.

The vulnerability of the emperor was an issue of particular concern in the Neronian age, because of the youth of the emperor and the concomitant increase in power of the members of his court. Much of the material discussed in this chapter does not date to the years of Nero's reign, but it is nevertheless valuable for understanding some of the particular problems that beset the Neronian age, and the ways in which Nero's time on the throne shaped the Roman conception of imperial rule. Material evidence for the public profile of the Julio-Claudian house during Nero's rule and prior to it demonstrates that, when Nero came to power, a key part of the emperor's role was his position within his family. While Seneca's tragedies cannot be securely dated, the relationship between the ruler and his family in these plays may well have had particular resonances for Neronian audiences familiar with tensions in the ruling *domus*. Although Tacitus composed his histories decades after Nero's death, he evidently still regarded the reign of Nero as significant for defining the character of dynastic monarchy. By the time of Nero's reign, it was clear that the problem for the absolute ruler was not whether he was able to keep his house apart from the state, but that his family could not be separated from the state, and thus that there could be no meaningful distinction between public and private life.

II. Household and Court

Early in his narrative of Nero's reign, Tacitus records a remarkable scene in which a delegation from Armenia visits Nero's court, and Agrippina attempts to intervene:

> *quin et legatis Armeniorum causam gentis apud Neronem orantibus escendere suggestum imperatoris et praesidere simul parabat, nisi ceteris pavore defixis Seneca admonuisset venienti matri ocurreret. ita specie pietatis obviam itum dedecori.* (*Annales* 13.5)

> Indeed, when delegates were pleading the case of the Armenian people before Nero, she [Agrippina] was going to ascend the emperor's platform and even sit together with him, if--while the others were transfixed by fear--Seneca had not advised him to go to meet his mother as she approached. Thus, shame was prevented under the pretext of filial devotion.

Agrippina's actions, and the response to them, exemplify her high position, contemporary objections to the influence of imperial women, and the potential for conflict between those closest to the emperor. Her relationship with Nero gives her a special access to him, even in the middle of this official meeting. Nero himself, however, plays a passive role in this moment: his mother makes a bold move and his tutor counters it, while the emperor only does as he is told.[6] This scene evokes the importance of the court, that is, of the persons who enjoyed privileged status because of their relationship to the emperor; it also indicates, however, that those who wielded this influence could act independently of the emperor's approval, even if their position ultimately derived from his favor. In what follows, I situate Agrippina's appearance at the Armenian embassy in the context of the study of the imperial court, a key institution in Roman political life; I then demonstrate how players other than the emperor exercised authority in the court and thus in the broader community.

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[6] On Tacitus' use of *occurrere* in this passage to signal intentional contact rather than an accidental meeting, see Betensky (1978) 420, 423-4.

While Tacitus does not describe the social make-up of the audience for the Armenian embassy (or even the size of the crowd), his assertion that those present were "transfixed with fear" at Agrippina's approach reflects elite anxiety over the power of the emperor's household, and the tensions between the traditional aristocracy at Rome and the rise of imperial women and freedmen.[7] In J. Ginsburg's view, Tacitus' Agrippina is mostly a cipher for this anxiety: the Agrippina of the *Annals* is "a literary and rhetorical construct, designed to suggest the weakness of an emperor and of a political system that could not control its women."[8] It is certainly true that the literary sources do not offer a complete picture of Agrippina's role in the empire: like other members of the imperial family, she appears as a benefactor and patron, rather than as a conniving interloper, on coins and in provincial statue groups. Yet even Tacitus' Agrippina is not simply a villain, but a deft manipulator of court relations and court ceremony, and thus in some sense her behavior serves as a model for successful negotiation of the rules of the court.[9] While Agrippina was not the only savvy player at Nero's court, she offers a particularly interesting lens through which to view the imperial court: she illustrates the authority that accompanied membership in the imperial house, and as a woman she had few outlets available to express her authority other than asserting her role in the ruling family.

In a discussion of Augustus' use of ceremony to define the role of the Republican aristocracy (especially consular officials) under the principate, G. Sumi notes that it was Augustus' practice to be seated with the consuls flanking him (Dio 54.10.5); Tiberius, on his return to Rome in 9 CE, greeted the Roman people in the Saepta Julia, seated on a tribunal with

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[7] Conflicts at court were not strictly drawn according to class lines: Wallace-Hadrill (1996) 301-2 points out that imperial women and freedmen, who came from very different social classes, belonged to the same faction, while some senators would have enjoyed greater power and access to the emperor than others.

[8] Ginsburg (2006) 23. On the rhetoric of female power in the *Annals*, see Santoro L'Hoir (2006) 111-198.

[9] The foundational twentieth-century study of the structure of the court is Elias (1983). The Roman imperial court in particular has received more focused attention in recent scholarship: see Wallace-Hadrill (1996) and (2011); Winterling (1999) and (2009); Paterson (2007); Acton (2011); Sumi (2011).

Augustus and the two consuls. This seating arrangement symbolized the relationship between

emperor and consular officials: it asserted a place for the consuls in the emperor's court, and

suggested that the emperor's "executive authority at least matched [theirs], even without the title

of the office."[10] Agrippina's move to seat herself with Nero, therefore, should not be read simply

as an impulsive and inappropriate expression of female authority, but rather as a conscientious

effort to adapt a standard court practice for her own purposes. Furthermore, just as Augustus

seated the consuls next to him to establish their place at court, so Nero's embrace of his mother

emphasized her position in the community. We see another instance of negotiation of court

ceremony earlier in the *Annals*, just before Tacitus' report of the Armenian embassy:

> *obtinuere patres, qui in Palatium ob id vocabantur ut adstaret additis a tergo*
> *foribus velo discreta, quod visum arceret, auditus non adimeret* (*Ann.* 13.5).

> The senators, who were called to the Palatine for this reason, arranged it so that
> she [Agrippina] would stand by the doors added at the back of the room,
> concealed by a curtain, which kept her from seeing but not from hearing.

Scholars have typically focused on the fact that Agrippina is kept out of sight, and argued that

the curtain was an attempt to hide her real influence.[11] While it is clear that Tacitus disapproves

of Agrippina's presence, we might also interpret Agrippina's curtain as part of an ongoing

process of experimentation in defining and representing the authority of the women of the

imperial house. The curtain allowed Nero, his advisors, and the Senate to acknowledge

Agrippina's authority at court while also setting visible limits on its exercise.

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[10] Sumi (2011) 81-83; quote on 83.

[11] Cf. Koesterman (1967) ad loc.; Hillard (1992) 42; Ginsburg (2005) 29. Barrett (1996) goes in the opposite direction, arguing that Agrippina's presence at the meeting "was a mark of her prestige and power--but she was careful not to offend tradition" (152); this characterization may overstate the extent to which the emperor's mother had been smoothly integrated into civic life at this early period of Nero's reign. The one other example of a woman concealed by a curtain in Latin literature that I am aware of (pointed out to me by David Potter) is Pliny's praise of his wife in *Epistle* 4.19, in which he observes that she is concealed behind a curtain (*discreta velo*) when she listens to his recitations. Although the curtain is proof of her modesty, Pliny chiefly admires her eagerness to listen to his performances.

The nature of the imperial court in Rome, especially during the Julio-Claudian period, has been a subject of significant debate in recent scholarship. Focus on court life has been viewed as a problematic project by some historians, "suspicious of anecdote, and disinclined to see history as made by feminine schemes and palace plots."[12] Yet Tacitus' accounts of Nero, Agrippina, and other members of the imperial court offer us insight not only into the salacious activities of "bad" emperors or anxiety over female influence, but also into the essential features of a monarchic system of government. According to A. Wallace-Hadrill, whatever the truth of specific anecdotes in the ancient sources, the prevalence of these anecdotes "is not a personal weakness of our sources, but a structural consequence of the retreat of politics behind closed doors."[13] While I concur with his emphasis on the value of anecdotes in ancient sources, I suggest that stories of the imperial court do not point to "the retreat of politics behind closed doors," but rather to the merging of the state with the imperial house, and thus to the futility of attempting to keep the ruling house and its members out of the public eye: there could be no distinction between the life of the state and the life of the court, and the power of women like Agrippina was understood to be an unavoidable trait of dynastic rule.

The women of the imperial house enjoyed special influence because the court consisted of those who had access to the emperor, regardless of formally defined legal offices and functions. One of the most complicated issues in the early empire was the relationship between the emperor's household (freedmen and slaves) and the traditional aristocracy (especially the senatorial class). A. Winterling has made the convincing argument that these two hierarchies (the

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[12] Wallace-Hadrill (1996) 285. See Wallace-Hadrill (2011) 93-97 for more detailed discussion of "why modern historiography has chosen to ignore a power structure about which the ancient sources speak plainly and repeatedly" (93). In the case of scholarship on ancient Rome, Wallace-Hadrill attributes this problem largely to the influence of Mommsen, who focused on constitutional and legal structures at the expense of less formal institutions like the court. For a detailed review of earlier literature on this topic, see Winterling (1999) 12-38.
[13] Wallace-Hadrill (1996) 285.

household and the senatorial class) were not always exclusive, but in fact operated in tandem, continuously overlapping and then diverging. For example, as an imperial freedman gained power and influence, the emperor would award him a title to bring him into the official aristocratic hierarchy: even under the empire, Republican institutions and titles retained their cachet. Once a freedman became a recognized member of the traditional ruling class, however, he became a potential rival for the emperor, and thus could no longer keep his position in the inner circle.[14] Yet this cycle did not apply in the same way for imperial women, who would always be ineligible for traditional Republican titles, although they could fall in and out of the emperor's favor: Nero, in addition to the extreme case of his murder of Agrippina, threw over his first wife Octavia for the slave Acte, and eventually divorced her to marry Poppaea. Unlike lowborn males in the emperor's inner circle, who might be able to rise in the traditional power hierarchy, imperial women were generally dependent on retaining the emperor's goodwill, or (although usually unsuccessfully) lending their support to his rivals. At the same time, the relationships that joined these women to previous emperors and to other members of the imperial family gave them some protection: even when they faced Nero's displeasure, both Octavia and Agrippina retained some influence as daughters of Claudius and Germanicus respectively. According to Winterling's model, the persistent importance of social rank in imperial Rome helped to perpetuate Republican offices, which served as markers of class rather than as indicators of political authority. The privileged status of imperial women, however, offered a constant reminder of the decoupling of power and office.

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[14] Winterling (2009) 30-33. Winterling adopts anthropologist Clifford Geertz's theory of "reinvolution," according to which traditional institutions and practices are continuously replicated even as they become increasingly unsuited to address societal change.

To treat imperial favor as the only mechanism for attaining status and protection suggests that the emperor was the sole authority at court, and that his courtiers acted simply to attract his goodwill. Yet while influence at court was derived from proximity to the emperor, the world of the court was not merely one of subservience to his whims. The court system allowed the emperor to increase and spread his authority, as "those at court acted as brokers for their contacts at home, securing benefits for them and drawing further compatriots into the circle of power at Rome."[15] In other words, the emperor could not act alone: rather, he relied on those around him to further his influence and support his position, even as they relied on him for protection and status. As J. Paterson has argued, "the court and court society [were] a negotiation between the ruler and the subject," and court ceremonies were "the language of this 'dialogue.'"[16] Interactions with the emperor were not motivated exclusively by deference, but by the desire to demonstrate one's own "access to the locus of power."[17] This kind of relationship between emperor and courtier parallels the relationship between emperor and elites at a much lower level, in provincial towns that erected imperial monuments in order to demonstrate their familiarity with the emperor and to promote their status as recipients of imperial benefactions.[18] Courtiers like Agrippina could exploit their proximity to the emperor for their own advantage, rather than for his.

While presence at court and proximity to the emperor was a primary indicator of the influence of the courtier, deliberate absence could also serve as an assertion of independent

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[15] Wallace-Hadrill (1996) 300. As an example of this dynamic, Wallace-Hadrill cites the prominence of the Spaniards during the Neronian period, which he attributes to Seneca's high position.
[16] Paterson (2007) 122.
[17] Ibid. 123. Cf. Goffman (1959): "when inferiors extend their most lavish reception for visiting superiors, the selfish desire to win favor may not be the chief motive; the inferior may be tactfully attempting to put the superior at ease by simulating the kind of world the superior is thought to take for granted" (19).
[18] See Price (1985) for the standard discussion of the relationship between patronage, self-promotion, and the imperial cult.

authority. K. Acton argues that Thrasea Paetus, a Senator and Stoic whom Nero ultimately

compelled to commit suicide, was viewed as a threat because of his deliberate absence from

court. During the trial that led to his death, Thrasea was charged with failing to attend meetings

of the Senate, not taking part in the Juvenalia, and preferring his gardens (*horti*) to holding office

(Tac. *Ann.* 16.21, 27). While Nero had at times prevented Thrasea from attending him at court,

"his authority and his control over the court were challenged by Thrasea's voluntary withdrawal

from it."[19] Thrasea's absence was a concern not simply because he did not dance attendance on a

tyrannical emperor, but because the pursuit of *otium* "asserted aristocratic status in a setting both

physically and socially removed from the emperor and court society" and thus established a basis

for authority which bypassed imperial control.[20] The significance of Thrasea's voluntary absence

points to the ways in which the emperor was dependent on those who were inferior to him: no

emperor could afford an abundance of courtiers who behaved as Thrasea did. When Agrippina

claimed a role in meetings of the Senate or at the Armenian embassy, she both insisted on her

own authority and demonstrated the extent to which the emperor's power was rooted in a

network that included Agrippina herself. As I will discuss further below, Agrippina and other

members of the ruling house could use their ties to previous emperors to protect themselves from

the machinations of the current emperor, or at any rate to make his life considerably more

difficult.

N. Elias, in his seminal study of court politics during the reign of Louis XIV, argued that

the decline of scholarly interest in court societies reflected the minimal importance of the court

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[19] Acton (2011) 118.

[20] Ibid. 120. André (1962) 127 looks at *otium* and withdrawal from public life in Seneca's letters and identifies a constant tension between *otium* as a haven and as a hiding place; Seneca is a "diplomatic moralist" who educates his readers on how to withdraw from public life without angering the prince (126).

in the modern world, not the triviality of the institution of the court in human civilization.[21]

Tacitus' attention to anecdote may strike the modern reader as a distraction from serious history, but his account of Agrippina's activities at court, as well as those of other members of the ruling house, does not only allow him to engage with the decline of Roman morality (a familiar trope long before Tacitus), or to pick out features of "bad" and "good" emperors; instead, these anecdotes are essential to his attempt to make sense of the development of a new world.[22] To understand the position of the emperor, it was necessary to consider the power exercised by those around him, especially the inner circle of the family. In the next section, I show how representations of royal families, and of the relationships between the ruler and those closest to him, demonstrate different ways of understanding the emperor's authority and the relationship between the ruling house and the state. Inscriptions and statue groups, which attest to interest in the imperial house throughout the Roman world, show that the members of the imperial family were as critical to legitimating the emperor's position as he was to ensuring theirs. Furthermore, the perpetual interest of both the imperial family and their subordinates in asserting the strength of the ruling house pointed to anxiety about its precarious position.

III. Defining the Family

In the *De Clementia*, Seneca reminds Nero that the emperor is the *pater patriae*, by which he means that "the father's power is given to him, which is most moderate, concerned for his children and putting his own affairs after them" (*datam sibi potestatem patriam, quae est*

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[21] Elias (1983) 8.

[22] Syme (1958) 375-7 believes that Tacitus' pays excessive attention to Agrippina and so fails to provided detailed information about the interests and activities of those around her. See Milnor (2012) on Tacitus' appreciation for how political change also transformed the project of writing political history.

temperantissima liberis consulens suaque post illos reponens, *Clem*. 1.14.2). Seneca's definition

of the title *pater patriae* reflects his understanding of the emperor as *paterfamilias*, rather than

the *dominus*, of the state: as M. B. Roller has shown, the aristocracy of the early empire aimed

not just to describe the role of the emperor, but to define it. Seneca's insistence on the *patria*

potestas as the basis of the emperor's power was part of his effort to promote the paradigm of

father and child, instead of master and slave, for the relationship between the emperor and his

subjects.[23] The honorific title *pater patriae*, furthermore, suggests a relationship not just between

Rome and the emperor, but also between Rome and the emperor's family. The *pater patriae* was

the *paterfamilias* of his own household, and the lives of his family and his *patria* were therefore

joined together. Augustus himself promoted the connection between his family and all of Rome

in the Forum Augusti through the images of the *viri illustres*, "which featured Romans from

many families, [and] created a new history of Rome by adopting everyone into Augustus'

family."[24] Both Nero and Augustus understood that to be the head of the ruling family of Rome

was to claim a privileged relationship with the Roman people, as well as a relationship between

the Roman people and the emperor's household.

The idea of the emperor as *paterfamilias*, however, was just one model for understanding

the relationships between the emperor and the imperial family, and the emperor and the state.

Indeed, the imperial family serves as a particularly effective tool for examining the role of the

emperor precisely because it was depicted in a variety of ancient sources and from a range of

perspectives. In this section I discuss the structure of the imperial family in the Julio-Claudian

period and examine the archaeological evidence for how it was understood and who was

included in its make-up. I also look at Tacitus' account of Nero's family in the *Annals*, which

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[23] Roller (2001) 239.
[24] Severy (2000) 323.

provides another point of view for understanding how powerful families were conceived of and represented in this period. Both visual and literary portrayals of the imperial family point to the influence that members of the emperor's family enjoyed, and so also suggest (even when unintentionally) the potential weaknesses of the ruler himself. Seneca's tragedies (which I discuss later in the chapter) take this problem a step further, in that the vulnerability of the ruler in fact points to the fragility of an imperial system and thus of the state as a whole.

Detailed charts of the Julio-Claudian family tree, a ubiquitous feature in studies of the emperors of this period, pose two major problems for understanding the imperial family. The first is the sheer complexity of the family tree, and the second is the extent to which this family tree had any meaning for ancient audiences. The word "family" in the contemporary sense most often refers to the nuclear family consisting of parents and their children, but the question of how the Romans defined or understood the family as a social unit is a problematic issue in modern scholarship. K. R. Bradley, who points out that "the Latin language has no word for 'family' in the customary modern sense of the term," argues that the contemporary value placed on the nuclear family would have been foreign to the Roman aristocracy.[25] Yet whether or not the nuclear family (spouse and children) "constituted the central point of emotional reference" for elites of the late Republic and early empire, there is evidence to suggest that the bonds between husband and wife, and parents and children, carried special significance.[26] In the *De Officiis,* Cicero calls the relationship between spouses the "first fellowship" (*prima societas*). This fellowship is followed by the relationship with one's children, and then by the relationships within a single household (*una domus*, Cic. *Off*. 1.54). While the hierarchy he presents "would make no sense if the Romans usually thought of *domus* as the mother-father-children triad," it

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[25] Bradley (1987) 56.
[26] Ibid. 33.

also demonstrates that these relationships were privileged above others included in the *domus*.[27]

Cicero goes on to identify the bonds between brothers and cousins (*coniunctiones fratrum…sobrinorum consobrinorumque*) as inferior to the bonds within the *domus*. Later, he argues that we owe the greatest obligations to "nation and parents" (*patria et parentes*, 1.58). The fact that Cicero highlights especially the bonds between parents, spouses, and children suggests that while the concept of the "nuclear family" may be an anachronism, it is nevertheless meaningful to distinguish between the emperor's immediate family (his wife and children, biological or adopted) and the extended network of relations joined to the Julio-Claudians.

Cicero describes the structure of the Roman family as part of his project to articulate the bonds of obligation between members of the citizen community. Further evidence, however, suggests that the immediate family of the emperor, especially his relations with the women of his household, was a topic of more widespread and persistent interest. Augustus advertised himself as a husband, father, and grandfather when he wore clothing woven by his wife, daughter, and granddaughter and promoted himself as the protector of their virtue.[28] The behavior of the women in Augustus' family was significant because it pointed to "the *princeps'* commitment to a virtuous Roman home."[29] By advertising the activities of the women of his family and his relationships to them, however, Augustus also drew attention to his role as a husband and father, and therefore to the ruling family as a "nuclear" unit, rather than as a network of distant relatives. It would make little sense for Augustus to promote this kind of self-image if the emperor's immediate family was not a meaningful category for his audience; Augustus' activities may have

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[27] Saller (1984) 344.
[28] Suet. *Aug.* 73; 64.
[29] Milnor (2005) 85.

intensified or (as K. Milnor has argued) even established the central role of domestic life in political discourse.

While Augustus was unique among Julio-Claudian emperors for his success in using his relations with his family to assert his moral authority, the significance of the emperor's family relationships did not end with him. Marriage and childbirth in the *princeps'* family were recognized as state events, even if they did not directly influence the line of succession: when Nero's daughter was born at Antium, the Senate immediately gathered there.[30] The importance of the immediate family of the *princeps* was also evident during the reign of Claudius, when Claudius' marriage to Agrippina became a matter of public concern. Claudius' freedmen competed to choose the emperor's next bride (*Ann.* 12.1-3) because they understood the influence that the *princeps'* wife could wield, and thus recognized the immediate family of the *princeps* as occupying a special category within the broader Julio-Claudian clan.

This is not to say that the emperor's immediate family always took precedence over the extended Julio-Claudian family. Rather, presentations of the imperial family varied depending on the particular context. As G. Rowe has argued, "Romans had several conceptions of the family, among them the *gens* (persons sharing a *nomen*), the *familia* (persons actually linked agnatically), and the *domus* (the *familia* plus cognate relations)," and "the imperial family presented itself as all three."[31] The ancient evidence frustrates attempts to arrive at a precise definition of the imperial family because different actors (the emperor, his family, the Roman elite, local officials in the provinces) defined it in different ways. When the issue of succession was at stake, the extended family, and membership in it, carried considerable weight. The phrase *domus Augusta* appears for the first time in three inscriptions from the Tiberian period--the

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[30] *omni senatu Antium sub recentem partum effuso* (Tac. *Ann.* 15.23).
[31] Rowe (2002) 19.

Tabula Hebana, the Tabula Siarensis, and the *Senatus Consultum de Pisone patre*--which all date

to the period immediately following the death of Germanicus, Tiberius' nephew and adopted

son, in 19 CE; the first two preserve parts of decrees for funeral honors for Germanicus, while

the third addresses the judgment against Piso, a rival of Germanicus who was accused of his

murder and committed suicide. In these documents, *domus Augusta* is used to refer to Augustus,

Livia, Augustus' four adopted sons (Tiberius, Drusus, Gaius, and Lucius), Tiberius' son Drusus,

and Germanicus, along with his mother, siblings, wife, and children.[32] Rowe observes that

"deaths in the imperial family created a need for periodic membership lists" to reflect changes in

the ruling house.[33] While Tiberius and Livia were the most powerful agents of the imperial

house, these decrees, especially the *SC de Pisone*, are not only interested in those at the top of

the hierarchy. One section of the *SC de Pisone*, which honors the members of the *domus Augusta*

for their exemplary and restrained mourning, concludes with praise for Germanicus' children,

and especially for Nero Caesar, who suffers "a youth's grief" (*iu<v>enis dolor*).[34] Although

Tiberius and Livia are credited for the self-discipline of the children, the presence of the children

in the list speaks as much to the fruitfulness of the house as it does to the distinction of their

grandfather and great-grandmother. The extensive list of the remaining members of the Julio-

Claudian family demonstrated the continuing strength of the ruling family, despite the loss of the

presumed heir.[35]

Conversely, during disputes over the right of succession it would be disadvantageous for

the emperor to recognize more distant relatives, and thus to acknowledge the claims of his

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[32] Rowe (2002) 19 provides a family tree based on the Julio-Claudians included in the decrees. On these documents, see also Potter and Damon (1999) and Severy (2000), especially her references at 318n1-2.
[33] Rowe (2002) 18.
[34] Text from Potter and Damon (1999) ln 147. This Nero was the emperor's uncle, brother of Agrippina the Younger.
[35] Honoring the imperial family was essential to expressing loyalty to the regime and thus to asserting one's own position in the political system. See Severy (2000) 327-8 and Rowe (2002), especially 1-66.

rivals.[36] Shortly before her death, Agrippina threatened to support the claims of Rubellius

Plautus to the throne: he was "on his mother's side, at the same remove from the divine Augustus

as Nero" (*per maternam originem pari ac Nero gradu a divo Augusto*, *Ann.* 13.19). It is unlikely

that Nero would have wanted his relationship to Rubellius Plautus advertised in a Senatorial

decree: while the number of family members who survived Germanicus spoke to the strength of

the imperial *domus*, for Nero it was more advantageous to present himself as the only plausible

heir to Augustus. Later in his reign, Nero even compelled Torquatus Silanus to commit suicide

because he had boasted that Augustus was his great-grandfather (15.35).[37] Nero's action here is

not necessarily evidence of madness or excessive sensitivity, but suggests that the definition of

the *domus Augusta* was a key instrument that the emperor used to maintain his power. F. Hurlet

has argued that the organization of the *domus Augusta* bore little relationship to Republican

conceptions of family structures: Augustus had total power to include whomever he wished in

his *domus*, or to exclude them.[38] Republican aristocratic families emphasized the *familia*, or

agnatic relations, rather than the *domus*, which included relations on both the paternal and

maternal side and was thus the most comprehensive category: for Augustus and his successors,

domus was a more flexible and thus more useful term.[39] The make-up of the *domus Augusta* was

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[36] Cf. Rogers (1955) for a compilation of Nero's heirs and rivals in the literary record.

[37] He was also accused of using the name of imperial offices for his own household staff (*quin inter libertos habere quos ab epistulis et libellis et rationibus appellet*, 15.35).

[38] Hurlet (1997) 418. Hurlet argues that Augustus used marriage to bind the *domus Augusta* to other major Republican houses, but these marriages were arranged through his cognate relatives (that is, through the women of his household). As Severy (2003) 64-6 has observed, Augustus appears to have been less interested in forming alliances with other families than in separating his own from the rest: men in the Julio-Claudian clan formed endogamous marriages; only women married outside it.

[39] Saller (1984) demonstrates that *domus* became the preferred term for senatorial families under the principate; Severy (2003) 69 argues that this trend began with Augustus' household, and his somewhat idiosyncratic emphasis on relations through his wife and sister. Corbier (1995) 190 argues that Augustus' marriage policies aimed to transform cognate relations into agnatic ones.

not determined based exclusively on objective characteristics, but rather was a tool for the emperor (and his rivals) to use to legitimate claims to power.

This tool would not have been an effective one, however, if imperial family ties, and familial bonds more generally, were not a matter of importance in the Roman world. It is true that, as R. Saller has argued, the traditional aristocratic interest in the *familia* must have been confined to a very small number of senatorial families who knew "enough about their male ancestors to attach great importance to their agnatic descent group."[40] The more flexible and expansive model of the *domus*, therefore, was valuable not only to the emperor but to those who sought to promote or claim a relationship with the imperial house. Interest in the make-up of the Julio-Claudian family was not confined to the ruling class of the empire: epigraphic evidence demonstrates "how assiduously and accurately subjects followed turnover in the imperial house."[41] This phenomenon is especially remarkable, moreover, when we consider how complex the *domus Augusta* was, and that frequent deaths of members of the house (especially during the reign of Augustus) meant that the membership and structure of the imperial family was always subject to change.

After the deaths of Augustus' sons Lucius and Gaius, in 2 CE and 4 CE, the town of Pisae (modern Pisa) issued commemorative decrees. The decree for Lucius contains provisions for building an altar and carrying out sacrifices on the anniversary of his death, and public sacrifices at the same altar were later decreed for Gaius as well. G. Rowe has demonstrated that the Pisan decree for Lucius is an imitation of a decree of the Senate at Rome: the Roman decree detailed the honors that local governments should establish for Lucius, and thus the documents

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[40] Saller (1984) 342.
[41] Rowe (2002) 18.

from Pisae show that Italian towns were aware of developments in the imperial family.[42] More

significant, however, is the Pisan decree for Gaius: although it was inspired by the decree for

Lucius, it contains original inventions of the magistrates at Pisae. As Rowe has shown, the

account of Gaius' life and the titles applied to him in the decree are not paralleled in comparable

decrees or records of his death in local *fasti*. While the decree for Lucius had listed his official

titles (augur, consul designate, *princeps iuventutis*), Gaius was praised as the prince "most just

and most like his father in his virtues and the sole defense of our town" (*i]ustissumum ac

simillumum parentis sui virtutibus principem coloniaeque no[st]rae unicum praesidium*). The

decree also lent an epic flavor to the circumstances of Gaius' death, asserting that the young man

died "waging a war beyond the farthest borders of the Roman people and…defeating or

accepting the surrender of the most warlike and most powerful nations" (*ultra finis extremas

populi [Ro]mani bellum gerens…devicteis aut in [fid]em receptis bellicosissimis ac maxsimus

gentibus*).[43] This kind of language demonstrates a popular investment in the imperial house that

existed alongside the authority of the emperor to recognize or dismiss persons who claimed a

connection with the *domus Augusta*.

The memorial for Lucius and Gaius at Pisae is representative of a more widespread

phenomenon: municipalities throughout the empire made dedications to members of the imperial

family. The towns that erected these statues, either in accordance with decrees from the Senate in

Rome or at their own initiative, aimed to claim a relationship with the ruling house, not just with

the current emperor. Dynastic sculptural groups proliferated during the reigns of Augustus and

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[42] Rowe (2002) 108-9. Lucius was a *patronus* of Pisa, which was one reason for the Pisans' special interest in him, but Rowe argues that familiarity with members of the ruling family would have been a more general phenomenon because "the princes' careers brought them into contact with each constituency" of the empire (174).

[43] See Rowe (2002) 114-115, 121 for text, translation, and discussion of the contrast between the decrees for Gaius and Lucius. Hurlet (1997) 482 notes that the decree for Gaius asserts the legitimacy of the prince's position in familial terms (his relationship to Augustus) as much as in legal ones (his Republican offices).

Tiberius, especially to honor the emperors' heirs.[44] The Gaius decree from Pisae includes a

pronouncement to build a memorial arch "in the most splendid place in our colony," with gilded

equestrian statues of Gaius and Lucius, and a second statue of Gaius, on foot and in triumphal

dress (ln. 34-7). During the Julio-Claudian period, city centers throughout the empire were re-

organized around monuments that celebrated the imperial house, and especially the role of the

heirs in continuing the dynasty.[45] Some statue groups even featured the young children of the

imperial family, in particular Germanicus' sons Nero and Drusus, and so paralleled the inclusion

of the children in the *SC de Pisone*.[46] Monuments dedicated to the imperial family often included

evidence of communication between the local authorities and the emperor at Rome: the town

would write to the emperor to inform him of the honor they had conferred, he would reply, and

copies of both of these communiqués would be inscribed near the state group.[47] Local

governments also took interest in members of the imperial family, apart from the emperor

himself, as patrons and benefactors. As noted above, the Pisans claimed Gaius as the "sole

defense of our colony," and Pisae was one of the towns that received significant public works

projects during the Augustan period.[48] The popularity of dynastic statue groups indicates that

representations of the emperor were not sufficient: his authority was grounded in part in his role

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[44] Particularly Agrippa, Gaius and Lucius Caesar, and Germanicus. Tiberius appears far less frequently than Gaius or Lucius (Hurlet [1997] 494). Hurlet addresses the evidence for these statue groups at 448-534.

[45] Hurlet (1997) 472. He observes that municipal dedications to the Julio-Claudian house in the Augustan and Tiberian periods were mostly linked to funeral honors for the emperor's heirs: the death of the heir made it necessary to proclaim the legitimacy of the dynasty (533).

[46] Cf. statue groups at Veii and Ephesus (Hurlet [1997] 517, 523). A statue group in the Circus Flaminius represented Germanicus and his six children, an elaborate version of the Republican custom of representations of triumphal processions with general and family (Rose [1997] 26). A young Nero (grandson of Germanicus) appeared in a statue group from Velleia, dated to the reign of Caligula, but re-cut in the Claudian and Flavian periods. In the Claudian period, the group included Claudius (re-cut from the image of Caligula), Agrippina the Younger, and the child Nero (body from an early unidentified portrait statue); Rose believes that a statue of Britannicus was originally included in the group, although no evidence for it has survived (Rose [1997] Cat. 50).

