

Vespasian Augustus: Imperial Power in the First Century CE

by

Karen Louise Acton

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy  
(Greek and Roman History)  
in the University of Michigan  
2011

Doctoral Committee:

Professor David S. Potter, Chair  
Professor Bruce W. Frier  
Assistant Professor Ian S. Moyer  
Assistant Professor J. Mira Seo

© Karen Louise Acton  
2011

## Acknowledgements

Completing this project has been a labor of love on my part, but an exercise in patience, wisdom, sympathy, helpfulness, and humor for a very large number of other people. I know that any attempt to name all the people to whom I owe a debt of gratitude would be impossible, and so I will begin by expressing my heartfelt thanks to all the students, staff, and faculty who comprise the Classics community at the University of Michigan, who have never failed to provide me with intellectual support and daily reminders that the study of the ancient world can be – and should be – fun.

Some names stand out, however, and I must take this opportunity to thank my committee, my Chair David Potter, Bruce Frier, Ian Moyer, and Mira Seo, for their insight and suggestions; I am also deeply indebted to the faculty of the Program in Greek and Roman History, especially Sara Forsdyke and Ray Van Dam, and to Ruth Scodel. I must also thank Michelle Biggs, for always being able to solve my problems.

I would have made no progress without the humor, advice, and friendship of my fellow students; anyone who has ever attended ancient historians' lunch has helped me in countless ways. Those who have read or commented on this project at various stages deserve special thanks: Rob Chenault, Nate Andrade, Mike Sampson, Sanjaya Thakur, Jon Arnold, Claudia Arno, Cassie Borges, Richard Persky, Jenn Finn, Jared Secord, Shonda Thom, Evelyn Adkins, and Joe Groves. I have no doubt that I have forgotten more names than I have remembered, and I apologize to all those whom I have left out.

Finally, I must thank the people without whom I could never have begun this project. David Page has inspired so many with his love of the ancient world, and I am privileged to have learned from him. My family, especially my parents and my brother, have tolerated my ramblings but encouraged my ambitions, for which I am profoundly grateful. My deepest thanks belong to Dan Leon, who deserves my constant praise.

## Table of Contents

Acknowledgements.....	ii
List of Figures.....	vi
Abstract.....	vii
Introduction.....	1
Chapter	
1. The Flavian Victory	
Introduction.....	20
The Flavian plan .....	21
The plan in motion... ..	33
December to January .....	38
Vespasian in Alexandria .....	44
Spring and early summer in Rome.....	51
Vespasian's return.....	55
Conclusion.....	60
2. Space and the ideological topography of Rome: the Capitoline, the Palatine, and the Quirinal in 70 CE	
Introduction.....	65
The Capitoline and the Palatine.....	66
The Palatine and the Quirinal.....	99
Conclusion.....	107
3. <i>Auctoritas</i> and <i>imperium</i> : the definition, construction, and negotiation of Vespasian's power	
Introduction.....	110
<i>Auctoritas</i> and <i>maiestas</i> .....	112
Vespasian's legal authority .....	132
Cola di Rienzo and the <i>lex de imperio Vespasiani</i> .....	167
Conclusion.....	174
4. Vespasian and his dynasty: the Flavian <i>domus Augusta</i>	
Introduction.....	178

The Julio-Claudian <i>domus Augusta</i> .....	180
The Flavian <i>domus Augusta</i> .....	202
Women in the imperial house: Caenis and Berenice.....	221
Conclusion.....	232
Conclusion.....	237
Bibliography.....	245

## List of Figures

### Figure

2.1: <i>RPC</i> 1 (Vitellius) 56 .....	77
2.2: <i>RIC</i> II <sup>2</sup> (Vespasian) 886.....	98
3.1: <i>RIC</i> I (Galba) 189.....	127
4.1: <i>RIC</i> I (Tiberius) 47.....	182
4.2: <i>RIC</i> I (Nero) 7.....	194
4.3: <i>RIC</i> I (Tiberius) 68.....	195
4.4: <i>RIC</i> I (Tiberius) 51.....	198
4.5: <i>RIC</i> II <sup>2</sup> (Vespasian) 16.....	208
4.6: <i>RIC</i> II <sup>2</sup> (Vespasian) 152.....	208
4.7: <i>RIC</i> II <sup>2</sup> (Vespasian) 680.....	212
4.8: <i>RIC</i> II <sup>2</sup> (Titus) 262.....	219

## Abstract

When civil war broke out in 68 CE, the succession of imperial candidates and the ensuing military chaos forced the people of Rome to confront their system of government and their understanding of imperial power. In order to restore peace, Vespasian had to translate his military victory into stable rule at a point when the concept of the emperor had been under scrutiny. Vespasian's solution was to construct and maintain an informal personal authority that represented a new model of the imperial office that drew from Julio-Claudian precedents and operated within social and cultural parameters established by his predecessors. However, Vespasian did not seek to present himself as the heir to the Julio-Claudian dynasty, but rather as a new imperial founder, a rival for Augustus; he expressed the difference between himself and his predecessors in his interactions with space in the city of Rome, the religious identity that he adopted, the rustic Italian public persona that he developed, and the way he presented the public image of his family as an imperial dynasty to express Rome's Flavian future. In creating this model of imperial authority, Vespasian drew from a range of Roman cultural traditions and historical exempla from the Julio-Claudian period and earlier, including narrative *topoi*, notions of gender and the family, the traditions and memories associated with Roman urban topography, and models of leadership that emerged in military contexts.

The early months of Vespasian's reign, from his acclamation in July 69 to the Flavian triumph of June 71, show how Vespasian's imperial persona was developed in response to the ideological and political problems that had arisen in the previous century



of Julio-Claudian rule, and which the intense experience of the civil war had exposed. By focusing on these early months and considering how Vespasian's imperial persona was formed over time and in response to a variety of factors, including pressure by Rome's elite, it is possible to discern Vespasian's unique conception of imperial power, and to explore how Vespasian and his contemporaries perceived the role of the emperor in Roman society.

## **Introduction**

The death of Nero in June 68 brought an end to the Julio-Claudian dynasty after almost exactly a century of imperial rule; this was also the culmination of a series of events in which a group of provincial governors rose up against the emperor and led their legions against other Roman armies. Senatorial commanders and their legionary armies would mobilize against Rome again at least twice over the course of the next few months. However, the civil war of 68-69, also known as the “Year of Four Emperors,” is remarkable for its apparent lack of lasting significance in spite of its intensity and scope: its events encompassed the entire empire and included fierce and bloody battles fought in Italy and even Rome itself; it saw the violent deaths of four emperors in Italy; the provincial governor of North Africa turned renegade, while the Batavian tribes rose up against Roman rule in Gaul and the Roman armies in Judaea ceased to pursue their war against the Jewish rebels. Nevertheless, after the death of Vitellius and the accession of Vespasian the empire seems to have recovered its equilibrium almost immediately; order was restored to the armies, the provinces, and the city. Vespasian’s ability to restore peace made him seem like a new Augustus, and his sons assumed the roles of imperial heirs as members of Rome’s second dynasty. In the end, the civil war had changed the identities of the individuals at the center of Rome’s political and social world, but it does not seem to have changed the imperial office, let alone the Roman state, at all.

This overly simple summary of the events of the civil war and its aftermath makes mundane one of the period's most remarkable features: these events caused the Romans to assess their own system of government after a century of Julio-Claudian rule, and to negotiate the separation of the principate from the persons of its founders, Augustus and his family. The chaotic violence of the civil war constituted a crisis – if not of Rome's political system, then at least of the empire's political ideology. The violence that had erupted in the spring of 68 had spread throughout the empire, leading to the creation of a complex web of alliances and rivalries, in which individuals – such as Vespasian himself – could rally their supporters and seek their own advancement. The process of reevaluation, which contributed to the violence and confusion of the war, was essential for the empire to continue in a stable way under the rule of new personnel. Therefore, the civil war presented an opportunity for the Romans to engage in an intense and critical investigation of the nature of the principate, and especially the nature of the imperial office; this investigation was carried out by a series of imperial candidates, their supporters, their opponents, and the military and civilian population of the empire as a whole. For modern historians and scholars of the Roman Empire, the civil war following the death of Nero provides an opportunity to investigate how imperial power was conceived of, constructed, and maintained in this period of transition.

But an even more crucial period for the analysis of the nature of power in first-century Rome was the aftermath of the civil war. After the death of Vitellius in December 69, there were no further serious attempts to elevate a new emperor; Tacitus claims that “it was more that war ceased than that peace began.”<sup>1</sup> This assessment, and

---

<sup>1</sup> Tac. *Hist.* 4.1: *Interfecto Vitellio bellum magis desierat quam pax coeperat.*

the historical fact that Vespasian did not face significant, organized opposition to his rule in any way that threatened the security of his regime, makes it appear that the civil war had simply ended on its own – that Vespasian had merely outlasted his competitors, and that his potential rivals for imperial power were worn out, unprepared for further conflict, or unwilling to inflict further damage upon the state. This contributes to the impression that the trauma of the civil war had been temporary and insignificant in the broader scope of Roman imperial history. However, a close analysis of the first months of Vespasian's reign shows that the new emperor and his supporters actively worked towards the establishment of a Flavian peace by making alliances that ensured political stability, taking steps to prevent further military unrest, and eliminating individuals who could have rallied opposition to the Flavians. The range of actions taken by the Flavians, some of which were extreme and controversial, show that they themselves viewed their victory as far from secure, and that the campaign to establish Vespasian as the new emperor continued for some time after their military victory in December 69.

The most important aspect of Vespasian's victory as it pertains to an analysis of imperial power in the first century was the way that the early months of his reign were taken up in a range of activities that were intended to contribute to the development of Vespasian's informal, personal authority within ideological and cultural parameters already associated with the office of the emperor. For example, Vespasian had to assume the emperor's religious role, not just in ritual terms (in his capacity as the new *pontifex maximus*) but as a quasi-religious figure himself, whose authority could be explained in terms of his personal connection to the divine and who stood at the center of a well-developed imperial cult. The emperor's family had assumed a political significance in

Roman imperial culture, as individual members had been given central roles in the development of certain Julio-Claudian emperors' moral programs, and thus the position of the emperor had come to assume an ideological and cultural dimension. These cultural, religious, ideological, and moral aspects of the imperial office were already well established when Vespasian translated his violent military victory into stable, peaceful government; the fact that his victory appeared to contemporaries, and appears to modern historians, as a mere cessation of hostilities shows the extent to which his efforts to establish himself within these categories of imperial meaning were successful.

In these efforts, Vespasian did not simply appropriate these roles and present himself as a continuation of the Julio-Claudian family. Rather, Vespasian manipulated imperial traditions and created a new model of the imperial office that was able to accommodate his claim to authority, which was based on a career, personality, and identity that set him apart from his imperial predecessors. As a result, Vespasian's accession subjected the imperial office to an extensive reevaluation, as Vespasian adapted notions of imperial space, the quasi-divine status of the emperor, the construction and presentation of a symbolic imperial family, and the emperor's relationship to Rome's past; the changes he made allowed him to create a new, Flavian notion of imperial authority that highlighted the contrast between the new regime and the old. In exploring how and why Vespasian made the changes that he made, it is possible to uncover Vespasian's conception of the imperial office and contemporary Roman notions of the nature of imperial power.

The discussion of how to define and describe the principate as a system of government and the position of the emperor has been heavily influenced by Mommsen,

who situated the discussion within his analysis of the Roman constitution. He argued for a view of the principate in which the state was based on a division of magisterial roles between the emperor and the senate, a “dyarchy,” according to which the emperor’s power was based on grants of constitutional rights and privileges that he shared with the senate, which retained its republican roles. This constitutional approach has led later scholars to look at the principate in terms of the continuity of republican legal and civic institutions and categories of magisterial authority.<sup>2</sup> Mommsen’s analysis made use of the point of transition from republic to principate, paying special attention to Augustus’ role in forming the position of the emperor out of a collection of republican elements. This emphasis on Augustus’ role in creating, and thus establishing the parameters for, the principate has been reflected in subsequent scholarship with the result that the constitutional or legal positions of later emperors, such as Vespasian, are usually discussed in terms of their adherence to an Augustan standard of republicanism, rather than in terms of their own relationships with republican legal traditions.<sup>3</sup>

While Syme’s discussion of the principate was also located within a consideration of the transition from republic to empire, he deemphasized the emperor’s formal powers and argued that Augustus’ power was based on his informal, personal authority, which arose from a republican aristocratic culture of competition and was based on his network of alliances, his monopoly of wealth, political influence, and access to the state’s military resources; this social authority was the basis of the imperial system of government, and the republican constitutional elements that Mommsen addresses were “a screen and a

---

<sup>2</sup> Eg. de Martino 1974.

<sup>3</sup> On Augustus’ position, see for example Lacey 1996.

sham.”<sup>4</sup> But according to this understanding of imperial authority, the emperor’s intangible personal authority, his *auctoritas* and *maiestas*, was closely connected to his control over the formal institutions of the state; Augustus’ *auctoritas*, for example, gave him the social capital to claim consular authority at the age of nineteen, and his exercise of consular authority, and the extraordinary military commands that went with it, augmented his personal authority.<sup>5</sup>

The relationship between formal magistracies and social authority informed Millar, who sought a descriptive definition of the imperial office by investigating the range of activities that Roman emperor engaged in.<sup>6</sup> Millar looked at a range of literary and epigraphic sources from the first three centuries CE to reveal the broad pattern of imperial activities and locates imperial power within the emperor’s actions and capacity to perform these actions. Millar, and to a similar extent Brunt,<sup>7</sup> made use of documentary evidence for emperors’ careers to consider more closely the relationship between the emperor’s position, his formal authorities, and his actions, and thus presents the problem of the nature of imperial power within the bigger picture of any emperor’s ability to exercise his authority within the broad legal and cultural landscape of the Roman world. In this way, Millar’s analysis of the emperors’ careers extends the analysis of the nature of imperial power beyond the reign of Augustus, recognizing it as a problem that was explored over the course of the first three centuries of the empire.

---

<sup>4</sup> Syme 1939, 15.

<sup>5</sup> I have approached *auctoritas* – the emperor’s informal personal authority – in terms of Weber’s notion of “charisma,” defined in *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft* (1922, 140-143) and applied to royal court ritual by Norbert Elias (1969, trans. 2006); cf. Acton 2011. On the position of the emperor as a charismatic monarchy, see the brief discussion by Wallace-Hadrill (1981, 298), and the more extensive discussions of Winterling (1999 and 2009) and Ando (2000, 19-70).

<sup>6</sup> Millar 1977.

<sup>7</sup> Eg. Brunt 1977.

In order to provide a new perspective on this problem, I have limited my analysis to the period from the death of Vitellius in December 69 to the Judaeian triumph of June 71 and I have attempted to focus entirely on Vespasian's relationship with and activities within the city of Rome. Vespasian's historical circumstances were particularly complex, as the Romans of his day had already experienced a century of the principate, but the civil war and the end of the Julio-Claudian dynasty had invited scrutiny of the nature of this system of government. Vespasian could not assume the position of emperor without reference to the past and his imperial predecessors, as a close analysis of Vespasian's actions shows; in this way, the analyses of the principate which had focused on its formation under Augustus provide a point of comparison, as Vespasian sought to reestablish a social, religious, moral, and political role that had already been well delineated. At the same time, Millar has shown that Vespasian's actions must be understood within the long-term development of the emperor's position that began with Augustus but continued during the reign of the Flavians and beyond; my analysis will contextualize Vespasian's actions within this development. In formulating this approach to the analysis of the nature of imperial power, I sought to employ a microhistorical mode of analysis,<sup>8</sup> using the evidence for Vespasian's definition of imperial authority within his particularly tense historical context to understand how Vespasian and his contemporaries conceived of the principate, understood the political developments of the previous

---

<sup>8</sup> I was particularly influenced by Ginzburg (1980) and Zemon Davis (1983), whose analyses of (respectively) Italian and French peasants revealed their subjects' contemporary intellectual world and social anxieties in an engaging and meaningful way. My analysis of Vespasian's reign seeks to explore constitutional issues with this methodological approach, to understand the cultural and ideological issues that were implicated in the emperor's actions, self-representation, and relationship with the Roman state.



century, and imagined the future of the Roman state;<sup>9</sup> in so doing, I sought to perceive in Vespasian's definition of the emperor a response to the question of what the principate was and how it worked.

Since Vespasian's actions were so frequently understood only within a context of Rome's recent imperial (and less recent republican) past, I have frequently looked beyond the period of Vespasian's early months in power to understand how his policies, actions, and deeds gained meaning. Vespasian's ability to draw from Rome's religious, military, and moral traditions as he developed the ideological, cultural, spatial, and political framework for his personal authority shows how closely connected these elements were in Rome's urban environment. Thus, I have been very much informed by recent work on memory in the Roman empire, particularly that of Alcock and Gowing, who have approached the study of ancient topography and the physical landscape within the framework of Hobsbawm's concept of traditions.<sup>10</sup>

The early months of Vespasian's reign support this kind of analysis particularly well because of the wealth and depth of the sources available. Narrative histories of the period survive from antiquity, although sometimes only partially; Tacitus' *Histories* breaks off in the middle of book 5, or the summer of 70, and Dio's books on the Flavians survive only in the epitomes of Xiphilinus and Zonaras. However, Josephus' account of the Jewish War offers a complete, and unique, perspective on the Flavian victory in the

---

<sup>9</sup> The nature of the Roman state is itself a problematic question, as the nature of the Roman state was contested and redefined in multiple contexts (eg. Ando 2000, 73-130); in considering the nature of Vespasian's Rome as a political community, I have made use of Benedict Anderson's concept of socially-constructed imagined communities (1991 [1983]).

<sup>10</sup> Alcock 2002, Gowing 2005; see Hobsbawm 2003 [1983]; I have also found the discussions of social memory in antiquity by Steinbock 2005 and Steed 2008 extremely helpful and comprehensive.

civil war and the beginning of Vespasian's reign. Suetonius' biographies of Vespasian, Titus, and Domitian provide their own narrative of the Flavian dynasty; Plutarch's lives of Galba and Otho also offer valuable information for the period of the civil war.

Literary figures of the late first century made reference to the period at the beginning of Vespasian's reign; thus I have found the writings of Pliny the Elder, Quintilian, Silius Italicus, Martial, and Frontinus to be useful complements to the historical sources.

Furthermore, non-literary evidence for this period frequently offers crucial insights for important political, military, and ideological events. For example, I have found that the coinage of Vespasian provides revealing evidence for Flavian attitudes, and even actions, within this period; this material has recently been made more accessible with the publications of both the Flavian volume of *Roman Provincial Coinage* in 1999 and the revised edition of the Flavian section of *Roman Imperial Coinage* in 2006.<sup>11</sup> I have also made use of documentary evidence, principally epigraphic. The archaeological evidence for the Flavian building program in the city of Rome has also been made accessible by relatively recent works; Darwall-Smith's analysis of Flavian construction projects in Rome identifies each building or structure and relates it to the reign of the emperor who oversaw its construction with a discussion of its architectural and symbolic significance. More generally, the multi-volume *Lexicon Topographicum Urbis Romae*, edited by Steinby, supplemented by Richardson's *Topographical Dictionary of Ancient Rome* (which has revised Platner and Ashby's *Topographical Dictionary of Rome*) puts these structures in their broader urban imperial context.<sup>12</sup>

---

<sup>11</sup> *RPC II* = Amandry, Burnett, and Carradice 1999; *RIC II*<sup>2</sup> = Buttrey and Carradice 2006.

<sup>12</sup> Darwall-Smith 1996; Richardson 1992, revising Platner and Ashby 1929; Steinby *LTUR* 1993-2000.

There is an extensive bibliography of modern scholarship on the events of the civil war, Vespasian's life and career, and the Flavian period in general, although there has not yet been a close analysis of the events and significance of the early months of Vespasian's reign. The year 69 CE first received attention from Henderson in 1908 in his historical commentary to Tacitus' *Histories*. Subsequent historians have focused on the chronological problems presented by Tacitus' narrative, which avoids a discussion of the early events of the civil war by beginning on 1 January 69 in the final days of Galba's life, and then omits or elides important details about the progression of the campaigns of Otho, Vitellius, and especially Vespasian and his supporters. Greenhalgh's and Wellesley's accounts both appeared in 1975, of which Greenhalgh's work was more oriented toward a general readership, but Wellesley's account engaged closely with the textual and narrative issues of Tacitus and complements his commentary of *Histories* 3 which had appeared in 1972. Wellesley's history of 69 CE has had a greater impact; a revised third edition, with an introduction by Levick, appeared in 2000. Most recently, Morgan's account of the civil war has ably summarized and presented the chronological and historical issues in a narrative that focuses on, and clarifies, the role of particular legions in the political and military developments of the year.<sup>13</sup> The first English biography of Vespasian was written by Levick and appeared in 1999; earlier notable biographical treatments of the first Flavian emperor are by Graf in 1937 (in the form of a critical treatment of Suetonius' *Life of Vespasian*), Bersanetti in 1941, Homo in 1949, and most recently Caratini in 2003. Nicols' history of the Flavian faction provides an invaluable analysis of the civil war and also closely follows the course of Vespasian's life

---

<sup>13</sup> Henderson 1908; Greenhalgh 1975; Wellesley 1975, 2000; Morgan 2006.

and career, elucidating much biographical and historical detail.<sup>14</sup> Biographical studies of Titus and Domitian, especially those of Jones, also consider Vespasian's significance as the father of the Flavian dynasty.<sup>15</sup> Finally, the Flavian age has received attention as a politically or culturally distinct period, as interest in the literary culture of Domitian's Rome has increased.<sup>16</sup>

These works all offer different perspectives on Vespasian's life, career, family, and rise to power; however, many of them share an approach to the events following the Flavian victory that presents Vespasian's reign as unchanging, static, and of less significance than the events leading up to his accession. The histories of the civil war of 69 present the war's conclusion as the restoration of order and the return of normalcy in the Roman state; for example, the opening and closing sentences of Wellesley's account are near identical consular formulas for the years 69 and 70, which creates the impression that the chaos of the year 69 had been a brief aberration in the ordered progress of imperial history, and Gallivan describes the year 70 as "when the state had once again settled itself down to running in routine."<sup>17</sup> The biographical and semi-biographical accounts tend to break off their chronological narratives upon the death of Vitellius. For example, Levick's discussion of Vespasian's reign consists of a series of thematic chapters on "Ideology", "Financial Survival", or "Imperialism", while Nicols' focus shifts to a prosopographical analysis of the emergent Flavian elite in order to shed light on the faction that had worked toward Vespasian's victory. As a result, the events of the year 70 have not received the same close attention as those of the previous year, which is

---

<sup>14</sup> Nicols 1978.

<sup>15</sup> Jones 1984 on Titus and 1992 on Domitian.

<sup>16</sup> See for example Salles 2002; Boyle and Dominik 2003.

<sup>17</sup> Wellesley 1975, 1 and 217; Gallivan 1981, 186.

a direct result of the assumption that the death of Vitellius restored order to the state and that the actions and movements of the new emperor and his supporters could not repay such a close analysis because they were unopposed and therefore less significant.

I have organized my study of Vespasian's imperial authority into four chapters. The first of these, "The Flavian Victory," reviews the events of the period from Vespasian's acclamation by the Egyptian and Syrian legions in July 69 until the Flavian triumph over Judaea in June 71. The Flavian strategy for victory in the civil war put the military campaign in the hands of Vespasian's supporters, notably Licinius Mucianus, while Vespasian remained in Alexandria; this strategy, I argue, was developed in response to the ideological and military tension between the city of Rome and the legionary armies that emerged in the course of the events of 68-69. Galba, Otho, and Vitellius had faced the choice between consolidating their claim to power by maintaining their presence in the city of Rome, where their formal powers and imperial honors were recognized, and sustaining a military presence outside of the city, prepared to respond to legionary soldiers and their senatorial commanders who might emerge to oppose them. Therefore, the Flavians developed a strategy for victory in which Vespasian himself remained outside of the city, in touch with the legions of Egypt and Syria, while his generals fought for Italy and took control of Rome; this would ensure that his status as emperor would be recognized while he was still in a position to guard against further provincial threats. As a result, however, the group of important figures in Roman politics in the early months of Vespasian's reign did not include the new emperor himself, but rather consisted of his son Domitian, Mucianus, the general Antonius Primus, and others. This chapter therefore examines the problem of Vespasian's absence from the city at a

political and symbolic level, and the effect that it had on the development of his personal authority. By observing the chronological developments of this period, this chapter also reveals the moments at which Vespasian's absence or presence invited public scrutiny of his claim to rule, and even provided the opportunity for individuals like the senator Helvidius Priscus to form a distinct position as critics of the Flavian regime. The fact that members of the senate and the Roman public were able to develop a critical awareness of Vespasian's claim to authority gradually in the months after his accession is significant, as it had a impact on the way that Vespasian would develop his imperial persona after his return to Rome in October of 70. The narrative presented in this chapter, therefore, introduces general issues of the imperial office and imperial power; in my subsequent chapters, I consider how Vespasian's actions, policies, and self-representation responded to these issues.

My next chapter, "Space and the ideological topography of Rome," looks closely at the relationship between imperial power and urban space. The ideological topography of the city had been exploited and developed by the Julio-Claudian emperors, whose organization of the imperial space of Rome was based on the memories and traditions that made particular spaces within the city meaningful. I focus on Vespasian's interactions with three of these meaningful spaces: the republican Capitoline, the Julio-Claudian imperial Palatine, and the Quirinal, which I argue Vespasian developed as a Flavian imperial space. The Capitoline, and especially the temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus, acquired particular significance in the aftermath of the Flavian victory, as it had been destroyed in a conflict between Vespasian's brother, the urban prefect Flavius Sabinus, and Vitellian soldiers. Thus Vespasian's performance on the site of the

Capitolium on the day of his return to Rome in October 70 invoked recent memories of the conflict that had brought him to power; however, the nature of his performance, which made use of triumphal ritual and military attitudes towards labor, used the republican and military significance of the space to communicate Vespasian's acceptance of responsibility for the project of reconstructing the city in his capacity as its new leader.

Vespasian also used meaningful space in the city to define his relationship to his imperial predecessors. He avoided the Palatine, with its Julio-Claudian palace structures, and relocated imperial power in Rome to the Quirinal. This posed an intriguing challenge to traditions of imperial space in Rome, as it dissociated Vespasian not only from the Julio-Claudian notions of power represented by that space but also from the republican aristocratic traditions of the Palatine hill. The Quirinal, by contrast, was an area of the city that had not been developed as imperial space by the Julio-Claudians; rather, I argue, its meaning for Vespasian was that it had been the region of the city where his family had been established for several decades before his accession. He was familiar with it, and the people of the area were familiar with him; more importantly, it allowed him to use urban space to redefine imperial power and create a new Flavian vision of imperial authority that contrasted with that of his predecessors.

In my next chapter, "*Auctoritas and Imperium*," I deal directly with the problem of defining, constructing, and discussing Vespasian's power at the outset of his reign. I have organized this discussion around the two most explicit ancient assessments of Vespasian's authority: the statement by Suetonius that Vespasian lacked *auctoritas* and *maiestas* and the possible legal basis of his power indicated by the *lex de imperio Vespasiani*. Both of these pieces of evidence have had a profound impact on modern

conceptions of Vespasian's reign, particularly on our notion of how his contemporaries viewed his "fitness" to rule. I therefore consider the role that Vespasian's allegedly humble upbringing and his perceived social and political disadvantage as a *novus homo* played in the construction of his informal imperial authority according to the traditional Roman concepts of *auctoritas* and *maiestas*, and argue that these aspects of Vespasian's background were deliberately exaggerated after his accession as he made use of narrative *topoi* to present himself as an imperial candidate: as the best possible leader because of his simple country wisdom, and as the beneficiary of divine support without which he could not have crossed the insurmountable gap between his poor upbringing and imperial glory. In this way, Vespasian developed a model of imperial *auctoritas* and *maiestas* that differed radically from that employed by his Julio-Claudian predecessors; Vespasian's lack of divine and noble ancestors or an extensive client network and his early poverty were the very elements that reinforced his personal authority and his status as quasi-divine.

This insight into the nature of Vespasian's *auctoritas* is significant in my discussion of the *lex de imperio Vespasiani*; this text has formed the basis of the analysis of the legal nature of the imperial office, but I believe that few modern scholars have appreciated the extent to which the surviving clauses of this document serve to limit and define Vespasian's position as emperor with regard to republican political traditions, especially senatorial procedure, the authority of the comitial assembly, and the authority of Roman law. I argue that this document represents the critical analysis of Vespasian's claim to power that was made possible by his extended absence in the first months of the year 70; it preserves a law that was intended to recognize Vespasian's claim to the formal



powers of the imperial office, but simultaneously express a vision of the imperial office that supported and protected republican traditions. In this way, the document suggests that Vespasian's notion of imperial authority was revised and refined through a process of negotiation between himself and members of the Roman public. Thus my discussion of the *lex de imperio Vespasiani* explores the extent to which the nature of imperial power was flexible and subject to reevaluation and redefinition, and the ability of the Roman senate and people to contribute in this process of reevaluation and redefinition even while reinforcing the emperor's claims to specific rights and privileges.

In my final chapter, "Vespasian and his Dynasty," I address the issue of imperial succession. Vespasian's family was presented to the Roman public as a dynasty – Vespasian's two adult sons formed part of his claim to power from the beginning. In this way, Vespasian was compelled to respond to Julio-Claudian traditions of dynasticism and the public presentation of the imperial house as he constructed his own imperial family and to build his sons' claims as his heirs. Vespasian's adoption of the Julio-Claudian concept of the *domus Augusta* once again shows that his conception of imperial power differed significantly from that of his predecessors, even in the way that it could be transmitted from one generation to the next, and that Vespasian was able to manipulate and adapt imperial traditions in the service of defining his own dynasty.

Vespasian's conception of imperial dynasty challenged the important symbolic role that women, especially the mothers of emperors or future emperors, played in the Julio-Claudian imperial household; their ability to connect the reigning emperor with his predecessors (especially Augustus) and to represent the physical link between one male member of the household and another was a crucial part of how the imperial family, and

imperial succession, was presented to the Roman public. This symbolic role allowed individual women, like Agrippina the Younger, to develop independent personal and political power, which threatened imperial stability and could complicate imperial court politics – as Vespasian himself had experienced. Consequently, the fact that Vespasian constructed a Flavian *domus Augusta* that eliminated the importance of imperial women, and communicated his relationship with Titus and Domitian through the physical similarities and offices and honors that were shared among the three members of the imperial family, is significant. However, as I discuss in this chapter, Vespasian’s imperial household was not devoid of women whose presence and domestic roles served to communicate important messages about the imperial family: Vespasian’s concubine Antonia Caenis and Titus’ mistress Julia Berenice occupied positions in the imperial family that were politically and socially significant, in that their relationships with the men of the imperial family served to clarify the future of the Flavian succession; however, crucially, their status in Vespasian’s household precluded them from leveraging their symbolic importance into permanent independent political authority.

Under Vespasian, the Roman public was presented with a Flavian imperial family which represented Vespasian, Titus, and Domitian as a coherent and unified group, within which degrees of status were observed but which was united by pervading physical, ethical, and political similarities. This representation resonated at the time and continues to affect the way that we understand the reigns of Vespasian and his sons. Modern scholarship discusses the Flavians as a coherent and homogenous group, united by a common notion of the nature of the principate and a shared attitude toward imperial power and Flavian dynastic policy; this cohesion is only disturbed by Domitian’s

increasing autocracy and tyranny, and his gradual rejection of the example set by his father and brother in favor of the example of Julio-Claudian emperors like Nero.

However, in discussing how Vespasian established his dynasty and asserted his sons' status as his heirs, I will argue that this perception of Flavian political homogeneity is the result of Vespasian's notion of imperial authority and his attempt to create a principle of imperial succession that eliminated the central role of imperial women.

The cohesion of the Flavian emperors was as constructed as Vespasian's imperial persona, but it is important to distinguish between the narrative of Flavian unity composed by Vespasian early in his reign and the very real differences between each Flavian emperor's own definition of imperial authority, which drew from – but did not imitate – the examples set by their predecessors. In fact, neither Titus nor Domitian maintained Vespasian's model of imperial power and its use of space, ritual, family, and other categories of imperial action. Titus and Domitian returned to a dynastic principle of succession that depended on their ability to produce a biological heir, and positioned themselves as the successors to Julio-Claudian emperors and the ultimate heirs of Augustus; Domitian not only returned to the imperial center of the Palatine, but his elaborate and luxurious palace constructions there set the standard for a new level of formality and court ceremonial. Ultimately, Vespasian's attempts to redefine the imperial office were short-lived, which makes it difficult to comprehend the extent to which Vespasian's accession represents a radical or revolutionary reassessment of the nature of the imperial office. However, Titus' and Domitian's departures from their father's example is revealing, as it demonstrates that imperial power, and the office of the princeps, was not a stable or monolithic concept in the first century CE, but was

continuously subject to a process of redefinition, reevaluation, and negotiation depending on historical and cultural circumstances, contemporary social concerns, and even the personality of the emperor. This highly personal aspect of imperial power, and the process by which a new emperor like Vespasian could redefine the position and give new meaning to imperial actions – including the exercise of formal authority – is the focus of this dissertation.

## Chapter 1:

### The Flavian Victory

#### Introduction

Tacitus' succinct commentary on the beginning of Vespasian's reign was that "it was more that war ceased than that peace began."<sup>1</sup> This statement indicates the ambivalent nature of the Flavian victory. With Vitellius dead, the senate was compelled to recognize Vespasian as the new emperor, and since no other candidates came forward the matter was settled. However, this historical tautology handily glosses over the real political and military challenge faced by Vespasian and his supporters in December of 69. The empire had been thrown into political turmoil, and almost every province and legion had been drawn into the conflict in one way or another; the fighting had converged on Rome, which had been partially destroyed in the fire on the Capitolium, and multiple Flavian armies now held positions in or around the city. The senate – when it was not hiding from Flavian troops – recognized Vespasian as their leader, but he was in Egypt, where he would remain for several months; he was represented in Rome by no fewer than three proxies, Domitian, Mucianus, and Antonius Primus, who did not always agree with

---

<sup>1</sup> Tac. *Hist.* 4.1: *Interfecto Vitellio bellum magis desierat quam pax coeperat.*

one another. Meanwhile, the troops and supporters of Vitellius needed to be reconciled with the Flavian victors.

Tacitus' comment draws attention away from a very serious and complex political situation. The fact that there was no more fighting after the death of Vitellius shows that Vespasian and his supporters were able to negotiate the very difficult translation of military victory into stable political power, and to defuse both the military tension and the political opposition to his reign. The events of the year 70 show that this was accomplished through the sometimes-brutal elimination of potential rivals to Vespasian's authority and the careful redeployment of legions throughout the empire in order to prevent further military resistance from among the troops, from provincial threats, and from politicians in Rome. There was no self-evident reason why the civil war should have ended with the death of Vitellius, except that it did. Therefore, the question becomes how did the Flavians accomplish their military and political victory so as to convince their contemporaries and their later commentators that it could not have been any other way.

### **The Flavian plan**

The soldiers of the Syrian and Egyptian legions swore an oath of allegiance to Vespasian at the beginning of July 69.<sup>2</sup> Although Dio presents this as a spontaneous action on the part of the troops, it was clearly premeditated: the prefect of Egypt, Tiberius Julius Alexander,<sup>3</sup> administered the oath in Alexandria on July 1 and the Syrian legions acclaimed him emperor a few days later, although that may have been at least partially

---

<sup>2</sup> Tac. *Hist.* 2.79-80; Suet. *Vesp.* 6.3; Dio 65.9.1; Josephus *BJ* 4.592f.

<sup>3</sup> Turner 1954, 54-64.

unprompted (as Tacitus suggests). This oath was the beginning of Vespasian's bid for power, and it immediately put him in opposition to Vitellius, of whose victory against Otho at Bedriacum the Syrian commanders had already learned.

The extent of the planning that led up to this moment is unclear. There is little indication that Vespasian had considered plotting against Nero, for all his unpopularity.<sup>4</sup> Similarly, although Vespasian and Mucianus may have been disappointed by Galba, there is no positive evidence that they had contemplated armed resistance to him either.<sup>5</sup> Tacitus' account of Vespasian's and Mucianus' reaction to the brewing conflict between Otho and Vitellius in the early spring of 69 suggests that they had already begun to consider making their own bid for power, as he shows them assessing the strengths and weaknesses of their position in Syria and when it would be most advantageous to strike, and putting their campaign against the Jewish rebels on hold for a season. However, Tacitus does not indicate whether they had begun to take any definitive steps towards action, such as reaching out to the extensive network of allies that would be in place by that summer.<sup>6</sup>

The reason for this mystery is that, after the end of the civil war, pro-Flavian narratives, which dominated the historiographic landscape, sought to present Vespasian

---

<sup>4</sup> Nicols 1978, 93, arguing against Chilver 1957, 34; Drexler 1956, 523; Weber 1921, 154. Josephus' famous prediction (*BJ* 3.399-408; cf. Dio 66.1.4, Suet. *Vesp.* 5.6) would have taken place in 67, but should not be seen as evidence that Vespasian's plans were already in motion (see below).

<sup>5</sup> Although it also not likely that Galba had sent for Titus in order to adopt him. See Büchner 1964, 83; Nicols 1978, 94.

<sup>6</sup> Tac. *Hist.* 2.7; the fact that they suspended the campaigns in Judaea indicates that they had at least decided definitively to act at some point in the year, see Chilver 1957, 34. Nicols (1978, 94) argues that their plans were first set in motion very soon before this, when Titus, in Corinth, heard of Galba's death and held a *consilium* of his friends to determine whether or not he should continue to Rome (Tac. *Hist.* 2.1), cf. Morgan 2006, 180. Certainly, Titus' movements throughout 69 seem to indicate an intense period of preparation and negotiation, see Levick 1999, 45.

as favorably as possible, often by emphasizing his reluctance to challenge authority or to engage in conspiracies; for example, Tacitus has Mucianus convince Vespasian to accept his nomination and the soldiers' acclamations are spontaneous and unprompted.<sup>7</sup> By presenting Vespasian's rise to power in this way, these narratives explain his accession as the result of his reaction to the aggression or injustice of other imperial candidates, and his supposed unwillingness preempted accusations of similar aggression or injustice on his part.<sup>8</sup> Vespasian's reluctance also creates a role for Fortune and divine will in the narrative of the Flavian victory: for example, Mucianus' attempt to persuade Vespasian to act is only successful after his companions have reminded him of the omens and portents that predicted his rise to power, especially the prediction of a certain Basilides who oversaw his sacrifice on Mt. Carmel.<sup>9</sup> This aspect of the narrative was a highly-developed and exceedingly useful piece of propaganda, as it presented Vespasian's victory as inevitable and cast him as the divinely-sanctioned ruler whose lack of desire for power for its own sake made him a better imperial claimant.<sup>10</sup> However, as a result of this reconstruction of the events leading up to Vespasian's victory, many of the details of how the victory had been brought about were buried.

In the weeks or months leading up to Vespasian's acclamation there were no doubt very complex clandestine arrangements, but the first open definitive action of

---

<sup>7</sup> Nicols 1978, 95. Mucianus convinces Vespasian in Tac. *Hist.* 2.76; his speech is constructed to respond to Vespasian's unexpressed anxieties, and has been taken as indicative of a real "failure of nerve" on Vespasian's part, see Morgan 2006, 183.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Nicols 1978, 45 on Josephus' use of Vespasian's *Commentarii*. These pro-Flavian histories also sought to obscure the extent to which Vespasian was aware of, or even engaged in, plots against other emperors of 68-69; see Nicols 1978, 55 on Vespasian's early knowledge of Vindex' revolt against Nero.

<sup>9</sup> Lattimore 1934; Scott 1934; Morgan 1996b, 41-55.

<sup>10</sup> cf. Tacitus' assessment of Galba's reign: in common opinion he was fit for power until he had wielded it (*omnium consensu capax imperii nisi imperasset*, *Hist.* 1.49). I will explore the relationship between fortune and Vespasian's claim to power in chapter 3.



planning the Flavian bid for power took place a few weeks after the troops had acclaimed him emperor in the beginning of July, when Vespasian and his allies met at Berytus; this group included Vespasian and Mucianus, their tribunes and legates (including Titus, the legate of *legio XV Apollinaris*), and the foreign allies Sohaemus of Emesa, Antiochus of Commagene, and Herod Agrippa of Judaea.<sup>11</sup> At this point, their plans were already well developed: agents were sent out to hold levies and to oversee the production of coins to pay the troops, while embassies were sent to the Parthians and Armenians to guard against an attack while Rome's troops were focused on the civil war.<sup>12</sup> The most important part of the plans developed at Berytus was strategic: Vespasian would go to Egypt and join Tiberius Alexander, his loyal and dependable ally, where he would be protected by the two legions of Alexandria (*III Cyrenaica* and *XXII Deiotariana*), so that he could "hold the keys of Egypt" (*obtinere claustra Aegypti*). Meanwhile, Mucianus would lead part of the troops into Italy; his force consisted of the entirety of *legio VI Ferrata* and detachments from the remaining Syrian legions (*IV Scythica*, *V Macedonica*, *X Fretensis*, *XII Fulminata* and Titus' legion *XV Apollinaris*), a total of around 18,000 legionary soldiers.<sup>13</sup> Titus would continue the war in Judaea with the remainder of these five legions; however, it is evident that he joined Vespasian in Alexandria over the course of the winter of 69/70.<sup>14</sup>

---

<sup>11</sup> Tiberius Alexander may have sent a representative as well, Scott 1934, 138-140.

<sup>12</sup> Vologaeses offered Vespasian 40,000 mounted archers, which Vespasian refused (Tac. *Hist.* 4.51).

<sup>13</sup> Tac. *Hist.* 2.82. The force sent to invade Italy was considered sufficient because it consisted of "part of the troops, the leader Mucianus, the name of Vespasian, and nothing difficult for fate" (*pars copiarum et dux Mucianus et Vespasiani nomen ac nihil arduum fatis*). This is an example of how pro-Flavian accounts of Vespasian's victory emphasize the role of fate.

<sup>14</sup> Morgan 2006, 185, 291-300. Dio says that Titus and Vespasian entered their consulships on 1 January 70 while Titus was in Palestine and Vespasian was in Egypt (66.1.1), however Josephus shows Vespasian sending Titus back to Judaea from Alexandria after he has heard news of

The Flavian strategy for defeating Vitellius seems to have been based on the notion that strategic applications of force and political leverage would effect a bloodless victory.<sup>15</sup> Mucianus would threaten Italy with his army, while Vespasian occupied Alexandria (the *claustra Aegypti*)<sup>16</sup> to control Rome's grain supply. However, this interpretation of the plan has been criticized by modern scholars, who point out that Vespasian's control of the grain supply would hardly have been politically decisive as the majority of Rome's grain came from Africa rather than Egypt and this measure would have put pressure on the people of Rome rather than its political leaders; in addition, Morgan argues that Mucianus' *pars copiarum* seems dismissively small for a force that is supposed to intimidate its enemies into submission when Tacitus strongly implies that Mucianus' initial strategy for reaching Italy would have involved a great deal of bloodshed.<sup>17</sup>

However, the circumstances of 69 were extraordinary, and what might not have worked in other years was potentially very effective then. Vespasian's control of Egypt's grain shipments would have had a significant impact on the grain supply to Rome, which had been a serious concern for several years and had received little attention due to the serious political and military instability. In 67 or 68, the people had turned against Nero for importing sand from Egypt during a period of high grain prices.<sup>18</sup> In 68 Nymphidius Sabinus wrote to Galba while he was still in Spain to tell him that Clodius Macer,

---

Vitellius' death (*BJ* 4.656) and Tacitus shows Vespasian conferring with Titus in Egypt before sending him back with an army (*Hist.* 4.51).

<sup>15</sup> Nicols 1978, 95, although he points out that it is unlikely that this is what Vespasian and others promised their troops.

<sup>16</sup> Ash 2007, 323.

<sup>17</sup> Morgan 2006, 187-188.

<sup>18</sup> Suet. *Nero* 45.1.

rebellling in Africa, had withheld the usual grain shipment and that there was unrest in the city.<sup>19</sup> Since Clodius was not suppressed until the fall of 68, it is likely that the shortage had not been relieved and prices were higher than usual in the winter of 68/69.<sup>20</sup> Therefore, even if the regular grain supply from Africa had been restored in 69, Vespasian's control of the grain shipment from Alexandria would have had a very real psychological impact on the Roman public, who had been concerned about grain for several years at this point. Furthermore, even if Vespasian's control of the grain supply put pressure on Rome's plebs rather than its political leaders, it is important to remember that Vitellius' support in the city lay primarily with the soldiers and people; by withholding shipments of grain, Vespasian put both economic and psychological pressure on the groups whose disenchantment would hit Vitellius the hardest.<sup>21</sup>

Mucianus' military role is more difficult to untangle. Certainly, his force of 18,000 men seems insignificant, especially given the large number of troops left with Titus in Judaea. However, it is highly unlikely that Vespasian and Mucianus imagined Mucianus' force remaining at that size over the course of his progress toward Italy. They would have already been aware of the discontent growing among the legions that had initially supported Otho or Galba as a result of Vitellius' inability to mollify them or win them over after his victory at Bedriacum. Thus the Othonian legions *I Adiutrix* and *XIV Gemina Martia Victrix* were sent to Spain and Britain respectively, while *XIII Gemina*

---

<sup>19</sup> Plut. *Galba* 13.3; cf. Josephus *BJ* 2.383, who says that Africa produced two-thirds of Rome's grain supply while Egypt produced the remaining third.

<sup>20</sup> Newbold 1972, 310. A conservative estimate places Rome's demand for grain at 40 million *modii* per year, Rickman 1980, 231.

<sup>21</sup> Yavetz 1969, 557-569; Newbold 1972, 308-319. In early 70, bad weather held the African grain ships in port, and the people immediately became afraid that Lucius Piso, the proconsul of Africa, had revolted (Tac. *Hist.* 4.38). This shows how much the grain supply was at the forefront of the people's concerns at this point, and how aware they were of North Africa for the feeding of Rome.

was put to work rebuilding Cremona. *XI Claudia* and *VII Galbiana* were returned to their winter quarters in Dalmatia and Pannonia. Vitellius' treatment of the defeated legions and their personnel was brutal; when he greeted Caecina and Valens at Lugdunum after their victory at the battle of Bedriacum, along with the defeated Othonian generals, he put the "most enthusiastic Othonian centurions" to death, an action that Tacitus states explicitly turned the legions in Illyricum against him.<sup>22</sup>

The Flavians' preparations for their attack included sending letters to Rome's armies and their commanders, urging them to stir up animosity toward Vitellius; the legions of the Danube, then, were already in a state to support Vitellius' opponent. What is more Mucianus had a particular advantage as he tried to win over support from Rome's other legions as he had once been a protégé of Cn. Domitius Corbulo, the long-time proconsul of Syria and Nero's victim of 67. Corbulo's twelve years of campaigning against Armenia had made him the premier military figure of the Neronian world, with the result that, even years after his death, a significant number of the legates or proconsuls throughout the Roman world had served under him or had been connected to him in one way or another.<sup>23</sup> Mucianus' ability to rally this group, which seems to have maintained a certain political solidarity, was crucial as he progressed through Asia Minor and Dalmatia, as it gave him influence over individuals like Dillius Aponianus, the legate of *legio III Gallica* stationed in Moesia.<sup>24</sup>

---

<sup>22</sup> Tac. *Hist.* 2.60: *tum interfecti centuriones promptissimi Othonianorum, unde praecipua in Vitellium alienatio per Illyricos exercitus...*

<sup>23</sup> For a detailed prosopographical analysis, see Nicols 1978, 103-108 and 118-124; Vervaeet 2003, 436-464. On Corbulo's political connections, see Syme 1970, 27-39.

<sup>24</sup> Tac. *Hist.* 3.10; Syme 1958a, 7. Cf. Tac. *Hist.* 2.76, which shows the ideological significance of the memory of Corbulo in the Flavian plans of 69.

Vespasian had not gained his military experience under Corbulo – in fact, Vespasian’s niece had married Caesennius Paetus, who had come into conflict with Corbulo as governor of Cappadocia,<sup>25</sup> and Vespasian himself, as the new commander in the war against the Jews, had benefited directly from Corbulo’s death.<sup>26</sup> But it seems that Corbulo’s former legates had formed a political faction in the face of Corbulo’s death, and they were aligned against Nero; with Mucianus’ involvement, the Flavian campaign offered the opportunity for revenge.<sup>27</sup> At the very least, the Flavian leaders had reason to believe that Mucianus would acquire more troops as he approached Italy.<sup>28</sup>

Finally, Mucianus’ 18,000 men may seem an inconsiderable force in comparison with the number of troops who remained behind in Syria. But even if Mucianus had not picked up additional men on his way through Moesia and Pannonia, his army still would have approached the size of the Vitellian forces in Italy. Vitellius boasted the support of a large number of legions: but, like Mucianus’, the Vitellian armies were composed mostly of detachments. At Bedriacum, the Vitellian force consisted of *V Alaudae*, Valens’ legion from Lower Germany, and *XXI Rapax*, following Caecina, from Upper Germany; these legions were supported by detachments from *I Germanica*, *IV Macedonica*, *XV Primigenia*, *XVI*, and *XXII Primigenia*.<sup>29</sup> After his victory, this force was joined by detachments from *II Adiutrix* and *XX Valeria Victrix*, both stationed in

---

<sup>25</sup> Townend 1961, 56; for Caesennius Paetus and Corbulo, see Tac. *Ann.* 15.6.

<sup>26</sup> Levick 1999, 56.

<sup>27</sup> Syme 1958b, 593. Domitian’s marriage to Domitia Longina, Corbulo’s daughter, appears to have followed very shortly after Vespasian’s victory; it is unclear to what extent this was a pre-arranged political alliance, Jones 1992, 34; Nicols 1978, 116; Vervaet 2003, 454. On Domitia, see Syme 1981, 49-51; Levick 2002.

<sup>28</sup> Nicols 1978, 73; Morgan 1994, 166-168.

<sup>29</sup> The bulk of *XV Primigenia* and *XVI* had to remain in Lower Germany to respond to the Batavian revolt, cf. Tac. *Hist.* 4.60.

Britain, and the remainder of *XXII Primigenia*, which accompanied Vitellius into Italy. Therefore, while Vitellius could claim the support of a large number of legions throughout the western half of the empire, his army in Italy only consisted of the soldiers of three legions and detachments from a further four – assuming that the Vitellians had been able to recruit soldiers to replace those who had died at Bedriacum. Mucianus' expedition of 18,000 would not have fallen so short of that number.

A potential central player in the Flavian strategy was Flavius Sabinus, Vespasian's older brother and the *praefectus urbi*.<sup>30</sup> Sabinus' tenure of this office shows that he was an influential person, as this office gave its holder *imperium* in the city of Rome and command over soldiers in Italy (the urban cohorts).<sup>31</sup> Sabinus was in the ideal position to serve as a moderator and negotiator within the city as pressure mounted from Mucianus' army and Vespasian in Egypt.<sup>32</sup> However, there is little evidence that the Flavians in Syria were in contact with Flavius Sabinus, who had maintained his position under Vitellius after the death of Otho;<sup>33</sup> it is possible that Vespasian or his representatives were not able to make contact with Flavius Sabinus until September 69.<sup>34</sup> Nonetheless, Sabinus would have been a valuable asset in Rome as Vespasian and

---

<sup>30</sup> *PIR*<sup>2</sup> F 352. Tacitus says that he had held this office for twelve years (*duodecim quibus praefecturam urbis obtinuit*, *Hist.* 3.75), a strikingly long term, but a problematic number. The city prefect under Galba was Ducennius Geminus (*Tac. Hist.* 1.14), although Otho restored the position to Sabinus (*Tac. Hist.* 1.46.1; Plutarch, *Otho* 5.4) evidently as a way to gain the support of the Flavians after the assassination of Galba (Nicols 1978, 157). More problematic is the fact that the previous prefect Volusius Saturninus, had died in office in 56 (Pliny *NH* 7.62; *Tac. Ann.* 13.30). For a reconstruction of Sabinus' career, see Nicols 1978, 27.

<sup>31</sup> Cadoux 1959, 152-160. On the Sabini in Tacitus, see Wallace 1987, 343-358.

<sup>32</sup> Nicols (1978, 161) argues that there was no contact between the Flavians in the provinces and the Sabini in Rome until September 69 at the earliest; however, Sabinus' efforts on behalf of his brother explain the fact that the praetorians and urban cohorts (whom he, as urban prefect, commanded), who had been loyal to Otho, declared for Vespasian early (*Tac. Hist.* 2.67) and fought at Cremona.

<sup>33</sup> cf. *Tac. Hist.* 2.55; Wallace 1987, 348-358.

<sup>34</sup> Nicols 1978, 160.

Mucianus exerted pressure on Vitellius from northern Italy and Alexandria, as he would have been in a position to turn the urban cohorts to Vespasian's side and offer Vitellius the opportunity of negotiating a settlement with the Flavians.

One final aspect of the Berytus plan deserves attention. Mucianus was by far the more experienced administrator and was from a more influential aristocratic family, yet Vespasian's status as the imperial claimant was not in dispute and Mucianus is represented as Vespasian's supporter and ally after an initial period of resentment.<sup>35</sup> In the context of the civil war, and after a century of Julio-Claudian rule, Vespasian's reputation as a "soldier's soldier", his adult sons (especially Titus), and his family network made him the better candidate.<sup>36</sup> But the Berytus plan involved sending Vespasian to Egypt while Mucianus waged war on his behalf. The decision to conduct Vespasian's bid for power in this way may have been largely due to Mucianus' connections with the Corbulo faction; perhaps it was also a reflection of how Vitellius had come to power, lingering in Gaul while his generals Caecina and Valens conducted his campaign in Italy. This strategy was a response to a problematic aspect of imperial power that had already become apparent in the events after the death of Nero: each imperial claimant – Vespasian included – understood the importance of gaining control of Rome and acquiring the formal recognition of the senate and people, but control of the city did not prevent imperial armies or individuals in the provinces – such as Vespasian – from making their own claim to imperial power. Tacitus' *arcanum imperii* was that a

---

<sup>35</sup> Although he is said to have conducted himself "more like a partner in power than an attendant" (*socium magis imperii quam ministrum agens*, Tac. *Hist.* 2.83); see Morgan 1994, 166-168.

<sup>36</sup> Tac. *Hist.* 2.5, cf. 2.82, in which Vespasian's less extravagant attitude toward donatives makes him a more effective commander than Mucianus; Nicols 1978, 115-118.

person could be made emperor somewhere other than in Rome,<sup>37</sup> but his focus on urban politics from the death of Vitellius onwards indicates that rule of the empire was still situated on the city itself. The strategy developed at Berytus allowed Vespasian to take control of the city by proxy while remaining safe in Alexandria, where his very presence constituted a claim to authority;<sup>38</sup> this aspect of the strategy shows Vespasian's understanding of the relationship between space and the construction of power, which would play an important role in the development of his imperial persona once he reached Rome in the later part of 70.<sup>39</sup> Meanwhile, Mucianus and Sabinus could represent his interests in Rome while Vespasian remained in an ideal strategic position to respond with Alexandria's legions should military opposition emerge from the provinces once again. Furthermore, by leaving Titus to continue the war in Alexandria with the bulk of the five remaining Syrian legions the conspirators had left a force in place which could operate as further provincial leverage against any resistance that arose during and after Mucianus' invasion of Italy.

Thus as Vespasian's bid for power began, he and his supporters had developed a very carefully-constructed plan; alliances had already been forged or reinforced before any overt claims to power were made, although we do not necessarily know at what point these preliminary measures were taken. The result was that when the Flavians began to

---

<sup>37</sup> *Hist* 1.4: *evulgato imperii arcano posse principem alibi quam Romae fieri*.

<sup>38</sup> Augustus had prohibited high-ranking Romans, including senators and equestrians, from entering Egypt without imperial permission; in Tacitus (*Ann.* 2.59) Tiberius criticizes Germanicus for entering Alexandria without his consent. In explaining this imperial prohibition, Tacitus explains that Augustus sought to prevent someone with imperial ambitions from using the province's grain supply to starve Italy, perhaps a deliberate reflection of Vespasian's plan in 69/70.

<sup>39</sup> I explore this in chapter 2.



move against Vitellius, their plan unfolded in a very precise, reliable way.<sup>40</sup> This plan took advantage not only of the network of alliances of which Mucianus, at least, was a part; it also took the circumstances of the city of Rome into account, as Vespasian set out to exert pressure on Vitellius by controlling the Egyptian grain supply at a time when the price and availability of grain was a pressing concern to the Roman people. This pressure, combined with the military threat posed by Mucianus' invasion of Italy and Titus' continued presence in the East, would drive Vitellius' allies to abandon him and could urge Vitellius himself to seek a peaceful resolution to the conflict, mediated by Vespasian's influential brother Flavius Sabinus in Rome. Meanwhile the Flavians waged a diplomatic campaign that sought to win over support from provincial legions and prevent Vitellius from raising further military support.

This strategy was designed to address the very real problem of how to translate military victory into civic power in the aftermath of the end of the Julio-Claudian dynasty. While it would not necessarily have guaranteed a "bloodless" victory, its goal was to force Vitellius and his followers to negotiate. With Vitellius' and the city's capitulation, there would be less cause for the previous emperor's former allies to rally against Vespasian, and the groundwork would have already been laid for civic reconciliation. In addition, by sending Mucianus as a proxy, Vespasian could take control of Rome without personally threatening the city, and without being directly responsible for any of the atrocities that might accompany a transfer of power. At the same time, this strategy also guarded against retaliation against Vespasian in the provinces, as the legions controlled by Mucianus, Titus, and Vespasian would deter

---

<sup>40</sup> Morgan 1994, 168: Mucianus' progress toward Italy was slow and regal, calculated to impress the local communities.

others in the provinces from raising support against the new regime while the Flavians consolidated power in Rome.

### **The plan in motion**

Unfortunately, the careful plans developed at Berytus were foiled, not because they failed but because they worked too well. As Mucianus advanced toward Italy, he encountered the legions of Moesia and Pannonia and their representatives, especially the legate of *legio VII Galbiana*, Antonius Primus.<sup>41</sup> Antonius emerges from Tacitus' account as an ambitious and grasping, but charismatic, figure, whose scandalous past reflected his desire for advancement and glory.<sup>42</sup> After Vitellius had ignored Antonius' offer of support – and thereby denied him the opportunity for self-promotion in the Vitellian regime – Antonius regarded Vespasian's bid for power as a chance to win the favor and obligation of a new ruler. As the Flavian armies came together, the leaders met for a conference at Poetovio to decide on the best strategy for invading Italy.<sup>43</sup>

While Mucianus urged patience, since Vespasian had control of the sea and the Flavian legions would be supplemented by additional soldiers from the east, Primus felt that an immediate invasion of Italy would catch the Vitellians by surprise, prevent them from acquiring reinforcements from Gaul, and ensure Vespasian's victory.

Consequently, while Mucianus remained behind to address an uprising of the Sarmatians,<sup>44</sup> Antonius and the Moesian legions had already moved ahead and entered

---

<sup>41</sup> Tac. *Hist.* 2.86; Suet. *Vesp.* 6.2.

<sup>42</sup> Antonius Primus had been convicted for forging a will in 60, Tac. *Ann.* 14.40. For his subsequent career under Nero and Galba, see Syme 1982, 464 and 467.

<sup>43</sup> Tac. *Hist.* 3.1.

<sup>44</sup> Syme 1977, 78-92

Italy, even engaging the enemy at Aquileia.<sup>45</sup> Antonius' victory there in a minor skirmish is identified by Tacitus as the "beginning of the war".<sup>46</sup>

Antonius' actions were not according to the Flavian plan, and though they were successful they ultimately came to pose problems as Vespasian attempted to translate military victory into civil authority and personal power. His advance into Italy past Aquileia was against Vespasian's orders, as letters from both Vespasian and Mucianus emphasized. What is more, Antonius' movements were taken without regard to the overall progress of the campaign, as when he left troops at Altinum to guard against the fleet at Ravenna because he had not heard of their defection to the Flavian side.<sup>47</sup> But perhaps the most dangerous of all was the fact that Antonius had taken it upon himself to shape Vespasian's imperial persona in Italy as he saw fit: at Patavium he ordered that Galba's statues should be restored, since he thought it would benefit Vespasian to be seen as Galba's avenger.<sup>48</sup> Thus Antonius Primus became the de facto military leader of the Flavian campaign, making decisions about strategy without Mucianus.<sup>49</sup>

Though he was ultimately responsible for the Flavian victory, Antonius' actions in Italy seriously disturbed the careful plans of the Berytus conference. His attacks on

---

<sup>45</sup> For Tacitus' treatment of Antonius Primus, see Dorey 1958, 244; Ash 1999, 147-166. Antonius' characterization – with its emphasis on his recklessness, fiery oratorical skill, and rapport with his soldiers, as well as his legal problems (which suggest amorality, as well as a certain aristocratic dissoluteness) – recalls the political archetype represented best by Mark Antony, Clodius Pulcher, and Alcibiades (see J. Griffin 1977). Given Antonius' political ambition, it seems likely that he developed these similarities.