[47] Rose (1997) 9.

[48] Cf. Harris (1971) 317, 317 n9 (cited in Rowe [2002] 116).

within the family, and representations of his family members were central to understanding his position.

While local elites were invested in keeping track of the structure and membership of the ruling family, the monuments representing the imperial house were not necessarily kept up-to-date. In addition to the obvious problem of the time that was needed to communicate the news that members of the imperial house had died or fallen into disgrace, it is not clear that this kind of information was always forthcoming or easily available. B. Rose's analysis of dynastic statue groups from the Julio-Claudian period reveals that there was no consistent pattern of responses to changes in the membership of the imperial house, especially in the case of exile: "the dissemination of information concerning the exile or banishment of an imperial family member seems to have been haphazard, and one detects a degree of uncertainty on the part of the donor as to whether or not a particular image should be destroyed."[49] Statues of Augustus' daughter Julia, banished in 2 BCE, remained a part of sculpture groups, and her image was preserved on the Ara Pacis in Rome. Caligula's sisters, Agrippina the Younger and Julia Livilla, generally disappeared from monuments during their periods of exile, although they continued to be honored as benefactors in Mytilene.[50] Even Britannicus, Nero's younger stepbrother and eventual victim, appeared in a statue group in Amisus with Nero and Poppaea; Poppaea's presence dates the monument to between 63 and 65 CE, the years of her marriage to Nero, and thus eight years after Britannicus' death. The statue group may have originally featured only Nero and Britannicus: the

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[49] Rose (1997) 10.
[50] Ibid. 21; 37; Cat. 90. Kampen (1991) notes that images of women (with the exception of goddesses and personifications) are rare in historical reliefs, and that they largely "appeared during three periods when [the idealized relationship between public and private] was of primary concern to the Roman ruling class," namely the Augustan, Antonine, and Severan ages (218-19).

monument would have been updated, with a new inscription, to commemorate Nero's marriage to Poppaea.[51]

The statue group at Amisus, however, is especially notable because the Neronian period saw "a sharp decline in the production of dynastic ensembles," perhaps because of Nero's failure to clearly identify and promote a successor.[52] The image of Britannicus could be compared to the memorial arch for Lucius and Gaius at Pisa, but that monument (at least according to the surviving evidence) did not include living members of the imperial family. In the view of F. Hurlet, the continued presence of Gaius and Lucius in dedications after their deaths was intended to assert the principle of hereditary succession as well as the legitimacy of the Julio-Claudian dynasty.[53] In the absence of any designated heir for Nero, the statue of Britannicus may have served the same role of legitimating dynastic government in principle, even when the emperor had no designated heir. It is also notable, however, that the tradition of dynastic statue ensembles situated the emperor in the context of other powerful figures: representations of the emperor alone were not sufficient, or at least were not sufficient to express the kind of relationship with the imperial house sought by the municipalities that erected the monuments. In a sense, then, these dynastic statue groups detracted focus specifically from the emperor in order to establish his position within the family group. By this I do not mean that the goal of these monuments was to delegitimate or dishonor the emperor, but rather that a source of his power was his connection

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[51] On the statue group at Amisus, see Bean (1956) 215-16. Rose (1997) 48 attributes Britannicus' presence in the later monument to the fact that Nero would not have informed the citizens of Amisus about the circumstances of the young man's demise.

[52] Rose (1997) 52. The sculptural reliefs of the Sebasteion in Aphrodisias are a notable exception to this trend: here, Agrippina is shown crowning Nero with a laurel wreath, an image that presumably refers to his accession to the throne and asserts the significance of his family bonds in attaining his office. On the depiction of Agrippina and Nero on the Sebasteion, see Ginsburg (2006) 89-91.

[53] Hurlet (1997) 494.

to and role in his household. Local authorities who sought to affirm this system of government and their own place within it needed to honor a ruling family, not a single ruler.[54]

In drawing attention to other members of the imperial family, these statue ensembles could not but emphasize the roles of these family members apart from the position of the emperor: communities who sought relationships with members of the imperial family hoped not only to gain the favor of the emperor, but also to benefit from the influence that his family enjoyed. Dynastic monuments allowed these communities to assert their connection to the Julio-Claudian house as a whole, which was more secure than the position of a single man within that house. Furthermore, these monuments demonstrated the power of the dedicants to determine who belonged to, or at least who mattered in, the ruling house. While the dedicants at Amisus, for example, may have received notification from Rome about Nero's marriage to Poppaea, it is unlikely that they were also instructed to maintain their statue of Britannicus. Rather, the citizens of Amisus were expressing a particular vision of the *domus Augusta*: although Britannicus was dead and Nero had no heir, his image allowed them to advertise their allegiance to the Julio-Claudian family, rather than to a single emperor.

Dedications to the imperial family, therefore, suggest two central tensions in the relationship between the emperor and his family. First, while members of the imperial family derived their authority from the emperor, he was also dependent on them, in that the strength of his house and the goodwill it inspired were necessary to ensure his own dominance. Second, the emperor did not have exclusive authority to determine the membership and structure of his household, or which members of his family should be honored: instead, the make-up of the *domus Augusta* was, at least to an extent, under negotiation by different groups in Rome and the

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[54] Cf. Levick (1990) 85, who argues that provinces with an attachment to the Julian clan worried that Claudius (who was not a Julian) would disregard their patronage ties.

empire. These same two problems also figure in Tacitus' portrayal of Nero's family and the imperial court in the *Annals*.[55]

Agrippina's appearance at Senate meetings and her intrusion into Nero's meeting with the Armenian embassy (*Ann.* 13.5) indicate that, at the very beginning of her son's reign, she recognized the need to maintain her influence at court. Once Nero became emperor, he was no longer dependent on his mother to secure his connection to the throne, and in one respect this threatened Agrippina's own position. Yet it is clear from Tacitus' account that the power relations between the two were far from settled, as Agrippina actively sought and courted rivals to Nero: she "welcomed tribunes and centurions as friends, she respected the names and excellence of noble men who still remained, as though she were looking for a leader and a faction" (*tribunos et centuriones comiter excipere, nomina et virtutes nobilium, qui etiam tum supererant, in honore habere, quasi quaereret ducem et partis*, 13.18).[56] While Agrippina's deviousness is notable, her overtures to other figures at court are especially interesting because they indicate her own power, independent of her son. Attention and endorsement from Agrippina, who was mother of the emperor but also great-granddaughter of Augustus, was a valuable commodity, and it was one that she could exploit to the detriment of her son's authority. Agrippina was later charged with supporting the imperial ambitions of Rubellius Plautus who was (like Nero) a great-great-grandson of Augustus: it was claimed that Agrippina intended "to

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[55] This is not to say that Tacitus should be adduced to explain or confirm particular interpretations of the archaeological record of dynastic dedications. Tacitus' treatment of the imperial family is part of his own conception of writing history: see Gabba (1984), who argued that "Tacitus is the last, almost impotent protagonist of an approach which applied to the historical interpretation of Augustus and the Empire the unattainable political ideal of a center of influence from below…from the failure of this ideal, Tacitus derives his dramatic capacity to provide a penetrating analysis of the ways in which imperial power was actually exercised" (85).

[56] Santoro L'Hoir (2006) argues that Tacitus models the women of the *Annals*, especially Livia and Agrippina the Younger, on the "masculine female antagonists of tragedy" (113). Agrippina's efforts to form a faction of her own go beyond masculine characterization in broad terms: she lays claim to specific powers associated with the emperor, such as choosing an heir and recognizing members of the imperial house. Cf. Hallett (1989) 62-3 for Agrippina the Elder's use of tactics typically identified as "male" (asserting her ancestry; calming mutinous soldiers).

again attack the Republic, through marriage to him and on his authority" (*coniugioque eius et imperio rem publicam rursus invadere*, 13.19). Although Agrippina naturally denied the charges, in elevating Rubellius Plautus' claim to rule she would have been seizing one of the key powers of the emperor, that of determining who was and who was not included in the Julio-Claudian house. Indeed, Agrippina's relationship to Augustus and her seniority to her son may have made her the most plausible candidate for making these particular decisions. Agrippina's authority in a strict sense was dependent on Nero, but in the *Annals* she wields her position as a weapon against the emperor.

Nero's weakness, relative to Agrippina and to other members of his household, is a significant feature of Tacitus' narrative of his reign. E. O'Gorman observes that, in the *Annals*, Nero rarely speaks for himself: Seneca is the true author of Nero's funeral oration for Claudius and of his addresses to the Senate, and "the Tacitean Nero is an emperor who quotes rather than speaks."[57] Tacitus' sources singled out Nero because he was "the first of those who achieved power over the state to have relied on another's eloquence" (*primum ex iis qui rerum potiti essent Neronem alienae facundiae eguisse*, 13.3). Nero's speeches are generally reported in indirect discourse, as is typical for Tacitus. In contrast, when Agrippina is accused of plotting a conspiracy with Rubellius Plautus, she makes her response to Burrus, the praeteorian guard captain who has come to warn her of the charges, in direct speech (13.21). Tacitus' source for this speech of Agrippina's (and for others like it) may have been her own *commentarii*, which Tacitus identifies as a source for his narrative of Agrippina the Elder, Nero's grandmother.[58]

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[57] O'Gorman (2000) 162.

[58] Tac. *Ann.* 4.53: *in commentariis Agrippinae filiae quae Neronis principis mater vitam suam et casus suorum posteris memoravit.* On Tacitus' use of Agrippina's *commentarii*, see Lewis (1993) 652-7.

It is no surprise, given Agrippina's relative position of strength, that Nero removed his mother to a separate house and took armed guards when he went to visit her: "and so that she would not be visited with crowds of people participating in the morning *salutatio,* he divided the household and moved his mother to Antonia's former house, and whenever he himself went there, he was protected by a mass of centurions and left after a brief embrace" (*ac ne coetu salutantium frequentaretur, separat domum matremque transfert in eam quae Antoniae fuerat, quoties ipse illuc ventitaret, saeptus turba centurionum et post breve osculum digrediens*, 13.18). J. Ginsburg points out that the physical separation "reveals the intrinsic connection between space and political power, by dramatizing Agrippina's loss of political influence once she is separated from the seat of imperial power."[59] Yet physical proximity to the emperor is not the only source of Agrippina's influence, as she continues to threaten Nero after she has been removed from the household. When the emperor begins to contemplate his mother's murder, Burrus objects, reminding Nero that "the praetorians were bound to the whole house of the Caesars, and because they remembered Germanicus, they would not dare violence against his progeny" (*ille praetorianos toti Caesarum domui obstrictos memoresque Germanici nihil adversus progeniem eius atrox ausuros respondit*, 14.7).[60] The power that Agrippina derived from her own genealogy, rather than from her role as Nero's mother, was representative of the kind of influence that the emperor's family members might enjoy regardless of his attitude toward them.

Britannicus, son of Claudius and Nero's stepbrother, possessed a similar ability to assert control over who should be included in the imperial house, and like Agrippina, he expressed his

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[59] Ginsburg (2006) 43.

[60] Cf. Hallett (1984) 56ff on elite women (including Agrippina the Younger) who "commanded…respect as daughters of powerful men."

power and threatened Nero through speech. While Britannicus was quickly marginalized after

his father's death, Nero's hostility to him was not based only on paranoia. During a performance

at a celebration for the Saturnalia, the lot fell to Nero to play the role of king in the festivities. He

ordered his young stepbrother to sing for the guests, and through his song, the boy indicated that

"he was turned out from his father's house and from the highest estate" (*evolutum eum sede*

patria rebusque summis, 13.15). This scene is especially interesting because while Nero both

plays the king for the Saturnalia celebration and actually holds the rank of emperor, he is

nonetheless undermined by Britannicus. The audience shows its pity for Britannicus during his

performance, "since night and license had removed pretense" (*quia dissimulationem nox et*

lascivia exemerat).[61] After Nero has his stepbrother poisoned, there is a modest burial ceremony,

performed in the dead of night; Tacitus reports that the funeral was accompanied by

thunderstorms that the people attributed to divine displeasure (13.17). In a sense, with the murder

of Britannicus, Nero asserted his ultimate authority to control who did and who did not deserve

membership in the ruling house, but sympathy for the prince's condition and the unease at his

death demonstrate that members of the imperial family, not simply the emperor himself, were

able to assert and manipulate the private bonds that were the basis of power in the public

sphere.[62]

    The response to Nero's treatment of Octavia later in the narrative further supports the

idea that the emperor was not always the ultimate arbiter of who belonged in the imperial

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[61] Bartsch (1994) argues that Britannicus' audience "made a mistake with fatal consequences: forgetting both the presence of the imperial eye and the necessity of playing a role…they respond with pity for the young Britannicus--who…has enacted his own short-lived power-reversal" (14). Yet while the audience's show of sympathy is misguided, it demonstrates Britannicus' influence and ability to claim membership in the ruling family, regardless of Nero's hostility.

[62] Cf. Tiberius and Livia, who murder Agrippa Postumus, Augustus' adopted son and potential heir, at the beginning of Tiberius' reign (Tac. *Ann.* 1.6). Severy (2003) points out that Agrippa Postumus' "status as the son of Augustus and part of the Julian family alone made him potentially powerful. The first deed of the new principate… demonstrated that the key to political power was now the house of Augustus" (206).

household and who did not. After Nero has Agrippina killed, a choice which is motivated in part

(in Tacitus' account) by his desire to divorce Octavia, Claudius' daughter, and marry his mistress

Poppaea, Tacitus claims that Nero found Octavia "burdensome because of her father's name and

the people's favor" (*nomine patris et studiis populi gravem*, 14.59). Just as Agrippina was

protected by her relationship to Augustus and Germanicus, Octavia's authority, as well as her

ability to capture external support, is founded not in her proximity to Nero but in her relationship

to Claudius: she offers a reproach to Nero's authority to define and control the makeup of the

ruling house. The popular outrage when Nero does divorce Octavia and marry Poppaea (the

people storm the Capitoline, pull down the statues of Poppaea, and restore the images of Octavia,

14.61) also demonstrates the relationship between the emperor's security and the stability of the

community. When Poppaea insists that Nero take action against Octavia, she claims that the

supporters of Claudius' daughter "have dared to commit acts in peacetime which scarcely

happen during war" (*ea in pace ausi quae vix bello evenirent*, 14.61). Poppaea also implies that

her husband is not rightly understood as a *paterfamilias*, as in fact his subjects (Octavia's clients,

and the Roman people more generally) may claim the authority to reshape the Julio-Claudian

house. The emperor must be wary of his enemies, since "if they lose hope that Octavia will be

Nero's wife, they will give her a husband" (*si desperent uxorem Neronis fore Octaviam, illi*

maritum daturos, 14.61).[63] Nero's submission to the conniving Poppaea may be shameful, but

the weakness of this particular emperor is not the ultimate focus of Tacitus' narrative. As K.

Milnor observes, in the *Annals*, "the problem was no longer one of individual morality but of the

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[63] Poppaea's statement offers an interesting contrast to a famous anecdote about Stalin, who is said to have threatened Krupskaya, the widow of Lenin, with a similar fate: if she did not stop criticizing Stalin, he (or the Communist Party) would find someone else to be Lenin's widow (Conquest [1990] 73). In Poppaea's view it is not Nero but his subjects (or at least Octavia's clients) who have the authority to find a substitute, and not the emperor's wife but the emperor himself who will be replaced.

constitution of the Roman state."[64] The accounts of Agrippina, Britannicus, and Octavia show that the emperor is particularly vulnerable to members of his own household. Nero's dysfunctional family relationships do not only point to the failings of a bad ruler, but instead reveal potential threats to the emperor's position, and thus to the security of any imperial regime.

IV. Family and Community in Seneca's Tragedies

While Tacitus is writing under imperial rule, his perspective on the early stages of development of that system of government is not a contemporaneous one. In this section I consider the depiction of ruling families in the tragedies of Seneca, an author of Nero's own time. In the last chapter, I addressed two of the major debates surrounding Seneca's tragic corpus: his use of Greek models, and whether these tragedies were intended for performance (and if they were, in what contexts they might have been performed). Two other questions that have received much attention in scholarship concern the date of these tragedies and whether they reflect any specific historical events in Seneca's experience. None of Seneca's tragedies can be dated with precision, and they have been assigned both to the period of Seneca's exile, prior to 54 CE, when he presumably had the leisure for composition, and to the reign of Nero, when Seneca's proximity to the exercise of power inspired him to comment on it.[65] Some critics, however, have insisted on the topical relevance of the *Oedipus* for the Neronian era, because of the incest between Jocasta and Oedipus, and because of Oedipus' responsibility for the deaths of his parents: the accusations of incest between Nero and Agrippina in the historiographical record,

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[64] Milnor (2012) 474.

[65] See Boyle (1997) on the impossibility of dating the tragedies (xv-xix) and the political and historical context for Seneca's literary career (xix-xxv). Calder (1976b) 3 dates them to sometime in the 50s; Bishop (1985) insists they were composed during Seneca's retirement, and specifically that Seneca "urged [the Pisonian conspiracy] on through these tragedies" (3).

as well as the untimely deaths of Claudius and Agrippina, have tempted some scholars to date

the *Oedipus* to 59 CE, after Nero had his mother murdered.[66]

Yet efforts to make specific connections between Seneca's tragedies and the events of his

time are ultimately speculative, and it is unclear what advantage such interpretations offer:

whether Seneca composed his tragedies during the reign of Claudius or Nero (or earlier), he

wrote during an early and precarious stage in the development of imperial rule. It is in this

context that Seneca's tragedies can be read, as an attempt to explain the relationship between the

ruler and community, and to identify and come to terms with the weaknesses of the system of

imperial rule. This is not to say these tragedies are only interested in the Roman experience of

one-man rule: C. J. Herrington made the grand claim that Seneca's characters "are supranational.

They speak with the voice of the Roman Empire, which in turn, for Seneca…was ideally the

Human Empire, the *Cosmopolis*."[67] Few would agree with him that Seneca's tragedies are

universally applicable (or even of universal interest), but the ways in which these plays treat

power relations and communal bonds need not be linked only to the developments of the Julio-

Claudian period.

The subject matter of Seneca's tragedies, the royal houses of Greek mythology, is

traditional for the genre, but Seneca's handling of the mythological tradition draws attention to

the vulnerability of the king, especially his vulnerability to members of his own family.[68] In the

Agamemnon, the *Thyestes*, and the *Oedipus*, the ruler emerges as a figure at risk, whose status

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[66] Calder (1976b), Bishop (1985), and Lefèvre (1985) all argue for this date, although their interpretation of the significance of this date is very different. Bishop and Lefèvre see *Oedipus* as an attack on Nero and the violent extremes of tyranny, while Calder suggests that Seneca intended the play "to flatter Nero and amuse him" (5). Boyle (2011) xix believes it is one of the earlier plays, and suggests it may be Claudian.

[67] Herrington (1966) 451.

[68] Henry and Henry (1985) note that the Greek tradition offered material that did not involve royal houses (e.g., *Philoctetes*, *Ion*): "Seneca chose, from all the range of Greek tragic plots, those which turn on the protagonist's role as autocrat" (68).

compromises the security of the community as a whole. In R. J. Tarrant's view, the figure of the tyrant is one of the primary points of connection between Seneca's tragic and philosophical works: the "grim conception of the nature and use of power [in the tragedies] is equally well represented in the prose works...most of the references to rulers (especially kings) in Senecan prose are negative."[69] Yet while the kings of the *Agamemnon*, the *Thyestes*, and the *Oedipus* are not attractive characters, they also provide a more subtle commentary on the realities of power and the costs of wielding it.

I focus on these three plays in particular because of the importance of the ruling family in each work, as it is the relationship between the ruler and his family that raises the question of the relationship between the ruler and the state. Seneca was certainly familiar with the treatment of these myths in Greek tragedy, as well as with Greek and Roman tragedies that are lost to us.[70] As discussed in the previous chapter, while Roman tragedy seems to have been a crucial source for Seneca's plays, the fragmentary evidence for these works makes it difficult to fit Seneca into a Roman tragic tradition. One text that may offer us a more extended view of ruling families in the Roman dramatic tradition is Livy's history. A. Feldherr examines several narratives from Livy's first pentad to show how each addresses the conflict between family interests and public affairs. The episodes in which Tarquinius Priscus and Servius Tullus are overthrown, and the rapes of Lucretia and Verginia, are depicted in dramatic terms: Livy presents the seizures of the throne as tragedies and the rapes as comedies, and the world of the theater is shown to be an aberration from Roman civic life. It is only by transforming the rapes of citizen women from private disgrace into a matter of communal interest, or by exposing the theatricality of the

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[69] Tarrant (2006) 14.
[70] For discussion of Seneca's use of Greek and Roman tragedy, see Chapter 2. Seo (2013) 94-121 argues for the importance of a non-tragic source, Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, in Seneca's vision of Oedipus and of Thebes.

Tarquins' family squabbles, that healthy civic life and the welfare of the Roman state can be restored.[71] The rule of the kings comes to an end in Rome because "the dynastic ambitions of the Tarquins mean that they constantly overvalue the family against the state."[72] It is significant, however, that the reign of the Tarquins in Livy's text is marked as an anomaly in Roman history, precisely because of "its privileging of family concerns over public legitimacy."[73] For Livy, as Feldherr sees it, the material of tragic and comic narratives are essentially private, distinct from public institutions and meaningful civic engagement: the schemes of Tanaquil and Tullia, and the rapes of Lucretia and Verginia, are confined to private settings, away from the gaze of the Roman people. When Brutus and Verginius use these private horrors to engage the Roman community in the overthrow of the kings and the decemvirs, the interests of the state reassert themselves over the private concerns of the powerful.[74] The royal houses in Seneca's tragedies, however, far from being isolated from the life of the community, are intimately tied to it, and the risks faced by the tyrants are in fact the risks that threaten the community as a whole. Whether Seneca's tragedies belong to the period of Claudius or of Nero, the theatrical narratives of tyrants had become central to understanding the nature of civic life at Rome.[75]

In the previous section, I argued that Tacitus' Nero is uniquely vulnerable to those closest to him, those who derive influence from their proximity to the emperor and may usurp his authority. The tyrants in the *Agamemnon*, the *Oedipus,* and the *Thyestes* are similarly under threat from those around them. This problem is most obviously present in the *Agamemnon*, in which the king returns home from war to be murdered by his wife. The crimes of the Tantalids

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[71] Feldherr (1998) 187-212.
[72] Ibid. 190.
[73] Ibid. 213.
[74] Ibid. 196-202; 207-211.
[75] The uncertain date of the first book of Livy's history makes it problematic to connect the portrayal of the Tarquins directly to the Julio-Claudian dynasty. Powerful political families, however, were a staple of political life in the late Republic.

against each other are well known: the play opens with the ghost of Thyestes recounting his

crimes, as well as those of his ancestors and his brother Atreus (*Ag.*12-26). Thyestes' ghost

alludes to Agamemnon's fate when he announces that he is "about to offer his neck to his wife"

(*daturus coniugi iugulum suae*, 43). While Agamemnon has wronged his wife in two ways, by

sacrificing Iphigenia and by bringing Cassandra home from Troy, Clytemnestra at first claims

that Agamemnon, as a king, is permitted to betray her in a way that a private citizen would not

be: she tells Aegisthus that "there is one law for the throne, another for the private bed" (*lex alia*

solio est, alia priuato in toro, 264).[76] Yet while a king may be held to different standards than

his subjects, Agamemnon is not only a king: from Clytemnestra's perspective, he is also her

husband. Cassandra articulates the conflict between Agamemnon's roles as husband, adulterer,

and king when she asks, "will the wanderer kill the king and the adulterer the husband" (*regemne*

perimet exul et adulter uirum, 884)? For Cassandra, Aegisthus is the *exul* and *adulter*, and on

one level, "the horror of the coming murder lies in its reversal of social and moral hierarchy."[77]

Yet at the same time, Agamemnon can be read as the *exul*, because of his long absence from

Argos, and as the *adulter*, because of his relationship with Cassandra.[78] In a sense, Agamemnon

ceases to be a king in respect to his relationship to Clytemnestra: he has wronged her as a

husband, not as a king, and so Clytemnestra takes vengeance on her husband in a way that she

could not on a king. Likewise, the king is vulnerable to his wife in a way that he is not vulnerable

to ordinary private citizens.

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[76] As Tarrant (1976) *ad loc.* observes, "Two arguments appear to be combined in Clytemnestra's apologia for Agamemnon: as a husband, he is permitted occasional intercourse with slaves (*nec coniugem hoc respicere nec dominam decet*, 263)," and as king, he is held to a different standard than a private citizen. Cf. La Penna (1979) on the characterization of the king in the *Thyestes* as belonging to the sphere of "political morality," rather than "common morality" (137).

[77] Tarrant (1976) ad loc.

[78] Although the characters in the drama respond differently to Cassandra, Aegisthus insists that Agamemnon's relationship with her is illicit: "the lowest evil for a wife is a concubine in open possession of her conjugal house" (*ultimum est nuptae malum palam maritam possidens paelex domum*, 257-8).

The *Thyestes* also focuses on a ruling family (the previous generation of Tantalids), but in this case the ruler, Atreus, is the aggressor rather than the victim.[79] One of the central issues in the play is the conflict between the two brothers, Atreus and Thyestes, regarding who is the rightful ruler of Mycenae.[80] Atreus, whose brother and wife once betrayed him and drove him into exile, has now recalled Thyestes from exile on the pretense of making peace. Thyestes does not trust his brother's offer: he asks himself, "do you trust in things most uncertain, a brother and power" (*rebus incertissimis,/ fratri atque regno, credis*, 424-5)?[81] Although R. J. Tarrant claims that "the uncertainty of power is a commonplace…but only a Tantalid would place brothers on the same level," it is reasonable to doubt a brother who is a competitor for power. Especially from the perspective of the Roman tradition, if two potential rulers are brothers, it would be far stranger for them to trust than to doubt one another.[82] When Thyestes has returned, Atreus insists that "this kingdom can hold two" (*recipit hoc regnum duos*, 534), but of course he is lying. Atreus, as king and as brother of his one-time rival for power, is ideally situated to take revenge on Thyestes: he has both the power and the intimacy with his brother that is required to devastate him.[83]

Furthermore, while the original quarrel between Atreus and Thyestes concerned the throne, the dispute in Seneca's tragedy is one between brothers, rather than between kings.

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[79] Like the *Agamemnon*, the *Thyestes* also begins with a ghost (Tantalus) recounting his own crimes and those of previous generations, and predicting those about to come. Of Seneca's surviving tragedies, only these two feature a ghost speaking the prologue.

[80] Rose (1986) argues that Thyestes and Atreus represent two different conceptions of power: "Atreus craves absolute control for its own sake" while Thyestes "found relief from the constant state of anxiety that attends the ruler" when his brother sent him into exile (122).

[81] Self-address is a common feature of Senecan tragedy. On this motif, see Star (2012) 62-83; he argues that "for Seneca, creation and maintenance of a consistent self are intensely rhetorical, based on the repetition of the figure of apostrophe and self-command" (63).

[82] Tarrant (1985) *ad loc.* Cf. Amulius and Numitor (Livy 1.3) and Romulus and Remus (Livy 1.7), stories that argue against the contention that brother-kings should trust each other.

[83] Schiesaro (2003) 139-141 argues that Thyestes and Atreus are essentially equivalent to one another in Seneca's play: the audience is meant to see Thyestes not as a foil to Atreus, but as fully capable of committing the same crime.

Atreus blames Thyestes for his affair with his wife and the possible illegitimacy of his sons as much as for political conflict: "he stole my wife with defilement and my kingdom with thievery; he obtained the ancient token of rule with deceit, with deceit he upset my house" (*coniugem stupro abstulit/ regnumque furto; specimen antiquum imperi/ fraude est adeptus, fraude turbauit domum*, 222-4).[84] A. Schiesaro suggests that "Atreus' revenge is not primarily motivated by issues of power" but rather by personal concerns, and that "privileging a political reading of the play…distracts our attention from the primal emotions which motivate Atreus."[85] The *Thyestes* demonstrates, however, that such "primal emotions" are intimately connected with political life. The twisted familial relationships in the house of the Tantalids are not simply private concerns, but have ramifications for the community over which they rule. The people express their relief when they believe the brothers have set aside their conflict (337ff), and the community sees its fate as linked to that of the ruling family. When the chorus first appears, they ask:

> *Argos de superis si quis Achaicum*
> *Pisaeasque domos curribus inclitas*
> *Isthmi si quis amat regna Corinthii…*
> *aduertat placidum numen et arceat,*
> *alternae scelerum ne redeant uices*
> *nec succedat auo deterior nepos*
> *et maior placeat culpa minoribus.*   (122-4; 133-5)

> If any of the gods loves Argos of Achaea, and the houses of Pisa famous for
> chariots, the kingdom of Corinth on the Isthmus…let him turn a kind spirit
> [toward us] and let him prevent the alternating turns of crime from returning, nor
> let a worse grandson follow his grandfather and a greater crime please the lesser
> ones.

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[84] The brothers competed over the golden fleece (the *specimen antiquum imperi*) in order to win the throne of Mycenae (Tarrant [1985] 39).

[85] Schiesaro (2003) 4; he argues that the chorus, who favor a political interpretation of the dispute between the brothers, serve to distract the audience in this way.

This request joins the welfare of the city with the family life of its rulers, and the events of the play vindicate the chorus' perspective on the relationship between ruler and ruled.

The conflation of the welfare of the royal *domus* with the condition of the community as a whole is also a distinctive feature of the *Agamemnon*. Agamemnon's speech when he returns home shows a similar slippage between the house in which Agamemnon lives as king and the land he rules: "I return to my ancestral household gods; O dear blessed land! To you so many barbarian nations surrendered their spoils, to you the happy mistress of powerful Asia subjected her hands" (*reuertor…ad patrios lares;/ o cara salue terra! tibi tot barbarae/ dedere gentes spolia, tibi felix diu/ potentis Asiae domina summisit manus*, 781-5). In a sense, the nations that Agamemnon defeated surrendered both to his *lares* and to his land, as the victory benefited both the state and the royal house. At the opening of the *Agamemnon*, Thyestes' ghost proclaims "now, now the house shall swim in the blood of retribution" (*iam iam natabit sanguine alterno domus*, 43).[86] It is not simply the house and the Tantalid family, however, but also the entire community that will suffer the consequences of the murder of Agamemnon. After Agamemnon's death, Electra connects the fortune of the house with that of the state, when she declares, "the house is utterly overturned, the kingdom falls" (*euersa domus est funditus, regna occidunt*, 912).

C. Segal observed that Senecan tragedy is marked by "the involvement of the entire world in the hero's suffering, a responsive sympathy between individual and cosmos…The Senecan hero places himself at the center of the world's stage and cries out, Look, my suffering is that of the entire universe."[87] Atreus' suffering in the *Thyestes* arises from his all-consuming desire for revenge against his brother, and it is his success in this pursuit that makes clear the profound connection between ruler and community. In the final choral ode in the play, when the

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[86] Translation of *sanguine alterno* adapted from Tarrant (1985) *ad loc.*
[87] Segal (1983) 173.

chorus has learned that Atreus sacrificed his nephews and fed them to their father, the chorus

describes its unenviable position:

> *Nos e tanto uisi populo*
> *digni, premeret quos euerso*
> *cardine mundus?*
> *in nos aetas ultima uenit?*
> *o nos dura sorte creatos,*
> *seu perdidimus solem miseri*
> *siue expulimus!* (875-881)

> Is it we, from so many people, who are deemed worthy to be buried by the world
> when the sky is overturned? Have the end times come to us? O we who were born
> with a hard lot, whether we lost the sun in our wretchedness or drove it out![88]

It is interesting that the chorus claim a part both in Thyestes' suffering (we lost the sun) and in

Atreus' guilt (we drove it out). F. DuPont argues that the *furor* that motivates Atreus, and the

action of all Senecan drama, isolates the madman (the *furiosus*) from those around him: *furor* is

an act of will, "a strategy for voluntarily quitting the world of men."[89] Whatever Atreus believes

in his madness, however, the response of the chorus undermines any possibility that Atreus and

his actions can be isolated from the community he rules.