<sup>46</sup> Tac. *Hist.* 3.6: *principia belli secundum Flavianos data.*

<sup>47</sup> Tac. *Hist.* 3.6.

<sup>48</sup> Tac. *Hist.* 3.6-8; Gag  (1952, 295-296) connects this episode with Primus' conflict with Mucianus and Domitian. Antonius' legion (*VII Galbiana*) had been established by Galba in Spain, so his show of respect was intended to appeal to his troops and likely did solidify their loyalty to Vespasian; however, this public assertion of the relationship between Galba and Vespasian would be problematic later, as I explore in chapter 3.

<sup>49</sup> Nicols 1978, 76.

Vitellius' soldiers led Vitellius to send out an army under Caecina, whose defection to the Flavian side did not prevent the battle at Bedriacum – fought on October 24<sup>th</sup> or 25<sup>th</sup> – that ended with the defeat of the Vitellians and the destruction of the city of Cremona.<sup>50</sup> Vitellius was shocked by this defeat, which led to several weeks of desperate deployments while his allies deserted him. At the beginning of December, the Flavian armies began massing at Fanum Fortunae; but the Vitellians could not face them, and Vitellius lost his last chance for victory when Valens was murdered around the 16<sup>th</sup> of December.<sup>51</sup> Throughout these events, Tacitus emphasizes the conflict between Antonius Primus and Mucianus. Mucianus is presented as jealous, concerned with Antonius' success because it was depriving him of his share of the glory.<sup>52</sup>

As Vitellius' support started to disappear, he began to negotiate with Flavius Sabinus: the two met often (*saepe*) in the presence of the illustrious senators Cluvius Rufus and Silius Italicus.<sup>53</sup> Evidently the praetor felt confident about the possibility of a settlement with Vitellius, as we are told that he had refused an opportunity to escape Rome when Antonius' soldiers tried to extricate him.<sup>54</sup> Domitian, also still in the city, was protected by Vitellius. Both Mucianus and Antonius also presented Vitellius with the opportunity to surrender and to turn over his family and himself to Vespasian, but the emperor seems to have become deeply depressed; he is described as falling into “such a

---

<sup>50</sup> Tac. *Hist.* 3.15-34. For the date of the Second Battle of Bedriacum, see Wellesley 1975, 142-144; Morgan 1996a, 381-403, 2005, 189-209.

<sup>51</sup> Tac. *Hist.* 3.44, 50; Nicols 1978, 82.

<sup>52</sup> Tac. *Hist.* 3.52.

<sup>53</sup> Tac. *Hist.* 3.65. After the outbreak of violence in Rome, Sabinus is said to have sent a message to Vitellius complaining that he had broken their agreement (*paacta turbarentur*), *Hist.* 3. 70.

<sup>54</sup> Tac. *Hist.* 3.59; although Antonius did succeed in helping Petillius Cerealis to escape, whom he put in command of a cavalry unit. Nicols (1978, 174) argues that the Flavians in Rome did not attempt to mobilize support for Vespasian while Vitellius held the city securely, and consequently they were safe.

lethargy... that if others had not remembered that he was emperor, he himself would have forgotten it".<sup>55</sup>

Finally, on the 18<sup>th</sup> of December, after hearing of yet another legion's defection to the Flavian side, Vitellius dressed in mourning and descended the Palatine into the forum. He was accompanied by his family, including his small son riding in a litter as if for a funeral. He held a *contio* of his soldiers, who were silent and disapproving, and gave a speech declaring that he was surrendering power for the sake of peace and urging compassion for his children, wife, and brother. Then he took a dagger, which Tacitus claims symbolized the power of life and death over the people of Rome, and made to hand it to the consul Caecilius Simplex who was standing near him. But Simplex rejected it, and the crowd started to grow restless. At that point, Vitellius attempted to leave the dagger at the republican Temple of Concord and leave the forum for his brother's house, but the people blocked his way and directed him back up to the palace. Thus, having attempted to renounce power for the sake of peace, Vitellius returned to the Palatine still the emperor.<sup>56</sup>

At this point, the Flavian supporters in the city, who had clearly anticipated Vitellius' renunciation of imperial authority, felt betrayed and urged Flavius Sabinus to strike. He gathered a group of soldiers and some senators and equestrians and left his house in arms; we do not know where he was heading, but it was likely either to the emperor on the Palatine or to the praetorian camps. The group met some of Vitellius' supporters at the Lacus Fundanus, where they fought; in his confusion, Sabinus led his

---

<sup>55</sup> Tac. *Hist.* 3.63: *tanta torpedo invaserat animum ut, si principem eum fuisse ceteri non meminissent, ipse oblivisceretur.*

<sup>56</sup> Tac. *Hist.* 3.67-68.

supporters up the Capitoline hill to the *arx*, which they occupied. Although the Vitellians were laying siege to the hill, Sabinus was able to inform the Flavian armies outside the city of his predicament. The next day, Sabinus sent word to Vitellius to urge him to leave the city and leave him and his men on the Capitoline, but Vitellius could not prevent his soldiers from attacking the hill, in the course of which one or the other side hurled firebrands onto the roofs of buildings on the hill's slope and set fire to the Temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus. In the panic, the Vitellian soldiers burst through the defenses and captured many of the Flavians, although Domitian and Sabinus' son (also Flavius Sabinus) were able to get away. Sabinus himself was captured and killed.<sup>57</sup>

The news of the siege, and then the news of the death of Sabinus and the destruction of the Capitol, led the Flavian armies in Italy to move toward Rome: Antonius Primus and Petillius Cerealis were both close enough to respond within the day, and fierce fighting broke out in the city between their forces and the Vitellians, who were supplemented by slaves and members of the Roman plebs.<sup>58</sup> Vitellius was killed by the tribune Julius Placidus during the fall of the city, and his body lay unburied on the Gemonian steps. By the 20<sup>th</sup> of December, Antonius Primus' army had taken Rome.<sup>59</sup>

The Flavian victory was not peaceful. Antonius' soldiers had the run of the city before and after Vitellius' death; the streets were full of slaughter, the fora and the

---

<sup>57</sup> Tac. *Hist.* 3.69-74; cf. Josephus *BJ* 4.645. On these events, see Wiseman 1978, 163-178; Wellesley 1981, 166-190. Mucianus was rumored to have been pleased by the death of Sabinus, who would have threatened his position as Vespasian's lieutenant, 3.75.

<sup>58</sup> On Vitellius' support among the Roman people, see Yavetz 1969, 557-569; Newbold 1972, 308-319.

<sup>59</sup> Tac. *Hist.* 3.85.

temples were covered in blood, and men were cut down everywhere.<sup>60</sup> Antonius' soldiers dragged Vitellius' followers out of their homes, but also ransacked the city and sought plunder. Antonius did not try to hold them in check; but his was not the only army around Rome. Mucianus, in contact with the senate, was still a few days away.<sup>61</sup>

Thus Vespasian's victory over Vitellius and accession to imperial power was marked by widespread destruction. In the space of a few days, Rome had suffered a fire that had destroyed one of its most important temples, as well as several other buildings; there had been fighting in the streets, which had been followed by several days of lawlessness and military disorder. Although Vitellius had lost most of his allies over the course of the second half of 69, there were still Vitellian forces near the city – Antonius Primus himself accepted the surrender of Lucius Vitellius and his cohorts outside of Rome, before executing him, and Campania was in disorder.<sup>62</sup> In other words, the city that Vespasian had won was damaged, smoking, bloodstained, and inhabited by people who had endured a traumatic end to a violent and unstable year all in the name of Flavian victory.

### **December to January**

The senate held an extraordinary meeting the day after Vitellius' death, on the 21<sup>st</sup> of December 69, to bestow honors on Vespasian and his family that included “all the

---

<sup>60</sup> Tac. *Hist.* 4.1: *plena caedibus viae, cruenta fora templaque, passim trucidatis, ut quemque fors obtulerat.*

<sup>61</sup> Josephus' statement that Mucianus reached Rome a day after Antonius is incorrect (*BJ* 4.654); Tacitus shows Mucianus still several days from the city, but sending a letter to the senate for their meeting on 21 December (*Hist.* 4.3). Syme (1977) makes a best guess at Mucianus' arrival in Rome as December 25<sup>th</sup>, and it is reasonable to assume that he would have tried to reach the city as quickly as possible.

<sup>62</sup> Tac. *Hist.* 4.2-3.

things usually conferred to emperors” (*senatus cuncta principibus solita Vespasiano decernit*), and the consulship to Vespasian and Titus, as well as a praetorship with consular power for Domitian.<sup>63</sup> Vespasian and Mucianus were both represented to the senate at these meeting through letters; Vespasian’s letter was written as if the war were still continuing, which made the senators eager to assert peace through these honors.<sup>64</sup>

This meeting of the senate, the first shown in Tacitus’ *Histories*, saw an effort on the part of certain senators to take the opportunity of the transfer of power to exercise a degree of autonomous authority, and to bring others to trial for crimes under previous emperors, as a number of senators sought to prosecute Neronian *delatores*. Notably, Helvidius Priscus argued that charges be laid against Eprius Marcellus, who had informed against Priscus’ father-in-law Thrasea Paetus; he had attempted to lay this charge earlier under Galba, but without the emperor’s support in the matter he had dropped it.<sup>65</sup> Helvidius Priscus’ reintroduction of this issue shows how important the emperor’s presence had become for senatorial procedure. Priscus’ first attempt at prosecuting Marcellus had failed because he did not have the emperor’s support; now, in the absence of the new emperor, he might find an opportunity to lay his charges without having to consider the emperor’s wishes.

---

<sup>63</sup> Tac. *Hist.* 4.3. Brunt (1977) understands the phrase *cuncta solita* to indicate a grant of *imperium* and other formal powers of the emperor and argues that it represents the clauses preserved in the so-called *lex de imperio Vespasiani*; see my discussion in chapter 3. The consulship granted in Tac. *Hist.* 4.3 was to begin 1 January 70; Vespasian had been consul in 53, and does not assume the title COS II until the beginning of 70 (Buttrey 1980, table 1); the senate’s ability to grant this position without first abrogating Vitellius’ arrangements for 70 (which they did at their meeting on 1 January, Tac. *Hist.* 4.47) suggests to Townend (1962, 135) that these positions were vacant, likely because they had been designated for Vitellius and his brother Lucius, now dead. The consuls of December 69 were Caecilius Simplex (mentioned in *Hist.* 3.68) and Quintus Atticus (*Hist.* 3.73), who were evidently permitted to finish their terms.

<sup>64</sup> Chilver and Townend 1985, 25.

<sup>65</sup> Tac. *Hist.* 4.6; Rogers 1949, 347.



This discussion of the question of whether or not members of the senate could take legal action against others for their behavior under Nero, which took place in the first senate meeting of Vespasian's reign, shows the problem facing the Flavian regime within its first few hours: although everyone agreed that Vespasian was the new emperor, it was not immediately obvious who represented his interests in the city. With the death of Flavius Sabinus, attention fell on Domitian, who accepted the name of Caesar and took up residence in an imperial palace.<sup>66</sup> But Primus' armies still held the city and he took on a number of the roles traditionally performed by the emperor: he accepted the surrender of Vitellius, appropriated money from the imperial palace, and had been exercising authority through the newly-made praetorian prefect Arrius Varus. Meanwhile, Mucianus, whose letter had not been as well-received as Vespasian's, was drawing near the city with his army. Until his arrival, "there was discord among the senators, rage among the defeated, no authority among the victors, and no laws or emperor in the state..."<sup>67</sup>

Vespasian's three potential representatives in Rome were generally in conflict with one another. Mucianus was able to exert influence over Domitian, although even then the two did not always see eye to eye. When the senate next met at a regular meeting on the Kalends of January,<sup>68</sup> the issue of Neronian informers came up again. Domitian, who was present, urged them to forget the wrongs and grievances of the

---

<sup>66</sup> Tac. *Hist.* 4.2: *nomen sedemque Caesaris Domitianus acceperat.*

<sup>67</sup> Tac. *Hist.* 4.11: *Tali rerum statu, cum discordia inter patres, ira apud victos, nulla in victoribus auctoritas, non leges, non princeps in civitate essent, Mucianus urbem ingressus cuncta simul in se traxit.* Tacitus' description of Vespasian's letter to the senate, written "as if the war were still going on" (*tamquam manente bello scriptae*, *Hist.* 4.3) is ironic: any communication from Vespasian at this point had been written before the war had been decided, as Vespasian would not hear about the death of Vitellius for several weeks (see below).

<sup>68</sup> Rogers 1949, 348.

previous age; after he spoke, Mucianus “spoke at length on behalf of the informers.”<sup>69</sup>

Both spoke to the same purpose – to convince senators like Helvidius Priscus to drop the lawsuits and accusations they had raised in the first days of Vespasian’s reign – but Domitian’s argument for forgetfulness did not convey the same attitude towards the matter as Mucianus’ attempt to defend the accused.

Much more significant was the obvious and destructive conflict between Mucianus and Antonius Primus. Primus had been recognized by the senate as one of Vespasian’s leading supporters, and had received consular insignia in the senate’s first meeting after the death of Vitellius. However, when Mucianus returned to the city he did not disguise his anger toward Antonius Primus, whose excesses had alienated the city.<sup>70</sup> But Antonius’ legions were still near Rome, and as the victor of Cremona he was influential among the soldiers and among the Flavian faction. Mucianus undermined Antonius’ authority by removing his legion (*VII Galbiana*) to winter quarters in Pannonia, and Varus’ legion (*III Gallica*) back to its post in Syria.<sup>71</sup> But the legions loyal to Antonius were only part of the military problem. Between Mucianus’ army and the units commanded by individuals like Petillius Cearealis, the Vitellian armies, and the urban cohorts, there were a large number of soldiers near Rome, many of whom (like the dismissed praetorians who had fought for Vespasian) wanted to be paid and to return to their usual commands, while those who had fought for Vitellius were kept in camps outside the city and were growing restless. It fell to Mucianus to relieve the pressure by reorganizing these troops and dismissing those who could be honorably discharged. With

---

<sup>69</sup> Tac. *Hist.* 4.44: *Proximo senatu, inchoante Caesare de abolendo dolore iraque et priorum temporum necessitatibus, censuit Mucianus prolixè pro accusatoribus...*

<sup>70</sup> Tac. *Hist.* 4.4; 11.

<sup>71</sup> Tac. *Hist.* 4.46.

this, he could restore a measure of military stability to the city, but he could not eliminate Antonius Primus.

One final problem had appeared in the first weeks of Vespasian's reign that had not been anticipated, and that had perhaps been made worse by the manner of the Flavian victory. There were several individuals in Rome who were relatives or closely connected to the emperors who had briefly reigned in 69. For example, although Lucius Vitellius had been killed soon after his brother, Vitellius' children were still alive and in the city.<sup>72</sup> Otho's young nephew, L. Salvius Otho Cocceianus, had been Otho's closest relative, and would live to serve as consul in 80.<sup>73</sup> The traumatic nature of the Flavian victory might have made any of these individuals credible imperial candidates, and a name for Vespasian's enemies to rally behind. Tacitus reports a rumor that Antonius Primus had urged M. Licinianus Crassus Scribonianus, the older brother of C. Calpurnius Piso Crassus Frugi Licinianus, Galba's adopted son and brief heir, to rise up against the Flavians.<sup>74</sup> Scribonianus' relationship with Piso and Galba made him a potential threat to Vespasian's authority – especially as Galba's memory would be restored by Domitian, and Antonius Primus and his legion had already demonstrated their loyalty to Galba.<sup>75</sup>

---

<sup>72</sup> Pro-Flavian sources evidently would have preferred that these children had never existed, and so details about their ages and genders are unclear; Josephus (*BJ* 4.596) has Vespasian's troops cite Titus and Domitian as evidence of Vespasian's superiority to Vitellius, whom they characterize as childless (ἄπαιδα δὲ ἀντὶ πατρὸς αἰρήσεσθαι προστάτην). But several coins minted in Rome during Vitellius' reign bear reverses with confronted busts of his children identified as LIBERI IMP GERMAN (*RIC* I (Vitellius) 79) and Tacitus indicates that Vitellius' young sons were an important part of his imperial identity (as when he brought his son into the forum in a litter in his attempt to abdicate authority, *Hist.* 3.67).

<sup>73</sup> *PIR* S 110; for his career see Syme 1968, 81; Roche 2003, 319-322.

<sup>74</sup> Tac. *Hist.* 4.39. Scribonianus, *PIR*<sup>2</sup> L 192.

<sup>75</sup> Domitian proposes the restoration of Galba's honors in a meeting of the senate on 9 January, Tac. *Hist.* 4.40 (for the date see Rogers 1949, 348). Antonius Primus' legion, *VII Galbiana*, had been raised by Galba in Spain before he sent it to Pannonia, and Antonius' continuing shows of

Scribonianus was, reportedly, not confident in the endeavor and refused Antonius Primus, but this reference serves as a reminder that Vespasian's hold on imperial power was not necessarily secure.

Thus in the first few weeks of Vespasian's reign the manner of his victory created an environment in which a number of specific problems could develop. With Vespasian on his way to Alexandria and Flavius Sabinus dead, it was not immediately clear who represented the new regime. Consequently, certain senators seized upon the opportunity of the emperor's absence to pursue personal animosities. It was not until a certain amount of order had been imposed within the imperial party, and Domitian and Mucianus had emerged as Vespasian's proxies, that the senate's efforts in this direction were reigned in. This brief period shows how much of an impact the events of Vespasian's victory – the siege of the Capitoline, the fighting in the streets of Rome, and the looting and disorder that followed Antonius' capture of the city – had as the Flavians began to assume power. Antonius Primus' status as the military victor of the Flavian campaign put him in a position to rival Mucianus, Vespasian's chosen representative, from the perspective of the senate. This conflict between Mucianus and Antonius Primus in particular seemed to invite future problems when it came to the relatives of previous emperors, many of whom were in a position to make their own claim to power if the instability continued.

Significantly, the destruction of the Capitolium was a specific political issue that served as the focal point for conflict between the senate and the Flavian party: in the first meeting of the senate after Vitellius' death Helvidius Priscus proposed that the senate

---

loyalty to Galba can be seen in his restoration of his statues during his invasion of Italy (*Hist.* 3.7).

should take over its reconstruction, instead of leaving it to Vespasian. He did not manage to gain support for this proposal, ostensibly because of the potential expense; more likely Helvidius Priscus' colleagues recognized the danger in asserting senatorial autonomy over such an ideologically significant monument. Nonetheless, Helvidius' proposal shows how the disorder of December and January could very easily lead to a decentralization of political authority.

### **Vespasian in Alexandria**

Meanwhile, Vespasian was in Alexandria. He had likely arrived in Egypt several months before, but was certainly there by the end of January 70 when he received word of his imperial acclamation.<sup>76</sup> Among his earliest actions as emperor was to send an irregular shipment of grain to Rome on fast ships, which proved to be a timely exercise of his imperial power; the grain supply had indeed been a concern for the people of Rome in the winter of 70, as the panic over the rumors of Lucius Piso's rebellion in North Africa shows, and stores were running low.<sup>77</sup> The shipment arrived in mid-February, and was the first contact that Rome had had with its emperor since his accession.

---

<sup>76</sup> Vespasian likely arrived in Alexandria some time in the late fall 69; see a discussion with bibliography in Henrichs 1968, 54. The ancient evidence is conflicting: according to Josephus (*BJ* 4.656) Vespasian reached Alexandria to be greeted with the news that he had been acclaimed emperor in Rome and Josephus and Tacitus (*Hist.* 4.51) presents Titus with Vespasian in Alexandria at this time. However Dio (66.1) says that Vespasian was in Egypt and Titus was in Palestine when they took office as consuls on 1 January and Tacitus says that he had heard about Cremona before he received word of the death of Vitellius.

<sup>77</sup> Lucius Piso: Tac. *Hist.* 4.38. Vespasian's grain shipment: Tac. *Hist.* 4.52: *tum celerrimas navium frumento onustas saevo adhuc mari committit: quippe tanto discrimine urbs nutabat ut decem haud amplius dierum frumentum in horreis fuerit, cum a Vespasiano commeatus subvenere*. By ensuring that this shipment reached Rome as soon as he had heard of his accession, Vespasian was engaging in a specifically imperial activity, as the provision of grain to the city had become one of the emperor's regular benefactions for the urban population (cf. Augustus *RG* 5.2, 15, 18.

However, Vespasian did not set out for Rome himself. He maintained contact with his representatives in the city – Tacitus shows him hearing rumors of Domitian’s outrageous behavior and credits him personally for appointing Vestinus to oversee the reconstruction of the Capitolium, while Dio claims he sent a letter to Domitian and Mucianus rebuking them for distributing too many offices and benefactions in his absence – but he remained in Alexandria for several months, well into the usual sailing season.<sup>78</sup> This delay in entering the city of Rome as emperor risked incurring anger or suspicion among Rome’s residents, including the senate and the plebs, but it allowed Vespasian and his followers to develop a strategy for preempting both political and military resistance. In this way, Vespasian’s delay in Egypt in the first few months of his reign was part of his strategy for translating the military victory of his faction into his own personal civil authority.

The consequences of Vespasian’s delay were significant, at least when it came to reestablishing order and normalcy in the city.<sup>79</sup> Vespasian could only assume the position of *pontifex maximus* in person once he had reached Rome, and indeed that office does not appear on his official titulature until late in 70.<sup>80</sup> Furthermore, over the course of the civil war lawsuits had accumulated, which were left unexamined until Vespasian’s return.<sup>81</sup> When Domitian attended a meeting of the senate in January, it is telling that his response to requests from senators seeking to examine imperial documents in order to pursue legal action against informers was to insist that “the emperor should be consulted

---

<sup>78</sup> Tac. *Hist.* 4.51, 53; Dio 66.2.3.

<sup>79</sup> cf. Gallivan (1981, 186), who describes the year 70 as “when the state had once again settled itself down to running in routine”.

<sup>80</sup> Mommsen *RS II*<sup>3</sup> 1106-1107; cf. Murison 1993, 147. He did not assume the title *pater patriae* either, see Buttrey 1980, 12.

<sup>81</sup> Suet. *Vesp.* 10.

on so great a matter.”<sup>82</sup> As much as the year 70 was a period in which the Roman state renormalized itself after the incredible disruptions of the previous year, there was a range of important legal, political, and religious activities that had to be put on hold until Vespasian’s return to the city.<sup>83</sup>

Vespasian risked specific criticisms for delaying so long in Egypt. His presence there could be seen as an imperial statement, but Alexandria’s associations with decadent eastern monarchy and moral decay had lingered since Octavian’s war with Cleopatra, and more recently the city had been held up as a rival for Rome: in his last days, Nero had developed a plan to take up the prefecture of Egypt if Galba let him leave Italy.<sup>84</sup> Vespasian did not help matters. During his stay in Alexandria, he seems to have gone out of his way to develop the public persona of a pharaonic or Ptolemaic king by associating himself with local gods and cults (such as Sarapis) and taking on traditional titles.<sup>85</sup>

Nonetheless, Vespasian made no move to leave Egypt when he first learned of the death of Vitellius and his own status as emperor; instead, he sent Titus back to Judaea to resume the war against the Jewish rebels.<sup>86</sup> At this point, the war was all but over, and

---

<sup>82</sup> Tac. *Hist.* 4.40: *Consulendum tali super re principem respondit.*

<sup>83</sup> Vespasian’s absence from Rome apparently took on symbolic importance – at least outside of Rome – as Tacitus (*Hist.* 4.75) presents Julius Civilis, the leader of the Batavian revolt, writing to Petillius Cerealis that the Gauls would not surrender to Rome. One of his reasons was that “Vespasian is dead, although they are keeping the news a secret...” (*Vespasianum, quamquam nuntios occultarent, excessisse vita...*).

<sup>84</sup> Suet. *Nero* 47.2.

<sup>85</sup> Henrichs 1968, 51-80; Takács 1995, 273-275. Suetonius (*Vesp.* 19.2) notes that the people of Alexandria nicknamed Vespasian “Cybiosactes” (a nickname also given to Ptolemy XIII), which Levick (1999, 145) takes as evidence that the Alexandrians saw through the “boorish interloper” Vespasian’s pretensions.

<sup>86</sup> Titus’ new role as commander of the war had been decided at Berytus, but he accompanied his father to Alexandria. His route back to Judaea is described in detail by Josephus (*BJ* 4.659-663; cf. Tac. *Hist.* 5.1).

Titus' only real military objective was to capture Jerusalem.<sup>87</sup> He joined the majority of legions *V Macedonica*, *X Fretensis*, and *XV Apollinaris*, which had remained in Judaea despite sending detachments with Mucianus, and brought with him *XII Fulminata* (which had also sent detachments) and some soldiers from the Alexandrian legions (*III Cyrenaica* and *XXII Deiotariana*), along with twenty cohorts of allied infantry, eight squadrons of cavalry, the auxiliaries of Antiochus, and a contingent of Arab auxiliaries.<sup>88</sup> Titus' Judaeian army was excessively large for the task at hand, which may reflect Vespasian's concerns about establishing his son's dynastic claims; Tacitus shows Vespasian delegating military glory to Titus while he would take over peace and "his house."<sup>89</sup> There are indications that certain senators were opposing Vespasian's dynastic plans, and Titus' case for imperial power would be strengthened by a military victory in his own name; failure to capture Jerusalem easily, however, would reflect poorly on his imperial potential, and even that of his family.<sup>90</sup>

However, events in Italy suggest that Titus' military role in Judaea was even more complex. Vespasian had left affairs in Rome to Domitian and Mucianus, who had to contend with Antonius Primus and the authority he claimed for himself as military victor.

---

<sup>87</sup> Jones 1985, 346.

<sup>88</sup> Tac. *Hist.* 5.1. Tacitus also reports that Titus was joined by "many whom the hope of each one sent from Rome and Italy of capturing the prince while he was still free" (*multi quos urbe atque Italia sua quemque spes acciverat occupandi principem adhuc vacuum*). These individuals – evidently seeking appointments and contracts – are among the many people who are shown traveling on the Mediterranean over the course of spring and summer 70; others include Titus himself and his party, Antonius Primus (Tac. *Hist.* 4.80; see below), and (probably) Antonia Caenis (Suet. *Dom.* 12). This shows that Vespasian's delay in Alexandria was not caused by poor weather or travel conditions (cf. Tac. *Hist.* 4.80: "During these months in which Vespasian waiting for the established time for summer winds and a predictable sea..." (*Per eos mensis quibus Vespasianus Alexandriae stator aestivis flatibus dies et certa maris opperiebatur...*))

<sup>89</sup> Tac. *Hist.* 4.52: *Vespasianus... bono esse animo iubet belloque et armis rem publicam attollere: sibi pacem domumque curae fore.*

<sup>90</sup> For senatorial opposition to Vespasian's dynastic plans, see Suet. *Vesp.* 25; Dio 12.1; for this argument see Jones 1985, 348.



The task fell to Mucianus to stabilize the political situation within the Flavian party and to resolve the lingering problems that stood to disrupt political and social stability. Among Mucianus' actions in the first part of the year 70 were the assassinations or executions of a number of individuals who may have posed a threat to Vespasian's power. One of these was Vitellius' young son, on the pretext that "discord would remain unless he extinguished the seeds of war."<sup>91</sup> He very likely also killed Piso's brother Scribonianus at this time.<sup>92</sup> Mucianus' other victims included the young Calpurnius Galerianus, a relative of the Gaius Piso who had been implicated in the conspiracy against Nero in 65.<sup>93</sup> Mucianus also orchestrated the assassination of Lucius Piso, the proconsul of Africa; rumors of his rebellion had reached Rome by the beginning of 70, and Tacitus reports that his legate, a relative of Vitellius, was attempting to convince him to sail to Gaul and join the Vitellian forces there.<sup>94</sup>

But at some point in the late spring or early summer, Mucianus left the city with another large force to address the Batavian Revolt. This uprising of Gallic tribes had begun in 69, and two legions had been besieged in Castra Vetera since September of that year.<sup>95</sup> Mucianus had already dispatched Petillius Cerealis and Gallus Annius, with a very large force drawn from eight legions. However, public anxiety about the rebellion

---

<sup>91</sup> Tac. *Hist.* 4.80: *Isdem diebus Mucianus Vitellii filium interfici iubet, mansuram discordiam obtendens, ni semina belli restinxisset.*

<sup>92</sup> Tacitus (*Hist.* 1.48) implies that Piso's adoption was a factor in Scribonianus' death (*ipse diu exul, quadriduo Caesar, properata adoptione ad hoc tantum maiori fratri praelatus est ut prior occideretur*), cf. Dessau's discussion of Scribonianus (*PIR*<sup>2</sup> L 192).

<sup>93</sup> C. Piso had been seen as a threat to Nero because of his influential connections (*multas insignisque familias paterna nobilitate complexus*; Tac. *Ann.* 15.48.); Tacitus' account of the death of Galerianus recalls this pretext (*nomen insigne et decora ipsius iuventa rumore vulgi celebrabantur*; *Hist.* 4.11); see Syme 1960, 19-20.

<sup>94</sup> Rumors of rebellion: Tac. *Hist.* 4.38; his death is related in 4.48-50. Tacitus' account of Piso's death hints that the death of Galerianus had been related: *cecidisse Galerianum consobrinum eius generumque.*

<sup>95</sup> Tac. *Hist.* 4.36.

ostensibly led Mucianus to plan his own expedition to Gaul with another large force.<sup>96</sup> Mucianus' preparations for the expedition included finding a suitable replacement as a proxy for Vespasian in his absence; he replaced Varus Arrius with Arrecinus Clemens, Titus' former brother-in-law, as praetorian prefect. Mucianus brought Domitian with him; Tacitus claims that Mucianus "was concerned about Domitian's unconquerable wantonness" (*Domitiani indomitae libidines timebantur*). The preparations for this expedition also allowed Mucianus to finally oust Antonius Primus from the city: he did not allow Domitian to include Primus among his *comites*, and evidently convinced him not to remain in Rome in the meantime. Primus joined Vespasian in Egypt, where he was welcomed warmly.<sup>97</sup> Mucianus and Domitian marched out of Rome some time in the spring or early summer of 70, but before they reached the Alps they heard that most of the rebels had surrendered in the face of Cerealis' army, and that the trapped legions had been freed.<sup>98</sup>

Mucianus' ostensible reason for bringing Domitian was his youth and impetuosity, which made him a poor choice to be left unattended at Rome; certainly, Domitian is presented as eager for glory and all too willing to exercise the authority of his new position as imperial prince. However, once they had heard of Cerealis' success – and learned that their own presence in Gaul was unnecessary, at least as far as the revolt was concerned – Mucianus convinced Domitian to take up quarters in Lyon on the pretense that he would be ready to respond should "the stability of the empire or the safety of the Gauls become dangerous" (*si status imperii aut salus Galliarum in*

---

<sup>96</sup> Tac. *Hist.* 4. 68.

<sup>97</sup> Tac. *Hist.* 4.80.

<sup>98</sup> Tac. *Hist.* 4.85.

*discrimine verteretur*). Tacitus reports that Domitian understood that he was being dismissed but did remain in Lyon, where he was suspected of sending secret messages to Cerealis <sup>99</sup>

Mucianus' expedition into Gaul with such a large army accomplished two things: it removed the legions that had been loyal to Vitellius or were currently loyal to Antonius Primus from Rome while reassuring the Roman public that the revolt would be brought to an end,<sup>100</sup> and it put Domitian, under the supervision of Petillius Cerealis and Mucianus, in Gaul with one of the two largest armies in the Roman world. Domitian's presence in Gaul at this point in the year 70 – around the late spring or early summer – balances Titus' presence in Judaea at the same time. Mucianus' insistence that Domitian remain in Lyons in case the "stability of the empire" should be threatened is an explicit reference to the lingering threat of civil war, and points to the real purpose of Mucianus' and Domitian's expedition: to get Domitian, as Vespasian's son, out of Rome and situated with a large military force in the western half of the empire, as Titus was in the eastern half, in case another imperial contender should emerge in Italy or in the provinces to threaten Vespasian's claim to power.

---

<sup>99</sup> Tac. *Hist* 4.86; Josephus depicts Domitian as the leader of the campaign against the Batavians, *BJ* 7.85.

<sup>100</sup> Tac. *Hist.* 4. 68; the combined Gallic force of Petillius Cerealis and Mucianus consisted of eight legions: *VIII Augusta*, *XI Claudia Pia Fidelis*, *XIII Gemina*, *XXI Rapax*, *II Adiutrix*, *XIV Gemina Martia Victrix*, *VI Victrix*, *I Adiutrix*. Of these, Tacitus identifies four (*VIII*, *XI*, *XIII*, and *XXI*) as formerly Vitellian, although *XI* and *XIII* had followed Antonius Primus. *II* had been formed by the Flavians after their victory. *I* and *VI* were stationed in Spain (the former sent there by Vitellius and the latter left by Galba; *XIV* had been sent to Britain by Vitellius. After the campaign, *I*, *XI*, *VIII* and *XIV* would be transferred to Upper Germany, *II* followed Petillius Cerealis to Britain, *VI* and *XXI* were stationed in Lower Germany, and *XIII* was returned to Pannonia. In this way, the mobilization of these legions into Gaul helped to redistribute the legions throughout the empire after the movement of 69 and helped clear Italy of lingering Vitellian legions and those loyal to Antonius Primus.

In this way, the Flavians managed to recreate the scenario for the conquest of the empire they had devised at Berytus: while the occupation of Rome was crucial for establishing the legal and political legitimacy of Vespasian's authority, the city was vulnerable to military instability in the provinces. The armies of Titus and Domitian occupied over half of Rome's active legions at the time, while serving to deter further unrest in both the western and eastern halves of the empire. The presence of the imperial princes with these armies was crucial as it reinforced the relationship between the legions and Vespasian, whose ability to ensure dynastic stability through his sons had played such a large part in his claim to imperial status. In the meantime, Vespasian remained in Alexandria where he was as active as he could be in affairs of Rome: he oversaw the grain supply and made appointments, such as that of Vestinus as overseer for the reconstruction of the Capitolium.

### **Spring and early summer in Rome**

Our reconstruction of Mucianus' expedition, particularly the date of his departure, depends on our understanding of Helvidius Priscus' role in a religious ceremony that took place on the site of the Capitolium on 21 June 70.<sup>101</sup> Syme, Townend, and Wardle explain Priscus' prominence in this ceremony as a product of his political office; with the consuls Vespasian and Titus gone, Priscus would have been among the most senior magistrates in the city as praetor.<sup>102</sup> Chilver and Townend propose that Priscus may have also served as a *quindecimvir* and perhaps, in the absence of a *pontifex maximus*, the

---

<sup>101</sup> Tac. *Hist.* 4.53.

<sup>102</sup> Helvidius Priscus is identified as *praetor designatus* in the senate's meeting in December 69 and as *praetor* in the account of this ceremony, Tac. *Hist.* 4.4, 53. Syme 1958a, 6; Townend 1987, 246; Wardle 1996, 212.

highest-ranking religious authority in the city at the time.<sup>103</sup> However, since Mucianus' suffect consulship had not yet begun<sup>104</sup> and Tacitus describes Mucianus' preparations for the expedition several chapters after the reference to the religious ceremony, Syme does not believe that Priscus' role in this ceremony shows that his expedition into Gaul had already left the city.<sup>105</sup> But if Mucianus' expedition had not yet left Rome, then it seems odd that Domitian did not preside over the ceremony as the urban praetor and the possessor of consular *imperium*.<sup>106</sup> Townend and Chilver suppose that he might have been considered too young, which seems unlikely; after all, his extraordinary office and imperial honors suggest that his age took second place to his status as a member of the imperial family.<sup>107</sup>

The most likely explanation of Helvidius Priscus' role in this ceremony is that Mucianus and Domitian had indeed left the city by the 21<sup>st</sup> of June, leaving Helvidius Priscus the most senior magistrate in Rome; the reference to Mucianus' preparations for departure that follows the account of the ceremony can be explained by the complex narrative structure of Book 4 of the *Histories*, which was a result of the fact that Tacitus was now describing events in three major centers of political activity: Rome, Judaea, and

---

<sup>103</sup> 1985, 65.

<sup>104</sup> Mucianus and Petillius Cerealis would not begin their suffect consulship until July, see Gallivan 1981, 187 and 213.

<sup>105</sup> Syme 1958a, 6; Tac. *Hist.* 4.68.

<sup>106</sup> Domitian's *imperium*: Tac. *Hist.* 3. Domitian assumed the urban praetorship on the Kalends of January: *Kalendis Ianuariis in senatu, quem Iulius Frontinus praetor urbanus vocaverat ... et mox eiurante Frontino Caesar Domitianus praeturam cepit*. Julius Frontinus, the author of the *De Aquis* and *Strategemata*, served in Gaul against Julius Civilis under Petillius Cerealis (Tac. *Agr.* 17), and so was also absent from the city in late spring or early summer 70. See Mellor 2003, 88-89.

<sup>107</sup> Chilver and Townend 1985, 65; Wardle 1996, 212.

the parts of Northern Gaul and Lower Germany taken up by the Batavian Revolt.<sup>108</sup> This conclusion is significant, as it means that there was a period of indeterminate length in the spring or early summer of 70 in which Rome had been emptied of the senior members of the Flavian party – or at least, all those who held an office or had been granted extraordinary powers. The consuls Vespasian and Titus had not yet returned, Domitian and Mucianus had left, and Antonius had been driven out. Helvidius Priscus and another praetor, Tettius Julianus, a former supporter of Vitellius, remained.<sup>109</sup>

However, there were a number of prominent Flavians in the city who did not hold formal office in June 70 but whose presence in Rome at the time might have ensured that Vespasian's interests were represented. Arrecinus Clemens, Arrius Varus' replacement as praetorian prefect, remained in Rome.<sup>110</sup> Some members of Vespasian's inner circle and family may have also remained in Rome at this time, although we have no positive evidence for them: Flavius Sabinus, Vespasian's nephew and a consul designate for 69, had survived the fall of the Capitolium but does not figure largely in the life of Vespasian's imperial court. Caesennius Paetus, the husband of Vespasian's niece, had been awarded the governorship of Syria after Vespasian's victory but the evidence of Josephus shows that he had not yet arrived in the province as of November 70.<sup>111</sup> It is possible that Ulpian Traianus had also arrived in Rome by the late spring or early summer, as he had been replaced as legate of *X Fretensis* in Judaea by Larcus Lepidus in April 70 and would assume a suffect consulship for September and October of 70;

---

<sup>108</sup> Chilver and Townend 1985, 2 (although they note that Tacitus seems to have preferred chronological precision wherever possible).

<sup>109</sup> Tettius Julianus: Tac. *Hist.* 4.39-40.

<sup>110</sup> Tac. *Hist.* 4.4, 68.

<sup>111</sup> *BJ* 7.59, cf. 219-243; Jones 1985, 349.

however, Syme points out that there are numerous other places around the empire where his services might have been helpful at this time.<sup>112</sup>

It is not clear how long Mucianus spent away from Rome, or how long Domitian lingered in Lyons. But the fact that Helvidius Priscus enjoyed a period of magisterial supremacy, however brief it may have been, is significant. Priscus' opposition to Vespasian was already established; for example, he did not honor or even mention Vespasian in his praetor's edicts.<sup>113</sup> Later, Helvidius Priscus would galvanize senatorial resistance to Vespasian, especially on the point of dynastic succession, and was executed, probably around 74.<sup>114</sup> What is more, Priscus had already laid claim to the project of the restoration of the Capitolium, when he had proposed in December 69 that the senate assume the responsibility for the project but allow the emperor to contribute money.<sup>115</sup> Thus the Capitolium had already become a point of contention between Helvidius Priscus and the representatives of Vespasian, through which the extent of the senate's authority under the new dynasty could be tested. Ultimately, Vespasian would take control over the restoration of the temple and the symbolic significance of the site, but at this point in the year 70 Helvidius Priscus used his status as the senior magistrate in the city to claim the site for the senate and republican political traditions in general.<sup>116</sup>

---

<sup>112</sup> Syme 1958a, 7; cf. Mellor 2003, 92-93. For the date of Larcus Lepidus' arrival with the legion, see Isaac and Roll 1976, 19; Isaac 1984, 143-144; cf. Buttrey 1980, 8-9.

<sup>113</sup> Suet. *Vesp.* 15.

<sup>114</sup> See MacMullen 1996, 1-94 for a discussion of the philosophical basis of the Stoic Priscus' opposition to Vespasian; Levick (1999, 89) and Penwill (2003, 347-353) resituate this discussion in the political context of 65-70. For the date of Priscus' death, see Syme 1958b, 212 and n. 1.

<sup>115</sup> Tac. *Hist.* 4.9. Tacitus says that the senate allowed this proposal to die, but "there were those who remembered it" (*censuerat Helvidius ut Capitolium publice restitueretur, adiuuaret Vespasianus. eam sententiam modestissimus quisque silentio, deinde oblivio transmisit: fuere qui et meminissent*).

<sup>116</sup> For Vespasian's appropriation of the symbolism of the Capitolium, see chapter 2.

Thus the military reconfigurations of mid-70, which were intended to preempt further provincial military turmoil and to prevent uprisings against Vespasian, had necessitated a temporary absence of Flavian authority in Rome itself. While Vespasian was represented by both family members and loyal subordinates who were put in positions of authority (like Arrecinus Clemens) or whose informal influence might determine the course of politics in the city in his absence, there was a period around June of 70 when the senior magistrate in the city was the already-hostile Helvidius Priscus. This state of affairs may not have lasted very long at all: by the time that Vespasian returned to Italy, both Mucianus and Domitian were in Rome to greet him.

### **Vespasian's return**

While this was taking place at Rome, Vespasian remained in Alexandria throughout the spring and summer of 70, ostensibly waiting for good sailing weather; he most likely finally departed in August.<sup>117</sup> Once he had left Alexandria, he did not sail directly to Italy. Josephus says that he crossed from Alexandria to Rhodes on a merchantman and then took triremes and visited all the cities on the route; he was received enthusiastically, and from Ionia he traveled into Greece and from Corcyra to the Iapygian headland, and from there he made his journey by land.<sup>118</sup> It seems likely that

---

<sup>117</sup> Tac. *Hist.* 4.81; Dio (66.9.2a) claims that Vespasian was waiting for Titus to break the siege of Jerusalem so that they could return to Rome together. However, by August the destruction of Jerusalem seemed imminent: the Temple was destroyed in late August and the upper town fell in late September. If Vespasian's delay in returning to Rome was due to Titus' delay in capturing Jerusalem, this does not explain why Vespasian left Alexandria before the siege was brought to an end. For his departure in August, see Garzetti 1974, 236; Bosworth 1973, 60.

<sup>118</sup> Josephus *BJ* 7.21-22: Καθ' ὃ δὲ καιροῦ Τίτος Καῖσαρ τοῖς Ἱεροσολύμοις πολιορκῶν προσήδρευεν, ἐν τούτῳ νεὼς φορτίδος Οὐεσπασιανὸς ἐπιβὰς ἀπὸ τῆς Ἀλεξανδρείας εἰς Ῥόδον διέβαινεν. ἐντεῦθεν δὲ πλέων ἐπὶ τριήρων καὶ πάσας τὰς ἐν τῷ παράπλῳ πόλεις ἐπελθὼν εὐκταίως αὐτὸν δεχομένης, ἀπὸ τῆς Ἰωνίας εἰς τὴν Ἑλλάδα περαιοῦται



Vespasian's route was designed in order to familiarize the new emperor with the local situations in Rome's provinces, probably as part of his financial reconstruction of the empire.<sup>119</sup>

The development of Vespasian's titulature in the second half of 70 shows that he had reached Italy by October: the titles Pontifex Maximus and *Pater Patriae* do not appear until after his return to the city, and appear before he is attributed a third consulship, which was likely designated in October.<sup>120</sup> An inscription recording a dedication to Fortuna Redux is attributed to October 70.<sup>121</sup> This recalls an undated fragment of the *Acta Arvalium*:

..... *co(n)s(ulibus)*.....  
*magisterio*.....*promag(istro) Q. Tillio Sassio collegi*  
*fratrum*  
*Arvalium nomine immolavit in Capitolio ob diem quo*  
*urbem in-*  
*gressus est imperator Caesar Vespasianus Aug(ustus), Iovi*  
*bovem m(arem),*  
*Iononi vaccam, Minervae vacc(am), Fortunae reduci*  
*vaccam.*  
*In collegio adfuerunt Q. Tillius Sassijs, C. Licinius*  
*Mucianus?...*

... in the consulships of.... chief official... with Q. Tillius Sassijs presiding, in the name of the college of the Arval Brethren, on the Capitoline in commemoration of the day on which the imperator Caesar Vespasian Augustus entered the city, [name] burned a bull to Jupiter, a cow to Juno, a

---

κάκειθεν ἀπὸ Κερκύρας ἐπ' ἄκραν Ἰαπυγίαν, ὅθεν ἤδη κατὰ γῆν ἐποιεῖτο τὴν πορείαν. Cf. Dio (66.9.2a): αὐτὸς δὲ ὀλκάδος ἐπιβάς ἐς Λυκίαν ἔπλευσε, κάκειθεν τὰ μὲν πεζῆ τὰ δὲ ναυτιλλόμενος ἐς τὸ Βρεντέσιον ἐκομίσθη.

<sup>119</sup> Bosworth 1973, 77.

<sup>120</sup> See Buttrey (1980, 12-13) for a discussion of this issue. That Vespasian did not assume the position of Pontifex Maximus before his return to the city is consistent with Vitellius' practice, see Murison 1993, 147. Tacitus' *Histories* break off before Vespasian's arrival in Italy.

<sup>121</sup> *CIL* 6.196; see (Buttrey 1980, 12) for date. A new reverse type of Fortuna Redux, showing Fortuna (identified by the legend) standing left holding a cornucopia and resting her hand upon a prow, also appeared at this point in 70 on coins of Vespasian from the Roman mint (*RIC* II (Vespasian) 19).

cow to Minerva, [and] a cow to Fortuna Redux. In the college were Q. Tillius Sassius, C. Licinius Mucianus...<sup>122</sup>

This fragment very likely records a sacrifice marking Vespasian's entry into the city for the first time as emperor. It recalls the altar to Fortuna Redux that had been erected by the senate in 19 BCE to celebrate Augustus' return from the east after a lengthy absence during the traumatic period 22-19 BCE;<sup>123</sup> it would not have commemorated the Flavian triumph of 71, as Titus, Vespasian's co-triumphator, is not mentioned. The fact that this inscription identifies among those present Mucianus (by far the most likely reconstruction of C. Licinius) shows that at some point between June and the fall Mucianus had returned to the city; Domitian was also present to greet Vespasian in Beneventum.<sup>124</sup>

The date of Vespasian's return is corroborated by Josephus' account of Titus' actions after the fall of Jerusalem in September 70. After the city and the Temple had been destroyed, Titus traveled with his army to Caesarea Maritima and then to Caesarea Philippi, as the "winter prevented him from sailing to Italy."<sup>125</sup> He put on games and other spectacles, including a number that seem deliberately dynastic: he celebrated Domitian's birthday (24 October) when he returned to Caesarea Maritima with a festival that included the execution in the arena of a number of Jewish captives, and then traveled to Berytus where he celebrated his father's birthday (17 November) with even more elaborate spectacles.<sup>126</sup> At this point, Titus heard news of Vespasian's enthusiastic

---

<sup>122</sup> *CIL* 6.2052 = McCrum and Woodhead 3; Scheid 1998, n. 41; Henzen (1874, xcvi).

<sup>123</sup> Platner and Ashby 1929, 218; Levick 1999, 91; for Fortuna Redux on Augustus' coinage, see Wallace-Hadrill 1986, 77-78. Kraay (1953, 104-7) suggests that Vespasian's return to Rome in October was intended to recall Augustus' return in 19 BCE.

<sup>124</sup> Dio 66.9.3.

<sup>125</sup> *BJ* 7.23, 20: τὸν γὰρ εἰς τὴν Ἰταλίαν πλοῦν ὁ χειμὼν ἐκόλυε.

<sup>126</sup> *BJ* 7.37-40.

reception in Rome, and “he became extremely joyful and happy, and he was most pleasantly relieved of his concern for Vespasian.”<sup>127</sup> This comment is significant, as it indicates that even Josephus’ sycophantic account of Vespasian’s accession could not present this moment without a hint of anxiety regarding how the city of Rome would receive its new emperor.

However, Vespasian’s arrival in Italy was promising for the new dynasty. According to Dio, Vespasian met Mucianus and other important individuals at Brundisium, and then met Domitian at Beneventum; he greeted Domitian in such a way as to humble him, but greeted the others with civility. When he reached Rome it seems that he entered the city in a procession that climbed the Capitoline Hill to the site of the Capitolium, where Vespasian initiated the work of restoring the temple.<sup>128</sup> Josephus does not describe this spectacle, instead he describes Vespasian making his way to the palace (τὸ βασιλείον) through streets lined with cheering people in a city filled with garlands and incense, and performing sacrifices of thanksgiving after which the people of Rome engaged in further festivities and feasts.<sup>129</sup> Then Vespasian got down to the business of ruling Rome: he distributed gifts to the citizens and soldiers and began the process of rebuilding the city.

Titus himself returned to Rome in the spring of 71. He left Judaea via Alexandria, where he dismissed his legions and selected the Jewish prisoners he wished

---

<sup>127</sup> *BJ* 7.63: Τίτος δὲ Καίσαρ τῆς περὶ τοῦ πατρὸς ἀγγελίας αὐτῷ κομισθείσης, ὅτι πάσαις μὲν ποθεινὸς ταῖς κατὰ τὴν Ἰταλίαν πόλεσιν ἐπήλθεν, μάλιστα δ’ ἡ Ῥώμη μετὰ πολλῆς αὐτὸν ἐδέξατο προθυμίας καὶ λαμπρότητος, εἰς πολλὴν χαρὰν καὶ θυμηδίαν ἐτρέπετο, τῶν περὶ αὐτοῦ φροντίδων ὡς ἥδιστον ἦν ἀπηλλαγμένος.

<sup>128</sup> Dio 66.9.3-10.2. I examine Vespasian’s performance of work on the Capitoline in chapter 2.

<sup>129</sup> Josephus *BJ* 7.71-74.

to include in the triumph; then he crossed to Italy, where he was greeted by Vespasian.<sup>130</sup> Shortly afterwards, the Flavians celebrated their triumph in June 71; Vespasian and Titus rode triumphal chariots as *imperatores* celebrating their victory, while Domitian rode a white horse alongside them. This procession was therefore a celebration of the Flavian dynasty, as it presented the three members of the imperial house to a Roman audience in a context that celebrated their accomplishments and imperial promise.<sup>131</sup> Significantly, Josephus' account emphasizes the extent to which the triumph put Vespasian and his sons on display for the Roman public, who derived particular joy from the sight of the family united at last;<sup>132</sup> very likely, since the triumph took place shortly after Titus' arrival in Rome,<sup>133</sup> this was the first major spectacle which permitted the Flavians to present themselves as a family to the Roman public. Throughout the months since Vespasian's acclamation, his sons had acquired a symbolic significance as his representatives in his absence, as a justification for his claim to rule, and as a promise of future stability and a deterrent of future instability: the Flavian triumph brought the Flavian family together for the Roman audience and celebrated their unity in a spectacle of imperial glory.

This triumph ostensibly celebrated Titus' and Vespasian's victory over the Jews; however, Josephus' account of the procession concludes with the dedication of the temple of Peace "after the triumph and the most secure establishment of the Roman empire."<sup>134</sup> The Flavians' victory over the Jewish rebels was a pretext for the imperial

---

<sup>130</sup> Josephus *BJ* 7.116-119.

<sup>131</sup> Beard 2003, 556; I discuss the dynastic significance of the triumph in chapter 4.

<sup>132</sup> e.g. *BJ* 7.120: "for the crowd of the citizens a certain fate provided the pleasure of seeing the three of them at once in one place" (τῷ δὲ πλήθει τῶν πολιτῶν δαιμόνιον τινα τὴν χαρὰν παρείχε τὸ βλέπειν αὐτοὺς ἤδη τοὺς τρεῖς ἐν ταύτῳ γεγονότας).

<sup>133</sup> *BJ* 7.121: "not many days later", οὐ πολλῶν δ' ἡμερῶν διελθουσῶν.

<sup>134</sup> *BJ* 7.158: Μετὰ δὲ τοὺς θριάμβους καὶ τὴν βεβαιοτάτην τῆς Ῥωμαίων ἡγεμονίας κατάστασιν ἔγνω τέμενος Εἰρήνης κατασκευάσαι...

celebration of a triumph, since it was not appropriate to recognize Vespasian's victory over Vitellius with that kind of ritualized celebration. However, this reference indicates that the triumph's significance as a celebration of victory in the civil war was widely understood and appreciated, and that the peace celebrated by this temple encompassed the order restored to the empire as a whole after the disorder of the civil war at the same time as it was a monument to the Flavian victory in the Jewish war.<sup>135</sup>

## **Conclusion**

This overview of the events from Vespasian's initial acclamation in July 69 to the triumph of Vespasian and Titus in June 71 has shown how difficult it was for the new emperor and his followers to negotiate the transition from military victory to political authority. In this case, the manner of Vespasian's victory was particularly problematic: the unforeseen destruction of the city, especially the ideologically-significant Capitolium, and the death of both Vespasian's brother Flavius Sabinus and of Vitellius made Vespasian's appropriation of civil authority more difficult. Vespasian and his followers had to contend with the threat of resistance from a number of directions: from the senate, which took the opportunity presented by the transfer of power to assert a measure of autonomy and to pursue its own concerns; from specific individuals whose family or personal connections made them potential rallying points for opposition to the Flavians; and from the soldiers who had participated in the civil war – whether as followers of Vespasian, Vitellius, or charismatic commanders like Antonius Primus – who now

---

<sup>135</sup> The temple of Peace had a very complex and multifaceted ideological significance, see Noreña 2003, especially pages 30-31 for the role of Peace in Vespasian's coinage and ideology in the years 69-71; cf. Darwall-Smith 1996, 55-68.

needed to be removed from Rome and put back in the field, or else discharged, in order for order to be restored.

Vespasian and his faction addressed the problem of Vespasian's civil authority by keeping the new emperor away from Rome until potential military threats had been nullified. Both Titus and Domitian played an important military, political, and symbolic role in his absence. Both of Vespasian's sons spent a significant part of the year 70 in the provinces with large armies, engaged – actively or symbolically – in the process of quashing local rebellions, while focusing the attention of Rome's restless soldiers on military activities. But, given the emphasis placed on Vespasian's sons, especially Titus, in the rhetoric of Vespasian's claim to power, their presence in the provinces with these armies also served to preempt further provincial unrest from Roman governors by extending Vespasian's presence throughout the empire. This shows that Flavian dynasticism, and the perception of Vespasian and his sons as a coherent and stable unit, was a central part of Vespasian's construction of his authority from the beginning.

Vespasian, meanwhile, remained in Alexandria, where he could maintain contact with the political and civic life of Rome. His involvement, from a distance, in traditional imperial spheres of activity is striking; his engagement with the grain trade and his active role in appointing commissioners and extraordinary offices shows that he was claiming the position of emperor even though he was not in Rome. Even his presence in Alexandria served as a claim to imperial authority, as entry into Egypt was forbidden to senators without imperial authority. In this way, Vespasian was able to participate in a limited way in the activities that connected the emperor to the empire, and the city of Rome in particular; this negotiation of the relationship between space and meaning in the

definition of his imperial power would also continue to be an important aspect of the construction of Vespasian's imperial authority.

In this transitional period from civil war to political reconstruction, Mucianus played a crucial role as he assumed the responsibility for some of the atrocities committed in the name of Flavian stability, such as the death of Vitellius' son, Scribonianus, and the family of C. Piso; this allowed Vespasian to distance himself from these atrocities, and even to cultivate a reputation for imperial clemency as he arranged a "splendid" marriage for Vitellius' daughter.<sup>136</sup> Mucianus' political arrangements and willingness to be ruthless served to address the unstable political situation in the aftermath of Vitellius' death. More important was Mucianus' redeployment of Rome's legions throughout the provinces in the early part of the year 70. His arrangements relieved the military pressure on the city of Rome and ensured that Rome's borders were once again secure, and that the legions that had fought on the wrong side in the civil war could be reintegrated into the empire's defense network with as little trouble as possible. This was an essential contribution to the establishment of Vespasian's authority.

Because of the efforts of Vespasian, Mucianus, Titus and Domitian to assert Vespasian's claim to authority in a variety of ways, the transformation of Vespasian's military claim to power into political authority was relatively smooth. Nonetheless, Vespasian still faced resistance in the first months of his reign. The conflict between Mucianus and Antonius Primus threatened to destabilize the restoration of political order as it created confusion in Rome as to who represented Vespasian's interests in his absence. When Mucianus removed the legions loyal to Antonius Primus to Pannonia and

---

<sup>136</sup> Suet. *Vesp.* 14: *Offensarum inimicitiarumque minime memor executorve, Vitelli hostis sui filiam splendidissime maritavit, dotavit etiam et instruxit.*

convinced him to leave the city, he was able to resolve some of this tension. But a more significant threat to Vespasian's claim to authority emerged from the senate, and from specific individuals who sought to take advantage of the instability caused by the civil war to assert senatorial autonomy against imperial prerogatives, and whose spokesperson (at least in Tacitus) was Helvidius Priscus.

Helvidius Priscus challenged Vespasian's claim to the imperial office from the beginning. His proposal that the senate assume responsibility for restoring the Capitolium set the stage for an extended negotiation between the emperor and his senatorial opponents. It is striking, then, that Mucianus' military arrangements in the middle of 70 resulted in a period in which Helvidius Priscus, a praetor, was the most senior magistrate in the city. Evidently, the threat that this group posed was not to Vespasian's claim to the imperial office in general, but to the specific parameters and restrictions on his imperial authority.

In short, in less than two years – from the acclamation of the troops on 1 July 69 until the Flavian triumph of June 71 – Vespasian was able to translate military power into personal, imperial power in a way that preempted armed resistance and limited political resistance. This process required a complex uses of the ideological value of space as the new emperor exploited the symbolic value of Alexandria as an imperial city, and the psychological impact of his control of the grain supply; the creation of Vespasian's personal authority also called upon his political leverage, and his willingness to extend his imperial power to proxies like Mucianus and his sons, who assumed a particular symbolic significance over the course of this period. The extraordinary success of the Flavians in this endeavor is attested by the fact that historians, both ancient and modern,



cannot imagine that the outcome could have been anything other than what it was: Tacitus would assert that after the death of Vitellius “it was more that war ceased than that peace began”. But the events of 70 and 71 show that the actions of the Flavians were carefully considered in order to ensure that Vespasian would be able to begin the process of transforming his military claims into personal and political imperial power. How this personal and political authority would develop once Vespasian reached Rome will be shown in the following chapters; that the Flavians were successful in this effort is shown by the fact that Vespasian’s secure authority seemed the inevitable outcome of his acclamation in July 69.

## Chapter 2:

### Space and the ideological topography of Rome: the Capitoline, the Palatine, and the Quirinal in 70 CE

#### Introduction

By the time that Vespasian came to power, the principate had already made its mark on the city of Rome both physically and ideologically.<sup>1</sup> The culture of Julio-Claudian Rome had infiltrated public spaces in the form of new and restored buildings, public art, and a material and stylistic vocabulary that communicated the ideology of empire.<sup>2</sup> As the emperors assumed a more pivotal role in the political, religious, and cultural life of the city, their actions required that Rome's traditional public spaces and monuments be reevaluated in light of the imperial present. As a result, public life in the city of Rome was enacted within an ideological topography of the principate, in which urban spaces, monuments, and structures imparted meaning to imperial actions, and were in turn redefined by them. Thus when Vespasian returned to Rome in October of 70, he

---

<sup>1</sup> The Romans' attitude towards space has received a certain amount of recent attention from modern scholars, especially as we begin to see how an understanding of the relationship between the conceptualization of space can illuminate historical inquiry (Riggsby 2009, 152-165 is a good introduction with recent bibliography). In particular, recent work has explored the way that the city of Rome consisted of highly constructed spaces containing a range of places that derived specific and general cultural and ideological meanings from their histories, monuments, the activities carried out within them, and more; see for example Nicolet 1991, 189-203; Jaeger 1997; Woodman 1993. Gowing (2005, esp. 132ff) explores the relationship between space, memory, and meaning in an imperial context.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Zanker 1990, esp. 239-264.

entered a city in which the very public and private spaces he sought to occupy would lend meaning to his actions as the new emperor. The way that Vespasian used space in the development of his imperial persona, by making use of the meanings of certain spaces to define his authority and by manipulating urban space in order to redefine the imperial office, offers an insight into the relationship between the emperor, the imperial office, and the city of Rome.

Vespasian's claim to imperial authority made use of three major areas of the city: the Capitoline (with its republican and military associations), the imperial complexes on the Palatine (which had already sprawled onto the neighboring Caelian and Esquiline Hills with the expansion of Nero's Domus Aurea), and Vespasian's own imperial space on the Quirinal. A discussion of these spaces will show how Vespasian used the ideologies associated with Roman spaces, and how Vespasian's accession and the resulting redefinition of imperial space within the city posed a challenge to Julio-Claudian traditions of imperial rule. By rejecting the ideological topography of imperial power created and reinforced by his predecessors, Vespasian revealed his intention not to establish himself as a successor to Augustus or, indeed, to attempt to associate himself with the Julio-Claudian house at all. Rather, in seeking to redefine imperial space he could present himself as a new imperial founder – a new Augustus, who took his cues from the city's republican traditions rather than its more recent imperial ideologies.

### **The Capitoline and the Palatine**

The destruction of the temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus on the Capitoline marked Vespasian's victory in 69 CE. This temple, along with the Capitoline Hill in

general, was a deeply meaningful space within the city of Rome, as it was associated particularly with Rome's republican religious and military past; more recently, it had played a significant role in the way that Vespasian's predecessors, especially Galba and Vitellius, developed their imperial personas. The fire of 69 gave Vespasian an opportunity to redefine the hilltop as imperial space; his restoration of the Capitoline's traditional republican monuments allowed him to engage directly with the space's more remote history, situating himself within Rome's republican, rather than imperial, traditions.

In the last days of Vitellius' reign, as Flavian troops closed in on the city and Vitellius' allies began to abandon him, Vitellius engaged in negotiations with the urban prefect, Flavius Sabinus, who was also Vespasian's brother.<sup>3</sup> The Flavians were attempting to convince Vitellius to abdicate, so that they could take the city without bloodshed.<sup>4</sup> But when Vitellius attempted to hand over power, in a *contio* in the Forum on the 18<sup>th</sup> of December, his legionary soldiers and the Roman plebs forced him back to the Palatine.<sup>5</sup> After this, other members of his audience – leading senators, many of the equestrians, and the urban cohorts – flocked to the house of Flavius Sabinus in the belief that Vitellius' abdication had been successful; when they learned that it had not been, they encouraged Sabinus to take up arms and mobilize his followers in order to preempt an attack from Vitellius' men. Sabinus and a small group of armed men, which included some soldiers, some senators, some equestrians, Sabinus' son (also named Flavius Sabinus), and Vespasian's younger son Domitian, occupied the "citadel of the

---

<sup>3</sup> Tac. *Hist.* 3.65.

<sup>4</sup> Nicols 1978, 82.

<sup>5</sup> Tac. *Hist.* 3.67-69. On Vespasian's popularity with the Roman people, see Yavetz 1969, 557-569; Newbold 1972, 308-319.

Capitolium” (*arx Capitolii*), where they were besieged.<sup>6</sup> That evening, Sabinus smuggled his son and nephew to safety and sent word to the Flavian armies outside the city to tell them of their situation. The next day, despite attempts to end the siege peacefully, the Vitellians attacked the Capitoline; in the chaos, the defenders threw rocks and tiles down on their attackers, who climbed over houses and set fire to the gates of the temple. The result was that the fire took hold of the houses on the slopes of the hill, colonnades, and then the temple itself.<sup>7</sup>

The destruction of the Capitolium – which was followed by the death of Flavius Sabinus – was the catalyst for the Flavian capture of the city and for Vitellius’ death.<sup>8</sup> Petillius Cerealis refused terms with Vitellius negotiated by members of the senate, while Antonius Primus told the Vestals whom Vitellius had sent that the death of Sabinus and the destruction of the Capitolium made peace impossible.<sup>9</sup> Antonius attacked that day, breaking the Vitellian defenses and capturing the city; the tribune Julius Placidus killed Vitellius.<sup>10</sup> In the days that followed, the senate recognized Vespasian as their emperor.<sup>11</sup>

In this way, Vespasian’s accession was precipitated by the destruction of the Capitolium and the houses and buildings on the slopes of the Capitoline Hill. Tacitus

---

<sup>6</sup> Tac. *Hist.* 3.69. On the meaning of this phrase, see Wiseman 1978, 63-64; Wellesley 1981, 180-183; Richardson 1992, 40; cf. MacIsaac 1987.

<sup>7</sup> Tac. *Hist.* 3.71. Cf. Suet. *Dom.* 1; Dio 65.17.3-4.

<sup>8</sup> Tac. *Hist.* 3.75.

<sup>9</sup> Tac. *Hist.* 3.78-81. Tacitus had been unwilling to state which side had started the fire, which was likely impossible to determine in any case. Nonetheless, in the aftermath of the temple’s destruction there was intense and immediate interest in determining who had started the fire (Tac. *Hist.* 3.75). Antonius Primus’ assumption that it had been the fault of the Vitellians represents the Flavians’ official stance on the issue, cf. Pliny the Elder *NH* 34.38: *priusquam id novissime conflagraret a Vitellianis incensum*.

<sup>10</sup> Tac. *Hist.* 3.84-85.

<sup>11</sup> Tac. *Hist.* 4.3.

calls the destruction of the Temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus, also known as the Capitolium, “the most grievous and loathsome crime that happened to the republic since the foundation of the city” (*id facinus post conditam urbem luctuosissimum foedissimumque rei publicae populi Romani accidit*), and offers a brief description of the history of the temple. Its construction had begun under the Tarquins and it was dedicated in 509 BCE; the connection between the structure and the earliest history of the republic was very strong.<sup>12</sup> It was a hexastyle Tuscan temple with three rows of columns on the porch and columns along the side of a triple *cella*. The podium was raised approximately 4m from the ground, and was unusually large (62m long and 53m in width) although the temple itself was not. An acroterion on the pediment featured a terracotta quadriga and two acroteria at the extremities bore winged horses, also of terracotta.<sup>13</sup> Tacitus emphasizes the continuity of the temple: it had survived Porsenna in the late sixth century and the capture of the Gauls in 387. In 296 BCE, the terracotta horses were replaced with bronzes and a statue of Jupiter appeared in the chariot.<sup>14</sup> Although the structure was restored in 179 BCE, it was fundamentally unchanged until 83 BCE, when it was destroyed by a fire (which also destroyed the Sibylline Books);<sup>15</sup> Sulla undertook its reconstruction, even bringing columns from the temple of Zeus Olympios at Athens to Rome, but died before the project could be completed. The temple that was destroyed in 69 CE had been built by the consul of 78 BCE, Quintus Lutatius Catulus, in the extraordinary office of *curator reficiendi Capitoli*. Catulus made other changes in the

---

<sup>12</sup> Tac. *Hist.* 3.72. Tacitus’ succinct account of its initial construction concludes “the glory of the work was reserved for liberty” (*sed gloria operas libertati reservata*).

<sup>13</sup> Steinby *LTUR* 3.150-151.

<sup>14</sup> Livy 2.8.6-8.

<sup>15</sup> Bastien 1978, 183 n. 12.

reconstruction of the temple: the wood of the archaic temple was replaced with stone, and the new architrave and pediment were in the Corinthian order rather than Etruscan.

The Temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus dominated the Capitoline, but it was by no means the only significant structure or object on the hill. A reference in Livy to the condemnation of Manlius Capitolinus in 385 BCE reveals that no patrician was allowed to live on the Capitoline Hill and that the site of Manlius' house had become the *aedes atque officina Monetae*.<sup>16</sup> This reference and recent archaeological work has indicated that the Temple of Juno Moneta and the Roman mint were separate structures, and that the mint was connected by the Tabularium – a secure covered walkway – to the Aerarium housed in the Temple of Saturn at the base of the hill in the Forum.<sup>17</sup> There were also Capitoline temples of Ops, Mens, Fides, and the large complex of the Temple of Concord and the Basilica Opimia on the hillside toward the Forum.<sup>18</sup>

In addition to these buildings, the Capitoline Hill also served as a repository for a large number of smaller monuments: among the restorations that Vespasian undertook was the replacement of three thousand bronze tablets which had preserved the “most splendid and ancient documents of the empire” (*instrumentum imperii pulcherrimum ac vetustissimum*), such as decrees of the senate and plebiscites regarding alliances, treaties, and special privileges to individuals from Rome's foundation.<sup>19</sup> The fact that Vespasian was able to find copies of these documents indicates that the bronze tablets on the

---

<sup>16</sup> Livy 6.20.13. No patrician may have lived on the hill, but excavations have shown that the slope of the hill that did not face the forum was occupied by residential buildings, including very large *insulae*, see Richardson 1992, 42.

<sup>17</sup> Coarelli 1991-1994, 23-66; Giannelli 1980-1981, 7-36; Purcell 1993, 125-155; Meadows and Williams 2001, 27-28.

<sup>18</sup> Meadows and Williams (2001, 47) connect the restoration of these buildings to a time of civil strife and moral anxiety in the later second century.

<sup>19</sup> Suet. *Vesp.* 8.

Capitoline were not primarily part of an official archive, but also had a powerful symbolic and even religious importance: the fact that these documents were inscribed on bronze and placed on this particular hillside made the tablets, and the documents, more authoritative and a more powerful expression of permanence.<sup>20</sup>

The Capitoline Hill, especially the sanctuary of Jupiter Optimus Maximus, was also significant as the site of military memorials, as the temple was the final stopping point of a successful general's triumphal procession through the city.<sup>21</sup> Although, as Beard points out, a generalized description of a triumph would be "grossly misleading," the description of Pompey's triumph in 61 seems to provide a broad impression of the component elements of a triumphal procession: the triumphing general would assemble his army outside the *pomerium*, then proceed along a prescribed route through the city that culminated on the Capitoline Hill. The procession included a display of the spoils of war, as well as images or scenes of the conquered territory to illustrate the general's great military achievements. Gifts to the general and the sacrificial animals would also be included in the procession, as would entertainers like musicians and dancers. Captives, including the enemy's conquered leaders, were lead in chains before the *triumphator's* chariot – a decorated *quadriga*. The general would be dressed in an elaborate costume, including a laurel crown and red face-paint. He might be accompanied by his children, especially his small sons. The victorious soldiers wearing laurel wreaths and chanting a ritual cry followed the triumphal chariot. At the Capitoline, some of the captives might be executed while the triumphator would lead the procession to the Temple of Jupiter,

---

<sup>20</sup> Williamson 1987, 165-174.

<sup>21</sup> Versnel 1970, *passim* and esp. 312-313 and 394-395; see also Jaeger 1997, 4-5; Rea 2007, 49; Packer 2003, 167; Beard 2007, 249-250.



where he would perform a sacrifice and dedicate other offerings. The triumph would end with feasting throughout the city.<sup>22</sup> The spoils, flags, and symbols of conquered enemies dedicated in the temple would have remained there and provided a permanent reminder of Rome's military and imperial history.

This extremely partial overview of the structures and objects on the top of the Capitoline Hill shows that this area had been a cultural and religious center of the city for centuries by the time that the Capitolium, and many other unnamed structures, were destroyed in the Flavian victory. The Capitoline's structures and monuments were closely associated with Rome's foundations, republican institutions, and oldest religious and civic traditions; the hill's particular association with the Roman triumph linked the space with the military and imperialist identity of Rome. As the core of the republican city, the Capitoline was a monument in its own right.<sup>23</sup>

From Vespasian's perspective in late 69 and 70, however, the enduring republican meaning of the Capitoline Hill had been subsumed within a more recent imperial ideological redefinition of Rome's urban space. The Julio-Claudian emperors had not sought to alter the topographical or ideological landscape of the hilltop; rather, they had preserved its military significance as the terminus of imperial triumphs. However, as triumphs had become one of the prerogatives of the imperial family, they had also become more rare; after the triumph of Lucius Cornelius Balbus in 19 BCE, triumphs were celebrated at a significantly reduced rate, with only five known between Balbus'

---

<sup>22</sup> Beard (2007, 80-85) reconstructs this from a range of ancient sources; cf. Greenhalgh 1980, 168-176; Mattingly 1936-1937; cf. Hopkins 1978, 26-27.

<sup>23</sup> Feeney 2007, 141-142 and 274 nt. 31.

and the Judaeian triumph of 71.<sup>24</sup> Members of the imperial family celebrated (or exaggerated) their victories in public triumphal processions that had become a venue for the advertisement of dynastic continuity and the strength of the imperial house.<sup>25</sup> Therefore, the Capitoline's military and imperialistic significance was incorporated into the ideology of imperial rule developed by Augustus and his heirs, but the Julio-Claudians diminished the Capitoline's significance by relocating the center of Rome's political and religious landscape to the area around the Palatine Hill on the other side of the Forum and the Velabrum. The Palatine had been the site of numerous aristocratic homes during the late republic, which is the very reason why Augustus took up residence there in the house of the orator Q. Hortensius Hortalus.<sup>26</sup> This house became the center of a complex of imperial properties in which the cultural, religious, political, and administrative life of the empire took place, and which quickly consumed the entire hilltop. As a result Rome's political center shifted away from the Curia and the basilicas in the north and west of the Forum, and Apollo Palatinus came to rival Jupiter Capitolinus visually, artistically, and ideologically in Augustus' restoration of the religious world of the city.<sup>27</sup>

---

<sup>24</sup> Campbell 1984, 137; Beard 2007, 70. Vespasian had won the *ornamenta triumphalia* for his service as a legate of *legio II Augusta* in Claudius' invasion of Britain in 43 CE, Suet. *Vesp.* 4; *Cl.* 17.3.

<sup>25</sup> I discuss Germanicus' triumph in 17 and Claudius' triumph in 44 as dynastic spectacles in chapter 4.

<sup>26</sup> Suet. *Aug.* 72.

<sup>27</sup> Zanker 1990, 65-68; Favro 1996, 193 and 203-206; Miller 2000, 412. Augustus takes credit for restoring the Capitolium in the *Res Gestae* "at great expense and without an inscription of his own name" (*opus impensa grandi refeci sine ulla inscriptione nominis mei*).

However, Vespasian's more recent predecessors had made different use of the symbolic significance of the Capitoline Hill. Galba had placed a great deal of emphasis on his claims to republican nobility as he took the throne in 68. Suetonius writes:

*Neroni Galba successit nullo gradu contingens Caesarum domum, sed haud dubie nobilissimus magnaue et vetere prosapia, ut qui statuarum titulis pronepotem se Quinti Catuli Capitolini semper ascripserit, imperator vero etiam stemma in atrio proposuerit, quo paternam originem ad Iovem, maternam ad Pasiphaen Minois uxorem referret.*

Galba succeeded Nero, being related in no degree to the house of the Caesars, although without question very noble indeed and from an old and powerful family; for he always added to the inscriptions of his statues that he was the great-grandson of Quintus Catulus Capitolinus, and as emperor he even displayed a family tree in his *atrium* in which he traced back his ancestry on his father's side to Jupiter and on his mother's side to Pasiphaë the wife of Minos.<sup>28</sup>

This reference, especially to Galba's family tree, has been understood as a "strange" claim that rivals, or perhaps parodies, Julius Caesar's claim to be descended from Venus.<sup>29</sup> However, these claims can be shown to be consistent with the tradition of asserting noble status by claiming divine ancestry, by asserting a lineage that could be traced back through illustrious ancestors to a divine founder of the clan, which had been prevalent in the republic.<sup>30</sup> Silius Italicus refers to a 3<sup>rd</sup>-century Galba as a descendent of Pasiphaë, but this should not be seen as evidence that this Galba (or any other Galba) had

---

<sup>28</sup> *Galba* 2.

<sup>29</sup> Charlesworth (1937, 54) calls this "strange", and Baldwin (1983, 548 n. 10) calls the genealogy of a "parody"; cf. Benediktson 1996-1997, n. 12.

<sup>30</sup> Wiseman 1974, 156; Jucker, 1975, 356-364; Cornell 1995, 10 and 245; Kragelund 1998, 160. The depiction of the stemma in Galba's *atrium* recalls the presentation of ancestor masks (*imagines*) in the *atria* of aristocratic houses, cf. Flower 1996.

made this claim, only that Silius knew of the emperor Galba's claims and took them seriously enough to reproduce them.<sup>31</sup>

Galba's claim to descent from Catulus Capitolinus, through his mother Mummia Achaica, seems to have been an important part of his self-representation as a republican aristocrat. In his speech on the adoption of Piso, he speaks of the adoption as "bringing the descendent of Gnaeus Pompey and Marcus Crassus into [his] house... and adding the glories of the Sulpician and Lutatian houses to [Piso's] own rank".<sup>32</sup> Suetonius' claims that Galba identified himself as *Q. Catuli Capitolini pronepos* in inscriptions has not been verified by any epigraphic evidence, although a bronze drachma from the Roman mint at Alexandria provides insight into the way that Galba promoted his nobility and his relationship with republican aristocrats like Catulus. This coin features an obverse laureate bust of Galba facing right and the reverse depicts a structure with four frontal columns and a gabled roof with statuary decoration. The reverse also bears a poorly preserved Λ and Α to the left and right of the structure, indicating year 1 of Galba's reign (68 CE).<sup>33</sup> The structure was first identified as a piece of local architecture by Handler, and with four frontal columns it does not resemble the depiction of the hexastyle Capitolium on Roman coins such as the denarius of M. Volteius of 78 BCE.<sup>34</sup> However, its distinctive ornamental features and comparisons with other numismatic depictions of the temple on coins minted at Rome and in provincial mints have led Kleiner to argue

---

<sup>31</sup> 8.468-471; cf. Wardle 1996, 213 n. 21.

<sup>32</sup> Tac. *Hist.* 1.15: *mihi egregium erat Cn. Pompei et M. Crassi subolem in penatis meos adsciscere, et tibi insigne Sulpiciae ac Lutatiae decora nobilitati tuae adiecisse*. On descent from consulars as the basis of republican nobility, see Gelzer 1969.

<sup>33</sup> *RPC* 1 (Galba) 5347; the coin is currently in the collection of the American Numismatic Society, ANS 1944.100.53672, whose database describes the reverse as a triumphal arch.

<sup>34</sup> M. Volteius: *BMCR* 3154, pl. 42.1. See Brown 1940, pl. 1.1; Fuchs 1969, 17-18 and pl. 2.16-18.

that this coin's reverse represents the Roman Capitolium.<sup>35</sup> This indicates that Galba was encouraging the identification between himself and Catulus, represented by the structure he had built.<sup>36</sup> Thus, the Sullan Capitolium became a physical symbol of Galba's claim to republican nobility and therefore imperial power.<sup>37</sup>

Interestingly, Vitellius also produced coins that bore reverse images of the Capitolium. An as produced by the Roman mint bears an obverse portrait of Vitellius with the legend A VITELLIUS GERMANICUS IMP AUG P M TR P, and a reverse image of the Temple of Jupiter Capitolinus, identified by the legend I O MAX CAPITO.<sup>38</sup> This issue had been preceded by a series of coins minted at Lugdunum, before Vitellius' return to the city, which bore an image of a temple with two columns containing a seated statue of Jupiter, identified by the legend I O MAX CAPITOLINUS:<sup>39</sup>

---

<sup>35</sup> Handler 1971, 57-74; Kleiner 1989, 71-72.

<sup>36</sup> The Sullan Capitolium was still associated with Catulus (who had taken the *cognomen* Capitolinus to commemorate his accomplishment), as it had kept its inscription during Augustus' restorations, Tac. *Hist.* 3.72: *Lutatii Catuli nomen inter tanta Caesarum opera usque ad Vitellium mansit.*

<sup>37</sup> The fact that *RPC* 1 (Galba) 5347 was minted in Alexandria is not problematic. The Alexandrian mint frequently copied types from other mints, including the mint of Rome; several examples include architectural types. See for example Milne 1933, xxxiii, a Parthian arch copied from Augustus' Asiatic cistophori; *BMC* Alexandria p. 2, 7, pl. 30, a temple of Mars also copied from Augustan cistophori; and Handler 1971, p. 70, 4, an arch erected by Nero on the Capitoline Hill in Rome copied from Roman sestertii. See Kleiner 1989, 76.

<sup>38</sup> *BMCRE* 1 p. 386, see Bastien 1978, 181. Like the Galban issue, this temple, which is explicitly identified as the Capitolium in the legend, does not represent a hexastyle temple, see Kleiner 1989, 74 n. 11.

<sup>39</sup> *RIC* 1 (Vitellius) p. 231 n. 6.



Figure 2.1: *RPC 1* (Vitellius) 56, minted at Lugdunum  
(image source: [www.cngcoins.com/Coin.aspx?CoinID=59544](http://www.cngcoins.com/Coin.aspx?CoinID=59544))

These types recall the accounts of Vitellius' entrance into the city for the first time as emperor: according to Tacitus, although Vitellius first approached Rome armed and in the dress of a general, he was convinced to enter the city on foot in a senator's toga. He was accompanied by his army bearing their standards and in gleaming armor, and he ascended the Capitolium where he embraced his mother and gave her the name Augusta; in Dio's version Vitellius embraced his mother who rebuked her son for taking the name Germanicus.<sup>40</sup>

Bastien puts Vitellius' Capitolium issues in the context of this emperor's coin program, in which he made use of generalized republican slogans to mobilize support, especially among the soldiers. By producing this image alongside coins that proclaimed *libertas*, *res publica servata*, and other such phrases, Vitellius was symbolically aligning Jupiter with liberty; the type served as a call to arms for Vitellius' soldiers, establishing the divine and ideological legitimacy of their rebellion against first Galba and then

---

<sup>40</sup> Tac. *Hist.* 2.89: *sic Capitolium ingressus atque ibi matrem complexus Augustae nomine honoravit*. Dio 65.4.5: ὅτι Βιτέλλιος ἀνέβη εἰς τὸ Καπιτώλιον καὶ τὴν μητέρα αὐτοῦ ἡσπάσατο. ἐκείνη δὲ ἐπεικῆς ἦν, καὶ ὅτε πρῶτον ἤκουσεν ὅτι Γερμανικὸς ἐπεκλήθη ὁ υἱὸς αὐτῆς, εἶπεν “ἐγὼ μὲν Βιτέλλιον ἀλλ’ οὐ Γερμανικὸν τέτοκα”; in Tacitus, Vitellius' mother rebuked him for taking the name Germanicus after she had received a letter from him (*Hist.* 2.64).

Otho.<sup>41</sup> This interpretation of these types' meaning makes use of the connection between the temple and its god, Jupiter Optimus Maximus; but the image of the temple was symbolically meaningful in its own right, given the connection between the Capitoline temple and military glory established by its role at the culmination of Roman triumphs. Vitellius' primary claim to power lay in his support from the German legions, and his understanding of himself as a military emperor is underlined by the development of his titlature over the course of his brief reign: he delayed accepting the imperial titles "Augustus" and "Caesar" but adopted the cognomen "Germanicus."<sup>42</sup> Therefore, it seems very likely that the image of Jupiter Optimus Maximus in his temple served to communicate a promise of victory and glory once the army reached Rome by evoking the symbolism of a triumph.

Given the way that Vitellius developed his connection with the soldiers through his titlature, it is striking that both of the versions of his ascension of the Capitoline upon his return to the city show him attempting to either rename himself or rename his mother now that he was emperor. The name "Augusta" had developed a complex significance over the course of the Julio-Claudian period, reserved for the mothers of emperors (or at least the potential mothers of emperors).<sup>43</sup> "Germanicus" on the other hand, while it had been applied to members of the Julio-Claudian imperial house, was intended to make Vitellius' relationship with the German legions explicit rather than to

---

<sup>41</sup> Bastien 1978, 182.

<sup>42</sup> Tac. *Hist.* 1.62; Suet. *Vit.* 8.2; see Mattingly 1920, 39-40; Sutherland 1987, 120-121; Ceaușescu 1984, 69-79. Tacitus also shows Vitellius claiming the name Germanicus for his son, *Hist.* 2.59.

<sup>43</sup> Flory 1996, 298; the women who were given this title before 69 were Livia (Julia Augusta), who shared the title with Antonia (Suet. *Cal.* 15.2; *Cl.* 11.2; Dio 59.3.3), Agrippina the Younger (to mark Nero's status as heir, Tac. *Ann.* 12.26.1), and Poppaea Sabina (by Nero, after the birth of their daughter, Tac. *Ann.* 15.23; Suet. *Nero.* 35.3).

attempt to emphasize his continuity with Germanicus, Caligula, Claudius, or Nero.<sup>44</sup> The emphasis on these names in these accounts highlights the extent to which Vitellius' entry into the city drew from the rituals of the triumph – he processed through the Mulvian Bridge on foot accompanied by his soldiers bearing their legionary standards, following a route to the Capitolium.<sup>45</sup> Since Vitellius' victory had been against Otho, a real triumph would have been in poor taste; nonetheless, by entering the city in this way Vitellius could emphasize his status as a military victor and celebrate the role of his legions in his accession. The emphasis on nomenclature – either his mother's or his own – suggests that Vitellius' procession culminated in some sort of military-imperial ceremony at the Capitolium in which he attempted to cast himself and his family in familiar imperial and dynastic roles.

Vitellius' arrival in Rome acquired meaning through his use of ritual within the highly significant space of the Capitoline Hill. Only a few years earlier, Nero had also made use of the ritual actions of the triumph in an elaborate public spectacle intended to communicate his authority and power. In this case, however, Nero's pseudo-triumphal spectacle took place on the Palatine Hill; once again, the space in which the performance took place gave his actions meaning. In 67 CE, Nero returned to Italy from Greece with musical and athletic prizes from Panhellenic festivals and he celebrated his status as a touring victor of an event at Greek games (α περιόδον(ι)κης) with processional entries into four different Italian cities: Naples, Antium, Albanum, and finally Rome. He entered the other cities in the manner of victors of sacred games, on a white horse that he rode through a part of the city wall that had been knocked down. But at Rome, his entrance

---

<sup>44</sup> I return to the significance of Vitellius' titulature in chapter 3.

<sup>45</sup> Tac. *Hist.* 2.69.



was a carefully-composed public spectacle that drew not just from the ritual of the Roman triumph in general but from his family's triumphal traditions in particular:

*... Romam eo curru, quo Augustus olim triumphaverat, et in veste purpurea distinctaque stellis aureis chlamyde coronamque capite gerens Olympiacam, dextra manu Pythiam, praeunte pompa ceterarum cum titulis, ubi et quos cantionum quove fabularum argumento vicisset; sequentibus currum ovantium ritu plausoribus, Augustianos militesque se triumphi eius clamitantibus. Dehinc diruto Circi Maximi arcu per Velabrum Forumque Palatium et Apollinem petit. Incedenti passim victimae caesae sparso per vias identidem croco ingestaeque aves ac lemnisci et bellaria...*

[Nero entered] Rome in the same chariot in which Augustus had once triumphed, and in a purple garment and a *chlamys* decorated with golden stars, and wearing an Olympic crown on his head, carrying a Pythian crown in his right hand, and a procession of the rest of the crowns went ahead of him with placards saying where he had won, and who he had beaten, and with what song or tale; his claque followed his chariot in the manner of those celebrating an ovation, declaring that they were his Augustiani and the soldiers of his triumph. From there he set out for the arch of the Circus Maximus which had been torn down, through the Velabrum, the Forum, and temple of Palatine Apollo. All along, victims were slaughtered, saffron was sprinkled throughout the streets again and again, and birds, ribbons, and sweetmeats were thrown upon him as he moved forward...<sup>46</sup>

Dio's version of Nero's return to the city offers a similar description:

καὶ ἐσεφοίτησαν πρῶτοι μὲν οἱ τοὺς στεφάνους οὐς ἀνήρητο κομίζοντες, καὶ μετ' αὐτοὺς ἕτεροι σανίδια [τε] ἐπὶ δοράτων ἀνατείνοντες, ἐφ' οἷς ἐπεγέγραπτο τὸ τε ὄνομα τοῦ ἀγῶνος καὶ τὸ εἶδος τοῦ ἀγωνίσματος, ὅτι τε Νέρων Καίσαρ πρῶτος πάντων τῶν ἀπὸ τοῦ αἰῶνος Ῥωμαίων ἐνίκησεν αὐτό, ἔπειτα αὐτὸς ἐφ' ἄρματος ἐπινικίου, ἐν ᾧ ποτε ὁ Αὔγουστος τὰ πολλὰ ἐκεῖνα νικητήρια ἐπεπόμφει, ἀλουργίδα χρυσόπαστον

<sup>46</sup> Suet. *Nero* 25; the *chlamys* is a Greek cloak associated with military use and equated with the Latin *paludamentum*, *OLD* s. v. *chlamys*.

ἔχων καὶ κότινον ἐστεφανωμένος, τὴν Πυθικὴν δάφνην προτείνων· καὶ αὐτῷ ὁ Διόδωρος ὁ κιθαρωδὸς παρωχεῖτο. καὶ οὕτω διὰ τε τοῦ ἵπποδρόμου καὶ διὰ τῆς ἀγορᾶς μετὰ τε τῶν στρατιωτῶν καὶ μετὰ τῶν ἰπέων τῆς τε βουλῆς διελθὼν ἐς τὸ Καπιτώλιον ἀνέβη, καὶ ἐκεῖθεν ἐς τὸ Παλάτιον, πάσης μὲν τῆς πόλεως ἐστεφανωμένης καὶ λυγνοκαυτούσης καὶ θυμώσης, πάντων δὲ τῶν ἀνθρώπων, καὶ αὐτῶν τῶν βουλευτῶν ὅτι μάλιστα, συμβόωντων “Ὀλυμπιονίκα οὐᾶ, Πυθιονίκα οὐᾶ, Αὔγουστε Αὔγουστε. Νέρωνι τῷ Ἡρακλεῖ, Νέρωνι τῷ Ἀπόλλωνι. ὡς εἰς περιοδονίκης, εἰς ἀπ’ αἰῶνος, Αὔγουστε Αὔγουστε. ἱερὰ φωνή· μακάριοι οἱ σου ἀκούοντες.”

The first ones who went in were carrying the crowns which he had won, and after them others holding up tablets on spears, on which had been written the name of the Games and the type of event, and that Nero Caesar had been the first to win this of all the Romans ever, and then he in a triumphal chariot in which Augustus had once celebrated those many victories, wearing a gold-spangled purple robe and a wild-olive crown, holding out the Pythian laurel; and Diodorus the citharode rode beside him. In this way going through the Circus Maximus and the Forum with his soldiers and the cavalry and the senate, he went up to the Capitolium, and from there to the Palatium, with all the city decorated with garlands and lit by lamps and filled with sacrificial smoke, and with all the people, and especially the senators themselves, crying out in unison: “Olympian victor, yay! Pythian victor, yay! Augustus, Augustus. Hooray for Nero Hercules, hooray for Nero Apollo, there is only one touring victor, there is only one for all time, Augustus Augustus. Holy voice; blessed are they who hear you.”<sup>47</sup>

The similarities between this procession and a military triumph are evident: Nero not only rode in a triumphal chariot, he rode in the very chariot that was associated with the triumphal display at the beginning of the Julio-Claudian dynasty.<sup>48</sup> His costume evoked

<sup>47</sup> Dio 63.20.2-5.

<sup>48</sup> ἐν ᾧ ποτε ὁ Αὔγουστος τὰ πολλὰ ἐκεῖνα νικητήρια ἐπεπόμφει indicates Augustus’ triple triumph of 27 BCE, see Dio 51.21.9.

the military dress of a triumphator, and as in a triumph his chariot was preceded by placards proclaiming where he had been victorious and whom he had defeated. The role of his supporters is especially significant, as their acclamations brought special meaning to the spectacle by emphasizing his role as victor in a manner reminiscent of the troops of triumphing generals (*ovantium ritu*). Most importantly, in developing this spectacle, Nero used the ideological topography of the city as he followed a route through urban spaces already implicated in Rome's military and civic tradition: the Circus Maximus, the Forum, and the Capitolium.

However, Nero's victories were in Greek games, and the spectacle combined elements of the Roman triumph with aspects of Greek eiselastic processions, such as his victory laurels, the fact that he entered the city through a torn-down wall, and the presence of Diodorus as his defeated enemy.<sup>49</sup> The fact that this procession continued from the Capitoline to the Palatine, and specifically the temple of Palatine Apollo, was an innovation that drew from both traditions: the Temple of Apollo on the Palatine had become the imperial rival to the Capitolium, and Apollo was particularly associated with music and artistic performance. Even more important is the fact that the temple had been built by Augustus and was at the heart of the imperial complexes on the Palatine Hill; this, the use of Augustus' chariot, and the deliberate attempts to evoke Augustus' triple triumph has led Miller to argue that Nero was attempting to present his artistic accomplishments as the equal to Augustus' military ones, and thus manipulate the traditions of triumphal processions in order to translate his artistic victories into personal

---

<sup>49</sup> Champlin 2005, 233.

authority.<sup>50</sup> In this way, Nero's entry into the city in 67, like Vitellius' in 69, made use of the traditions of the Roman triumph to establish his claim to imperial power, and he used space to give his actions meaning – in this case, the ideological significance of the Capitoline Hill constructed against the new imperial meaning of the Palatine.

When Vespasian returned to the city in 70, the Capitolium had been destroyed. Nonetheless, he followed the examples of his imperial predecessors by engaging in a public performance that drew from triumphal rituals and made use of triumphal space on the Capitoline Hill. After arriving in Brundisium and graciously receiving the prominent men who had come to greet him, Vespasian moved on to Rome. There, according to Dio's epitomator,

τόν τε νεῶν τὸν ἐν τῷ Καπιτωλίῳ εὐθὺς οἰκοδομεῖν ἤρξατο, αὐτός τε τοῦ χοῦ πρῶτος ἐκφορήσας καὶ δῆλον ὅτι καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοις τοῖς ἐπιφανεστάτοις τὸ αὐτὸ τοῦτο ποιῆσαι κελεύσας, ἵνα καὶ τῷ λοιπῷ πλήθει ἀπαραίτητον τὸ διακόνημα γένηται.

He immediately began to build the temple on the Capitoline, and he himself was the first to carry out the soil, and it was clear that he was ordering the other prominent men to do the same thing, so that the service might be unavoidable for the rest of the people.<sup>51</sup>

Suetonius' description of this episode varies only slightly.<sup>52</sup> He does not specify that Vespasian made this trip to the Capitolium immediately, as the reference is contained

---

<sup>50</sup> Miller 2000, 412 and 417. Suetonius' reference to Nero keeping his crowns in his bedroom, rather than dedicating them, is an interesting detail as it defies the readers' expectations for the conclusion of Nero's procession and emphasizes Nero's narcissism and divine aspirations.

<sup>51</sup> Dio 66.10.2 (= Xiph. 206, 20-24 R. St.). It is difficult to reconstruct the place of this episode in Dio's original narrative. Zon. 11.17 describes Vespasian rebuilding "sacred precincts and public buildings" "damaged in the war; Murison (1999, 152-153) interprets Zonaras' comment as describing "very summarily" the same passage as Xiphilinus' discussion of the Capitolium.

<sup>52</sup> *Vesp.* 8.5.

within a description of Vespasian's general response to the project of reconstruction.<sup>53</sup> However, once Vespasian had undertaken the restoration of the Capitolium, "he was the first to put his hand to the clearing of the rubble, and he carried some of it out on his own neck" (*ipse restitutionem Capitolii adgressus, ruderibus purgandis manus primus admovit ac suo collo quaedam extulit...*). Josephus' account of Vespasian's return to Rome does not mention the Capitolium; instead, according to Josephus, as Vespasian drew near the city the people of Rome came out to line the streets to greet him, and as they passed they hailed him "benefactor", "savior", and "only worthy leader of Rome" (τὸν εὐεργέτην καὶ σωτήρα καὶ μόνον ἄξιον ἡγεμόνα τῆς Ῥώμης ἀνακαλοῦντες). He describes the city filled with garlands and incense like a temple (ὡς νεὼς ἦν στεφανωμάτων καὶ θυμαμάτων ἀνάπλεως). In this version, Vespasian reached the palace (τὸ βασιλεῖον), where he offered sacrifices of thanksgiving while the crowds continued the festivities by breaking into groups and having feasts.<sup>54</sup>

These accounts show that Vespasian made use of the rituals of the triumph to give his entry into the city greater significance, as Nero and Vitellius had also done. Josephus' account contains details which recall the description of the city and procession of Nero's pseudo-triumph; the reference to the city decorated like a temple with garlands and incense strongly recalls the description of the "city decorated with garlands and lit by lamps and filled with sacrificial smoke" (πάσης μὲν τῆς πόλεως ἐστεφανωμένης καὶ λυχνοκαυτοῦσης καὶ θυμώσης) of Nero's entrance to the city. The accounts of his

---

<sup>53</sup> "The city was unsightly from old fires and destruction; he allowed anyone to take possession of empty spaces and to build them up, if their owners did not do so"; *deformis urbs veteribus incendiis ac ruinis erat; vacuas areas occupare et aedificare, si possessores cessarent, cuiusque permisit.*

<sup>54</sup> Josephus *BJ* 7.70-73.

ascent of the Capitoline are especially significant; Dio's reference to the ἐπιφανεστάτοι suggests an audience who had followed Vespasian to the site, in order to observe, or participate in, his actions on the hilltop.<sup>55</sup> Evidently, Vespasian proceeded immediately to the ruins of the Temple, where he engaged in a performance of work as he began to clear rubble from the site. This action of removing the rubble seems to invert the expected triumphal action of dedicating the spoils of war, especially inasmuch as the destruction of the Temple had been the result of the war that had put him in power. His actions and the space in which he performed them gave his arrival in the city a particular ideological significance that would have been all the more accessible in light of Vitellius' and Nero's recent similar performances.

Vespasian's triumphal performance made use of, and therefore drew attention to, the damage that the Capitolium had sustained in the last days of Vitellius' reign. In order to fully understand the way that his performance drew its meaning from the space in which it was performed, it is important to consider the impression that this damage would have made on his audience and the Roman public in general. Tacitus' account of the fire describes it beginning with firebrands thrown onto the roofs of houses built level with the Capitolium (although he does not know which side threw them); from there, the fire spread to porticoes next to the temple, and then took hold of the roof of the temple itself.<sup>56</sup> This description is significant, as it is very likely that the greatest damage to the structure would have been to its roof: the tiles and wooden supports would have collapsed inwards, bringing the stone acroteria with them. This material would have continued to

---

<sup>55</sup> Keaveney (1987, 213-216) argues that Suetonius' account, embedded as it is within a discussion of the *vacuae areae* being reclaimed, indicates that Suetonius purposefully omitted a reference to the urban population as a distinct and specific audience of this action.

<sup>56</sup> Tac. *Hist.* 3.71. Cf. Suet. *Dom.* 1; Dio 65.17.3-4.

burn inside the cella, destroying the temple's contents. It is possible that the fire could have burned long and hot enough to damage the stone of the cella by causing it to shatter and collapse or even to burn, but the fact that the Capitolium's cella was divided into three small chambers makes this even more unlikely.<sup>57</sup>

Thus despite the destruction of the roof and the material inside the temple, it is probable that the walls of the cella and the marble columns – and perhaps even the temple's façade – remained standing; as the fire smoldered, this stone would have been blackened by soot, but not permanently damaged. But by the time that Vespasian ascended the Capitoline Hill and approached the temple, this smoke damage would have worn away, restoring the normal appearance of the temple's exterior. The most visible signs of damage would have been the absent roof and acroteria: a striking and highly visible reminder of the violence and conflict that led to its destruction.

In Vespasian's absence, the site of the Capitolium had not been neglected. As early as December 69, Helvidius Priscus had tried to use the site as a way to leverage power by proposing that the senate should oversee restorations in the place of the absent emperor, but the proposal was met with a general reluctance.<sup>58</sup> Vespasian, still in Alexandria, appointed a respected equestrian, Vestinus, to oversee the reconstruction of the temple; he consulted haruspices for guidance in planning the project. They told him

---

<sup>57</sup> A comparative example is the Odeion of Herodes Atticus in Athens, which was destroyed by fire at an unknown date; see Tobin 1997, 185-194. This structure was excavated in the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Meinel 1980, 80-117). The fire that destroyed the building evidently burned very hot, as is indicated by blobs of melted bronze, calcinated marble of the seats and orchestra floor, and the exploded marble lion-feet ornaments of the seats; nonetheless, the external structure remained intact, although blackened by smoke. There is some debate concerning whether the structure was fully roofed, despite the fact that Philostratus describes its cedar roof (*VS* 2.551) and excavators found a thick layer of ash and debris which contained roof tiles and other matter. I am grateful to Prof. Chris Ratto for information on the archaeological visibility of temple destruction.

<sup>58</sup> Tac. *Hist.* 4.9.2; the ostensible cause for the senate's reluctance was an unwillingness to assume the expense of restorations, see Townend 1987, 243; Malitz 1985, 236.

that the ruins of the old temple should be deposited in the marshes, and that the new temple should be built on the plan of the old one, and that he should use entirely new materials in the construction of a new temple on the site.<sup>59</sup>

The first step toward beginning this project appears to have been on the 21<sup>st</sup> of June, when Helvidius Priscus, as the senior magistrate in the city, oversaw a ritual on the Capitoline:<sup>60</sup>

*... omne quod templo dicabatur evinctum vittis coronisque; ingressi milites, quis fausta nomina, felicibus ramis; dein virgines Vestales cum pueris puellisque patrimis matrimisque aqua e fontibus amnibusque hausta perluere. tum Helvidius Priscus praetor, praeunte Plautio Aeliano pontifice, lustrata suovetaurilibus area et super caespitem redditis extis, Iovem, Iunonem, Minervam praesidesque imperii deos precatus uti coepta prosperarent sedisque suas pietate hominum inchoatas divina ope attollerent, vittas, quis ligatus lapis innexique funes erant, contigit; simul ceteri magistratus et sacerdotes et senatus et eques et magna pars populi, studio laetitiaeque conixi, saxum ingens traxere. passimque iniectae fundamentis argenti aurique stipes et metallorum primitiae, nullis fornacibus victae, sed ut gignuntur: praedixere haruspices ne temeraretur opus saxo aurove in aliud destinato. altitudo aedibus adiecta: id solum religio adnuere et prioris templi magnificentiae defuisse credebatur.*

... all the space which was dedicated to the temple was bound up with fillets and crowns; the soldiers, who had auspicious names, entered with lucky branches; then the Vestal Virgins, with boys and girls with fathers and mothers still living, cleaned the area with water drawn from fountains and streams. Then Helvidius Priscus, the praetor, with the pontifex Plautius Aelianus guiding him, with the area having been purified by a suovetaurilia and with the entrails having been deposited on an earthen altar, prayed to Jupiter, Juno, Minerva, and the gods who guard the empire that they should make this enterprise prosper and

---

<sup>59</sup> Tac. *Hist.* 4.53.

<sup>60</sup> Helvidius Priscus was the urban praetor, Braithwaite 1927, 48; on the political implications of his involvement in this ritual, see Wardle 1987, 212-215; Darwall-Smith 1996, 43-45 and n. 19.



that they should raise their temple begun by the piety of men with their divine assistance, and he touched the fillets with which the stone was tied and the ropes were knotted; at the same time the rest of the magistrates, the priests, the senate, the equestrians, and a great part of the people, joined together in zeal and joy, moved the giant rock. Small offerings of silver and gold and offerings of metals which had been smelted in no furnaces, but were as they had been found, were thrown here and there in the foundations; the haruspices had warned that the work should not be profaned by stone or gold intended for another purpose. Height was added to the temple: this alone religious observance allowed, and was believed to have been lacking in the magnificence of the earlier temple.<sup>61</sup>

This unusual ritual is certainly connected to the construction of the new temple, but its specific relationship to the project is unclear. Suetonius' and Dio's descriptions of Vespasian's actions on the site suggest that it was still littered with rubble from the fire, and since it is likely that the structure of the temple had remained standing, the *lapis* and *fundamenta* referred to in this passage cannot refer to structural elements of either the new temple or the old one. Townend argues that this passage describes the rituals associated with the displacement or removal of a *lapis* associated with or contained within the temple precincts, perhaps the Terminus Stone.<sup>62</sup> Although this ritual took place in the area of the Capitolium and was perhaps an essential precursor to the reconstruction of the Temple, Tacitus in no way associates it with the structure itself; in fact, he specifies that the entire temple precinct was garlanded and that the sacrifice took place at an earth altar. Therefore, although the fire may have necessitated this ritual, its focus was not the temple itself and there is no reason to believe that the participants were

---

<sup>61</sup> Tac. *Hist.* 4.53.

<sup>62</sup> Townend 1987, 245 (cf. Piccaluga 1974, 123), arguing against Wagenvoort 1980, 252 and others who had understood this passage to describe the laying of a foundation stone. Cf. Wardle 1987, 211 and n. 10.

directly engaged with the most damaged parts of the structure; perhaps this is how Tacitus could describe the ritual as “joyous” (*studio laetitiaeque conixi*). What is more, this account should not be viewed as an indication that reconstruction began in June 70, before Vespasian’s return, or that the site had been substantially altered between its destruction and his arrival except as far as this religious ritual went.<sup>63</sup>

By contrast, when Vespasian approached the Capitoline in 70 his actions drew attention directly to the evidence of the temple’s destruction as he began to clear rubble from the site. In this way, Vespasian made use of the site to address anxieties arising from the civil and military conflict that had led to its destruction, by first drawing his audience (Rome’s ἐπιφανεστάτοι, but perhaps also an audience of the people in general) into a direct confrontation with the damage, and then acknowledging his role in its destruction by taking responsibility for the project of clearing and rebuilding the site. This symbolism-heavy performance both acknowledged the violent origins of Vespasian’s imperial power while setting a tone of civic harmony and a dedication to the restoration of the city, both physically and emotionally.<sup>64</sup>

Vespasian’s interaction with the space of the Capitolium communicated this message; however, it is interesting that Dio attributes to Vespasian another, very specific, intended message: his performance was also intended to inspire his audience to engage in the reconstruction of the city. Thus while Vespasian’s ascension of the Capitoline and

---

<sup>63</sup> Wardle 1987, 217: “There is no literary evidence to suggest that substantial preliminary work towards rebuilding the Capitol had taken place before Vespasian’s return, and it is unclear how far the epigraphic testimony can be forced.”

<sup>64</sup> cf. Darwall-Smith 1996, 47, who says of Vespasian’s Capitolium coinage: “[Images of the Flavian Capitolium on Vespasian’s coinage] could call to memory both the appalling act of arson by Vitellius (as Flavian sources saw it) and the rebuilding of Vespasian, and stand as a symbol of the restoration of normality”.

his interaction with the ruins of the temple conveyed his imperial identity and his intention to address and resolve the tensions that had arisen during the civil war, he was trying to encourage others to participate in the project of restoring the areas of the city that had been damaged by the war or other recent disasters.<sup>65</sup> However, it is not immediately clear how: the image of an emperor performing manual labor while the Roman public (or at least Rome's elite) watched is unusual and striking, especially since Vespaian's humble rural background is frequently understood to have been an obstacle for his claim to imperial dignity.<sup>66</sup> The question, therefore, is how Vespaian's odd performance, in which he cleared rubble and carried it away on his back, would have been viewed by his audience, and how this performance was meaningful and aided in the construction of a powerful and convincing imperial persona for Vespaian.

Two episodes from the Julio-Claudian past involved similar performances of work by members of the imperial family. The first emerges from the narrative of Germanicus' burial of Varus' legions in the Teutoburg Forest in 16 CE, while the second occurred in 66 or 67 when Nero, on his tour of Greece, took charge of the project of digging a canal at the Isthmus of Corinth. According to Suetonius, after Nero had decided to dig the canal, he called together his praetorians to a *contio* in order to urge them to begin the project; after the blast of a trumpet had called his audience's attention, "he was the first to break the earth with a rake and he carried off a heap of earth in a basket on his shoulders" (*tubaeque signo dato primus rastello humum effodit et corbulae*

---

<sup>65</sup> Casson (1978) takes this literally, and understands Vespaian to be attempting to convince his audience to help him clear the site for free; Brunt (1980, 81) disagrees, and likens this performance to (another) laying of a foundation stone, intended to inspire his audience generally.

<sup>66</sup> Suet. *Vesp.* 7.2: *auctoritas et quasi maiestas quaedam ut scilicet inopinato et adhuc novo principi deerat*. For an extended discussion of this statement as an assessment of Vespaian's authority, see chapter 3.

*congestam umeris extulit*).<sup>67</sup> Dio's description is more colorful: the men were unwilling to dig the canal because blood had gushed from the earth and strange groans had been heard when they'd first touched it. Therefore, "[Nero] himself, taking the mattock and digging up some [of the earth], compelled the others to imitate him" (λαβὼν δὲ αὐτὸς δίκελλαν καὶ τι καὶ ἀνασκάψας ἔπεισε καὶ τοὺς ἄλλους ἀνάγκη αὐτὸν μιμήσασθαι...<sup>68</sup> This episode invites a comparison with Vespasian's performance on the Capitoline: both Vespasian and Nero were engaging in a very public way in manual labor – unusual behavior for an emperor – with the express purpose of urging others to work. Suetonius' account makes it clear that this action was self-consciously directed towards an audience, one which was summoned and whose attention was drawn to particular aspects of the display with trumpet calls. That Nero's intended audience was praetorians recalls Vespasian's audience of ἐπιφανεστάτοι.

Germanicus' performance years earlier had resembled both Nero's and Vespasian's in a number of ways. During his command in Germany early in Tiberius' reign, he had visited the site of the Varus disaster in the Teutoburg Forest. After surveying the site and trying to understand the disaster, he and his men gathered the bones of the soldiers of the three Roman legions who had died there in order to bury them. Tacitus is clear that this work was performed by the entire legion, but he notes that "Germanicus placed the first sod on the tomb that was being built, an ally in the most appropriate tribute to the dead and in the grief of those still living" (*primum extruendo tumulo caespitem Caesar posuit, gratissimo munere in defunctos et praesentibus doloris*

---

<sup>67</sup> Suet. Nero 19.2.

<sup>68</sup> Dio 63.16.1-2.

*socius*).<sup>69</sup> This episode, like Nero's performance at the Isthmus, emphasizes the importance of the audience – in this case, the one that would identify with Germanicus and feel a sense of shared grief and shared purpose.

Germanicus' and Nero's performances of manual labor are also similar in that they both took place explicitly in military contexts for audiences of soldiers. In this way, their actions seem to draw from a particular tradition of republican military leadership in which commanders tried to ensure the loyalty and discipline of their troops by sharing their labors, hardships, and risks, rather than attempting to establish military authority while enjoying the privileges of superior rank. For example, Marius, while still under the command of Metellus in North Africa in 109 BCE, set out to win the loyalty of the soldiers by sharing the labor of the camp. Plutarch describes how Marius quickly became so popular and famous as a result of his willingness to share the hardships of military life that his soldiers urged the people back in Italy to elect him as consul. Plutarch explains how Marius' strategy was so effective:

ὅλως μὲν γὰρ ἔοικε τοῦ κάμνειν ἐκάστῳ παραμυθία τὸ συγκάμνον ἐκουσίως εἶναι· δοκεῖ γὰρ ἀφαιρεῖν τὴν ἀνάγκην· ἥδιστον δὲ Ῥωμαίῳ θέαμα στρατιώτῃ στρατηγὸς ἐσθίων ἐν ὄψει κοινὸν ἄρτον ἢ κατακείμενος ἐπὶ στιβάδος εὐτελοῦς ἢ περὶ ταφροῖαν τινὰ καὶ χαράκωσιν ἔργου συνεφαπτόμενος. οὐ γὰρ οὕτως τοὺς τιμῆς καὶ χρημάτων μεταδιδόντας, ὡς τοὺς πόνου καὶ κινδύνου μεταλαμβάνοντας ἡγεμόνας θαυμάζουσιν, ἀλλὰ μᾶλλον ἀγαπῶσι τῶν ῥαθυμῶν ἐπιτροπέων τοὺς συμπονεῖν ἐθέλοντας.

For on the whole it would seem that to share in labors voluntarily is an encouragement for each man to work; for it seems to take away the compulsion to work; the sweetest sight for a Roman soldier is to see a general eating the common bread in plain sight, or sleeping on a cheap straw

---

<sup>69</sup> Tac. *Ann.* 1.62.

bed, or joining in the work around some trench or fortification. For they do not admire those leaders who give them a share of honor and money as much as they do those who take their share of the labor and the danger, but they love more dearly those who are willing to suffer with them than they do those allowing them to rest.<sup>70</sup>

Plutarch's point is not that sharing in the labors of the camp made the soldiers happier with their commanders, but that the *sight* of a commander voluntarily accepting hardships that he did not have to accept inspired their affection and loyalty. Commanders or officers frequently had substantially better arrangements than their soldiers with respect to food, sleeping tents and beds, and share of physical labor;<sup>71</sup> unsurprisingly, there are numerous examples of republican (or republican-era) commanders winning their soldiers' affection by voluntarily giving up any of these specific advantages.<sup>72</sup> For Marius, popularity with the soldiers put him in a position to compete with Metellus for military and political prestige. This specific relationship between military success, the fanatical love of the soldiers, and political power had contributed significantly to the instability of the late republic; once Augustus had established his control over Rome's political world military commanders were rarely in a position to court the affections of their men in this way. Consequently, this kind of egalitarian performance had disappeared.<sup>73</sup>

Nonetheless, the military performances of work by Germanicus and Nero seem to have drawn from this republican model. Both were explicitly engaging in actions more

---

<sup>70</sup> Plut. *Mar.* 7.4-5.

<sup>71</sup> cf. Josephus *BJ* 3.70-109.

<sup>72</sup> Frontinus' *Strategemata*, a late-first-century collection of military maxims and exempla, provides several examples: Marcus Cato drank the same wine as his rowers (4.3.1); Massinissa ate while standing or walking outside his tent, even at the age of ninety (4.3.11); Hannibal slept on the ground alongside his men (4.3.8); Alexander, though earlier, was a popular exemplum for this style of military leadership, such as at 4.6.2 when he gave his place at the fire to one of his men. See Campbell 1987, 13-29.

<sup>73</sup> Campbell (1987, 18) discusses this change and how the army's loyalty to the emperor was guaranteed in other ways, such as the annual military oath and donatives.

typical of common soldiers, with the intention of communicating a sense of camaraderie or to induce their men to undertake a difficult or daunting task. In both cases, the provincial context of the performance is significant, as both were away from the social and political world of the Roman court and had taken control of legions, and so were able to cast themselves in a military role as commanders. Yet the egalitarian approach to military labor could still be repaid with political credit back in Rome: Tacitus' account of Germanicus' actions concludes with the observation that Tiberius did not approve, "whether because he thought everything Germanicus did was for the worse, or because he believed that the army would be slow in battle and more fearful of the enemy because of the sight of the slaughtered and unburied dead; and that an *imperator* endowed with an augurate and the most ancient religious rites ought not to have come into contact with burials".<sup>74</sup> The contrast between Germanicus' ingenuous and intuitive actions and Tiberius' suspicious and critical reaction serves as an invitation for Tacitus' readers to observe the emperor's paranoia, but his reaction is telling: his paranoia was based on his awareness of the relationship between this kind of action and military popularity, which would augment Germanicus' political authority and pose a threat to Tiberius' power.<sup>75</sup>

Marius' campaign to win the affection of the troops shares a further similarity with the episodes of Germanicus and Nero, namely that all three episodes emphasized the

---

<sup>74</sup> *quod Tiberio haud probatum, seu cuncta Germanici in deterius trahenti, sive exercitum imagine caesorum insepultorumque tardatum ad proelia et formidolosiore hostium credebat; neque imperatorem auguratu et vetustissimis caerimoniis praeditum adtrectare feralia debuisse.*

<sup>75</sup> Nero's performance also seems to have been intended to shore up his personal authority by building a rapport with his troops, as the project of the Corinthian canal was undertaken at a point when Nero was beginning to lose his grip on the empire, and Philostratus comments that one of the possible reasons that Nero halted work on the project was that he feared resistance to his rule (VA 4.24.3: σχεῖν δὲ λέγεται Νέρων τὴν τομὴν οἱ μὲν Αἰγυπτίων φιλοσοφησάντων αὐτῷ τὰς θαλάττας καὶ τὸ ὑπὲρ Λεχαίου πέλαγος ὑπερχυθὲν ἀφανιεῖν εἰπόντων τὴν Αἴγιναν, οἱ δὲ νεώτερον περὶ τῆ ἀρχῆς δέισαντα).

fact that these men were the first to engage in these actions: Nero began the digging when his men were reluctant,<sup>76</sup> Germanicus placed the first sod on the tomb, and Marius was the first to pick up tools and begin work. In this way, the dynamic between the commander and his soldiers goes beyond sharing labor as *commilitones*. Rather, it is a form of self-representation that uses shared labor to assert superior status and ability.<sup>77</sup> Though the work is the same, the commander's superior dedication, discipline, and eagerness to perform required tasks exceeds that of regular soldiers. This is both an appeal to the affection and loyalty of the men and a justification for the commander's superior status. Nero's engagement in the physical labor of the soldiers asserted his right to rule; so did Germanicus', or at least so it seemed to Tiberius.

In light of this, Vespasian's performance on the Capitoline in 70 CE takes on a much more complex, and much less risky, meaning. Though he was engaging in physical labor, the work was presented as a shared burden, which everyone – including Rome's elite – would also have to bear; Vespasian, as Rome's new leader, was the first to engage in order to encourage his "men" to participate more willingly, and to communicate to them a shared sense of purpose. At the same time, by being the first to engage in this labor, Vespasian was emphasizing his superior status. But Vespasian's performance differed from the examples of Nero, Germanicus, and Marius because it took place in the

---

<sup>76</sup> Suetonius' *primus rastello humum effodit* contrasts slightly with Dio's τοῖς πρώτοις ἀψαμένοις τῆς γῆς, according to which Nero did not begin the project until after his men had already abandoned it. Nonetheless, the episode clearly shows Nero working alone, in order to convince his audience to work in turn.

<sup>77</sup> See Moore 2002, 180-182 for an analysis of Plutarch's account of Marius' actions in the context of a discussion of *comitas* and military leadership.



city, before an audience of Rome's civic elite and the people of the city, and required him to engage in a task that would have fallen to a civilian workforce.<sup>78</sup>

However, the space in which Vespasian's performance of work took place helped to define and clarify its meaning; the connection between the Capitoline Hill and Rome's military traditions made this the ideal space in which to translate a performance that had been meaningful in a military context into civic life. Having already evoked a military atmosphere with his quasi-triumphal ascension of the hill, Vespasian extended military behavior into the civilian world of Rome. In this way, by performing physical labor, Vespasian was able to evoke models of military command in order to assert his superior personal authority in a political and social context.

In this way, Vespasian used the ideological and historical significance of the Capitoline – the hill, the temple, and its rubble – to communicate a range of ideas about his relationship with the city, its past, and its future to a Roman audience in 70. By performing actions associated with military glory, he responded to the Capitoline's traditional meaning as the site of military celebrations; the way that he entered the city for the first time – in a procession of citizens that made for the Capitolium – recalled other recent quasi-triumphal entries and used traditions of the triumph to present him as a returning military victor. However, his entrance in 70 contrasts with Vitellius' of the previous year in that it completely avoided all overt military celebration; Vespasian was not, apparently, accompanied by his soldiers as his predecessor had been. In this way, he could benefit from the impression of military glory that his actions were creating while simultaneously casting himself as an emperor who was aware of the city's civic

---

<sup>78</sup> Brunt 1980, 94-96.

traditions.<sup>79</sup> Once on the hill, Vespasian led his audience to confront the evidence of the Capitolium's destruction, perhaps for the first time. Because the destruction of the temple had been such an important event in the Flavian victory that had brought him to power, it was crucial that he acknowledge its emotional and symbolic significance. His performance communicated that acknowledgment, while also communicating his commitment to the city's restoration and the return of civic harmony. Finally, Vespasian used the military associations of the hill to give meaning to his performance of work, through which he asserted his status as Rome's leader and the superior abilities on which his claim to power was based.