The *Oedipus* also revolves around a ruler who is under threat from members of his

household, and whose own precarious position threatens the state. The circumstances of this

tragedy, however, are unique, because those who threaten Oedipus are in fact unaware of the

danger they pose: Jocasta and Creon even seek to protect Oedipus from the devastating

implications of his fate. Nevertheless, Oedipus and Thebes are ultimately brought down because

of the actions of Oedipus' family and his relationship to them. At the very beginning of Seneca's

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[88] On this passage as "an exemplary rendition of the ruin of the world" in Stoic terms, see Rosenmeyer (1989) 152-3. See also Boyle (1983) 212 on the dissolution of "the structures of civilization" in the *Thyestes*.
[89] DuPont (1995) 77: "une stratégie pour quitter volontairement le monde des hommes." Cf. Braden (1970): "the crucial fact of the Senecan universe [is that]…its ontology is wholly private. The characters are isolated, and there is no civilization to be seen anywhere around" (18).

tragedy, Oedipus assumes responsibility for the plague that is ravaging the city and explains that

he has been spared; in contrast, Sophocles only reveals this information later in the play (*OT*

1455-7).[90] Oedipus, then, separates himself from his subjects, at least temporarily. He explains

the curse that caused him to flee Corinth, that he would murder his father and marry his mother,

and claims that,

> *iam iam aliquid in nos fata moliri parant.*
> *nam quid rear quod ista Cadmeae lues*
> *infesta genti strage tam late edita*
> *mihi parcit uni? cui reseruamur malo?*
> *inter ruinas urbis et semper nouis*
> *deflenda lacrimis funera ac populi struem*
> *incolumis asto--scilicet Phoebi reus.*
> *sperare poteras sceleribus tantis dari*
> *regnum salubre? fecimus caelum nocens.* (28-36)

> Now, now, the fates are preparing to build something against me, for how could I
> think that the plague hostile to the people of Cadmus, with suffering spread
> throughout the city, spares me alone? For what evil am I being saved? Among the
> ruins of the city and the funerals always to be mourned with fresh tears and the
> destruction of the people I stand secure--surely the defendant in Phoebus' suit.
> Could you expect that a safe kingdom would be granted in return for such great
> crimes? We have made the heavens guilty.[91]

The audience knows, however, that the "evil" awaiting Oedipus has already happened, in that it

is rooted in the crimes he has already committed: Oedipus is suffering along with his people,

although he does not yet fully realize it. On their first entrance to the stage, the chorus tells him,

"you fall, noble descendants of Cadmus, with the whole city" (*occidis, Cadmi generosa proles,*

urbe cum tota, 110-11). This line appears to be modeled on Sophocles' tragedy, but in Seneca's

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[90] Boyle (2011) *ad loc*. Seo (2013) notes that Seneca's Oedipus is "strongly and even improbably aware of his literary and mythological identity outside the text" (94).

[91] For further examples of the link between the moral integrity of the monarch and the welfare of the kingdom, see Töchterle (1994) *ad loc*.

telling it highlights Oedipus' suspicion that he is responsible for the city's afflictions.[92] The

chorus warns Oedipus that in the future, his fate will be the same as theirs, but this is a future he

somehow already knows.

Ultimately, the link between monarch and subject is rooted in a tangible association, their

shared physical suffering. Oedipus' first significant description of the effects of the plague

concerns the way it has ravaged the landscape: the air is unrelentingly hot, the rivers are dry,

black mist hangs over the land, and the crops are barren (38-51). After this account of

environmental misery, Oedipus observes that death is omnipresent in the city, and that his

subjects must steal fire from other pyres to bury their dead, although no earth is available for

their graves (64-68).[93] The chorus, too, describes the immense human destruction which has

taken place in Thebes:

> *Stirpis inuictae genus interimus*
> *labimur saeuo rapiente fato;*
> *ducitur semper noua pompa Morti;*
> *longus ad manes properatur ordo*
> *agminis maesti, seriesque tristis*
> *haeret et turbae tumulos petenti*
> *non satis septem patuere portae;*
> *stat grauis strages, premiturque iuncto*
> > *funere funus.*   (124-132)

> We are destroyed, a race of unconquered stock. We fall with cruel fate grasping at
> us. A new procession is always being carried out for death; a mournful troop is
> hastened to the shades in a long row, and the sad line stands still and the seven
> gates are not enough for the crowd seeking tombs; heavy carnage comes to a halt,
> and one funeral is trapped by the next.

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[92] For the Sophoclean parallels, see Töchterle (1994) *ad loc.* (*OT* 29, 168ff, 179ff). Boyle (2011) *ad loc.* points out
that Oedipus, in this point in the play, believes that he is not a descendant of Cadmus.
[93] The most famous parallel for this gruesome image, of stealing fire from one pyre to burn another corpse, is
Thucydides 2.52.4; for other examples, see Boyle (2011) *ad loc.* I note also the burial of Pompey in Lucan *BC* 743ff,
discussed further in Chapter 5. Seo (2013) 103 points out that Seneca's description of the plague is much more
detailed than Sophocles'.

The unrelenting quality of the suffering that Oedipus and the chorus describe is repeated at the

end of the play, in Oedipus' recognition of his own crimes and his self-mutilation. When

Oedipus emerges from the palace, blind by his own hand, the description of his blindness mirrors

the condition of the land described at the beginning of the play. In Oedipus' telling, the sky of

Thebes was overwhelmed by Phoebus' "dark sister" (*obscura soror*, 44), and "heavy and dark

vapor [loomed] over the earth" (*grauis et ater incubat terris uapor*, 47). Now, Oedipus himself is

"deprived of light" (*luminis orbus*, 996), and a god "drenches [his] head with a black cloud"

(*atra nube perfundit caput*, 1000).[94] In a sense, Oedipus personally endures the continuous

funerals that overwhelmed the city of Thebes: as soon as he has come to terms with the death of

his father, he also loses his mother. He complains to Phoebus, "I am twice a parricide, and, more

guilty than I feared, I killed my mother; she was slaughtered by my crime" (*bis parricida

plusque quam timui nocens/ matrem peremi: scelere confecta est meo*, 1044-45). Oedipus the

king, the cause of the communal suffering, also relives its effects.[95]

One further point of connection between Oedipus and his subjects arises from the

people's efforts to perform funeral rites for the dead. The circumstances are far from ideal:

parents and children are dying at the same time (54); the carnage is so unrelenting that mourners

are unavailable to weep (58-9); mourners die while conducting funeral rites for those they have

lost (63); and (as noted above) there is a shortage of fire, of wood, and even of earth with which

to cremate and bury the dead (65-68). Nevertheless, Oedipus watches as "the weary father bears

his son to the final fire, the raving mother carries her son and hurries to find another for the same

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[94] Boyle (2011) notes that Oedipus takes the plague with him when he leaves, and so becomes a scapegoat for the community (ln. 1042-61). The intimate bond between king and community is broken only when the king actually abandons the city.

[95] Mader (1995) does not note the specific resonances between the symptoms of the plague and Oedipus' blindness, although he sees the "expiatory *mors longa*" that Oedipus subjects himself to as "qualitatively congruent with the deaths for which it atones" (315-16).

pyre" (*portat hunc aeger parens/ supremum ad ignem, mater hunc amens gerit/ properatque ut alium repetat in eundem rogum*, 59-62). The devastation of the plague highlights the parents' extraordinary concern to fulfill the responsibilities associated with their relationship to their children. It is precisely Oedipus' unwitting disrespect for his relationship with his parents, and the perverse relationship he has with his children, that is the cause of the suffering at Thebes.

Earlier in the play, before his guilt was confirmed, Oedipus characterized the relationship between ruler and people as one based on fear. He explained that the party guilty for Laius' murder was not discovered because "no one makes inquiries about a dead man whom he feared when he was safe" (*quaerit peremptum nemo quem incolumem timet*, 243). It has been observed that Seneca's tyrants are familiar with the maxim on power from Accius' *Atreus*: "let them hate, provided that they fear" (*oderint, dum metuant*).[96] This conception of the relationship between ruler and ruled, however, does not account for the complexity of the treatment of the ruler in Seneca's tragedies. Whatever the subjects' attitudes of hate or fear, the position of the ruler is predicated on an erosion of boundaries between his private world and the life of the community. The dangers which threaten ruler and ruled are representative of the deeper intimacy that joins these two parties in a system of one-man rule.

V. Conclusion

The emperor occupied the center of the network of relations that made up the court and the imperial house, and the authority of members of the imperial family originated in their proximity to the emperor himself. Nevertheless, the emperor did not hold an unquestioned

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[96] Boyle (2011) *ad loc.*; Tarrant (2006) 14 and note 29 for allusions to this fragment of Accius in Seneca's other works.

position of dominance, in the court or in his house, and the influence that the imperial family enjoyed did not always serve to promote and protect his control. I have argued that the emperor was understood to be vulnerable to his family in two ways. First, his authority was rooted, in part, in his role within his household. Dynastic statue groups from the early imperial period emphasized the power of the Julio-Claudians, rather than of a single ruler; in this way, the emperor was dependent on his household to secure his claim to the throne. Second, the special proximity of members of the emperor's family meant that they were ideally located to influence him. In Nero's case, this was especially true for Agrippina and Poppaea, but it also applied to Octavia and Britannicus. Even the authority to determine who belonged to the ruling *domus* was not exclusive to the emperor, as members of the imperial house could choose to favor relations whom the emperor would prefer not to recognize (e.g., Agrippina's dealings with Rubellius Plautus), or could exploit their connections to previous emperors to protect themselves from the emperor's ill-will (as Octavia endeavored to do).

The relationship between the emperor and the imperial family, moreover, was not only of interest to the emperor himself. The emperor's lack of privacy, or the fact that all of his activities concerned and affected public life, meant that the vulnerability of the emperor also threatened the community under his rule. Seneca's tragic treatment of tyrants in the *Agamemnon*, *Oedipus*, and *Thyestes* brings this connection between the ruler and the ruled into stark relief. In each of these plays, the ruler comes under threat from members of his household, and the community endures the upheaval that besets the imperial house. In Seneca's tragedies, the king and his house do not stand apart from the people: instead, they are joined together through shared suffering and even shared guilt.

Chapter 4. Fantasy Tours and Power Trips: Three Case Studies on the Empire in the House

I. Introduction

One problem posed by a system of one-man rule and by the ancient material that addresses it is the extent to which the ruler can be separated from the state he rules. In the previous chapter, I defined privacy as the ability to act without public consequence. It is not only bad emperors (like the Nero of the historiographical tradition) who are unable to distinguish between the affairs of the ruling household and the business of the state: rather, absolute power is defined in part by the fusion of the ruling house and the state, as the emperor's actions always have the potential to affect the community as a whole. In this chapter, I look at three different approaches to articulating the relationship between the state and the houses of the powerful. My assessment of the second style frescoes from Villa A at Oplontis, Trimalchio's house in the *Satyricon,* and the treatment of space in Lucan's *Bellum Civile* suggests that the house can declare the dominance of the powerful over a much larger territory. Asserting dominance, however, can also threaten the position of the ruler and destabilize his community.

In the essay "Centers, Kings, and Charisma: Symbolics of Power," the anthropologist C. Geertz describes several examples of the royal progress (in Elizabethan England, 14th century Indonesia, and Alawite Morocco), or processions of the king and his court in which the king asserts his authority over his territory. The progress, Geertz argues, serves to "locate the society's center and affirm its connection with transcendent things by stamping a territory with

ritual signs of dominance."[1] In Geertz's reading, the "center" is not a location in space, but rather the essential ideals, institutions, and modes of expression of a given society. The center is "the point or points in a society where its leading ideas come together with its leading institutions to create an arena in which the events that most vitally affects its members' lives take place."[2] The king derives his power from his proximity to the center, from his involvement in these critical parts of his society, and from the extent to which he upholds them and puts them on display. The royal progress in particular can function as a dramatization of the center of a society and of the king's claim to inhabit the center. This centrality, I suggest, is part of the public nature of power: the powerful are in continuous contact with the center, the ideals and institutions that motivate and sustain the society in which they dominate, and thus their actions and experiences always have profound consequences for the identity of the community as a whole.

I draw on Geertz's concepts of "progress" and "center" to show how the house functions to mark authority over the outside world. For Geertz, the royal progress can take a variety of forms, from ceremonial processions to constant military campaigns; I also examine progresses during which the ruler remains in his house and the kingdom comes to him. Frescoes from Villa A at Oplontis on the Bay of Naples allow the viewer to take a fantasy tour through the territories of Rome's Eastern conquests. In the *Satyricon*, Trimalchio recreates a royal progress in the confines of his house, by importing or producing the goods of the empire (agricultural produce, luxury items, slaves) on his estate. In Lucan's *Bellum Civile*, Caesar and Pompey go on a progress through the empire as they oppose one another in civil war. Over the course of the

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[1] Geertz (1985) 124.

[2] Ibid. 122. Cf. E. Shils (1965): "The charismatic quality of an individual as perceived by others, or himself, lies in what is thought to be his connection with (including possession by or embodiment of) some very central feature of man's existence and the cosmos in which he lives. The centrality, coupled with intensity, makes it extraordinary" (201). Geertz bases his conception of the center on Shils' work in this article.

conflict, the action shifts between the vast geographical extent of the Roman empire and the confined space of the ruler's house. I will use these case studies to demonstrate the political significance of touring the Roman world, and to argue that the equation of the house with the world outside it allows the ruler to assert his essential position in the life of the community.

The case studies that I discuss in this chapter reveal a number of different aspects of the relationship between the empire and the houses of the powerful. To the extent that the frescoes at Oplontis remind viewers of regions of the world far removed from the Bay of Naples, they further expand the space of the house. While the villa is associated with luxurious repose and distance from the affairs of state, it is at the same time a space where the villa owners advertise their connections to the outside world and associate themselves with the ideology of expansion. Trimalchio takes a more expansive approach to the fantasy tour, as his estate encompasses the Roman world and the world of the dead, but his house also reveals that claiming dominance can be an act of self-destruction.[3] Lucan draws out the unsettling aspects of the equation of house and empire: the contraction of space in the course of the epic emphasizes the fragility that is a principle characteristic of one-man rule. In the *Bellum Civile*, the equivalence of the empire with the ruler's house asserts the position of the ruler at the center of the world, but it also shows how the system of one-man rule runs counter to the project of empire.

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[3] The Roman empire is not coextensive with the Roman world: the Romans were keenly aware of regions of the world that were not under their power (especially, for example, the Parthian empire). Nevertheless, ancient sources often confuse (unintentionally or by design) the parts of the world under Roman control with the known world (the *orbs terrarum* or *oikumene*). Cf. Mann (1974); Sherk (1974); Nicolet (1991), especially Chapter 1; Arnaud (1993).

II. Imperial Fantasies in Villa A at Oplontis

A major subject of debate in the study of Roman painting is what kinds of models or sources inspired these images. This is an especially interesting problem for the atrium frescoes from Villa A at Oplontis, an ensemble of second style paintings (generally dated to the mid-first century BCE) that have been said to evoke "a kind of royal vestibule," known to the Romans from the palaces they encountered in the Hellenistic East.[4] The architectural images in the atrium feature columnar screens, grand doors, gold, jewels, and precious stones. Most notably, images of Macedonian shields, which allude to the military conquests of Alexander and the monarchies that followed his death, appear repeatedly in the atrium and in other rooms of the house.[5] Villa A, however, was built on the Bay of Naples in the middle of the first century BCE and was thus significantly removed in space and time from Rome's conquest over Greece. Furthermore, our evidence for the architecture and decoration of Hellenistic palaces is limited, which makes it difficult to determine whether Roman domestic art imitated them.[6] E. W. Leach observes that, "we greatly undervalue the semiotic capacity of these images [i.e., second style painting in Campania] if we ascribe them to some romantic mystique based on half-formed notions of exotic splendor existing in distant places long ago."[7] While the frescoes at Villa A had a variety of resonances for ancient viewers, I will focus on the representations of Macedonian shields and luxurious building materials. These images could evoke the Greek East and Roman conquest, and thus allowed viewers to imagine the expanse of the empire while remaining inside the house.

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[4] Clarke (1991) 113. For the relationship between second style painting and Hellenistic architecture, see Fittschen (1976) and Ling (1991).
[5] See De Franciscis (1975) Fig. 4, 12; atrium fresco with shields (upper right) may also be found at http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:False_door_fresco_in_Villa_Poppaea_Tcr.jpg (accessed May 19, 2014).
[6] On the architecture of the Hellenistic palaces, see Nielsen (1999). Later in this chapter, I discuss the evidence for the Ptolemaic palace in Alexandria.
[7] Leach (2004) 89.

Although Villa A was built in the first century BCE, an east wing, erected adjacent to a large pool, was added to the villa in the mid-first century CE. This construction, as well as subsequent modifications to the new wing, suggests that the villa may have been in use during the Neronian age. Previous scholars even speculated that it belonged to Poppaea Sabina, Nero's wife: this claim is based on meager epigraphic evidence, which at best may indicate that the villa was the property of Poppaea's family, rather than of Poppaea herself.[8] Even if we reject the idea that Villa A belonged to Poppaea, her contemporaries may well have inhabited or visited it, and they would have encountered the second style frescoes with shields and grand architectural imagery in the atrium and nearby rooms. Although the second style paintings are traditionally dated to the first century BCE, later owners of the villa must have preserved them, perhaps as heirlooms or period pieces that evidenced the distinguished past of the house. Some excavators have argued, however, that the paintings in the atrium date to the mid-first century CE, and so are roughly contemporaneous with the reign of Nero: the owners could have revived an older style of painting in the process of remodeling or redecorating the villa.[9]   Whether the frescoes were made in the first century BCE and preserved, or painted only during the first century CE, it is important to consider what meanings they could have had for later audiences.[10] For Neronian viewers, images of Greek opulence might allude to a longstanding tradition of engagement with Greek culture that had become firmly established in the lives of the Roman elite; images associated with Roman conquest might offer a reminder of the early stages of the expansion of their empire.

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[8] On the construction history of the villa, and an overview of the evidence for its ownership, see Guzzo (2000) 19-25. De Franciscis (1975) argues that the villa was the property of Poppaea.

[9] Personal communication with excavator Regina Gee (2010). I thank Elaine Gazda for discussing this question with me. Cf. Clarke (1991) Fig. 51 for a plan of the house indicating second, third, and fourth style frescoes.

[10] It is unlikely that Villa A was actively in use at the time of the eruption of Vesuvius in 79 CE: no bodies were found there, and the absence of furnishings and removal of some architectural features suggest that it was under construction. See Guzzo (2000) 20.

The second style frescoes in Villa A are clustered in the atrium and a few nearby rooms. Some of the most remarkable elements of these paintings are Macedonian shields, identifiable by their small, round shape and by the stars at their centers. In the atrium, images of marble columns support a row of three Macedonian shields, and the damaged sections of the walls probably featured a symmetrical arrangement of shields. These shields sit at the same level as the tops of the doors, the most prominent elements of the atrium paintings. The frescoes on the east and west walls of room 15 also feature a columnar screen that supports a row of shields, similar to the arrangement in the atrium.[11] Although it is difficult to tell whether these shields were decorated with stars, their size and round shape might encourage viewers to associate them with the shields in the atrium, and thus to identify the shields in room 15 as Macedonian.[12] Another shield, this one marked with a star, also appears in a central position on the east and west walls of room 14: the shield hangs below the entablature of an arch, which supports a tholos displaying a statue of a god.[13] Like the shield, the divine image might also be a reference to booty captured in war: K. E. Welch has suggested that Greek temples were a likely source for Roman sculpture collections and approaches to sculptural installations, as sanctuaries accumulated sculpture of a variety of subjects and styles over extended periods of time.[14] In all of these paintings, the shields play a significant role in the composition, either framing a major element in the paintings (the doors in the atrium, the tripod in room 15), or occupying a central position (in room 14).

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[11] Images of shields (upper left) in De Franciscis (1975) Fig. 24; http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Oplontis-PinturesSalo1-5627_panoramic2.jpg (accessed May 19, 2014).
[12] The same is true for the shield depicted on the west wall in room 23.
[13] See De Franciscis (1975) Fig. 17, 23; http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Villa_Oplontis_(8020671366).jpg (accessed May 19, 2014).
[14] Welch (2006), especially 120-131.

The images of shields allude to the display of *spolia*, which victorious commanders would display either in temples or in their own houses.[15] A visitor who saw these painted shields might associate the owner with Rome's victory over the Macedonians and with the venerable aristocratic tradition of victory dedications (whether or not his ancestors had actually been awarded such *spolia*). Depictions of *imagines clipeatae*, shields decorated with portrait heads at their centers, rest above the painted doors in the atrium frescoes.[16] We find other *imagines clipeatae* on the west and east walls in room 14; the shields frame the central tholos.[17] Further rows of columns recede into the distance behind these shields, and the *imagines clipeatae* draw the attention of the viewer by marking a boundary between the painted architecture that appears to be part of the physical room and the painted view that appears to extend beyond it. In both room 14 and the atrium, the *imagines clipeatae* may be read as part of an ensemble with the Macedonian shields, in imitation of the Republican aristocratic practice of displaying ancestor portraits together with the *hostium spolia*.[18]

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[15] Maxfield (1981) 59. Welch (2006) 131 suggests that second style painting was directly influenced by manubial temples in Rome, the temples which victorious generals dedicated with their war booty and where some of the impressive works displayed in triumphal processions ultimately came to rest.

[16] See De Franciscis (1975) Fig. 11; images of *imagines clipeatae* in the atrium frescoes (upper left and right) also at http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:False_door_fresco_in_Villa_Poppaea_close-up_Tcr.jpg (accessed May 19, 2014).

[17] See De Franciscis (1975) Fig. 17 and http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Villa_Oplontis_(8020671366).jpg (accessed May 19, 2014).

[18] Winkes (1979) 482-3 has argued, based on his reading of Pliny's *Natural History*, that the wax *imagines* were worn for funeral processions and kept in the *armaria* of the household; the *imagines clipeatae* were shields with central ancestor portraits that were originally painted, but later worked in metal. Because they were painted on shields, the *imagines clipeatae* advertised the *virtus* of the ancestor. With regards to the shield paintings from Oplontis, Pliny's most interesting observation is that the *imagines* hung in the doorway next to military spoils (*circa limina imagines erat adfixis hostium spoliis*, Pliny *NH* 35.7). If the *imagines* which Pliny mentions here are, as Winkes argues, the *imagines clipeatae*, then we see this very arrangement of *imagines clipeatae* next to *spolia* in the paintings at Villa A. On the *domus* as a candidate for the display of *spolia* in the third and second centuries BCE, especially in aristocratic dwellings on the Palatine hill, see Welch (2006) 91-105. Displays of *spolia* and ancestor portraits were characteristic of the *domus*, the house in town, rather than the villa, the country retreat. In a sense, then, the militaristic elements of the décor of Villa A evoked urban life, with its emphasis on political and military achievement, and perhaps specifically the experience of the ruling class in the city of Rome (who would have had the most impressive *spolia*).

The Macedonian rulers, especially Alexander the Great, had special significance for the Roman elite as they expanded their empire and established their dominance over the Eastern Mediterranean. We can imagine visitors in room 14, observing the prominent position of the Macedonian shields in the wall paintings, and discussing Alexander's former empire and Rome's contemporary greatness: these paintings could remind audiences in both the first centuries BCE and CE of the origins of Roman power in the Greek world, and thus of a transformative moment in Roman culture. Yet these allusions to the conquests of Alexander served to remind the viewer not only of Roman victories, but also of the extent of the world beyond Campania. Alexander's military campaigns brought him into contact with diverse peoples and territories: he was distinguished as both a warrior and a traveler. In the *Bellum Civile*, Lucan claims that only death was able to stop Alexander in his progress through the world, from Greece and India to Africa (*BC* 10.28-45). While Lucan treats Alexander as a "mad king" (*uaesano…regi*, 10.42) and as an example of a ruler out of control, he is also something of an explorer: before his death, "he was ready to bring ships to the Ocean…he would have followed the setting heavens and gone all the way west, and circled the poles of the earth and drunk the Nile from its source" (*Oceano classes inferre parabat… isset in occasus mundi devexa secutus/ ambissetque polos Nilumque a fonte bibisset*, 10.36, 39-40). The shields in the frescoes at Villa A symbolized the extent of the territory that Alexander saw and dominated, and that Rome had (in part) inherited, and so situated the villa and the viewer within this vast landscape. These images could be seen as a kind of monument to the great expanse of territory with which Alexander (and those who succeeded him) had come into contact.

In addition to the emblems of Macedonian and Roman conquest, further elements of Villa A draw the viewer into a foreign landscape of Greek culture and opulence. Both the architecture

of the villa and the architectural forms in the second style frescoes allude to the use of columns

in Greek public buildings. It is unlikely that columnar architecture was always understood as

strictly Greek, but, as A. Wallace-Hadrill notes, "the column was the hallmark of Greek public

and sacred architecture, and we should ask whether associations with public buildings did not

adhere…in their employment by the Romans."[19] Some visitors to Villa A would likely have been

more sensitive to Greek architectural influence than others. The large peristyle and the long

rectangular pool on the Eastern side of the villa also gestured toward the Greek standard of

culture and leisure, as both of these structures evoke "the world of the public palaestra or

gymnasium."[20] The pool in Villa A might even allude to regions of the world more exotic than

the Greek city: the pools in villa estates were sometimes named for the Nile, and the frescoes in

room 14 in Villa A include a Nilotic scene of the type that was not uncommon in domestic

painting.[21] The pool was constructed in the mid-first century CE, while the Nile fresco is

traditionally dated to the earlier stages of the villa, but visitors in later periods could have seen

the pool as quoting or alluding to the fresco (or vice versa). Rather than deciding between a

Greek or Egyptian reference for the pool, viewers might have understood and enjoyed the ways

in which the architecture of Villa A offered them the experience of two journeys, to Greece and

to Egypt, at the same time.

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[19] Wallace-Hadrill (1994) 20. For a more recent take on the importance of Hellenistic architecture and luxury goods for the development of the villa, see Zarmakoupi (2014) 1-19.

[20] Zarmakoupi (2014) 21. Welch (2006) has argued that while the peristyle in Roman houses and villas was ultimately "inspired by Hellenistic prototypes such as columnar porticoes from palaces, sanctuaries, and gymnasia" the more immediate models were the porticoes from the *horti* attached to aristocratic houses in Rome (133). We should consider, however, that the question of Greek models for Roman architecture and painting ultimately depends on the viewer involved: owners and visitors who were sensitive to or interested in Greek achievements in art, architecture, and cultural life might well have emphasized the importance of Greek sources for columnar architecture in the villa, even if the original architects had used the Roman *horti* as a model.

[21] Noted in Zarmakoupi (2014) 157; see 157-63 on the use of river names for bodies of water in Roman villas. On *Aegyptiaca* in Roman domestic contexts, see Swetnam-Burland (2007).

The public architecture of the Greek world was also a source for the architectural imagery in the frescoes: columnar screens, either represented as part of the architecture of the room or shown receding into the distance, appear in all the second style paintings of the villa. M. Zarmakoupi notes that Roman generals would have encountered *stoai* displaying war booty in the Hellenistic kingdoms: Eumenes II constructed a stoa to surround a Temple of Athena Nikephoros and decorated the second story of the stoa with sculptural depictions of spoils of war, including Macedonian weapons.[22] The colonnades and Macedonian shields that appear in the frescoes in Villa A might have brought to mind these architectural and cultural practices of the Hellenistic kings. Furthermore, depictions of lavish building materials in Villa A, such as colored marbles in the atrium and columns encrusted with gems and golden vines in room 14, are suggestive of the extraordinary wealth that arrived in Rome following the conquest of the Greek kingdoms. The most prominent elements of the atrium frescoes are the elaborate doors, set within a colonnade and painted as if they are made of gold and gems, which (as noted above) some scholars have associated with Hellenistic palaces. E. W. Leach argues that these doors were more likely inspired by the *scaenae frons*, the stage building which often (especially for tragic performances) represented the house of the king, than by actual palaces.[23] In a sense, however, this is a distinction without a difference: the theater was a space of fantasy, where the audience traveled to the world of the mythic Greek kings. Whether the doors in the atrium frescoes in Villa A refer to the palaces of the Hellenistic East, or the royal palaces familiar from

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[22] Zarmakoupi (2014) 79-80.
[23] Leach (2004) 95.

tragedy, these frescoes could transport viewers to a landscape far removed from the Italian peninsula.[24]

While the art and architecture of Villa A allude to distant regions of the world, the villa itself was built to take advantage of the Italian environment and to give viewers the opportunity to enjoy it. One of the villa's primary assets was its view of the landscape around it, including the sea and the hills.[25] The most basic function of the Roman luxury villa (at least ideologically, if not necessarily in practice) was to provide an escape from the city and the daily business of politics, and views of the countryside and the coast were defining features of this escape. Imagery that evoked the Greek East and that enabled viewers to imagine themselves in exotic places promoted escapism on an even grander scale, not just to the beauty of the Italian countryside, but to the wealthiest and (in the Roman mind) most cultured territories in the empire. Yet to travel the empire, even in the imagination, was not a neutral act: travel was bound up with staking a claim to the territories that one explored. C. Nicolet argues that, for the geographers of antiquity, "geography [was] indeed the science of the appropriation of land by man, the inventory of his home, of his resources, and of the traces he had left behind him. This geography is essentially aimed at the rulers to allow them to govern better."[26] Military expeditions were a key mechanism for acquiring geographical knowledge, and this knowledge was often communicated through the display of maps of defeated territories in triumphal

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[24] A further, though much more tendentious, connection to the Greek world in the frescoes from Villa A may be seen in the images of *thymiateria*, candelabra produced in the Greek East and imported to Italy. Marble and bronze candelabra were found in the shipwreck at Mahdia, near Tunisia, which Wallace-Hadrill (2008) calls "a virtual catalogue of Roman luxury in the first century BCE;" *thymiateria* are distinctive for their flat tops for holding lamps (Etruscan candelabra have spikes for candles) and their solitary, ornate stems (361). If the images of candelabra in Villa A specifically referred to *thymiateria*, then these luxurious imports are a further element of the décor that could inspire viewers to associate their surroundings with the Greek East.

[25] Bergmann (2002a) 97.

[26] Nicolet (1991) 73. Nicolet is describing in particular the attitude of Strabo, a Greek author of the first century BCE/CE, whose work is among the few extensive geographical writings that survive from antiquity.

processions.[27] Frescoes in Villa A took viewers on a fantasy tour of the East, but this tour was not simply a vacation. During the mid-first century CE, these images could encourage visitors and inhabitants of the villa to remember the beginnings of Roman ascendancy and to admire the extent of Roman power, and thus to participate in the project of expansion that was central to the life of the Roman state.

III. Touring the Empire in the *Cena Trimalchionis*

It is impossible to discuss the relationship between house and state in the early empire without considering Trimalchio and the episode of the *cena* in the *Satyricon*. In Villa A, opulent images of war booty and architecture with Greek overtones allowed viewers to escape from the Italian coast to distant lands that had been brought under Roman rule, and whose wealth and cultural accomplishments Rome had absorbed. Trimalchio takes a more literal approach to the kind of fantasy journey that visitors to Villa A might experience: he transforms his house into a state in miniature, and ultimately into a mini-cosmos that embodies the world of the dead as well as the living. The fact that Trimalchio is a freedman, whose legal status prevents him from fully taking part in social and political life, makes him acutely sensitive to the importance of demonstrating his authority to those around him.[28] He presents himself as the ruler of the world and the master of death itself, but the shifting boundary between his house, the empire, and the underworld illustrates the self-destructive quality of absolute power, not for Trimalchio alone, but for the world he rules.