The reconstruction of the Capitolium seems to have begun immediately, and the restoration of the temple had already been advertised on Vespasian's coinage with an as of 71 bearing a reverse of a hexastyle Temple of Capitoline Jupiter.<sup>80</sup> A flurry of coinage of several denominations bearing the same image appeared in the mid-70s beginning in 74, suggesting that this was when the construction of the temple began to near completion:

---

<sup>79</sup> Although Josephus' description of Titus' and Vespasian's triumph over Judaea in 71 concludes: *μετὰ δὲ τοὺς θριάμβους καὶ τὴν βεβαιοτάτην τῆς Ῥωμαίων ἡγεμονίας κατάστασιν Οὐεσπασιανὸς ἔγνω τέμενος Εἰρήνης κατασκευάσαι...* (*BJ* 7.158). This suggests that he – and probably others – understood the triumph to be as much a celebration of Vespasian's victory in the civil war as a celebration of the defeat of the Jewish rebels.

<sup>80</sup> *RIC* II<sup>2</sup> (Vespasian) 323. The temple is not identified, but three figures are visible between the columns and have been identified as Jupiter, Juno and Minerva, the Capitoline triad.



Figure 2.2: *RIC II*<sup>2</sup> (Vespasian) 886  
(image source: [www.cngcoins.com/Coin.aspx?CoinID=66125](http://www.cngcoins.com/Coin.aspx?CoinID=66125))

Because images of the Capitolium had always been highly stylized and there was no standard way to represent it, even within Vespasian's own Capitoline coin types, these coins do not help significantly in reconstructing the artistic and architectural detail of Vespasian's temple.<sup>81</sup> However Tacitus' description of the religious ritual in June 70 suggests that the building would have very closely resembled the Sullan Capitolium in its decorative and stylistic choices. The appearance of this image on Vespasian's coinage was significant, as it continued his association with the Capitoline space beyond his performance in 70; thus at this point the Capitolium became a Flavian symbol as much as a republican one, as the site and the image became associated with Vespasian's victory and his reconstruction of the city. Its traditional façade emphasized the continuity between his reign and the Roman republic, and redefined this symbol of republican military and imperial glory – which had been deemphasized by the Julio-Claudians – as Flavian space. This redefinition of Julio-Claudian imperial space is also to be observed in Vespasian's attitude towards the Palatine.

---

<sup>81</sup> Darwall-Smith 1996, 47.

## The Palatine and the Quirinal

A century of Julio-Claudian rule had established a connection between imperial power and the Palatine Hill. Augustus had lived on the hill, which had begun to be transformed into a complex of imperial buildings even during his own life. Its status as the residence of emperors is reflected by the fact that *palatium* was already being used to mean “palace” in the first century;<sup>82</sup> in fact, Plutarch’s description of the year 69 was as a series of transfers of “the house of the Caesars, the Palatium.”<sup>83</sup> However, according to Dio, Vespasian avoided the Julio-Claudian imperial buildings, and the Palatine in general: “he lived rarely in the palace, but spent most of his time in the gardens that are called “Sallustian”.”<sup>84</sup> This reference is intriguing, because it suggests that Vespasian avoided the appearance of continuity that would have resulted from his association with and residence in Julio-Claudian palaces, and instead rejected the Palatine as the primary site of imperial power. Dio’s reference indicates that the connection between Vespasian and the space of city was rather focused on the Gardens of Sallust, a suburban estate in the north-east area of Rome, between the Quirinal and the Pincian Hills, along the Via Salaria.<sup>85</sup> This and other evidence from the reigns of Vespasian and his sons suggests that Vespasian attempted to relocate imperial power in the city of Rome away from the Palatine, with its Julio-Claudian structures, to create a new Flavian imperial space in the area of the Quirinal; what is more, this evidence also suggests that his family’s

---

<sup>82</sup> Paterson 2007, 128; Frézouls 1987, 452. The earliest appearance of *palatium* to mean a residence of the emperor is Ovid *Met.* 1.176 (*magni palatia caeli*). Winterling (2009, 83 n. 21) thinks the term entered common use under Domitian.

<sup>83</sup> *Galba* 1.5: ἡ δὲ τῶν Καισάρων ἐστία, τὸ Παλάτιον, ἐν ἐλάσσονι χρόνῳ τέσσαρας αὐτοκράτορας ὑπεδέξατο, τὸν μὲν εἰσαγόντων ὥσπερ διὰ σκηνῆς, τὸν δ’ ἐξαγόντων.

<sup>84</sup> Dio 66.10.4: ὀλίγα μὲν ἐν τῷ παλατίῳ ᾤκει, τὸ δὲ δὴ πλείστον ἐν τοῖς κήποις τοῖς καλουμένοις Σαλουστιεῖοις διέτριβε.

<sup>85</sup> Hartswick 2004, 1.

connection with this part of the city predated Vespasian's rise to imperial power, which provides insight into why Vespasian developed it as a Flavian alternative to the Palatine.

Most recently, Nero had extended the imperial space of the Palatine onto neighboring hills with the construction of his Domus Aurea, a sprawling palatial complex that integrated imperial properties on the Palatine, the Esquiline, and Caelian Hills.<sup>86</sup> Nero's palace was excessively lavish and extravagant, including a private park with a lake; the residence in particular physically embodied the atmosphere of the Neronian court which senators like Vespasian seem to have found distasteful.<sup>87</sup> Consequently, when it fell into Flavian hands much of its space was repurposed for public use: the garden was flattened and became the site of the Colosseum, a massive public building that highlighted the contrast between Nero's lavish exclusiveness and Flavian openness.<sup>88</sup> Although it is true that parts of the Domus Aurea remained untouched during the Flavian period, and that there is a good chance that at least Titus maintained a residence on the Esquiline during Vespasian's lifetime, the Domus Aurea and the imperial residences ceased to be the primary location for the Roman public to interact with the emperor either formally or informally.<sup>89</sup>

At first glance, the Gardens of Sallust were a curious choice as the alternative to the Palatine. This property had likely passed into the imperial *patrimonium* in 47 CE with the death of C. Sallustius Crispus Passienus, the husband of Agrippina the

---

<sup>86</sup> Tac. *Ann.* 15.42; Suet. *Nero* 31 and 39.2; Wallace-Hadrill 1996, 287; Winterling 2009, 85.

<sup>87</sup> Although Kragelund (2000, 511) notes that the contrast between Nero's excess and the parsimony of Galba's court was "shocking" and proved unpopular, and Otho had committed himself to finishing the construction of the Domus Aurea (Suet. *Otho* 7); thus it seems that the tone of Nero's court was not universally unpopular.

<sup>88</sup> Darwall-Smith 1996, 72; see Boyle 2008, xxiii-xxv on the importance of theatrical entertainment in the Flavian period.

<sup>89</sup> Krause 1995, 263.

Younger.<sup>90</sup> Although it was never Nero's primary residence, he seems to have resided there at least for a short time.<sup>91</sup> Archaeological evidence suggests that the property was lavish, with an elaborate sculptural program and extensive gardens.<sup>92</sup> Therefore, this property offered an effective and meaningful alternative to the imperial complexes on the Palatine for the new emperor Vespasian: as part of the imperial *patrimonium*, residence there proclaimed Vespasian's occupation of the imperial office while avoiding evoking the memory of any particular previous emperor, and although the surroundings were lavish, as a luxury estate on the periphery of the city it afforded a more casual and open atmosphere which invited favorable comparisons between Vespasian and Nero.<sup>93</sup>

However, Vespasian's choice of the Gardens of Sallust as an imperial residence may have been even more significant than that. There is evidence that suggests that this part of the city – the area of the Quirinal and the Pincian, near the Porta Salaria and the Porta Nomentana – had been the Flavians' home for several decades before Vespasian's accession. Tacitus' account of the beginning of the Flavian occupation of the Capitolium, which eventually led to its destruction and the death of Vitellius, begins when senators, members of the equestrian order, and the city guards flocked to the house of Flavius Sabinus and urged him to take action against Vitellius:

*Circa lacum Fundani descenditibus qui Sabinum  
comitabantur armatis occurrunt promptissimi  
Vitellianorum. modicum ibi proelium improviso tumultu,  
sed prosperum Vitellianis fuit. Sabinus re trepida, quod*

---

<sup>90</sup> *LTUR* 3.79-83; Harstwick 2004, 10.

<sup>91</sup> Tac. *Ann.* 13.47: *pons Mulvius in eo tempore celebris nocturnis inlecebris erat; ven[ti]tabatque illuc Nero, quo solutius urbem extra lasciviret. igitur regredienti per viam Flaminiam compositas insidias fatoque evitatas, quoniam diverso itinere Sallustianos in hortos remeaverit...*

<sup>92</sup> Harstwick 2004, 83ff; Syme (1964, 283) discusses how members of Sallust's family flaunted their wealth.

<sup>93</sup> Acton 2011, 106-108.

*tutissimum e praesentibus, arcem Capitolii insedit mixto milite et quibusdam senatorum equitumque...*

As those armed men who accompanied Sabinus were coming down around the Lacus Fundani, an extremely eager group of Vitellians met them. The fight there was insignificant, since the uprising was unforeseen, but the Vitellians had the better of it. At this perilous juncture, Sabinus did what was safest from his current options, and occupied the *arx* of the Capitolium with a motley group of soldiers and certain of the senators and equestrians...<sup>94</sup>

In this passage, Sabinus had begun at his house and sets out with his supporters, and their destination is not specified; presumably, since Sabinus had been urged to take up arms against Vitellius, they were heading towards the Palatine (where Vitellius was)<sup>95</sup> or to the *castra praetoria*. The encounter at the Lacus Fundani changed Sabinus' plans so that he fled to the Capitoline. The exact location of the Lacus Fundani is not known, although it may have drawn its water from the Cati Fons, and is clearly associated in some way with the Quirinal.<sup>96</sup> Without knowing where Sabinus was heading, this reference only barely suggests that the *domum Flavii Sabini* from which this group had departed was in the area of the Quirinal or Pincian, but epigraphic evidence has led Coarelli to argue that a large first century house found on the Via XX Settembre belonged to Flavius Sabinus.<sup>97</sup> Thus, Flavius Sabinus' established presence in the area of the Quirinal before his death in 69 seems secure.

---

<sup>94</sup> Tac. *Hist.* 3.69.

<sup>95</sup> Tac. *Hist.* 3.68: *maior hic clamor obsistentium penatibus privatis, in Palatium vocantium. Interclusum aliud iter, idque solum quo in sacram viam pergeret patebat: tum consilii inops in Palatium rediit.*

<sup>96</sup> Coarelli in *LTUR* III, 167-68; Richardson 1992, 230.

<sup>97</sup> Coarelli 1984, 151-153: a *cippus* (*CIL* VI 29788 = *ILS* 5988), which reads *Inter duos parietes ambitus priva[tus] Flavii Sabini*, and a lead pipe (*CIL* XV, 7451) bearing the name of Flavius Sabinus support this identification, although it is not certain whether this Flavius Sabinus was Vespasian's brother or nephew. See Darwall-Smith 1996, 159-160.

Even more secure is Suetonius' reference to Domitian's birth in the year when Vespasian was about to begin his consulship in a house in the sixth region of the city called "the Pomegranate" which he later converted into the *Templum Gentis Flaviae*.<sup>98</sup> The exact site of this temple is unknown, but the Hartwig-Kelsey fragments of a sculptural frieze, which are plausibly associated with a construction project near the Baths of Diocletian on the Quirinal, have been identified as part of its decorative program.<sup>99</sup> Therefore, the temple, which indicates that Vespasian's residence before his accession had been somewhere in this region of the city, loosely locates Vespasian with his brother in an area of the city centered on the Quirinal Hill; the Hartwig-Kelsey fragments at least indicate the decorative motif of this *Templum Gentis Flaviae*, if they do not hint at even further Flavian imperial building on the Quirinal after Vespasian's accession.

One further piece of evidence presents itself: *CIL VI 1268* records Vespasian's role as arbiter on a mile marker. This inscription identifies Vespasian as "T. Flavius Vespasianus", which indicates that it was created and erected before his accession, as his and his sons' imperial titlature steadfastly and consistently avoided the gentilician "Flavius" on coins and inscriptions.<sup>100</sup> Therefore this inscription records Vespasian's

---

<sup>98</sup> Suet. *Dom.* 1: *Domitianus natus est VIII. Kal. Novemb. patre consule designato inituroque mense insequenti honorem, regione urbis sexta ad Malum Punicum, domo quam postea in templum gentis Flaviae convertit.*

<sup>99</sup> Koeppl 1980 14-29. Unfortunately, the provenance of these pieces are unclear; they were purchased by Kelsey and Hartwig in 1901 and later at various places in the Quirinal, and may have been unearthed during construction at the Baths of Diocletian (See discussion in Koeppl 1980 14-16). These fragments, which include a bust of Vespasian, indicate a Flavian building with a decorative motif of palm fronds and palm trees and showed Vespasian and his soldiers, almost certainly a reference to the Jewish war.

<sup>100</sup> Buttrey 1980. The inscription reads: HI•TERMINI•XIX•POSITI•SUNT | AB•SCRIBONIANO



engagement in a dispute in his capacity as a senator, probably in the mid-60s. For the purposes of understanding Vespasian's relationship with Rome's urban space, this inscription is significant because it was found near the Porta Nomentana, a gate in the Aurelian Wall behind the Quirinal; the Via Nomentana was not a major route, and merged with the Via Salaria a few kilometers past Nomentum (modern Mentana).

Within Rome, the Via Salaria was the street on which the Gardens of Sallust were to be found; once past the Porta Salaria, the Via Salaria was the major Roman road through Sabinum and ran through Reate, where the Flavii Sabini originated. In describing Vespasian's family, Suetonius locates his ancestry very specifically in towns in Sabinum: Vespasian's father and grandfather had been from Reate, while Vespasian's mother had been from Nursia and Suetonius also knows of a place called Vespasiae on the road from Nursia to Spoleum. Vespasian himself was born in Falacrina, a town near Reate, and was raised at Cosa by his grandmother.<sup>101</sup> We know that Vespasian maintained a connection with this area, specifically Reate and Cosa, for the rest of his life: as emperor he spent his summers at his grandmother's estate, and during his reign he settled veterans in Reate.<sup>102</sup>

Thus this inscription hints at an even deeper connection between the Flavii Sabini and the Quirinal in Rome; Vespasian was evidently an influential senator if he served as arbiter in this case, but his influence was not his sole claim to authority in this matter: he

---

•ET•PISONE•FRUGI | EX•DEPALATIONE•T•FLAVI•VESPASIANI | ARBITRI (This nineteenth mile-marker was placed by Scribonianus and by Piso Frugi according to the measurements of Titus Flavius Vespasianus, arbiter). The reference to Scribonianus and Piso Frugi also help to situate this dispute in the mid-60s. See Nicols 1978, 11; I discuss this inscription further in chapter 3.

<sup>101</sup> Suet. *Vesp.* 1-2.

<sup>102</sup> Vespasian was in Reate when he fell ill and died in 79, Suet. *Vesp.* 24; for the settlement of veterans, see *CIL* 9.4684 = *ILS* 2460, Braithwaite 1927, 19.

seems to have had a strong local connection to Quirinal, the part of Rome near the Porta Nomentana, and he had a lifelong and personal connection to Reate, which he would have reached by traveling on this road. This is a graphic illustration of how the Romans, with their highly developed ideologies of space, viewed relationships between individuals and places. What is more, this connection hints at the reason why the Quirinal had been the home of the Flavians during their senatorial careers, and why Vespasian developed this particular region of the city as his imperial space during his reign; it presents the possibility that an aspect of the Quirinal's meaning for Vespasian and his contemporaries was its associations with Italian, specifically Sabine, families and merchants, who would have passed through this space on their way between Sabinum and Rome.

In any event, the Porta Nomentana inscription, Vespasian's house in the "Pomegranate" which became the *Templum Gentis Flaviae*, and the house of Flavius Sabinus all point to a strong, well-established relationship between the Flavians and the Quirinal that predates Vespasian's accession; the fact that Domitian was born in the house in the "Pomegranate" shows that the Flavian connection with this area had begun at least eighteen years earlier by the time of Vespasian's accession in 69. This fact sheds light on Vespasian's decision to reside in the Gardens of Sallust as emperor: in addition to choosing a residence that articulated the difference between himself and Nero in a variety of ways, Vespasian had also chosen to make the center of his imperial court the part of the city where his family were already known and established, and with which he was already familiar. The Palatine had become imperial space because that was where Augustus lived, and Augustus and his successors had taken pains to ensure that the cultural, religious, political, and administrative life of the empire revolved around their

residences in the palaces there. But in avoiding the Palatine and taking up residence in the Horti Sallustiani, Vespasian was attempting to reform the ideological topography of the city around his family's traditions and associations, so that a new, Flavian imperial center would form in his space, the Quirinal.

Vespasian's relocation of imperial authority to the Quirinal did not last. One of Domitian's most extravagant contributions to Rome's topography was his radical reconstruction of the Palatine, especially the massive palace of the Domus Flavia with its elaborate and immense public spaces for formal imperial rituals.<sup>103</sup> It is important to recognize that Domitian's use of the Palatine in his construction of imperial space – and imperial authority – does not represent a continuity of his father's model of imperial power; as he developed the imperial associations of the hilltop, and constructed a palace that used and developed Julio-Claudian palaces already there, Domitian was allowing the Palatine to regain its role as the imperial space of the city, and seeking to use its traditions to augment and define his own authority.

But even Domitian did not abandon the opportunities presented by the Flavian imperial center of the Quirinal; his Templum Gentis Flaviae shows that he continued to direct public attention to that area of the city as an area with particular significance in terms of his dynasty's traditions. However, the temple evidently fulfilled multiple roles as an imperial dynastic site. Suetonius' account of Domitian's death concludes:

*Cadaver eius populari sandapila per vispillones  
exportatum Phyllis nutrix in suburbano suo Latina via  
funeravit, sed reliquias templo Flaviae gentis clam intulit  
cineribusque Iuliae Titi filiae, quam et ipsam educarat,  
conmiscuit.*

---

<sup>103</sup> Darwall-Smith 1996, 185-190; Zanker 2002, 105-130.

Phyllis, his nurse, performed funeral rites for his body, which was carried out in a common bier by the public undertakers, in her suburban property on the Via Latina; but she secretly brought his remains to the Templum Gentis Flaviae and mixed them with the ashes of Julia, the daughter of Titus, whom she had also raised.<sup>104</sup>

Domitian's temple to his family in the Quirinal had become simultaneously a monument to his birth, the center of the cult of his family, and a Flavian mausoleum.<sup>105</sup> The structure's three functions make it exceptional, and it was clearly intended to challenge the Augustan Mausoleum as a dynastic monument.<sup>106</sup> Thus even while Domitian was developing the Palatine's traditional imperial associations in order to give meaning to his elaborate palatial constructions there, he was still maintaining his father's conception of the Quirinal as a region of the city with a particularly Flavian imperial significance.

## **Conclusion**

Vespasian's entry into the city of Rome in 70, with its performance of work on the Capitoline, shows a highly-developed understanding of the relationship between space and meaning. His performance used the traditional military associations of the Capitoline to give his actions meaning as he made use of triumphal ritual to communicate his status as a victorious general and engaged in a performance that acknowledged the extent to which his claim to power had threatened the city. Vespasian's performance of work on the site of the Capitolium used the military associations of the space to translate a military model of leadership into a civic context as he assumed responsibility for the

---

<sup>104</sup> Suet. *Dom.* 17.3.

<sup>105</sup> Torelli 1987, 569; Darwall-Smith 1996, 163-165; Davies 2000, 24-27.

<sup>106</sup> Even though it is clear that Domitian could have appropriated the Augustan tomb for his own family had he wanted to, since Trajan later buried Nerva there; Darwall-Smith 1996, 164 and n. 179.

task of reconstructing the city. Then, throughout his reign, Vespasian's attitude toward the Palatine, with its Julio-Claudian and imperial associations, in favor of the north-eastern area of the city around the Quirinal, where his family was already established, shows a willingness to manipulate the meaning of urban space as he redrew the ideological topography of the city and challenged the Palatine's association with imperial power and created an imperial meaning for the Gardens of Sallust.

Vespasian's use of the significance of the Capitoline, Palatine, and Quirinal as he defined himself as emperor shows that he possessed a canny understanding of the role of space in constructing meaning in imperial spectacle. Performances like his procession to the Capitoline communicated complicated messages about Vespasian's claim to rule and the nature of his power, which he constructed in the intersection between the familiarity of ritual actions and the engrained meaning of the space in which these actions were being performed. In this way, while the emperor Vespasian may have emerged from a destructive and traumatic civil war, and he himself may have seemed like a radical departure from his Julio-Claudian predecessors, his use of space in this instance communicated an awareness of Rome's history and traditions and a commitment to operating within them as he began the process of restoring the city. Vespasian's Capitoline Temple was almost a replica of the Capitolium that had been destroyed in the Flavian capture of the city, but even before its construction Vespasian's performance on the Hill and on the site of the temple simultaneously established the continuity of the Capitoline's meaning from the republic into the new dynasty, at the same time as it established Vespasian's claim to the site and the new temple as a symbol of Flavian power.

Vespasian's relocation of imperial power to the Quirinal is even more revealing, as it shows that he understood how the relationship between the emperor and the city of Rome meant that he could manipulate the constructed meaning of urban space in order to redefine the imperial office. Vespasian used space to define his relationship with his Julio-Claudian predecessors by avoiding the Palatine, with its Julio-Claudian palace structures and imperial associations. Instead, he created a new imperial space on the Quirinal. In this way, Vespasian challenged the relationship between space and power, and in so doing challenged Julio-Claudian definitions of imperial power in general, as he resituated imperial authority in a new space whose meaning derived exclusively from Flavian traditions of residence and patronage.

## Chapter 3:

### *Auctoritas and imperium:* the definition, construction, and negotiation of Vespasian's power

#### Introduction

Two important pieces of evidence have dominated the discussion of Vespasian's authority at the outset of his reign: the statement by Suetonius that Vespasian lacked *auctoritas* and *maiestas* upon his accession (*Vesp* 7.2), and the *lex de imperio Vespasiani* (*CIL* 6.930), a fragmentary inscription that seems to preserve the law by which his formal rights were granted to him by the senate and people of Rome. These two seemingly disparate pieces of evidence address two aspects of Vespasian's authority – the informal personal authority that the emperor was expected to possess that would hold the social order of the empire together and the formal *potestates* by which Vespasian would exercise legal rights and privileges in his capacity as the leader of the state. Suetonius' statement and the fragment of the law both indicate that Vespasian's accession was marked by a discussion of and anxiety over the nature of Vespasian's power and the similarities (or lack of similarities) between him and previous holders of imperial power. Perhaps more significantly, these two pieces of evidence have had a considerable influence on modern scholars who have attempted to assess Vespasian's personal and

formal power. Therefore, a reassessment of this discussion and anxiety in the context of the years 69-71 is in order.

Both Vespasian and his contemporaries made sense of this anxiety with reference to historical narratives that they imposed on their own experiences and histories in order to shape and define Vespasian's position in the present. Thus, Vespasian presented his own personal history in terms of narrative *topoi* that emphasized the moral superiority he possessed by virtue of his humble birth, and the divine authority that derived from his status as the gods' choice of emperor. The *lex de imperio Vespasiani* preserves a similar process of redefinition, as the senate sought to frame Vespasian's imperial office in terms of its relationship to traditional republican organs of government and civic procedures; here too, however, this redefinition was facilitated by a reinterpretation of Rome's imperial past, in which certain emperors (Augustus, Tiberius, and Claudius) were presented as examples of 'good' rulers because of their attitudes towards Rome's political traditions and the senate as a body. The extent to which Vespasian's power was subject to redefinition, however, provides a new perspective on the nature of the principate in the first century; this process of negotiation offers a new interpretation of the *lex de imperio Vespasiani* and reveals its contentious, even revolutionary nature as document that set out to reframe imperial authority in traditional, republican, legalistic terms.

In considering the issue of Vespasian's *auctoritas* and the question of Vespasian's formal authority as it is presented in the *lex de imperio Vespasiani*, it will be possible to see the extent to which the emperor's informal personal authority was interconnected with his formal authority; furthermore, it will reveal that Vespasian's formal powers could be redefined within contemporary cultural and historical discourses in a way that



invited a renegotiation of the relationship between the office of emperor and the traditions of government of the Roman state. The civil war and its aftermath afforded Vespasian and the Roman senate an opportunity to explore this relationship through the language of the legal document of the *lex de imperio*, but the way that this document, and its argument for popular authority, was revived in the fourteenth century by the revolutionary Cola di Rienzo shows that this debate resonated far beyond the early months of Vespasian's reign.

### ***Auctoritas and maiestas***

In their accounts of Vespasian's time in Egypt after his acclamation in July 69, Suetonius and Tacitus both dwell on miracles and portents that proclaimed Vespasian's destiny as king.<sup>1</sup> Following Suetonius' account, when Vespasian first arrived in Alexandria, he entered the temple of Serapis to consult the auspices, whereupon he encountered the freedman Basilides, whom Vespasian knew to be far away and bedridden; this Basilides presented Vespasian with sacred boughs, crowns, and loaves of bread, as was the custom there.<sup>2</sup> Immediately afterwards, Vespasian received news that Vitellius had been killed and that he had been recognized as emperor. At this point, Suetonius comments that "he still lacked *auctoritas* and a certain *maiestas*, since he was

---

<sup>1</sup> Tac. *Hist.* 4.81-84; Suet. *Vesp.* 7.

<sup>2</sup> *Vesp.* 7: ... *verbenas coronasque et panificia, ut illic assolet, Basilides libertus obtulisse*... The Basilides of this episode is often connected with the Basilides who prophesied Vespasian's success while he was sacrificing on Mt. Carmel in Tac. *Hist.* 2.78-79: see Scott 1934, 138-140; Nicols 1978, 125-126; Rajak 1984, 189. For other treatments of the episode, see Lattimore 1934, 445; Derchain 1953; Derchain and Hubaux 1953; Herrmann 1953; Schäfer 1977, 455-457; Morgan 1996b, 41-45. Tacitus' account differs: he places the visit to the temple of Serapis after the healing miracles, all of which occur after the death of Vitellius.

an unexpected and still new emperor, but these things also came to him”<sup>3</sup> and goes on to describe Vespaian performing healing miracles, as he cures a blind man’s sight by spitting in his eyes and cures a lame man’s leg by touching it with his heel. These miracles took place in front of a large crowd, although Vespaian was reportedly dubious and reluctant. Suetonius concludes by noting that at the same time some soothsayers in Tegea had dug up a vase in a sacred place that bore an image that closely resembled Vespaian.

The phrase *auctoritas et quasi maiestas quaedam* is striking, as it seems to offer a succinct assessment of the new emperor’s personal authority in the abstract and intricate terms of Roman power. The words *auctoritas* and *maiestas* have defied simple definition, let alone explanation. *Auctoritas*’ republican meaning, elaborated by Cicero, was the informal power that lay beneath the senate’s ability to advise magistrates, or the personal authority by which an individual could be confident that his views would be considered by those with formal power;<sup>4</sup> thus in the *Res Gestae* Augustus seems to draw a comparison between his *potestates* (formal powers) which he laid down and his *auctoritas* (which he retained).<sup>5</sup> However, the term was related to formal powers, as the possession of *imperium* or *potestas* could confer *auctoritas*, while the title *Imperator*, which had become a standard imperial title by the civil war, reflected a commander’s

---

<sup>3</sup> *Vesp.* 7.2: *auctoritas et quasi maiestas quaedam ut scilicet inopinato et adhuc novo principi deerat; haec quoque accessit.*

<sup>4</sup> e.g. Cicero *Rep.* 1.25, *de imperio Cn. Pompeii* 2; see Magdelain 1947, 1-7; Béranger 1953, 114-131; Brunt and Moore 1967, 84-85.

<sup>5</sup> *RG* 34.3: *Post id tempus auctoritate omnibus praestiti, potestatis autem nihilo amplius habui quam ceteri qui mihi quoque in magistratu conlegae fuerunt.* The word *quoque* has posed problems for modern readers (as discussed in Brunt and Moore 1967, 78-80), but for a discussion of the relationship between *auctoritas* and *potestas* in this passage see Adcock 1952, 11-12. For the possible etymological link between *auctoritas* (or at least *auctus*) and the name ‘Augustus’, see Suet. *Aug.* 7.

personal *auctoritas* (and was not the formal title for a possessor of *imperium*).<sup>6</sup> *Maiestas* is even more intangible; meaning something like the dignity of an already-exalted individual, group or divinity, its role in the way that the authority of the senate, and then the emperor, was constructed made attacks on the emperor's *maiestas* analogous to treason.<sup>7</sup>

The importance of personal *maiestas* to the notion of imperial power is revealed in Tacitus' narrative of the revolt of the German legions after the death of Augustus. After the soldiers had been brought to order by the sight of Agrippina and Caligula being led out of the camps, Germanicus delivered a speech that began with the declaration "neither my wife nor my son is dearer to me than my father and the republic, but his own *maiestas* will protect him and the other armies will defend the Roman empire."<sup>8</sup> This passage makes Tiberius' *maiestas* seem an aspect of his personal authority that served to define, isolate, and therefore protect the emperor's person and his position, an impression that is emphasized a few chapters later when the people of Rome criticize Tiberius for not attending to the rebellion in person by saying that "he himself should have gone and presented them with his imperial *maiestas*, and they would have backed down when they saw a *princeps* himself with extensive experience and the height of both severity and kindness."<sup>9</sup> However, Tiberius seems acutely aware of the limitations of intangible personal authority, preferring to send Germanicus and Drusus in his place in order to

---

<sup>6</sup> Mommsen *RS* 1. 124; for a discussion see Crook 1953, responding to Grant 1946.

<sup>7</sup> cf. Tac. *Ann.* 1.72; see Bauman 1974, esp. 2-10 on *maiestas*' place in imperial thought and imperial law.

<sup>8</sup> Tac. *Ann.* 1.42.1: *Non mihi uxor aut filius patre et re publica cariores sunt, sed illum quidem sua maiestas, imperium Romanum ceteri exercitus defendant...*

<sup>9</sup> Tac. *Ann.* 1.46.2: *ire ipsum et opponere maiestatem imperatoriam debuisse cessuris ubi principem longa experientia eundemque severitatis et munificentiae summum vidissent.*

protect his *maiestas*, “for which there was greater respect at a distance.”<sup>10</sup> This episode reveals the complicated nature of imperial *maiestas*, which was often discussed as an almost tangible expression of the emperor’s superiority, yet needed to be cultivated and maintained in order to continue to have force as an expression of his authority.<sup>11</sup>

In these terms, Suetonius’ description of Vespasian as lacking *auctoritas et maiestas* seems profoundly significant in the context of his accession to power, but the implication in Suetonius’ account is that Vespasian’s healing miracles and the Tegean portent had resolved the problem. Suetonius does not return to this subject, as he resumes the narrative of Vespasian’s life in *Vesp.* 8 with the emperor’s return to Rome, the celebration of his triumph, and the manner of his rule. But this reference has not escaped Suetonius’ modern readers. Vespasian’s lack of personal authority has become a commonplace in accounts of his reign, with scholarly attention drawn towards explaining how he overcame this deficiency. One argument has been that Vespasian compensated for his lack of *auctoritas* by acquiring “religious capital,” prestige based on his status as the favorite of the gods.<sup>12</sup> Other scholars have claimed that Vespasian’s lack of *auctoritas et maiestas* had been overcome with legal measures; thus Levick observes that “the dynasty notoriously lacked *auctoritas*... but acquired ready-made *maiestas* from the *lex Julia*,” while Levi argues that Vespasian found his legal alternative to personal authority in the clauses of the *lex de imperio Vespasiani*.<sup>13</sup> Suetonius’ remark is usually understood to be a reference to Vespasian’s status as a *novus homo* from a poor family

---

<sup>10</sup> Tac. *Ann.* 1.47.3: *at per filios pariter adiri maiestate salva, cui maior e longinquo reverentia.*

<sup>11</sup> In this sense, imperial authority can be analyzed in terms of Weber’s concept of charisma, articulated in *Economy and Society* ([1968] 3, 956ff and 1111ff). See discussion in Wallace-Hadrill 1981, 298.

<sup>12</sup> e.g. Scott 1934, 140; Waters 1963, 209.

<sup>13</sup> Levick 1999, 75; Levi 1938a, 9.

with no familial connection to Rome's senatorial elite or, more importantly, the Julio-Claudian imperial family under whom he had been born.<sup>14</sup>

However, the humble nature of Vespasian's family may have been overstated. Suetonius' biography of Vespasian begins with an account of his ancestry and family origins, as do each of his other imperial biographies. Vespasian's grandfather is identified as Titus Flavius Petro, a citizen (*municeps*) of Reate, who had a military career as a centurion or an *evocatus* under Pompey at Pharsalus and then became a money-collector (*coactiones argentarias factitavit*). His son, Vespasian's father, was Titus Flavius Sabinus, a tax farmer in Asia (*publicum quadragesimae in Asia egit*) with a reputation for honesty; Vespasian's mother, Vespasia Polla, was a member of an honorable family at Nursia, whose father had been military tribune three times and a prefect of the camps (*ter tribunum militum praefectumque castrorum*), while her brother had served as praetor and become a Roman senator.<sup>15</sup>

Suetonius concludes his account of Vespasian's family by attempting, and failing, to trace Vespasian's family back another generation. He states that "it has been speculated by some" (*iactatum a quibusdam*) that the father of Flavius Petro, Vespasian's great-grandfather, had come from Transpadana and was a contractor of workers (*manceps operarum*) who came from Umbria into Sabinum in order to work the fields every year, and that he had settled in Reate.<sup>16</sup> This passage is in keeping with Suetonius' practice of beginning each imperial life with an account of the origins of that emperor's family

---

<sup>14</sup> For example, see Shotter 2004, 1: "[Vespasian] was evidently aware, too, of his own need to 'make his mark', to acquire the *auctoritas* that had been the birthright of members of the old, republican nobility, of which his predecessors were a part, but to which his own relatively humble origins denied him immediate access."

<sup>15</sup> Suet. *Vesp.* 1.1-3. For Vespasian's father, see *PIR*<sup>2</sup> F 351, for Vespasia *PIR*<sup>1</sup> V 300.

<sup>16</sup> Suet. *Vesp.* 1.4.

name, the earliest appearance of his ancestors in the historical record, or the town or region from which that family came: so the *Life of Augustus* begins with an account of the Octavii; *Tiberius* with an account of the Claudii; *Nero* with the Domitii; *Galba* with the Servii Galbae; *Otho* with the Salvii Othones; and *Vitellius* with the Vitellii.<sup>17</sup> But in Vespasian's case, Suetonius encounters problems, since he simply cannot trace Vespasian's family back beyond his grandparents. He ends the account by claiming that he has found no evidence for Vespasian's great-grandfather, "although [he] has investigated with due rigor" (*quamvis satis curiose inquirerem*).

This account of Vespasian's family background does seem to support the argument that Suetonius' assessment of the new emperor's deficient *auctoritas et maiestas* was due in large part to his family origins. However, it is important not to overstate the humility or poverty of Vespasian's childhood. The fact that both Vespasian and his brother Flavius Sabinus, who was consul in 47, had been able to begin senatorial careers is a sign that the Flavii Sabini, whatever their origins, had considerable wealth at their disposal. After Augustus' reforms to the senatorial property requirements around 18 BC, it was even more difficult for individuals to qualify for equestrian or senatorial status; *both* of the brothers would have had to prove that they had a minimum of 400,000

---

<sup>17</sup> *Aug.* 1-2; *Tib.* 1-2; *Nero* 2; *Galba* 1-3; *Otho* 1; *Vit.* 1.2-2.1. The *Life of Julius Caesar* is fragmentary and begins with Julius Caesar at the age of sixteen; this pattern suggests it would have begun with an account of the Julii. The *Lives* of Gaius and Claudius are anomalous because Suetonius had already provided an account of their family origins with his accounts of the Iulii and the Claudii in previous *Lives*; Gaius' and Claudius' biographies begin instead with accounts of their fathers (*Gaius* 1-7; *Claudius* 1). In these passages, the emphasis on their fathers' deeds, and especially on the name Germanicus, suggests that Suetonius was subtly presenting the family of Drusus Claudius Nero, as an important and distinct family grouping within the Julio-Claudian house on par with the Julii, the Claudii, the Octavii, and the Domitii.

HS and met other requirements of birth and legal status.<sup>18</sup> According to Tacitus, the property requirement was not a mere technicality, as a public career in Rome under the Julio-Claudian emperors involved immense, and often ruinous, financial commitments and expenditures; some of these were formalized and unavoidable, and were indispensable for a successful career.<sup>19</sup> The extent to which these requirements put financial pressure on elite families and limited access to the senate to all but the very wealthy is shown by the examples of men of senatorial rank who could not afford to provide funds to meet the senatorial census requirement for more than one of their children, or the fact that one of Augustus' common acts of generosity was his willingness to make up the census requirement for struggling families who were facing the loss of their status.<sup>20</sup> In order to provide a senatorial career for both Flavius Sabinus and Vespasian, the Flavian family must have had significant resources at their disposal, and must have been among the wealthiest families in Italy.

Vespasian's public career, which had likely begun in 28 CE when Vespasian was nineteen years of age, had been at least as successful as those of his contemporaries. By the early 50s, he held two priesthoods, had received the *ornamenta triumphalia* for his actions as the legate in Claudius' invasion of Britain, and he held a consulship in the year

---

<sup>18</sup> Dio 54.17.3. Suetonius (*Aug.* 41) provides the figure 1,200,000 HS, raised by Augustus from 800,000 HS; for a discussion of the requirement, and this discrepancy, see Talbert 1984, 10-11.

<sup>19</sup> Tac. *Ann.* 3.55; Talbert 1984, 54-66.

<sup>20</sup> For Hortalus, who cannot provide a career for his four sons, see Tacitus *Ann.* 2.37-38, cf. Martial *Ep.* 5.38. For imperial generosity, see Dio 55.13.6; Tac. *Ann.* 1.75. Vespasian also displayed his generosity by helping senators meet their census requirements (Suet. *Vesp.* 17). Nicols (1978, 12) argues that the family's wealth must have gone back at least as far as Vespasian's paternal grandparents, Petro and Tertulla (*PIR*<sup>1</sup> T 87), who lived *in praediis Cosanis* (Suet. *Vesp.* 2.1).

52.<sup>21</sup> Vespasian's early career seems to have depended on the support and favor of a particular faction in the Julio-Claudian imperial court that revolved around the household of Claudius, Germanicus, and Antonia, which seems to have been instrumental in helping him in the early stages of his career but benefited him especially after Claudius' accession.<sup>22</sup> This faction split after the marriage of Agrippina to Claudius, which seems to have resulted in a lull in Vespasian's career, but by the 60s he regained a secure and influential place in the imperial political world: his brother was already urban prefect and he held his (delayed) proconsulship in Africa in 63/4.<sup>23</sup> More telling is the fact that, by the 60s, Vespasian's family was already connected through marriage to some of the most influential individuals and families in Roman senatorial society, although not the imperial family: Vespasian's brother's daughter had married L. Caesennius Paetus, the consul of 61, Vespasian's son Titus had married the sister of M. Arrecinus Clemens, while his daughter may have already married Petillius Cerealis.<sup>24</sup> Titus had previously been married to Marcia Furnilla, the niece of Barea Soranus, which had connected Vespasian to the so-called "senatorial opposition" who were at the heart of the Pisonian conspiracy; however, Titus' divorce from Marcia may have been part of an attempt to distance himself from this group.<sup>25</sup>

---

<sup>21</sup> For Vespasian's early career, see Nicols 1978, 1-11. Nicols (9, 22) proposes that Vespasian's two priesthoods (*duplex sacerdotium*, Suet. *Vesp.* 4.2) was a *sodalitas* and either a pontificate or an augurate. For a discussion of the typical career of a *novus homo* imperial senator, see Syme 1958b, 654.

<sup>22</sup> Nicols 1978, 15.

<sup>23</sup> The date is disputed. Nicols (1978, 10) argues for 63/4, but see also Thomasson 1960, 2 p.42 and Weidemann 1965, 797.

<sup>24</sup> Caesennius Paetus see *PIR*<sup>2</sup> C 173; Arrecina Clemens, see *PIR*<sup>2</sup> A 1074, and her brother, see *PIR*<sup>2</sup> A 1072; Petillius Cerealis, see *PIR*<sup>1</sup> P 191. See Townend 1961, 54ff.

<sup>25</sup> Titus' marriages are referred to in Suetonius *Titus* 4.2; for Barea Soranus see *PIR*<sup>2</sup> B 55; Tac. *Ann.* 16.23 and 30ff. On this topic in general, see Nicols 1978, 22-23, but cf. Levick 1999, 23 for



Nonetheless, around 64 Vespasian's connections or personal influence had become considerable enough that we see him serving as an arbiter in a dispute between M. Crassus Scribonianus and L. Piso Frugi Licinianus, the sons of M. Licinius Crassus Frugi and representatives of an extremely important senatorial elite.<sup>26</sup> This episode in his pre-imperial career is known from an inscription, which reads:

HI•TERMINI•XIX•POSITI•SUNT  
AB•SCRIBONIANO•ET•PISONE•FRUGI  
EX•DEPALATIONE•T•FLAVI•VESPASIANI  
ARBITRI

This nineteenth mile-marker was placed by Scribonianus and by Piso Frugi according to the measurements of Titus Flavius Vespasianus, arbiter.<sup>27</sup>

In this dispute over the placement of mile-markers, likely related to a dispute over property, Vespasian served as an *arbiter ex compromisso*, a role that demanded a high degree of personal prestige, especially given the identities of the disputants.<sup>28</sup>

Vespasian's ability to fill this role at this point in the reign of Nero indicates that he had not only enjoyed a successful career as a senator but that he held considerable personal authority and the respect of his senatorial colleagues.<sup>29</sup>

On the other hand, the literary evidence that addresses Vespasian's senatorial career, especially under Nero, paints a different picture. After his consulship in the early 50s, Suetonius describes him going into "rest and retirement" (*in otio secessuque egit*)

---

a contrasting view. Pigón (1992, 237 n. 11) argues against Nicols that Titus' divorce was connected to the conspiracy.

<sup>26</sup> As Galba tells us in his speech explaining his adoption of L. Piso Frugi Licinianus, Tac. *Hist.* 1.15. Scribonianus turned down the empire, *Hist.* 4.39. For this family, see Syme 1960, 12.

<sup>27</sup> *CIL* 6.1268.

<sup>28</sup> Nicols 1978, 11; for this reason Nicols dates the arbitration to the period after Vespasian's proconsulship in 63/4 and before Piso's exile after 65.

<sup>29</sup> cf. Chapter 2, in which I discuss the significance of this inscription's discovery near the Porta Nomentana.

because of the political ascent of Agrippina. Vespasian is described as chronically poor, even in comparison to his own brother, and evidence for this is the fact that upon his return to politics in the 60s he was reprimanded for extorting money from a young man seeking his political patronage.<sup>30</sup> One story about his career under Nero depicted him as powerless and vulnerable and apparently existed in several versions: Suetonius, Dio, and Tacitus all describe an episode in which an imperial freedman named Phoebus confronted Vespasian when he had fallen asleep (or perhaps looked sullen, or got up and left too often) while Nero was singing. Phoebus ordered him to “go to hell,” and the encounter may have threatened Vespasian’s status in court and his personal safety, as he was banned from attendance on Nero’s person and he is said to have needed the intervention of friends to save his life.<sup>31</sup> This and similar depictions of Vespasian’s position in Neronian society leads some modern scholars to argue that his command in Judaea, which he may have entered as early 66, was an example of Nero’s paranoia and evidence of Vespasian’s perceived harmlessness: Nero selected him to replace the powerful Corbulo because he thought that Vespasian could never become influential enough to challenge him.<sup>32</sup>

---

<sup>30</sup> Suet. *Vesp.* 4.2-3; see discussion in Levick 1999, 24. However, references to Vespasian’s withdrawal from political life are likely exaggerated, as he would have continued his priestly functions in the period between his consulship and his proconsulship, and attendance at senatorial meetings was mandatory (cf. Dio 55.3.1). The reference to extortion seems to confirm the report of Vespasian’s greed (Tac. *Hist.* 1.50.1; 2.5.1), but does not seem to fit in this section of Suetonius’ narrative, which focuses on Vespasian’s marginal status under Nero. If Vespasian was so powerless, on what grounds could he extort this money in the first place?

<sup>31</sup> Phoebus *PIR*<sup>2</sup> P 391; for the episode see Suet. *Vesp.* 4.4, 14.1; Tac. *Ann.* 16.5; Dio Cass. 66.11.2. Braithwaite (1927, 30) understands Suetonius’ two accounts as describing two different incidents; *RE* T. Flavius Vespasianus, col. 2629 (Weynand) argues that all four accounts describe a single incident; Gascou (1984, 325) attributes the variation in detail to the authors’ sources. For a discussion of Phoebus in Vespasian’s imperial court, see Acton 2011, 111-113.

<sup>32</sup> For the command in Judaea, see Josephus *BJ* 3.8, Nicols 1978, 12. On Vespasian’s harmlessness, see e.g. Morgan 2006, 174.

The anecdotes about his powerlessness and vulnerability in Nero's court do not seem to fit with this reconstruction of his career. However his background may have contributed to his status, neither he nor his family could be characterized as poor, and the evidence of Vespasian's career reveals that he was a successful and respected member of the senatorial elite; even at the beginning of his career he was well-connected in Rome, with his senatorial maternal uncle, and by the 50s and later Vespasian was linked to a number of important other individuals and groups either through marriage, formal interaction, or patronage. He was given command in Judaea because of his standing and experience, not because of his marginal status; this is a far more likely scenario, as the Jewish Revolt was a serious military situation in a part of the empire that had needed almost constant attention throughout Nero's reign, and thus would have required the attention of a military commander who could promise some degree of competence. These stories of Vespasian's career troubles seem to be best understood as a retroactive recasting of his status under Nero, distancing him from his unpopular and tyrannical predecessor by making him seem one of Nero's potential victims rather than a senator who flourished in his court. What is more, given the connection between *auctoritas* and military command, Vespasian's position at the death of Vitellius is a perfect example of imperial *auctoritas*: his power derived from his military strength at a point when his soldiers had captured the city of Rome and he himself had joined the Egyptian legions, who had been the first to hail him *imperator*.<sup>33</sup> Vespasian's military position and the support of his soldiers should have provided him with a quintessentially Augustan

---

<sup>33</sup> Tac. *Hist.* 2.79.

*auctoritas*.<sup>34</sup> This traditional notion of informal authority was enhanced and preserved over the course of Vespasian's reign in his exhaustive collection of imperial offices and honors, including consulships, imperial salutations, and priesthoods, all of which were carefully documented in his official titulature.<sup>35</sup> Over the course of his reign, Vespasian used the imperial traditions of republican office-holding to augment his imperial authority, but his *auctoritas* initially derived from his status as a high-ranking and well-respected senator and his claim to the loyalty of the army.

Thus the evidence for Vespasian's life and career is paradoxical: we are told that he was of humble birth but the evidence of his career suggests that his family was well-connected and wealthy; similarly, we are told that he was a marginal figure in the imperial court, whose career had suffered setbacks due to the vicissitudes of palace politics, and who had actually feared for his life because he had displeased the tyrannical Nero, and yet the evidence of the 60s indicates that he had remained a powerful figure in the imperial court and in the senate. Suetonius' statement that Vespasian lacked *auctoritas et maiestas* at the outset of his reign does not seem to aptly describe Vespasian's career or personal authority to that point. A closer examination of Suetonius' reference to *maiestas* in this context will provide the explanation for the statement as a whole.

*Maiestas* conveyed a sense of super-human, even divine personal authority, and in light of that it is significant that Suetonius' statement appears in an account of Vespasian's religious activities while in Egypt. Vespasian's victory was presaged by his encounter with the priest Basilides, and then his lack of *auctoritas et maiestas* was

---

<sup>34</sup> Garzetti 1974, 630.

<sup>35</sup> Buttrey 1980.

resolved when he publicly performed a healing miracle; Tacitus' account places these events after Vespasian's accession, while he waited in Alexandria for the sailing season.<sup>36</sup> Vespasian's inability to claim a divine ancestor has been seen as a disadvantage for the new emperor, as it prevented him from presenting his imperial authority in the same way that his Julio-Claudian predecessors had; religious ceremonies, portents, miracles, and other carefully scripted displays of Vespasian's status as the favorite of the gods represent an attempt to develop a religious authority that served to elevate him above ordinary people and create the foundation of his super-human authority, his *maiestas*.<sup>37</sup> The question, however, is whether the strategies that Vespasian evidently employed in Alexandria – performing orchestrated public healing miracles and seeking the advice of the local gods – were intended to resonate outside of Egypt, or were adapted for Vespasian's later use in Rome.

Henrichs has noted the local character of Vespasian's Egyptian miracles, and has argued that they were part of Vespasian's attempt to establish himself as the new ruler of Egypt by associating himself through his behavior with Alexander and Ptolemaic kings.<sup>38</sup> One of the strongest Alexandrian elements in these accounts is the presence of Serapis, a god particularly associated with the Ptolemies: Vespasian's encounter with Basilides occurs in the Temple of Serapis, and both Suetonius and Tacitus say that the blind man had been instructed to seek Vespasian's healing touch by Serapis in a dream. Furthermore, Tacitus presents Vespasian's visit to the Temple of Serapis as the result of his desire (*cupido*) to consult the god about imperial matters; the term *cupido* in this

---

<sup>36</sup> Suet. *Vesp.* 7, Tac. *Hist.* 4.81-4.

<sup>37</sup> e.g. Scott 1934, 140; Waters 1963, 209.

<sup>38</sup> Henrichs 1968, 54-59.

context recalls Alexander's πόθος to visit the Temple of Zeus Ammon.<sup>39</sup> This pattern suggests that Vespasian's religious performances were intended to appeal specifically to an audience of the people of Alexandria; although he was certain of the support of the Roman legions in Egypt, he may have felt the need to secure his position with the population of the city where he was to spend several months before his return to Rome.<sup>40</sup> However, Henrichs sees this effort as part of Vespasian's attempt to establish himself as the new emperor throughout the Roman world as a whole.<sup>41</sup>

The contention that Vespasian's religious performances in Egypt were intended for a wider audience, or that this behavior was carried over into his conduct as ruler once he returned to Italy, requires closer examination. Certainly, accounts of the civil war and of Vespasian's life contain many references to portents, omens, and other signs that Vespasian was destined for imperial power. Suetonius relates a total of twelve portents foretelling Vespasian's accession, second only to the seventeen that appear in the *Life of Augustus*, and Suetonius, Tacitus, and Dio all seem to be drawing from an extensive and varied corpus of omens and portents from Vespasian's childhood, life experiences, or campaigns in Judaea to such an extent that we can be assured that these episodes were well known, and perhaps even centrally compiled.<sup>42</sup> There is even some evidence that Vespasian's supporters in the city of Rome tried to create an impression of Vespasian's

---

<sup>39</sup> Tac. *Hist.* 82.1: *Altior inde Vespasiano cupido adeundi sacram sedem ut super rebus imperii consuleret...* Curtius Rufus (4.7.8) uses the phrase *ingens cupido* as the Latin equivalent of πόθος in this context, see Henrichs 1968, 56; Baynham 1998, 160-162. For a discussion with bibliography of Alexander's *cupido*/πόθος in general, see Baynham 1998, 57 n. 3.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. *P. Faoud* 8, a papyrus that seems to recall Vespasian's jubilant, and perhaps triumphant, entry into Alexandria: Henrichs 1968, 59 n. 24.

<sup>41</sup> Henrichs 1968, 65: "when he was in Alexandria, he still lacked official authority, and the sacred blood of Augustus was exhausted once and forever."

<sup>42</sup> See discussion in Morgan 1996b, 42-43.

divine favor by orchestrating a “portent”: the statue of the Divus Caesar turned on its base to point east, indicating the place from which the new ruler would emerge.<sup>43</sup>

However, Vespasian himself seems to have resisted attempts to associate him with specific divinities or religious forces in general. For example, he is supposed to have laughed when certain people tried to trace his origins to the founders of Reate and a companion of Hercules.<sup>44</sup> This reference deserves special attention, as it indicates that a certain group of Vespasian’s courtiers were willing to suspend their disbelief and participate in the fiction that Vespasian’s family had divine origins,<sup>45</sup> when they had never claimed such a thing before; that Vespasian chose to reject their offer makes the “disadvantage” of his humble origins compared to his Julio-Claudian predecessors seem much less significant. Vespasian’s famous last words, “Alas, I think I am becoming a god!” (*Vae, puto deus fio*), have been interpreted as a sincere imprecation that the senate support his sons’ claims to power by effecting his apotheosis; but the phrase is presented by Suetonius as one of Vespasian’s witticisms and an example of his self-effacing humor.<sup>46</sup>

Furthermore, Vespasian differs from the other emperors of the civil war in that he did not attempt to create or present a connection between his family and members of the Julio-Claudian household, especially its *divi*: Galba evidently valued his personal

---

<sup>43</sup> Tac. *Hist.* 1.86.1; Suet. *Vesp.* 5.7; Plutarch *Otho* 4.4; Damon (2003, 277) discusses each author’s treatment of this event, but does not ask who might have turned the statue base; since all accounts date this portent to the period within the spring or summer of 69, when Vespasian was contemplating or already actively pursuing revolt (Chilver 1957, 34-35; Nicols 1978, 89-99), it is likely that his supporters in the city attempted to sway the crowd to their cause with such displays.

<sup>44</sup> Suet. *Vesp.* 12; cf. Waters 1963, 213.

<sup>45</sup> Galba had also claimed divine ancestry, cf. Suet. *Galba* 2 (...*imperator vero etiam stemma in atrio proposuerit, quo paternam originem ad Iovem, maternam ad Pasiphaen Minois uxorem referret*); I discuss this passage further in Chapter 2.

<sup>46</sup> Suet. *Vesp.* 23.4; see, for example, Clarke 1966, 322-323.

interaction with Augustus and boasted of his interactions with Augustus, even if Suetonius identified him as “connected in no degree to the house of the Caesars.”<sup>47</sup>

Galba also featured Livia on his coinage, identified as Diva Augusta:



Figure 3.1: *RIC I (Galba) 189*, struck in Rome  
(image source: [www.cngcoins.com/Coin.aspx?CoinID=22701](http://www.cngcoins.com/Coin.aspx?CoinID=22701))

Otho’s personal connection with Nero, already established by his marriage to Poppaea Sabina, was emphasized by Otho’s completion of Nero’s *Domus Aurea*; more significantly, perhaps, he is said to have intended to marry Statilia Messalina, Nero’s widow.<sup>48</sup> Vitellius may have resisted the titles “Augustus” and “Caesar,” but he did associate himself with the founders of that dynasty: he carried around a sword that had belonged to Julius Caesar and had been taken from a temple of Mars, and he made funerary offerings for Nero in the Campus Martius.<sup>49</sup> Otho’s connection to Statilia Messalina is significant because it serves as a reminder that certain individuals with personal, even biological, connections to specific Julio-Claudian emperors had survived

---

<sup>47</sup> Suet. *Galba* 2: ... *nullo gradu contingens Caesarum domum*; for his interaction with Augustus, see *Galba* 4. For Livia on Galba’s coinage, see Morelli 2001.

<sup>48</sup> Suet. *Otho* 7.1; Statilia Messalina, see *Otho* 10.2, cf. *Nero* 35.1.

<sup>49</sup> Suet. *Vit.* 8, 11.2.



the death of Nero;<sup>50</sup> had Vespasian wished to create a connection between his family and the previous dynasty, the easiest route would have been to arrange marriages for himself or his sons. The fact that he did not do so, nor did he pursue a connection with specific individuals through coin types, is indicative of his conception of how his dynasty should relate to their predecessors.

Similarly, Vespasian's reign is remarkable for the way that the new emperor did not attempt to elevate the status of his dynasty by promoting religious associations, a cult for his family, or his personal relationship with any particular gods or deified ancestors. Some modern scholars have supposed that the absence of imperial religious institutions for the new dynasty was a matter of necessity, and that Vespasian did not implement a cult for the Gens Flavia, a college of *Flaviales*, or the deification of any of his family members because he could not have done so; the fact that he was so invested in establishing a dynasty, and that divine associations were part of "the trappings of a well-established dynasty" indicates that Vespasian was prevented by the law, custom, or his circumstances from initiating these changes.<sup>51</sup> However, this argument is illogical. There was no force preventing Vespasian from establishing these imperial institutions; the deification of Livia by Claudius thirteen years after her death and the divine honors later extended to M. Ulpius Traianus, the father of Trajan, show that if Vespasian had wished his family to include a deified family member the ideology of imperial deification would have permitted divine honors for a parent, his deceased wife, or his deceased

---

<sup>50</sup>Other such individuals include Junia Calvina (the daughter of Aemilia Lepida and granddaughter of Julia, the granddaughter of Augustus, *PIR*<sup>2</sup> I 857) whose death in 79 is attested (Suet. *Vesp.* 23.4); see Syme 1986, 197 for Junia Calvina's identity as the last descendant of Augustus.

<sup>51</sup>E.g. Clarke 1966, 322; quotation is from Wood 2010, 45.

daughter, and he could have implemented a priestly college or a cult for his family if he had wished it.<sup>52</sup> Vespasian avoided these measures and rejected, even mocked, attempts to associate his family with a divine ancestor.<sup>53</sup> The later appearance of Flavian *divi* and a *templum gentis Flaviae* under Titus and Domitian is evidence that his sons did not follow his example, rather than evidence that they carried out his long-term, posthumous plans.

We do see the gradual development of a connection between Vespasian and certain Julio-Claudian emperors, especially Claudius, over the course of Vespasian's reign.<sup>54</sup> However, this was not initially part of the construction of Vespasian's personal authority, but rather (I will argue below) an attempt to accommodate the wishes of the senate, who wanted to see Vespasian follow the example of a more senatorial emperor. Vespasian's connection to Augustus is also frequently referred to, but (I will argue in my fourth chapter) this took the form of emulation, rather than the development of a fictive familial connection. The most concrete example of a Flavian emperor attempting to argue for a personal connection between himself and a member of the Julio-Claudian house comes from Titus, whose childhood education in the household of Claudius as Britannicus' friend – emphasized by Britannicus' appearance in Titus' restored coinages – presents a certain continuity of regimes.<sup>55</sup> Again, however, this must be seen as a break

---

<sup>52</sup> *RIC* II (Trajan) 764 shows a reverse portrait bust with the legend *DIVUS PATER TRAIANUS*; see also 242. See Price (1987, 82-90) on the ideological and political aspects of deification in the imperial family.

<sup>53</sup> Suet. *Vesp.* 12.

<sup>54</sup> cf. Schmidt 1988.

<sup>55</sup> Suet. *Titus* 2; *BMCRE* I Claudius 226 was struck under Titus, see Mattingly 1930, 330-332; attribution to a particular mint is difficult, cf. Komnick 2001 and discussion in Carradice and Buttrey 2007, 191-193.

from Vespasian's model of the relationship between his family and the previous dynasty, and not typical of Flavian attitudes as a whole.

Given this overall tendency to avoid religious themes in his or his family's representations, the miracles in Alexandria described in Suetonius *Vesp.* 7 and Tacitus *Hist.* 4.81 can no longer be seen as part of a general attempt to establish Vespasian's divine credentials to help him assume imperial power more seamlessly; rather, they were an effort to establish Vespasian's royal authority in purely local terms for the benefit of an Alexandrian audience. This performance had an immediate purpose of securing Vespasian's position in Egypt while he waited to return to Italy.

However, the numerous omens and portents that predicted Vespasian's rise to power and were recorded by his historians and biographers do seem to have been aimed at a broader audience. If the Flavian family manufactured these stories (or the portents themselves) and circulated them to build support for the new emperor, this would not have constituted a claim to divine associations in the same way that a claim to a divine ancestor would have. These portents allowed Vespasian and his supporters to present the Flavians in divine terms without drawing specific connections between Vespasian and particular divinities or divine forces; Vespasian could publicly reject the tone of Nero's court, with its emphatic assertion of the emperor's relationship with the divine, while simultaneously allow himself to be seen as the gods' choice as emperor.<sup>56</sup> This self-representation filled a particular political function, as it allowed Vespasian's rise to be seen as the result of divine favor and his own good fortune, rather than the result of

---

<sup>56</sup> On Nero and Apollo see Toynbee 1942, Champlin 2003, 276-277. Nero's portraiture grows increasingly ornate and acquires divine attributes over the course of his reign; see Toynbee 1947, 126; however Hiesinger (1975, 121) argues that these divine associations were "only part of a varied and complex ideological program".

extensive planning, conspiracy, and negotiation going back – potentially – even before the death of Nero.<sup>57</sup>

The importance of portents in Vespasian's political self-representation was effective because it made use of certain appealing narrative *topoi*. Vespasian's persona as a pragmatic realist who is nonetheless guarded by fortune echoes depictions of other great generals, such as Caesar.<sup>58</sup> Similarly, the depiction of Vespasian's low status in the imperial court in the 50s and 60s, which is in direct contradiction to the evidence for his career, is also intelligible in narrative terms. The moral value and innate capability of humble birth is adduced to explain the superiority of plebeian commanders over patrician commanders in Livy, Seneca, and Velleius.<sup>59</sup> By representing himself in a way that emphasized his rusticity, Vespasian was able to make use of this *topos* to claim a different, yet superior kind of personal authority to the divine *maiestas* of the Julio-Claudians; the same recasting allowed Vespasian to distance himself from the political and social world of Nero's court, despite his success there.

Thus Suetonius' statement concerning Vespasian's lack of *auctoritas et quasi maiestas quaedam* does not describe his situation in the empire as a whole at the time of his accession but reflects Vespasian's use of particular narrative *topoi* in his self-representation; by retroactively casting himself as the poor, rural, nonentity in the Julio-Claudian court, Vespasian could make the case that he possessed a particular moral quality as a leader that his predecessors had not possessed, and that his rise to power

---

<sup>57</sup> Nicols 1978, 132.

<sup>58</sup> e.g. Velleius 55.1, 3; for a discussion of Fortuna helping chosen generals, see Kraus 1994, 166.

<sup>59</sup> Livy 34.11; Seneca *Controversiae* 1.6.3-4; Velleius 128.1-3; see Kraus 1994, 277. Cf. Nicols 1978, 10, who argues that Vespasian also made use of the *topos* of the rise of an individual from the very lowest point to the greatest height as a way to emphasize his status as the favorite of Fortuna.

indicated his status as the (human) favorite of the gods, rather than that he was himself divine or possessed of godlike powers. Suetonius' presentation of the miracles that Vespasian performed in Alexandria were not intended to address a lack of personal authority broadly, because this was ample, but rather an attempt to establish himself locally as the new king of Egypt and the heir to Alexander, in light of his intention to remain in that city for several months from 69 to 70.

Vespasian's status as an Italian *novus homo* with no connection to the previous imperial house formed the basis of his imperial *auctoritas* in his own terms in a way that was particularly appealing because of the social backlash against Nero and because of longstanding and recognizable narrative *topoi*. Subsequent attempts by Titus and Domitian to establish a relationship between the Flavians and the Julio-Claudians or to create a particular bond between the dynasty and divine power should be seen as departures from Vespasian's strategy for building and maintaining imperial *auctoritas*; Vespasian had the opportunity to create those connections and he chose not to, instead developing a new model of imperial power that responded to contemporary criticisms of Julio-Claudian royal authority, his own personal history, and the fact that he had risen to power in a civil war: in creating a narrative of his accession, he created a model for imperial power in which his *auctoritas et maiestas* was based on the perception that he had lacked *auctoritas et maiestas*.

### **Vespasian's legal authority**

The most significant document pertaining to Vespasian's imperial authority is without question the so-called *lex de imperio Vespasiani*, the final clauses of a law

apparently formally granting Vespasian imperial authority that has been preserved on a bronze tablet.<sup>60</sup> The text is incomplete, and since the tablet is not broken it is reasonable to assume that the complete document was originally presented on at least one other tablet of equal size (164cm tall); the text of the document is well-engraved and easily read, with few textual problems. The surviving tablet reads as follows:<sup>61</sup>

I	[---] foedusue cum quibus uolet facere liceat, ita uti licuit diuo Aug(usto), Ti. Iulio Caesari Aug(usto), Tiberioque Claudio Caesari Aug(usto) Germanico;	
II	utique ei senatum habere, relationem facere, remittere, senatus consulta per relationem discessionemque facere liceat, ita uti licuit diuo Aug(usto), Ti. Iulio Caesari Aug(usto), Ti. Claudio Caesari Augusto Germanico; <sup>vacat</sup>	4
III	utique cum ex uoluntate auctoritateue iussu mandatuue eius praesenteue eo senatus habebitur, omnium rerum ius perinde habeatur seruetur, ac si e lege senatus edictus esset habereturque;	8
IV	utique quos magistratum potestatem imperium curationemue cuius rei petentes senatui populoque Romano commendauerit quibusue suffragationem suam dederit promiserit, eorum comitis quibusque extra ordinem ratio habeatur; <sup>vacat</sup>	12
V	utique ei fines pomerii proferre promouere cum ex re publica censebit esse liceat, ita uti licuit Ti. Claudio Caesari Aug(usto) Germanico; <sup>vacat</sup>	16
VI	utique quaecunq[ue] ex usu rei publicae maiestate diuinarum huma<na>rum publicarum priuatarumque rerum esse {e} censebit, ei agere facere ius potestasque sit, ita uti diuo Aug(usto) Tiberioque Iulio Caesari Aug(usto), Tiberioque Claudio Caesari Aug(usto) Germanico fuit; <sup>vacat</sup>	20
VII	utique quibus legibus plebeiue scitis scriptum fuit, ne diuus Aug(ustus), Tiberiusue Iulius Caesar Aug(ustus), Tiberiusque Claudius Caesar Aug(ustus) Germanicus tenerentur, iis legibus plebisque scitis imp(erator) Caesar Vespasianus solutus sit; quaeque ex quaque lege rogatione diuum Aug(ustum), Tiberiumue Iulium Caesarem Aug(ustum), Tiberiumue Claudium Caesarem Aug(ustum) Germanicum facere oportuit, ea omnia imp(eratori) Caesari Vespasiano <sup>v</sup> Aug(usto) facere liceat;	24  28

<sup>60</sup> *CIL* 6. 930 = *ILS* 244 = *FIRA*<sup>2</sup> 1.15. The tablet is now in the Musei Capitolini, Rome, Inv. 7180.

<sup>61</sup> I have used Crawford's edition of the text (1996 vol. 1, 552).

- VIII utique quae ante hanc legem rogatam acta gesta <sup>vac</sup>  
decreta imperata ab imperatore Caesare Vespasiano Aug(usto)  
iussu mandatuue eius a quoque sunt, ea perinde iusta rataq(ue)  
sint, ac si populi plebisue iussu acta essent. <sup>vacat</sup> 32  
<sup>vacat</sup> sanctio <sup>vacat</sup>  
si quis huiusce legis ergo aduersus leges rogations plebisue scita  
senatusue consulta fecit fecerit, siue quod eum ex lege rogatione  
plebisue scito s(enatus)ue c(onsulto) facere oportebit non fecerit huius legis <sup>v</sup> 36  
ergo, id ei ne fraudi esto, neue quit ob eam rem populo dare debeto,  
neue cui ea re actio neue iudicatio esto, neue quis de ea re apud  
[s]e agi sinito. <sup>vacat</sup>
- I ... [and that] it should be lawful [for him]... to make treaties with whomever he  
wishes, just as it was lawful for the deified Augustus, Tiberius Julius Caesar  
Augustus, and Tiberius Claudius Caesar Augustus Germanicus;
- II ... and that it should be lawful for him to preside over the senate, to propose or  
dismiss a motion, and to pass decrees of the senate through a motion and  
division, just as it was lawful for the deified Augustus, Tiberius Julius Caesar  
Augustus, and Tiberius Claudius Caesar Augustus Germanicus;
- III ... and that when the senate is convened according to his order or his command  
or in his presence, the law of all things shall be maintained and observed just as  
if the senate had been summoned and was being convened according to the law;
- IV ... and that those men seeking a magistracy, power, *imperium*, or a curatorship  
of whatever thing whom he recommends to the senate and the Roman people,  
or to whomever he has extended or promised his support, consideration of them  
will be taken in whatever elections *extra ordinem*;
- V ... and that it should be lawful for him to extend or move the limits of the  
boundaries of the city when he deems it in the interests of the republic, just as it  
was lawful for Tiberius Claudius Caesar Augustus Germanicus;
- VI ... and that whatever he shall judge to be according to the custom of the  
republic and the grandeur of divine, human, public, and private matters, he shall  
have the right and the power to conduct it and to do it, just as there was for the  
deified Augustus, Tiberius Julius Caesar Augustus, and Tiberius Claudius  
Caesar Augustus Germanicus;
- VII ... and that in whatever laws or plebiscites it is written that the deified  
Augustus, Tiberius Julius Caesar Augustus, and Tiberius Claudius Caesar  
Augustus Germanicus should not be bound, from these laws and plebiscites the  
Imperator Caesar Vespasian is released; and whatever things by whatever law  
or motion it was proper for the deified Augustus, Tiberius Julius Caesar  
Augustus, or Tiberius Claudius Caesar Augustus Germanicus to do, it shall be  
lawful for the Imperator Caesar Vespasian Augustus to do those same things;
- VIII ...and that whatever was done, performed, decreed, or ordered before this law  
was passed by the Imperator Caesar Vespasian Augustus, or by anyone by his  
order or command, these things shall be lawful and valid, just as if they had  
been done by the order of the people or the plebs;

### Sanction

If anyone has acted or will have acted against the laws, *rogationes*, plebiscites, or decrees of the senate in consequence of this law, or if he will not have done something that he ought to have done through a law, *rogatio*, plebiscite, or *senatus consultum* in consequence of this law, let this be held against him, nor shall he owe anything to the people on this account, nor shall anyone have action or judication in that matter, nor shall anyone allow there to be action before him in that matter.

The tablet appears to preserve part of a law through which the formal powers of the emperor were bestowed by the senate and by the vote of the people, and thus offers the promise of revealing the formal and constitutional basis of the principate; however, the historical significance of the text is controversial for a number of reasons, including the document's incompleteness, the lack of comparable documents for other emperors, and its unusual grammatical and legal form. In order to use this document as the basis of a discussion of the principate's legal foundations, therefore, it is necessary to address a number of questions. What is this document's place within the Roman imperial legal tradition? What were the contents of the missing tablet, or tablets? If this is the formal basis of the principate, did this law only bestow specific rights and privileges, or does it represent a comprehensive legal action that bestowed inclusive powers such as *tribunicia potestas* and *imperium maius*? Does this law represent the traditional legal form through which imperial power was bestowed on a new emperor, a legal innovation that was introduced for Vespasian, or a unique event without parallel in imperial history? Where did the phrasing of each clause originate? And finally, at what point after the defeat of Vitellius was the *lex de imperio Vespasiani* passed? These questions must all be addressed in order to consider what this document reveals about Vespasian's imperial authority and the nature of the principate in general.



The legal form of the document is problematic as the surviving clauses begin with forms of *ut*, suggesting that they are dependent on a missing form of *censuere* as would be typical of a *senatus consultum*; but the document calls itself a *lex* in lines 29 and 34 and ends with a *sanctio* as would be typical for a *rogatio*. This suggested to Brunt that the document had been drafted in the senate and met with “perfunctory” comitial deliberations, with the result that the senate’s directives became a *lex* with little alteration.<sup>62</sup> The fact that the main verbs in the surviving *ut* clauses are in the present subjunctive, however, indicated to Crawford that the text was a piece of comitial legislation, as the verbs in the clauses of a *senatus consultum* would ordinarily be in the imperfect tense; although, again, perhaps the text of the senatorial *rogatio* had been little altered.<sup>63</sup> The document therefore seems to synthesize formal elements of a *senatus consultum* and a comitial *lex*, in a manner that is also reflected in the early imperial Tabula Hebana.<sup>64</sup>

The fact that only the final clauses of the law has survived invites speculation on the contents of the missing clauses, and particularly on whether the missing tablets included specific grants of the central, comprehensive, constitutional powers that defined the imperial monarchy: *imperium maius* and *tribunicia potestas*.<sup>65</sup> This argument would support a reconstruction of the imperial system in the first century CE in which the distinct powers of the emperor had begun to elide with one another to an extent that they could all be conferred in a single motion; furthermore, it makes the case that the senate had become the primary source of imperial powers at the expense of the army and the

---

<sup>62</sup> Brunt 1977, 95. See also Last 1936, 405; de Ste. Croix 1981, 630 n. 36.

<sup>63</sup> Crawford 1996, I 550, cf. 10.

<sup>64</sup> Brunt 1977, 95; Crawford 1996, 512.

<sup>65</sup> Griffin 2000, 12; cf. Kunkel 1966, 57.

assembly of the people.<sup>66</sup> But this argument poses a problem in the face of the text of the *lex* itself: the surviving clauses describe specific prerogatives that establish a legal basis for the emperor's privileges, not broad constitutional powers that confer any kind of comprehensive authority; therefore, it seems logical to argue on the basis of the surviving clauses that the missing clauses of the document contain more of the same.<sup>67</sup>

One major school of interpretation of the *lex de imperio* therefore argues that the document was a grant of miscellaneous, specific rights enjoyed by the emperor in addition to his constitutional powers. Some scholars have been skeptical of the senate's ability to restrain the emperor's power in this way,<sup>68</sup> and have therefore seen the law as a consolidation of the emperor's rights as a supplement to the comprehensive powers of *imperium maius* and *tribunicia potestas*.<sup>69</sup> Along this line, Levi and Garzetti have argued that the law's purpose was honorific, intended to recognize Vespasian's right to exercise these privileges in a way that clarified his status as head of state.<sup>70</sup> Levick emphasized the law's potential role in bolstering Vespasian's *auctoritas* by recognizing his right to prerogatives available to the Julio-Claudians by virtue of their authority in the

---

<sup>66</sup> Mommsen *RS* II<sup>3</sup> 842ff thought that the people had ceased to play a role in conferring imperial powers but that *imperium* could be legally conferred by the army in addition to the senate; but see Schulz (1916, 45), who argues that the proconsular *imperium* could only be legally granted through a decree of the senate, confirmed by a *comitia* (Hammond 1956, 70). In any event, the *Acta Arvalium* shows that *imperium* and *tribunicia potestas* were granted at separate meetings, cf. Brunt 1977, 101-105.

<sup>67</sup> A further problem lies with the fact that Vespasian celebrated the anniversary of his *imperium* from December 69, but counted his years of tribunician power from the date of his first acclamation on 1 July 69; if these powers were legally bestowed in the same motion, this seems a bizarre and tactless error, cf. Hammond 1956, 77.

<sup>68</sup> Garzetti 1974, 630

<sup>69</sup> Last 1936, 406; cf. Mommsen *RS* II<sup>3</sup> 878 n. 1

<sup>70</sup> Levi 1938b, 89-90; Garzetti 1974, 630. See also Bonini 1981, 255-256.

state, demonstrating that the imperial office was now beyond the control of the senate, even if the symbolic importance of the senate as a legitimating body remained.<sup>71</sup>

Brunt's analysis of the *lex de imperio*, which has dominated discussion of the law since the publication of his article in 1977, dismisses this line of analysis as absurd, although he too approaches the law as a list of privileges that had come to define the imperial office beginning with Augustus; however, he does not view the document as honorific and argues strongly that the law was traditional in nature and legally conferred these privileges on the new emperor. He argues that each clause can be traced back to its initial formulation, after which it had been included in a standardized, formal law that had been passed for every emperor since Tiberius.<sup>72</sup>

In his analysis of the document, Brunt places special emphasis on the appearance of Augustus, Tiberius, and Claudius as legal precedents cited in most, but not all, of the clauses. First, he argues that if this document does confer formalized powers, the appearance of these precedents must indicate when each clause, with its specific privileges, had been introduced to the law: thus, the right to move the *pomerium*, for example, must have been first articulated under Claudius (clause V), but since then it had become a standard prerogative of imperial power. Using historical accounts and the records of comitial assemblies recorded in the Acts of the Arval Brethren, Brunt identifies the dates on which the senate had voted imperial powers to each emperor as

---

<sup>71</sup> Levick (1999, 86) observes that it was "ironical" that Cola di Rienzo thought that the document demonstrated the power of the senate, which she attributes to his inability to understand the document. However, as I have discussed above, Cola's intentions were not to explicate the contents of the law, but to make a rhetorical point that supported his own political views and ambitions; I have addressed her point about *auctoritas* above (n. 13). On the senate as a legitimating body, see Eck 2000, 215.

<sup>72</sup> Brunt 1977, 98-100.

part of his accession to power, and thus reconstructs the gradual legal formation of the office of the emperor.<sup>73</sup> Because all of these dates are very early in each reign, Brunt argues that a vote of formal power was a formal part of the investiture of a new emperor; on these grounds, he identifies the vote of comprehensive authority partially preserved in the *lex de imperio Vespasiani* with Tacitus' reference to the senate's vote of "all things usually given to emperors" (*cuncta solita*), which took place in their first meeting after the death of Vitellius.<sup>74</sup>

Brunt further supports this date for the passage of the law by considering why Augustus, Tiberius, and Claudius are the only emperors who are invoked in this document. This would seem to pose a problem for Brunt's analysis of the document as a formal legal tradition – if the law has its origins in the vote of imperial power to Augustus and reflects the emperor's gradual acquisition of further formal powers, why are only these three emperors named in the document in addition to Vespasian, while imperial precedents are not invoked in clauses III, IV, and VIII?

Brunt responds to this question with his reconstruction of the political context of the law's passage, and he argues that, although this law was passed at the beginning of each emperor's reign, not every emperor was well-regarded in December 69, and some had even had their *acta* officially revoked. Nero had been condemned before his death and declared a public enemy by the senate;<sup>75</sup> Otho had evidently declared Galba's *acta* invalid, as Domitian is supposed to have attempted to restore his honors in his first

---

<sup>73</sup> Gaius: Suet. *Gaius* 14.1, Dio 59.3.1. Claudius: Dio 60.1.4, 3.2. Nero: Suet. *Nero* 8. Galba: Plutarch *Galba* 7, Dio 63.29.1. Otho: Tac. *Hist.* 1.47; cf. Suet. *Otho* 7.1, Dio 64.8.1, Plutarch *Otho* 1.2. Vitellius: Tac. *Hist.* 2.55. For the Acts of the Arval Brethren, see Henzen 1874.

<sup>74</sup> Brunt 1977, 101; Tac. *Hist.* 4.3.3.

<sup>75</sup> Suet. *Nero* 49.2: ...*legitque se hostem a senatu iudicatum*....

meeting with the senate in January 70.<sup>76</sup> Although there is no evidence that the *acta* or memory of Otho or Vitellius was officially condemned, it is reasonable to suppose that it would have been impolitic to mention them at the beginning of Vespasian's reign; similarly, Dio describes Claudius opposing the official "dishonoring" (ἀτιμῶσαι) of Gaius – an effort that required opposing a vote (ψηφισθῆναι μὲν αὐτὸς ἐκώλυσεν) – but then taking down his images with the result that Gaius' name, along with Tiberius', did not appear in the list of emperors whom Dio's contemporaries mention in their oaths and prayers.<sup>77</sup> Thus the author of the *lex de imperio* would have had either legal or political reasons for omitting references to these emperors when he was drafting the document in December 69; the fact that no precedent is cited for certain clauses, Brunt argues, is due to the fact that that prerogative had first been voted to Nero or one of his successors, and so it was not possible to adduce their names.<sup>78</sup>

However, Brunt's explanation for the pattern of imperial citation in this document does not accord with the rigorous legalistic reading on which his interpretation of its significance in the constitutional history of the Roman state is based. Regardless of the disrepute into which individual emperors had fallen, their legal precedent should have been equally valid if this document does record a grant of authority grounded in a traditional, legal framework. Gaius, and his *acta*, had not been officially condemned, and while he might have been forgotten by Dio's day he does appear in the list of emperors who had granted citizenship that appears in the Tabula Banasitana, which Brunt

---

<sup>76</sup> *Referente Caesare de restituendis Galbae honoribus...*, Tac. *Hist.* 4.40. For Brunt, the fact that Galba is not referred to in this document is further evidence that the law was drafted and passed in December 69, before Domitian's attempt to restore Galba's honors.

<sup>77</sup> Dio 60.4.5-6.

<sup>78</sup> For clauses III and IV; it would have been too difficult to phrase a citation for clause VIII; Brunt 1977, 103, see especially n. 45.

acknowledges.<sup>79</sup> The fact that Gaius had disappeared from the list of emperors who receive oaths and prayers by Dio's day is not sufficient evidence that he would not have been considered an acceptable legal precedent, since Dio specifies that the same is also true of Tiberius. What is more, since there is no evidence that the *acta* of Otho or Vitellius were officially rescinded, or that their memories had been condemned, the absence of their names from the document must indicate that the major criterion for inclusion in the document was not legal rigor but another principle entirely: Augustus, Tiberius, and Claudius appear as imperial precedents in this document because its authors perceived them to be relevant, not because they provided the only precedents which supported the clauses' legal meaning; the exclusion of Gaius, Nero, Galba, Otho, and Vitellius was not based on the legal status of their *acta* or the abolition of their memories, but on the perception that a reference to them would not provide the appropriate support for the 'correct' reading of the clauses in the law.

Furthermore, Brunt's legal reading of the document is problematic when it comes to the so-called "discretionary clause", clause VI:

... and that whatever he shall judge to be according to the custom of the republic and the grandeur of divine, human, public, and private matters, he shall have the right and the power to conduct it and to do it, just as there was for the deified Augustus, Tiberius Julius Caesar Augustus, and Tiberius Claudius Caesar Augustus Germanicus.<sup>80</sup>

---

<sup>79</sup> Brunt 1977, 103 nt. 45; on the tablet see Seston and Euzennat 1971; Oliver 1972; Sherwin-White 1973.

<sup>80</sup> ll. 17-21: *utique quaecunque ex usu rei publicae maiestate diuinarum huma<na>rum publicarum priuatarumque rerum esse {e} censebit, ei agere facere ius potestasque sit, ita uti diuo Aug(usto) Tiberioque Iulio Caesari Aug(usto), Tiberioque Claudio Caesari Aug(usto) Germanico fuit...* The phrase "whatever he shall judge to be according to the custom of the republic and the grandeur of divine, human, public, and private matters" (*quaecunque ex usu rei publicae maiestate diuinarum humanarum publicarum priuatarumque rerum*) is remarkably opaque; see Malavolta (2008, 110-112) for a discussion of the various merits of different restorations of the punctuation and syntax of the clause.

This clause has attracted a great deal of scholarly attention, inasmuch as it seems to grant the emperor the authority to do whatever he wishes.<sup>81</sup> However, if this is the case, the clause makes the rest of the document legally redundant.<sup>82</sup> This observation has led some scholars to suppose that the clause must refer to a more specific aspect of imperial rule, even if that aspect is not explicitly delineated; for example, Last and de Martino have argued that it was a contingency clause, deliberately vague so as not to restrict the emperor's response in the event of an unforeseen emergency.<sup>83</sup> But, as Crawford points out, that explanation does not resolve the problem that this clause seems to render the more specific clauses of the rest of the document unnecessary.<sup>84</sup> Other possible explanations are that the clause formalizes the emperor's eminent legal authority, as Karlowa offered, or that it could have been an articulation of the formal power of the *imperator*.<sup>85</sup> Brunt's interpretation of the clause is that it means nothing other than what it says: it grants the emperor an all-encompassing authority within all aspects of the state.<sup>86</sup>

However, if this is the case, the fact that clause VI cites the precedent of Augustus, Tiberius, and Claudius is especially troubling in light of Augustus' reported unwillingness to accept any kind of comprehensive legal authority such as that apparently laid out here.<sup>87</sup> While Tiberius or Claudius may have held this kind of blanket authority

---

<sup>81</sup> De Ste. Croix 1981, 385; Pabst 1989, 125-148; Malavolta 2008, 122.

<sup>82</sup> Crook 1996, 120.

<sup>83</sup> Last 1936, 407; de Martino 1974, 502.

<sup>84</sup> Crawford 1996, 550.

<sup>85</sup> Karlowa 1885, 498; Clemente 1977, 248ff.

<sup>86</sup> Brunt 1977, 107; cf. Parsi 1963, 34-35, 108-109.

<sup>87</sup> Crook 1996, 118-119. This is reflected in the *Res Gestae*, in which Augustus emphasizes his unwillingness to accept authority that was unlimited or inconsistent with Republican traditions,

– note the use of *ius* – it seems highly unlikely that Augustus did. Brunt explains this anomaly by claiming that Augustus’ appearance in this clause was intended to indicate a historical vote of comprehensive authority, but rather represents a late-first-century perspective on Augustus’ reign; the authors of the clauses of the *lex de imperio Vespasiani*, like Dio, Suetonius, Tacitus, and even Seneca, considered him the founder of a monarchy, and therefore it was appropriate to grant Vespasian the right to behave as Augustus had done even if Augustus had not had that right through law.<sup>88</sup> Furthermore, although the clause may seem to render the rest of the law redundant, Brunt’s argument that this clause was first introduced to the imperial privileges in 37 CE at the accession of Gaius, and Roman legal conservatism would have led them to retain older, more restricted clauses; meanwhile, clauses like III, IV, and V, which Brunt dates to the reign of Claudius and later, were added in an attempt to authorize the emperor to pay particular attention to specific aspects of his imperial domain, but the fact that these rights had not been extended to Augustus, Tiberius, or Claudius meant that it was inappropriate to cite any legal precedent for these provisions.<sup>89</sup>

This argument requires a significant amount of suspension of disbelief, especially when so much of Brunt’s analysis of the document in general depends on a legalistic reading of the law and its use of precedents. Other clauses of the law carefully avoid ascribing specific powers to emperors who did not possess or exercise them, as is the case with clause V, which identifies Claudius alone as the sole precedent for Vespasian’s

---

see 5-6, cf. 34. This is reflected in Augustus’ historians too: see Velleius Paterculus 2.89.3, Dio 54.10. See Grant 1946, 448 and 1949, 112; Syme 1939, 337.

<sup>88</sup> Brunt 1977, 114 and n. 110. Hurllet (1993) argues that this principle, rather than the principle of legal precedent, applies to the invocation of Augustus’ name throughout the document.

<sup>89</sup> Brunt 1977, 115.



prerogative to move the *pomerium*.<sup>90</sup> But in the case of clause VI, the clause, which is supposed to represent the legal transmission of autocratic authority to the new emperor, invoked Augustus' name in order to explain the nature of the power being conferred rather than to provide legal justification for the existence and legitimacy of the power, and while we may believe that certain intellectually-engaged historians of the second century and later viewed Augustus as the founder of the imperial system, that does not mean that he was generally considered the first Roman imperial autocrat. If this were the case, the early Flavian coin program, which made use of early imperial, generally Augustan, coin types alongside types that explored republican themes could not have been expected to resonate.<sup>91</sup>

Therefore, the appearance of Augustus' name cited as precedent in clause VI seems to undermine the interpretation of the clause as one that "legalizes autocracy" and Brunt's legalistic interpretation of the *lex de imperio Vespasiani* in general. Just as the omission of Gaius, Nero, Galba, Otho, and Vitellius as imperial precedents throughout the document must be due to the fact that their inclusion would not illustrate the nature of the imperial prerogatives rather than due to a desire to support the legality and traditional nature of the individual powers, the inclusion of Augustus (as well as Tiberius and Claudius) in clause VI is intended to clarify the power described in the clause. Brunt dismisses Last's argument that the clause's purpose was to give Vespasian the legal power to act in matters where Augustus had been able to perform through his *auctoritas*

---

<sup>90</sup> Tacitus (*Ann.* 12.23), Dio (55.6.6), and the *SHA Life of Aurelian* (29.9-11) claim that Augustus had, in fact, extended the *pomerium* of the city, and the absence of his name in clause V of the *lex de imperio Vespasiani*, along with the silence of the *Res Gestae* and Suetonius' biography of Augustus on the matter, has been adduced as evidence that these references are incorrect or mistaken. See Boatwright (1986, 13-27) for a discussion of this problem with an extensive bibliography.

<sup>91</sup> Cf. Carradice and Buttrey 2007, 13-14, 54.

on the grounds that Suetonius does not mention such a legal privilege as redress for Vespasian's lack of *auctoritas* in *Vesp.* 7.2 and that Vespasian was not the first emperor to come to power with limited personal authority.<sup>92</sup> However, the reinterpretation of Augustus' name in this clause invites a reassessment the clause as a whole in the context of a tension between informal authority and formal legal power.<sup>93</sup>

In reconsidering clause VI, the difficult phrase *quaecunq̄ue ex usu rei publicae maiestate divinarum humanarum publicarum privatarumque rerum esse censebit* of lines 17-18 becomes especially puzzling. The phrase *divinarum humanarum publicarum privatarumque rerum* seems all-encompassing, and it is difficult to imagine an aspect of Roman life not covered by these concepts; but this genitive phrase modifies *maiestas*, which, along with the phrase *usus rei publicae*, may be more limited in its scope than the list of adjectives suggests. Crawford points out that the latter phrase is a peculiar anomaly that should mean something other than “the interest of the state”, which would normally be rendered *e re publica* in Latin legal language.<sup>94</sup> *Maiestas* in this context is similarly vague, and its usage here seems to have no legal or literary parallels.<sup>95</sup> Crawford translates the phrase “... according to the custom of the *res publica* and the ‘greatness’ of divine and human, public and private matters,” which presents the possibility of a new reading for the clause as a whole: that the imperial prerogative laid

---

<sup>92</sup> Brunt 1977, 115, arguing against Last 1936, 407. Cf. Levi 1938b, 93, who argues that the end of Nero's reign precipitated a “crisis of authority” in the Roman state.

<sup>93</sup> Waters 1963, 213, agreeing with Levi (above); see also Hurlet 1993, 268-280.

<sup>94</sup> As it is in line 14; Crawford 1996, 550.

<sup>95</sup> Crawford suggests, tentatively, parallels with the prayer of the censors in Val. Max. 4.1.10 and Cicero's description of Varro's activities in *Academica* 1.9, but these comparisons are not indisputable and, in any case, recall only the vague and broad phrase *divina humana publica privataque res* – as a discrete phrase (in Valerius Maximus) and as a genitive phrase modifying the more specific *nomina genera officia* (in Cicero) – without shedding light on the much more significant *ex usu rei publicae maiestate(que)*.

out in clause VI and ascribed to Augustus, Tiberius, and Claudius, referred vaguely to the emperor's exercise of authority, whether formal or informal, because the clause was intended to communicate the sphere in which this power was exercised rather than to confer a broad but specific power. The phrase *quaecunque ex usu rei publicae maiestate divinarum humanarum publicarum privatarumque rerum esse censebit* is intended to limit the exercise of total authority and direct the emperor towards the consideration of traditional, republican principles.<sup>96</sup>

In fact, several clauses in the *lex de imperio Vespasiani* seem to endorse traditional republican procedures even while affirming the emperor's authority. For example, clauses II and III read:

II ... and that it should be lawful for him to preside over the senate, to propose or dismiss a motion, and to pass decrees of the senate through a motion and division, just as it was lawful for the deified Augustus, Tiberius Julius Caesar Augustus, and Tiberius Claudius Caesar Augustus Germanicus;

III ... and that when the senate is convened according to his order or his command or in his presence, the law of all things shall be maintained and observed just as if the senate had been summoned and was being convened according to the law...<sup>97</sup>

These clauses appear to grant the emperor an immense amount of authority over the senate, including several rights that seem to extend beyond those usually associated with tribunician power.<sup>98</sup> However, it is important to note that the clause specifically grants

---

<sup>96</sup> Crawford 1996, 550; cf. Levi and Meloni 1986, 324; Griffin 2000, 12.

<sup>97</sup> Lines 3-9: *utique ei senatum habere, relationem facere, remittere, senatus consulta per relationem discessionemque facere liceat, ita uti licuit divo Aug(usto), Ti. Iulio Caesari Aug(usto), Ti. Claudio Caesari Augusto Germanico; utique cum ex voluntate auctoritateve iussu mandatuve eius praesenteve eo senatus habebitur, omnium rerum iusperinde habeatur servetur, ac si e lege senatus edictus esset habereturque;...*

<sup>98</sup> Nicolet 1988, 846-858.

the emperor a privileged position within the well-defined realm of senatorial procedure: he has the power to call meetings of the senate and control the content, and progression, of the senate's discussion, but in order to pass decrees the emperor still has to observe the traditional senatorial process.<sup>99</sup> The importance of these traditions and of the rule of law is emphasized in clause III.

Clause IV deals with elections:

IV... and that those men seeking a magistracy, power, *imperium*, or a curatorship of whatever thing whom he recommends to the senate and the Roman people, or to whomever he has extended or promised his support, consideration of them will be taken in whatever elections *extra ordinem*...<sup>100</sup>

This clause grants Vespasian the considerable power to nominate candidates in elections with a reasonable expectation for their election. Crucially, however, this clause does not imply that these elections (*comitia*) were unnecessary and did not need to happen.

Rather, the clause reinforces the electoral system by which magistrates and officials were appointed, even while it recognizes the emperor's ability to control the outcomes.<sup>101</sup>

Therefore, Vespasian's ability to appoint officials and distribute offices to his clients and supporters has been framed in terms of the traditional electoral procedures. In order to exercise this right, Vespasian will need to respect and make use of the voting assemblies.

After clause V, in which Vespasian is given control over the extension of the *pomerium*, and clause VI, in which Vespasian's ability to exercise his extensive authority

---

<sup>99</sup> Which had not changed significantly from late republican practice by this point in the first century, see Talbert 1984, 221.

<sup>100</sup> Lines 10-13: *utique quos magistratum potestatem imperium curationemve cuius rei petentes senatui populoque Romano commendaverit quibusve suffragationem suam dederit promiserit, eorum comitis quibusque extra ordinem ratio habeatur*...

<sup>101</sup> Levick 1967, 211.

is couched in terms of adherence to traditional, republican principles, clause VII goes a step further by clarifying the relationship between the emperor and the law:

VII... and that in whatever laws or plebiscites it is written that the deified Augustus, Tiberius Julius Caesar Augustus, and Tiberius Claudius Caesar Augustus Germanicus should not be bound, from these laws and plebiscites the Emperor Caesar Vespasian is released; and whatever things by whatever law or motion it was proper for the deified Augustus, Tiberius Julius Caesar Augustus, or Tiberius Claudius Caesar Augustus Germanicus to do, it shall be lawful for the Emperor Caesar Vespasian Augustus to do those same things;...<sup>102</sup>

This clause has not attracted as much attention as clause VI, in part because it seems to be made redundant by the previous clause.<sup>103</sup> As a result, the extent to which this clause in fact imposes limitations on clause VI has been overlooked: where clause VI extended to Vespasian the right to do whatever he wished within the framework of republican principles of the interest of the state and the *maiestas* of all aspects of Roman life, this clause emphasizes the fact that Vespasian's position in the state shall be no more and no less than that of his predecessors. Thus, his limitless authority is restrained within a well-defined legal position, although one that is expressed in terms of the emperor's freedoms. It is significant that this measure follows the earlier clauses II-IV, which had presented Vespasian's authority within the framework of senatorial and comitial procedure; in this clause, Vespasian's freedom to act is expressed in terms of the "laws and plebiscites"

---

<sup>102</sup> Lines 22-28: *utique quibus legibus plebeive scitis scriptum fuit, ne divus Augustus, Tiberiusve Iulius Caesar Augustus, Tiberiusque Claudius Caesar Augustus Germanicus tenerentur, iis legibus plebisque scitis imperator Caesar Vespasianus solutus sit; quaeque ex quaque lege rogatione divum Augustum, Tiberiumue Iulium Caesarem Augustum, Tiberiumue Claudium Caesarem Augustum Germanicum facere oportuit, ea omnia imperatori Caesari Vespasiano Augusto facere liceat;...*

<sup>103</sup> Brunt (1977, 109) argues that this clause was introduced in 14 CE as part of the motion that absorbed Tiberius' rights to those of Augustus and was retained, with characteristic Roman legal conservatism, when the more comprehensive clause VI was added for the accession of Gaius.

which free him from legal constraint or permit him to perform specific actions – his freedom from the law is established, guaranteed, and expressed with reference to legal actions and decisions.

Finally, clause VIII is the so-called “retroactive” or “transitory” clause:

VIII...and that whatever was done, performed, decreed, or ordered before this law was passed by the Emperor Caesar Vespasian Augustus, or by anyone by his order or command, these things shall be lawful and valid, just as if they had been done by the order of the people or the plebs.<sup>104</sup>

This clause differs from the rest of the document in that it cannot be a general grant of authority, but rather a response to Vespasian’s situation at the end of 69 and the beginning of 70, when he had been giving orders as emperor for several months but without the official, legal authority to do so.<sup>105</sup> Even in this clause, however, the legitimacy of Vespasian’s orders – in the past, in the present, or in the future – is expressed in terms of an order of the people, and the standard of legality is based on traditional Republican principles. Thus, this clause simultaneously resolves potential problems by clarifying the legal status of individuals who had acted on Vespasian’s orders before the death of Vitellius while emphasizing the correlation between the force of Vespasian’s order and the force of traditional Roman law.

Although each clause of the *lex de imperio Vespasiani* describes extensive, and sometimes very broad, imperial rights and prerogatives, these powers are more than just couched within a rhetoric of traditional republican procedures and values. Vespasian’s

---

<sup>104</sup> Lines 29-32: *utique quae ante hanc legem rogatam acta gesta decreta imperata ab imperatore Caesare Vespasiano Augusto iussu mandatuve eius a quoque sunt, ea perinde iusta rataque sint, ac si populi plebisve iussu acta essent.*

<sup>105</sup> Lesuisse 1962, 71-75; Parsi 1963, 121-122; Brunt 1977, 107; for a different perspective see Jacques and Scheid 1990, 24.

powers are represented as the products of the republican organs of government – the senate or the comitial assembly – and his supra-legal status is represented as the result of a series of laws. The vision of the imperial office that emerges from these clauses is one where Vespasian’s power as emperor is contingent upon republican concepts and the continuity of republican legal and constitutional forms, which have incorporated the emperor rather than been incorporated by him. This law both presents Vespasian with imperial authority and directs his attention to a specific way of viewing his position: as one that is the result of, defined by, and dependent upon traditional legal principles.

This may seem like standard imperial republican rhetoric, intended to palliate the autocracy of the principate, but this reading of the document also sheds light on the use of imperial precedents in the *lex de imperio Vespasiani*: inasmuch as the inclusion of Augustus, Tiberius, and Claudius and the exclusion of Gaius, Nero, Galba, Otho, and Vitellius cannot be due to the legal status of each of these emperors at the point at which the law was drafted, and must therefore be due to an attempt by the authors of the law to use imperial precedent to highlight a particular aspect of each prerogative and enable a “correct” reading of each clause, how do references to imperial precedent serve to reveal the intended meaning of the surviving clauses of this law? Augustus’ appearance in clause VI, and by extension in other clauses in the document (I, II, and VII) can be understood as an attempt to present imperial power in purely Augustan terms in an effort to cast Vespasian in the role of the first emperor.<sup>106</sup> But given the republican framework for the imperial powers in this document, that model demands additional explanation.

---

<sup>106</sup> Hurlet 1993, 268-280.

One aspect of the document that is a crucial part of this question concerns the perspective of the law's authors. Many modern scholars who have discussed the *lex de imperio* have started from the assumption – sometimes explicit – that this document was drafted by, or at least under the supervision of, one of Vespasian's adherents, and that the clauses of the document therefore lay out imperial power in a way that reflects Vespasian's understanding of his position as emperor.<sup>107</sup> But the emphasis on Augustus and his "good successors" raises the possibility that this law genuinely represents the interests of the senate and people, even while it grants authority to the new emperor, either by limiting imperial authority in the formulation of his powers or by using the formulation of the clauses to clarify the relationship between the emperor and the legal bodies of the state.<sup>108</sup> Augustus, Tiberius, and Claudius made appealing imperial precedents from a senatorial perspective because these were the three emperors who had made the greatest effort to respect the traditions, practices, and authority of republican government even if they had had the power to ignore it altogether.

The year 69 had provided a series of examples of emperors who had adopted different approaches to the concept of imperial rule. Vespasian's immediate predecessors, in part because of the brevity of their reigns, do not appear at first sight to have alienated the senate or developed a tyrannical form of rule: Vitellius adopted a pose of civility toward the Roman senate and people and his coinage proclaimed the return of

---

<sup>107</sup> Explicit statements: Waters 1963, 213 (cf. Adcock 1959); Levick 1967, 213; Facchetti 1981, 400; Levick 1999, 86. This sentiment is implicit in the treatments of Last (1936, 407), Hammond (1959, 328), Garzetti (1974, 629-631). Griffin (2000, 10) argues that the omission of Galba, Otho, and Vitellius represents the Flavian tact in dealing with the tension between Vespasian's supporters, some of whom were Galban and some Othonians. Even Brunt (1977, 95), who argues that the clauses of the law derive from legal tradition, views their formulation as representative of an emperor's notion of imperial power.

<sup>108</sup> Levi 1938a, 9 and 1938b, 89-90; Bonini 1981, 256; cf. Hurlet 1993, 279.



Liberty and Clemency, the latter of which had also appeared on the coinage of Otho, who is supposed to have surprised his contemporaries by not adopting a luxurious and tyrannical way of life as emperor.<sup>109</sup> But from a senatorial perspective, the most significant aspect of the reigns of Galba, Otho, and Vitellius was the influence exerted by the army as each emperor formed his policies and imperial persona, which was due to the support each emperor received from the legions and urban cohorts who had initially ushered him into power.

Tacitus describes the jubilation with which the members of the senate greeted the news of the death of Nero, and Galba began his rebellion not by declaring himself emperor but by declaring that he was the representative of the senate and people of Rome.<sup>110</sup> However, Galba's brief but mismanaged reign was characterized by an inability to capitalize on the goodwill of others, whether that was the soldiers who had supported him or the senate who had so enthusiastically recognized him as emperor. Thus, he alienated Rome's political elite by restricting access to the benefits of the *ius trium liberorum* and limiting the offices available to senators and equestrians.<sup>111</sup> Furthermore, his arrival in the city was accompanied by considerable violence, as he executed a number of former supporters of Nero. Tacitus names the consul elect Cingonius Varro, the ex-consul Petronius Turpilianus, and the provincial governors Clodius Macer and Fonteius Capito, in addition to the less-lamented praetorian prefect Nymphidius Sabinus; these executions were especially disconcerting because the victims were executed

---

<sup>109</sup> Brunt 1977, 101 and n. 33. *Civilitas* see Tac. *Hist.* 2.91-92; cf. Wallace-Hadrill 1982. For Otho, see Tac. *Hist.* 1. 71. However, this boast of Clemency was not such an appealing quality in an emperor: it implied that the emperor's superior force was held in check by his own graciousness, Charlesworth 1937a, 113; Béranger 1953, 271. Cf. Sutherland 1938, 129.

<sup>110</sup> Tac. *Hist.* 1.4; Suetonius *Galba* 10. Compare Galba's coinage: Kraay 1949.

<sup>111</sup> Suetonius *Galba* 14.3, 15.

without trial, and because of the perceived influence of Icelus, Galba's freedman, in determining these men's fates.<sup>112</sup> At the same time, his relationship with the troops had deteriorated as he failed to pay the donatives promised in his name and, most spectacularly, bungled the redeployment of a group of marines with the result that his arrival at Rome was marked by their massacre.<sup>113</sup> Thus the reign of the senatorial emperor Galba was marked by a limitation of the prerogatives and opportunities available to the senators, displays of disregard for the legal process, and violence in the city that demonstrated the extent to which the accession of Galba had made life in Rome less secure. Even the adoption of Piso, which was intended to establish a principle for imperial succession that would obviate an imperial family and thus return power to the hands of Rome's political elite, was a graphic demonstration of Galba's lack of respect for the senate as a body and for the republican traditions of government that it represented: not only did he choose to present Piso as his son and heir for the first time in the praetorian camp rather than the senate or the rostra, he selected as his heir an individual who had never held any kind of civil or magisterial office, although he was of extremely noble birth.<sup>114</sup>

Otho's revolt against Galba began with the loyalty of the urban cohorts: before the adoption of Piso, he bought the loyalty of Galba's imperial guard, and when he was overlooked as Galba's successor he reacted by bribing still further guardsmen. It is telling that his initial plan was to "occupy the camps" (*castra occupare*), but he delayed

---

<sup>112</sup> Murison 1993, 58.

<sup>113</sup> Tac. *Hist.* 1.5-7, 58, 62, 73; Suetonius *Galba* 11-13; Plutarch *Galba* 6.13. Although Galba's victims may not have been popular, their deaths set the tone for Galba's reign; Tacitus describes the victims as "unheard and undefended, just as if they were innocent" (*inauditi et indefensi tamquam innocentes*).

<sup>114</sup> Tac. *Hist.* 1.17-18; Piso was exiled in 38 CE, see Tac. *Hist.* 1.48. For the lukewarm reaction to Piso's adoption in the senate, see *Hist.* 1.19.

out of consideration for the cohort that was on guard at the time, since he did not wish to add to its poor reputation.<sup>115</sup> Otho's accession took the significance of Galba's accession a step further, in that the emperor's power was undeniably and baldly based on the support of the troops, often so explicitly that the security of civil government was threatened; the episode with the marines, in which a group of soldiers, apparently motivated by the fear that their cohorts were going to be disbanded, attacked the palace demanding the death of the senate and access to the emperor, was a violent reminder that Otho's position depended on his relationship with the troops and that the soldiers could exercise authority over the new emperor in a way that put the senate – both the traditions upon which it was based and the individuals of which it was composed – at risk.<sup>116</sup>

Tacitus even presents Otho's suicide after his defeat at Bedriacum as noble and self-sacrificing, not because it was required for the state to be at peace but because he wished to spare his soldiers further risk; at his death, Otho's primary mourners were his troops.<sup>117</sup>

Vitellius' position was even more firmly in the hands of his soldiers in the German legions, who had acclaimed him because of their antipathy towards Galba and their desire to put an emperor in his place who would be indebted to them rather than the Gallic legions, but seem to have been somewhat indifferent as to the identity of the

---

<sup>115</sup> Tac. *Hist.* 1.23-24; Suetonius *Otho* 4.2, 6. See Shotter 1996, 384 for a consideration of how Otho's coin designs were intended to reassure especially senators and equestrians; but see p. 385 for a discussion of how Otho's coinage advertised his qualities of military leadership.

<sup>116</sup> Suet. *Otho* 8.2: *repente omnes nullo certo duce in Palatium cucurrerunt caedem senatus flagitantes...* See also Tacitus *Histories* 1.80 and Plutarch *Otho* 3. Cf. Tacitus' *arcenum imperii*, *Hist.* 1.4; for the political role of the army in this period in general see Chilver 1957.

<sup>117</sup> Tac. *Hist.* 2.47-48; Suet., *Otho* 12.2: *Multi praesentium militum cum plurimo fletu manus ace pedes iacentis exosculati... multi et absentium accepto nuntio prae dolore armis inter se ad internecionem concurrerunt.* The construction of these sentences makes it clear that Otho's absent mourners were also soldiers.

emperor they elevated.<sup>118</sup> Vitellius seems to have remained acutely aware of the extent to which his position depended on the support of the German legions specifically: for example, he took the cognomen “Germanicus” and on Roman coinage his name appears as “Aulus Vitellius Imperator Germanicus,” an unusual formulation that emphasized that he was “emperor by the will of the armies in the German provinces.”<sup>119</sup> Vitellius may have attempted to build his favor with the people of Rome at all levels by wearing the toga praetexta and walking on foot when he entered the city for the first time as emperor, as Tacitus describes him; but Suetonius describes him wearing his general’s cloak and sword in a military procession.<sup>120</sup> Nonetheless, he seems to have been popular with the Roman public.<sup>121</sup> Indeed, at the end of his reign, when his military allies were abandoning him and the Flavian armies were drawing near, Vitellius attempted to return the empire to the control of the senate in a *contio* in the Forum by passing a dagger, symbolizing the power of life and death, to the consul Caecilius Simplex; but by then the writing was on the wall, and “the leaders of the senate, most of the equestrian order, and all the urban soldiers and watchmen” flocked to Flavius Sabinus as the representative of the new regime.<sup>122</sup>

From the perspective of the senate as a body in late 69 or early 70, then, Vespasian – still in Egypt – may have seemed like a threatening mystery; like his

---

<sup>118</sup> Tac. *Hist.* 1.8-9, 51-61; Suet. *Vit.* 7-8.

<sup>119</sup> On “Germanicus” see Tac. *Hist.* 2.64, cf. 2.59. The conventional order of titles would have been “A. Vitellius Germanicus Imperator”, which eventually appeared on Roman coins. Mattingly 1920, 39-40; Sutherland 1987, 120-121. But it is significant in this context that Vitellius adopted the title Augustus late, and never used Caesar on his coins. Cf. Suet. *Vit.* 8.2.

<sup>120</sup> Tac. *Hist.* 2.89; Suet. *Vit.* 11.1. These contradictory accounts are evidence of how important these displays were: evidently, during and after Vitellius’ reign, the manner in which he conducted himself as he entered the city was reimagined to suit impressions of his character and his reign.

<sup>121</sup> Yavetz 1969, 564, but cf. Newbold 1972.

<sup>122</sup> Tac. *Hist.* 3.67; Suet. *Vit.* 15; I also address the significance of this episode in Chapter 2.

immediate predecessors, Vespasian had become emperor with military support, and while he may not have been present in the city the senate was confronted with his most tenacious generals, Mucianus and Antonius Primus, in his place. Even more troubling was the fact that Antonius Primus had had Galba's statues restored in Italian towns as he led his army south, which seemed to assert Vespasian's claim to be Galba's avenger; Domitian was about to arrange for the restoration of Galba's honors.<sup>123</sup> In short, there was no guarantee that Vespasian would not follow Galba's footsteps and begin to threaten elite legal privileges or the authority of the senate as a body, or would not fall into the same trap as Galba, Otho, and Vitellius and come to depend too closely on the continued support of the military at the cost of senatorial influence. Augustus, Tiberius, and Claudius provided far more pleasing alternatives as imperial precedents than the other emperors of 69.

The three emperors who are cited as imperial precedents in the *lex de imperio Vespasiani* share the characteristic that they were most willing to engage in a show of respect for the senate as a branch of the Roman government and for republican legal and political traditions in general. Augustus' reluctance to accept extra-constitutional or extraordinary authority or to be presented as anything other than the protector of Roman republican traditions is well-known, and is documented in the *Res Gestae*, which emphasizes his status as a private citizen.<sup>124</sup> Meanwhile, the extended and fraught negotiations between Tiberius and the senate over the precise formulation of his position

---

<sup>123</sup> Tac. *Hist.* 3.7; 4.40. On the tension between the followers of Vespasian and the former partisans of Otho, see Ferrill 1965; Griffin 2000, 10. There is also the possibility, argued by Mattingly, that Vespasian issued coins under Galba's name, including one bearing the legend SENATUS PIETATI AUGUSTI SC with reverse images of a togate figure, likely a senator, placing a wreath on Galba's head (*RIC I*<sup>2</sup> Galba 489; Mattingly *BMCRE I*, ccxvi and 1952, 72-77). However, Kraay (1956) has shown that this is not possible. See also Gagé 1952.

<sup>124</sup> *RG* 5-6, cf. 35.

and authority are well documented in the beginning of Tacitus' *Annals*.<sup>125</sup> Claudius had risen to power because of the support of the praetorian guard after the assassination of Gaius and had therefore begun his reign in opposition to the senators, but he immediately made an effort at reconciliation: the only individuals who were punished for the death of Gaius were tribunes and centurions and Claudius began his reign by refusing excessive honors. Suetonius emphasizes Claudius' relationship with the senate: he consulted the senate before recalling exiles; he obtained their permission to bring members of the praetorian guard into the senate house during meetings, and he obtained their permission before ratifying the actions of imperial procurators; he would participate in trials as an advisor; when he attended games thrown by magistrates or other individuals, he would stand with the rest of the crowd and participate in shouting acclamations; and he would apologize for making tribunes stand before him.<sup>126</sup>

Some of Claudius' actions with regard to the senate drew consternation, such as the extent to which he permitted the lack of protections for the Roman people against informers.<sup>127</sup> Similarly, Tacitus begins his account of the senatorial negotiations over Tiberius' authority by showing Sallustius Crispus advising Livia to ensure that Tiberius did not "loosen the power of the principate by referring everything to the senate;" Tacitus then characterizes the senatorial negotiations as "the consuls, the senators, and the equestrians rushing into slavery."<sup>128</sup> These emperors were by no means republican. But

---

<sup>125</sup> 1.7. See Matthews 2010, 67-72.

<sup>126</sup> Suet. *Claudius* 11-12; cf. Dio 60.32-7.

<sup>127</sup> Tac. *Ann.* 11.5, cf. Brunt 1977, 114 and n. 112. McAlindon (1956) discusses the senatorial opposition to Claudius; see page 115 for a discussion of the "ample evidence for Claudius' respect for, and attempts to placate the Senate". Informers were a particularly powerful issue in the senate at the beginning of Vespasian's reign (see Tac. *Hist.* 4.6f and 42f).

<sup>128</sup> *Ann.* 1.6: ... *monuit Liviam... neve Tiberius vim principatus resolveret cuncta ad senatum vocando; Ann.* 1.7... *ruere in servitiam consules, patres, eques.*

their willingness to at least show deference to traditional forms of government, and to the authority of the senate and the people as the traditional organs of government, presented a welcome alternative to the sometimes-tyrannical behavior of their younger family members, Gaius and Nero, and to the frighteningly autonomous authority of the military emperors of 69. Augustus, Tiberius, and Claudius provided a model for imperial rule that was rooted in the senate: in traditional procedures of republican government, the authority of the senate and the assembly as bodies of government, the rule of law, and the shared belief in the importance of the traditions and glory of the *res publica*.

Therefore, the authors of the *lex de imperio Vespasiani* invoked Augustus, Tiberius, and Claudius as precedents for certain clauses in the document in order to direct Vespasian's attention towards a model of imperial power that relied on republican concepts and was based on the emperor's cooperation with republican institutions; these emperors were not invoked as legal precedent, but in order to enhance the way that the imperial rights were presented in the document. In this way, the imperial precedents in these clauses serve to underscore the meaning conveyed by the phrasing of each clause, which presented Vespasian's authority in republican terms and urged him to direct his attention toward the civic, traditional issues of Roman government. The overall effect is persuasive, and makes the case that a strong and protected senate could support Vespasian's broad imperial powers, as long as he was prepared to demonstrate his respect for republican civic traditions.

This insight carries with it some implications for the dating of the document. Brunt, because he believed that law represents the formal legal transfer of power from the senate to the new emperor, argued that it should be associated with the *cuncta solita*

which the senate voted to Vespasian in their first meeting after the death of Vitellius, some time before the end of December 69. His argument also depended on his understanding of the role of Augustus, Tiberius, and Claudius in the document: he believed that these emperors were invoked as essential legal precedent, as any other emperor whose memory was not formally abolished or temporarily impolitic would have been.<sup>129</sup> The absence of Galba struck Brunt as particularly significant, as Domitian's restoration of his memory in the senate at its first meeting in January 70 would have clarified Galba's eligibility for inclusion in the list of imperial precedents – as both a legally-valid emperor and as one whose name would not incur too much ill-will.<sup>130</sup> But if the document does use these emperors' names as a way of highlighting its senatorial perspective, by presenting imperial authority as integrated with republican traditions of government, as I have argued, the legal status of Galba's *acta* would have been irrelevant. The restoration of Galba's memory would not have made him an acceptable model for imperial rule from a senatorial perspective.

Levick has proposed a later date for the *lex de imperio Vespasiani*. She argues that the clauses in the law may have been based on legal precedent, but that it does not represent the standard mode for the transfer of power; rather, it was an extraordinary measure intended to publicly clarify and recognize Vespasian's powers in light of his lack of personal *auctoritas*, and thus it “embodied prerogatives available to Vespasian's predecessors rather through position than by rights.”<sup>131</sup> The law cannot have been passed immediately, as the senate would have initially resisted such a measure and the necessity

---

<sup>129</sup> Tac. *Hist.* 4.3: *At Romae senatus cuncta principibus solita Vespasiano decernit....* See Brunt 1977, 101-105.

<sup>130</sup> Tac. *Hist.* 4.40.

<sup>131</sup> Levick 1999, 86.



of such a law was not yet apparent. Levick therefore proposes a date in late February or mid-March of 70, after the restoration of order in the city and the resumption of Roman government, by which time the senate would have been more inclined to support Vespasian's imperial rule. Facchetti has argued an even later date, although on similar grounds: because the law would not have been a satisfactory grant of authority, by his reckoning, this law must define rather than grant imperial legislative powers, and was likely passed at a crucial political point later in Vespasian's reign, perhaps in the mid- to late-70s.<sup>132</sup> But both Levick's and Facchetti's views depend on the notion that the *lex de imperio* was drafted and passed by Vespasian's supporters, and that it therefore represents Vespasian's notion of his own authority; these views overlook the strongly senatorial tone of the document.

The republican emphasis of the document provides the best evidence, although only circumstantial, for the law's date. The *lex de imperio Vespasiani* presents imperial power as a list of specific privileges that the emperor enjoyed phrased in terms of their dependence on traditional, republican forms, procedures, and concepts; this does not necessarily correspond with how Vespasian and his supporters had conceived of the imperial office, and it certainly does not reflect political reality during the reigns of Rome's most recent emperors. Therefore, the period at the beginning of Vespasian's reign after the death of Vitellius in December 69 but before his return to the city in October 70 is the most logical period for the law's composition, because this period offered the opportunity for the senate to consider how they wanted their new ruler to

---

<sup>132</sup> Facchetti 1981, 400 and 405.

behave before he had arrived in person and clarified his position with regard to the senate and to Roman traditions.

Two specific moments within that period present themselves as likely potential periods for the composition of and debate over this document. The first of these was in the last days of 69, after Antonius Primus' capture of the city; in their first meeting (when they granted Vespasian *cuncta solita* for emperors) the senate also gave Vespasian and Titus the ordinary consulships for 70;<sup>133</sup> therefore, for the remaining days of 69 the consuls were Caecilius Simplex and Quintius Atticus, the latter of whom had been among Flavius Sabinus' companions in the siege of the Capitoline and had narrowly missed being executed for it. Thus although he was apparently a supporter of Vespasian's claim to power, he may also have felt that that he was in a position to express his conception of the ideal imperial office within the context of a document that recognized Vespasian's authority. The second of these moments occurred in mid-70, when Mucianus' military strategy led to a period of indeterminate length in which most of the senior, office-holding members of the Flavian faction had left the city: Vespasian and Titus, still consuls, had not yet returned, while Domitian (the urban praetor with consular authority) had left Rome with Mucianus and Petillius Cerealis to put an end to the Batavian revolt, and Antonius Primus had left Rome to join Vespasian in Alexandria. As a result, on June 21<sup>st</sup>, Helvidius Priscus, who held a praetorship, was the most senior magistrate in the city.<sup>134</sup>

---

<sup>133</sup> Tac. *Hist.* 4.3.

<sup>134</sup> Cf. Tac. *Hist.* 4.53; for Helvidius Priscus' authority as praetor to convene a meeting of the senate, see *Hist.* 1.47, in which the urban praetor calls together the senate after the deaths of the consuls Galba and Vinius. I discuss this period of Priscus' relative autonomy in Chapter 1.