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[27] Nicolet (1991) 20-24, 111. See also Sherk (1974).

[28] For a standard discussion of Trimalchio as evidence for the role of freedmen in the society and economy of ancient Rome, see Veyne (1961) and the more recent assessment by Andreau (2009). See the introduction to Petersen (2011) for how the compelling portrait of Trimalchio and his fellow-freedmen in the *Satyricon* has compromised the assessment of other kinds of evidence for freedmen in the Roman world.

Before turning to the episode of the *cena*, it is important to address some of the basic issues that can obstruct any reading of the *Satyricon*. While Trimalchio has sometimes been read as a parody of Nero himself, the text cannot be securely dated: most scholars assign it to the Neronian period, but the evidence for this date is largely internal and may provide only a *terminus post quem*.[29] In the majority of the manuscripts, the work is attributed to Petronius Arbiter, who has often been identified with Nero's "arbiter of taste," known from Tacitus' *Annals* (*elegantiae arbiter*, *Ann*. 16.18). Tacitus' Petronius is an engaging figure and a tempting candidate for the author of such a strange, funny, and obscene work. He sleeps all day and spends his nights "with the business and pleasure of life" (*officiis et oblectamentis vitae*), and he is distinguished from the common crowd of profligates by his "learned extravagance" (*erudito luxu*, 16.19). When the emperor compels him to commit suicide, he first draws up a catalogue of Nero's sexual exploits and has it delivered to him (16.19). In the *Annals*, however, the *elegantiae arbiter* is referred to either as "Gaius" (16.18) or simply "Petronius" (16.19), without the cognomen that the author of *Satyricon* receives in the manuscript tradition. Plutarch and Pliny both refer to a certain Petronius at Nero's court, but the Petronius in each instance has the praenomen Titus.[30] None of these accounts make reference to the *Satyricon*. It is likely that, at a later period, the author of the *Satyricon* was assumed to be the same as Nero's *elegantiae arbiter* and that he was given the cognomen Arbiter.

Although the identity of the author must remain uncertain, much commentary on the *Satyricon* has pointed out allusions and references that assume that the audience of the work would be familiar with the cultural milieu of the Neronian age. During Trimalchio's banquet, the

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[29] Crum (1952a) and (1952b) assembles the evidence for the associations between Trimalchio and Nero. See Courtney (2002) and Schmeling (2011) xiii-xvii for summaries of the arguments and evidence for dating the text to the Neronian period; more recently, Laird (2007) has proposed dating the novel to the 2nd century CE.
[30] Pliny *NH* 37.20; Plutarch *Quomodo adulator* 19.60e.

freedmen mention gladiators and actors famous in Nero's day.[31] At one point during the *cena*,

Trimalchio's acrobatic slave boy lands on top of his master: this episode may allude to an event

reported in Suetonius, when a performer playing Icarus fell close to Nero "and splattered him

with blood" (*ipsumque cruore respersit*, *Nero* 12.2).[32] A number of parallels can be found

between Trimalchio and his guests at the *cena* and Seneca's descriptions of historical characters

in his letters.[33] Later in the work, Eumolpus, a lecher and a bad poet, recites his *Bellum Civile*,

which is sometimes read as an attack on Lucan's epic of the same name.[34] It is true that none of

these things allow us to date the *Satyricon* securely to the mid-first century CE, but the literary,

theatrical, and athletic reference points of the characters assume an audience familiar with and

still interested in the cultural life of the age of Nero.[35]

The generic heritage of the work is similarly complex.[36] The Greek romances to which

the *Satyricon* has been compared date to the 2nd century CE, well after the reign of Nero: it is

admittedly improbable that Petronius' text was a model for Greek authors of the Second

Sophistic, but the common source which Petronius may have shared with these later novels is

unknown.[37] Some scholars, because of the combination of prose and verse in the *Satyricon*, as

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[31] Courtney (2002) 7-8 and Schmeling (2011) xiv.

[32] Slater (1994) 550. Slater also argues that a scene depicted on one of Trimalchio's ornate *skyphoi* should be identified as Pasiphae being shut up in the wooden cow, the subject of another show performed in Nero's amphitheater on the Campus Martius (Suet. *Nero* 12.2).

[33] Cf. Sullivan (1968); Byrne (2007).

[34] For a review of the scholarship on the relationship between Lucan's *Bellum Civile* and the epic in the *Satyricon*, and the role of Eumolpus' *Bellum Civile* in the novel, see Connors (1998) 100n1.

[35] Laird (2007) argues that these details may only demonstrate the author's concern for historical realism, not the cultural interests of his audience: he takes Xenophon's *Cyropaedeia* and Plato's dialogues as examples of historical fiction in the Greek tradition. Cyrus the Great, however, was a figure of greater historical importance than any of the performers named in the *Satyricon*: we would expect audiences who post-dated the Persian king to be interested in his exploits, whereas later audiences might well be less likely to remember performers famous in Nero's day.

[36] Schmeling (2011) xxx-xxxviii.

[37] Cf. Laird (2007) 152-6; Walsh (1970) 2-7. Schmeling (2011) defends the *Satyricon* against charges that it is merely a "remake" or even a translation of a Greek novel: "Just perhaps…[Petronius] wrote an original work in Latin, is owed much credit for both form and content of the emerging ancient novel, and is the writer being copied, not the writer copying" (xxxi).

well as its satirical tone and "low" subject matter, have identified it as "Menippean satire,"

although in antiquity this term was not used to designate a genre.[38] The author of the work,

moreover, did not limit himself to particular genres for models or material. The plight of the

main character of the novel, Encolpius, who was cursed with impotence by the god Priapus and

endures a tortuous journey through the lower strata of Roman society, bears obvious resemblance

to the epic wanderings of Odysseus and Aeneas; the *cena* has been read as a parody of Plato's

Symposium.[39] Any attempt to determine an overarching plan for the text of the *Satyricon* is

frustrated by the fact that most of the work has been lost: our surviving text is derived from the

fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth books.

In spite of the difficulties of classifying the *Satyricon* in terms of historical period or

generic type, it nevertheless has much to contribute to a study of conceptions of power in the

Neronian era. A. Laird, who rejects the accepted dating of the *Satyricon* to the mid-first century

CE, has remarked that "the term 'Neronian' [when applied to literature] has become not just a

chronological label but an aesthetic, almost generic, category, loaded with the baggage of recent

hobbyhorses: metaphors of consumption, life-as-performance, authorial-self-fashioning and so

on."[40] Yet the *cena*, which is the longest surviving episode of the *Satyricon*, deals with questions

of particular interest for an audience experiencing the development of one-man rule: the role of

the absolute ruler and the relationship between ruler and the wider community. While these

issues were not relevant in the Neronian period exclusively, the cultural environment of the

Satyricon and the characteristics of Trimalchio himself suggest that Nero's reign was considered

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[38] For the view that the *Satyricon* is a Menippean satire, see Walsh (1970) 19. Walsh argues that Petronius' work was a reaction against the Greek romance. Courtney (2002) 21 argues convincingly that "Menippean satire" is too specific a term to apply this unusual text.
[39] Sullivan (1968) 125.
[40] Laird (2007) 161. He has in mind especially Bartsch (1994), Elsner and Masters (1994), and Rimell (2002).

an appropriate setting for the treatment of these issues, regardless of the date of composition of the work.[41]

In the *cena,* the house of the ruler is assimilated to the empire: Trimalchio's estate is figured as a kind of state unto itself, and the design of his house and course of the dinner allows him to demonstrate his control over the extent of his territory. The dinner guests come face to face simultaneously with Trimalchio's economic successes and with the magnitude of Roman authority. Trimalchio declares that "I want to join Sicily to my little estate, so that when I want to go to Africa, I can travel within my own borders" (*coniungere agellis Siciliam volo, ut cum Africam libuerit ire, per meos fines navigem*, 48.3); while he may be unable to take a physical journey through the empire while remaining on his own property, he has taken steps to bring the empire to him.[42] The first of the many slaves that Encolpius meets at Trimalchio's estate are eunuchs, who wait on Trimalchio while he takes exercise on his grounds (27.3). The custom of employing eunuchs as guards associates Trimalchio with Eastern monarchs, but these eunuchs are only one variety of the exotic slaves in Trimalchio's household.[43] His retinue also includes slaves from Ethiopia (34.4) and Egypt (35.6), and those who are specifically marked as "Alexandrian" (31.3, 68.3). The provenance of Trimalchio's slaves is significant not because of Trimalchio's regal pretensions, but rather because it is indicative of the vastness of the world that is contained within Trimalchio's house. Some scholars argue that Trimalchio's slaves are only costumed "stage-hands," who do not really hail from the regions of the world that their physical

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[41] Cf. Vout (2009): "The *Cena* is not a text about Nero's Rome so much as a text which alerts us to the artifice or ingredients involved in representing Roman imperial culture, especially perhaps Neronian culture" (109).

[42] Schmeling (2011) *ad loc.* interprets this boast as a parody of Seneca's attacks against extravagant estates in a number of his letters (e.g., *Ep.* 89.20). Smith (1975) *ad loc.* notes that this statement seems to be contradicted later in the text, when Trimalchio announces, "If I manage to join my estates to Apulia, I'll have gotten far enough in my life" (*quod si contigerit fundos Apuliae iungere, satis vivus pervenero*, 77.3). I suggest that both of these statements reveal his conviction that recreating the empire inside his house is the most important means of establishing and demonstrating his authority.

[43] On the association between Eastern kings and eunuchs, see Smith (1975) 55.

appearance is meant to suggest.[44] Yet the fact that Trimalchio has made an effort to include

them in his household points to his desire to bring these distant lands within his domain: if

Trimalchio needs to use makeup and costume to transform his slaves into Ethiopians and

Egyptians, this only further demonstrates the weight he places on reproducing the empire at

home.

Beyond his assembly of exotic (or exotic-seeming) slaves, Trimalchio makes use of and

displays luxury goods from diverse regions of the world. One of the guests at the dinner informs

Encolpius that Trimalchio imported rams from Tarentum to breed with his own flock (38.2). He

also acquired Athenian bees to produce Attic honey, and mushroom spores from India (38.4).

Trimalchio's tremendous wealth seems to make him uniquely independent from the outside

world: Encolpius' conversation-partner tells him "there's nothing here for you to think that he

bought. Everything is produced in-house" (*nec est quod putes illum quicquam emere. omnia*

domi nascuntur, 38.1). This passage is just one of the many indications in the *cena* that point to

"Trimalchio's desire to build a self-sufficient kingdom which neither he nor any member of his

familia will ever need to leave."[45] Producing exotic luxury items for himself, however, also

allows Trimalchio to advertise his dominance over the regions from which they normally must

be purchased. As in the case of the frescoes from Villa A, Trimalchio's banquet takes his guests

on a tour of far-off lands while they remain inside his house, but this trip is not mere

entertainment: instead, the guests are expected to recognize that their host is powerful enough to

make this kind of fantasy travel possible. Even if the freedman who claims "everything is

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[44] Cf. Sandy (1974) 332 and note 6.

[45] Slater (1990) 56. Veyne (1961) 42 claims that Trimalchio has three aims: growth of his estate, economic self-sufficiency, and administrative autonomy. Rimell (2002) argues that Trimalchio is only pretending to self-sufficiency: "Trimalchio's indigenous produce is imported in bulk" (43). Nevertheless, independent production of luxury goods is apparently one of Trimalchio's desires, and it is not clear how he could begin to produce these items for himself without importing them first.

produced in-house" is exaggerating or mistaken, he defines the extent of Trimalchio's authority in terms of his ability to bring together the entire world under his roof.[46]

In V. Rimell's view, Trimalchio's efforts to create a self-contained empire in fact underscore the futility of all such attempts: the *cena* shows that "there is no such thing as self-sufficiency, as the human demand for food proves; it always has to be faked."[47] No human being is really "self-sufficient," in that our bodies cannot survive independent of the sustenance we derive from the outside world. Yet the absolute ruler defines himself in part by claiming total independence and freedom from desire. As V. Wohl has argued, in her discussion of tyranny in Classical Athens, the tyrant is associated both with all-consuming and insatiable desire, and with complete satisfaction of his desires: the tyrant "stands…outside [the] psychic economy of desire and deferred satisfaction, *ekstatic* to the pleasure principle and its logic of lack."[48] The tyrant does not experience pleasure from the fulfillment of some desire, because he lacks nothing and thus desires nothing: he "represents a dream of absolute fulfillment and limitless joy."[49] Whether or not Trimalchio has succeeded in creating an independent empire inside his house, his efforts to do so show that his conception of absolute power is bound up with his ability to provide any luxury that the world offers and thus to satisfy all possible desires.

Beyond the vast geographical space represented in Trimalchio's estate, he has also assimilated elements of public life and political institutions that mark his house as a state unto itself. One of Trimalchio's slaves reports that his master has "a water clock in the dining room and a trumpeter ready to go, so that he knows how much life he's spent" (*horologium in triclinio et bucinatorem habet subornatum, ut subinde sciat quantum de vita perdiderit*, 26.9). While

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[46] Purcell (1996) argues that agricultural production played a key role in elite self-display.
[47] Rimell (2002) 43.
[48] Wohl (2002) 237.
[49] Ibid.

obsession with death is a distinctive feature of Trimalchio's character, the water clock and

trumpeter serve an additional purpose: they are characteristic of public life, and indicate that

Trimalchio has constructed a model state in his house.[50] During the banquet, part of the varied

entertainment provided to the guests is a reading of the transactions of the estate, which

Trimalchio's secretary "recited as though they were the *acta* of the city" (*tamquam urbis acta*

recitavit, 53.1). When Trimalchio boasts of the immense size of his house, he calls it "a temple"

(*nunc templum est*, 77.4). Trimalchio is also especially concerned to portray himself as a high

public official. He wears a bib adorned with the *latus clavus*, the purple stripe distinguishing

senators and other occupants of high office (*laticlaviam…mappam*, 32.2), and boasts that he

owns both a Greek and a Latin library, like the libraries familiar from Augustus' complex on the

Palatine (48.4).[51] Perhaps most striking of all, before the banquet begins, the great man is

escorted to his house in a triumphal procession: he is carried in a litter, clothed in red, and

accompanied by runners, his boy-toy (*deliciae*), and a musician who whispers in his ear (28.5).[52]

The triumph suggests that we are not in just any city, but in a specific city: Rome. Trimalchio's

house-empire includes the capital as well as more distant territories under Roman power.

Trimalchio's power over the known world extends beyond Rome, its territories, and its

exotic neighbors to include the world of the dead. One of the most distinctive features of

Trimalchio's house is a series of biographical frescoes that decorate the portico through which

guests enter the house.[53] The paintings show Trimalchio in the key moments of his life,

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[50] The *horologium* neatly ties together Trimalchio's interests in death and self-aggrandizement: "clocks of this sort were used in law-courts and by physicians when measuring heart-beats" (Schmeling [2011] *ad loc.*).

[51] Starr (1987) 253. The MS read *tres bybliothecas*, which has been corrected by most editors to *II bybliothecas*; *tres* is assumed to be a misreading for the Roman numeral (252).

[52] Cf. Schmeling (2011) *ad loc.*

[53] Bagnani (1954) attempted a reconstruction of the plan of Trimalchio's house. He notes that, if we compare Trimalchio's house to the houses of Pompeii, this portico is an unusual feature: we would expect to find the portico at the back of the house, behind the atrium, rather than in front of it (29). This arrangement would not be unusual,

accompanied by the gods: Minerva guides him from the slave market; he learns bookkeeping and

becomes a steward (*dispensator*) for his master; and Mercury, with the favor of Fortune and the

Fates, leads him to freedom and high office (29.3-6). Biographical imagery was common in

funerary art, and tombs with depictions of labor and the activities of daily life are often identified

as belonging to freedmen.[54] J. Bodel has made the compelling argument that the equation of

house and tomb reflects the role of the freedman in Roman society: freedmen inhabited "an

underworld defined by civil status."[55] When the freedmen are not discussing wealth, property,

and business, they devote much of their conversation to morbid topics, such as the funerals of

their peers (42.3ff) or the brevity of human life (34.10). Near the end of the *cena* (discussed

further below), Trimalchio provides an exhaustive description of the tomb he wants built for

himself and the funeral rites he intends to be performed on his behalf. Trimalchio's tomb-like

house embodies this obsession with death, and thus it draws attention to a critical element of

freedmen culture that we can associate with Geertz's concept of "the center:" death is a key

institution in the lives of Trimalchio and his peers, and it is also the symbol which best

communicates their status among the living. Trimalchio uses his house to claim mastery over

wealth and death and thus to associate himself with the most powerful forces in his community.

    The characterization of Trimalchio and his house speaks in part to the indecorous self-

regard of the freedman who has made good. Trimalchio, in this reading, "tends to appropriate for

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however, for a country villa in Campania, and it is possible either that this is a country house, or that Trimalchio has adopted that design. One further difficulty in determining the layout of Trimalchio's house is that we do not see the atrium at any point during the *cena*. Bagnani points out that Encolpius does question the guard of the atrium (the *atriensis*) about the paintings in the middle of the house (*in medio*, 29.9), but the point in the text where the protagonists pass from the portico to the *triclinium* is corrupt (30.1). Hales (2009) 169 asserts that we are not supposed to be able to determine the plan of Trimalchio's house because it is (by design) a labyrinth.

[54] Bodel (1994); Bagnani (1954) 23. Petersen (2011) argues that scholars associate funerary imagery of this type with freedmen because of the influence of Trimalchio, even when they lack clear evidence from the epigraphic or archaeological record.

[55] Bodel (1994) 251. Cf. Veyne (1961) 35-6, arguing that freedmen were trapped in a perpetual interim.

himself, more or less explicitly, the prestige of the ruling classes and to claim all types of power, indeed almost to the ultimate extent of styling himself an emperor."[56] The absurdity of the freedman's claims to power, however, is only part of the significance of the depiction of Trimalchio's house as a state writ small. Indeed, Trimalchio's pretensions are not pure foolishness: his every movement is significant for the autonomous state that he has built. The *cena* dramatizes the position of the ruler as a public figure, demonstrating what it means to be unable to act without consequence for the broader community, and the danger this poses for ruler and ruled. S. Hales argues that "Trimalchio's *domus* is a sealed box in which he can be king of the castle…his authority can only exist within the *domus* gone wrong, within the fantasies he creates through the manipulation of the visual world around him."[57] I suggest, however, that it is precisely the nature of Trimalchio's *domus* as a "sealed box" that makes him a key test case for understanding the nature of power. Trimalchio's *domus* is a self-contained model kingdom that, without the distractions of outside influences, keeps our focus on the central position of the ruler and his relationship to those he rules. While Trimalchio offers an extreme example, his efforts to mark his dominance over his world point to broader concerns for the vulnerability of the powerful and the consequent fragility of the communities dependent on them.

Trimalchio's attempt to assert control over the land of the dead is what most undermines his authority. The similarities between Trimalchio's house and Hades, and between Encolpius' visit and Aeneas' journey to the underworld, have been much remarked upon.[58] Encolpius complains that he and his friends have been "shut up in a new kind of labyrinth" (*novi generis*

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[56] Rosati (1999) 103. Cf. also Walsh (1970) 128. Schmeling (2011) argues that the narrator's view of Trimalchio changes over the course of the *cena*: "by the end [Petronius] is much warmer towards him, clearly portraying him as someone trapped in his freedman's body" (xxxviii).

[57] Hales (2009) 178.

[58] Cf. Newton (1982); Courtney (1987); Bodel (1994) 238-40; Frangoulidis (2008) 84.

labyrintho inclusi, 73.1); his boyfriend Giton feeds the guard dog a biscuit to distract him just as

Aeneas fed Cerberus to gain passage to Hades (72.9; *Aen* 6.417-23); Trimalchio's gatekeeper

warns that it is impossible to leave the house by the same door one used to enter (72.10), an

admonition that recalls the two gates that Aeneas encounters when he leaves the land of the dead

(*Aen*. 6.893-99). By including even the world of the dead in his house, Trimalchio seems to have

constructed a world in which he is fully in control. Yet just as Trimalchio's house is proof of his

fantastic wealth and power, it is also emblematic of his inevitable death. It has been observed

that for Trimalchio (as indeed for much of Roman literature) excessive luxury has fatal

consequences: "this is Petronius' theme--the death which *luxuria* brings in sex, food, and

language, that is, in the areas of energetic desire and social community."[59] Trimalchio's trouble,

however, goes beyond luxury and excess. When he claims authority over death, and thus over the

cosmos as a whole, he also reminds his audience of his own mortality: his power points toward

his self-destruction.[60]

Trimalchio, however, seems to be unaware of his precarious position: he insists that he

can control his own death and determine the way he will be treated and remembered after death.

He has taken great care to plan his tomb, and he criticizes the man who "has a well-kept house

while he is alive, but doesn't care about that house where we'll have to dwell for much longer"

(*est vivo quidem domos cultas esse, non curari eas, ubi diutius nobis habitandum est*, 71.7). In

fact, Trimalchio has bestowed greater care on the house he will enjoy after death than on his

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[59] Arrowsmith (1966) 310.
[60] Rimell (2002) makes a related observation about Trimalchio's penchant for luxury and exotic goods: "the more he displays the gilded accessories of imperialism, evidence of his mastery over nature and time, the more paranoid and comic he looks. The more he preaches liberality in every sphere…the more he spells out a human inability to transcend his own corporeality, his ultimate lack of control. Ultimately, he too is one of the freedmen, the larger than life caricatures symbolizing the general Roman public…who embody a cheap parody of liberty" (189-90). For Rimell, one of the key motifs of the *cena* is the human failure to overcome the needs of the body, particularly the dependence on food.

current estate. The house that he calls "a temple" is not particularly extravagant when compared

with some of the finer houses in Pompeii, such as the Villa of the Mysteries.[61] His tomb,

however, covers ten times the average area of tombs documented in Ostia and is "appointed with

all the necessities of life."[62] He requests carved reliefs of banquets, complete with feasting

crowds and great amphorae of wine (71.10-11), and imagines himself depicted as a high

magistrate and distributing coins to the people (71.9). Just as Trimalchio's house functioned as a

kind of independent state, his tomb, too, will represent a self-contained universe with Trimalchio

at its head. By the end of the *cena*, then, Trimalchio's tomb has taken over the function that his

house once played: it is now his tomb, not his house, that reproduces the world in miniature.

When Trimalchio concludes his instructions for the design of his funeral monument, the entire

household bursts into tears (72.1). While this reaction is in part a sign of their deference to

Trimalchio, his dependents have cause for genuine grief:[63] when Trimalchio is dead, the world

that he has created, and thus their entire universe, will devolve into a tomb.

The *cena* closes with a remarkable scene in which Trimalchio orders his household to

pretend that he is already dead and to carry out his funeral (78.6). The mock funeral is in a sense

Trimalchio's greatest performance of power, in that he insists that his subjects enact a new

reality, one in which they have lost their master. Yet this performance also undermines his model

state: the end of the episode, when firemen burst into the house and put a halt to the proceedings

(78.7-8), proves that Trimalchio's control over his little empire is more tenuous than he

believes.[64] One approach to reading the *cena* treats Trimalchio as a stage director, who puts on

an elaborate performance for his guests over the course of the evening, but who ultimately loses

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[61] Bagnani (1954) 18.
[62] Whitehead (1994) 307.
[63] Cf. Canali (1987) 47-8 on the unusual symbiosis between masters and slaves throughout the *Satyricon*.
[64] Frangoulidis (2008) 86.

control of the play: "the *Cena* represents a shifting, unreliable, and unpredictable reality," reflective of the society Encolpius lives in and of the Roman world of Nero's day.[65] Trimalchio's failure to impose order on chaos, however, speaks not just to the quandaries of the Neronian age, but also to the essential difficulty an absolute ruler faces in attempting to control his environment. The more that Trimalchio attempts to assert his authority by recreating the world within his house, the more he draws attention to the fragility of the world he has built.

IV. Cosmos and Claustrophobia in the *Bellum Civile*

Thus far, I have considered two approaches to the relationship between house and empire and how the house can claim dominance over a wider landscape. The frescoes in Villa A in Oplontis evoked a fantasy tour of the Hellenistic East within an Italian landscape, and so associated the villa with the advance of Roman power. Visitors to Trimalchio's house also experienced a kind of progress through the Roman world, as Trimalchio built a self-contained empire within his house and asserted his dominance over it. Viewers of the frescoes and guests at the *cena* enact a journey to distant lands within the confined space of the house, and both the frescoes and the *cena* in some sense pull the empire, the outside world, into the house.

This shift in perspective from immense landscapes to confined spaces is also a distinctive characteristic of Lucan's epic the *Bellum Civile*, which was most likely composed in the 60s CE and is securely dated to the reign of Nero. The narrative action spans the Mediterranean, from the movements of Caesar's troops from Gaul, to political and military activity in Italy and Greece, to Cato's debilitating journey through North Africa and the arrival of Pompey and later Caesar in

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[65] Zeitlin (1971) 660; it should be noted that the fragmentary nature of the *Satyricon* might contribute to the sense of chaos and disorder in the text. For Trimalchio the stage director, see also Slater (1990) and Rosati (1999). For Trimalchio as an author, see Rimell (2002) 39.

Egypt. Key moments in the poem, however, take place within relatively constricted environments: Cato's house in Book 2 where the self-proclaimed champion of the Republic joins Pompey's army, Pompey's visit to the island of Lesbos in Book 8, and Caesar's battle in Cleopatra's palace in Book 10. The narrative transitions between the cosmic effects of civil war, the great territories that suffer the fallout of the conflict, and the small spaces that determine the fate of the entire world.

In this section, I examine the shift in perspective between open spaces and closed ones, and how the contraction of space in the *Bellum Civile* affects the ruler and the community as a whole. I begin by discussing the three main problems scholars have identified in Lucan's use of space in his epic: boundaries (and especially how they are compromised or destroyed), the identity of (geographical) center and periphery, and the relationship between the Roman Empire and the broader cosmos. I then argue that the civil war functions as a progress through the space of the Roman world. C. Geertz's concepts of "progress" and "center" are especially valuable for understanding the relationship between the depiction of space in the epic and the treatment of political change. As discussed in the introduction to this chapter, Geertz argues that the progress, or the ruler's procession through his territory, serves to demonstrate the ruler's dominance and to assert his proximity to the center, by which Geertz means the essential values, symbols, and institutions that define a given society. In the *Bellum Civile,* the ruler and his house become identified with the center: essential features of the Roman world and the wider cosmos are associated with or even brought inside the houses of the powerful, just as they were in the frescoes from Villa A and in Trimalchio's *cena*, and this connection between the empire and the ruler's house points to the ruler's supremacy. The conclusion of the epic, however, suggests that in claiming dominance over a space the ruler also threatens and destabilizes it.

One major spatial question in Lucan's epic is the definition of boundaries, and especially how they contract, expand, and dissolve. Civil war undermines the boundaries that separate citizen and enemy, state and subject, and even animate bodies and inanimate matter.[66] In S. Bartsch's reading, the many graphic instances of bodily mutilation in the epic parallel the destruction of the state in civil war and demonstrate that political upheaval compromises the integrity of the subject. She argues that the protection of physical, social, and legal boundaries determines the extent to which "we [can] maintain a continuous hold on our own identities."[67] In addition to boundaries between persons, geographical boundaries are also contested in the *Bellum Civile*. In the opening of Book 1, Lucan criticizes his fellow Romans for turning against one another even though so many foreign lands and peoples remained to be conquered: Babylon (1.10), the far reaches of the east, west, south, and north (1.15-18), the Seres, Armenia, and even the mysterious region containing the source of the Nile, a problematic space that Lucan will return to in the final book of the epic (1.19-20).[68] His compatriots should have been expanding the boundaries of the empire; they turned against each other instead.[69] This catalogue of regions that Rome failed to conquer indicates that boundaries, contraction, and expansion will be essential themes of the epic.

A second key spatial problem in the *Bellum Civile* is the relationship between center and periphery, especially between Rome and the far-flung territories it has conquered. The center in

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[66] Bartsch (1997) 10-47. See also Henderson (2010; orig. 1987), especially 456: civil war constitutes "terminal break-down in social relations, incestuous collapse of linguistic categories, transgression against Order in discourse."

[67] Bartsch (1997) 41.

[68] See Roche (2009) *ad loc.* Babylon stands for Parthia: Lucan's complaint that "proud Babylon could have been despoiled of Ausonian trophies" (*superba foret Babylon spolianda tropaeis/ Ausoniis*, 1.10-11) refers to the standards that Crassus lost to the Parthians in 53 BCE. Nicolet (1991) and Arnaud (1993) both identify Parthia as the principal problem for Roman declarations of mastery over the *oikumene*, the inhabited world.

[69] Myers (2011) points out that "the violence that underlies imperial expansion is centripetal: the further the empire extends itself outward, the more destructively it will turn back on itself" (401).

question here is the capital of the Roman empire, that is, the geographical location most important for the political life of the Roman state. While the center of the empire is of course not identical to the "center" as Geertz conceives of it (i.e., the meeting-point of a society's most significant ideas and institutions), these two different "centers" do have some important characteristics in common. Rome is by rights the *caput mundi*, the city that is most important for defining and upholding Roman culture and for ensuring the strength of Roman power over the world. Yet little of the action of the *Bellum Civile* takes place in the vicinity of Rome: as M. Myers observes, "among the casualties of the civil war is the centrality of the erstwhile *caput mundi*."[70] Other cities and regions emerge either as a counterpart to Rome or to take its place as the *caput mundi*. In Lucan's description of the devastating naval battle at Massilia, which Caesar attacked in 49 BCE, the Massilians embody the virtue of *fides* that is characteristic of the glory days of Rome.[71] Dyrrachium, a city in Albania and the site of one of Pompey's few victories in 48 BCE, is described as a kind of scapegoat that takes Rome's place and so protects her from the devastation of civil war.[72] M. Dinter has argued that Thessaly, because it is the site of the critical battle in the civil war, becomes the *caput mundi* in Lucan's text, and that this is a remarkable choice because Roman poetry often associated Thessaly with witchcraft.[73] In the *Bellum Civile*, Thessaly is the meeting place of land and sea, heaven and earth, and Pompey and Caesar.[74] By the end of the epic, Alexandria threatens to take Rome's place as the capital of the empire and as the city that will determine the fate of the Roman world.[75] That the center of the empire has no fixed identity in Lucan's epic points to the fact that "the center, the narrative focus, the *scene* in

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[70] Myers (2011) 411.
[71] Rowland (1969) 205.
[72] Saylor (1978) 253-7.
[73] Especially in elegy. Cf. Prop. 1.1.24; 3.24.9; Tib. 2.4.55. In the *BC*, Thessaly is the home of Erictho, the witch who summons the dead to predict Pompey's defeat (Book 6).
[74] Dinter (2013) 69.
[75] Spencer (2005) 66.

the epic of *Bellum Civile,* is always already a political construct, *the* construction of a political

contestation."[76]

The nature of the relationship between the Roman empire and the cosmos is another

spatial question that has attracted the attention of Lucan scholars. The epic opens by describing

the conflict between Caesar and Pompey in cosmic terms. When the two leaders took up arms

against each other, they initiated "a struggle towards communal crime, with all the forces of the

shattered world" (*certatum totis concussi uiribus orbis/ in commune nefas*, *BC* 1.5-6). Here, as he

will repeatedly later in the poem, Lucan draws an "explicit connection between internecine strife

and the destruction of the universe."[77] M. Lapidge has pointed out the prevalence of metaphors

of "cosmic dissolution" in the first seven books of the *Bellum Civile*, which he associates with

Lucan's education in Stoic philosophy.[78] In the Stoic view, the universe was a coherent whole:

"all things were cognate parts…of the one living being which was the universe."[79] Although

these different parts were typically joined together, the bonds that connected them were

periodically destroyed through "cosmic conflagration" (*ekpurosis*), when "the universe would

either be swamped with floods…or consumed with fire."[80] This is not to say that Lucan was a

"doctrinaire Stoic," or that the narrator of the epic can be easily located within the Stoic tradition,

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[76] Henderson (2010) 485.