Either Quintius Atticus or Helvidius Priscus are ideal candidates for the authors of the a document like the *lex de imperio Vespasiani*; their very names on the document in its *praefatio* would have established the republican tone of the law and encouraged it to be read as an assertion of senatorial privilege and an argument for how Vespasian – or any good emperor – should relate to the senate, people’s assemblies, and to Roman law itself.<sup>135</sup> The law itself is honorific, acknowledging Vespasian’s authority and recognizing his right to be counted among the best Roman emperors, but its clauses are simultaneously phrased in such a way as to delimit the scope of the emperor’s power in the face of the enduring strength of republican institutions; this argument for how Vespasian – or any good emperor – should relate to the senate, people’s assemblies, and Roman law itself recalls Helvidius Priscus’ reputation as a vocal proponent of senatorial privilege over imperial prerogative, which is shown in his attempts to assert senatorial autonomy in the absence of the emperor in the first meeting of the senate after Vitellius’ death, and his omission of the emperor’s name in his praetor’s edicts.<sup>136</sup>

---

<sup>135</sup> Cf. the *lex Gabinia Calpurnia de Insula Delo* (Crawford 1996, 345-51; Dumont et. al. 1980, 48-53 and 58-61), which was passed by the consuls of 58 BCE and granted tax exemptions and other rights to the island of Delos. Crawford notes that “the form of the text [of the *lex Gabinia Calpurnia*] is curious. The Latin version begins with the prescript appropriate to a statute which has been passed through the assembly... But what we have thereafter is the text of a *rogatio*... The text is also anomalous in that, like a decree of the senate, it gives reasons for its prescriptions; no doubt the text of the *rogatio* closely follows that of such a decree. It offers a comparison to the *lex de imperio Vespasiani* not only because of its formal peculiarities: its preface begins with the names of the consuls who had proposed the law and the circumstances of its passage: *A. Gabinius A.f. L. Calpurnius L.f. Piso consules populum iuere rogauerunt populusque iuere sceiuit*... This phrasing emphasized the role of these two individuals in a way that communicated their roles as benefactors to the people of Delos. In this instance, the euergetical intent of the law influenced its form and its phrasing – particularly of its *praefatio* – which invites a reading of the text at a rhetorical as well as a legal level.

<sup>136</sup> In Tac. *Hist.* 4.4 Priscus had proposed that the senate undertake the restoration of the Capitolium, allowing Vespasian only to provide money for the project. On his disrespect toward Vespasian during his praetorship see Suet. *Vesp.* 15.

The use of imperial precedents in this document also casts Vespasian in a narrative of imperial power, in which the good emperors are celebrated for their adherence to a set of values while the memory of bad emperors (like Gaius, Nero, and Vespasian's immediate predecessors) is obliterated. In light of this, it is interesting to note how Vespasian responded to the narrative presented in this document. After his arrival, Vespasian's attitude towards his imperial predecessors, and towards Roman traditions, changed. Before his accession, Vespasian and his followers had cast themselves as the avengers of Galba, erecting his statues throughout Italy, and in one of the early senate meetings Domitian moved to restore Galba's memory. But Suetonius includes a puzzling reference at the end of his *Life of Galba*:

The senate, as soon as it was permitted, voted for him a statue standing on a beaked column in the spot of the Forum where he had been killed; but Vespasian put an end to the decree, believing that Galba had sent assassins against him from Spain to Judaea.<sup>137</sup>

This passage has puzzled modern scholars as it seems to contradict Vespasian's established attitudes towards his predecessor; the comment that the senate did this "as soon as it was permitted" suggests that this vote took place early in Vespasian's reign, as they would have been prevented from honoring Galba under both Otho and Vitellius. This statue would have been an important monument, marking Flavian attitudes towards the other emperors of 69 and preserving Galba's memory as a great victor and leader. Vespasian's rejection of the motion suggests that, after his return to the city, he began to

---

<sup>137</sup> Suet. *Galba* 23: *Senatus, ut primum licitum est, statuam ei decreverat rostratae columnae superstantem in parte Fori, qua trucidatus est; sed decretum Vespasianus abolevit, percussores sibi ex Hispania in Iudaeam submississe opinatus.*

distance himself from the memory of Galba and began to conceive of a different relationship between himself and the Roman imperial past.

Instead, over the course of the 70s, Vespasian began to associate himself more and more with the memory of Claudius. In the course of the reconstruction of the Domus Aurea and the areas damaged by the civil war, Vespasian completed the Temple of the Deified Claudius, which had been begun but abandoned by Nero;<sup>138</sup> he also supported the cult associated with this temple, which does not seem to have flourished either before or after the Flavian dynasty.<sup>139</sup> The temple was a colossal structure on the Caelian Hill, which Vespasian was able to incorporate into the larger project of opening the Domus Aurea for public use and transforming parts of the complex into public projects.<sup>140</sup> Thus this massive structure was adjacent to the Flavian amphitheatre and incorporated within the rest of the Flavian public building projects in the southern end of the forum. The temple added its own personal nuance to the Flavian building program's political significance: Claudius' temple became part of the Flavian project of monumentalizing the obliteration of Nero's memory, just as Claudius' name had appeared in the clauses of the *lex de imperio Vespasiani* in an attempt to create a narrative of imperial power that eliminated Nero and other despotic rulers.<sup>141</sup>

---

<sup>138</sup> Suet. *Vesp.* 9. The construction of the temple conveyed a sense of nostalgia for Claudius' reign by employing a rusticated building style that was associated with Claudius' projects and contrasted sharply with the Hellenistic style of Nero's Rome. See Ramage 1983, 213; Charlesworth 1937b, 57-60; see Darwall-Smith 1996, 48-55.

<sup>139</sup> Charlesworth 1937b, 58. Charlesworth also considers the curious fact that the *lex de imperio Vespasiani* does not refer to Claudius as a *divus* despite the fact of his deification and the Flavians' later respect for him. He argues that this indicates that the significance of Claudius changed from the time of the composition of the law and the mid-70s, when the work on the Temple was completed.

<sup>140</sup> Platner and Ashby 1929, 120-1; Steinby 1993, 277-8.

<sup>141</sup> Schmidt 1988, 83-89; Shotter 2004, 2 n. 13.

Meanwhile, in 73-4, Vespasian assumed the office of *ensor* and conducted a census in Rome with Titus as his colleague.<sup>142</sup> This was the first census that had taken place since the reign of Claudius, and only the fifth since the beginning of the principate.<sup>143</sup> In holding this office, Vespasian was able to assess the membership of the senatorial body and all orders of society, and confirm the status and eligibility of individuals; but it is significant that he did so by means of a traditional republican mechanism for the renovation of the state.<sup>144</sup> His adoption of this office was not a threat to individuals or perceived as overwhelming arrogance or tyranny. Rather, it was understood as an attempt by the emperor to use his authority to preserve and strengthen the republican bodies of government. After the conclusion of the census, Vespasian and Titus continued to use the title *ensor* in their imperial titulature throughout their reigns, and Domitian would create the position of *ensor perpetuus*.<sup>145</sup> Vespasian's censorship can be seen as a response to the senatorial narrative of imperial power presented in the *lex de imperio Vespasiani* in that the emperor has assumed the role of protector of republican traditions, which he pursues by means of the legal and political mechanisms that were already in place. Thus he participated in the ongoing correlation between imperial power and senatorial tradition. His retention of the title of *ensor* after the conclusion of the census indicates how important he, and his contemporaries, considered this accommodation to be.

---

<sup>142</sup> Suet. *Vesp.* 9.2.

<sup>143</sup> Suolahti 1963, 699.

<sup>144</sup> See Eck 1970, 103-105 for a list of equestrians adlected to the senate in this census. This censorship also seems unique in that it conferred a higher rank on a number of men who were already senators (Eck 1970, 93f). For a discussion see Millar 1977, 293-294.

<sup>145</sup> Jones 1972, 128, cf. Hammond 1959, 85-86. For Domitian, see Dio 67.4.3; Jones 1973, 276-277, Buttrey 1975. On Vespasian's adlection of men in the senate, see Houston 1977, 37 n. 14. Vespasian's retention of the title after the conclusion of the census was an honorific, see Houston 1977, 38 n. 16.

Thus the *lex de imperio Vespasiani* is a crucial piece of evidence for the legal and cultural background of Vespasian's power in the early months of his reign, yet its singular nature makes it difficult to understand. The complete text was at least at least one tablet longer, if not more; the senatorial perspective represented in the document and the emphasis in the surviving clauses makes it likely that the law's front matter, with the consular date and information about who proposed the law, was extensive, in order to emphasize the connection between Vespasian's imperial power and senatorial procedure. This law formally recognizes Vespasian's rights as the new emperor by listing a series of specific privileges that had become part of the imperial office. But its purpose was distinct from its legal function: this document was drafted in order to present a particular image of the relationship between the emperor and the traditional bodies of the Roman state, in which imperial prerogatives are based on and defined by senatorial and comitial procedures. Thus imperial powers are described in senatorial terms, and the precedents of civic-minded emperors – Augustus, Tiberius, and Claudius – are invoked in order to emphasize this point.

In this way, the *lex de imperio Vespasiani* was a contentious document that was intended by its authors to honor the new emperor while actively engaging in the definition of his position by using the law to frame the discussion over the nature of the principate. The senatorial notion of imperial power emphasized the relationship between imperial power and traditional republican government, presenting this series of legal privileges as entirely bound up within the system of senatorial procedure. In order to make best use of these privileges, Vespasian will have to respect and protect these procedures. This shows that, despite the precise legal privileges transmitted by the

clauses of the *lex de imperio*, at the moment that Vespasian was granted power, the position of the princeps was undefined, amorphous, and subject to negotiation. The *lex de imperio Vespasiani* is a product of this negotiation and discussion, challenging imperial autonomy at a rhetorical level while conceding imperial privileges at a legal level in the early months of Vespasian's reign, before the new emperor had had the chance to exercise his personal *auctoritas* in Rome.

### **Cola di Rienzo and the *lex de imperio Vespasiani***

The text of the *lex de imperio Vespasiani* has been the focus of interest as a piece of imperial constitutional history since the fourteenth century, when it was discovered and presented to the Roman public by the politician and revolutionary Cola di Rienzo. The discovery is related in the account of an anonymous but contemporary Chronicler who wrote an account of Cola's life and career in his history of the years 1327-54, which can be compared with his surviving letters and other personal documents.<sup>146</sup> In the early 1340s, Cola, known for his oratorical skill, had been sent to the new pope Clement VI in Avignon to request his return to Rome and to seek papal recognition for a new popular government that had taken control of the city; this mission failed, and the city fell back into the hands of an aristocratic government. But Cola retained an important administrative position, and continued to work towards a program of anti-aristocratic

---

<sup>146</sup> For a critical edition of the chronicle see Porta 1979; the Life of Cola di Rienzo is often extracted and the English translation of Wright (1975) also contains a helpful introduction to the historical, social, and economic background to the material. Billanovich (1995) has proposed that the anonymous chronicler was Bartolomeo di Iacovo da Valmontone, an acquaintance of Petrarch. Cola's correspondence: Burdach and Piur 1913-1929.



revolution, and in May 1347 he took control of the Capitol with his supporters and assumed the title of “Tribune”.<sup>147</sup>

But before he had seized power, perhaps in late 1346 or early 1347, Cola di Rienzo had raised public awareness of his position through dramatic spectacles, placards, and displays. One of these spectacles took place in the portico of the Church of St. John Lateran, where Cola re-erected the tablet containing the *lex de imperio Vespasiani* surrounded by a painting showing the senate conceding authority to the emperor Vespasian, and then presented this tableau in a ceremony during which he stood at a decorated speaker’s platform and delivered a speech on the contents and significance of the text before an audience of Roman nobles, jurists, and others. The Chronicler’s account of this event records Cola’s speech:

*“Vedete quanta era la mannificenzia dello senato, ca la autoritate dava alla imperio’. Puoi fece leiere una carta nella quale erano scritti li capitoli colla autoritate che llo puopolo de Roma concedeva a Vespasiano imperatore. In prima, che Vespasiano potessi fare a sio benepiacito leie e confederazione con quale iente o puopolo volessi; anche che potessi mancare e accrescere lo ogliardino de Roma, cioène Italia; potessi dare contado più e meno, come volessi; anche potessi promuovere uomini a stato de duca e de regi e deponere e degradare; anco potessi disfare citate e refare; anco potessi guastare lietti de fiumi e trasmutarli aitrove; anche potessi imponere gravezze e deponere allo benepiacito. Tutte queste cose consentio lo puopolo de Roma a Vespasiano imperatore in quella fermezza che avea consentuto a Tiberio Cesari. Lessa questa carta, questi capitoli, disse: “Signori, tanta era la maiestate dello puopolo de Roma, che allo imperatore dava la autoritate. Ora l’avimo perduta...”*

---

<sup>147</sup> Collins 1998, 161-162; 2002, 62-66, and 143-152 for a discussion of the sources and their ideological and cultural perspectives. Cola’s revolutionary Tribunate met armed resistance from Rome’s aristocratic faction and by December 1347 Cola had abdicated power and fled to Naples.

“You see how great was the magnificence of the Senate, which gave authority to the Empire.” He had a paper read which contained the articles describing the authority which the people of Rome conceded to the Emperor Vespasian: he could make laws and treaties at will with any nation or people; he could decrease or increase the garden of Rome, that is, Italy; he could grant a greater or lesser fief, as he wished; he could promote men to the status of duke or king, and demote and degrade them; he could destroy cities and rebuild them; he could divert the courses of rivers; and he could impose taxes and remit them at will. All these things the people of Rome conceded to Vespasian just as they had conceded them to Tiberius Caesar. When this paper had been read, and these articles, he said, “Gentlemen, so great was the majesty of the people of Rome that it gave authority to the Emperor. Now we have lost it...”<sup>148</sup>

Collins has argued that this display, and the text of the *lex de imperio* in general, played an important role in Cola di Rienzo’s developing political philosophy: “in 1347 Cola was to envisage his own powers as comparable to those of Vespasian... He used the Vespasianic precedent as a prelude to his own legal establishment as supreme ruler of Rome by popular mandate.”<sup>149</sup> Thus, she argues, the *lex de imperio Vespasiani* was instrumental in the development of Cola’s revolutionary platform.

For scholars interested in the text of the *lex de imperio* itself, this account raises a number of important questions. Cola’s list of Vespasian’s rights includes items that are not present in the clauses on the surviving tablet, raising the possibility that Cola di Rienzo had access to additional tablets and – perhaps – the complete text of the law. In particular, the similarity between the first item in the Chronicle and the first, incomplete, clause of the existing tablet (the right to “...make treaties with whomever he wishes” of line 1) seems an unlikely coincidence, and Sordi has argued that the fourth item in the list

---

<sup>148</sup> Text: ed. Porta 1979, 148-149; trans. Wright 1975, 36.

<sup>149</sup> Collins 1998, 173.

presented in the Chronicle – the right to “promote men to the status of duke or king, and demote and degrade them” – correlates to the fourth clause of the surviving tablet, in which Vespasian is given the right to nominate candidates for magistracies and other offices.<sup>150</sup> But the sixth item of the Chronicle’s list – that Vespasian could divert the course of rivers – must refer to Vespasian’s ability to appoint *curatores aquorum*, a specific right that derived from a vote of extraordinary *imperium* that does not appear in the surviving tablet.<sup>151</sup> The Chronicle’s reference to Vespasian’s ability to “decrease or increase the garden of Rome” evidently arose from a confusion between *pomerium* of line 14 and the word *pomarium*, or “orchard”, and thus correlates to clause V of the *lex*.<sup>152</sup>

This confusion, which Gibbon regarded as evidence for Cola’s lack of comprehension, makes it seem likely that Cola’s speech merely repeats the contents of the law, since he lacked the critical skills to analyze the text and the comparative juristic knowledge to understand its contents.<sup>153</sup> Collins, however, points out that the Chronicle is specific in its reference to a single tablet, and makes the case for Cola’s ability to understand and engage with the document.<sup>154</sup> She argues that Cola had access to legal and historical documents that could have informed his reading of the text, and that his reference to the emperor’s ability to appoint *curatores aquorum*, for example, can be

---

<sup>150</sup> Sordi 1971, 307.

<sup>151</sup> Crawford 1996, 551.

<sup>152</sup> This connection has been discussed for some time, cf. cf. Collins 1998, 170 n. 22.

<sup>153</sup> Gibbon [1994] 3, p. 1025 (= volume 6 chapter 70); Crawford (1996, 551) argues that Cola may still have had access to the entirety of the text since he would not have been able to distinguish between one tablet with one column of text and a tablet with a double column in his description. Sordi (1971, 309) argues that Cola had access to the missing tablet or tablets on the grounds that, if he had not, he would have needed as advanced an understanding of Roman legal traditions as Karlowa or Mommsen in order to produce the rights listed in the Chronicle, and therefore that the missing tablet contained the laws of the *lex regia* absent from the surviving text and a list of bodies from which the law emanated: the senate and the people of Rome. See also De Martino 1974, 462-3; Brunt 1977, 75 n. 2.

<sup>154</sup> Collins 1998, 172.

explained as easily by Cola's familiarity with this right from other legal documents and his friendship with contemporary scholars of Roman law as it could by his access to a missing tablet of the *lex de imperio*.<sup>155</sup> Thus, Cola's speech is evidence for his engagement in the traditions of ancient Roman law, but not necessarily evidence for the original contents of the complete law.

The argument that Cola had an advanced knowledge and understanding of Roman legal traditions and was capable of compiling a list of rights without reference to the missing tablets of the *lex de imperio Vespasiani* seems to falter in the face of the fact that Cola had confused the *pomerium*, a crucial Roman concept, with an apple orchard. However, Collins shows that Cola had used the term *pomerium*, along with other legal language found in the *lex de imperio*, correctly in other contexts. Therefore, we must attribute such errors to the Chronicler, who either relied on a witness who did not understand the phrase or did not understand it himself.<sup>156</sup> This insight poses an interpretive challenge, as it forces us to acknowledge the Chronicler's role in relating the contents and rhetoric of Cola's speech before we can use the speech as a source for the contents of the law; in addition, Collins' argument destabilizes the assumption that Cola must have found the rights that do not appear in the surviving clauses of the law on its missing tablets, and that he therefore had access to a more complete, or even entirely

---

<sup>155</sup> Collins explores the correlation between the clauses in the Chronicler's description and the rights of the *lex regia* as reconstructed by Karlowa (1885, I 492-500), who made use of historical and legal documents, including the surviving tablet of the *lex de imperio Vespasiani* but excluding Cola's speech in the Chronicle. The fact that Karlowa was able to independently find evidence for imperial rights that correlate to each of the clauses of the Chronicle's account may indicate that these rights were originally including in the missing tablet or tablets of the law, but not necessarily that Cola di Rienzo could have known of them from that source alone.

<sup>156</sup> Collins 1998, 170. Cola used the word *pomerium* in a letter shortly afterward to describe the boundaries of the Roman Empire (Burdach and Piur, *Briefwechsel* 3, letter 57.645). What is more, this term was in fairly common use in the mid-fourth century; see Collins 1998, 170 n. 22.

complete, text of the law. The Chronicler's account of Cola's speech is evidence for how Cola's performance, which drew meaning from the contents of the tablet and from its monumentality in a combined rhetorical and visual display, was received by at least one of his audience members, and therefore of the effect of Cola's dramatic interpretation of the text.

But Cola's rhetorical engagement of the text may help to clarify the constitutional questions about Cola's access to the missing tablets and his knowledge of the complete law. Cola di Rienzo's interpretation of the document located imperial power in the hands of the senate, and supported his argument for a popular government in Rome:

Then he said, "You see how great was the magnificence of the Senate, which gave authority in the Empire." He had a paper read which contained the articles describing the authority which the people of Rome conceded to the Emperor Vespasian.... When this paper had been read, and these articles, he said, "Gentlemen, so great was the majesty of the people of Rome that it gave authority to the Emperor..."

In light of the truly extensive powers granted to Vespasian in the surviving clauses of the law, this interpretation seems absurd and impossible;<sup>157</sup> the only ready explanation is that Cola's apparent reading of the tablet represents his attempt to connect this law to his emerging political philosophy.<sup>158</sup> But the discussion of the language of the clauses above has shown that the surviving clauses emphasize traditional republican bodies of government and ground Vespasian's imperial powers in legal, constitutional terms; Cola's assertion that the document reflects the senate's power over the emperor reflects the rhetorical meaning of the surviving clauses, if not their legal meaning.

---

<sup>157</sup> Levick 1999, 86.

<sup>158</sup> Collins 1998, 175.

If Cola di Rienzo had had access to the complete document, including the law's *praefatio*, he may have had an even stronger impression of the autonomy and authority of the senate and of traditional legal bodies than the content of the law would indicate. We must assume that the law's opening lines preserved the names of the magistrates proposing the *rogatio* and information about its passage that emphasized the senate's authority in passing this law and the legalistic traditionalism that would dominate the language of the rest of the document; Cola's access to the opening lines of the text would have strengthened the impression that the law indicated the senate's authority over the emperor, and not an assertion of imperial autonomy. Although this is tenuous, Cola's engagement with the rhetorical language of the text would suggest that it is more likely than not that he had access to the complete law, and that the missing clauses that are found in the Chronicle's account of his speech were originally inscribed on missing tablets of the law.

Furthermore, Cola's engagement with the rhetoric of the text sheds new light on interpretation of the law, and the historical significance of his presentation of the law. Collins had argued that Cola's reading of the *lex de imperio Vespasiani* contributed to the development of his political platform as he laid the groundwork for his popular revolution in May 1347, in which "Cola was to envisage his own powers as comparable to those of Vespasian."<sup>159</sup> But in his assertion that the text illustrates "how great was the magnificence of the Senate, which gave authority in the Empire... so great was the majesty of the people of Rome that it gave authority to the Emperor" we can see that in fact Cola is aligning himself more with the senatorial authors of the document, rather

---

<sup>159</sup> Collins 1998, 173.

than the law's imperial audience. His interpretation applies the central question at the heart of the *lex de imperio* – the role of the people in framing the power of Rome's leader – to the conflict between the people and the aristocracy of his fourteenth-century Rome, and he uses this document, which had been written to communicate the senate's assertion of their right to legally define the position of the princeps, to support an argument for the Roman people's historic claim to authority over their leaders; in this way, the *lex de imperio Vespasiani* presented Cola di Rienzo with a historical and legal framework for the popular, anti-aristocratic political platform that underlay his revolution in 1347.

The senatorial definition of imperial power presented by this law emphasized the role of traditional republican government, which, for Cola di Rienzo, meant the people of the city of Rome. By his time, the political tension between the Roman people and their aristocratic rulers – and, indeed, the pope – was a deeply-entrenched problem and the root of long-term instability; Cola's response to this tension used this document to re-engage the political debate of 69-70 on the nature of the principate and its relationship with traditional urban government. For Cola di Rienzo, as for the senators of 69-70, the nature of power and the right to government was subject to negotiation, and *lex de imperio Vespasiani* was both a product of and a framework for the continuation of that discussion, both when it was drafted in 70 and when it was read by Cola di Rienzo in 1346.

## **Conclusion**

There is a certain amount of overlap between the discussion of Vespasian's informal authority, his *auctoritas* and *maiestas*, and the discussion of his formal powers as they are reflected in the *lex de imperio Vespasiani*. For example, the importance of

imperial precedent – especially Claudius – is relevant to both. I have argued that Vespasian departed from the practice of his imperial predecessors by not attempting to forge a relationship between himself and the Julio-Claudian dynasty, or even specific members of that family; yet, in responding to the particularly senatorial vision of the imperial office represented in the *lex de imperio*, Vespasian used the memory of Claudius to give an added senatorial nuance to the meaning behind his reconstruction of the Neronian buildings at the south-east end of the Forum. Even then Vespasian's attitude towards his predecessors is revealing: he was willing to show Claudius *pietas* and encouraged his cult, but he did attempt to position himself as Claudius' son, or heir, or protégé. Nonetheless, the role of Vespasian's predecessors, Claudius in particular, in these discussions indicates the extent to which the Romans of the year 70 were making use of an idealized version of Rome's imperial past as a reference point as they negotiated the anxieties of their imperial present: the republic was not Rome's only Golden Age.

Vespasian made use of narrative *topoi* as he developed his imperial persona in a way that avoided any indication of pre-imperial privilege or political power. His *auctoritas* and *maiestas* derived from the way that he presented himself: a political outsider whose rustic morality and lack of pretension gave him a moral authority over his more polished urban contemporaries, and Suetonius can speak of Vespasian's lack of *auctoritas* despite extensive evidence for his political and social influence in the mid-60s. Vespasian's use of narrative *topoi* also allowed him to develop a particular model of imperial *maiestas*; Vespasian, unlike his predecessors, cultivated his imperial super-human greatness by rejecting, even openly mocking, the divine pretensions of previous



emperors. His down-to-earth qualities, combined with the fact of his imperial accession and the numerous divine portents and omens that were supposed to have foretold his rise, cast him as a favorite of Fortune; the gods sought to establish a relationship with him, and not the other way around.

Understanding Vespasian's informal personal authority illuminates, at least in part, some of the problems in interpreting the *lex de imperio Vespasiani*. The surviving clauses of the law recognize Vespasian's new imperial privileges in terms of his seemingly limitless powers: his freedom from punishment under the law, his ability to decide the outcome of elections, his control over senatorial proceedings. Vespasian's claim to these powers lies in his claim to the imperial office, and the immense amount of personal authority required in maintaining such a claim; if anything, clause VIII shows that, for Vespasian, legal recognition had not been a technical necessity when he first assumed the role of emperor although the legal formulation of Vespasian's imperial privileges contained in the *lex de imperio Vespasiani* was valuable for Vespasian, as it provided him with a senatorial 'seal of approval'. But then, Vespasian's perceived need for senatorial approval was in part the creation of the law itself. This balance between Vespasian's personal authority and constitutional powers, and the senate's awareness of the emperor's prerogatives and their desire to influence his attitude towards them, shows the extent to which *auctoritas* and *imperium* were thoroughly interconnected at this point in Rome's history.

The language of the *lex de imperio Vespasiani* also shows the extent to which the formal powers of the emperor were as fluid and subject to reevaluation as his informal authority; for all that the document defines Vespasian's legal privileges, it also situates

his autocratic powers in a legal framework that asserts the emperor's dependence on the traditional constitutional forms of the republic. The *lex de imperio*'s dual function of transmitting formal authority to the new emperor at a legal level while engaging ideologically with the question of the origin and nature of imperial power – and asserting the senate's right to define and delimit imperial power – shows the extent to which the document was a product of the political and cultural instability of the period of the civil war. However, by engaging with the question of the state's civic government's capacity to define the authority of its rulers, the *lex de imperio* made the case for popular government in a way that resonated beyond the years 69-70, as is clear from its revolutionary impact on the political thought of the fourteenth-century Roman populist Cola di Rienzo.

## Chapter 4:

### Vespasian and his dynasty: the Flavian *domus Augusta*

#### Introduction

By the time that Vespasian assumed power, what the Roman public saw of the imperial family was carefully controlled, as the relationships between family members, their personalities and behaviors, and their morality contributed to the public persona of the emperor, whose claim to moral and social authority often derived from his perceived status as the head of the model Roman family. This connection between the emperor's family and his personal authority became crucial when it came to issues of succession, as familial relationships – either biological, legal, or entirely fictive – served to justify and explain transfers of power from one generation to the next. In imagining ways to represent the Flavian dynasty, Vespasian responded to the precedents set by his Julio-Claudian predecessors. His priority was to present his family to the Roman public in such a way as to lead them to view his sons as extensions of himself, so that when he died Titus', and then Domitian's, accessions would not meet resistance. Thus his family became an important component of Flavian ideology, and the relationships between the members of the imperial house became a crucial part of how the Roman public viewed its individual members. In order to understand how Vespasian achieved this, it is necessary

first to examine the Julio-Claudian traditions of dynasticism to which he was responding, especially the Augustan concept of the *domus Augusta*, the ideologically charged public construction of the imperial household.<sup>1</sup>

The public presentation of the Julio-Claudian imperial family was a crucial means by which Augustus established his public persona in traditional, domestic terms, which contributed to his personal authority; the way that the members of the *domus Augusta* were presented to the public both before and after Augustus' death also played a crucial role in establishing the Julio-Claudian dynasty, as the family groups that were constructed and presented to the public emphasized Augustus' role as the founder of a concrete family tradition whose heirs would continue his legacy into the future. Women played an important role in this performance, as their bodies served to negotiate imperial succession by transmitting imperial legitimacy in the form of royal blood from one generation to the next; thus, certain imperial women, especially the mothers or potential mothers of emperors, assumed immense symbolic importance in dynastic politics, which many could translate into real personal political authority.

When Vespasian assumed power, the Julio-Claudian model of the *domus Augusta* had been well-established, and he had personally witnessed the rise and fall of one of the most famous Julio-Claudian dynastic women, Agrippina the Younger. Consequently, while Vespasian had always presented himself as the founder of a new imperial dynasty, he adapted the concept of the *domus Augusta* for the Flavian family in a way that offers a commentary on the later decades of Julio-Claudian dynastic politics. He avoided an

---

<sup>1</sup> This phrase first appears in Ovid (*ex Pont* 2.2.74) to describe the house and household of Augustus. I use "*domus Augusta*" here to describe a particular political construction that predated the first appearance of the phrase; cf. Wardle 2000, 479-483.

emphasis on biological connections, and thus references to imperial women, in developing the public presentation of the Flavian imperial house, and instead developed other ways of depicting the relationships among himself, Titus, and Domitian that nonetheless clearly articulated the dynastic stability of the Flavian future. However, it is incorrect to say that there were no women in the imperial family under Vespasian; in fact, Antonia Caenis, the freedwoman concubine of Vespasian, and Julia Berenice, the Jewish princess who was Titus' mistress, both assumed important symbolic roles in developing the public perception of the Flavian dynasty, as their presences in the imperial family as the lovers of imperial men underscored and emphasized aspects of Vespasian's dynastic narrative.

### **The Julio-Claudian *domus Augusta***

The *domus Augusta*, or the construction of the imperial family that was displayed to the Roman public, was a crucial part of Augustus' development of his imperial persona. Milnor has shown that Augustus developed a "performed domesticity" which allowed him to demonstrate his adherence to traditional values; this "performance of privacy for public consumption" allowed Augustus to project an image of himself as a private citizen who lived virtuously and simply despite the luxurious complexity that his public role occasionally demanded.<sup>2</sup> Augustus blurred the distinction between public and private, casting himself and certain of his family members in traditional domestic roles that were broadcast to the Roman public through a variety of media.<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup> Milnor 2005, 80-93. Cf. Zanker 1988, 137-139.

<sup>3</sup> Milnor 2005, 48-50; Winterling 1999, 85-93; 2009, 79-102; Wallace-Hadrill 1996 285-89, 298.

Augustus' building programs had shaped the city, and had written his family onto Rome's urban environment.<sup>4</sup> Projects like the Portico of Octavia and the Portico of Livia put these women before a public audience in a way that proclaimed their relationships to Augustus and simultaneously used these relationships to give meaning to the public spaces containing these projects: for example, Octavia's status as Augustus' sister meant that the works of art contained within her eponymous Portico were reinterpreted in light of the Augustan program.<sup>5</sup> Livia, Augustus' wife, was a key figure of Augustus' early reign, and her image – presented in public honorific statuary, public monuments, official documents, and eventually Roman coinage – established a precedent for the representation of women in Roman art and the introduction of women to Roman political discourse.<sup>6</sup> Crucially, members of the imperial household were presented as ordinary and unexceptional, except in their strict adherence to republican morality; Livia's portraiture, for example, was carefully crafted to depict her in understated terms appropriate to the wife of private citizen.<sup>7</sup>

During and after Augustus' life, Livia became the public model for a number of female virtues. While simple, her portraiture proclaimed her female modesty, her *pudicitia*, which was a crucial aspect of Augustus' moral reforms.<sup>8</sup> Among her *beneficia* was the dedication of a Temple of Concord; this act of generosity was not in any way inconsistent with appropriate gender roles, as Concord was a wifely virtue that produced

---

<sup>4</sup> Zanker 1988, 143.

<sup>5</sup> Zanker 1988, 145.

<sup>6</sup> Bartman 1999, 3-5.

<sup>7</sup> The votes of honorific statues to Livia by the senate in 35 BCE and in 9 BCE, represent a serious change in the traditions of public, state commemoration; perhaps Livia (and Octavia, who shared the honor in 35 BCE) was depicted in such modest and traditional poses and garb so that the traditional form compensated in part for the radical medium, see Flory 1993, 287-296; Bartman 1999, 32.

<sup>8</sup> Bartman 1999, 46.

matrimonial happiness. But Concord was also associated with civic harmony, and Livia's Temple therefore proclaimed publicly her adherence to a domestic, feminine, private virtue while it associated this virtue, and therefore also Livia, with the expressly public, masculine realm of civic politics; Livia thus became an advocate for reconciliation and peace.<sup>9</sup> Livia's moral significance continued long after Augustus, and indeed she herself, was dead: her earliest appearance on coins minted at Rome was in 21-22 CE, when she appeared on obverses of a series of *dupondii* in the guise of the goddesses Iustitia, Salus, and Pietas, recognizable because of the characteristic knot in her hair.<sup>10</sup>



Figure 4.1: *RIC I* (Tiberius) 47  
(image source: [www.cngcoins.com/Coin.aspx?CoinID=132762](http://www.cngcoins.com/Coin.aspx?CoinID=132762))

Livia's role as the model of Roman domestic virtue was an extension of Augustus' public image; her adherence to traditional morality and domesticity communicated his dedication to these aspects of Roman private life. In addition, it modeled specific aspects of the Augustan moral scheme for the Roman audience, particularly the behavior of a good wife.<sup>11</sup> However, in order to be an effective public symbol for his own domesticity, Livia had to become a public figure, engaging in the

---

<sup>9</sup> Kellum 1990; Flory 1984; Purcell 1986; Milnor 2005 57, 63.

<sup>10</sup> *RIC I* (Tiberius) 43, 46, 47; *BMCRE I* (Tiberius) 79-84, 98.

<sup>11</sup> Purcell 1986, Severy 2003 232-245, cf. Fischler 1994.

daily life of the city as a benefactor and priestess, whose features were so recognizable that her face on the image of a goddess would send a comprehensible message. This is the essence of Augustan “performed domesticity,” in that Livia’s private wifely and feminine virtues were documented and displayed to the public as part of the elaborate construction of Augustus in the context of his household, the *domus Augusta*.<sup>12</sup> As a result, Livia herself acquired her own personal authority, especially in the realm of the family.<sup>13</sup>

Over the course of Augustus’ reign, the ideologically-charged image of the imperial family had become an important part of political discourse. The *domus Augusta* took on a special significance as the Roman public (and Augustus himself) became increasingly concerned about the issue of succession. Statue groups depicting members of the imperial family from both Rome and the provinces show an awareness of the imperial family’s dynastic nature, reflecting a simplified and harmonious vision of the emperor and his closest family that emphasizes his younger relatives and their potential roles as his heirs.<sup>14</sup>

The early years of Tiberius’ reign reveal a public emphasis on the dynasty’s future, especially the one promised by Germanicus and his many children. In 17 CE, during Germanicus’ triumphal procession, all of his children rode with him in his

---

<sup>12</sup> Milnor 2005, 80-93.

<sup>13</sup> Bartman (1999, 93), referring to her as “the de facto female head of state”, explores the way that Livia’s public role connected her with traditionally female virtues.

<sup>14</sup> Flory (1996) discusses the *domus Augusta* as it (may have) appeared in a statue group dedicated in 15 (Tac. *Ann*, 1.55.1; *RE* 17 (1936): 934-35; *CIL* 6.37836), see especially pages 287 and 293. In Ovid, the imperial house of 12 CE consisted of Livia, Tiberius, Germanicus and Agrippina, Drusus and Livilla, and their children; although all the women and Tiberius are unnamed, (Millar 1993, 13). Rose (1997, 4-10 and 22-31) discusses the cultural context for dynastic imagery in general and how this grouping of individuals was reflected back to Rome in provincial honorific statuary.



triumphal chariot.<sup>15</sup> By this point, triumphs had become reserved for members of the imperial family, as celebrations of the glory and power of the imperial household; Germanicus' status as Tiberius' adopted son and prospective heir lent this particular triumphal procession a dynastic meaning as a display of the future of the Julio-Claudian house. The presence of his children, especially his daughters, was a potent symbol of the dynasty's promise for the future.<sup>16</sup> To emphasize this message, in the same year Germanicus dedicated the Temple of Spes, a deity who was associated with the promise of security and prosperity offered by the young to society.<sup>17</sup>

Germanicus' death in 19 CE disrupted the imperial household's systematic use of his family to represent the future of the dynasty, and consequently caused a certain degree of anxiety in the public at large; the *domus Augusta* needed to be reformed to accommodate his death and to present a new heir to the imperial audience. This process is reflected in the *senatus consultum de Pisone patre*, the decree of the senate recording the outcome of the trial of Cn. Piso who, along with his wife Plancina, had been accused of Germanicus' murder.<sup>18</sup> This document was preserved in inscriptions that have been uncovered in Spain and represents a rare complete *senatus consultum*. The text – 176 lines long – consists of a prescript (lines 1-4), which reveals that the text was drafted in the portico of the Temple of Apollo on the Palatine, in the heart of the Augustan imperial complex; a *relatio* (4-11), in which Tiberius asks the senate for a decision on the guilt of

---

<sup>15</sup> Tac. *Ann.* 2.41.

<sup>16</sup> Flory 1998, 492.

<sup>17</sup> *Spes* was later associated specifically with the imperial heir: Grant 1950, 74; Fears 1981, 893-894; Clark 1983, 83 (cf. Clark 1981, *passim*); for a discussion of Germanicus' connection to *Spes* see Clark 1983, 96-100. Germanicus' dedication of the Temple of *Spes*, Tac. *Ann.* 2.49.

<sup>18</sup> Eck, Caballos and Fernández 1996; see also Griffin's review (1997) for a concise discussion of the inscription and the historical issues it raises. Cf. Tac. *Ann.* 2.69 – 3.18.

the elder Piso, his son Marcus, his wife Plancina, and Visellius Carus and Sempronius Bassus, his *comites*; expressions of gratitude to the gods and the emperor (12-22); an account of Germanicus' accusations against Piso and his behavior in his capacity as governor of Syria (23-70); a declaration that the senate found Piso guilty but were prepared to be lenient with Marcus and extended a light penalty to Carus and Bessus, but spared Plancina due to the intercession of Livia (71-123); commendations of the members of the imperial house, the equestrians, the plebs, and the soldiers (123-165); an order to publish the emperor's speech and the decree (165-173); and a *subscriptio* by Tiberius (174-176).

This decree presents a complex construction of the imperial family, several aspects of which have been discussed since its discovery in the 1980s. Cooley has discussed the way that the inscription explores the contrast between the family of the *princeps* and the depraved and flawed Pisones,<sup>19</sup> and Severy has shown that the text highlights the relationships between each individual, in order to show the hierarchical ordering of Roman society starting from the "father" Tiberius and extending to the plebs.<sup>20</sup> The family's political role has also been explored: the document presents the imperial family as intertwined with the institutions of the state, with the result that the emperor's household emerges as a civic institution;<sup>21</sup> but at the same time the individual members of the imperial family are presented in terms of their virtues, which plays a role

---

<sup>19</sup> Cooley 1998, 200-2001; cf. O'Gorman 2006, 281-301 for a discussion of how the family of the Pisones serve as a foil for the Julio-Claudians throughout Tacitus' *Annals* and *Histories*.

<sup>20</sup> Severy 2000, 329.

<sup>21</sup> Yakobson 2003, 84; Stadter 2000, 169; Potter 1999, 71. Severy (2000, 326-327) discusses this phenomenon in this document and the related Tabula Siarensis and Tabula Hebana, for which see Crawford 1996, 1.507-543.

in maintaining social order.<sup>22</sup> What has not yet been addressed, however, is the extent to which the *senatus consultum* presents the imperial household in the process of being reordered in light of the death of its heir, and the way that the configuration of the members of the family in the text serves to connect Tiberius to the past through his connection with Augustus and to the future, through his new heir, Drusus. Thus the *senatus consultum de Pisone patre* presents the *domus Augusta* as a narrative of the imperial past, present, and future.

The members of the imperial household who appear in the document are Tiberius, Livia (now named Julia Augusta after her adoption into the Julian household in 14), Germanicus' wife Agrippina, Germanicus' mother Antonia, and Germanicus' sister Livilla, who is also Drusus' wife; Germanicus' brother Claudius, the future emperor, appears in passing in line 148 along with the children of Agrippina and Germanicus. Throughout the document, each individual is referred to in terms of his or her relationship to other members of the household, which creates the overall impression that the imperial family is a coherent and harmonious, if grief-stricken, whole. Tiberius' relationship with Augustus is emphasized as he is referred to as Tiberius Caesar Augustus throughout the text; this is consistent with broader usage, but the repeated "Augustus" of line 4 (*Tiberius Caesar divi Augusti filius Augustus*) brings special attention to this relationship.<sup>23</sup> However, in the context of this presentation of the imperial family, the women of the household assume a particular importance.

Agrippina, Antonia, and Livilla appear together at the beginning of the list of individuals and groups receiving the senate's commendation, in lines 137-145:

---

<sup>22</sup> Eck, Caballos and Fernández 1996, 282-303; Cooley 1998, 207; Potter 1999, 76.

<sup>23</sup> cf. line 86, 124.

... *ceterorum quoq(ue) contingentium Germanicum Caesarem necessitudine magnopere probare: Agrippinae, quam senatui memoriam divi Aug(usti), qu<o>i fuisset probatissima, et viri Germanici, cum quo unica Concordia vixisset, et tot pignora edita partu felicissimo eorum, qui superessent, commendare; itemq(ue) Antoniae Germanici Caesaris matris, quae unum matrimonium Drusi Germ(anici) patris experta sanctitate morum dignam se divo Aug(usto) tam arta propinquitate exhibuerit; et Liviae sororis Germ(anici) Caesar(is), de qua optume et avia sua et socer idemq(ue) patruos, princeps noster, iudicaret, quorum iudicis, etiam si non contingere{n}t domum eorum, merito gloriari posset, nedum tam coniunctis necessitudinibus inligata femina...*<sup>24</sup>

... and of the others related to Germanicus Caesar by personal connection (the senate) particularly commends: Agrippina, whom the memory of the deified Augustus, by whom she had been highly esteemed, and of her husband Germanicus, with whom she had lived in singular harmony, and the so many children brought forth by a birth most favorable for those who survived, commends to the senate; and of Antonia, the mother of Germanicus Caesar, who, having experienced a sole marriage to Drusus, the father of Germanicus, has shown by the moral purity of her character that she was worthy of so close a connection with the deified Augustus; and of Livia, the sister of Germanicus Caesar, whom both her grandmother and her father in law (who was also her paternal uncle), our *princeps*, held in great esteem, of whose opinions, even if she were not a member of their house she would be justified in bragging, much more as a woman bound by such close connections...

Agrippina is identified as the relative of Augustus and as Germanicus' wife; the former's fondness for her and the "singular harmony" (*unica concordia*) and fecundity of her marriage make her worthy of the senate's commendation. Antonia is presented in terms of her sole marriage (*unum matrimonium*) to the older Drusus, her status as Germanicus' mother, and her close kinship with Augustus, which she deserves because of the moral purity of her character (*sanctitate morum dignam*). Livilla's claims to commendation are

---

<sup>24</sup> Text of Potter and Damon 1999.

made clear by the praise she has already received from her relatives: her grandmother Livia, and her “father-in-law and paternal uncle” the emperor Tiberius (*socer idemque patruos, princeps noster*). Interestingly, her husband Drusus is not mentioned in this passage, although her status as the wife of Tiberius’ only surviving son is made explicit in the word *socer*, and then highlighted when the senate expresses its agreement with Livia’s and Tiberius’ assessment of her character by saying that “even if she were not a member of their house (*domus*) she would be justified in bragging of it, much more as a woman bound by such close connections” (143-145). Thus her relationship to the imperial family, and their fondness for her, is simultaneously the substance of and the proof of her character.

In light of the circumstances that lay behind this document – the death of Germanicus – the differences between the ways these three women are represented are striking. Agrippina and Antonia have a great deal in common: although they are of different generations, they share a male relative (Augustus) whose perspective is co-opted in order to praise their characters. Consequently, when their worth is discussed it is in a retrospective way: Agrippina had been greatly esteemed by Augustus (*qui fuisset probatissima*), while Antonia has demonstrated that she was worthy of a relationship with Augustus (*dignam se divo Augusto tam arta propinquitate exhibuerit*). Agrippina’s *unica concordia* with Germanicus is ambiguous, as *unica* may mean either “unique” or “only”; of course, the marriage to Germanicus had been Agrippina’s first, so the word *unica* is perfectly appropriate, but the her marriage to Germanicus and her mother-in-law’s *unum matrimonium* to the older Drusus are correlated, which strongly suggests that this marriage will be Agrippina’s only union and that she will not be available for a second

marriage.<sup>25</sup> Meanwhile, Livilla's claims to commendation are supported by praise from living members of the imperial household – Tiberius and Livia – even though she too was descended from Augustus and could have been described in those terms as well.

In this way, the *senatus consultum* presents a reconfiguration of the imperial house. Where Agrippina and Germanicus had once been presented as the future of the dynasty, as, for example, in Germanicus' triumph in 17, now Agrippina will contribute to the imperial family no further: she, like Antonia, has been redefined in terms of her connections with the household's past, with the implication that her reproductive role in the family has been fulfilled. It is striking that her children, who had featured so prominently in the dynastic display of the triumph, are barely mentioned in the *senatus consultum*; her fecundity is evidence of her wifely virtue, but the results of her fecundity are mentioned briefly, with Claudius, as other members of the imperial family who were affected by the loss of Germanicus.

Instead, the focus has shifted to Livilla, whose own marriage is only hinted at and whose children do not appear at all.<sup>26</sup> The result is that Livilla appears to be on the point of assuming a new role in the imperial family. Her capacity to contribute to the family as her predecessors had is strongly implied by her juxtaposition with Agrippina and Antonia: she too will be a *univira*, and she too will produce children who will, in turn, become members of the imperial family. However, the fact that this remains purely in the realm of her potential contributions highlights even more the extent to which she is stepping into a role vacated by the two women mentioned just before her, Agrippina and Antonia.

---

<sup>25</sup> cf. Tiberius' refusal to allow Agrippina to remarry, Tac. *Ann.* 4.53.

<sup>26</sup> Tac. *Ann.* 2.84; Livilla had given birth to twin sons while the city was mourning Germanicus.

Thus this passage, in which the senate expresses its praise for three women of the imperial house affected by the death of Germanicus, presents a dynastic narrative in the process of being rewritten, as Agrippina's role in the continuation of the family is assumed by Livilla. In this way, the passage provides a domestic, family-oriented parallel to lines 126-133, in which the senate urges Tiberius to devote his attention to his only remaining son, in whom now all the future hope of his father's custody of the state has been placed:

*... magnopere rogare et petere, ut omnem curam, quam in duos quondam filios suos partitus erat, ad eum, quem haberet, converteret, sperareq(ue) senatum eum, qui supersit, tanto maiori curae dis immortalibus fore, quanto magis intellegent, omnem spem futuram paternae pro r(e) p(ublica) stationis in uno repos[i]ta<m>, quo nomine debere eum finire dolorem ac restituere patriae suae non tantum animum, sed etiam voltum, qui publicae felicitati conveniret; item senatum laudare magnopere Iuliae Aug(ustae) Drusiq(ue) Caesaris moderationem imitantium principis nostri iustitiam...*

... (the senate) urgently asked and sought that all the care which he had once distributed between his two sons, he turn to the one whom he still had, and that the senate hoped that he who has survived would be all the more under the care of the immortal gods, insofar as they understood that all future hope of his father's position over the republic had been placed in one son, in whose name (Tiberius) ought to put an end to his sorrow and restore to his country not only a disposition, but also a countenance, which suited the public good-fortune; the senate also greatly praised the moderation of Julia Augusta and Drusus Caesar, imitating the justice of our princeps...<sup>27</sup>

In this passage, Drusus too is represented in terms of the living, current members of the imperial household – Tiberius and Livia, with whom he is commended for their

---

<sup>27</sup> Note the prevalence of *spes* in this passage: ... *sperareque senatum eum...*, *omnem spem futuram* .... Cf. the connection between *spes* and imperial succession, discussed in note 17 above.

emulation of Tiberius' restraint and regard for justice. In this case, however, the invitation to shift our attention from Germanicus, locked in the past, to Drusus is made explicit.

Livia's role in the *senatus consultum de Pisone patre* is more complex. In the passages above, she is mentioned, along with Tiberius, with reference to both Livilla and Drusus. She also appears as a political actor, interceding on behalf of Plancina, despite Tiberius' intention not to influence the senate's pursuit of justice (109-120). Thus she, unlike the other women named in this document, has influence in the public world of Roman politics.<sup>28</sup> Her dual role is emphasized in the senate's reasons for acceding to her request: the fact that she was the mother of the *princeps* and the many *beneficiae* she had performed for men from all ranks of Roman society.<sup>29</sup> As Severy points out, the celebration of Livia's domestic role as the mother of the emperor in a public document like this is unprecedented, and serves to suggest that the position of the mother of the emperor "had become in effect another officer of the state." Her intercession, his acquiescence, and the senate's recognition all place domestic relationships within the public realm, legitimating her political influence through the imperial family's adherence to traditional familial roles.<sup>30</sup>

In this document, Livia performs a role that was already familiar to the Roman audience: the dynastic mother. Under Augustus, the women of the imperial family enjoyed a particular public prominence as their sons became potential heirs for Augustus:

---

<sup>28</sup> Griffin 1997, 256.

<sup>29</sup> Both of these reasons are grounded in traditional Roman social institutions: the reference to *beneficiae* casts Livia as a patron, who is owed the loyalty of her clients, while her position as Tiberius' mother gives her the right to expect his *pietas* and cooperation with her wishes, see Yakobsen 2004, 86.

<sup>30</sup> Severy 2000, 330.



the Portico of Octavia, built around 27, coincided with Marcellus' coming of age and marriage to Julia, who in turn took on an increased public role around after 13 BC when Gaius and Lucius became an important part of Augustus' dynastic plans, and Livia herself had taken on an increased public role in the last decade of Augustus' life as Tiberius emerged as the sole candidate for imperial power.<sup>31</sup> It is significant, therefore, that Livia appears in this document in her capacity as the current emperor's mother and is identified as the older female relative of both Drusus and Livilla, to the exclusion of their biological relatives.<sup>32</sup> Thus, she served to relate Drusus and Livilla to Tiberius as their pseudo-mother, clearly marking Drusus as Tiberius' heir, while simultaneously appearing in her capacity as Tiberius' biological mother, connecting him to Augustus.

Meanwhile, the first emperor's relationships to individual members of the household is only mentioned explicitly in the case of Tiberius in the preface, and then Agrippina and Antonia; otherwise, the text shows a remarkable unwillingness to connect Drusus and Livilla with Augustus explicitly, preferring to identify them as the grandchildren of Livia, identified consistently throughout the document as Augusta. In this way, the members of the imperial household are divided into two distinct groups: the "living" imperial house, consisting of those who have or will contribute to the dynasty's continuation, that is Livia, Tiberius, Drusus and Livilla; and those whose contributions to the family have already been made, namely Agrippina and Antonia – or will not be made,

---

<sup>31</sup> Flory 1993, 305.

<sup>32</sup> A spectacular piece of genealogical reverse engineering, as biological reality in this case would seriously interfere with the dynastic narrative being constructed. Had Livilla's biological mother, Antonia, been named in connection with her, it would have confused the dynastic status of the rest of that branch of the family, which included Agrippina and Germanicus' children; while Drusus' biological mother, Vipsania Agrippina, had remarried to Asinius Gallus, with whom she had had several children, and was still alive at the death of Germanicus (*Tac. Ann.* 3.10; *PIR* V 462). Her status as Drusus' mother is never acknowledged in dynastic propaganda.

in the case of Agrippina's and Germanicus' children and the marginal Claudius. Meanwhile, Tiberius' identification as the son of Augustus in line 4 and as the son of Livia in line 113 makes the relationship between the current emperor and his imperial predecessor clear. This simplified, streamlined set of family relationships makes the emperor's connection to imperial history explicit: his relationship with his mother shows his connection to the imperial past, while the presence of his son proclaims the future of the dynasty. In light of this construction of the imperial family, Livilla takes on a particular importance as the wife of the imperial heir and the future mother of the next heir when she assumes the role vacated by Agrippina and Antonia.

This reading of the *senatus consultum de Pisone patre* reveals several aspects of the construction of the *domus Augusta* at this point in Tiberius' reign. First, the vision of the imperial family that emerges from this text serves to present a narrative in which the current emperor is connected both to Augustus (the imperial past) and to the future in the form of his heirs. Livia's and Livilla's important roles in the construction of this narrative are comparable: Livia negotiates the transition from one generation of the imperial family to the next in her capacity as Augustus' wife and Tiberius' mother, while Livilla's body represents the limitless promise of the dynasty's future in the form of her (unmentioned) children. In this text, Livia also serves to connect Tiberius to Drusus and Livilla when she, and not Augustus, is identified as their grandparent. Livia's role in this document is especially striking, in that references to her seem to mark a distinction between the core members of the family – Tiberius, Drusus, and Livilla – and other relatives; thus, we see that within the imperial family, the dynastic narrative revolves around only a select few individuals, whose relationships to one another can be presented

simply. But this document also captures the imperial family at a moment of transition, as Germanicus and his family are replaced by Drusus and Livilla; but as membership in the *domus Augusta* is rewritten, the narrative is not, even if now Agrippina and her children are cast out of the core group. Finally, in its representations of the importance of the relationships between each individual in the imperial family, this document shows the extent to which the domestic virtues of members of the emperor's household have already been incorporated into the institutions of the state, as Plancina's pardon came about through Tiberius' *pietas* and Livilla is commended by the senate for her capacity to be a good wife and mother. As a result, the domestic roles of Livia and Livilla have been politicized, and their crucial contributions to the imperial family's reproduction and narrative coherence will be broadcast throughout the empire.<sup>33</sup>

By the reigns of Claudius and Nero, these patterns of representation had become well established. A coin type that was struck in both *aureus* and *denarius* issues in 55 CE depicts a simplified version of the *domus Augusta* that makes use of many of the same familial and narrative devices as the *senatus consultum de Pisone patre*.



Figure 4.2: *RIC I* (Nero) 7  
(image source: [www.cngcoins.com/Coin.aspx?CoinID=46228](http://www.cngcoins.com/Coin.aspx?CoinID=46228))

<sup>33</sup> cf. the order to publish the decree in lines 165-173. Sculptural groups from provincial towns depicting members of the imperial family indicates that the dissemination of this conception of the *domus Augusta* was successful, and that provincial communities were capable of understanding (and manipulating) this domestic, political concept, see Rose 1997, 3 and 13.

This coin type bears an obverse with jugate busts of Nero and his mother Agrippina the Younger with the legend NERO CLAUD DIVI F CAES AUG GERM IMP TR P COS; the reverse features an elephant-drawn quadriga bearing the deified Claudius holding an eagle-topped scepter and the deified Augustus holding a scepter and a patera with the legend AGRIPP AUG DIVI CLAUD NERONIS CAES MATER and EX S C in the field above the elephants.<sup>34</sup>

This coin type's depiction of the imperial family draws from a range of imperial images. The elephant quadriga had first appeared in Roman coinage under Tiberius, when coins featuring an image of the deified Augustus holding a laurel branch and scepter, identified with the label DIVO AUGUSTO SPQR, seated in the carriage of such a vehicle appeared on the obverse.



Figure 4.3: *RIC I (Tiberius) 68*  
 (image source: [www.cngcoins.com/Coin.aspx?CoinID=109019](http://www.cngcoins.com/Coin.aspx?CoinID=109019))<sup>35</sup>

<sup>34</sup> *RIC I (Nero) 6 and 7*, both dated to 55 CE.

<sup>35</sup> *RIC I (Tiberius) 68* is dated to 36-37 CE. Claudius had apparently arranged for Livia's image to be carried in circus processions in an elephant chariot (Suet. *Claud.* 11); Toynbee 1973, 42. This type of vehicle had been very common in the coinage of the Seleucids, although the chariot's passenger had been either Athena or (in a rare coin of Ptolemy I) Alexander. See Svoronos 102; Newell *ESM* 29.

Thus the reverse image on the Neronian coin drew from established modes of representation for deified emperors. But the presence of Agrippina on this coin gives it an explicit, and complex, dynastic meaning as well.

Agrippina's portrait appears on the obverse, with Nero's superimposed before her, but her name and titles appear on the reverse. Like the imperial women in the *senatus consultum de Pisone patre*, she is identified in terms of her relationship to men: the legend AGRIPP AUG DIVI CLAUD NERONIS CAES MATER identifies her as Agrippina Augusta, the wife of the deified Claudius, and the mother of Nero Caesar. By placing her portrait on the obverse with and her name on the reverse, this coin uses Agrippina to connect Nero with Claudius and Augustus; her role as both Claudius' wife and Nero's mother sets out simply the connection between the current emperor and the previous one. Even more significantly, Agrippina is also used here to make the connection between Nero and Augustus, since she was descended from Augustus.<sup>36</sup> Thus this coin depicts the *domus Augusta* in a way that strongly resembles the image of the imperial family that emerged from the *senatus consultum*: the current emperor is connected to the past through the figure of his mother, whose role in physically linking one generation to the next helps to create a simple narrative of dynastic continuity. However, in this case we also see how important a connection to Augustus had become;

---

<sup>36</sup> At least according to Tacitus (*Ann.* 12.2), this had been one of the chief arguments for Claudius' marriage to Agrippina: Nero was "... the grandson of Germanicus, utterly suitable for an imperial fate" (*quod Germanici nepotem secum traheret, dignum prorsus imperatoria fortuna*). Cf. Tac. *Ann.* 12.41.3, Suetonius *Nero* 50, where Nero's many family connections – Julius, Claudius, or Domitius – are problematized.

Agrippina has taken on the additional role of connecting her son to the remote dynastic past, as a representative of Augustus' bloodline.<sup>37</sup>

The marriage of Agrippina and Claudius had immense dynastic significance, because of her direct biological connection to Augustus, and Claudius' lack of one.<sup>38</sup> Their marriage served to unite the Julian and Claudian branches of the imperial family and, once Nero had been adopted by the *princeps* and married to Octavia, Claudius could once again create and project a simple conception of a continuous and stable *domus Augusta*; a conception which once again used imperial women to represent the connection between the family's present and the imperial past (as Agrippina connected Claudius to Augustus) and between the family's present and its dynastic future (as Octavia and Nero represented Rome's future emperor and his heirs).<sup>39</sup> But by this point, the symbolic and biological value of imperial women who, like Agrippina, could claim descent from Augustus had created a situation where these women could translate their dynastic position into immense political and personal authority. Agrippina's influence in the courts of Claudius and then Nero affected many senatorial careers; Vespasian was unable to cultivate her as a patron and experienced a lull in his career in the 50s.<sup>40</sup>

This process of translating dynastic significance into personal authority is reflected in the coinage in the gradual rise in importance of, coincidentally, another form of transportation: the *carpentum*. This vehicle was a four-wheeled wagon drawn by two

---

<sup>37</sup> In dynastic contexts, women take on an essential role as the perpetuators and transmitters of power – in the form of royal blood – from one generation to the next. See Mirón 2000, 44-47 for this phenomenon in Macedonian royal politics; cf. Milnor 2005, 291.

<sup>38</sup> Tac. *Ann.* 12.1-2; Suet. *Claud.* 26.3; Dio 60.31.6. The public interest in this event is indicated by the fact that each author offers multiple explanations.

<sup>39</sup> Tac. *Ann.* 12.9 for Nero's marriage to Octavia, 12.25 for his adoption; cf. Suet. *Claud.* 27, Dio 60.33.2,2.

<sup>40</sup> Suet. *Vesp.* 4. 1; Nicols 1978, 21.



revered imperial women – especially imperial mothers – associating them with a particular kind of religious and social authority.

However, in 44 CE the senate had voted Messalina the right to participate in Claudius' triumph over Britain, riding in a *carpentum* following Claudius' triumphal chariot.<sup>45</sup> In this way, the *carpentum* acquired an additional meaning beyond its religious aspect, as it became “a vehicle comparable in its symbolic significance to the triumphal chariot.”<sup>46</sup> Thus its religious, and dynastic, associations acquired a political dimension, as the vehicle became the empress' conveyance in real life. This makes it especially significant that, in 50 CE, as Nero was being introduced to the Roman people as Claudius' heir,

*suum quoque fastigium Agrippina extollere altius: carpento Capitolium ingredi, qui <ho>nos sacerdotibus et sacris antiquitus concessus venerationem augebat feminae, quam imperatore genitam, sororem eius qui rerum potitus sit et coniugem et matrem fuisse, unicum ad hunc diem exemplum est.*

Agrippina raised her own dignity higher: she entered the Capitoline in a *carpentum*, which honor, having been granted to priests and sacred people long ago, increased their reverence for the woman who was the daughter of an *imperator*, and the sister, the wife, and the mother of one who ruled, the sole example to this day.<sup>47</sup>

This passage makes the connection between Agrippina's status as a woman in the imperial family, her right to ride in a *carpentum*, and her personal authority clear; in particular, it emphasizes that her use of a *carpentum* broadcast her status which derived

---

<sup>45</sup> Dio 60.22.2.

<sup>46</sup> Flory 1998, 493. Flory speculates that Claudius' and Messalina's children, Octavia and Britannicus, were also featured prominently in the triumphal procession, which would have given the spectacle a dynastic meaning.

<sup>47</sup> Tac. *Ann.* 12.42.



from her relationships with imperial men. It is striking that Tacitus presents this as Agrippina's response to Nero's rise in authority: now that he has been identified as the next emperor, she could assume the use of a *carpentum* in her capacity as the mother of the imperial heir.

In this way, the *carpentum* – a traditional republican conveyance with religious associations – took on a specific, dynastic significance in an imperial context. Its appearance on the coinage of Gaius honoring Agrippina and the *carpentum*'s appropriation into imperial ceremonial as the appropriate vehicle for the effigies of emperor's deceased mothers, led to its redefinition. When Agrippina assumed its use, she did so because her new role as the mother of the imperial heir gave her a special status in the imperial house; from the public perspective, her use of the *carpentum* increased her personal authority. Her dynastic significance, as the means for the transmission of imperial power from one generation to the next gave her a unique position in imperial politics, and it is significant that the Roman people's *veneratio* for her derived from her relationships with multiple generations of powerful imperial men.

Tacitus' account of Agrippina's death takes full advantage of the fact that her dynastic role was the source of her personal authority. The account of Nero's plot against his mother begins with Poppaea Sabina, Nero's mistress, who urges Nero to divorce Octavia and marry her on the grounds that she, unlike Octavia, had already proven to be fertile.<sup>48</sup> But Agrippina's opposition to Poppaea made her an obstacle, and Nero already resented his mother's control. After his failed first attempt, Nero sent soldiers to murder her; when Agrippina realized that her son had ordered her death, she offered her belly to

---

<sup>48</sup> Tac. *Ann.* 14.1.2; Ihrig 2007, 350-359.

the centurion drawing his sword and told him to strike her womb: *centurioni ferrum destringenti protendens uturum “ventrem feri” exclamavit*.<sup>49</sup> The emphasis on her womb is intended to resonate with the reader; Agrippina’s blood connection with Augustus and her potential role as the mother of Augustan heirs had justified her position in the imperial house and had been the source of her vast personal and political power.<sup>50</sup> At the end of her life, she is killed by being struck in the part of her body that had given her access to imperial power and had defined her place within it; from this point on, Poppaea assumes a crucial role as the potential mother of the future heir.<sup>51</sup>

This discussion of the roles of women in the imperial household has shown how Augustus’ emphasis on his family – the “performed domesticity” of the *domus Augusta* – produced a public construction of the imperial household in which the relationships between individuals acquired a significance that was often symbolic; women in particular took on a crucial role in dynastic ideology as the connection between one generation of the imperial family and the next. By the early years of Tiberius’ reign, we can see in the *senatus consultum de Pisone patre* a representation of the imperial family in which Livia, as Tiberius’ mother, assumed a crucial role in connecting Tiberius to Augustus, connecting Drusus and Livilla to Tiberius, identifying a core family unit of the imperial household who would play a role in the dynasty’s future from that point on. In this way, Livia’s presence in the document aided in the construction of a dynastic narrative, in

---

<sup>49</sup> Tac. *Ann.* 14.8.5.

<sup>50</sup> Ihrig 2007, 343-4. Ps-Seneca (*Oct.* 368-372) presents a very similar version of Agrippina’s final words: *caedis moriens illa ministrum rogat infelix, utero dirum condat ut ensem: ‘hic est, hic est fodiendus’ ait ‘ferro, monstrum qui tale tulit.’* (Dying, that wretched woman asked the agent of her slaughter to bury that dreadful sword in her womb: “Here, stab here with your sword,” she said, “here, which bore such a monster”). See Boyle 2008, 167-168 for a relevant discussion of these lines.

<sup>51</sup> Ihrig 2007, 350-9.

which Tiberius was linked to the imperial past of Augustus and the imperial future of his heirs and their children. Later, under Claudius and Nero, Agrippina the Younger would play a similar symbolic role in defining the relationships between the important (male) members of the imperial family in order to construct a dynastic narrative that emphasized the continuity of Nero's role as Claudius' successor, and Claudius' role as Augustus' successor.

However, the example of Agrippina shows the extent to which the *domus Augusta*, and the symbolic significance it bestowed on certain imperial women (especially mothers), allowed them to translate their positions into a considerable amount of personal authority. Agrippina's biological role as Nero's mother and her symbolic role as the link between Nero and his predecessor, and between Nero and the founder of the principate, blurred with one another, in a construction of an imperial narrative that was not substantially different than the one that had appeared in the *senatus consultum de Pisone patre*. For Agrippina, the result was that her aggregate imperial connections gave her a particularly large amount of independent authority. After her death, Poppaea must assume her role as the physical symbol of the continuation of the Julio-Claudian *domus Augusta*.

### **The Flavian *domus Augusta***

There was no ambiguity: Vespasian and his sons would form a dynasty. Titus' likeability had been a major factor in Vespasian's ability to gather support from

Mucianus and his soldiers.<sup>52</sup> In addition, Titus had acted very publicly in Vespasian's interests throughout the east during the civil war, as an intermediary between Vespasian and Mucianus and an ambassador to the court of Herod Agrippa and to the imperial government of Tiberius Julius Alexander in Egypt.<sup>53</sup> After Vespasian's acclamation, Titus' special status as his son was clearly indicated by the decision to leave him in charge of the armies of Judaea to oversee the siege of Jerusalem.<sup>54</sup> But in presenting Titus and Domitian as his heirs, Vespasian was able to draw from the previous century of Julio-Claudian dynasticism; one established technique that he made use of was the presentation of his family as a dynastic narrative, according to which he developed the public image of his family in terms of its continuity into the future. However, the early history of Vespasian's reign also shows a determined rejection of certain Julio-Claudian techniques of dynastic presentation, especially the crucial symbolic role played by women of the imperial house in the construction and presentation of these narratives. In this way, Vespasian developed a model of dynastic succession that responded to one of the great social tensions of the later Julio-Claudian period, namely the immense personal

---

<sup>52</sup> Tacitus (*Hist.* 2.74, 77) shows Mucianus presenting Titus as one of the chief reasons to support Vespasian as emperor; in Josephus (*BJ* 4.596-7) this argument is put in the mouths of his soldiers, who wonder who could prefer a childless man in place of a father, since the greatest guarantee of peace is legitimate successors to the king (ἄπαιδα δὲ ἀντὶ πατρὸς αἰρήσεσθαι προστάτην· μέγιστον γὰρ δὴ πρὸς ἀσφάλειαν εἰρήνης εἶναι τὰς γνησίους τῶν βασιλέων διαδοχάς). Josephus' sentiment is echoed by Titus in Tacitus' *Histories*: "neither armies nor fleets are so secure a protection for an empire as a number of children" (*non legiones, non classis proinde firma imperii munimenta quam numerum liberorum*, 4.52).

<sup>53</sup> For Titus and Mucianus: Tac. *Hist.* 2.5.2, 79; for Titus and Julius Alexander see Josephus *BJ* 3.8, 65, cf. Levick 1999, 46 and 220 nt. 8. For Titus and the court of Herod Agrippa, see Tac. *Hist.* 2.5; Josephus *BJ* 2.309; and Tac. *Hist.* 81 for Vespasian's allies in general; cf. Crook 1951; Rogers 1980. The details of the Flavian plans and negotiations before Vespasian's acclamation are not certain, see Graf 1937, 34; Sullivan 1953, 67-70; Chilver 1957, 34; Henrichs 1968, 78 n. 93; Nicols 1978, 71 and 92; Barzanò 1983, 195-202; Levick 1999, 45.

<sup>54</sup> Waters 1963, 215; cf. Vespasian's declaration that his sons would follow him or no one would (Suet. *Vesp.* 25).

power that imperial women with dynastic significance – such as Agrippina – were able to accrue.

In the year 70, Vespasian's extended biological family was not large, but included members from three generations and multiple branches.<sup>55</sup> It included his sons, Titus and Domitian, and Titus' daughter Julia, then six years old; but Titus' first marriage to Arrecina Tertulla had ended with her death and his second marriage to Marcia Furnilla had ended in divorce, perhaps because of her father's implication in the Pisonian conspiracy of 65.<sup>56</sup> Vespasian's own wife, Flavia Domitilla, had died, as had his daughter by the same name;<sup>57</sup> the younger Domitilla's husband, Quintus Petillius Cerealis, and daughter, another Flavia Domitilla, were still alive.<sup>58</sup> Vespasian's brother Flavius Sabinus had died in the final days of Vitellius' reign, but his son, a consul of 69 – also called Flavius Sabinus – had survived; his own sons, another Flavius Sabinus and Flavius Clemens, were most likely already born, but still young.<sup>59</sup> Vespasian's niece, Flavia, had married L. Junius Caesennius Paetus and the couple had a son of the same name who would be old enough to serve as consul in 79.<sup>60</sup> In addition, Domitian had already married Domitia Longina, the daughter of Nero's general (and victim) Domitius

---

<sup>55</sup> See general discussion in Mellor 2003, 86-88.

<sup>56</sup> Suet. *Tit.* 4.2; for Arrecina and her brother see *PIR*<sup>2</sup> A 1074 and 1072; for Barea Soranus see *PIR*<sup>2</sup> B 55; Tac. *Ann.* 16.23 and 30ff. On this topic in general, see Nicols 1978, 22-23, but cf. Levick 1999, 23 for a contrasting view. Pigón (1992, 237 n. 11) argues against Nicols that Titus' divorce was connected to the conspiracy; I discuss this issue in chapter 3. Titus captured Jerusalem on Julia's birthday (Suet. *Titus* 5). The identity of Julia's mother is contested, see Castritius 1969, 492-502.

<sup>57</sup> For the mother, see *PIR*<sup>2</sup> F 416; for the daughter, see *PIR*<sup>2</sup> F 417.

<sup>58</sup> Suet. *Vesp.* 3; for Cerealis see *PIR*<sup>2</sup> P 260, Cassius Dio 65.18.1; Mellor (2003, 87) understands Cerealis to have been married to Vespasian's daughter; cf. Townend 1961, 54ff. For his daughter with Flavia Domitilla, see *PIR*<sup>2</sup> F 418; *Der neue Pauly* 4:542 "Flavia [3] F. Domitilla" Mellor argues that the Petillius Rufus who served as *consul ordinarius* in 83 was his son, *PIR*<sup>2</sup> P 263.

<sup>59</sup> Tac. *Hist.* 3.73; for Flavius Sabinus the elder, see *PIR*<sup>2</sup> F 352; for his son: *PIR*<sup>2</sup> F 354, but see the discussion in Nicols 1978, 169.

<sup>60</sup> For the father, see *PIR*<sup>2</sup> C 173; see Josephus *BJ* 7.220. For the son, *PIR*<sup>2</sup> C 174.

Corbulo.<sup>61</sup> Thus, like the early imperial household of Augustus, Vespasian's immediate family included adult heirs and young male children, as well as women and girls who could be enlisted into the projection of the *domus Augusta* to symbolize future generations of the Flavian house.

However, in developing the public image of the Flavian imperial family, Vespasian drew attention solely to himself and his two sons. The coinage, accounts of public honors or extraordinary magistracies, and monuments of Vespasian's early reign uniformly presented an image of an imperial house that consisted of only Vespasian, Titus, and Domitian. Other members of the imperial family clearly held important public roles: Vespasian's nephew Flavius Sabinus held a consulship in 72, Petillius Cerealis became the governor of Britain and held consulships in 71 and 74, and Caesennius Paetus was governor of Syria until his death in 72. Even Titus' former brother-in-law, M. Arrecinus Clemens, became praetorian prefect in 70 and held a suffect consulship in 73.<sup>62</sup> These members of Vespasian's extended family played important public roles in the new regime. However, as was the case under Julio-Claudian emperors, the Flavian *domus Augusta* consisted of a more select group: Vespasian, Titus, and Domitian are the only three family members to appear in dynastic imagery of the 70s CE.<sup>63</sup>

This articulation is most clear in the coinage of Vespasian's reign produced by the Roman mint. Throughout Vespasian's reign, the mint only produced coins in the names of Vespasian, Titus, and Domitian; in fact, the only human or human-shaped figures to appear on the coinage of Vespasian are these three members of the imperial family,

---

<sup>61</sup> Suet. *Dom.* 1.3; Vinson 1989, 431-450; Levick 2002, 199-211.

<sup>62</sup> *PIR*<sup>2</sup> A 1072.

<sup>63</sup> Girard 1987, 169-73.

deities, personifications of virtues, and personifications of places (as in the famous *Judaea Capta* series).<sup>64</sup> The contrast with Julio-Claudian coinage is clear: Vespasian's coinage did not present a broad selection of his family members, and presented no women or children. What is more, the Julio-Claudian emperors had occasionally celebrated important deceased family members on their coinage, as was the case with the *carpentum* coinage of Agrippina the Elder discussed above; Vespasian abandoned this practice, and when deceased members of the Flavian family like Flavia Domitilla did appear on Roman coinage it was not until after Vespasian's own death.<sup>65</sup> Compared to the presentations of the imperial family on the coinage of the previous dynasty, the membership of the Flavian *domus Augusta* that was presented by Vespasian was extremely limited. But, as had been the case in Julio-Claudian documents like the *senatus consultum de Pisone patre*, Flavian coinage isolated a distinct core group of the imperial family in its construction of the *domus Augusta*, as Vespasian, Titus and Domitian were identified as the individuals whose special status and privilege extended to (and was advertised on) Roman coins.

From the beginning, these three members of the imperial family were presented in a way that emphasized their homogeneity and unity. Flavian portraits are characterized by a literal, realistic style that recalls the Latin veristic artistic traditions, and a rejection of the baroque Hellenism of Neronian portraiture as well as the serene classicism of

---

<sup>64</sup> Mattingly has argued that Vespasian issued coins under Galba's name bearing his obverse portrait (*RIC I*<sup>2</sup> (Galba) 489; Mattingly *BMCRE I*, ccxvi and (Galba) 237-8, 241-3, 247-8, 249-66; cf. *BMCRE II* p. 72-77); however, Kraay (1956) has shown that this is not possible. See also Gagé 1952.

<sup>65</sup> For the appearance of other Flavians, including women, on the coinage of Titus: Wood 2010 46; Daltrop et. al. 1966, 60; Kienast 1989, 142-143.

Augustan representations.<sup>66</sup> Portraits of Vespasian and his sons do not pursue an ageless, boyish appearance; rather, signs of age are emphasized. Vespasian's coin portraiture presented the emperor with very prominent wrinkles at the chin, nose, brow, and around the eyes, and his baldness was not disguised. This official portrait may have resembled Vespasian's real physical appearance to an extent: Suetonius describes him as stocky and well-proportioned, with a strained expression of one moving his bowels,<sup>67</sup> and he was sixty years old at the time of his accession. But early Flavian art presented Titus and Domitian with the same features, advertising their relationship to their father; the only sign of their youth was a slightly smoother face and, sometimes, the addition of a beard. In fact, Domitian's portraits share the Flavian signature heavy features and compact face and neck despite Suetonius' description of him as tall, with large eyes, a handsome and graceful appearance, and a body that tended towards thinness over time.<sup>68</sup>

Several coin types from the early months of Vespasian's reign present the three members of this Flavian *domus Augusta* as a family unit, with obverses showing a laureate bust of Vespasian (identified by the legend IMP CAESAR VESPASIANUS AUG, dating the coins to 69-70)<sup>69</sup> and reverses depicting Titus and Domitian paired with one another in ways that emphasized their similar status and new imperial roles. For example, one type that appeared on both *aurei* and *denarii* combined the Vespasian obverse with a reverse showing busts of Titus and Domitian facing one another, identified by the legend CAESAR AUG F COS CAESAR AUG F PR.

---

<sup>66</sup> Breckenridge 1968, 202 and 1982, 493; Daltrop, Hausmann and Wegner 1966, 10.

<sup>67</sup> *Vesp.* 20.

<sup>68</sup> *Dom.* 18. For a discussion of Domitian's portraiture, see Daltrop, Hausmann and Wegner 1966, 30-42.

<sup>69</sup> Buttrey 1980.





Figure 4.5: *RIC II*<sup>2</sup> (Vespasian) 16  
 (image source: [www.cngcoins.com/Coin.aspx?CoinID=128644](http://www.cngcoins.com/Coin.aspx?CoinID=128644))<sup>70</sup>

Another type that appeared on both metals showed Titus and Vespasian standing, either togate and holding pateras and rolls<sup>71</sup> or in military garb holding spears and a roll (Titus) or a parazonium (Domitian).<sup>72</sup>



Figure 4.6: *RIC II*<sup>2</sup> (Vespasian) 152  
 (image source: [www.cngcoins.com/Coin.aspx?CoinID=154035](http://www.cngcoins.com/Coin.aspx?CoinID=154035))

Yet another variation of this type was a *denarius* of 70 with a reverse that showed the two brothers, togate, seated in curule chairs, each holding branches in their right hands, identified by the legend TITUS ET DOMITIAN CAESARES PRIN IU.<sup>73</sup> A final variation showed Titus and Domitian on horseback, again identified by the legend TITUS

<sup>70</sup> cf. *RIC II*<sup>2</sup> (Vespasian) 15; both struck at Rome in 70.

<sup>71</sup> Identified by the legend CAESARES VESP. AVGVSTVS P P. *RIC II*<sup>2</sup> (Vespasian) 1365, attributed by Carradice and Buttrey (2007) to an early or military issue; cf. 1376, 1387.

<sup>72</sup> *RIC II*<sup>2</sup> (Vespasian) 142-154, struck in 71; cf. 66. The obverse legend reads IMP CAES VESPASIAN AVGVSTVS P P TR P P COS III.

<sup>73</sup> *RIC II*<sup>2</sup> (Vespasian) 6, cf. 55-56, 1362-1363.

ET DOMITIAN CAES PRIN IU.<sup>74</sup> These coin types present the sons of Vespasian as identical to one another, only occasionally distinguished from one another by their different magisterial offices: Titus as consul and Domitian as praetor. In addition, the reverse legends of all types refer to Vespasian explicitly, identifying them as *Augusti filii*, or even *Vespasiani Augusti filii*; in this way, the reverse legend links the image on the reverse to that on the obverse in the same way that the image and name of Agrippina the Younger had connected Nero to Claudius and Augustus in *RIC I* (Nero) 6 and 7, discussed above.

A type of 71 bears a reverse that shows the three Flavian men together in the same image. The obverse bears a laureate bust of Vespasian, again identified by a legend that provides the date (IMP CAES VESPASIAN AUG P M TR PPPP COS III, that is 71). The reverse shows the personification of Spes, advancing forward and offering a flower to the first of three male figures, helmeted and in military dress, standing before her: this figure holds a transverse spear in his left hand and extends his right to accept the flower, the next male figure holds a parazonium and a vexillum, and the last one holds an aquila. The legend, SPES AUGUSTA S C identifies the female figure but not the three men, but the established connection between Spes and imperial succession makes their identification as Vespasian and his two sons certain.<sup>75</sup> Thus this image can be read as allegorically depicting Vespasian accepting the empire on behalf of his dynasty, which consisted of himself and his two sons. Another reverse with a similar effect, also

---

<sup>74</sup> *RIC II*<sup>2</sup> (Vespasian) 5; cf. 54, 64, 1377-1378.

<sup>75</sup> *RIC II*<sup>2</sup> (Vespasian) 206; cf. 997, struck in 77-78. Ramage 1983, 202 and 214. See discussion of the association between *spes* and imperial succession in n. 17 above.

produced early in the 70s, showed Vespasian, holding a scepter, and his two sons standing in a triumphal quadriga.<sup>76</sup>

Titus' and Domitian's status as the sons of the princeps were also advertised in the coinage of the 70s when they were identified in several legends as *principes iuventutis*, the holders of the quasi-military leadership of the youth of Rome that had become a standard position for the young heirs of the imperial house.<sup>77</sup> The brothers' new roles in the political, military, or religious leadership within the city was also communicated visually through the use of meaningful symbols, such as the patera, roll, spears, and curule chairs. These iconographic techniques and the emphasis on Titus' and Domitian's statuses as the leaders of the youth was part of a general program to emphasize the connection between their civic roles and their positions as Vespasian's sons, a program which began as soon as the Flavians had taken control of the city.

These coin types emphasized the unity of the Flavian family group; however, the coinage of Vespasian also shows a sustained attempt to use iconography and legends to express differences in status among Vespasian, Titus, and Domitian. In its first meeting after the defeat of Vitellius, the senate had voted honors to the new imperial family: Domitian was immediately offered the title 'Caesar', a name which had become reserved for the sons of the emperor, and in its first meeting in December of 69 the senate elected Titus consul as his father's colleague, in addition to tribunician power, and bestowed a praetorship with consular power on Domitian.<sup>78</sup> In this way, the members of the Flavian family were arranged within a hierarchy, according to which Titus was aligned more

---

<sup>76</sup> *RIC II*<sup>2</sup> (Vespasian) 1370-1372, 1383.

<sup>77</sup> Rosenberg 1970-1971.

<sup>78</sup> Tac. *Hist.* 4.2-3.

closely with his father than with his brother. Suetonius describes Titus as Vespasian's partner (*particeps*), while Domitian was held back from campaigning in Gaul and Germany lest he make himself an equal to his brother in military glory.<sup>79</sup> This hierarchy was even reinforced in the distribution of consulships among the members of the dynasty. Vespasian was *consul ordinarius* in 70, 71, 72, 74, 75, 76, 77, and 79. Titus was his colleague in every one of these consulships except that of 71; it is worth noting too that Titus and Vespasian were colleagues in the censorship in 73. Domitian, meanwhile, held an ordinary consulship in 73, and suffect consulships in 71, 75, 76, 77, and 79.<sup>80</sup> Domitian's six consulships marked him as a member of the privileged imperial family, distinct from the rest of the Roman political elite. However, the distribution of Titus' and Vespasian's magistracies over the course of the decade created the impression that they were a special pair, whose unity was emphasized by their repeated shared offices,<sup>81</sup> although Domitian was unquestionably part of this family group, he did not enjoy Titus' status as Vespasian's partner.

Meanwhile, the iconographic program on Vespasian's coinage and public ceremonies cast Domitian in roles already associated with the children of the imperial house as Titus was presented in positions that emphasized his age and similarities to his father. Although both of the sons of Vespasian held the title *princeps iuventutis*, and appeared together identified by that shared title, coinage issued in the early 70s in Domitian's name further emphasized his status as leader of the youth with reverses that

---

<sup>79</sup> Suet. *Tit.* 6.1, *Dom.* 2.1, cf. Tac. *Hist.* 4.85-86.

<sup>80</sup> Gallivan 1981, 213-215. Carradice and Buttrey (2007, 18) note that the difference between suffect and ordinary consulships was not marked in Domitian's titulature on coins.

<sup>81</sup> Vespasian's consulship in 71 was held with M. Cocceius Nerva, and was the only time he had a colleague other than Titus. For a discussion, see Murison 2003, 148-150.

showed him togate on horseback in an image that was already associated with this title;<sup>82</sup> coinage issued with Domitian's name also bore reverses of Spes, a personification particularly associated with youth and the imperial heir.<sup>83</sup>



Figure 4.7: *RIC II*<sup>2</sup> (Vespasian) 680  
(image source: [www.cngcoins.com/Coin.aspx?CoinID=156296](http://www.cngcoins.com/Coin.aspx?CoinID=156296))

At this time, a common type issued in Titus' name paired his obverse portrait with a reverse showing him seated, facing right, holding a scepter in his right hand and a branch in his left, with a variation of PONTIFEX TRIB POT as its legend;<sup>84</sup> this reverse type also appeared on coins produced under Vespasian's name in the same year, on which the legend on the reverse identified the seated figure as Vespasian with the legend PONTIFEX TRIB POT, *pontifex maximus*.<sup>85</sup> These coin series strengthened the connection between

<sup>82</sup> *RIC II*<sup>2</sup> (Vespasian) 679-680; cf. a similar image with Domitian holding a spear or scepter, 538-541, 662, 672, 789, 835, 931, 1052, 1102. This reverse type, showing Domitian, also appeared with obverses of Titus and Vespasian, see for example *RIC II*<sup>2</sup> (Vespasian) 418, 486, 888.

<sup>83</sup> *RIC II*<sup>2</sup> (Vespasian) 654-656, 663-664, 674-675, 787-788, 836-837, 917, 926, 932-933, 1043, 1053-1054, 1099. Titus' obverse was also paired with the Spes type, however, it is striking that Domitian's Spes coinage continued to be struck under Titus: 86, 276, 284-285, 298-300, 316-318, 349-351. Cf. Germanicus and *spes*, n. 17 above.

<sup>84</sup> *RIC II*<sup>2</sup> (Vespasian) 555-556, 692, 705-707, 864-865; cf. 701.

<sup>85</sup> *RIC II*<sup>2</sup> (Vespasian) 545-6, 553-4, 683, 685, 702. Note especially *BMCRE II* (Vespasian) 112-113, in which obverse portraits of Titus were paired with the seated, *pontifex maximus* type of Vespasian. This type recalls a one that first appeared under Tiberius, in which a female figure seated, facing right, holding a branch in her left hand and a scepter in her right (identified by

Vespasian and Titus, stressing the similarities in their positions and social roles, while Domitian's youth and inferiority (in comparison to his brother and father) is made clear. Although *princeps iuventutis* was undeniably an imperial, dynastic position, it was one associated with the young heirs of the Julio-Claudian dynasty and it cast Domitian as a junior member of the *domus Augusta*.

The relative statuses of the three members of the imperial house were also put on display in Vespasian's and Titus' triumph over Judaea in 71.<sup>86</sup> Josephus' description of the procession centers on Titus and Vespasian, who participate in it as equals: the ceremony began when the *imperatores* (οἱ αὐτοκράτορες) came forth in traditional purple robes and greeted the senate, chief magistrates, and members of the equestrian order.<sup>87</sup> During the procession itself, Titus and Vespasian rode in triumphal chariots while Domitian rode beside them on a white horse.<sup>88</sup> This arrangement presented the entire imperial family together in one place for an audience of the entire city – Josephus had earlier emphasized the “divine delight” which the sight of the three Flavians in the same place had given to the people.<sup>89</sup> However, in the context of an imperial display like a triumph, the fact that Titus and Vespasian each rode in their own chariot, ostensibly to recognize the fact that they had each been hailed *imperator* on separate occasions during

---

Mattingly as Livia in her guise as Pax) is paired with the legend PONTIF MAXIM, see *BMCRE I* (Tiberius) 30-60.

<sup>86</sup> See Beard 2003, 543-558 and 2007, 93-101; Künzl 1988, 9-29 (especially 14-29 for a reconstruction of Flavian triumphal monuments).

<sup>87</sup> *BJ* 7.124. αὐτοκράτορες here must refer to their role as triumphing generals, Titus having been proclaimed *imperator* at the conclusion of the siege of Jerusalem (Suet. *Tit.* 5.2). However, its use here seems deliberately ambiguous: Beard 2003, 554.

<sup>88</sup> *BJ* 7.152: μεθ' ἃ Οὐεσπασιανὸς ἤλαυνε πρῶτος καὶ Τίτος εἶπετο, Δομετιανὸς δὲ παρίππευεν, αὐτὸς τε διαπρεπῶς κεκοσμημένος καὶ τὸν ἵππον παρέχων θεᾶς ἄξιον; Suet. *Dom.* 2.1: *triumphum utriusque Iudaicum equo albo comitatus est.*

<sup>89</sup> *BJ* 7.120: τῷ δὲ πλήθει τῶν πολιτῶν δαιμόνιον τινα τὴν χαρὰν παρεῖχε τὸ βλέπειν αὐτοὺς ἤδη τοὺς τρεῖς ἐν ταύτῳ γεγονότας.

the war, presented them as equals in the broader imperial sense; while Domitian's place on horseback drew on republican and early imperial traditions to present him as a youth and the son of the *triumphator*.<sup>90</sup>

Beard describes the triumph of 71 as a moment that “heralded the arrival of a new dynasty rather than just a new emperor, succession assured and visible in the shape of two grown-up sons.”<sup>91</sup> But the presentation of the two sons of Vespasian in this spectacle was much more nuanced. Titus and Domitian were both technically adults at this point, at the ages of 31 and 18 respectively, but they were not included in the procession as members of the same generation: Titus, as a *triumphator* and *imperator*, was presented as Vespasian's colleague, even his equal. But despite his age and his status, Domitian was presented as a child, junior to both of the *imperatores*. The overall effect is still a dynastic one, but not of Vespasian and his “heir and a spare” sons; rather, we see Vespasian, his adult son and colleague Titus, and his youthful son Domitian.

Thus in portraiture, coin types, and in public performances, Vespasian presented himself and his two sons as the members of a new Flavian *domus Augusta* whose cohesion, harmony, and homogeneity was expressed in their physical resemblance to one another, the fact that they were clearly marked as distinct from the rest of Vespasian's extended family (and, indeed, the rest of Roman society), and the frequency with which they appeared together either in person or in representations. However, these same techniques communicated a hierarchy within the family group: Domitian was subordinate to Titus, while Titus was presented as Vespasian's colleague. This communicated a clear and unambiguous message about the Flavian future: Domitian's position left him with no

---

<sup>90</sup> cf. Flory 1998, 489 n. 1.

<sup>91</sup> 2003, 556.

space to argue Titus' status as Vespasian's heir. Instead, Domitian's role in this family group was as the imperial prince, associated particularly with the youth of the city; in this way, he was positioned as Titus' heir and eventual successor.

This vision of the imperial family drew from Julio-Claudian traditions of dynastic representation. Vespasian, Titus and Domitian presented a dynastic narrative, in which Vespasian's relationship with his heirs, and thus with the future of Rome, was made clear; what is more, by establishing Domitian as an imperial prince, Vespasian could develop a very detailed and nuanced vision of Rome's Flavian future. Like the Julio-Claudians, in order to create this narrative, Vespasian had to rewrite individuals' real biological relationships with one another, as he reorganized his family to cast Domitian as Titus' son. It is striking, then, that this version of the *domus Augusta* does not attempt to situate the imperial family within a historical context; the narrative presented by the imperial house did not extend further back than Vespasian. This clearly communicated that the Flavians were making a break with the past, as they did not seek to establish a sense of continuity with their Julio-Claudian predecessors, especially Augustus. Rather, this construction of the *domus Augusta* cast Vespasian as the new Augustus, the founder of a new dynasty, whose claim to power rested on his own accomplishments. The focus of the Flavian family narrative was therefore on the present and on a well-articulated future, because the break with the past had been complete.

The Flavian *domus Augusta* differed significantly from its Julio-Claudian precedent in another very important way: it did not include women. The public image of the Julio-Claudian imperial house had placed a symbolic importance on women to explain the relationships between other (male) family members, and to connect one



generation to the next. The Flavian *domus Augusta* did not do this. Instead, the relationships between Vespasian, Titus and Domitian was negotiated by their physical similarities and shared offices: Titus was Vespasian's close colleague and his claim to be Vespasian's imperial successor was based on practicality and the fact that he was already enjoying many of the legal privileges (and social advantages) that came with being emperor. At the same time, the relationship between Titus and Domitian, established by their shared offices (as *principes iuventutis*) and status as Vespasian's sons, but reinforced by the emphasis on Domitian's youth and (comparative) lack of legal privileges and imperial experience, established Domitian's future claim to his brother's future power.

A reference in Suetonius indicates that the Flavians may have at one time considered employing Julio-Claudian dynastic strategies and using the women of their family to symbolically negotiate the relationships between individuals and to create gradations in status among Vespasian and his sons: Domitian, reportedly, had been persistently offered Julia, Titus' daughter, in marriage, but had refused her because he was pursuing Domitia Longina.<sup>92</sup> If Vespasian or Titus had proposed this marriage, its effect would have been to confirm Domitian's status as Titus' son, a relationship created by their respective relationships with Julia; this would have strongly resembled the way that Livia had negotiated the relationship between Augustus and Tiberius, or the way that Agrippina had negotiated the relationship between Claudius and Nero. Although they never married, Julia and Domitian seem to have remained closely linked in popular

---

<sup>92</sup> Suet. *Dom.* 22. If this marriage had been proposed when Domitian was still pursuing Domitia, Julia would have been only six years old; the immediate political benefits of a marriage alliance with the daughter of Corbulo and the ever-present possibility of mortality (whether Vespasian's, Domitian's, or Julia's), may in fact be the real reason why this marriage never materialized.

consciousness: Suetonius goes on to say that Domitian had seduced her after she had married Flavius Sabinus while Titus was still alive, that they had conducted an affair after she had been widowed, and that her death had come about when he had forced her to abort his child. These details seem unlikely – especially the notion that Domitian, lacking a son and heir, would have compelled any woman to abort his child<sup>93</sup> – but they show that Domitian and Julia were perceived as contemporaries, close enough in age to one another that a marriage, or at least a sexual relationship, would have been conceivable (although perhaps too closely related for that relationship to have been respectable). The continued association between Domitian and Julia is shown in Suetonius' account of Domitian's death, in which he writes that the emperor's corpse was cremated by his nurse Phyllis, who secretly deposited the ashes in the temple of the Gens Flavia by mingling them with those of Julia, whom she had also raised.<sup>94</sup>

But by crafting the public image of the Flavian family in such a way as to create cohesion between its three members without employing women to mediate their relationships, Vespasian was creating the image of an all-male imperial house.<sup>95</sup> It is possible that he did not feel the need to incorporate female figures into the public image of his dynasty; his main support during the civil war had come from the soldiers, and it seems that military loyalty transferred easily from father to son in the Roman army.<sup>96</sup>

---

<sup>93</sup> Wood (2010, 52) shows that iconography that appeared on coinage of Julia under Domitian and appeared shortly before her death (ca. 88-89) connected her with Juno, which emphasized her potential as mother of Flavian heirs (*RIC* II Domitian 218-8a). Cf. Carradice 1983, 35-6.

<sup>94</sup> *Dom.* 17.3.

<sup>95</sup> cf. Syme 1981, 49.

<sup>96</sup> Waters 1963, 203. Suetonius' account of Vespasian's family background (*Vesp.* 1-2) emphasizes the Flavian tradition of military service, as his paternal grandfather is identified as a former *centurio an evocatus* and his maternal grandfather is identified as *ter tribunum militum praefectumque castrorum*, and Suetonius must even correct the apparently persistent rumors that

But more importantly, by excluding women from the Flavian dynastic narrative, Vespasian was preventing the women of his family from developing the kind of informal and sometimes dangerous power that the emphasis on continuity and bloodlines had afforded certain Julio-Claudian women. Vespasian's career had suffered because of Agrippina's ascendancy; by restricting membership in the Flavian *domus Augusta* to himself and his two sons, and finding a way to present their relationships with one another without reference to women, Vespasian was able to ensure that his reign would not be disrupted by similar powerful women.<sup>97</sup> What is more, it proclaimed to the Roman public that that aspect of Julio-Claudian dynastic power would not be a feature of the new Flavian dynasty.

After Vespasian's death his heirs began to reincorporate women into the public image of the Flavian family. The coinage of Titus included bronze *sestertii* which featured on the obverse a *carpentum* accompanied by the legend MEMORIAE DOMITILLAE (or sometimes DOMITILLAE IMP CAES VESP AUG) in an obvious reference to the type issued in memory of Agrippina the Elder; the reverse bears a portrait of Titus and the legend IMP T CAES DIVI VESP F AUG P M TR P PP COS VIII, which dates the issues to 80-81.<sup>98</sup>

---

Vespasian's father had served in the army (*etsi quidem eum primipilarem, nonnulli, cum adhuc ordiens duceret, sacramento solutum per causam valitudinis tradunt*).

<sup>97</sup> Winterling 2009, 92; Levick 1999, 181.

<sup>98</sup> *RIC II*<sup>2</sup> (Titus) 262-4; see Daltrop, Hausmann and Wegner 1966, 60; Kienast 1989, 142-143; Wood 2010, 46-47.



Figure 4.8: *RIC II*<sup>2</sup> (Titus) 262  
 (image source: [www.cngcoins.com/Coin.aspx?CoinID=53850](http://www.cngcoins.com/Coin.aspx?CoinID=53850))

Under Domitian, a portrait of Domitilla, now a *diva*, appeared on the reverse of an *aureus* type (identified by the legend *DIVA DOMITILLA AUGUSTA*) paired with an obverse portrait of the Divus Vespasian, as well as on the obverses of *denarii* which paired her with the personification of Fortuna.<sup>99</sup> Because of the pairing of this figure and the deified Vespasian and the iconographic parallel being drawn with Agrippina, this Domitilla has been plausibly identified as the long-dead wife of Vespasian, Titus' and Domitian's mother.<sup>100</sup>

Since Flavia Domitilla – or any other woman – had not appeared on the coinage of Vespasian, her appearance on the coinage of her sons must be significant. Wood connects her appearance to an official process of deification, arguing that the appearance of the *carpentum* but no portrait on the coinage of Titus indicates that he had presented an image of his mother at the funeral of Vespasian before her deification, and that her titlature on the coinage of Domitian indicates that she had been deified between 80 and

<sup>99</sup> *RIC II*<sup>2</sup> (Domitian) 146, 157; Carradice 1983, 17-20 and 23-24; Daltrop, Hausmann and Wegener 1966, 55, 61. Alexandridis 2004, 19, 307. Metrological analysis dates these series to 82-85 (Carradice 1983, 160-61, 163), see Wood 2010, 47.

<sup>100</sup> Mattingly *BMCRE II*, lxxc; Mattingly and Sydenham *RIC II*, 114-115; Kienast 1989; Hahn 1994, 228-230; Wood 2010, 46-49. However, Daltrop, Hausmann and Wegener (1966, 60-2, 120-121) argue that the figure on Titus' bronzes is the elder Domitilla and the figure on the coins of Domitian is the younger Domitilla, Vespasian's daughter and Domitian's sister; Carradice and Buttrely (2007, 197 and 351) retain the distinction.

85.<sup>101</sup> Therefore, her appearance on the coinage of Titus may represent his attempt to represent his relationship with Vespasian with a reference to their biological connection, physically represented by his mother; Domitian would later extend this symbolic use of women in the construction of his public image of his family by giving a prominent role to his wife Domitia and his niece Julia, both women whose potential for childbearing represented the future of the dynasty as long as he had no children.<sup>102</sup>

However, it is worth emphasizing that there were no legal, religious, or social restrictions preventing Flavia Domitilla's appearance on coinage before her deification, let alone during the reign of Vespasian; this approach to employing women in the *domus Augusta* to represent dynastic continuity, and using their images and memories to represent dynastic relationships, had been well-established in Julio-Claudian coinage and was available for Vespasian to use; he could have invoked his late wife in order to represent the relationship between himself and his sons. The fact that he did not, but rather used public performances like his triumph, a complex numismatic program, and the style of imperial portraiture to establish these relationships must be seen as a deliberate choice. Titus' and Domitian's later inclusion of women, both dead and alive, in their representations of the *domus Augusta* represents a break from Vespasian's strategy, and should be viewed separately.

Vespasian's *domus Augusta* focused on himself and his two sons and promised a stable future in the continuity of Flavian rule; but this continuity derived from the homogeneity of the group, in which their similarities were not articulated with reference to their biological relationships to one another, and the differences between individuals

---

<sup>101</sup> 2010, 47.

<sup>102</sup> Wood 2010, 51-53.

were expressed in their relative status. In this way, the Flavian dynasty could present a well-developed narrative of the future, in which Vespasian's rule could extend into the lifetimes of both of his children in succession, and Titus' superior position over Domitian obviated the possibility of another civil war. This version of entirely-male dynastic succession and the exclusion of women from the representation of the *domus Augusta* marked a significant departure from Julio-Claudian precedent, even while Vespasian adopted several of its other features. The choice to express the relationships between Vespasian and his heirs without reference to female relatives, and therefore to biological reality, created an ideological system in which the women of the imperial family would not be able to translate their status into personal authority as women of the later Julio-Claudian period, like Agrippina, had done.

### **Women in the imperial house: Caenis and Berenice**

While there may have been no women in the public presentation of Vespasian's Flavian *domus Augusta*, that is not to say that there were no women in the imperial family; in fact, certain women held important positions at the center of the imperial family, whose presence had immense symbolic significance. Antonia Caenis and Julia Berenice,<sup>103</sup> the freedwoman concubine of Vespasian and the Judaeian princess mistress of Titus, were visible members of the imperial household because of their relationships with its male members; Caenis' presence helped to subtly explain the nature of Vespasian's relationship with his deceased wife, and thus establish Titus' and Domitian's status as his legitimate children and his legal heirs, while Berenice's relationship with

---

<sup>103</sup> For Caenis, *PIR*<sup>2</sup> A 888; for Berenice, *PIR*<sup>2</sup> I 651.

Titus communicated Domitian's place in the future of the dynasty. What is more, these relationships communicated to the Roman public that neither Vespasian nor Titus intended to marry again in the immediate future, and that the image of the imperial family that Vespasian had constructed – which consisted of himself and his two sons only – would not change substantially in response to either Vespasian's or Titus' future legitimate children. In this way, Caenis and Berenice played important symbolic roles in the way the imperial family was viewed and understood, even if they never appeared in Flavian dynastic propaganda.

Both Caenis and Berenice were highly visible in Roman society as a result of their relationships with men of the imperial family and their place in the imperial household. Caenis was treated almost as a lawful wife by Vespasian, and Dio describes her using Vespasian's fondness for her as an opportunity to become very wealthy selling governorships and other appointments.<sup>104</sup> However, it is possible that she had been wealthy before Vespasian's accession; she was the former *a manu* of Claudius' mother Antonia, who also seems to have been fond of her and may have bequeathed property or wealth to Caenis after her death.<sup>105</sup> Nonetheless, if she was in a position to intercede with Vespasian as he made decisions about appointments, her influence was comparable to earlier Julio-Claudian wives like Poppaea Sabina or Livia.<sup>106</sup>

Julia Berenice, on the other hand, was the sister of Herod Agrippa II of Judaea and had met Titus when he was campaigning in Judaea with his father; she may have

---

<sup>104</sup> Suet. *Vesp.* 3: *paene iustae uxoris loco*; Dio 66.14.3.

<sup>105</sup> For a possible property of Caenis, see Friggeri 1977-1978.

<sup>106</sup> Josephus describes Poppaea's ability to act as patron to his mission to Rome on behalf of Judaea (*Vita* 16; *AJ.* 2. 195). On the patronal roles of imperial wives in general, see Saller 1982, 69.

been involved in the intrigues that set the Flavian claim to power in motion.<sup>107</sup> Her relationship with Titus resumed after she and her brother traveled to Rome in the 70s.<sup>108</sup> Once there, she lived “in the palace” (ἐν τῷ παλατίῳ ὄκησε) with Titus, expecting to marry him and living as if she were his wife. However, the public reaction to her was negative and Titus sent her away.<sup>109</sup> The similarity of the language describing Caenis’ life with Vespasian (*paene iustae uxoris loco*) and Berenice’s life with Titus (ὡς καὶ γυνῆ αὐτοῦ οὔσα) underscores the fact that, despite the many differences between these two women in terms of their legal status and cultural background, they occupied the same position from the perspective of the imperial house: they were women who were engaged

---

<sup>107</sup> Tac. *Hist.* 2.2; see Sullivan 1953; cf. Tac. *Ann.* 2.81.

<sup>108</sup> Dio 66.15.4. The date for her arrival is usually given as 75 (see Crook 1951, 166; Rogers 1980, 91-92; Braund 1984, 120) based on the reference in Dio 66.15.1 to the dedication of the Temple of Peace in that year; Rogers and Crook both observe that this delay seems unusual, but they are unwilling to set aside Dio’s (for once) secure chronological marker. However, the fact that this section (14.1-16.4) was epitomized by Xiphilinus (208, 15-210, 14) should indicate that dating by inference would be incautious. Dio’s juxtaposition of the Herodian visit with the dedication of the temple of Pax recalls Josephus’ reference to the temple at the conclusion of his account of the triumph of 71 (*BJ* 7.158), and it would be perfectly reasonable to expect that Agrippa, as a client king, would travel to Rome early in the 70s to swear allegiance to Vespasian, as he had done for Galba, Otho, and Vitellius (Tac. *Ann.* 81; see Jordan 1974, 209-211). Moreover, Xiphilinus’ epitome is not a strictly annalistic account: it begins with an account of the death of Caenis in 66.14.1, which occasions a retrospective sketch of her career before and after Vespasian’s accession; then at 66.15.1 there is a thoroughly abbreviated passage about signal events of the mid-70s, including the dedication of the temple, shows that Vespasian presented, the fact that Titus had once engaged in a sham fight, and a sentence about the Parthians seeking military aid; then, at 66.15.3, Berenice arrives, and there follows a description of her life in Rome with Titus and the public response to her presence; the section ends with another abbreviated account of events of the late 70s, including an accident with a wine cask, the defeat of the Gaul Sabinus and his family, and the conspiracy of Caecina Alienus and Eprius Marcellus. This arrangement of information suggests that the discussions of these two women were paired digressions from Dio’s annalistic narrative in the context of a vague “middle period” of Vespasian’s reign, which emphasizes the similarities of their positions. Given all of this, Berenice’s (and Agrippa’s) arrival at around the time of the triumph seems eminently plausible.

<sup>109</sup> ἡ δὲ ἐν τῷ παλατίῳ ὄκησε καὶ τῷ Τίτῳ συνεγίνετο. προσεδόκα δὲ γαμηθήσεσθαι αὐτῷ, καὶ πάντα ἤδη ὡς καὶ γυνῆ αὐτοῦ οὔσα ἐποίει, ὥστ’ ἐκείνον δυσχεραίνοντας τοὺς Ῥωμαίους ἐπὶ τούτοις αἰσθόμενον ἀποπέμψασθαι αὐτήν, cf. Suet. *Tit.* 7.1-2.



in long-term social and sexual relationships with a man in the imperial family, but their relationships were not legal marriages.

Caenis was described by Suetonius as Vespasian's *concupina*,<sup>110</sup> and their relationship is an important piece of evidence for the Roman institution of concubinage, which is otherwise attested in legal documents and epigraphic evidence.<sup>111</sup> Recent work on this practice has shown that it was a legitimate and sometimes preferable alternative to marriage at all levels of Roman society. The ostensible purpose of Roman marriage was the reproduction of a new generation of citizens and the transmission of property within families, but these functions existed within a set of very narrow legal and social parameters. Concubinage existed as an alternative to marriage, which allowed individuals who wanted to avoid complicating inheritance issues to engage in a stable, long-term sexual relationship. In fact, in certain circumstances – if an elite man had already produced legitimate children from a marriage that had ended in divorce or the death of his wife, for example – concubinage might have been more respectable than another marriage, as it would preserve the legal and financial rights and interests of his children while providing him with sexual and social companionship.<sup>112</sup> In a properly-conducted relationship of concubinage, both parties would be unmarried, the woman would be of lower social status than the man, and the man would be in a position where legitimate offspring would be a complication or a burden – either because he was not yet old enough to support them, or because he was old enough that his legal marriage(s) had

---

<sup>110</sup> *Dom.* 12.3.

<sup>111</sup> Work on concubinage in the Roman classical period has focused on the question of its legal status and its relationship to the Julian laws of adultery, see Rawson 1974, Treggiari 1971, 1981, 1982, and 1991, and McGinn 1991 which includes a comprehensive bibliography and discussion of the issues. Treggiari 1982 includes an Appendix of epigraphic evidence for concubinage.

<sup>112</sup> McGinn 1991, 338; cf. Treggiari 1971.

ended and his estate had been organized to support his existing legitimate children and no more.<sup>113</sup>

Vespasian's relationship, which was supposed to have begun before his marriage to Flavia Domitilla and had resumed after her death,<sup>114</sup> was not the only such relationship among important senators under Nero. Rawson has suggested that the L. Caesennius L. f. Stel[.] of *CIL* 6.13937, whose concubine was Maria, may have been one of the senatorial Caesennii, if not the L. Caesennius Paetus who was consul of 61.<sup>115</sup> *CIL* 6.17170 has a Cossus Gaetulicus, who seems to be the father of a Vestal Virgin named Cornelia, whose concubine was a woman named Eon.<sup>116</sup> In many ways, Caenis' position had a precedent with Nero's Acte, who was his mistress during his marriage to Octavia but is sometimes called his *concupina*.<sup>117</sup> However, it had much more in common with the post-marital relationships of later emperors: Marcus Aurelius' unnamed concubine is attested in the *Historia Augusta*, and Antoninus Pius' relationship with his wife's freedwoman Lysistrate is attested in this source and from epigraphic evidence.<sup>118</sup>

Based on our knowledge of Vespasian's relationship with Caenis, it seems to have conformed to these social rules. Caenis may have had experience in the imperial court and personal connections with important figures because of her career in Antonia's household, but her legal status as a freedwoman created sufficient social distance to avoid

---

<sup>113</sup> Treggiari 1982, 59-81 and discussion in McGinn 1991, 335-339; Treggiari 1991, 52.

<sup>114</sup> Suet. *Vesp.* 3.

<sup>115</sup> And the husband of Vespasian's niece; *PIR*<sup>2</sup> C 173.

<sup>116</sup> Rawson (1974, 292), speculating, connects this individual with Cossus Cornelius Lentulus Gaetulicus, *PIR*<sup>2</sup> C 1392, the son of the consul of 26 and, perhaps, the father of the Vestal Virgin identified by Tacitus as *Cornelia ex familia Cossorum* (*Ann.* 15.22).

<sup>117</sup> Suet. *Nero* 50; Sen. *Suas.* 2.17; Mart. 3.82.11. For a brief discussion of the significance of the use of "*concupina*" in connection with Acte, see Treggiari 1982, 60.

<sup>118</sup> Marcus Aurelius' relationship is attested at *SHA Marcus* 29, see Rawson 1974, 288 n. 31. For Lysistrate: *SHA Ant. Pius* 8.9; *CIL* 6.8972.

opprobrium. The brief account of the relationship in Suetonius suggests that it had begun in their youth, suspended during Vespasian's marriage, and then resumed after the death of his wife. This marriage had produced three legitimate children – at least two of whom were still alive – so it was entirely reasonable for Vespasian to want to avoid future legitimate children who would complicate his son's inheritance. In short, the relationship between Caenis and Vespasian seems to have been entirely respectable and in keeping with the established practice of concubinage; the result of this is that when Vespasian became emperor and his relationship with Caenis was publicly visible, this respectability contributed to an overall impression of the nature of Vespasian's previous relationships.<sup>119</sup> Specifically, Caenis' presence in the imperial household implied that Vespasian's relationship with Flavia Domitilla had been a legitimate marriage between citizens, which had produced legitimate offspring; moreover, Caenis' status made a legal marriage between the two impossible, so it was clear that as long as their relationship continued Vespasian would not pursue a second marriage, and that Titus' and Domitian's claims as his heirs would not be challenged by further siblings. In this way, Caenis' presence – because of her absence from official representations of the family – communicated a narrative of the Flavian dynasty that began with Vespasian's deceased wife and extended into the future with his heirs.

---

<sup>119</sup> On the visibility of Caenis' and Vespasian's relationship: as evidence for Domitian's arrogance, Suetonius describes an occasion when he greeted Caenis on her return to Rome from Histria by holding out his hand to her rather than receiving her accustomed kiss (Suet. *Dom.* 12.3). The kiss would have been the appropriate greeting between social equals or close friends, see Paterson 2007, 147-48. This reference is cryptic; the fact that his reunion with Caenis was public suggests that it followed Vespasian's accession, and perhaps occurred during the period in early 70 when Domitian was the senior magistrate (and senior Flavian) in the city. Cf. Dio 66.14.1.

As Vespasian's concubine, Caenis served as a contrast to a legitimate wife, the never-mentioned Flavia Domitilla. As discussed above, Vespasian did not refer to his late wife in his development of a public image for the imperial family, but expressed the relationships between himself and his sons without reference to their biological connections. Nonetheless, Flavia Domitilla seems to have attracted some speculation and attention during Vespasian's reign. Suetonius describes her as the former mistress (*delicata*) of a Roman knight from Africa named Statilius Capella and claims that she had been of Latin rank, and that her status as a freeborn Roman citizen had been established in a suit brought before arbiters by her father, a secretary.<sup>120</sup> This description indicates that – rightly or wrongly – a question mark hung over Vespasian's relationship with Flavia Domitilla during his reign that concerned her status and her ability to contract a legal marriage with a Roman senator and bear citizen children for him. Caenis' presence in the imperial household addressed these concerns emphatically but indirectly: had Vespasian not contracted a legal and respectable marriage that produced legitimate children, his relationship with Caenis would have been inappropriate; his relationship with Caenis was appropriate only because it followed a legitimate marriage. Caenis' presence in the imperial family served as a retroactive assertion of Flavia Domitilla's status, the legality of her marriage to Vespasian and the legitimacy of her children, and the fact that the marriage had been conducted within the parameters of respectable elite Roman marriage practice.

In this way, Caenis' presence served as a persistent but subtle assertion of Titus' and Domitian's status as legitimate children and Vespasian's heirs. As discussed above,

---

<sup>120</sup> *Vesp.* 3.

the Flavian *domus Augusta* deemphasized familial relationships, connecting individuals to one another by emphasizing physical resemblance and degrees of status reinforced by magisterial appointments and honors. Caenis' relationship with Vespasian re-introduced the familial aspect of Vespasian's, Titus', and Domitian's relationship to one another, adding a layer of complexity to the public perception of the dynamics of the imperial house. Caenis' presence told a narrative about the family's (private) history: that Vespasian had married a respectable citizen woman, who had given birth to legitimate children who could continue her husband's family and assume his property after his death, then had died. While the Flavian *domus Augusta* now seemed firmly rooted in the present, lacking the retrospective assertion of legitimacy based on a connection with Augustus that appeared in Julio-Claudian constructions of the public imperial house, it still had a past and a history that explained its current membership and their relationships to one another. Because relationships of concubinage were common and respectable even among Rome's political elite, this narrative was easily accessible: Caenis' presence asserted the legality and propriety of Vespasian's defunct marriage without any overt reference or public promotion of Vespasian's defunct wife.

Moreover, Caenis' relationship with Vespasian emphasized the lack of women in the official *domus Augusta*, and the implications that that would have for life under the Flavians. Vespasian's omission of women and their reproductive roles in his version of the imperial family was in contrast to the pivotal roles that Julio-Claudian women had played in legitimating their male relatives' claims to power and in transmitting authority from one generation to the next; this had been the context from which individuals like Agrippina the Younger had built substantial informal personal authority. Caenis was an

influential figure under Vespasian as well, allegedly acting as a broker for magistracies, procuratorships, consulships, and other imperial *beneficia*. Her authority derived from influence with and access to Vespasian. But her role was not reproductive, and her relationship with the imperial family was explicitly with him alone, and not with his children or their children. Therefore, whatever social influence she may have had was contingent upon her continued relationship with Vespasian; after it was over, she would not be able to translate her symbolic importance into personal authority, or exercise influence over his children. Her power was temporary, and she did not have the potential to become another Agrippina.

Although Julia Berenice's position in the imperial family was similar to Caenis' the effect of her presence was very different. Like Caenis', her life with a member of the imperial family was on display: Quintilian describes himself pleading a case on her behalf for which she herself served as a judge, which indicates that she had an active political life and occupied an influential position on the imperial *concilium*.<sup>121</sup> We know that her relationship with Titus drew particular attention because of the censure it attracted. Dio says that "in addition to other talk" (ἄλλως τε γὰρ πολλὰ ἐθρουλείτο) that her presence attracted, two specific incidents occurred when Diogenes and Heras, Cynic philosophers, entered the city; Diogenes denounced Titus and Berenice in a crowded theatre and was flogged, while Heras barked many and senseless things against them (πολλὰ καὶ ἄτοπα κυνηδὸν ἐξέκραγε) and was beheaded.<sup>122</sup> This reference indicates that Titus and Berenice's relationship was both highly visible and vulnerable to criticism; the extreme response to the philosophers may indicate the fact that the Flavians were

---

<sup>121</sup> *Inst.* 6.1; Young-Widmaier 2002.

<sup>122</sup> Cassius Dio 66.15.5. On philosophers in Rome under Vespasian, see Penwill 2003, 345-368.

concerned that criticism of this relationship would ignite criticism of the regime as a whole. It may also support Suetonius' assertion that Titus behaved violently and brutishly in his position as Praetorian Prefect.<sup>123</sup> In any event, the references to Diogenes and Heras reveal the extent to which Titus' relationship with Berenice was unpopular and attracted public condemnation to a potentially dangerous extent.<sup>124</sup> As fond of one another as they may have been, Berenice's dismissal – against both of their wishes, according to Suetonius (*invitus invitam*) – was deemed necessary.<sup>125</sup>

Berenice's role in the imperial family was comparable to Caenis', and thus her presence could have been as symbolically meaningful as well: like Caenis' relationship with Vespasian, Berenice's relationship with Titus was of considerable duration and put her in the role of a wife to the imperial prince, although, crucially, the couple was not legally married. Thus as long as the relationship continued, Berenice's presence signaled that Titus would not be entering a legal marriage any time soon. In terms of the construction of the Flavian *domus Augusta*, this served to refine the dynastic narrative of the Flavian future presented by the relationships between Vespasian and his sons: Caenis' presence signaled that the future of the dynasty lay with Vespasian's children, and Berenice's presence signaled that it ultimately lay with Domitian. As long as these relationships endured, the Flavian house would not dissolve into dynastic squabbling or face troubling questions about inheritance. It seems no accident that Domitian was the

---

<sup>123</sup> Suet. *Tit.* 6.1.

<sup>124</sup> Crook's explanation for Berenice's arrival in Rome in 75 is that Titus had been prevented from bringing her to the city by Mucianus, who anticipated public hostility to her presence and died in that year (1955, 166-167); Braund argues that Vespasian and Titus themselves might have foreseen this response and the delay was due to their desire to secure their hold on the city (1984, 122). However, see n. 108 above.

<sup>125</sup> Suet. *Tit.* 7.2; Berenice's dismissal should be dated to 79 either before Vespasian's death (Crook 1951, 169, Rogers 1980, 94) or after (Braund 1984, 121). She returned to Rome after Vespasian became emperor (Dio 66.18.1) but they did not resume their relationship.

only member of the imperial family to enter a legal marriage, to Domitia Longina, after Vespasian's victory.

However, unlike Caenis, Berenice proved to be more divisive and destabilizing, and her relationship with Titus attracted hostility and censure. The reason for this is the difference in status, both legal and social, between these women. Since she was a freedwoman, the limitations of the relationship between Caenis and the senatorial, and then imperial, Vespasian were familiar to contemporaries accustomed to the institutions of Roman marriage and concubinage. Although she may have had experience in the imperial court, and was well-connected and wealthy, Caenis' legal status created a social gulf that precluded legal marriage. Berenice was a foreign princess and a Roman citizen, so there was no legal barrier to a marriage between Berenice and Titus;<sup>126</sup> the only obstacle was her cultural background and her royal status. Her obvious analogue would be Cleopatra, although no ancient source makes this comparison explicit; nonetheless, the issues raised by the relationships between Cleopatra and Roman senatorial men had reverberated for over a century.<sup>127</sup> Her social status was difficult to gauge in the complex web of legal and cultural markers of first-century Rome; at the same time, Vespasian, like his Julio-Claudian predecessors, had maintained a rhetoric of equality and republicanism that ran counter to the principate's real monarchic nature. By treating Berenice like a concubine, Titus was inviting scrutiny about his own status and about the nature of the principate: was a *Caesar* the social superior of a Judaeian princess, even though the emperor was theoretically a private citizen?

---

<sup>126</sup> Julius Caesar granted citizenship to Antipater of Judaea in 47 BCE (Josephus *AJ* 14.136-7; *BJ* 1.194).

<sup>127</sup> Braund 1984, 122-123; cf. Garzetti 1974, 259; Gagé 1959, 233-6; J. Griffin 1977; Kraft 1967.