[77] Myers (2011) 405. Myers notes that the correspondence between civil war and cosmic cataclysm in the text "reveals Lucan's conception of civil war as fundamentally affecting Rome's geopolitical and spatial relationship to the world" (402).

[78] Lapidge (2010, orig. 1979).

[79] Ibid. 293.

[80] Ibid. 300. Lapidge identifies Lucan's teacher Cornutus, as well as his uncle Seneca, as likely sources for the transmission of Stoic views on cosmology, especially those of Chrysippus (3rd century BCE).

but he does treat the Roman civil war as a matter of universal interest.[81] Right before battle

begins at Pharsalia, the narrator claims that the end of the world is imminent:[82]

> *sua quisque pericula nescit*
> *attonitus maiore metu. quis litora ponto*
> *obruta, quis summis cernens in montibus aequor*
> *aetheraque in terras deiecto sole cadentem,*
> *tot rerum finem, timeat sibi? non uacat ullos*
> *pro se ferre metus: urbi Magnoque timetur.*   (7.133-8)

> Each is ignorant of the danger to himself, struck with a greater fear. When he sees
> the shores overwhelmed by the sea and water on the mountaintops and heaven
> crashing into earth when the sun has been cast out, the end of so many things,
> who fears for himself? No one has time for any fear on his own account: they are
> afraid for the city and for Magnus.

 This passage is notable not only for the motif of cosmic destruction, but also because it suggests

that this war overrides the boundaries between individual interests and communal ones.

All three of the spatial issues discussed above--boundaries, center vs. periphery, and the

relationship between the space of the Roman conflict and the cosmos--are essential for

understanding not only Lucan's treatment of space, but also the make-up of the political

community: Lucan uses descriptions of space and tensions between different kinds of spaces to

represent the political transformation which is central to the narrative of the civil war. I now turn

to an additional distinctive feature of Lucan's use of space, and one that is critical for

understanding the rise of one-man rule in the *Bellum Civile*: the shift in perspective from wide or

open spaces (e.g., the cosmos, the extent of the Roman empire) to narrow or closed ones

(especially the house).

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[81] Ibid. 323, arguing against identifying Lucan as a "doctrinaire Stoic." Bartsch (1997) 116 points out characteristics
of the narrator's voice that run counter to Stoic attitudes, especially his rage and refusal to accept the authority of
fate. On the prevalence of Stoicism in Roman culture, see Shaw (1985).
[82] Cited in Lapidge (2010) 322.

The military encounters in the *Bellum Civile* are spread out across the Mediterranean. Yet while Lucan's subject matter dictates the immense geographic scale of the epic, he reinforces the sense of the size and diversity of the poem's landscape by his use of esoteric toponyms and catalogues of troops participating in the war.[83] The most extensive catalogue (3.169-297) is a list of Pompey's troops from the East, a passage replete with regions in Greece and Asia Minor that were subject to Roman rule, as well as lands beyond its influence.[84] Lucan claims that "the fate of Magnus had stirred cities throughout the whole world that were to go down in battle with him" (*totum Magni fortuna per orbem/ secum casuras in proelia mouerat urbes*, 3.169-70). The catalogue begins with troops sent from Phocis (3.172), a region near Delphi that is often identified as the center of the world, and moves through cities and landmarks of Asia Minor, Syria, and North Africa. Lucan lingers especially over the participation of Troy (3.211-213), notable for its role in the Homeric tradition and also its connection to the Julian family, who claimed direct descent from the Trojan Aeneas.[85] He notes Pompey's support from the rich cities of the East (3.217) and claims that the Roman civil war even caught the attention of the peoples of India (3.235-243), "who dye their hair with saffron ointment and bind up their flowing garments with colored gems, and erect their own pyres and climb on the hot flames while they are still alive" (*qui tinguentes croceo medicamine crinem/ fluxa coloratis astringunt carbasa gemmis,/ quique suas struxere pyras uiuique calentis/ conscendere rogos*, 3.237-41). This catalogue of troops functions as a progress through the empire and the world known to the

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[83] Cf. Mayer (1986) on esoteric names for peoples, topographical features, and regions in Roman poetry.

[84] Cf. Hunink (1992) 102-5 for a discussion of Lucan's sources for this catalogue. One of Lucan's main models was Caesar's list of Pompey's forces in his account of the civil war (*BCiv* 3.3-5); similar catalogues of Pompey's troops appear in other historical sources (e.g., Appian *BC* 2.49, Cic. *Att.* 9.9.2.). Lucan's version differs from Caesar's in several important respects: the poet omits most "relevant military details," as well as some geographical names, but he adds references to exotic Eastern tribes (the Indians and Ethiopians), and includes greater detail on the traditions and history of the peoples loyal to Pompey. Hunink suggests that "the civil war, with its theme of *patria ruens* is thus transposed and amplified to cosmic dimensions" (104).

[85] Ibid. *ad loc.*

Romans, as the reader is exposed to the multitude and diversity of peoples involved in the civil war, and takes an imaginary journey through their native lands.

Although the catalogue nominally serves to identify Pompey's supporters in the conflict, it ultimately foreshadows the extent of the landscape that Caesar will rule. The passage concludes by asserting that Roman civil war has (in a perverse sense) united all of humanity, by bringing representatives from across the world to the same battlefield: "for fear that blessed Caesar might not get everything at once, Pharsalia offered the world to be conquered altogether" (*acciperet felix ne non semel omnia Caesar,/ uincendum pariter Pharsalia praestitit orbem*, 3.296-7). The catalogue simultaneously offers a panoramic view of the Roman world and of Caesar's prospective territory. M. Dinter has argued that the variety and extent of environments treated in Lucan's poem are symptomatic of Lucan's interest in the self-destruction that result from civil war: "the plot of the *Bellum Civile*--which incorporates nearly all the known world…--never forms an integrated unit and fails to create a unity of cosmos and imperium."[86] Caesar himself, however, acts as the unifying force that binds together the disparate regions of Lucan's epic, as he travels through the world and "makes war in the farthest regions of the earth" (*extremis terrarum Caesar in oris/ Martem saeuus agit*, 4.1-2). The royal progresses of the Alawite kings in eighteenth and nineteenth century Morocco (as C. Geertz explains them) offer an interesting example for comparison. These progresses facilitated the king's confrontations with his opponents in his own territory: "the realm was unified…by a restless searching-out of contact, mostly agonistic, with literally hundreds of lesser centers of power within it."[87] Just as the king in Morocco traveled to physically assert his dominance over his territory, so Caesar's

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[86] Dinter (2013) 9.
[87] Geertz (1985) 138.

movement in Lucan's poem serves to demonstrate his position as master of the world and to unite the empire under his authority.

After Caesar has defeated Pompey at Pharsalus and essentially guaranteed his dominance over the empire, Pompey goes on a progress that points to Caesar's authority rather than his own. He makes his way from Thessaly to Lesbos, to the coast of Asia Minor, and finally to Alexandria, but in his travels he aims not to demonstrate his prestige but to conceal his presence. He seeks out deserted areas (*deserta petens*, 8.2; *deserta sequentem*, 8.12) and "prefers to be unknown to all peoples and to travel safely through cities with his name obscure" (*cunctis ignotus gentibus esse/ mallet et obscuro tutus transire per urbes nomine*, 8.19-21).[88] Later in his journey, he lands briefly on the coast of Lycia, in the tiny town of Phaselis, where he encounters only the occasional inhabitant (*incola rarus*, 8.252) and "houses drained of people--the crowd on [Pompey's] ship was bigger" (*exhaustaeque domus populis*, *maiorque carinae… turba fuit*, 253-4). The fact that Pompey is no longer ruler of Rome is expressed in terms of his isolation. Pompey's progress through barren landscapes, however, is a kind of negative image of the victorious journey Caesar might make as conqueror. While Caesar is absent from the scene, Pompey's condition reminds the reader of Caesar's dominance over the landscape through which his opponent travels.

Both Lucan's descriptions of the peoples and landscapes affected by the civil war and the course of Pompey's retreat after the battle of Pharsalia emphasize Caesar's dominance over the Roman world. The poem presents one further candidate for ruler, although this one has no ambitions for the kind of rule that Pompey and Caesar enjoy, and he asserts his dominance over a different kind of landscape. Unlike Pompey and Caesar, who both aspire to control of the empire,

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[88] The rise and fall of Pompey's nomen is an important motif in the *Bellum Civile*: see Feeney (2010; orig. 1986).

Cato the Younger is a ruler in that he defines the meaning of the civil conflict and its significance

for the wider world.[89] Cato was a common model of the Stoic sage in the early empire and is

often identified by scholars as the hero of Lucan's epic; other critics of the poem, most notably

W. R. Johnson, argue that Cato is a sham hero who demonstrates "the impotence of virtue."[90]

Cato's role in the poem is indeed problematic: he is an ineffectual champion for the cause of the

Republic, and while Cato describes himself as a devoted father of his country (2.297-303), the

poet undermines his claim to this title by emphasizing his harsh treatment of his wife (2.372-380)

and of the soldiers under his command (9.500-510).[91] Our understanding of Lucan's Cato is

further complicated by the fact that he appears only in Books 2 and 9, with no account of his

famous suicide in Africa, although some scholars speculate that the poem was meant to conclude

with Cato's death.[92] Yet whether Lucan meant his audience to see Cato as a positive *exemplum*

or as a negative one, Cato claims authority for the fate of the universe, and he situates the civil

war within a cosmic landscape.

As noted above, Lucan repeatedly points to the cosmic implications for the civil conflict

in the Roman world. When Cato's kinsman Brutus asks him whether he intends to take part in

the war and declares his allegiance to whatever side Cato chooses, Cato describes the universal

turmoil that is a result of civil war:

> *sidera quis mundumque uelit spectare cadentem*
> *expers ipse metus? quis, cum ruat arduus aether,*

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[89] Bartsch (1997) 123, 129.

[90] Johnson (1987) 66. The characterization of Cato will be discussed further in Chapter 5. For more positive assessments of Cato, see Ahl (1976), George (1988), Narducci (2002), D'Alessandro Behr (2007).

[91] Johnson (1987) argues that we are meant to condemn Cato for his treatment of his wife Marcia. On the father/son model for the relationship between ruler and ruled, see Roller (2001). It is also noteworthy that while Cato claims he will follow Rome and Liberty to the grave like "a father bereft of his sons" (*parentem/ natorum orbatum*, 2.297-8), the poet calls Cato "the father of the city and the husband of the city" (*urbi pater est urbique maritus*, 2.388) Scholars (Bartsch [1997], George [1998], Tracy [2009]) generally take this comment in a positive light; I see it as an incestuous metaphor that calls Cato's real relationship with the city into question (see Chapter 5).

[92] Cf. Tracy (2011), who argues that the extant epic is complete.

> *terra labet mixto coeuntis pondere mundi,*
> *compressas*[93] *tenuisse manus? gentesne furorem*
> *Hesperium ignotae Romanaque bella sequentur*
> *diductique fretis alio sub sidere reges,*
> *otia solus agam? procul hunc arcete furorem,*
> *o superi, motura Dahas ut clade Getasque*
> *securo me Roma cadat.*   (2.288-297)

Who wants to watch the stars and the world falling while he himself is free from fear? Who, when the heights of the aether rush down, when the earth falls with the jumbled weight of the world, wants to have kept his hands folded? Shall unknown nations and kings separated by the sea and under an alien star follow Italian madness and Roman wars while I alone keep my peace? Keep this madnesss far away, O gods, that Rome as it falls rouses Dahae and Getae with disaster, while I remain free from care.[94]

Cato's speech functions as a kind of progress through the cosmos: the reader's perspective moves from the heavens (the stars, the aether), to the earth, to Italy and its foreign subjects and allies, and from East (the Dahae, Persian tribes near the Caspian sea) to West (the Getae, Thracian tribes, near the Danube). Like Lucan's geographic catalogues that reveal the extent of Caesar's domain, however, Cato's description of the universe establishes his own relationship to the Roman community and to the cosmos as a whole. When Cato refuses to remain detached during the conflict, his arguments are representative of Stoic attitudes towards social bonds. In the Stoic view, relationships between the different elements of the cosmos can be mapped using "concentric circles," with the family at the center, surrounded by the political community, all of humanity, and then the universe: "it is the wise man's duty to attempt to contract the circles …until he treats all men as brothers."[95] Yet Cato wants not simply to lament cosmic upheaval or to promote the brotherhood of mankind, but to identify his own role in giving meaning to the

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[93] Housman has *complossas*; I follow D. R. Shackleton Bailey here.

[94] His warning of cosmic upheaval foreshadows the narrator's assessment at 7.133-8 (discussed above) that the battle of Pharsalus will bring about the end of the world.

[95] George (1988) 333. Cf. Cic. *Fin*. 3.19.63. The significance of this aspect of Stoic philosophy for the *Bellum Civile* will be discussed further in Chapter 5.

conflict. He hopes that his participation will transform the conflict from one between two despots to a war between the Republic and those who threaten it: he wants Pompey to win "with me among his troops…so that he does not think that he has conquered for himself" (*me milite…ne sibi se uicisse putet*, 2.322-3). When Cato emphasizes the significance of his participation in the war, he asserts his dominance over the cosmos; it is his actions that will give meaning to the violence inflicted on heaven, earth, and peoples all over the world (cf. 2.288-97 above), and thus he will shape the significance of the transformation brought about by civil war.[96] Cato, moreover, it not alone in this conviction: Brutus calls him "the only proof of excellence, which was long ago driven out and put to flight from all the world" (*omnibus expulsae terris olimque fugatae/ uirtutis iam sola fides*, 2.243-4). Cato's description of the effects of civil war offers the reader a perspective on the vast landscape influenced by Roman concerns and then reveals Cato's power over that landscape.

When Cato expounds on the sufferings of cosmos and empire, he does so during a conversation with Brutus in his house: Brutus arrives at Cato's "modest atrium" (*atria…non ampla,* 2.38), and finds Cato "considering the common fates of men and the fortunes of the city with sleepless care, both fearful for all and unconcerned for himself" (*insomni uoluentem publica cura/ fata uirum casusque urbis cunctisque timentem/ securumque sui*, 2.239-241). After Cato declares his support for the Pompeian side, his former wife Marcia knocks on his door (*pulsatae sonuere fores*, 2.327) and asks Cato to marry her. The ensuing marriage ceremony, severe and asexual in accordance with Cato's preferences, is especially bizarre because of the lack of any signs of celebration at the house: there are no garlands to decorate the threshold, no ribbons on

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[96] See Bartsch (1997) 123-9, who argues that Cato presents himself as in control of the meaning of the civil conflict. On Catonian self-absorption, cf. Johnson (1987).

the gates, no torches, and no couches (2.354-357).[97] The physical setting of these episodes may seem incidental, but two points argue in favor of taking Cato's *domus* more seriously. First, even before the reader arrives at Cato's house, the opening of Book 2 points to the significance of the domestic space for understanding the life of the state. When the news of civil war reaches Rome, Lucan compares the city to "a house that has gone silent when it is stunned by a sudden funeral" (*sic funere primo/ attonitae tacuere domus*, 2.21-2).[98] That Lucan frames the experience of civil war in terms of the experience of the *domus* encourages the reader to pay attention to the presence of other houses (like Cato's) in the poem.

Second, as noted above, Cato's arguments for joining the Pompeians in the civil war are rooted in a Stoic understanding of the bonds that unite the human community, and the foundational bonds for human society are those that join members of the *domus*. The relationships among members of a *domus*, then, have some bearing on the ties that join members of the broader human community, especially in the case of Cato, who sees himself as uniquely concerned and responsible for the welfare of the whole. When Cato chooses to join the war, he is motivated by the conviction that his house is equivalent to the Roman world and that the fate of the world will be decided within his *domus*. Cato's encounters with Brutus and Marcia at his house dramatize both the Stoic conception of the *domus* as the starting point for all human bonds and the centrality of the houses of the powerful in Roman society.

Although Lucan's geographical catalogues, the movements of Pompey and Caesar, and Cato's account of the effects of civil war all evoke vast spaces, in the *Bellum Civile* the whole

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[97] On the contrast between Cato and Marcia's marriage and traditional Roman marriage ceremonies, see Fantham (1992) *ad loc.* On how this marriage ceremony reflects on Cato, see Johnson (1987) 37ff. Bartsch (1997) discusses this passage as a key example of Lucan's peculiar use of the negative: he describes the ceremony in terms of what is missing, rather than what is present.

[98] See Fantham (1992) *ad loc.* on the transitions between public and private reactions to civil war in this passage. This simile will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 5.

world is reduced to Cato's house: it is in this house that (at least in Cato's mind) the significance

of the conflict between Pompey and Caesar is to be determined.[99] Cato, in turn, is marked as a

ruler because of the importance of his house: he has no privacy, no ability to act without

ramifications for the community as a whole. Cato enacts a progress through the cosmos while

remaining inside his house, and thus the domestic space becomes equivalent to the expanse of

the Roman world. It is specifically the ruler's house, however, not all domestic spaces, that

exerts a defining influence on the fate of the broader world, and which thus can be understood as

equivalent to it. While Cato cannot maintain his authority over the cosmos, his appreciation for

the bond between the *domus* of the powerful and the world is repeatedly vindicated in the *Bellum*

Civile.

Pompey's activity in the aftermath of defeat also shows how the ruler's house functions

as the center of the world, but as in the case of his secretive progress after the battle of Pharsalus,

he proves this relationship in the negative. While Pompey's authority has been considerably

reduced because of Caesar's victory, some critics have observed that Pompey continues to

submit, or cling, to his own despotic impulses. In Book 8, Pompey even considers defecting to

Parthia in order to protect his own position: F. Ahl suggests that "Pompey really believes that the

battle of Pharsalia was fought for him alone, that what Rome wants, above all, is her Pompey,

regardless of the cost."[100] Pompey's arrival in Lesbos, the island where he had left his wife and

son to keep them away from the battlefield, gives him an opportunity to restore his position as

ruler. The Lesbians offer Pompey complete control over their island and their resources: they tell

him, "accept the worship of our temples and the gold of our gods; accept our young men,

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[99] See note 96 above.

[100] Ahl (1976), 171; Tracy (2009) 139-143 argues that Pompey almost becomes an Eastern despot (along the lines of Ptolemy and Alexander).

whether they are more suitable for land or ship; use all of Lesbos, as much strength as it has"

(*accipe templorum cultus aurumque deorum;/ accipe, si terris, si puppibus ista iuuentus/ aptior est; tota, quantum ualet, utere Lesbo,* 8.121-123).[101] While Pompey has been driven into

obscurity in the rest of the empire, Lesbos stands apart as it presents itself as subject to Pompey.

Pompey's conception of his role in Lesbos, however, is presented in particularly interesting

terms for the assessment of the relationship between empire and *domus*. He praises Lesbos as his

true home:

> *… 'nullum toto mihi' dixit 'in orbe*
> *gratius esse solum non paruo pignore uobis*
> *ostendi: tenuit nostros hac obside Lesbos*
> *adfectus; hic sacra domus carique penates,*
> *hic mihi Roma fuit.'*   (8.129-133)

> "That no land is more pleasing to me in all the world," he said, "I have shown you
> with no small proof: Lesbos held my affections with this security; here was my
> sacred house and my dear *penates*, here was my Rome."

The idea that Lesbos is Pompey's family and his house corresponds to the relationship between

cosmos and *domus* that Cato argued for in Book 2. For Cato, his house was linked to the cosmos

because of his view of the fellowship between human beings, but also because of the uniqueness

of his own role in the world. For Pompey, defeated and on the run from Caesar, the cosmos has

become much smaller: he holds a special position only on Lesbos, but even this claim to power

gives rise to an intimate relationship between his house and the tiny world he rules.

Here, two counter-arguments must be addressed. First, we might say that Pompey's

equation of Lesbos with hearth and home indicates the value he places on his own family,

especially his wife Cornelia, over the Roman people as a whole. Lesbos has served as his house

and his *penates* because it provided a refuge for Cornelia, and Pompey's devotion to his wife has

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[101] Mayer (1981) *ad loc.* suggests that *cultus aurumque deorum* alludes to 3.114-68, when Caesar robs the Temple of Saturn in Rome, home to the treasury of the state: "Pompey is here offered what Caesar would take."

been interpreted as a weakness, one of the primary failings that prevents him from becoming a true hero in the epic.[102] Pompey's love for Cornelia, however, is an essential point of commonality between himself and the people of Lesbos. Cornelia becomes like a citizen of Lesbos (*ut ciuem*, 8.152), and the matrons weep when they see her leave with Pompey (8.153): "some her decency had won over with great love, others her uprightness and the modesty of her blameless face" (*tanto deuinxit amore/ hos pudor, hos probitas castique modestia uoltus*, 8.155-6). Pompey's love for Cornelia does not disqualify him as a ruler from the perspective of the people of Lesbos; rather, the bond between Cornelia and Pompey strengthens the one between Pompey and Lesbos.

Second, it is true that when Pompey calls Lesbos his house, his *penates*, his Rome, he is announcing that he has no attention to remain on the island. Pompey flatters the people of Lesbos before he leaves them for more promising locales: "grant me peoples like those of Lesbos, who neither forbid a man defeated in war to enter their ports, although they make Caesar their enemy, nor forbid him to leave" (*da similis Lesbo populos*, *qui Marte subactum/ non intrare suos infesto Caesare portus,/ non exire uetent*, 8.144-6). Yet whatever Pompey's intentions in his address to the people, when he emphasizes Cornelia's position, he makes an important statement about the nature of one-man rule: the necessary link between the *domus* of the ruler and the state. The presence of Cornelia transformed Lesbos into Pompey's house and "his Rome" (*hic mihi Roma fuit*, 8.133), and if Pompey were still the foremost leader in the empire, *Roma* and *domus* would be equivalent. The fate of the house of Pompey, the master of the Roman world, would exert a determining influence on the fate of the entire community.

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[102] Ahl (1976) argued that for Pompey, "Rome is wherever Cornelia is…The city and the woman are both objects whose love Pompey seeks to earn while doing great deeds and winning applause…Whatever loves him, this is his Rome" (177). On how Cornelia may undermine Pompey's heroic status, see Tracy (2009) 52-3, 76-8.

Pompey's house has no such broader significance beyond Lesbos, yet the link between Pompey's *domus* and Lesbos serves as a model of the relationship between ruler and state. As we shall see below, however, this kind of equivalence between house and state puts the ruler and the community in a dangerous position.

In Book 2, Cato's house became the center of the world, the place in which the most important questions for the Roman world were raised: the meaning of the civil war and of participation in it. On Lesbos, Pompey equated his *domus* with Rome, the *caput mundi*, an indication not of his misplaced affections but of the significance of the ruler's house in a system of one-man rule. The focus on the *domus* in both of these episodes represents a contraction of space in the poem, from the global and even cosmic effects of the civil war to the limited confines of the house. In Book 10, Caesar's arrival at the Ptolemaic court in Alexandria is the culmination of this contraction of space: the final book of the poem takes place almost entirely inside the royal palace, a claustrophobic environment that stands in stark contrast to the immense geographic sprawl of the previous nine books. In a sense, as I will argue, the entire Roman world is contained within the palace, just as the second style frescoes at Villa A and the banquet at Trimalchio's pulled the Roman empire inside the house. Lucan's attention to the royal palace serves not only to identify the ruler's *domus* as the center of the Roman world, but also shows how the royal *domus* can destabilize the community.

Book 10 relates the events after Caesar's arrival in Alexandria, where he has come to announce his victory in the civil war to Ptolemy and Cleopatra. Pompey is dead, and Pothinus and Achillas, two key players in the Ptolemaic court, turn against Caesar and Cleopatra. The epic comes to an abrupt end in the palace at Alexandria, during a fight between Caesar, Cleopatra, and their enemies. Although Lucan's poem should not be used as a guide to reconstruct the

Alexandrian palace, the ruling class of the Roman empire may well have had some knowledge of

this structure, and some scholars believe that it exerted a significant influence on Roman

architecture.[103] The palace consisted of multiple structures set in a large park, including the

museion, library, peristyle courtyards, pavilions, a theater, the *heroon* of the kings and the tomb

of Alexander.[104] In the *Bellum Civile*, Caesar takes part in a banquet in a splendid hall that is

meant to attest to the power and resources of the Ptolemies:

> *ipse locus templi, quod uix corruptior aetas*
> *extruat, instar erat, laqueataque tecta ferebant*
> *diuitias crassumque trabes absconderat aurum.*
> *nec summis crustata domus sectisque nitebat*
> *marmoribus, stabatque sibi non segnis achates*
> *purpureusque lapis, totaque effusus in aula*
> *calcabatur onyx; hebenus Meroitica uastos*
> *non operit postes sed stat pro robore uili,*
> *auxilium non forma domus.*   (10.111-119)

> The place was the image of a temple, which a more dissolute age could hardly
> build, and the paneled roofs bore riches and solid gold covered the beams. Nor did
> the house gleam encrusted with marble bands just on the surface, and there stood
> brilliant agate and purple stone, the genuine article, and onyx spread out in the
> whole court was stepped upon; ebony from Meroe did not cover the immense
> doors but took the place of cheap wood, the structure, not the mere appearance, of
> the house.[105]

In Lucan's account, the Egyptian palace is not only decorated with luxurious and expensive

materials but is actually built out of them. This Alexandria is in part a cipher for Rome,

especially for the decadence and luxury of the Roman empire that was much criticized by the

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[103] Nielsen (1994) 225 suggests that the palace at Alexandria was a model for the Domus Aurea, but our limited evidence for both structures make it difficult to prove this claim. On the Domus Aurea as a model for Lucan, see Berti (2000) 126.

[104] Nielsen (1994) 218.

[105] Translation adapted from Braund (1992). Dido's palace in the *Aeneid* is one key model for Lucan's description of the Alexandrian palace. See Schmidt (1986) 190ff. For other literary palaces that Lucan may have turned to, see Berti (2000) 126.

writers of Lucan's own period.[106] From another perspective, however, Lucan's presentation of

the palace at Alexandria undermines Rome's project of *imperium sine fine*.[107] The richness of the

banquet hall suggests that it competes with the scale and stakes of war over the empire in the

previous books. Caesar's final battle will be not over the empire but over Cleopatra's palace, and

it is, to his mind, a worthy replacement. Indeed, the prize of the civil war, control of the Roman

world, counts for less than the luxuries of the banquet: "Caesar learns how to waste the riches of

a world despoiled and is ashamed to have waged war with his poor son-in-law and wants a

reason for war with the nations of Pharos" (*discit opes Caesar spoliati perdere mundi/ et gessisse*

pudet genero cum paupere bellum/ et causas Martis Phariis cum gentibus optat, 10.169-71).

Even the servants of the Alexandrian court are a "crowd" and a "people" unto themselves

(*famulae numerus turbae populusque minister*, 10.127).[108] At the beginning of the *Bellum Civile*,

Lucan lamented the fact that Rome wasted its energies on internal conflict when it could have

been expanding the borders of its empire (1.13-20); now the immense wealth and territory of the

outside world has been brought within the confines of the palace, as the scope of Roman

authority and the ambitions of the ruler of the Roman world are devoted only to the house of the

Ptolemaic kings.

The Roman world has been contained within the palace of Alexandria in two ways: first

because the wealth of Egypt is comparable to that of the empire, and second because of the

presence of Caesar, whose fate is now the same as that of the community as a whole. At this

point in the poem, Pompey is dead, and Caesar has become the sole ruler of Rome; nevertheless,

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[106] Edwards (1993) 140ff. Schmidt (1986) 191 notes that the palace is a reflection of Cleopatra's extravagance and depravity.
[107] Johnson (1987) 86-96 argues that Lucan fears the loss of Roman freedom, which is dependent on Roman empire and cultural dominance.
[108] Schmidt (1986) *ad loc.* identifies a Vergilian model for this line: Aeneas sees fifty serving girls at Dido's court (*quinquaginta intus famuluae*, *Aen.* 1.703); Lucan's Cleopatra has a much larger crowd of attendants.

while he remains inside the palace, he is in a more precarious position than ever before. Cleopatra has been displaced from power by her brother's regent, Pothinus, who undertook the murder of Pompey with the help of the general Achillas. Relying on her sexual wiles and the wealth of the Ptolemaic house, Cleopatra persuades Caesar to ally himself with her (10.85-103). While elsewhere Lucan treats Caesar and Cleopatra as powerful and destructive figures, within the palace and in their conflict with Pothinus and Achillas they are on the defensive. Cleopatra's address to Caesar acknowledges that she and her royal brother occupy a subservient position in their own household: she tells him, "the boy himself loves his sister, provided that he were free; but his affections and his forces are under Pothinus' authority" (*puer ipse sororem,/ sit modo liber, amat; sed habet sub iure Pothini/ adfectus ensesque suos,* 10.94-6). For Caesar's part, when he entered the palace in Alexandria and aligned himself with Cleopatra, he put himself at risk. J. Tracy, in his reading of Book 10, points out that Pothinus takes the dominant role which Caesar claimed earlier in the epic: Pothinus initiates the conflict between Caesar and the Egyptians, and he asserts his control over the course of the struggle.[109] Caesar, by contrast, becomes weak, fearful, and even womanish inside the palace: "wrath and fear touch his heart…like a boy unfit for war or a woman inside captured walls, he seeks the protection of the house" (*tangunt animos iraeque metusque…ceu puer inbellis uel captis femina muris,/ quaerit tuta domus,* 10.443; 458-9).[110] E. Berti argues that Caesar's fear and uncertainty is the result of his claustrophobia, and that he loses his nerve when he is besieged in the palace.[111] The claustrophobia at the close of the poem, however, does not affect Caesar alone: rather, the

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[109] Tracy (2009) 368.

[110] Cf. *BC* 10.434-467 for numerous verbs of fearing, with Caesar as the subject.

[111] Berti (2000) 294-5. Tracy (2009) 372-3 disagrees with this interpretation, pointing out that Caesar's choice to take refuge in the palace is a result of his fear, rather than its cause. Lucan's extended treatment of Caesar's terror once he is trapped in the palace, however, suggests to me that while he may have been afraid before entering the palace, the reader is meant to see that his confinement increased his anxiety.

relatively confined space of the palace in Alexandria is now a source of fear for the entire Roman world, as the future of the empire depends on the outcome of a struggle that is limited both in human involvement and geographical scope.

Although the struggle between Caesar and the Egyptian forces takes place almost entirely within the palace in Alexandria, this battle is no less globally significant than the previous contests in the civil war. Indeed, Caesar's near encounter with death, when it appears that Pothinus and Achillas will defeat him, makes the struggle in the palace a major historical event: Lucan observes that "because of the great danger to Caesar, one day could have gone down in glory and history" (*potuit discrimine summo/ Caesaris una dies in famam et saecula mitti,* 10.532-3).[112] The battle in the palace calls the security and strength of Roman dominance into question. Just as Cato claimed to decide the fate of Rome from inside his *domus*, and Pompey's relationship with Lesbos pointed to the significance of the ruler's house for the political community, at the close of the *Bellum Civile* the Roman world is reduced to the space of the ruler's house. The narrative of the civil war takes the reader on a progress through the Roman empire, and thus demonstrates the vastness of Caesar's realm, but ultimately his victory undermines the state he has conquered: the extent of Roman territory and the life of the community is subsumed by a single man and a single house.