Caenis and Berenice both represent women at the center of the imperial family during the reign of Vespasian. Like their Julio-Claudian predecessors, their presence alone had a symbolic significance that communicated ideologically-meaningful things about the men of the imperial house and their relationships with one another. However, unlike the women of the imperial family, their significance was not based on their capacity for reproduction; rather, it lay in the fact that they could not produce legitimate children for their partners. Caenis' presence effectively communicated Vespasian's intentions to remain unmarried and to avoid further children, which was an important sentiment in the context of dynastic politics; this message was easily accessible because her social status as a freedwoman precluded marriage with Vespasian and ensured that their relationship, which fell into an established pattern of the institution of concubinage, which would be familiar to Vespasian's contemporaries. Berenice's presence, on the other hand, caused anxiety; her legal and social status in comparison with Titus' was opaque, and thus the nature of their relationship – concubinage or marriage? – was not clear. Her presence in the imperial house did not contribute to the clarity of the dynasty's future; in fact, it invited uncomfortable questions about Titus' status as the son of the *princeps* and about the nature of the principate in general.

## **Conclusion**

Augustus and his successors had been faced with a unique problem that derived from the necessity of balancing ingrained Roman attitudes towards monarchy with the developing position of the *princeps* in the Roman world; when it came to creating and enforcing social programs, like Augustus' moral reforms, this problem became especially

pressing. Augustus' solution was to create and promote a public image for himself and his family that modeled the changes that he wished to effect. The result was the construction of the *domus Augusta*, the projection into the public of Augustus' private life, which allowed the emperor and his family to model the behaviors, attitudes, and relationships that he wished members of the Roman public to bring into their homes. This concept also allowed Augustus to shape his family and its membership for a Roman audience, so that the relationships within it could be intelligible and its future – in the form of his heirs – would become familiar and acceptable.

Ultimately, the *domus Augusta* became an integral part of Julio-Claudian dynasticism. Emperors developed versions of the *domus Augusta* that, in its composition, communicated the dynastic narrative of the family, and therefore the state, to the Roman audience. For example, under Tiberius, the inclusion of Livia in the public face of the family connected the imperial present (Tiberius) to its past (Augustus) while the inclusion of Tiberius' sons (Drusus and Germanicus) put the imperial future on display. This concept allowed emperors to bend the rules, to rewrite biological reality for the sake of dynastic unity and narrative simplicity; Germanicus' status as Tiberius' son was no less real than Drusus', from the point of view of the public understanding of the *domus Augusta*. This can be clearly seen in the way that the image of the imperial family was reflected back to the center; texts like the *senatus consultum de Pisone patre* and statuary groups from provincial communities show a willingness to accept the public version of the *domus Augusta* at face value, even if only as a form of sycophancy.

Augustus' public presentation of his family drew attention to its female members, giving them a public profile that seems to contradict their status as models of female

domestic virtue; meanwhile, the *domus Augusta* as it was constructed late in Augustus' reign and by his successors emphasized the women of the imperial family, who could be used symbolically to express the relationship between one generation and the next – whether that relationship was rooted in biological reality or not. This cast the women of the imperial house in the role of intermediary, symbolically negotiating the transfer of power from the emperor to his heir. This ideological device allowed certain women to transform their relationships to the men of the imperial family into tremendous personal power, which was rooted, fundamentally, in the symbolic significance of their bodies and their ability to perpetuate the royal blood into the next generation.

As the successor to the Julio-Claudians and the founder of Rome's second dynasty, Vespasian was compelled to respond to this model. The symbolic narrative of the *domus Augusta* – and its implications for the presentation of imperial heirs and the rise of powerful women – was part of the position of *princeps*, and for Vespasian, whose political and military support rested in part on his two adult sons, the way that he made use of this dynastic device was particularly important. His response was innovative. The *domus Augusta* that he promoted was extremely limited in its composition, consisting entirely of himself, Titus, and Domitian. For the first time, the imperial family was rooted in the present rather than the past, as Vespasian cast himself as the family's progenitor; this served to equate him with Augustus, rather than connect him to Augustus, and expressed the clean break from the past that the Flavians promised. The emphasis was therefore on himself and his children, but instead of relying on the biological connection to express their relationships to one another, he developed other iconographic and performed ways of unifying the imperial house and articulating its

future. Coinage stressed the similarities between these three men, both in terms of their physical appearance and in terms of their position in Roman society; these similarities were the basis for this imperial grouping. However, coinage and public performances, like the Judaeian triumph of 71, also presented a hierarchy within the imperial family, according to which Titus was only slightly inferior to Vespasian but superior to Domitian. This effectively rewrote biological reality, casting Domitian as Titus' son and heir; it also served to clarify succession and remove the specter of inter-filial civil war.

One outcome of this strategy was that it obviated the role of women, whose bodies had featured so prominently in Julio-Claudian dynastic politics, in articulating the relationships between one generation of Flavians and the next. Indeed, the art and culture of Vespasian's rule seems remarkably devoid of imperial women, even though we know that he had several living female relatives, both adults and children, and that his late wife would later play an important role in Titus' and Domitian's dynastic narratives. This seems to have been a response to the powerful women of the later Julio-Claudian reigns, who had been able to translate their symbolic dynastic importance into personal authority, often with destabilizing effects.

But this is not to say that Vespasian's reign was devoid of women, and the figures of Caenis and Berenice loom large in historical accounts of the 70s as women whose place in the imperial household, as the sexual and social partners of Vespasian and Titus, took on deeply important symbolic significance in the context of the Flavian *domus Augusta*. These women served to communicate certain aspects of the Flavian dynastic narrative, despite not figuring in the formal public image of the imperial family: specifically, Vespasian's and Titus' inaccessibility for legal marriage, and Domitian's

(and his unmentioned wife's) role in creating the next generation of Flavians and perpetuating the dynasty. But while Caenis' position was clearly intelligible in the context of the traditional extramarital institution of concubinage, Berenice's presence was more ambiguous and caused public anxiety, and so she was dismissed.

Vespasian's approach to the *domus Augusta* and to the basis of imperial succession – the principles on which he presented his heirs to the public and expected the public to accept them – were short-lived. Titus and Domitian both turned back to the Julio-Claudian emphasis on biological relationships, expressed through women, and Domitia Longina emerges from the 80s and early 90s as a formidable political player in her own right. But Titus' and Domitian's strategies should not be attributed to Vespasian, whose approach consisted of a radical rethinking of the nature of Roman dynastic power – an approach that would not be revisited until the second century.

## **Conclusion**

This discussion of the construction of Vespasian's personal authority over the course of his reign, and especially in the early months after the death of Vitellius, has revealed a number of significant aspects of Vespasian's attitude towards imperial power and conception of the role of emperor; in the context of the history of the Roman empire in general, Vespasian's attitudes provide insight into the nature of imperial authority in the first century CE.

The narrative of Vespasian's victory, as traced in my second chapter, shows how important the military and political support from a military faction – his legions, and the group of senatorial former protégés of Domitius Corbulo – was in his bid for power. However, Vespasian's military authority was potentially threatening, especially in the context of the period after the chaotic and unstable reigns of the previous military emperors, Galba, Otho, and Vitellius. The challenge for Vespasian was to translate military authority into personal, civil authority in a stable way without alienating the soldiers or their commanders (who might find a new candidate to support).

Vespasian's use of military models in his construction of his personal authority is striking, especially when it seems that he used these models to facilitate the translation of his military power into personal power. For example, in my third chapter I described Vespasian's performance on the military space of the Capitoline, in which he evoked

associations of military glory through actions that recalled those of a triumph, and invited a comparison between himself and his immediate predecessors Vitellius and Nero whose ceremonial entries into the city in 69 and 66 had also assumed a quasi-triumphal aspect. At the same time, Vespasian's performance of work on the Capitoline used its military space to facilitate the integration of military values of leadership into a civic context. In my third chapter, I discussed how Vespasian's personal authority at the outset of his reign relied on an Augustan conception of the relationship between a successful *imperator* and his social influence, or *auctoritas*.

Finally, in my fourth chapter I discussed how Vespasian's notion of dynasticism and the way that he developed the public image of his family, emphasized the similarities between himself and his sons; the accounts of Josephus and Tacitus both emphasize that Vespasian's troops in Syria had viewed his relationship with the popular young commander Titus as one of Vespasian's claims to their loyalty and support. This emphasis on Vespasian's relationship with Titus (and the fact that he had another grown son in Rome) draws attention to the Roman legions' well-established tendency to transfer military loyalty from father to son.

The enduring significance of military concepts and models of leadership as Vespasian developed his personal authority in Rome provides an insight into Vespasian's success: he was able to use his status as a commander and his military success to give meaning to – but not to take the place of – the role that he developed for himself in the civic space of Rome. The actions he took early in his reign show him making use of military concepts as he adapted an existing imperial civic ideology, which represents both a flexible notion of imperial authority that would appeal to his initial legionary supporters

and a civic audience. This process of redefinition produced a radically new conception of imperial authority.

Vespasian's ability to challenge, manipulate, and adapt imperial traditions as he created his own model of personal authority shows how flexible and personal the office of emperor was at this point in the first century. Although there were certain spheres of activity in which Vespasian was expected to act – as a religious figure, as the center of Roman social and political life, and as the central figure in a dynastic narrative that promised future stability for the Roman empire – his ability to construct his imperial persona gave him the opportunity to reevaluate the meaning of his position and to create new ways of interacting with Roman space, memory, and concepts of gender in order to explore and express imperial power. This is an extremely important insight into the nature of the principate in the first century CE, as it shows that the imperial office at this point consisted less of formal behaviors and more of a collection of cultural and ideological categories of action, and that these categories of action could be adapted and altered as each emperor saw fit.

One of the implications of this is that it casts serious doubt on the validity of our current approach to the periodization of imperial history. The Flavian dynasty, which encompassed the rules of Vespasian, Titus, and Domitian, is often discussed as a coherent whole, which responded to the model of the principate put forward by the emperors of the Julio-Claudian period. However, my analysis has shown that Vespasian's heirs challenged, reversed, or overlooked a number of the most important aspects of his model of the imperial office. For example, Titus and Domitian responded to Vespasian's redefinition of the concept of the imperial family by reintroducing symbolically-



meaningful female relatives whose presence served to explain the relationships between the men of the current imperial house; Domitian even deified his deceased female relatives, in an effort to increase his own divine authority. Similarly, Vespasian's attempt to redraw the ideological map of the city of Rome by relocating imperial power in the Quirinal, which offered a contrast to the Julio-Claudian traditions of the Palatine, met with short-lived success as both his sons made their imperial palaces on the sites of Julio-Claudian structures.

The notion of the unity of the Flavian dynasty, and specifically the physical, political, and personal similarities among Vespasian, Titus, and Domitian, was in fact constructed by Vespasian as he developed the public projection of his imperial house. By rejecting the role of symbolic imperial women, Vespasian devised a new way to express the relationship between one generation of his family and the next, and to represent the future dynastic stability that his sons offered to the empire. The fundamental similarity between the current emperor, Vespasian, and his immediate heir, Titus (and between Titus and his heir, Domitian) offered an accessible and clearly-defined vision of an imperial future that did not threaten the security of the state or the stability of the imperial office. This construction was successful because it was so appealing; it has endured for modern scholars, who assert the static unity of the Flavian dynasty as a distinct period, at the expense of appreciating the extent to which Vespasian, Titus, and Domitian each developed their own notions of imperial power.

Vespasian's ability to manipulate and adapt the traditions of the imperial office show that he possessed a canny understanding of the nature of imperial spectacle and the importance of constructing a public persona as a means of maintaining a claim to

personal imperial authority. His manipulation of urban space, his use of ritual and performance, and his utilization of narrative *topoi* in the construction of his identity as emperor indicate that he understood the difference between the way the Roman public should perceive him as emperor and his “real” historical identity; this can be seen in the way that he is consistently represented as poor and from a humble rural background despite his long, extensive senatorial career and his family’s unquestionable wealth.

It is difficult not to imagine that Vespasian’s association with the freedwoman Caenis contributed to this understanding of the constructed nature of imperial identity. Vespasian’s relationship with Caenis allegedly began before his marriage and then resumed after the death of Flavia Domitilla;<sup>1</sup> since Titus was born in December of 39 (and Antonia, Caenis’ mistress, committed suicide in 37), this means that Vespasian’s earliest associations with Caenis date to a period when her mistress was a crucial symbolic figure as the surrogate mother of the imperial heir Caligula, whose family represented both the challenging opposition to and the future of Tiberius’ reign.

Consequently, when Vespasian began his career at Rome in the 30s, he came as a relative outsider to Roman imperial court life; he had family and personal connections in the senate, but his perception of the emperors was entirely from the point of view of a member of the Roman public, who was exposed to the emperor through carefully constructed images of imperial power that appeared on coins, honorific statues, in decrees and inscriptions, edicts and rescripts, in religious festivals, cults and shrines, and even in the emerging literature and poetry of the age. Caenis, however, had spent her life inside the imperial household, in a position to observe the real interactions between the

---

<sup>1</sup> Suet. *Vesp.* 3.

individuals whose images were being constructed and shown to the public: Dio's reference to her role in taking dictation for the letter from Antonia to Tiberius which exposed Sejanus' conspiracy even shows her participating in the interactions between the individuals of the imperial family.<sup>2</sup> More importantly, this episode shows that Caenis had the opportunity to observe the extent to which the political life of the empire entered into the domestic life of the imperial family, and the extent to which familial politics could threaten the security of the state.

In this respect, Caenis occupied a privileged position that we modern historians share; ancient literary sources, including Suetonius, Tacitus, and Dio, were fascinated by the "secret history" of the imperial house and the relationship between the person and the perception of the emperor. They were able to write these histories because their own careers gave them personal access to members of the imperial house, which Caenis' role also afforded her; Tacitus and Dio were both senators and consuls, while Suetonius' career as an imperial secretary offered him glimpses into the personal lives of not only Hadrian but also previous emperors. This perspective, which explores and exposes the tension between the real and the constructed, personal and public, in imperial court life has shaped our conception of the principate, the early emperors, and the nature of imperial authority.

Vespasian therefore had the experience of perceiving the emperors he served simultaneously as a newcomer to the imperial court and the audience of emperors' constructed personas, and, through Caenis, as real and distinct individuals. As Vespasian made his bid for power in 69 and began to develop a notion of his imperial authority, he

---

<sup>2</sup> Dio 66.14.1.

was aware of the importance of his imperial persona, and of his ability to shape a coherent and appealing image of himself and his family to the Roman public – legionary soldiers, the political elite, and the population of the city of Rome – that could draw from a range of concepts and ideologies to reinforce his status. Consequently, he was extraordinarily good at presenting himself as emperor, even when his imperial persona departed significantly from reality.

Thus Vespasian's public image appealed to the Roman people who were concerned about moral decay and attacks on Roman traditions after the civil war and the reign of Nero, and who were suspicious of imperial luxury and tyranny, and unsure of the balance between civic politics and military power. Vespasian developed a notion of imperial authority that addressed these fears: he constructed an identity for himself that was humble, rural, and unspoiled by imperial luxury, which promised a return to republican traditional morality; he presented himself as a marginal figure of the Neronian court, almost one of Nero's victims, in order to distance himself from the tyranny of Nero's reign; he constructed the public image of his family in such a way that it challenged the role of the imperial household in the dynastic politics of the state while simultaneously offering a stable future for the empire under the rule of Vespasian's sons as his successors. As he relocated imperial power in the city to the Quirinal, where his family had already established their influence, he challenged the traditional ideological topography of the city and the connection between imperial power and the aristocratic traditions of the republic, and distanced himself from the luxury and excess of his predecessors' court environments. In so doing he created a model of imperial authority that addressed the military, political, and cultural tensions of Rome in 69 CE, and drew

from his own personality and experience. In this way, he accomplished the difficult task of translating his military victory in the civil war into stable imperial government based on his personal authority and a redefinition of the nature of imperial power.

## Bibliography

- Abaecherli, A. L. 1935-1936. "Fercula, Carpentia, and Tensae in the Roman Procession." *Bollettino dell'Associazione degli Studi Mediterranei* 6: 1-20.
- Acton, Karen. 2011. "Vespasian and the Social World of the Roman Court." *American Journal of Philology* 132: 103-124.
- Adcock, F. E. 1952. "A Note on *Res Gestae Divi Augusti*, 34,3." *Journal of Roman Studies* 42: 10-12.
- . 1959. *Roman Political Ideas and Practice*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.
- Alcock, S. 2002. *Archaeologies of the Greek Past: Landscape, Monuments, and Memories*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Alexandridis, Annetta. 2004. *Die Frauen des römischen Kaiserhauses: eine Untersuchung ihrer bildlichen Darstellung von Livia bis Iulia Domna*. Mainz: von Zabern.
- Amandry, Michel, Andrew M. Burnett, and Ian Carradice. 1999. *Roman Provincial Coinage, Volume II: from Vespasian to Domitian (AD 69-96)*. London: British Museum Press.
- Anderson, Benedict. 1991 [1983]. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso.
- Ando, Clifford. 2000. *Imperial Ideology and Provincial Loyalty in the Roman Empire*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Ash, Rhiannon. 1999. *Ordering Anarchy: Armies and Leaders in Tacitus' Histories*. London: Duckworth.
- . 2007. *Tacitus, Histories Book II*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Baldwin, B. 1983. *Suetonius. The Biographer of the Caesars*. Amsterdam: Gieben.
- Bartman, Elizabeth. 1999. *Portraits of Livia: Imaging the Imperial Woman in Augustan Rome*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press.

- Barzanò, A. 1983. "Tito e Tiberio Giulio Alessandro." *Atti del Congresso Internazionale di Studi Flaviani, Rieti, settembre 1981*. Rieti: Centro di Studi Varroniani: 195-202.
- Bastien, P. 1978. "Vitellius et le temple de Jupiter Capitolin. Un as inédit." *Numismatica e Antichità Classiche* 7: 181-202.
- Bauman, Richard A. 1974. *Impietas in Principem: A study of treason against the Roman emperor with special reference to the first century A. D.* Munich: Beck.
- Baynham, Elizabeth. 1998. *Alexander the Great: The Unique History of Quintus Curtius*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.
- Beard, Mary. 2003. "The Triumph of Flavius Josephus." *Flavian Rome: Culture, Image, Text*. Eds. A.J. Boyle and William J. Dominik. Boston: Brill. 543-558.
- . 2007. *The Roman Triumph*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Benediktson, D. Thomas. 1996-1997. "Structure and Fate in Suetonius' *Life of Galba*." *Classical Journal* 92.2: 167-173.
- Béranger, Jean. 1953. *Recherches sur l'Aspect Ideologique du Principat*. Basel: Reinhardt.
- Bersanetti, G. M. 1941. *Vespasiano, con una cartina geografica e una tavola fuori testo*. Rome: Edizioni Roma.
- Billanovich, Giuseppe. 1995. "Come nacque un capolavoro: La 'cronica' del non più Anonimo Romano." *Rendiconti dell'Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei*, ser. 9, 6: 195-211.
- Boatwright, M. T. 1986. "The Pomerian Extension of Augustus." *Historia* 35.1: 13-27.
- Bonini, Roberto. 1981. "Profili storico-costituzionali del Principato di Vespasiano." *Atti del Congresso Internazionale di Studi Vespasiane, Rieti Settembre 1979*. Rieti: Centro di Studi Varroniani Editore: 253-259.
- Bosworth, A. B. 1973. "Vespasian and the Provinces: Some Problems of the Early 70's A.D." *Athenaeum* 51: 49-78.
- Boyle, A. J. 2008. *Octavia, Attributed to Seneca*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Boyle, A. J. and William J. Dominik, eds. *Flavian Rome: Culture, Image, Text*. Leiden: Brill.
- Braithwaite, A. W. 1927. *C. Suetoni Tranquilli Divus Vespasianus*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- Braund, D. C. 1984. "Berenice in Rome." *Historia* 33: 120-123.
- Breckenridge, J. D. 1968. *Likeness. A Conceptual History of Ancient Portraiture*. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press.
- . 1982. "Roman Imperial Portraiture from Augustus to Gallienus." *ANRW* II, 12.2: 477-512.
- Brown, D. F. 1940. *Temples of Rome as Coin Types. Numismatic Notes and Monographs* 90. New York: American Numismatic Society.
- Brunt, P. A. 1977. "Lex de Imperio Vespasiani." *Journal of Roman Studies*. 67: 95-116.
- . 1980. "Free Labour and Public Works at Rome." *Journal of Roman Studies* 70: 81-100.
- Brunt, P.A. and J. M. Moore. 1967. *Res Gestae Divi Augusti: the Achievements of the Divine Augustus*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Büchner, K. 1964. *Studien zur römischen Literatur* Band 4: Tacitus und Ausklang. Wiesbaden: Steiner.
- Burdach, Konrad and Paul Piur. 1913-1929. *Briefwechsel des Cola di Rienzo*, 5 vols. Forschungen zur Geschichte der deutschen Bildung 2. Berlin.
- Buttrey, T. V. 1975. "Domitian's Perpetual Censorship and the Numismatic Evidence." *The Classical Journal* 71.1: 26-34.
- . 1980. *Documentary Evidence for the Chronology of the Flavian Titulature*. Meisenheim: Hain.
- Cadoux, T. J. 1959. Review of G. Vitucci, *Ricerche sulla praefectura urbi in età imperiale (sec. I-III)*. *Journal of Roman Studies* 49: 152-160.
- Campbell, B. 1987. "Teach Yourself How To Be A General." *Journal of Roman Studies* 77: 13-29.
- Caratini, Roger. 2003. *Vespasien: le bon empereur*. Neuilly-sur-Seine: M. Lafon.
- Carradice I. 1983. *Coinage and finances in the reign of Domitian, A.D. 81-96*. Oxford: Brit. Archaeol. Reports, BAR Intern. Ser.; 178.
- Carradice, I. A. and T. V. Buttrey. 2007. *The Roman Imperial Coinage* vol. 2 part 1 (Second Fully Revised Edition). London: Spink.
- Casson, L. 1978. "Unemployment, the Building Trade, and Suetonius, *Vesp.* 18." *Bulletin of the American Society of Papyrologists* 15: 34-51.



- Castritius, Helmut. 1969. "Zu den Frauen der Flavier." *Historia* 18.4: 492-502.
- Ceașescu, G. 1984. "Vitellius' kaiserliche Titel." *Studii Clasice* 22: 69-79.
- Champlin, E. 2003. "Nero, Apollo, and the Poets." *Phoenix* 57.3: 276-283.
- . 2005. *Nero*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Charlesworth, M. P. 1937a. "The Virtues of a Roman Emperor: Propaganda and the Creation of Belief." *Proceedings of the British Academy* 23: 105-140.
- . 1937b. "Flaviana." *Journal of Roman Studies* 27.1: 54-62.
- Chilver, G. E. F. 1957. "The Army in Politics, A.D. 68-70." *Journal of Roman Studies* 47.1: 29-35.
- Chilver, G. E. F. and G. B. Townend. 1985. *A Historical Commentary on Tacitus' Histories IV and V*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Clemente, G. 1977. *Guida alla storia romana*. Milan: Mondadori.
- Clark, Mark Edward. 1981. "The Evidence for *Spes* as an Early Imperial Idea." PhD. Dissertation Indiana University.
- . 1983. "*Spes* in the Early Imperial Cult: 'The Hope of Augustus'." *Numen* 30.1: 80-105.
- Clarke, G. W. 1966. "The Date of the 'Consecratio' of Vespasian." *Historia* 15.3: 318-327.
- Coarelli, F. 1984. *Roma sepolta*. Rome: A. Curcio.
- . 1991-1994. "Moneta. Le officine della zecca di Roma tra Repubblica e Impero." *Annali dell'Istituto Italiano di Numismatica* 38-41: 23-66.
- Collins, Amanda. 1998. "Cola di Rienzo, the Lateran Basilica, and the *Lex de Imperio* of Vespasian." *Mediaeval Studies* 60: 159-183.
- . 2002. *Greater Than Emperor: Cola di Rienzo (ca. 1313-54) and the World of Fourteenth-Century Rome*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.
- Cooley, Alison. 1998. "The Moralizing Message of the Senatus Consultum de Cn. Pisone Patre." *Greece and Rome* ser. 2 45.2: 199-212.
- Cornell, T. 1995. *The Beginnings of Rome: Italy and Rome from the Bronze Age until the Punic Wars (ca. 1000-264 BCE)*. London: Routledge.
- Crawford, M. H., ed. 1996. *Roman Statutes*, 2 vols. BICS supplement 64.

- Crook, John A. 1951. "Titus and Berenice." *AJP* 72: 162-175.
- . 1953. "Some Remarks on the Augustan Constitution." *Classical Review* New Series, 3.1: 10-12.
- . 1996. "Augustus: power, authority, achievement." *Cambridge Ancient History*, second edition, volume X. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 113-146.
- Daltrop, G., U. Hausmann and M. Wegner. 1966. *Die Flavier. Vespasian, Titus, Domitian, Nerva, Julia Titi, Domitilla, Domitia*. Berlin: Mann.
- Damon, Cynthia. 2003. *Tacitus, Histories Book I*. Cambridge; Cambridge University Press.
- Darwall-Smith, R. H. 1996. *Emperors and Architecture: A Study of Flavian Rome*. Collection Latomus 231. Brussels: Revue d'Études Latines.
- Davies, Penelope J. E. 2000. *Death and the Emperor: Roman Imperial Funerary Monuments, from Augustus to Marcus Aurelius*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Davis, Natalie Zemon. 1983. *The Return of Martin Guerre*. Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press.
- Derchain, P. 1953. "La visite de Vespasien au Sérapéum d'Alexandrie." *Chronique d'Égypte* 28 no. 56: 261-279.
- Derchain, P. and J. Hubaux. 1953. "Vespasien au Sérapéum." *Latomus* 12: 38-52.
- Dorey, T. A. 1958. "Tacitus' Treatment of Antonius Primus." *Classical Philology* 53.4: 244.
- Drexler, H. 1956. Review of A. Briessmann, *Tacitus und das flavische Geschichtsbild*. *Gnomon* 28: ????.
- Dumont, J.-C., J.-L. Ferrary, Ph. Moreau and Cl. Nicolet. 1980. *Insula Sacra. La loi Gabinia-Calpurnia de Délos (58 av. J.-C.)*. Collection de l'École Française de Rome, 45. Rome.
- Eck, W. 1970. *Senatoren von Vespasian bis Hadrian*. Munich: Beck.
- . 2000. "Emperor, Senate and magistrates." *Cambridge Ancient History*, second edition, volume XI. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 214-237.
- Eck, Werner, Antonio Caballos and Fernando Fernández. 1996. *Das Senatus Consultum de Cn. Pisone patre*. Munich: Beck.

- Elias, Norbert. 1969. *Die höfische Gesellschaft: Untersuchungen zur Soziologie des Königtums und der höfischen Aristokratie, mit einer Einleitung: Soziologie und Geschichtswissenschaft*. Darmstadt and Neuwied: Luchterhand.
- . 2006. *The Court Society*. Trans. Edmund Jephcott. Dublin: University College Dublin Press.
- Facchetti, Vittorio. 1981. "La 'lex de imperio': struttura giuridica, ragioni politiche, significato storico." *Atti del Congresso Internazionale di Studi Vespasiani, Rieti Settembre 1979*. Rieti: Centro di Studi Varroniani Editore: 399-410.
- Favro, D. 1996. *The Urban Image of Augustan Rome*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Fears, J. Rufus. 1981. "The Cult of Virtues and Roman Imperial Ideology." *ANRW* 2.17.2: 827-948.
- Feeney, D. 2007. *Caesar's Calendar: Ancient Time and the Beginnings of History*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Ferrill, Arther. 1965. "Otho, Vitellius, and the Propaganda of Vespasian." *The Classical Journal* 60.6: 267-269.
- Fischler, Susan. 1994. "Social Stereotypes and Historical Analysis: the Case of the Imperial Woman at Rome." *Women in Ancient Societies: an Illusion of the Night*. Eds. Léonie J. Archer, Susan Fischler, and Maria Wyke. New York: Routledge, 115-133.
- Flory, M. B. 1984. "*Sic exempla parantur*. Livia's Shrine to Concordia and the Porticus Liviae." *Historia* 33: 309-330.
- . 1993. "Livia and the History of Public Honorific Statues for Women in Rome." *TAPA* 123: 287-308.
- . 1996. "Dynastic Ideology, the Domus Augusta, and Imperial Women: a Lost Statuary Group in the Circus Flaminius." *TAPA* 126: 287-306.
- . 1998. "The Integration of Women into the Roman Triumph." *Historia*. 47.4: 489-494.
- Flower, Harriet I. 1996. *Ancestor masks and Aristocratic Power in Roman Culture*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Friggeri, R. 1977-1978. "La domus di Antonia Caenis e il Balineum Caenidianum." *Rendiconti della Pontificia Accademia di Archeologia* 50: 145-154.

- Frézouls, Edmond. 1987. "Les Julio-Claudiens et le Palatin." *Le Système Palatial en Orient, en Grèce et à Rome: Actes du Colloque de Strasbourg 19-22 juin 1985*, ed. Edmond Lévy, 445-62, Leiden: Brill.
- Fuchs G. 1969. *Architekturdarstellungen auf römischen Münzen der Republik und der frühen Kaiserzeit*. Berlin: de Gruyter.
- Gagé, J. 1952. "Vespasien et la mémoire de Galba." *Revue des Études Anciennes* 54: 290-315.
- . 1959. "L'empereur romain et les rois. Politique et protocole." *Revue historique* 221: 221-260.
- Gallivan, Paul. 1981. "The Fasti for A.D. 70-96." *Classical Quarterly New Serie*, 31.1: 186-220.
- Garzetti, Albino. 1974 (1960). *From Tiberius to the Antonines: a History of the Roman Empire AD 14-192*. Trans. J. R. Fischer. London: Methuen & Co.
- Gascou, Jean. 1984. *Suétone historien*. Rome: École française de Rome.
- Gelzer, M. 1969. *The Roman Nobility*. Trans. Robin Seager. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Giannelli, G. 1980-1981. "Il tempio di Giunone Moneta e la casa di Marco Manlio Capitolino." *Bullettino della Commissione Archeologica Comunale di Roma*. 87: 7-36.
- Gibbon, Edward. [1994]. *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, 3 vols. Ed. David Womersley. London: Penguin.
- Ginzburg, Carlos. 1980. *The Cheese and the Worms: the Cosmos of a Sixteenth-Century Miller*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Girard, Jean-Louis. 1987. "L'idée Dynastique Sous Les Flaviens." *Ktéma* 12: 169-73.
- Gowing, A. 2005. *Empire and Memory: the Representation of the Roman Republic in Imperial Culture*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Graf, H. R. 1937. *Kaiser Vespasian, Untersuchungen zu Suetons Divi Vespasiani*. Stuttgart: Kohlhammer.
- Grant, Michael. 1946. *From Imperium to Auctoritas. A Historical Study of Aes Coinage in the Roman Empire 49 B.C.-A.D. 14*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- . 1949. "The Augustan 'Constitution'." *Greece and Rome* 18 no. 54: 97-112.

- . 1950. *Roman Anniversary Issues: an Exploratory Study of the Numismatic and Medalllic Commemoration of Anniversary Years 49 B.C. – A.D. 375*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Greenhalgh, P. A. L. 1980. *Pompey: the Roman Alexander*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson.
- Grenzheuser, Bruno. 1964. *Kaiser und Senat in der Zeit von Nero bis Nerva*. Dissertation: Westfälischen Wilhelm-Universität.
- Griffin, J. 1977. "Propertius and Antony." *Journal of Roman Studies* 67: 17-26.
- Griffin, Miriam. 1997. Review of *Das Senatus Consultum de Cn. Pisone Patre* by Werner Eck, Antonio Caballos, Fernando Fernández. *Journal of Roman Studies* 87: 249-263.
- . 2000. "The Flavians." *Cambridge Ancient History*, second edition, volume XI. Cambridge; Cambridge University Press. 1-83.
- Hammond, Mason. 1956. "The Transmission of the Powers of the Roman Emperor from the Death of Nero in A.D. 68 to that of Alexander Severus in A.D. 235." *Memiors of the American Academy in Rome* 24: 61-133.
- . 1959. *The Antonine Monarchy*. Rome: Papers and Monographs of the American Academy in Rome 19.
- Handler, S. 1974. "Architecture on the Roman Coins of Alexandria." *American Journal of Archaeology* 75: 57-74.
- Hartswick, K. J. 2004. *Gardens of Sallust: A Changing Landscape*. Austin: University of Texas Press.
- Henderson, B. W. 1908. *Civil War and Rebellion in the Roman Empire A.D. 69-70; a Companion to the Histories of Tacitus*. London: Macmillan and Co.
- Henrichs, Albert. 1968. "Vespasian's Visit to Alexandria." *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 3: 51-80.
- Henzen, G. 1874. *Acta Fratrum Arvalium Quae Supersunt*. Berlin: Reimeri.
- Herrmann, L. 1953. "Basilides." *Latomus* 12: 312-315.
- Hiesinger, Ulrich W. 1975. "The Portraits of Nero." *American Journal of Archaeology* 79.2: 113-124.
- Hobsbawm, Eric. 2003 [1983]. "Introduction: Inventing Traditions." *The Invention of Tradition*. Eds. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1-14.

- Homo, L. P. 1949. *Vespasien, l'empereur du bon sens (69-79 ap. J. C.)*. Paris: A. Michel.
- Hopkins, K. 1978. *Conquerors and Slaves*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Houston, George W. 1977. "Vespasian's Adlection of Men in *Senatum*." *American Journal of Philology* 98.1: 35-63.
- Hurlet, F. 1993. "La *Lex de imperio Vespasiani* et la légitimité augustéenne." *Latomus* 55.2: 261-280.
- Ihrig, Martin A. 2007. *Sermone ac vultu intentus: Körper, Kommunikation und Politik in den Werken des Cornelius Tacitus*. Munich: Martin Meidenbauer Verlagsbuchhandlung.
- Isaac, B. 1984. "Vespasian's Titulature in A.D. 69." *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 55: 143-144.
- Isaac, B. H. and I. Roll. 1976. "A Milestone of A.D. 69 from Judaea: The Elder Trajan and Vespasian." *Journal of Roman Studies* 66: 15-19.
- Jacques, F. and J. Scheid. 1990. *Rome et l'intégration de l'Empire (44 av. J.-C. – 260 ap. J.-C.)*, vol. 1. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.
- Jaeger, M. 1997. *Livy's Written Rome*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.
- Jones, B. W. 1972. "A Note on the Flavians' Attitude to the Censorship." *Historia* 21.1: 128.
- . 1973. "Some Thoughts on Domitian's Perpetual Censorship." *Classical Journal* 68: 276-277.
- . 1984. *The Emperor Titus*. London: Croom Helm.
- . 1985. "Titus in the East, A. D. 70-71." *Rheinisches Museum für Philologie* 128: 346-352.
- . 1992. *The Emperor Domitian*. London: Routledge.
- Jordan, Ruth. 1974. *Berenice*. London: Constable.
- Jucker, H. 1975. "Der Ring des Kaisers Galba." *Chiron* 5: 356-364.
- . 1980. "Zum Carpentum-Sesterz der Agrippina Maior." *Forshungen und Funde. Festschrift Bernhard Neutsch*. Ed. F. von Krinzinger. Innsbruck: Verlag des Institutes für Sprachwissenschaft der Universität Innsbruck: 205-217.

- von Kaenel, H. M. "Britannicus, Agrippina Minor und Nero in Thrakien."  
*Schweizerische Numismatische Rundschau* 63: 127-165.
- Karlowa, Otto. 1885. *Römische Rechtsgeschichte* 2 vols. Leipzig, Viet.
- Keaveney, Arthur. 1987. "Vespasian's Gesture (Suet. *Vesp.* 8.5 and Dio 65.10.2)."  
*Giornale italiano di filologia* 39: 213-216.
- Kellum, B. A. 1990. "The City Adorned: Programmatic Display at the Aedes  
Concordiae Augustae." *Between Republic and Empire*. Eds. K. A. Raaflaub and  
M. Toher. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 267-307.
- Kienast, Dietmar. 1989. "Diva Domitilla." *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik*  
76: 141-147.
- Kleiner, Fred S. 1989. "Galba and the Sullan Capitolium." *American Journal of*  
*Numismatics* 1: 71-77.
- Koepfel, G. M. 1980. "A Fragment from a Domitianic Monument in Ann Arbor and  
Rome." *Bulletin of the Museums of Art and Archaeology of the University of*  
*Michigan* 3: 9-29.
- Komnic, Holger. 2001. *Die Restitutionsmünzen der frühen Kaiserzeit: Aspekte der*  
*Kaiserlegitimation*. Berlin and New York: de Gruyter.
- Kraay, C. M. 1949. "The Coinage of Vindex and Galba, A.D. 68, and the Continuity of  
the Augustan Principate." *Numismatic Chronicle* Sixth Series, 9: 129-149.
- . 1953. *The Aes Coinage of Rome and Its Subsidiary Mints in the West, AD 68-81*.  
Dissertation: Oxford.
- . 1956. *The Aes Coinage of Galba*. Numismatic Notes and Monographs 133. New  
York.
- Kraft, K. 1967. "Zu Sueton, Divus Augustus 69.2: M. Anton und Kleopatra." *Hermes*  
95: 496-499.
- Kragelund, Patrick. 1998. "Galba's "Pietas," Nero's Victims and the Mausoleum of  
Augustus." *Historia* 47.2: 152-173.
- Kraus, C. S. 1994. *Livy, Ab Urbe Condita* VI. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Krause, C. C. 1995. "Wo residierten die Flavii?" *Arculiana: recueil d'hommages*  
*offerts à Hans Bögli*, edd. Franz Koenig and Serge Rebetz, 459-88, Avenches:  
L.A.O.T.T.
- Kunkel, Wolfgang. 1966. *An Introduction to Roman Legal and Constitutional History*.  
Trans. J. M. Kelly. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

- Künzl, Ernst. 1988. *Der römische Triumph. Siegesfeiern im antiken Rom*. Munich: Beck.
- Lacey, W. K. 1996. *Augustus and the Principate*. ARCA papers and monographs #35.
- Last, Hugh. 1936. "The Principate and the Administration." *Cambridge Ancient History* vol. XI. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 393-434.
- Lattimore, Richmond. 1934. "Portents and Prophecies in Connection with the Emperor Vespasian." *The Classical Journal* 29.6: 441-449.
- Lesuisse, L. 1962. "La clause transitoire de la «lex de imperio Vespasiani»." *Revue Belge de Philologie et d'Histoire* 40: 51-75.
- Levi, M. A. 1938a. "I principii dell'impero di Vespasiano." *Rivista di filologia e di istruzione classica* 16: 1-12.
- . 1938b. "La legge dell'iscrizione CIL VI, 930." *Athenaeum* 26: 85-93.
- Levi, M. A. and P. Meloni. 1986. *Storia romana dalle origini al 476 d.C.* 5<sup>th</sup> edition. Milan: Cisalpino-Goliardica.
- Levick, Barbara. 1967. "Imperial Control of Elections under the Early Principate: Commendatio, Suffragatio, and "Nominatio"." *Historia* 16.2: 207-230.
- . 1999. *Vespasian*. London: Routledge.
- . 2002. "Corbulo's Daughter." *Greece and Rome Series* 2, 49.2: 199-211.
- Lucchi, Gabriele. 1968. "Sul significato del carpentum nella monetazione romana imperiale." *Rivista Italiana di Numismatica* 70: 131-141.
- MacIsaac, J. D. 1987. *The Location of the Republican Mint of Rome and the Topography of the Arx of the Capitoline*. Dissertation: Johns Hopkins University.
- MacMullen, Ramsay. 1966. *Enemies of the Roman Order: Treason, Unrest, and Alienation in the Empire*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Magdelain, André. 1947. *Auctoritas Principis*. Paris: Société d'Édition "«Les Belles Lettres»".
- Malavolta, Mariano. 2008. "Sulla Clausola Discrezionale della C. D. *Lex de Imperio Vespasiani*." *Simblos* 5: 105-129.
- Malitz, J. 1985. "Helvidius Priscus und Vespasian. Zur Geschichte der «stoischen» Senatsopposition." *Hermes* 113: 231-246.
- de Martino, Francesco. 1974. *Storia della Costituzione Romana*, 4 vols. Naples: Jovene.



- Matthews, John. 2010. *Roman Perspectives: Studies in the social, political and cultural history of the First to Fifth Centuries*. Swansea: The Classical Press of Wales.
- Mattingly, H. 1920. "Some Historical Roman Coins of the First Century A.D." *Journal of Roman Studies* 10: 37-41.
- . 1923. *Coins of the Roman Empire in the British Museum* vol. 1. London.
- . 1930. "Britannicus and Titus." *Numismatic Chronicle* Fifth Series 10: 330-332.
- . 1936-1937. "The Tale of the Triumph." *Greece & Rome* 6, no. 17: 94-102.
- . 1952. "The 'Military' Class in the Coinage of the Civil War of A.D. 68-69." *Numismatic Chronicle* Sixth Series, 12: 72-77.
- Mattingly, H. and E. A. Sydenham. 1926. *The Roman Imperial Coinage II: Vespasian to Hadrian*. London: Spink.
- McAlindon, D. 1956. "Senatorial Opposition to Claudius and Nero." *American Journal of Philology* 77.2: 113-132.
- McCrum, M. and A. G. Woodhead. 1961. *Select Documents of the Principates of the Flavian Emperors, Including the Year of Revolution, A. D. 68-69*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- McGinn, Thomas A. J. 1991. "Concubinage and the Lex Julia on Adultery." *TAPA* 121: 334-375.
- Meadows, Andrew and Jonathan Williams. 2001. "Moneta and the Monuments: Coinage and Politics in Republican Rome." *Journal of Roman Studies* 91: 27-49.
- Meinel, R. 1980. *Das Odeion*. Frankfurt: Peter Lang.
- Mellor, Ronald. 2003. "The New Aristocracy of Power." *Flavian Rome: Culture, Image, Text*. Eds. A.J. Boyle and William J. Dominik. Boston: Brill. 69-101.
- Millar, F. 1977. *The Emperor in the Roman World (31 BC-AD 337)*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- . 1993. "Ovid and the Domus Augusta: Rome Seen from Tomoi." *JRS* 83: 1-17.
- Miller, John F. 2000. "Triumphus in Palatio." *American Journal of Philology* 121.3: 409-422.
- Milne, J. G. 1933. *Catalogue of Alexandrian Coins, University of Oxford, Ashmolean Museum*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- Milnor, Kristina. 2005. *Gender and Domesticity in the Age of Augustus: Inventing Private Life*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Mirón, Dolores. 2000. "Transmitters and Representatives of Power: Royal Women in Ancient Macedonia." *Ancient Society* 30: 35-52.
- Moore, Rosemary. 2002. *The Art of Command: The Roman Army General and his Troops, 135BC-138AD*. Dissertation: University of Michigan.
- Morelli, Anna Lina. 2001. "La rappresentazione di Livia nella monetazione di Galba." *Rivista Storica dell'Antichità* 31: 93-113.
- Morgan, Gwyn M. 1994. "Tacitus *Histories* 2.83-84: Content and Positioning." *Classical Philology* 89.2: 166-175.
- . 1996a. "Cremona in AD 69. Two Notes on Tacitus' Narrative Techniques." *Athenaeum* 84: 381-403.
- . 1996b. "Vespasian and the Omens in Tacitus *Histories* 2.78." *Phoenix* 50.1: 41-55.
- . 2005. "The Opening Stages in the Battle for Cremona, or the Devil in the Details (Tacitus, *Histories* 3.15-18)." *Historia* 54.2: 189-209.
- . 2006. *69 A.D. The Year of Four Emperors*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Murison, Charles L. 1993. *Galba, Otho, and Vitellius: Careers and Controversies*. *Spudasmata* 52. Zurich and New York: Georg Olms Verlag.
- . 1999. *Rebellion and Reconstruction, Galba to Domitian; An Historical Commentary on Cassius Dio's Roman History Books 64-67 (A.D. 68-69)*. American Philological Association Monograph Series 37. Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press.
- . 2003. "M. Cocceius Nerva and the Flavians." *Transactions of the American Philological Association (1974-)* 133.1: 147-157.
- Newbold, R. F. 1972. "Vitellius and the Roman Plebs." *Historia* 21: 308-319.
- Newell, E. T. 1938. *The Coinage of the Eastern Seleucid Mints from Seleucus I to Antiochus III*. Numismatic Studies 1. New York.
- Nicolet, Claude. 1988. "La *Tabula Siarensis*, la *Lex de Imperio Vespasiani*, et le *Jus Relationis* de l'Empereur au Sénat." *Mélanges de l'École Française de Rome* 100.2: 827-866.
- . 1991. *Space, Geography, and Politics in the Early Roman Empire*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.

- Nicols, J. 1978. *Vespasian and the partes Flavianaes*. *Historia Einzelschriften* 28. Wiesbaden: Steiner.
- Noreña, Carlos F. 2003. "Medium and Message in Vespasian's *Templum Pacis*." *Memoirs of the American Academy in Rome* 48: 25-43.
- O'Gorman, Ellen. 2006. "Alternative Empires: Tacitus' Virtual History of the Pisonian Principate." *Arethusa* 39.2: 281-301.
- Oliver, James H. 1972. "Text of the Tabula Banasitana, A. D. 177." *American Journal of Philology* 93.2: 336-340.
- Pabst, Angela. 1989. "...ageret faceret quaecumque e re publica censeret esse." – Annäherung an die *lex de imperio Vespasiani*. *Festschrift Robert Werner zu seinem 65. Geburtstag dargebracht von Freunden, Kollegen, und Schülern*. Ed. Werner von Dahlheim et. al. Konstanz: Universitätsverlag. 125-148.
- Packer, James E. 2003. "Plurima et Amplissima Opera: Parsing Flavian Rome." *Flavian Rome: Culture, Image, Text*. Eds. A. J. Boyle and W. J. Dominik. Leiden: Brill: 167-198.
- Pagnotta, M. A. 1977-1978. "Carpentum: privilegio del carro e ruolo sociale della matrona romana." *Annali della Facoltà di Lettere e Filosofia, Università di Perugia* 15.1: 157-170.
- Parsi, B. 1963. *Désignation et Investiture de l'Empereur Romain (I<sup>er</sup> et II<sup>e</sup> siècles ap. J.C.* Paris: Sirey.
- Paterson, Jeremy. 2007. "Friends in High Places: The Creation of the Court of the Roman Emperor." *The Court and Court Society in Ancient Monarchies*. Ed. A. J. S. Spawforth, 121-56, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Penwill, John L. 2003. "Expelling the Mind: Politics and Philosophy in Flavian Rome." *Flavian Rome: Culture, Image, Text*. Eds. A. J. Boyle and W. J. Dominik. Leiden: Brill. 345-368.
- Piccaluga, Giulia. 1974. *Terminus. I segni di confine nella religione romana*. Rome: Edizioni dell'Ateneo.
- Pigón, J. 1992. "Helvidius Priscus, Epirus Marcellus, and *iudicium senatus*: observations on Tacitus, *Historiae* 4.7-8." *Classical Quarterly New Series* 42: 235-248.
- Platner, S. B. and T. Ashby. 1929. *A Topographical Dictionary of Rome*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Porta, Giuseppe. 1979. *Cronica*. Milan, Adelphi.

- Potter, David S. 1999. "Political theory and the Senatus Consultum de Cn. Pisone Patre." *AJP* 120.1: 65-88.
- Potter, David S. and Cynthia Damon, eds. 1999. "The Senatus consultum de Cn. Pisone Patre." *American Journal of Philology* 120.1: 13-42.
- Price, Simon. 1987. "From noble funerals to divine cult: the consecration of Roman Emperors." *Rituals of Royalty: Power and Ceremonial in Traditional Societies*. Eds. David Cannadine and Simon Price. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 56-105.
- Purcell, N. 1986. "Livia and the Womanhood of Rome." *Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society* 32: 78-105.
- . 1993. "Atrium Libertatis." *Papers of the British School at Rome* 61: 125-155.
- Rajak, Tessa. 1984. *Josephus: the Historian and His Society*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press.
- Ramage, Edwin S. 1983. "Denigration of Predecessor under Claudius, Galba, and Vespasian." *Historia* 32: 201-214.
- Rawson, B. 1974. "Roman concubinage and other de facto marriages." *TAPA* 54: 279-305.
- Rea, Jennifer A. 2007. *Legendary Rome: Myth, Monuments, and Memory on the Palatine and Capitoline*. London: Duckworth.
- Richardson, Lawrence. 1992. *A New Topographical Dictionary of Ancient Rome*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Rickman, Geoffrey E. 1980. *The Corn Supply of Ancient Rome*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Riggsby, Andrew M. 2009. "Space." *The Cambridge Companion to the Roman Historians*. Ed. Andrew Feldherr. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 152-165.
- Roche, P. A. 2003. "The Execution of L. Salvius Otho Cocceianus." *Classical Quarterly New Series*, 53.1: 319-322.
- Rogers, Perry M. 1980. "Titus, Berenice and Mucianus." *Historia* 29.1: 86-95.
- Rogers, Robert Samuel. 1949. "A Criminal Trial of A. D. 70 (Tacitus, *Histories* 4.44)." *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association* 80: 347-350.

- Rose, Charles Brian. 1997. *Dynastic Commemoration and Imperial Portraiture in the Julio-Claudian Period*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Rosenberg, David O. 1970-1971. "Historical Development of a Roman Coin Type." *Society of the Journal of Ancient Numismatics* 2: 34-35, 39.
- Saller, R. P. 1982. *Personal Patronage under the Early Empire*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Salles, Catherine. 2002. *La Rome des Flaviens: Vespasien, Titus, Domitien*. Paris: Perrin.
- Schäfer, Eckart. 1977. "Domitians Antizipation im Vierten Historienbuch des Tacitus." *Hermes* 105.4: 455-477.
- Scheid, J. 1998. *Recherches archéologiques à la Magliana: Commentarii Fratrum Arvalium Qui Supersunt: les copies épigraphiques des protocoles annuels de la confrérie arvale (21 av. – 304 ap. J.-C.)*. Rome: Soprintendenza archeologica di Roma.
- Schmidt, M. G. 1988. "Claudius und Vespasian; eine Neue Interpretation des Wortes 'vae, puto, deus fio' (Suet. Vesp. 23,4)." *Chiron* 18: 83-89.
- Schulz, O. T. 1916. *Das Wesen des römischen Kaisertums der ersten zwei Jahrhundert*, 2 vols. Paderborn, Schöningh.
- Scott, Kenneth. 1934. "The Rôle of Basilides in the Events of A.D. 69." *Journal of Roman Studies* 24: 138-140.
- Seston, W. and M. Euzennat. 1971. "Un dossier de la Chancellerie romaine, la Tabula Banasitana. Étude de diplomatique." *Comptes rendus de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres*. 468-490.
- Severy, Beth. 2000. "Family and State in the Early Imperial Monarchy: The Senatus Consultum de Pisone Patre, Tabula Siarensis, and Tabula Hebana." *Classical Philology* 95.3: 318-337.
- . 2003. *Augustus and the Family at the Birth of the Roman Empire*. London: Routledge.
- Sherwin-White, A. N. 1973. "The Tabula of Banasa and the *Constitutio Antoniniana*." *Journal of Roman Studies* 63: 86-98.
- Shotter, D. C. A. 1996. "The Coinage of Otho: A Contribution to the History of his Reign." *Historia* 45: 382-385.
- . 2004. "Vespasian, *Auctoritas* and Britain." *Britannia* 35: 1-8.

- Sordi, M. 1971. "Cola di Rienzo e le clausole mancanti della Lex de imperio Vespasiani," *Studi in onore di Edoardo Volterra* vol. 2. Milan, Giuffrè. 303-311.
- Stadter, Philip A. 2000. "The Ruler's Virtue and the Empire: Cyrus the Great and Tiberius." *Ancient World* 31.2: 163-171.
- de Ste. Croix, G. E. M. 1981. *The Class Struggle in the Ancient Greek World from the Archaic Age to the Arab Conquests*. London: Duckworth.
- Steed, Kathryn L. Seidl. 2008. *Memory and Leadership in the Late Roman Republic*. Dissertation: University of Michigan.
- Steinbock, Bernd. 2005. *Social memory in 4<sup>th</sup> Century Athenian Public Discourse*. Dissertation: University of Michigan.
- Steinby, Eva Margareta (ed). 1993-2000. *Lexicon Topographicum Urbis Romae* vols. 1-6. Rome: Quasar.
- Sullivan, Philip B. 1953. "A Note on the Flavian Accession." *Classical Journal* 49.2: 67-70.
- Suolahti, J. 1963. *The Roman Censors: A Study on Social Structure*. *Annales Academiae Scientiae Fennicae* 117. Helsinki.
- Sutherland, C. H. V. 1938. "Two "Virtues" of Tiberius: A Numismatic Contribution to the History of his Reign." *Journal of Roman Studies* 28.2: 129-140.
- . 1987. *Roman History and Coinage 44 BC – AD 69: Fifty Points of Relation from Julius Caesar to Vespasian*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Svoronos, Ioannes N. and Catherine Lorber. 1904 (1995-1999). *Ta Nomismata tou Kratous ton Ptolemaion (Ptolemaic Coinage)*. Online Resource: Edward J. Waddell Ltd.
- Syme, R. 1939. *Roman Revolution*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- . 1958a. "Consulates in Absence." *Journal of Roman Studies* 48.1: 1-9.
- . 1958b. *Tacitus*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- . 1960. "Piso Frugi and Crassus Frugi," *Journal of Roman Studies* 50: 12-20.
- . 1964. *Sallust*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- . 1968. "The Ummidii." *Historia* 17.1: 72-105.
- . 1970. "Domitius Corbulo." *Journal of Roman Studies* 60: 27-39.

- . 1977. "The March of Mucianus." *Antichthon* 11: 78-92.
- . 1981. "Princesses and Others in Tacitus." *Greece & Rome* Second Series, 28.1: 40-52.
- . 1982. "Partisans of Galba." *Historia* 31.4: 460-483.
- . 1986. *The Augustan Aristocracy*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Takács, Sarolta A. 1995. "Alexandria in Rome." *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 97: 263-276.
- Talbert, Richard J. A. 1984. *The Senate of Imperial Rome*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Thomasson, B. 1960. *Die Statthalter der römischen Provinzen Nordafrikas* 2 vols. Lund: Gleerup.
- Tobin, Jennifer. 1997. *Herodes Attikos and the City of Athens: Patronage and Conflict under the Antonines*. Amsterdam: J. C. Gieben.
- Torelli, M. 1987. "Culto Imperiale e Spazi Urbani in Età Flavia. Dai rilievi Hartwig all'arco di Tito." *L'Urbs: Espace Urbain et Histoire (I<sup>er</sup> s. ap. J.C.)*. Rome: Collections de l'École Française de Rome: 563-582.
- Townend, G. 1961. "Some Flavian Connections." *Journal of Roman Studies* 51: 54-62.
- . 1962. "The Consuls of A. D. 69/70." *American Journal of Philology* 83.2: 113-129.
- . 1987. "The Restoration of the Capitol A. D. 70." *Historia* 36: 243-248.
- Toynbee, Jocelyn M. C. 1942. "Nero Artifex: The *Apocolocyntosis* Reconsidered." *Classical Quarterly* 36.3: 83-93.
- . 1947. "Ruler-apotheosis in Ancient Rome." *Numismatic Chronicle* 7: 126-149.
- . 1973. *Animals in Roman Life and Art*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Treggiari, Susan. 1971. "Libertine Ladies." *Classical World* 44: 196-198.
- . 1981. "Contubernales in *CIL* 6." *Phoenix* 35: 42-69.
- . 1982. "Concubinae." *Papers of the British School at Rome* 49: 59-81.
- . 1991. *Roman Marriage: iusti coniuges from the time of Cicero to the time of Ulpian*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

- Trillmich, Walter. 1978. *Familienpropaganda der Kaiser Caligula und Claudius. Agrippina Maior und Antonia Augusta auf Münzen*. Berlin: De Gruyter.
- Turner, E. G. 1954. "Tiberivs Ivliivs Alexander." *Journal of Roman Studies* 44: 54-64.
- Versnel, H. 1970. *Triumphus: an Inquiry into the Origin, Development and Meaning of the Roman Triumph*. Leiden: Brill.
- Vervaeet, Frederik Juliaan. 2003. "Domitius Corbulo and the Rise of the Flavian Dynasty." *Historia* 52.4: 436-464.
- Vinson, Martha P. 1989. "Domitia Longina, Julia Titi, and the Literary Tradition." *Historia* 38: 431-450.
- Wagenvoort, H. 1980. *Pietas: Selected Studies in Roman Religion*. Leiden: Brill.
- Wallace, Kristine Gilmartin. 1987. "The Flavii Sabini in Tacitus." *Historia* 36.3: 343-358.
- Wallace-Hadrill, Andrew. 1981. "The Emperor and his Virtues." *Historia* 30.3: 298-323.
- . 1982. "Civilis Princeps: Between Citizen and King." *Journal of Roman Studies* 72: 32-48.
- . 1986. "Image and Authority in the Coinage of Augustus." *Journal of Roman Studies* 76: 66-87.
- . 1996. "The Imperial Court." In *CAH*<sup>2</sup> 10:283–308.
- Wardle, D. 1996. "Vespasian, Helvidius Priscus and the Restoration of the Capitol." *Historia* 45.2: 208-222.
- . 2000. "Valerius Maximus on the *Domus Augusta*, Augustus, and Tiberius." *The Classical Quarterly*, New Series, 50.2: 479-493.
- Waters, K.H. 1963. "The Second Dynasty of Rome." *Phoenix* 17.3: 198-218.
- Weber, M. 1922. *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft: Grundriss der Verstehenden Soziologie*. 2 vols. Tübingen: Mohr.
- . [1978]. *Economy and Society: an Outline of Interpretive Sociology*. Eds. Günther Roth and Claus Wittich. Trans. Ephraim Fischhoff et. al. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Weber, W. 1921. *Josephus und Vespasian; Untersuchungen zu dem Jüdischen Krieg des Flavius Josephus*. Hildesheim and New York: G. Olms.



- Weidemann, Ursula. 1965. Review of Thomasson, *Die Statthalter der römischen Provinzen Nordafrikas* 2 vols (1960). *Gnomon* 37: 786-799.
- Wellesley, Kenneth. 1975. *The Long Year A.D. 69*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- . 1981. "What Happened on the Capitol in December A.D. 69." *American Journal of Ancient History* 6.2: 166-190.
- . 2000. *The Year of the Four Emperors* 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, with a new introduction by Barbara Levick. London: Routledge.
- Williamson, Callie. 1987. "Monuments of Bronze: Roman Legal Documents on Bronze Tablets." *Classical Antiquity* 6.1: 160-183.
- Winterling, Aloys. 1999. *Aula Caesaris: Studien zur Institutionalisierung des römischen Kaiserhofes in der Zeit von Augustus bis Commodus 31 v. Chr.-192 n. Chr.* Munich: Oldenbourg.
- . 2009. *Politics and Society in Imperial Rome*. London: Blackwell.
- Wiseman, T. P. 1974. "Legendary Genealogies in Late-Republican Rome." *Greece & Rome*, Second Series 21.2: 153-164.
- . 1978. "Flavians on the Capitol." *American Journal of Ancient History* 3.2: 163-178.
- Wood, Susan. 2010. "Who Was Diva Domitilla? Some Thoughts on the Public Images of the Flavian Women." *American Journal of Archaeology* 114.1: 45-57.
- Woodman, A. J. 1993. "Amateur Dramatics at the Court of Nero: *Annals* 15.48-74." *Tacitus and the Tacitean Tradition*. Eds. T. J. Luce and A. J. Woodman. Princeton, NJ: University of Princeton Press: 104-128.
- Wright, John. *The Life of Cola di Rienzo*. Mediaeval Sources in Translation 18. Toronto, Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies.
- Yakobson, Alexander. 1998. "The Princess of Inscriptions: "Senatus Consultum de Cn. Pisone Patre" and the Early Years of Tiberius' Reign: review article." *Scripta Classica Isrealica* 17: 206-224.
- Yavetz, Z. 1969. "Vitellius and the 'Fickleness of the Mob'." *Historia* 18: 557-569.
- Young-Widmaier, Michael R. 2002. "Quintilian's Legal Representation of Julia Berenice," *Historia* 51: 124-129.
- Zanker, Paul. 1990. *The Power of Images in the Age of Augustus*. Trans. Alan Shapiro. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.

- . 2002. "Domitian's Palace on the Palatine and the Imperial Image."  
*Representations of Empire: Rome and the Mediterranean World*, ed. Alan K.  
Bowman et. al. Oxford: Oxford University Press: 105-130.