V. Conclusion

The frescoes from Villa A at Oplontis, the *cena Trimalchionis*, and critical moments of the *Bellum Civile* all point to a relationship between the empire and the house (or houses) of the

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[112] See also *BC* 10.420, 426, 485. Cf. Hardie (1993) 7-11 on Caesar as "the imperial Everyman, without whom there is no independent action" (7).

powerful. At Villa A, images that recall military victory and the splendor of the Greek East allow viewers to go on a fantasy journey to far-off regions of the Roman world, and thus to experience the expansion of Roman power. In the *Satyricon*, Trimalchio claims a position of authority by transforming his house into a model empire. While the *Bellum Civile* is distinctive for the extent of the landscape depicted in the poem, the fate of the Roman world and of the cosmos itself is decided within the boundaries of the ruler's house. The houses in all of these examples enact a progress through the territory subject to Roman rule, whether they allow us to visit the empire while remaining in the house (as at Oplontis and Trimalchio's estate), or whether they reduce a war for the empire to a battle for a palace (as in the end of the *Bellum Civile*). The equation between the *domus* of the ruler and the empire as a whole speaks to the extent to which Roman identity was bound up in Rome's status as a world power, and to the ruler's responsibility for upholding that power and thus for protecting what it meant to be Roman. While Petronius and Lucan suggest that the dominance of the ruler destabilizes the community, in the next chapter I will consider the ways in which the absolute ruler was understood to protect and preserve the community.

In her treatment of the significance of the domestic sphere in the Augustan period, K. Milnor observed that the house became "the place where politics was felt most deeply, expressed most profoundly, and played out on an emotive and moral level not achieved in the more formal sphere of the state."[113] Lucan and Petronius are also concerned with the relationship between house and state, but they emphasize the special significance of the house of the ruler in defining the life of the community. To identify the ruler as the center (in Geertz's sense of the term) was to associate him with the institutions, ideals, and modes of self-presentation that were critical to

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[113] Milnor (2005) 304.

the identity of the ruling class at Rome. In the early imperial period, the ruler's house became the center, not as a physical location, but as the embodiment of the problematic relationship between individual and community, the space that proclaimed it impossible to distinguish between the life of one and the fate of the whole.

Chapter 5. Intimate Politics: Ruler and Ruled in the Roman House and the *Bellum Civile*

I. Introduction

Dionysius of Halicarnassus, a Greek antiquarian writing in Rome in the first century CE, distinguished the Romans from the Greeks in part because of the peculiarly close relationship he described between the officials of the Roman state and the citizens of the *res publica*. He observes that, while the Athenians and Spartans took steps to punish those who were negligent in managing public business,

> they took no precautions and set no guard over the affairs of the household, since they considered the gate of the courtyard to be the boundary-marker of freedom in life. But the Romans, after opening up the house and extending the office of the censors as far as the bedroom, established overseer and guard over what took place there, since they believed the master should not be cruel in the punishment of slaves, nor the father harsh or mild beyond the norm in the rearing of his children, nor the husband unjust in association with his wedded wife, nor children heedless of their old fathers, nor legitimate brothers litigious for the greater share instead of an equal portion, nor should symposia and drunkenness last all night, nor should there be recklessness and ruin of youths, nor abandoning the ancestral rites of sacrifices and burials, nor anything done contrary to what was fitting and advantageous to the state.[1]

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[1] τῶν δὲ κατ' οἰκίαν γενομένων οὔτε πρόνοιαν οὔτε φυλακὴν ἐποιοῦντο, τὴν αὔλειον θύραν ἑκάστου ὅρον εἶναι τῆς ἐλευθερίας τοῦ βίου νομίζοντες. Ῥωμαῖοι δὲ πᾶσαν ἀναπετάσαντες οἰκίαν καὶ μέχρι τοῦ δωματίου τὴν ἀρχὴν τῶν τιμητῶν προαγαγόντες ἁπάντων ἐποίησαν ἐπίσκοπον καὶ φύλακα τῶν ἐν αὐταῖς γινομένων, οὔτε δεσπότην οἰόμενοι δεῖν ὠμὸν εἶναι περὶ τὰς τιμωρίας οἰκετῶν οὔτε πατέρα πικρὸν ἢ μαλθακὸν πέρα τοῦ μετρίου περὶ τέκνων ἀγωγὰς οὔτε ἄνδρα περὶ κοινωνίαν γαμετῆς γυναικὸς ἄδικον οὔτε παῖδας γηραιῶν ἀπειθεῖς πατέρων οὔτε ἀδελφοὺς γνησίους τὸ πλεῖον ἀντὶ τοῦ ἴσου διώκοντας, οὐ συμπόσια καὶ μέθας παννυχίους, οὐκ ἀσελγείας καὶ φθορὰς ἡλικιωτῶν νέων, οὐχ ἱερῶν ἢ ταφῶν προγονικὰς τιμὰς ἐκλιπούσας, οὐκ ἄλλο τῶν παρὰ τὸ καθῆκον ἢ συμφέρον τῇ πόλει πραττομένων οὐδέν. (Dion. Halic. *Roman Antiquities* 20.13.2-3).

C. Edwards suggests that, in Dionysius' account of the Greek world, "citizens were able to behave as they pleased in their own homes," while in Rome "it was felt to be to the advantage of the state that the personal lives of its citizens be subject to relentless scrutiny."[2] The Romans sacrificed their privacy for the public good, or rather they had no conception that they were or should be entitled to escape judgment from the wider community. Yet in addition to emphasizing the "relentless scrutiny" that Roman citizens endured, Dionysius' narrative also raises a deeper issue in defining the relationship between citizen and state: the lives that citizens lead in their homes and among their families are central to the life of the state. For the Romans, the door of the house did not mark the boundary between public and private life, as it did in the Greek world, but instead served as the entrance to the community's most vital concerns.

H. Arendt, distinguishing between Greek and Roman conceptions of privacy, makes the intriguing remark that "the full development of the life of hearth and family into an inner and private space we owe to the extraordinary political sense of the Roman people who, unlike the Greeks never sacrificed the private to the public, but on the contrary understood that these two realms could exist only in the form of coexistence."[3] In one sense, Dionysius' account of the Roman house is very different from Arendt's, as he sees it not as "an inner and private space," but as a space exposed to the eye of the state. Yet Dionysius does imply that the house and state "exist only in the form of coexistence:" the state depended on its citizens observing certain norms and behaviors within their own houses, and thus to be a Roman citizen was to open up one's house, and to reveal oneself, to the state.

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[2] Edwards (1993) 30.

[3] Arendt (1958; 2nd ed. 1998) 59. Arendt also claims that for the Romans, to have a house, to own private property, was essential to having a location in the world: "to have no private place of one's own (like a slave) meant to be no longer human" (64).

The emperor's position as a wholly public figure, then, was not without precedent in Roman culture. The total exposure of the emperor to the public eye meant that he experienced, to an extreme degree, a quintessential aspect of Roman life: Dionysius' Romans endure the eye of the censors in their own houses, but the emperor is subject to the gaze of all members of the polity. While Dionysius demonstrates the interdependence of the state and the households of its citizens in Roman thought, the emperor transformed this conception of the significance of the citizen house: under one-man rule, the life of the entire community could be understood to be bound up in a single house, that of the emperor.

In the previous four chapters, I have considered privacy as the ability both to avoid scrutiny and to act without public consequence, and I have argued that the relationship between ruler and ruled in the early imperial period was understood as one of mutual vulnerability. The emperor, defined by his lack of privacy, was always exposed to public view, and his actions, no matter where they took place, had a determining influence on the life of the state. The vulnerability of the ruler, therefore, was not simply a concern for those in power, but also for those subject to him. In this chapter, I will show how the joining of the ruler's fate to that of the community was expressed in terms of a familial bond between ruler and people. I focus on Lucan's *Bellum Civile*, in which one-man rule is imagined to mean not only the elevation of the ruler above the rest of the community, but also the development of intimacy between ruler and ruled that transcends traditional familial ties and rewrites the definition of the family. The *Bellum Civile* is a particularly important text for understanding this transformation: it addresses at once the destruction that results from civil war and the ways in which this conflict actually produces a new community.

Like "privacy," intimacy is a problematic term to apply to the ancient world, as it is often

rooted in modern discussions of emotions, love, the body, and the inwardness of the self.[4] I use

the architecture of the Roman house to define intimacy in terms of inclusion, reciprocity, and

access to power: based on the evidence from Pompeii, I examine the way in which domestic

space was organized to promote different degrees of intimacy between the *dominus* and

outsiders. While scholars often focus on how the *dominus* used his house to advertise his

superior authority, I argue that certain spaces in the house also served to integrate the outsider

into the household, and thus to emphasize the relationship of mutual obligation that he shared

with his host.[5] Because the house was one of the key environments for interaction between

dominant and subordinate players in Roman society, evidence for domestic space allows us to

establish the connection between intimacy and power as part of a broader cultural phenomenon.

In Lucan's *Bellum Civile*, I focus on the interactions between commanders and troops. Caesar,

Pompey, and Cato all form new ties of obligation with their men that displace and surpass the

bonds between kinsmen. Leaders and soldiers show their devotion to one another particularly in

the case of funeral rites and care of the wounded. The mutual devotion between ruler and ruled

becomes the basis of identity for the new political community.

II. Intimacy in the Roman House

For the elite Roman man, the house was one of the main environments in which he put

himself on display to his community, and the spatial arrangements of Roman houses facilitated

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[4] Cf. Arendt (1958), e.g. "the intimacy of the heart" (39); "the discovery of the intimate" (46). The essays in Berlant
(2000) explore the role of intimacy in contemporary political discourse.
[5] On scholarly attention to the perspective of the *dominus*,

different types of interactions between the *dominus* and his visitors.[6] According to the literary

tradition, the *salutatio*, the daily morning ceremony in which the *dominus* received his clients,

took place in the atrium, the main courtyard of the house; more privileged guests might be

invited to meet with the *dominus* in a cubiculum, a small room equipped with a bed for the host

and an antechamber for his visitors.[7] The spatial arrangements of Roman houses established

different degrees of intimacy between the *dominus* and his visitors. The guest's relationship to

the *dominus* determined whether he was allowed to enter a relatively secluded cubiculum or was

expected to remain in the atrium, and thus the location of a guest in the house also reflected (to

an extent) the significance of his association with his host.[8] Yet whatever the level of access that

the visitor enjoyed, upon entering the house he became (if only temporarily) a member of the

household: as M. Grahame explains, "once received into the house the stranger may be converted

into another social type, the visitor, whom we may regard as being a temporary inhabitant."[9] I

argue that the space of the Roman elite house served to produce and emphasize an intimacy

between the *dominus* and his visitors, in that it included guests in the daily life of the household,

and emphasized the reciprocity between the *dominus* and outsiders.

Recent scholarship has cautioned against an overly-strict categorization of ancient

domestic space: different rooms could serve a variety of functions, depending (for example) on

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[6] On how the plan of the Roman house allowed the *dominus* to display himself to his visitors, see especially Drerup (1959) and Wallace-Hadrill (1994). For an attempt to reconstruct the life of the house from the perspective of different members of the household, rather than of the guest, see George (1997).

[7] Standard treatments of the development of the atrium include Brown (1961) 14-15; Dwyer (2010; orig. 1997); Leach (2004) 31-3. On the definition of "cubiculum" and the range of functions of this type of room inside the house, see Anguissola (2010), especially 5-35 and 69-182. As discussed in Chapter 2, the validity of the traditional terminology for identifying and describing spaces within the Roman house have been disputed; I adopt the traditional terms here for convenience. See Allison (2004), discussed further below, for a critique of applications of the literary record to the material evidence.

[8] Wallace-Hadrill (1994) 58; Anguissola (2012) 45. See Grahame (1997) and (2000) on morphic mapping, a method used to reconstruct paths of movement through a house, and thus to determine the relative accessibility of different parts of the house.

[9] Grahame (1997) 142.

the season and time of day, and archaeological evidence (particularly artifacts) complicates or contradicts standard interpretations of ancient literature on the house.[10] Furthermore, a house built in Pompeii in the 2nd century BCE was unlikely to have been used in exactly the same way from the time of construction until the eruption of Vesuvius in 79 CE. These variables make it ill-advised to insist on a unified interpretation for the use of space in all Pompeian houses: instead, we need to consider the range of possible activities that took place within the house, and how a given space could influence the relationship between those who took part in these activities. To arrive at some understanding of the relationship between the elite *dominus* and his visitors, it is valuable to try to analyze the rooms of the Roman house according to several broad criteria: what activities could have taken place in a given space, who was intended to use it and what was their relationship to the household (the master, other members of the household, guests), how many people could have occupied it, how difficult it was to reach this room from other parts of the house, and the rooms from which it was most isolated or to which it was most closely linked.[11]

Differentiating between spaces in the house based on access to them and activities that took place there is important for understanding how social hierarchy might be reflected in domestic space. In his influential study of the houses of Pompeii and Herculaneum, A. Wallace-Hadrill argued that "one can broadly distinguish the areas of public activity or business, which cluster round the main entrance--the atrium and tablinum and perhaps the cubicula and smaller rooms opening on the atrium--from the areas of private entertainment, which can only be reached

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[10] See especially Allison (1993) and (2004); Nevett (2011).
[11] See Anguissola (2010) 429-30.

by passing through further barriers and characteristically cluster round the peristyle."[12] The

atrium wing was easier to access than the peristyle, which would have required special

permission from the *dominus*; visitors who were allowed into the peristyle enjoyed greater access

to the house and thus a more intimate relationship with the household. Beyond the question of

how and when visitors had access to these reception spaces, we must also consider how members

of the household approached them, and how they carried out other household business in the

presence of visitors. M. Grahame has argued that "to function as a formal reception space, a

space must be relatively segregated with respect to the rest of the configuration, but it must not

be too removed…One key strategy for inhabitants to signal their different status is to 'appear'

from part of the house to which strangers are denied access."[13] The organization of space within

the Roman house would encourage visitors to understand the distinction between host and guest

as well as between guest and guest.

Yet material evidence suggests that the distinction between household and outsider was

not always clearly expressed. Although the atrium could serve as a formal reception space, other

activities probably also took place there. In a study of thirty houses in Pompeii, P. Allison

identified loom weights, wooden chests, and storage vessels as the most frequent small finds:

while the literary record primarily associates the atrium with the *salutatio*, religious life, and

display, these finds suggest that "the atrium had a fairly utilitarian function, acting as a service

court around which mundane household activities revolved."[14] Evidence for cloth production in

the house is in fact most common in the room typically identified as the atrium, which suggests

that "cloth production was a highly visible activity and therefore an important part of the 'public'

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[12] Wallace-Hadrill (1994) 47. Lauritsen (2012) presents the evidence for barriers in Campanian houses (doors, partitions, and curtains).
[13] Grahame (1997) 160.
[14] Allison (1993) 4-6.

activities of the household."[15] It should be noted that some of these items (like storage vessels) were portable, and so could have been moved to different parts of the house at different times.[16] The atrium, furthermore, might not have been used for weaving during the *salutatio*, and attendants at the morning ritual would not necessarily have observed anyone weaving even if they saw looms in the atrium of the patron's house. Yet the fact that guests of the household, even the relatively less privileged visitors to the atrium, might have witnessed these activities or the equipment related to them suggests that distinguishing between visitor and inhabitant was not always the chief concern of ancient domestic space. In analyzing the way in which the Roman house shaped and expressed relationships between the *dominus* and his visitors, we should consider how the house was designed not just to exclude the visitor but to include him, and not only for special activities such as audiences and banquets but also as a participant in the more "mundane" life of the household.

It is important to observe that the literary and material evidence for the Roman house derive from very different social strata: the atrium of even an elite house in Pompeii does not form an exact parallel to atria described in literary sources produced by the highest aristocracy. The opportunity for differentiation of space according to function, furthermore, was much greater in larger houses than in smaller ones: a smaller household might have required the use of the atrium for storage, while a larger house probably would not. Nevertheless, the tasks associated with daily life may not have been at odds with social engagement and display even at the most rarefied levels of Roman society. Augustus, for example, made it known that his clothing was produced by the female members of his family, and the act of spinning wool was

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[15] Allison (2004) 148.
[16] George (1997) 303.

associated closely with the virtuous Roman *matrona*.[17] Even storage vessels might advertise the

prosperity and thus the social status of the *dominus*.[18] To expose a visitor to the "mundane"

aspects of household life, then, would not necessarily undermine the impression of the authority

of the *dominus*. The evidence for the variety of activities that took place in the atrium points to a

more complicated relationship between *dominus* and outsider, one that allowed not simply for

the distinction between host and visitors, but also for the inclusion of the guest in the household.

Although it is less frequently categorized as a reception space than the atrium, the

cubiculum also facilitated interactions between house and guest, and served to emphasize the

bond between the *dominus* and his visitors. For the purposes of this discussion, I adopt A.

Anguissola's definition of the cubiculum as a small room that included an alcove for a bed (a

pattern of mosaic tiles indicates the placement of the bed, which usually does not survive *in

situ*).[19] The cubiculum is a particularly interesting and complex space because it served such a

wide range of functions, from traditionally private activities such as sleeping and sex, to business

dealings and entertaining guests. A. Riggsby, who has analyzed the usages of the term cubiculum

in the literary record, argued that public and private "are primarily loci of responsibility rather

than of rights. Being in a given area does not so much allow behavior as it compels actions

'appropriate' to that space."[20] This differentiation of space with respect to suitable behavior

implies that those who enter a space are responsible for acting appropriately, and thus for

conforming to the expectations for that space. In the cubiculum, because of the diversity of

activities that this space could accommodate, both inhabitant and visitor would be most

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[17] On the symbolic resonance of weaving, see Milnor (2005) 27-32, 83-85.
[18] Purcell (1995) argues for economic success as an important component of elite self-presentation; his discussion
focuses on agricultural production at the villa but the same values might be at work here.
[19] Anguissola (2010) 7-8.
[20] Riggsby (1997) 36.

conscious of the constraints on their actions. While the cubiculum as a space is suitable both for activities which are expected to remain out of sight and for interaction between the *dominus* and his guest, both parties must choose their actions with consideration of their relationship to the other. The cubiculum thus heightens the awareness of the obligations that unite host and guest.

According to A. Anguissola's analysis, the standard cubiculum during the period of the first and second styles at Pompeii was divided into two parts: an elongated alcove for a bed, and an antechamber, often including other furniture, for visitors. These two parts of the plan were distinguished by decorative elements: pilasters in stucco and paint marked the boundary between alcove and antechamber, and distinct schemes of frescoes also delineated the two areas. Despite this established plan, cubicula could be distinguished from each other within a household according to their location and ease of access. Cubicula reserved for sleeping, for example, would have been more isolated, while more accessible cubicula would be suited to daytime activities and reception of small numbers of guests.[21] Even the clear distinction between alcove and antechamber, however, disappeared in the periods of the third and fourth styles: decorative schemes that marked the division between these two areas gave way to mosaics and paintings that were uniform over all surfaces.[22] While the placement of furniture would still have signaled which areas were intended for the *dominus* and which for his guests, the decline of the practice of differentiation through decoration indicates that signaling the distinction between visitor and host was no longer the main purpose of the decoration. This is not to say that the *dominus* in the imperial period no longer wanted to assert his authority within his household, but rather that domestic decorative schemes could serve functions other than hierarchical differentiation.

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[21] On the first and second style cubiculum, see Anguissola (2010) 7-9, 300; also 71-115 for fuller discussion of the development of the cubiculum according to the chronology of the canonical four styles.
[22] Ibid. 302-8. Anguissola includes the size of the entrance to the cubiculum as a factor in its usefulness as a reception space (240).

A further defining spatial characteristic of the cubiculum was its close relationship to other rooms within the house. By the Augustan period in Pompeii, cubicula often formed three-part suites with a triclinium and exedra, even in more modest houses.[23] In A. Wallace-Hadrill's view, the association of a cubiculum and triclinium helped to draw explicit attention to the relative privilege of guests: were they permitted to enter the triclinium only, or were they invited into the cubiculum as well?[24] Yet the association of triclinium and cubiculum also meant that even visitors who did not enter the cubiculum enjoyed a certain degree of access to it: they might be able to see into it, or at least to be in its vicinity. Conversely, the joining of triclinium and cubiculum suggested that it was essential even for relatively secluded rooms to be able to participate in the social life of the household.[25] The variety of activities that took place within the cubiculum or in proximity to it meant that this kind of room "[took] on and even [took] over some of the associations of the *domus* as a whole; it [was] a place where at least some of the rules of public behavior were relaxed."[26] If the cubiculum symbolized the *domus* as a whole, then guests who entered into or came near the cubiculum in some sense were welcomed as part of the household itself, in that they were allowed into the space that facilitated the widest range of household functions.

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[23] Ibid. 209-13. She argues that the tripartite suite was a standard feature of the town house until the Augustan age; it then disappeared in the town house but became common in villa architecture. When this feature returned to town houses later in the first century CE, it probably reminded viewers of contemporary villas rather than older town houses.

[24] Wallace-Hadrill (1994) 58.

[25] See Leach (2004) 49 on the propriety of receiving dependents and guests in the cubiculum: she notes that this kind of use of the cubiculum could be associated with exceptional conscientiousness and generosity (Cicero's brother Quintus) or with lewdness (Verres). A recent study of evidence for barriers in Pompeian houses has shown that cubicula near the peristyle, in the rear of the house, were less likely to have evidence of barriers (doors, partitions, or curtains) than those near the atrium: boundaries were less important for regulating spaces which were accessible to smaller numbers of people. See Lauritsen (2012) 105-6.

[26] Riggsby (1997) 47.

The Roman house was built not only to satisfy the needs of its inhabitants, but also with the expectation that a wider population would make use of its space and thus would play an important role in the normal functioning of the life of the household. While the *domus* served as a meeting place between the *dominus* and the outside world, the *dominus* did not invite guests to his house only in order to demonstrate his mastery over his visitors and the broader community of which both were a part. When he received members of the community at his house, for the *salutatio* or for more restricted gatherings, he also advertised the bonds of obligation that joined him to his clients and friends. In passing from the more general to the more selective reception spaces in the house, the privileged visitor entered into an intimate relationship with the *dominus* and with the household as a whole. This intimacy between host and guest did not contradict the dominant status of the master of the house: instead, it reinforced the privileged nature of the bond between the *dominus* and those who attended him. For a visitor to become part of the household of his host suggested that he (if only temporarily) put aside the obligations that tied him to his own house, in favor of his relationship with the *dominus* of the house he visited.[27]

Because the *dominus* received and interacted with members of the broader community in his house, the domestic sphere provides key evidence for the experience of power relations in the Roman world. I have argued that Roman domestic space created an intimacy between the master of the house and his guests, as outsiders became included in the household and host and guest recognized their obligations to one another. This conception of intimacy is also valuable for considering the relationship between ruler and ruled outside the house. In the next section, I examine the privileged bond between the powerful and those subordinate to them in Lucan's *Bellum Civile*. In this epic, which narrates the rise of autocracy and in which familial bonds, and

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[27] Grahame (2000) 74-83 contends that inter-household bonds could undermine the internal hierarchy of any given household.

the obligations associated with them, take center stage, the extraordinary intimacy between ruler and ruled is one of the most important elements of the transformation brought about by one-man rule.

III. Intimacy, the Crowd, and One-Man Rule in the *Bellum Civile*

Lucan's *Bellum Civile*, which narrates not just the fall of the Republic but also the birth of a new form of rule and a new Rome, portrays an intimacy between ruler and ruled that calls traditional family relations into question. The intimacy between master and subordinate is not only a concern for Lucan, however: as discussed in the previous section, the space of the Roman house drew attention to the intimate bond between the *dominus* and his visitors, as the guest became integrated into the household of his host, and host and guest were joined together through their shared obligations. An extreme form of the intimacy between the Roman householder and his visitors is essential to the presentation of power relations in the *Bellum Civile*.

M. Leigh has observed that, in Lucan's epic, "the relationship of soldiers to their general transcends the conventional concept of loyalty. As important as the spiritual inseparability of commander and troops, moreover, is the distance at which this [army] stands from the traditional values of the nation they once served and now invade."[28] While civil war undermines traditional conceptions of family ties and the obligations that unite kinsmen, Caesar's new regime is not simply destructive: it also forges new bonds between members of the community. I argue that the intimacy between soldier and commander that Lucan represents in the context of civil war is

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[28] Leigh (1997) 208. On the breakdown of the traditional definition of *pietas* and thus of respect for family ties in the *Bellum Civile*, see Roller (2001) 20-53.

critical to his understanding of one-man rule. First, I consider the role of family bonds in the epic and their significance for the wider community. Next, I focus on the representation of funeral rites and caring for the body: although these activities are described as the responsibility of kinsmen, commanders and soldiers perform them for one another. In the *Bellum Civile*, the intimate bonds of obligation and devotion between members of family and community are ultimately displaced by the bonds between Caesar and the state. Yet Caesar's opponents also foster and promote the bonds between ruler and community: Pompey and Cato, the two other primary leaders in the *Bellum Civile*, care for their followers and arouse devotion and dedication that competes with or overtakes established ties of kinship. The interactions that Caesar, Pompey, and Cato experience with their men demonstrate that the rise of one-man rule means not just the elevation of one man above the rest, but the formation of a new family that joins the ruler and the community.

To illuminate the nature of the relationship between ruler and ruled in Lucan's text, and the significance of this relationship for defining the community, I turn to the work of L. Berlant, a scholar of contemporary American literature. In a study of the development of national identity in nineteenth-century America, Berlant argues for the importance of "fantasy" in sustaining a nation: through fantasy, the stories, occasions, monuments, and imagery that define the collective (e.g., the Fourth of July or the Statue of Liberty) also shape the consciousness of the individual. To produce this kind of fantasy, states require a "National Symbolic," a set of practices and ideals that inspire a citizen to desire to belong to the collective, and to believe that union with his or her fellow-citizens is a critical component of personal identity: citizens who share in national identity believe that "the accident of birth within a geographical/political boundary transforms individuals into subjects of collectively-held history…[this] pseudo-genetic condition not only

affects profoundly the citizen's subjective experience of his/her political rights, but also of civil life, private life, the life of the body itself."[29] While Berlant conceives of the centrality of national identity as a characteristic of life in the modern state, this emphasis on the value of belonging to a people would not have been foreign to a Roman audience. One of the essential problems in the *Bellum Civile* is the rupture of the bonds that join the members of the Roman community. At the opening of the poem, Lucan calls the Romans "a powerful people, turned against its own innards with its victorious right hand" (*populumque potentem/ in sua uictrici conuersum uiscera dextra*, 1.2-3); here, civil conflict is described as suicide, suggesting that the people share a body even as they tear it apart. Later, he complains that Rome suffers most from violence that is the work of her own people: no foreign enemy was as destructive as "the deep wounds from a citizen's right hand" (*alta…ciuilis uulnera dextrae*, 1.32). The familial ties that Caesar, Pompey, and Cato form with their followers perform the work of a national fantasy: even as these leaders and their men are engaged in a conflict within their own community, they assert the value of their relations with one another. To the extent that the community can survive civil war, it is the extreme devotion to one another that we see in the interactions between troops and commander that will sustain it.

I begin with Caesar. The *Bellum Civile* includes numerous scenes in which Caesar confronts and converses with crowds of his soldiers, and these scenes are a distinctive feature of the epic: Lucan's attention to the will and expression of the masses is unusual in epic poetry. The prominence of crowd scenes has attracted some attention in recent scholarship, especially for the

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[29] Berlant (1994) 5-20 (quote on 20). Berlant's analysis has been inspired by the work of Benedict Andersen. Rose (1996) also argues for the essential role of fantasy in sustaining and creating nations; she uses Israel, Britain, and South Africa as case studies to investigate "the link between historic destiny and the fantasies which support and lend to that destiny their shape" and to argue "that there is the most intimate relation between what goes on underneath the surface--call it the unconscious--and territorial stake-out of people, places, and things" (21).

question of how Lucan judges the crowds to whom he gives voice. Does the poet make the common people the heroes of the epic, or does he see rulers and crowds as "aspects of the same evil?"[30] By "crowds," I mean groups of both soldiers and civilian citizens, as both types appear in the poem. While Lucan often shows more sympathy for the civilian crowds than for the troops (especially Caesar's men), it is not necessary to draw too great a distinction between them in terms of the relationship that each has with Caesar, as commander and as future leader. P. Hardie has argued that narratives of mutinies in early imperial historiography (especially in Tacitus) "serve as a kind of laboratory in which to air issues that touch on the relationship between the emperor and the potentially unruly Roman people as a whole;" likewise, the first book of the *Bellum Civile* concentrates on the relationship between Caesar and the crowd, both civilian and military.[31] The key issue for my argument, however, is not that civilian and military crowds play similar roles in the epic. Rather, the fact that these two types of crowds are interchangeable demonstrates that the *dux*, the military leader, threatens the bonds that join members of a community and that join soldiers to their fellow-citizens and kinsmen. The position of the *dux*, moreover, takes on a special significance in the *Bellum Civile*, when the military victor will become the absolute ruler of the Roman world.

The way in which the Caesarians transfer their allegiance from family and fellow-Romans to Caesar himself is at issue in the first book of the *Bellum Civile*, when Laelius, a Caesarian, states his devotion to his commander in terms of his rejection of his family: "If you order me to bury my sword in my brother's chest and my parent's throat and the guts of my pregnant wife, I will do all of it although my hand is unwilling" (*pectore si fratris gladium*

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[30] Johnson (1987) 113. For a more positive assessment of the crowd in Lucan's poem, see Berthold (1975) and Borgo (1976). Gall (2005) is the most recent general outline of the appearance and function of the crowd in the epic, and how Lucan's use of the crowd distinguishes him from other epic poets.
[31] Hardie (2011) 15, 20.

iuguloque parentis/ condere me iubeas plenaeque in uiscera partu/ coniugis, inuita peragam

tamen omnia dextra, 1.376-8). Laelius makes his oath in the company of soldiers, but his speech

brings his family, and the obligations that join him to the citizen community, onto the battlefield.

As M. B. Roller has shown, Laelius' rhetoric "implicitly acknowledges the power of claims of

kinship" as it indicates "that one might normally consider oneself bound…by the obligations of

pietas."[32] Roller argues that the Caesarian perspective in the *Bellum Civile* is set up in opposition

to the ethical system of the Roman elite: allegiance to Caesar takes precedence over the

traditional emphasis on *pietas* toward the family. Professions of allegiance to Caesar in the epic

resemble historical loyalty oaths, preserved in inscriptions, that citizens swore to Caesar and the

Julio-Claudian emperors. In both cases, the oath-taker pledged his loyalty to Caesar over the

demands of *pietas* toward his kinsmen and fellow citizens.[33] Yet as we will see, Caesar's role in

the epic goes beyond overturning traditional values: he does not simply put an end to *pietas*

towards the family, but takes on a familial role in his relationship with his followers. Although it

is far from certain that we are supposed to admire Caesar for his actions towards his troops

during the battle at Pharsalus, he nevertheless usurps the role that they expect their kinsmen to

fulfill.[34]

While Caesar expects his troops to show him the kind of absolute loyalty that the partisan

Laelius professes, the Caesarians themselves are not always so sanguine about what it means to

transfer their *pietas* to Caesar. In Book 5 of the epic, the Caesarians threaten to mutiny,

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[32] Roller (2001) 43. On *pietas* as both devotion and obedience, and as a virtue practiced by both parents and children, see Saller (1994) 102-132 (discussed further below).
[33] Roller (2001) 59-63.
[34] See Walde (2006) 55-9 for positive responses to Caesar in the reception of Lucan's epic in European literature (e.g. Dante, Voltaire).

exhausted by their many years of service to Caesar.[35] The soldiers contrast their collective

devotion to Caesar with the care they expect from their families at their deaths. Their concern

about their deaths is hardly surprising: funeral rites are the key mechanism for expressing respect

for family ties in this epic, and in martial epic more generally. The troops speak with one voice

when they command Caesar to recognize their weakness, their old age, and the length of their

service to him. They beg Caesar, "now look upon our white hair and our weak hands, and see our

useless arms. Our life is wasted away, we have spent our life's span in wars: release old men to

death" (*iam respice canos/ inualidasque manus et inanis cerne lacertos./ usus abit uitae, bellis*

consumpsimus aeuum: ad mortem dimitte senes, 5.274-7). Their complaints are communal, but

they ask for a death that is appropriate for an individual member of a family and community,

rather than for a nameless soldier. Here is their wish (which they sarcastically refer to as an

improba vota, a shameless prayer, 5.277):

> *non duro liceat morientia caespite membra*
> *ponere, non anima galeam fugiente ferire*
> *atque oculos morti clausuram quaerere dextram,*
> *coniugis inlabi lacrimis, unique paratum*
> *scire rogum.*   (5.278-282)

> Not to set dying limbs on the hard earth, not to strike the helmet with our fleeing
> breath and not to search for a right hand to close our eyes for death; [but] to fall
> amidst the tears of a wife, and to know the pyre built for one.

The idealized funeral scene the soldiers present to their commander focuses on the death of a

single individual ("the pyre built for one"), and on the respect shown to him on his death by his

wife, for whom mourning is a responsibility, not a matter of chance (as it would be for

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[35] Lucan never identifies the geographical setting of this mutiny, but it is probably based on a mutiny of the Caesarians in Placentia, reported in Appian and Dio. See Fantham (1985) for the contrast between the epic treatment and the historical narratives of the mutiny. She sees the Book 5 mutiny as a deliberate re-working of the scene in Book 1, when Laelius reawakens the loyalty of the restive Caesarians. Notably, Caesar omits this mutiny from his own narrative of the civil war. On Caesar's *commentarii* as a source for Lucan's epic, see Masters (1992) 13-24; he argues that "Lucan's *Bellum Civile* is a deliberate counterpoise to Caesar's commentary of the same name" (17-18).

whomever the dead soldier might find to close his eyelids). This kind of death also points to the

underlying respect for the relationship between husband and wife, in that the wife's duties are

acknowledged to be meaningful and worthy of being honored by the community at large.[36] The

desire of the mutineers to die in the presence of their wives also recalls the death of a soldier at

the battle of Massilia in Book 3. Near the end of the violence, one of the dying men "seeks kisses

in silence and invites his father to close his eyes with his right hand" (*tacito tantum petit oscula*

uoltu/ inuitatque patris claudenda ad lumina dextram, 3.739-40). The death of this soldier, like

the pleas of the mutineers, underscores the fact that "a Roman wishes for a family member to be

by his side as he dies, to be there with the dying."[37] When the mutineers demand the privilege of

dying among their kinsmen, their request is not only to die in comfort, but also to die with

dignity, recognized as a member of a family and a community.

For both Laelius in Book 1 and the mutineers in Book 5, Caesar's dominance interferes

with the exchange of obligations among family members. Laelius frames his devotion to

Caesar's cause in terms of his rejection of other relationships, while the mutineers identify the

loss of a family funeral as one of the key consequences of service to their commander. In Roman

thought, these family ties are inextricably tied to public concerns: the practice of *pietas* requires

devotion to family, community, and gods. Indeed, the Romans described by Dionysius of

Halicarnassus, who admitted officials of the Roman state to stand guard over their bedrooms,

believed that family life was not separate from public concerns, but was instead essential to the

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[36] The public significance of female mourning is another key theme in the epic tradition: cf. the mourning for Hector in *Iliad* 24.

[37] Leigh (1997) 255. D'Alessandro Behr (2007) 40-1 argues that Lucan (at 7.630ff) undermines the significance of the death of an individual and of the positive value of recognition for that death: in comparison with the devastation of the battle of Pharsalus, mourning for an individual loses its meaning. Yet even after the battle, funeral rites and the failure to perform them remain a concern in the poem for both Pompeians and Caesarians: Lucan's attention to the death and funeral of Pompey in Book 8 and of the Pharsalian dead in Book 9 (both discussed below) weighs against the claim that, because of the suffering brought by civil war, a single death no longer deserves to be grieved. On the evidence for mass graves in Rome, see Hope (2000) 111.

community as a whole. The link between the family and the broader community is also fundamental to the Stoic concept of *oikeiosis* (generally translated as "affinity" or "appropriation"), which is the faculty that causes human beings to recognize and pursue their own interests and to identify with the interests of others.[38] Hierocles, a Stoic of the 2nd century CE, compared the relationship between the individual, his family, and the wider community to a series of concentric circles, spreading outward from the mind of the individual to the whole of humanity. Although Cicero was not a Stoic, he used a similar metaphor to explain human relations in his *De Officiis* two centuries before Hierocles (*Off.* 1.54).[39] R. Whitlock Blundell raises the objection that there is no direct link between love of self (personal *oikeiosis*) and love of others (social *oikeiosis*), and thus it is not clear how the Stoics imagined that we could transition between the two. Ultimately, she suggests that parents' love for their children served as an example for human behavior more generally: "by demonstrating the possibility of altruism, parental love makes clear that other kinds of human sociability need not be construed as merely a means to vulgar self-preservation."[40] In caring for their children and demonstrating this love to others, parents practiced caring for other members of the human community, and they also modeled this kind of care to those who observed them.

While Lucan himself was not necessarily a Stoic, it has been frequently observed that Stoic language and ideas play an important role in his epic narrative.[41] Stoic philosophy was well-known among the elite of Lucan's day (not least to his uncle Seneca, who was prolific in his

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[38] For a standard approach to defining *oikeiosis*, see Schofield (2003) 241-246; Reydam-Schils (2006) focuses on the development of *oikeiosis* in the Roman philosophical tradition.

[39] See Asmis (1996) 70-72, who points out that while Hierocles' series begins with the individual, Cicero's begins with the couple (husband and wife). The Roman treatment of *oikeiosis* is rooted in the perspective of the family. On Hierocles, see Inwood (1984) and Parente (1989).

[40] Whitlock Blundell (1990) 235. She suggests that the attention to the parent-child relationship in Stoic philosophy can be explained by the Stoic interest in grounding philosophical argument in everyday experience (234).

[41] See for example Brisset (1964), George (1988), D'Alessandro Behr (2007). On Stoic ideas of cosmic conflagration in the poem, see Chapter 4.

discussions of Stoic ideals and their place in Rome), and Lucan's emphasis on the importance of

family bonds might well have been influenced by Stoic thought. G. Reydam-Schils has argued

that the conception of the family as the basis of the community was especially important in Stoic

philosophy of the Roman period. In her reading of the Stoic perspective on parenthood, "care for

offspring…embodies a crucial transition from self to other…[Parenthood] on the both the human

and the cosmic level has exemplary moral value."[42] Family members who were unable to

minister to their dead were prevented not only from showing respect to their own kin, but also

from participating in relationships and responsibilities that were central to what it meant to be

human and to be part of the human community. When the mutineers demand to be allowed to

return home, they speak not only for their own interests but for a particular vision of a

community which is predicated on respect for relationships between family members.[43]

The soldiers' pleas during the mutiny in Book 5 recalls a critical moment at the beginning

of Book 2, when Rome has just received the news that Caesar has crossed the Rubicon and is

making his way to the capital. Lucan compares the city, as it prepares for the outbreak of civil

war, to a mother preparing to mourn the death of her son. The mother gazes upon her son's

corpse in shock, and has not yet begun formally to mourn: "nor does the mother, with her hair

torn, seek the arms of her slaves to cruelly beat her breast…raving she broods, and marvels at the

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[42] Reydam-Schills (2006) 119.

[43] An important objection to my discussion of Caesar's mutineers as family men is the significance of economic motives in the soldiers' discontent. The soldiers complain that, when they captured Rome, they robbed neither men nor gods and so emerged "pious with poverty" (*paupertate pii*, 273). Even the desire to profit, however, is due to their understanding of the obligations that their commander has to them: Caesar may have benefited from the victories his soldiers won for him, but without booty, they have nothing. The Caesarians also recognize, moreover, the extent of the crimes that they have committed for free. As the Caesarians explain it, serving Caesar has compelled them to commit "every crime" (*omne nefas*, 272), with no gain to show for it. Fantham (1985) 125 notes that the mutineers also contrast their previous victories during the wars in Gaul (267-8) with their current position: "in return for those real wars [Caesar] has given them civil wars." Since he has implicated them in civil crimes and deprived them of the dignity of death at home, the Caesarians argue that their commander must show himself willing to protect their interests.

disaster" (*nec mater crine soluto/ exigit ad saeuos famularum bracchia planctus…incubat amens/ miraturque malum,* 2.23-8).[44] The mutineers in Book 5 imagined the next stage of grief, when their families accept the loss and perform the rituals to honor it. The behavior of this metaphorical mother at the beginning of Book 2 also corresponds to the behavior of the *matronae* in Rome, who have assembled to express their grief for their family members and their community.[45] The women occupy the temples and overwhelm the gods with their lamentations and their prayers: "they divided up the gods, and no altar lacked a parent to show her ill-will" (*diuisere deos, et nullis defuit aris/ inuidiam factura parens*, 35-6).[46] Yet while the *matronae*, as they grieve the onset of civil war, demonstrate their respect for the bonds of citizenship and kinship, their opportunity to mourn is limited. One of the *matronae* speaks to and on behalf of the crowd:

> 'nunc,' ait 'o miserae, contundite pectora, matres,
> nunc laniate comas neue hunc differte dolorem
> et summis seruate malis. nunc flere potestas
> dum pendet fortuna ducum: cum uicerit alter
> gaudenum est.'   (2.38-42)

> "Now," she said, "wretched mothers, beat your breasts, now tear your hair, and do
> not delay your grief or save it for the worst of evils. Now you have the power to
> weep, while the fortune of the leaders hangs in the balance: when one of them has
> conquered, you must rejoice."

The soldiers believed that, should Caesar release them from their service in war, they could die in peace, mourned by their families as individuals and as private citizens, grieved for their

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[44] Cf. Fantham (1992) *ad loc.* on the shift between public and private in this passage. On the role of women and the family in Roman burial rites, see Lindsay (2000).

[45] Reydam-Schils (2006) 56 argues that parenthood, for the Stoics, was a "paradigmatic case in which we can see human bonding at work…parenthood stands for a dynamic of socialization that is part of a human being's make-up right from the start of his or her life." The centrality of parenthood in the Stoic understanding of human relationships may help to explain Lucan's attention to mothers and motherhood in Book 2, when the Roman community is on the verge of unraveling.

[46] Narducci (1973) points to the sack of Troy in *Aeneid 2* as a model for Lucan's presentation of the Roman *matronae*.

absence as kinsmen, rather than as subordinates. In contrast, the *matronae* in Rome imagine a very different future, one in which the victory of Caesar or Pompey compels them to give up their grieving for what they have lost and instead to celebrate what they have gained. The matron's pronouncement that Rome will celebrate its victor, however, does not derive only from her appreciation for the need for self-censorship under a dictator. In the new order of one-man rule, there will be no place for the grief that gives priority to respect for the bonds between private citizens. Rather, these women will demonstrate their devotion to their community by rejoicing at the success of its most important member: their new leader.

Thus far, I have argued that familial ties between spouses, parents, and children are privileged relationships in the *Bellum Civile*, and that caring for the dying and mourning the dead are two of the key mechanisms through which family members demonstrate their devotion to one another. I have also suggested that the assembly of the *matronae* early in Book 2 evokes a future in which mourning and family ties will be transformed or passed over in favor of a different bond, the relationship between ruler and community. Next, I will examine episodes from the epic in which three leaders, Caesar, Pompey, and Cato, demonstrate their devotion to their subordinates or receive respect and affection from them. Even as one-man rule, the power of the dictator or the authority of the commander, undermines traditional family ties, it also creates a new community, one which is based not on the ties between private citizens, but on the bond between all citizens and the ruler.[47]

At the battle of Pharsalus, the turning point in Lucan's account of the civil war and the event that leads to Pompey's defeat, Caesar's actions correspond to his soldiers' previous

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[47] Dinter (2013) has suggested that Lucan's vision of civil war is associated not just with destruction but with the creation of a new world order (he cites especially the "large-scale construction thematized in extensive descriptions of Caesar's military building works and landscaping" [126]). The *Bellum Civile* addresses the shape of the new community, born from civil war, as well as the loss of the old one.

demands for recognition and respect, and his attention to his troops also recalls the devotion the

matronae showed to their kinsmen and fellow-citizens in Book 2. Before the fighting begins,

Caesar claims that he can pick out specific soldiers in the crowd, and so suggests that he knows

them not as a nameless mass but as individual actors. He asks his troops, "Which soldier's sword

shall I not know? And when the quivering lance crosses the sky I shall not fail to tell from whose

arm it was thrown" (*cuius non militis ensem/ agnoscam? caelumque tremens cum lancea transit/*

dicere non fallar quo sit uibrata lacerto, 7.287-9). During the battle, Caesar notes each soldier's

actions and responses:

> inspicit et gladios, qui toti sanguine manent,
> qui niteant primo tantum mucrone cruenti,
> quae presso tremat ense manus, quis languida tela,
> quis contenta ferat, quis praestet bella iubenti,
> quem pugnare iuuet, quis uultum ciue perempto
> mutet…   (7.560-5)

> He even examines their swords, which are completely drenched in blood, which
> shine just with a bloody tip, which hand shakes with the grip of the sword, who
> holds his spear loosely, who tightly, who performs violence for his commander,
> who is pleased to fight, who changes his expression when he has killed a fellow-
> citizen.

The repetition of singular verbs and pronouns in this passage, as Caesar identifies individual men

and their particular actions during the battle, contrasts sharply with the revolt in Book 5, when

the troops spoke with a single voice. During the mutiny, the Caesarians complained, "*we* have

captured our ancestral houses….*we* have spent our life in wars" (*cepimus …patriae…tecta…*

bellis consumpsimus aeuum, 5.270, 276). The mutineers also feared that they would die untended

on the battlefield, searching for "a hand to close our eyes" (*oculos morti clausuram quaerere*

dextram, 5.280). While the soldiers at Placentia imagined that they would die in a homogenous

mass, with only a stranger to tend to them in their final moments, in fact Caesar himself is

present to recognize them and to care for their bodies. In a remarkable and gruesome moment,

Caesar uses own hands to stop the bleeding from his soldiers' wounds: "he himself presses and sets his hand against many men's wounds, which are about to spill out all their blood" (*uolnera multorum totum fusura cruorem/ opposita premit ipse manu*, 7.566-7).[48] It is Caesar, not the soldiers' wives and mothers, who acknowledges and tends to his men.

While scholars often emphasize the absolute authority of the *paterfamilias* in the Roman family and treat *pietas* as the total obedience of the son to the father, R. Saller has demonstrated that the "essence of *pietas* lay in devotion, not merely obedience or submission."[49] One of the most celebrated stories of *pietas* in the Roman literary tradition (both Valerius Maximus and Pliny the Elder discuss it) explains the origins of the Templum Pietatis, erected on the site of a prison where a devoted daughter nursed her starving mother, who was waiting to be executed.[50] Saller observes that "the object of *pietas* here is not a father or any other male authority figure, but a poor woman under sentence of death--the antithesis of power in the Roman world---…against the higher authority of the state."[51] Furthermore, *pietas* is not limited to the devotion of children to their parents, but also includes parents' love for their children: Valerius Maximus includes a catalogue of *exempla* that represent "the devoted and steady love of parents toward their children" (*pius et placidus adfectus parentium erga liberos*). The paradigmatic example of *pietas* is Aeneas' flight from Troy, in which he demonstrates his dedication to his young son as well as his aged father.[52] Caesar both receives *pietas* and shows it to others; he becomes the

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[48] Caesar's attention to the physical well-being of his subordinates is reminiscent of Epictetus' reprimand to a Roman official, that he ought to tend to his sick daughter himself, not simply provide for her medical needs (see Reydam-Schils [2006] 121). See Gagliardi (1975) *ad loc.* for how Caesar's actions are consistent with his role as the *dux par excellence.*

[49] Saller (1994) 105.

[50] Val. Max. 5.4-7; Pliny *NH* 7.121.

[51] Saller (1994) 107. It is worth noting, however, that the daughter's act of *pietas*, while originally contrary to state authority, was usurped by the state, in that it inspired a state monument.

[52] As noted in Saller (1994) 105. The importance of the *Aeneid* for Lucan's poem is a major concern in scholarship: in addition to the commentaries cited in the bibliography, all of which identify numerous parallels between Vergil

primary object of devotion for his followers, and in turn he takes on the obligations of caring for them that their family members once observed.

Even as Caesar is unrelenting in his dedication to the crime of civil war and as he urges his men to commit atrocities on his behalf, he also asserts his privileged relationship with his soldiers.[53] At the close of his address to his troops before the battle, Caesar distinguishes between the enemies who fight back and those who (wisely) choose to flee:

> *uos tamen hoc oro, iuuenes, ne caedere quisquam*
> *hostis terga uelit: ciuis qui fugerit esto.*
> *sed, dum tela micant, non uos pietatis imago*
> *ulla nec aduersa conspecti fronte parentes*
> *commoueant; uoltus gladio turbate uerendos.*   (7.318-323)

> But I beg you, boys, that none of you wish to cut down an enemy from behind: let
> whoever flees be a fellow-citizen. But, while the spears gleam, do not let any
> vision of devotion nor your parents spied on the opposite side disturb you; rend
> the revered faces with your sword.

With this speech, as M. B. Roller observes, Caesar establishes innovative rules for how to define "the community of moral obligation:" the soldiers owe *pietas* not to their kinsmen but to those who fail to resist their opponents on the battlefield. Caesar's conception of *pietas* offers "a distinctive new ethic that serves the interests of the eventual victor…against the interests of the vanquished, those who represent the old sociopolitical order."[54] In addition to providing a new understanding of who should be counted as an enemy and who as a friend, however, Caesar inserts himself in the place of the *parentes*, not simply in his demand for obedience from his

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and Lucan, see Ahl (1976), Leigh (1997), Narducci (2002), Tesoriero (2005). Masters (1993) makes the intriguing (but perhaps overly clever) argument that Lucan's posture of allegiance to the Republican cause emerges from his opposition to Vergil's poetics, rather than his politics: "Lucan's poem is a *reductio ad absurdum* of politically committed writing (as it is of every other feature of Vergilian epic)" (168).

[53] Leigh (1997) 104-5 contrasts the "frenzied mobility" of the Caesarians and the "saintly inactivity" of the Pompeians during the battle of Pharsalus.

[54] Roller (2001) 43.

troops, but in his attentions to them. He claims that the interests of his subordinates carry more

weight than his own advancement:

> *non mihi res agitur, sed, uos ut libera sitis*
> *turba, precor, gentes ut ius habeatis in omnes.*
> *ipse ego priuatae cupidus me reddere uitae*
> *plebeiaque toga modicum componere ciuem,*
> *omnia dum uobis liceant, nihil esse recuso.*
> *inuidia regnate mea.* (7.264-269)

This business is not done on my behalf, but I pray that your multitude will be free,
that you will hold authority over all nations. I myself desire to return to private
life and to play the modest citizen in a plebeian toga, but until you are allowed
everything, there is nothing that I refuse to be.[55] Rule while I am in disfavor.

There is no doubt that Caesar's humility here, and his insistence that he has put away his own

desires to promote the welfare of his subordinates, is in part a rhetorical posture, although he

does not hesitate to express the savagery of his intentions a few moments later, when he urges his

men to rend the faces of their kinsmen (7.323). Even pretending that he supports the interests of

his men over his own, however, allows him to define himself as both the sole recipient of

allegiance and the sole source of support.

In making this proclamation to his troops, Caesar acknowledges the importance of mutual

obligation in constructing and sustaining a community: the national fantasy that joins the

Caesarians together, and that will be the basis for the Roman community after the civil war, is

the ideal of the family. This family is predicated not only on total submission to Caesar, but on

mutual obligation and devotion between ruler and ruled. Some critics have argued that, for

Lucan, civil conflict is ever-present in Roman history, and that "Caesar and the principate ensure

a perpetual, irreparable fracturing of [the] community."[56] Lucan does lament the lasting

influence of civil war on the Roman state: after Pharsalus, he declares, "We are brought down for

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[55] Translation of *esse nihil recuso* from Dilke (1978).
[56] Roller (2001) 63. On civil strife as a persistent and dominant feature of Roman history, Leigh (1997) 299.

all eternity. Every age, conquered by these swords, will be enslaved" (*in totum mundi prosternimur aeuum./ uincitur his gladiis omnis quae seruiet aetas,* 7.640-1). Nevertheless, the reciprocal devotion between Caesar and his men prefigures a future in which the performance of family ties will play a unifying role in the community and will form the basis of a new state. Caesar's care for his men is exceptional in part because, as victor in the civil war, he can be expected to retain his position as the object of their devotion: Caesar will be the permanent *dux*, for soldiers and civilians alike. Yet Caesar is not the only leader in the epic whose relationship with his subordinates is cast in terms of kinship. Both Cato and Pompey, although ultimately unsuccessful, also disrupt and reshape the conception of family ties in the Roman community. While Cato and Pompey fight against Caesar, their appearance in the poem looks not only backward to the fallen Republic but also forward to the new regime. Cato seems to provide the starkest contrast to Caesar in the *Bellum Civile*: unlike Caesar, who seeks his own victory at the cost of the Republic, Cato devotes himself not to the cause of any particular leader but to Rome and liberty itself.[57] When Cato's cousin Brutus asks whether he will join in the war or withhold himself, as a Stoic sage, from political concerns, Cato frames his relationship to the Roman state in paternal terms:

> *…ceu morte parentem*
> *natorum orbatum longum producere funus*
> *ad tumulos iubet ipse dolor, iuuat ignibus atris*
> *inseruisse manus constructoque aggere busti*
> *ipsum atras tenuisse faces, non ante reuellar*
> *exanimem quam te conplectar, Roma; tuumque*
> *nomen, Libertas, et inanem persequar umbram.*   (2.297-303)

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[57] As discussed in Chapter 4, Cato is one of the most disputed figures in the *Bellum Civile*. Johnson (1987) articulates a forceful case against Cato; his position was softened, though not rejected, especially by Bartsch (1997) and Leigh (1997). Brisset (1964), Ahl (1976) and D'Alessandro Behr (2007) read Cato as the Stoic hero of the epic; Roller (2001) suggests that Cato offers the only possibility of reconciliation between the competing ethical systems explored in the epic.

Just as grief itself bids the parent, bereaved by the death of his sons, to lead the long funeral procession to the tomb, and he is pleased to have thrust his hands into the black flames and to have held the torches blackened from the heaped up mound of the funeral pyre, I shall not be torn away before I embrace you Rome, when you are lifeless, and I shall pursue your name, Liberty, and your empty ghost.[58]

Cato confirms his devotion to Rome after the battle of Pharsalus, when he leads the resistance to Caesar even though Pompeian defeat is all but assured. In his efforts to fight against Caesar, however, Cato's actions recall the behavior of his power-hungry opponent. At Pharsalus, Caesar moved among his soldiers, encouraged them, and tended to their wounds. As commander of his own troops, Cato "received the fatherland when it was in need of a guardian, warmed the people's shaking limbs, [and] returned swords that were cast down to fearful hands" (*patriam tutore carentem/ excepit, populi trepidantia membra refouit,/ ignauis manibus proiectos reddidit enses*, 9.24-6). Cato fulfils the obligations of the *dux*: he consoles the people and urges them into battle just as Caesar did with his troops. While the narrator of the epic insists that Cato took on these duties without desiring rule (*nec regnum cupiens*, 9.27), in fact Cato's behavior is consistent with the exchange of devotion that Caesar modeled during the battle at Pharsalus and with the relationship expected between ruler and ruled.

Cato proves himself worthy of his claim to be father of his country through his activity on the battlefields of civil war. Yet the significance of becoming the father of one's country is far from unproblematic in the context of the rise of one-man rule.[59] As noted above, Cato demonstrates his dedication to the survival of the Republic with the same tactics that Caesar employed to establish his relationship with his troops and thus his dominance over Rome.

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[58] See Seo (2013) 70-71 for Cato's grief as anti-Stoic. Reydam-Schils (2006) 121ff argues that the Stoic sage was expected to experience grief at the loss of a child, but that he was also supposed to control it.

[59] The context of civil war complicates all attempts to display *virtus* and *pietas*: on Lucan's reworking of traditional Roman ethical terminology, see Roller (2001) 20-54 and Sklenar (2003).

Although Lucan calls Cato the "true parent of the fatherland" (*parens uerus patriae*, 9.601), two moments in the poem suggest that this appellation is not simply a laudatory one.[60] First, when Cato and his troops are dying of thirst in the desert, one soldier manages to fill his helmet with some water and offers it to Cato. The soldier's consideration for Cato is a form of *pietas*: his actions recall the efforts of the daughter who nursed her mother and who was commemorated by the Templum Pietatis. Cato, however, has a different response:

> *'usque adeo mollis primisque caloribus inpar*
> *sum uisus? quanto poena tu dignior ista es,*
> *qui populo sitiente bibas!' sic concitus ira*
> *excussit galeam, suffecitque omnibus unda.* (9.507-10)

> "Did I appear so soft to you that I am unequal to this trivial heat? You are much
> more worthy of this penalty, that you drink while the people are thirsty!" Thus
> driven by anger, he knocked the helmet down, and the water sufficed for
> everyone.

Cato's harshness here has been praised as an example of Stoic austerity: Cato is so virtuous that he disregards physical suffering.[61] Nevertheless, his actions suggest that there is a conflict between the loyalty he professes to Rome and his refusal to show compassion to actual Romans. W. R. Johnson powerfully states the case against Cato: "the desert is [Cato's] stage. His soldiers…are both his supernumeraries and his audience. The drama that is being played out is the drama of the struggle between the world and his perfected self."[62] Yet whether Cato's refusal to accept the water is indicative of his virtue or of his excessive severity, this scene serves partly as a parallel to Caesar's speech before the battle of Pharsalus. On the battlefield, Caesar insisted that his own desires meant nothing in comparison to the advantage of the troops (7.264-9). In the desert, when Cato insists that the people's thirst takes precedence over his own (9.509), he also

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[60] On the history of this title, see Alföldi (1971) 80-101.
[61] On Cato's outburst as "righteous anger" ("heiliger Zorn") see Wick (2004) *ad loc.*
[62] Johnson (1987) 63. Johnson's reading, while seductive, has been criticized for being overly subjective (Seo [2013] 66n1).

suggests that the role of the leader is to give preference to the welfare of his subordinates. Being the father of his country means that Cato, whether or not he desires power for its own sake, must play the part of the ruler.

The second problem with Cato's claim to the title of "parent of his country" is that this is not the only kinship title that he receives. Before Cato joins the fighting, he marries Marcia, once his wife, now another man's widow, in a ceremony that is defined by the ways in which it differs from the traditional wedding rites: there is no decoration of the house, no fine clothes for the bride or groom, and no sex (*BC* 2.350-71). Lucan claims that Cato rejects the customs of marriage because he is "the father of the city and the husband of the city" (*urbi pater est urbique maritus*, 2.388). Much later in the epic, as C. Wick points out, Cato's treatment of the state mirrors Pompey's efforts to comfort his wife Cornelia: Cato "warmed the people's shaking limbs" (*populi trepidantia membra refouit*, 9.25), just as Pompey "warms [Cornelia's] limbs with his embrace" (*refouet conplexibus artus*, 8.67).[63] The incestuous character of the bond between Cato and Rome points to the way in which figures of power can upset and surpass traditional ties of kinship within a community. After the battle of Pharsalus, Pompey's former allies declare that Caesar "is the only man in the whole world who is willing and able to offer help to the conquered" (*toto solus in orbe est/ qui uelit ac possit uictis praestare salutem*, 9.246-7). It is Caesar's absolute authority that makes him the sole and complete source of succor and protection available to his supporters and his enemies. Similarly, when Cato acts as father and husband to the city, he does so in a time of civil crisis, when conflict has undermined the relationships that usually support and protect citizens. For Cato to be both the father and the husband of the city is not merely an indicator of his civic virtue, but also gestures toward the

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[63] Wick (2004) *ad loc.*

changing political system in which the ruler must be all things to all men.[64] The relationship

between ruler and subject, rather than between parent and child or husband and wife, becomes

the only bond available in the new Rome that can provide sustenance and support.

The defeat and death of Pompey in the *Bellum Civile* demonstrates both the ways in

which the bond between ruler and ruled becomes paramount, and how one-man rule ultimately

reshapes the conception of family ties more generally. After the battle of Pharsalus, a contingent

of Pompey's allies in Asia Minor, the subjects of King Tarcondimotus in Cilicia, announce that

they will abandon the Roman forces and return home.[65] They address Cato, who has taken

command of Pompey's army:

> *nos, Cato, da ueniam, Pompei duxit in arma*
> *non belli ciuilis amor, partesque fauore*
> *fecimus. ille iacet quem paci praetulit orbis*
> *causaque nostra perit: patrios permitte penates*
> *desertamque domum dulcesque reuisere natos.*
> *nam quis erit finis si nec Pharsalia pugnae*
> *nec Pompeius erit? perierunt tempora uitae,*
> *mors eat in tutum; iustas sibi nostra senectus*
> *prospiciat flammas: bellum ciuile sepulchra*
> *uix ducibus praestare potest.*   (9.227-236)

Pardon us, Cato: love of Pompey brought us to arms, not love of civil war, and we
took part because of our partiality. He has fallen whom the world preferred to
peace and our cause is dead: allow us to see our ancestral hearth-gods and our
deserted home and our sweet children again. For what end will there be to battle if
it is neither Pharsalia nor Pompey? The prime of our lives is spent, let us die in
safety; let our old age see the just pyre: civil war can scarcely promise tombs to its
leaders.

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[64] In her examination of the discourse of tyranny in Classical Athens, Wohl (2002) argues that the relationship
between tyrant and community was understood not in terms of subjugation, but of erotic desire: the citizen desires
the "impossible potency" of the tyrant (218) while the tyrant desires the love of the people (265). Lucan also treats
one-man rule in terms of the attraction that the people feel for their leader.

[65] Morford (1967) sees Book 9 as the crucial transition from the cause of Pompey to the cause of *libertas*.
Apparently, the Cilicians are not interested in making the switch.

Two points in this speech are particularly notable. First, Pompey's allies suggest that for the duration of the civil war, Pompey took the place of family and home. Love of Pompey brought them into battle; now that Pompey has lost, they intend to return to their *penates*, *domus*, and *nati* (hearth-gods, house, and children) that occupy pride of place and are owed their greatest devotion in normal circumstances.

Second, the sentiments expressed by the Cilician allies recall the concerns of the mutineers in Book 5. When Caesar's troops demanded to be released from service, they emphasized the length of their service to Caesar and described the kind of death they believed they deserved. Caesar's troops complain that their lives have been used up in Caesar's wars (*usus abit uitae, bellis consumpsimus aeuum* (5.276), and they beg "to know the funeral pyre built for one" (*unique paratum/ scire rogum* 5.281-2); in similar terms, the Cilicians announce that the days of their lives have come to an end (*perierunt tempora uitae*, 9.232) and want to meet "fitting flames" when they die (*iustas…flammas*, 9234-5).[66] For both the Cilicians and the mutineers, the bond between soldier and commander is all-consuming and potentially disruptive to the expected and desired processes of life and death. The Cilicians abandon Pompey's cause and so give up the *amor* that took them away from hearth, home, and family. In most cases in the epic, however, the kinship between commander and troops is not so easily dissolved. The response to Pompey's death demonstrates that it is not only Caesar who inspires familial devotion in his men, and that one-man rule expands the boundaries of the family.

The account of Pompey's death fully establishes the ruler's relationship to his subordinates as equivalent to his familial ties. Pompey's funeral takes place under unusual circumstances for a Roman leader. He is assassinated by the agents of the young Pharaoh, aboard

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[66] Wick (2004) *ad loc.* also notes the parallels between the speeches of the Cilicians and of the mutineers .

a royal vessel; the Egyptians take his head as proof to show to Caesar, and they abandon

Pompey's body. In Lucan's narrative, it is Cordus, one of Pompey's men but most likely the

poet's invention, who performs the funeral rites for his deceased commander. Lucan provides

little information on the background of this character, noting only that he was a quaestor and

Pompey's companion in his journey from Cyprus (8.714-15).[67] Yet the description of the funeral

transforms Cordus into a member of Pompey's family: he plays the role of parent and spouse.

After Cordus rescued the body from the water and set it on dry land, "he bent over Magnus and

poured his tears over every wound" (*incubuit Magno lacrimasque effudit in omne/ uolnus*, 8.727-

8).[68] Two words, *incubuit* and *lacrimas*, are particularly significant in this context. The verb

incubo also appears in the simile that opens Book 2 of the *Bellum Civile*, when the city of Rome

on the brink of civil war is compared to a house in mourning. In the simile, the mother of the

house bends over the corpse (*incubat*, 2.27) in her grief. When Cordus weeps for Pompey, he

enacts the death scene that the mutineers at Placentia imagine for themselves, when they ask "to

fall amidst a wife's tears" (*coniugis inlabi lacrimis*, 5.281). If Pompey had died among his

family, he could have expected the same treatment from them that he receives from Cordus.

Later, Cordus takes material to build a fire from a pyre constructed for another corpse: he asks

pardon from the dead man, insisting that the body, because it is not under guard, must be unloved

(*nec ulli/ cara tuo,* 8.746-7).[69] Yet this corpse has received the funeral rites that the mutineers

desired, namely "the pyre built for one" (*unique paratum…rogum* 5.281-2). Using the limited

resources available to him, Cordus performs the kind of funeral that men at arms throughout the

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[67] Brennan (1969) argues that the name Cordus is an allusion to Cremutius Cordus, a historian who committed suicide during the reign of Tiberius.

[68] Cf. Mayer (1981) *ad loc.* on the motif of tears (and other bodily fluids) shed over corpses in Latin literature.

[69] Some sources (Dio, 56.42.4, Dion. Halic. 8.59.4, Prop. 3.16.24) indicate that kinsmen were supposed to keep watch over the body. For the parallels, see Mayer (1981) *ad loc.*; Lindsay (2005) 152ff argues that funeral rites were confined to the household in order to protect the rest of the community from ritual pollution.

poem, from the Caesarians to the Cilicians, considered worthy. During the course of the funeral,

Cordus is transformed from Pompey's companion (Lucan calls him Pompey's *comes*, 8.717) to a

substitute for his closest kin.

Lucan does not only treat Cordus as Pompey's parent or spouse in a general sense, but

actually casts him in the role of Pompey's wife Cornelia, who observes the burial from Pompey's

boat. Cordus himself implies that he is acting in place of Cornelia, who would be responsible for

Pompey's body if he had died in Italy:

> …*Fortuna recursus*
> *si det in Hesperiam, non hac in sede quiescent*
> *tam sacri cineres, sed te Cornelia, Magne,*
> *accipiet nostraque manu transfundet in urnam.*
> *interea paruo signemus litora saxo…*   (8.767-771)

> If fortune grants return to Hesperia, these holy remains shall not remain in this
> place, but Cornelia, O Magnus, will receive you and take you from my hand to an
> urn. Meanwhile I will mark the shore with a small stone.

The intimacy of the bond between commander and soldier is equated to the bond between

husband and wife, and the part of soldier is interchangeable with the part of wife. Pompey's

preeminent position among his followers, then, undermines the distinction between his

relationship with Cornelia and with Cordus: both were dependent on him during his life, and

both are obliged to care for his body after his death.

Cornelia is not insensitive to the fact that she must yield her rightful place in Pompey's

funeral.[70] She defines her role as wife in terms of her duties to her deceased husband:

> '*ergo indigna fui,*' dixit '*Fortuna, marito*
> *accendisse rogum gelidosque effusa per artus*
> *incubuisse uiro, laceros exurere crines*
> *membraque dispersi pelago conponere Magni,*

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[70] On the associations between women and uncontrolled emotion in the Stoic tradition, particularly in the Senecan corpus, see Mauch (1997), 26-9. Bruère (1959) cites Livy, Vergil, and Ovid as Lucan's sources for the characterization of Cornelia.

> *uolneribus cunctis largos infundere fletus…*
> *numquam dare iusta licebit*
> *coniugibus? numquam plenas plangemus ad urnas?'*   (9.55-69)

> "Fortune, was I thus unworthy," she said, "to have ascended my husband's pyre
> and to cling to the man and cover his cold limbs, to burn up my torn hair and to
> arrange Magnus' body, scattered by the sea, to pour out floods of tears over all his
> wounds…will I never be allowed to perform duties for my husbands? Will I never
> beat my breast beside full funeral urns?"

Cornelia's description of the appropriate funeral rites mirrors Cordus' activities: although she

wants to weep and brood over the body, it is Cordus who fulfills these functions.[71] While

Caesar's mutineers begged to die in the presence of their wives, Pompey does not require a

spouse to give him the kind of death that the mutineers wanted. His status elevates his bond with

Cordus, but it also weakens his bond with Cornelia. The privileged relationship between husband

and wife is demoted; it becomes just one of the intimate bonds that the ruler enjoys with those

subordinate to him. Indeed, while Cornelia mourns because she cannot perform the duties

traditionally associated with her role as his wife, she also orders her sons to transfer their filial

piety from Pompey to Cato. She orders them, "only keep your mind untamed and mindful of

your father's authority. It will be fitting to obey Cato alone, if he takes up the cause of liberty"

(*tantum indomitos memoresque paterni/ iuris habete animos. uni parere decebit,/ si faciet partes*

pro libertate, Catoni, 9.95-7). When Pompey has died, Cato becomes not only father of the state

but also father to Pompey's sons: this bond between Cato and Pompey's sons prefigures the bond

that will exist between Caesar and the Roman people, as Caesar will be the sole recipient of the

people's obedience. The role of the father gives way to the role of the ruler.

In the world of one-man rule, Cornelia's role as wife is no longer a privileged one:

instead, the intimate bond between the ruler and his subjects reduces or raises all social bonds to

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[71] On these parallels, see Wick (2004) *ad loc.*

an equal plane. Even Cornelia's misery at Pompey's death is matched by the suffering of the people: "there was grief without precedent and unknown in any age, for the people to mourn the death of a powerful man" (*exemploque carens et nulli cognitus aeuo/ luctus erat, mortem populos deflere potentis,* 9-169-70). It is important to note here that this widespread grief is not mourning for freedom or the fallen Republic: Lucan rages against the loss of liberty that accompanied the rise of Caesar but also insists that the civil war itself was a contest between two potential despots.[72] Rather, when Pompey's followers lose him, they also lose the paradigmatic relationship in their world; Pompey is their primary source of protection and thus the reason for the most profound bereavement. As Pompey's followers are at one with Cornelia in grief, her mourning has a transformative effect on the community as a whole. As they watch Cornelia beat her breast, tear her hair, and collect Pompey's remains, "all piety takes up this example, and tombs rise up throughout the shore to light pyres for the Thessalian ghosts" (*accipit omnis/ exemplum pietas, et toto litore busta/ surgunt Thessalicis reddentia manibus ignem,* 9.178-80).[73] The intimacy between ruler and ruled that causes Pompey's followers to grieve him also intensifies the bond between members of the community in general. The primary relationship between ruler and ruled means that all other distinctions are undermined: all members of the community are now joined in mutual obligation and devotion. The first object of the community's allegiance is the ruler, but in comparison to their bond with him, all bonds between the ruled are equivalent.

The devastating violence of the battle at Pharsalus concludes with an expression of the intimate bonds among Pompey's men, who perform funeral rites for those they have lost. The

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[72] *BC* 1.108-128; 2.319-323.
[73] It is notable not only that Pompey's men make up for Caesar's failings, but that Cornelia's grief inspires their action.

bodies of their comrades, however, must be the very corpses that Caesar left to rot after the battle

of Pharsalus, when he refused to build funeral pyres for the Pompeians (7.796-9). Caesar's

behavior, however, goes beyond callousness. The morning after the battle, he picks a picnic spot

where he can see the putrefying corpses of his opponents:

> *...cernit propulsa cruore*
> *flumina et excelsos cumulis aequantia colles*
> *corpora, sidentis in tabem spectat aceruos*
> *et Magni numerat populos, epulisque paratur*
> *ille locus, uoltus ex quo faciesque iacentum*
> *agnoscat.*   (7.789-94)

> He marks the rivers, displaced by flows of blood, and the bodies in heaps that
> equal the lofty hills, and he counts Magnus' peoples, and a place is prepared for
> feasting, where he can recognize the faces and forms of his enemies.

 This is an exceptionally gruesome panorama, but it is most remarkable in contrast to Caesar's

treatment of his own troops during the battle: as noted above, during the fighting, Caesar pressed

his hands to his soldiers' wounds in order to keep their blood from spilling out (7.566). It is no

surprise that Caesar is more dedicated (to say the least) to his own people than to those who

fought against him, but this contrast is essential to defining the new community that has arisen

now that Caesar is the unquestioned leader of the Roman people. The intensity of Caesar's

loyalty to his followers, and the ways in which his relationship with them sustains the

community, is most keenly felt when it can be contrasted with his relationship to outsiders.

Pompey's death also offers an opportunity for Caesar to claim and demonstrate a

privileged bond with the people. Throughout the epic, Caesar has disregarded the fact that

Pompey is his son-in-law, the widower of Caesar's daughter Julia, and the narrator criticizes

Caesar for waging war on a member of his own family: "it's a shame, Caesar, and it always will

be, that the peak of your crimes is advantageous to you, to have fought with your dutiful son-in-

law" (*dolet, heu, semperque dolebit/ quod scelerum, Caesar, prodest tibi summa tuorum,/ cum*

genero pugnas pio, 6.303-6). Yet when he encounters Pompey's head in Egypt, Caesar pretends

to mourn. He shed tears "unwillingly" (*non sponte*, 9.1038), and he "forced out groans from a

joyous heart, not otherwise able to conceal the plain joy in his mind except with tears"

(*gemitusque expressit pectore laeto,/ non aliter manifesta potens abscondere mentis/ gaudia*

quam lacrimis, 1039-41). Caesar mimics the actions of real mourners, clinging to Pompey's head

(*uoltus, dum crederet, haesit*, 1036) and weeping, but his grief is a sham. It is interesting,

however, that Caesar, now the undisputed champion in the conflict, believes that he must mourn

at all. The narrator also questions why Caesar had to weep (1048), although he insists that

whatever the cause, it had nothing to do with *pietas* (1066).[74] Yet while it is clear that Caesar's

mourning has little to do with respect for his relationship with Pompey, it does reflect his respect

for his relationship with his soldiers.

As Caesar mourns openly, his men repress their sorrow at Pompey's death. In the

presence of their commander, "they conceal their groans and hide their hearts with joyful faces,

and happily they dare to look on bloody crime, O fine liberty, while Caesar grieves" (*abscondunt*

gemitus et pectora laeta/ fronte tegunt, hilaresque nefas spectare cruentum,/ o bona libertas,

cum Caesar lugeat, audent, 9.1106-8). The soldiers act in accordance with the joy that Caesar

struggled to hide: "the freedom men now have is that of acting in accordance with their master's

true feelings."[75] Yet Caesar, for his part, performs the actions and expresses the emotions that his

men are too fearful to show. Although he may aim in part to deceive his audience, it is unlikely

that Caesar imagines he can persuade anyone of the sincerity of his grief. Instead, Caesar

appreciates the kind of response his subordinates feel at Pompey's death, and he acts on their

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[74] D'Alessandro Behr (2007) 68-71 reads this passage as straightforward evidence of Caesar's hypocrisy: his
pretended grief contributes to "the transvaluation of Roman ethical terms" (71).
[75] Kubiak (2001) *ad loc*.

behalf. When the Egyptians present Pompey's head to Caesar, he speaks in the voice of the

Roman people, demanding honor for their fallen hero:

> *…uos condite busto*
> *tanti colla ducis, sed non ut crimina solum*
> *uestra tegat tellus: iusto date tura sepulchro*
> *et placate caput cineresque in litore fusos*
> *colligite atque unam sparsis date manibus urnam.*
> *sentiat aduentum soceri uocesque querentis*
> *audiat umbra pias.*   (9.1089-95)

> Build a mound for the neck of so great a leader, but not only so that the earth may
> cover your crimes: give incense for a fitting tomb, and be gracious to the head and
> gather the ashes spread out on the shore and give one urn to the scattered shades.
> Let the ghost feel the approach and hear the devoted speech of his mourning
> father-in-law.

Caesar's demands here make a pointed contrast with the end of Book 8, when the narrator

lamented that the meager funeral that Cordus performed for Pompey was to Caesar's advantage:

he claimed that Caesar would prefer for Pompey to be buried dishonorably than for him not to be

buried at all.[76] It is obvious that Caesar's desire for an appropriate burial for Pompey is not born

from genuine goodwill, but this makes his request all the more interesting. His speech shows his

appreciation for what the people want even when they cannot express it for themselves. The

intimacy of the bond between ruler and ruled, between Caesar and his soldiers, is such that

Caesar performs the devotion to Pompey that his men cannot reveal.[77]

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[76] *placet hoc, Fortuna, sepulchrum/ dicere Pompei, quo condi maluit illum/ quam terra caruisse socer*? (8.793-5)

[77] Caesar's behavior toward his deceased son-in-law also recalls a singular moment of peaceable contact between the Pompeians and Caesarians in Book 4. The hostile armies recognize their kinship with one another: "Then, as burning love with its greater goads broke the laws, a soldier dares to cross the ramparts, to offer his hands stretched out for embraces. One man cries out the name of his host, another man calls for his kinsman…nor was he a Roman, who had not acknowledged an enemy" (*mox, ut stimulis maioribus ardens/ rupit amor leges, audet transcendere uallum/ miles, in amplexus effusas tendere palmas./ hospitis ille ciet nomen, uocat ille propinquum…nec Romanus erat, qui non agnouerat hostem,* 4.174-9). When Caesar mourns over Pompey's head, it is he who "recognizes an enemy."

IV. Conclusion

In both Lucan's epic and the Roman *domus*, the relationship between ruler and ruled goes beyond subjugation.[78] Intimacy was understood to be a central feature of power relations and the experience of power in the Roman world, whether between the *dominus* and his visitors in the house, between the *dux* and his men on the battlefield, or under the autocracy born from the civil war that established the dominance of Caesar and his descendants. By examining the interactions between *dominus* and outsiders in the house, I argued that visitors became integrated into the household and thus formed an intimate relationship with the *dominus*. The space of the house allowed the *dominus* to advertise the obligations that bound him to his guests, and to include favored visitors in the life of the house: when a visitor was allowed into the most intimate spaces of the house, the distinction between household and guest, inside and outside, was eroded.

The association of power and intimacy in the *domus* demonstrates that the privileged relationship between ruler and ruled in the *Bellum Civile* is not Lucan's invention. Rather, Lucan's epic takes an established feature of the Roman conception of power relations and pushes it to the extreme. While the disruption of the bonds between kinsmen and fellow-citizens is a critical element of his treatment of civil war and the rise of one-man rule, Lucan also shows how the ruler enters into a familial relationship with his subordinates. Family ties between ruler and ruled, moreover, involve mutual devotion as well as obedience. At the battle of Pharsalus, Caesar confronts his troops not as an amorphous crowd, but as individual actors. Caesar and Cato respond to physical suffering among their men. Pompey's followers perform his funeral and

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[78] Cf. D'Arms (2000), who argues that performance at the *convivium* in the Roman house served to reinforce the social hierarchy, but observes that "to conclude that the small man is always made to feel still smaller, humiliated, in the presence of the great man is to deny the humbler person any semblance of independence in these social encounters--that is, to deny him the internal weapons with which to combat the feelings of powerlessness and humiliation, of being transformed from *spectator* to *spectaculum*" (314).

mourn his death, but in doing so they oust his wife from her traditional role. In the world of the *Bellum Civile*, the boundary that divides family from state breaks down, and political bonds are equated to familial ones. While the guest of an elite householder might be integrated into the house of his host and thus temporarily neglect or leave behind his attachment to his own household, he also eventually left that house, either to attend another master or to return to his own dwelling: it was not so easy for Caesar's men to escape the bond they formed with him. The absolute ruler had no need to threaten, pervert, or compete with traditional family ties, as his relationship with the ruled became the only bond with any meaning, for public or for private life.

Conclusion

Shortly before his narrative of the Great Fire of 64 CE, Tacitus reports a remarkable

speech of Nero to the people of Rome. The emperor, who had been about to embark on a trip to

the East, changed his mind and decided to stay at home. Nero explained,

> *vidisse maestos civium vultus, audire secretas querimonias, quod tantum*
> *[itineris] aditurus esset, cuius ne modicos quidem egressus tolerarent, sueti*
> *adversum fortuita adspectu principis refoveri. ergo ut in privatis necessitudinibus*
> *proxima pignora praevalerent, ita populum Romanum vim plurimam habere*
> *parendumque retinenti.*   (*Ann.* 15.36)

> He had seen the sorrowful expressions of the citizens, heard their secret
> complaints, because he was about to go on such a long journey, while they could
> not even endure his short departures, accustomed to be restored by the sight of the
> *princeps* in the face of chance events. Therefore just as in private bonds the
> closest relations were strongest, in this way the Roman people carried the most
> weight and he had to obey them when they held him back.

Tacitus quickly casts doubt on Nero's interpretation of the people's grief: the people's desire for

pleasures and for grain distribution naturally made them concerned about the loss of Nero's

company.[1] Yet Nero's formulation of his bond with the political community is nevertheless

significant for understanding the idea of the ruler in the early imperial period. E. Champlin sees

the analogy between the Roman people and the emperor's closest friends and relations, his

necessitudines, as part of Nero's populist leanings and his desire to transform Rome into "a

society turned upside down" where "the proud are humiliated, the humble are treated to

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[1] *haec atque talia plebi volentia fuere, voluptatum cupidine et, quae praecipua cura est, rei frumentariae angustias, si abesset, metuenti* (*Ann.* 15.36).

aristocratic pleasures."[2] Yet the notion that Nero is bound by the desires of his subjects, who have become equivalent to his *necessitudines*, also has more sinister aspects. First, like Caesar, Cato, and Pompey in the *Bellum Civile,* Nero asserts that there is a mutual devotion between ruler and ruled that surpasses all other bonds. Second, Nero's claim that the people are "accustomed to be restored by the sight of the emperor" (*sueti…adspectu principis refoueri*) points to the underlying fragility of the polity, which is dependent on Nero for protection from the vicissitudes of fate (*aduersum fortuita*).[3]

I have argued that this double-edged relationship between ruler and ruled is essential to the understanding of absolute power in the early empire. In order to define both the position of the ruler and the implications of his position for the life of the community, I have considered privacy from two perspectives, as the ability to avoid scrutiny and to act without public consequence. In the first and second chapters, I focused on the visibility and vulnerability of the ruler and argued for a more nuanced approach to the conception of theatricality commonly employed in studies of the Neronian age. The relationship between ruler and ruled, and the way in which they must perform for one another, is often analyzed in terms of repression and resistance: the subordinate is forced to submit to the script set by his superior and to play a part assigned by him, although he also has means (in certain contexts) of asserting his own interpretation of the ruler's performance. I suggest, however, that the acts of seeing and being seen were understood to contribute not only to the assertion of control by one party over the other but to the survival of the community itself.

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[2] Champlin (2003) 159. Champlin believes that the statement in *Annals* 15.36 is a "paraphrase of the official edict announcing the emperor's change of plan" (187).
[3] See the discussion of *refovere* at *BC* 8.66 and 9.25 in Chapter 5.

In Chapter 1, I used Seneca's *De Clementia* and the Domus Aurea to demonstrate that exposure to public view was an essential component of the understanding of absolute power. The Domus Aurea recreates the emperor's country villa, usually understood as a retreat from political affairs, in the capital of the empire and so suggests that the emperor is always subject to the eye of the community. In the *De Clementia*, Seneca claims that the absolute ruler cannot escape from his high station (*Clem*. 1.8.2), but his primary concern is the vulnerability of the community when its ruler is subject to judgment and attack. In Chapter 2, I argued that the attention to the act of viewing in Senecan tragedy and theatrical frescoes from Campania demonstrates the privileged position of the spectator: the ruler or *dominus* is dependent on his subjects to be his audience and thus to recognize and reinforce his authority. Just as the exposure of the ruler to the public eye has implications for the stability of the polity, so the subject's activity as spectator is critical to establishing the position of the ruler and therefore to ensuring the cohesion of the whole.

I also addressed the ruler's inability to act without public consequence. This kind of lack of privacy is best reflected in the union of the ruler's family and house with the state in Senecan tragedy, Tacitus' narratives of court life, and Lucan's *Bellum Civile*. While the emperor is often figured as the *paterfamilias* of those he rules, his position in his household was not necessarily one of unquestioned dominance. The vulnerability of the ruler to those closest to him was not a characteristic of weak rulers, but rather an inherent feature of dynastic rule, and the potential threats to the ruler's position from within his own household were understood to have ramifications for the wider community. In Chapter 3, I argued that the emperor relied on his family bonds to legitimate his claims to power, and that members of his family could exercise influence even if the current emperor turned against them. A. Wallace-Hadrill recently urged

scholars "to see that the ruler is as vulnerable as any other players" in his court;[4] while he focuses on historiographical sources, I have also looked to Seneca's tragedies as evidence for the Roman understanding of the relationship between the ruler and those close to him. In the *Agamemnon*, *Thyestes*, and *Oedipus* the ruler is often a victim of his family, and he is joined to the state in a relationship of shared suffering. These tragedies take place outside the imperial court, but Seneca's depiction of royal houses draws attention to the vulnerability of the ruler, as well as to the consequences of this vulnerability for the community as a whole.

In Chapter 4, I considered further aspects of the reciprocity between the houses of the powerful and the wider world in frescoes from Villa A at Oplontis, the *cena Trimalchionis*, and the *Bellum Civile*. The wall paintings in Villa A allowed viewers to embark on a fantasy journey to the Hellenistic East, which was in a sense the starting-point of Rome's position as an imperial power, and thus to take part in the engagement with Greek culture and the project of expansion that were essential to Roman identity. The Roman world is also conflated with the ruler's house in the *Satyricon* and the *Bellum Civile*: in these texts, furthermore, the house is a space where the ruler's authority and thus the stability of the state are most likely to come under attack. The ruler does not stand apart from his subjects; rather, his life is inseparable from the life of the community he rules. As I argued in Chapter 5, the bond between ruler and community is a defining feature of the rise of autocracy in Lucan's *Bellum Civile*, in which the intimacy between ruler and ruled leads to a reassessment of the nature and purpose of all family relations. In Lucan's poem, the ruler's public position means that his relationship with those subordinate to him transcends and subverts all other ties, both those between his subjects and his own with his kinsmen.

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[4] Wallace-Hadrill (2011) 100.

To what extent can the publicity of the ruler and the relationship between ruler and ruled that I have discussed here be considered "Neronian?" As I noted in the introduction, it is not my contention that Nero's reign was entirely different from his predecessors' reigns or from the period of the Republic. Nevertheless, the oddities of his rule (his youth, the prominence of his mother and other members of his household in his court, his reputation for scandal and extravagant display) brought the nature of autocracy into stark relief, and even compelled reflection on it as a system, whether among his contemporaries or among later writers recounting the events of his day. In analyzing the literary and material sources for politics in the Neronian age, it is important to be sensitive both to the endurance of traditional features of political life and to how those traditions could be renewed and reshaped. The intimacy between the elite *dominus* and the privileged among his visitors, for example, was an established aspect of political and social engagement in the Roman world, but this traditional intimacy takes on a much greater significance in Seneca's *De Clementia* and in Lucan's *Bellum Civile*, when the community is utterly dependent on a single man and the relationship between ruler and ruled becomes paramount for the wellbeing of the whole. If the Nero of the historiographical sources sometimes appears as a parody of an emperor, it is a parody that has deeper implications for the idea of one-man rule in Roman political thought.

J. Connolly has recently observed that "the study of Roman political theory today faces an array of challenges and opportunities. Foremost is the absence of an easily defined canon and the correspondingly vast scope of non-philosophical potential sources."[5] Throughout this project I have been especially concerned to take into account a wide range of literary and material evidence for political thought and political life in the early empire. The prominence of the act of

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[5] Connolly (2009) 714.

viewing in domestic frescoes, for example, demonstrates that the association between power and visibility that is a crucial feature of Senecan tragedy is part of a broader cultural phenomenon in the Roman world. Text and archaeology, however, are not always mutually reinforcing. The Domus Aurea offers a perspective on the exposure of the emperor that is very different from that which emerges in the *De Clementia*. Nero's palace attracts attention to the emperor to advertise his singular position in Roman society; the absolute ruler in the *De Clementia* would prefer to escape public view, but instead must rely on the goodwill of his subjects to protect himself from the dangerous effects of their gaze. Comparison of literary and material sources, then, allows us not simply to confirm the interpretation of one with the other, but to illuminate how the ruler's position, and the relationship between dominant and subordinate, were understood by and communicated to diverse audiences.

It is important to note, moreover, that "literary" and "material" is not a simple two-part division, as there are many different kinds of literary and material sources and different types of audiences encountered and interpreted them. Viewers of the Domus Aurea in Rome were likely familiar with domestic art similar to the examples we know from Pompeii and Oplontis, and Lucan's readers might well have known Seneca's tragedies, but these audiences were not identical. Nevertheless, this problem is not necessarily an obstacle to the study of Roman political culture: engaging with a variety of sources allows us to arrive at a more nuanced understanding of the meaning and experience of power, for both ruler and ruled, in the Roman world.

One problem that my discussion has raised for future work on Roman ideas of power involves the fascination and allure of the absolute ruler.[6] It may be tempting for modern readers,

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[6] For a discussion of this issue in Classical Athens, see Wohl (2002).

familiar with the horrors of dictatorship in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, to divide the literature of the early empire into two main categories: either they are works of resistance, intended to subvert established authority, or they are propaganda, produced in service of a totalitarian regime. Fear of the tyrant, however, is only one aspect of the treatment of the ruler in Seneca, Lucan, Petronius, and Tacitus: these texts, I suggest, are sensitive not only to the destructive force of the absolute ruler, but to the ways in which his singular position can reinvent the identity of the community, and to the potential appeal of this reinvention, extending beyond the folly and enchantment of the masses. Moving beyond Accius' maxim on tyranny, "let them hate, so long as they fear" (*oderint, dum metuant*), makes it possible to account more fully for the role of the powerful in public life, and for how the powerful influence private life, in the Neronian age and in other times and places.
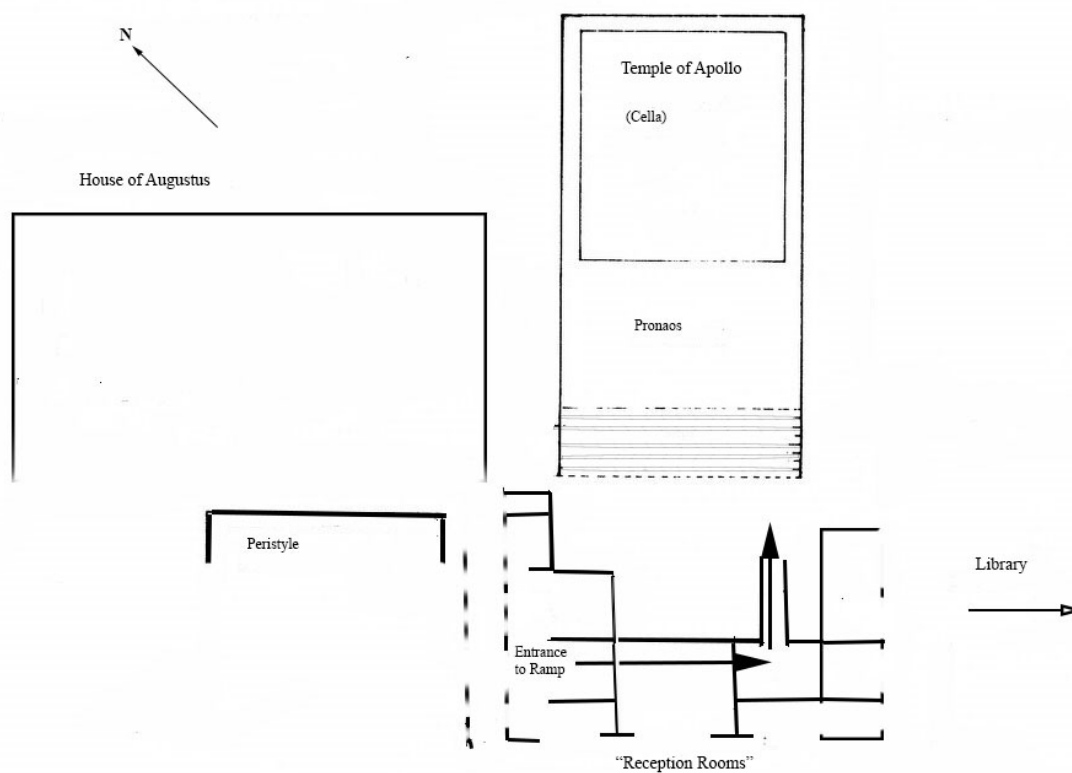
Figures

Fig. 1. House of Augustus on the Palatine, showing the path of the ramp (bottom center) between the "Reception Rooms" of the house and the Temple of Apollo. Adapted from Carettoni (1983) Plan 1 and Quenemoen (2001) Fig. 4a.
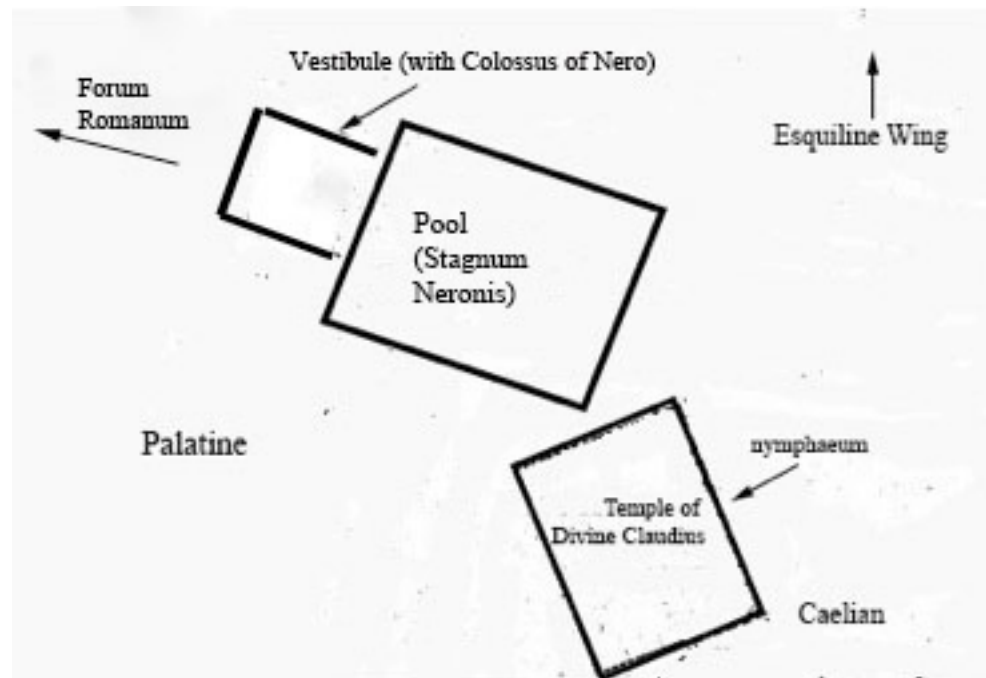
Fig. 2. Domus Aurea (Colosseum valley section). Adapted from Boëthius and Ward-Perkins (1970) Fig. 90 and Panella (1996) Fig. 167.

Fig. 3. Remains of foundations, Domus Aurea: porticoes and vestibule (bottom left and right). View from the Colosseum. Photo by the author. With permission of the Ministero dei Beni e delle Attività Culturali e del Turismo--Soprintendenza Speciale per i Beni Archeologici di Roma.

Fig. 4. Alcestis and Admetus, House of the Tragic Poet in Pompeii (VI.8.3)/Naples National Archaeological Musuem No. 9026. Photo by Lynley McAlpine. With permission of the Ministero dei Beni e delle Attività Culturali e del Turismo--Soprintendenza Speciale per i Beni Archeologici di Napoli.

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