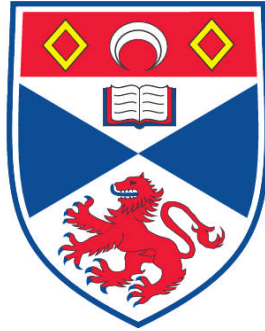


GENDER AND PUBLIC IMAGE IN IMPERIAL ROME

Anna McCullough

**A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of PhD
at the
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Gender and Public Image in Imperial Rome

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Ph.D.

9 March 2007

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Abstract

Roman gender was often defined and regulated visually – that is, if and under what conditions a woman or man appeared in public, through personal appearance, or through representations in art or literature. In this discourse on gender, the gaze (especially the public's) was thus an important agent in helping not only to shape gender ideals, but also the direction and function of the discourse itself.

The emperor affected these precepts because of his appropriation of public space and his control of the gaze: as the most powerful and high-ranking member of society, no one could be more visible than him, and his own gaze was unlimited: he was all-seeing and all-visible. As befitting these attributes of imperial office, public space became his domain, and he placed limitations on the expression of public images in this space. This therefore affected gender by limiting the ways in which it could be expressed and proved.

Within the changed discourse, the emperor was the alpha male, the most masculine man in Roman society, and controlled public space and access to the gaze. Aristocratic males thus suffered a crisis in masculinity, and were forced to find alternate sources of masculinity from the traditional ones of gaining *virtus* through military service, public oratory and service, and public competition for *gloria*. In response, some still valued the traditions of military and service to the *res publica*, but no longer made public expression or competition of *virtus* as a precondition for its legitimacy or existence – in effect de-linking masculinity from the public sphere. Another response turned to the private sphere for inspiration, finding role models for *virtus* in ideal women and stressing a man's behavior in the home as important in judgments on his masculinity. Femininity did not suffer such changes or crisis. Feminine ideals remained relatively stable, but with a few minor changes: imperial women were held to a stricter standard of traditional femininity to prevent their intrusion into imperial power, and their public activities were either low-profile or focused around the family. Aristocratic women had more scope for public activities, which enhanced their femininity but were not prerequisites for being a good woman: that is, it was not necessary for a woman to possess and maintain a public image for her to be feminine.

Abbreviations and Citations

The first time a work is cited, I have provided full bibliographical information; when the work is used thereafter, I provide the author's last name, year of publication, and page number. Footnote numbering starts over in each chapter, but citations are running in that I do not restate bibliographical information for a work cited in a previous chapter.

All abbreviations in this document conform to *Oxford Classical Dictionary* style. Journal abbreviations which appear in the footnotes and bibliography are listed below.

AJA = American Journal of Archaeology

AJAH = American Journal of Ancient History

AJPh = American Journal of Philology

ANRW = Aufstieg und Niedergang der Roemischen Welt

BICS = British Institute of Classical Studies

CA = Classical Antiquity

CJ = Classical Journal

C&M = Classica et Mediaevalia

CPh = Classical Philology

CQ = Classical Quarterly

G&R = Greece and Rome

JRS = Journal of Roman Studies

Loeb = Loeb Classical Library

Mnemos. = Mnemosyne

PCPS = Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society

Rh.Mus. = Rheinisches Museum fuer Philologie

TAPA = Transactions of the American Philological Society

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Introduction

Ancient Roman society was heavily visual; the physical act of seeing and the physical state of being watched informed how a Roman citizen navigated, consumed, and contributed to Roman culture.¹ Eyewitnesses were more valuable than hearsay in legal cases;² the body and dress were read as keys to an individual's moral character;³ and spectacle and performance infused both political and religious activity, as in triumphal processions or building dedications. The division between public and private also was blurred, with events in the home often visible, as for example in the use of the atrium for conducting business or holding audiences.⁴ This emphasis on the visual penetrated all levels of Roman society, involving both individuals and groups of people of all social orders - the lowly baker or cobbler participated by, for example, watching the emperor or some other important senator, or by going to the games or public festivals, while for a member of the aristocratic order, and especially the emperor, being seen was a hallmark of their high status, and watching one another was a serious, sometimes deadly business.

The idea of sight itself was gendered in Roman society. It is portrayed by Varro "as the most powerful, intellectual, and masculine sense"⁵ when he derives *video* from *vis*,⁶ "force" or "violence," the concept of "the evil eye" and a recurring

¹ Shadi Bartsch, *The Mirror of the Self: Sexuality, Self-knowledge, and the Gaze in the Early Roman Empire* (Chicago 2006), 115-25.

² Jane F. Gardner, *Being a Roman Citizen* (London 1993), 179-91.

³ Roman physiognomical tradition is rooted in Aristotle's *Physiognomonica* (Arist. *Phgn.*). For discussions on the reading of dress and bodies in Roman culture, see Maria Wyke, "Woman in the Mirror: The Rhetoric of Adornment in the Roman World," in *Women in Ancient Societies: An Illusion of the Night*, eds. Leonie J. Archer, Susan Fischler, and Maria Wyke (London 1994), 134-51; Catherine Edwards, *The Politics of Immorality in Ancient Rome* (Cambridge 2002); and Tamsyn S. Barton, *Power and Knowledge: Astrology, Physiognomics, and Medicine Under the Roman Empire* (Ann Arbor 1994).

⁴ Mary Harlow and Ray Laurence, *Growing Up and Growing Old in Ancient Rome: A Life Course Approach* (London 2002), 27-8, 30-1; Plin. *Pan.* 82-84; for a discussion on public vs. private as a gendered division, see Andrew Wallace-Hadrill, "Engendering the Roman House," in *I Claudia: Women in Ancient Rome*, eds. Diana E.E. Kleiner and Susan B. Matheson (New Haven 1996), 104-15.

⁵ David Fredrick, "Introduction: Invisible Rome," *The Roman Gaze: Vision, Power, and the Body*, ed. David Fredrick (Baltimore 2002), 2.

⁶ Varro *Ling.* 6.80.

link between looking and [male] desire and eroticism also reflect this attitude.⁷ Indeed, at the more general level, vision and gazing are often both explicitly and implicitly associated with the male, given the opposition within sight of active agency with passive object. Though in certain cases, such as public oratory, the male object may invite and welcome the gaze, women were not supposed to invite observation. This is not to say that women did not gaze, but to do so meant claiming a masculine force and invading male space (and bodies); both were contrary to traditional Roman ideas valuing feminine passivity, and so women who did gaze were often portrayed negatively.

As a relatively new field, scholarship on the role and effect of the gaze in Roman culture has still tended to focus on a few key themes, such as the body, sexuality, theater, and art and architecture. This is reflective of the field's roots in, most prominently, Michel Foucault's model of the gaze in his volumes of *The History of Sexuality*,⁸ which focuses on the construction of the body and sexuality, and *Discipline and Punish*,⁹ which describes the power produced or conferred by the gaze, and its physical expression in societal structures. So, a survey of the works cited on this and the previous pages provides articles or books on physiognomics, the erotics of watching and being watched, power and sexuality, and effeminacy and the eye. As one of the first volumes to treat the Roman gaze as phenomenon independent from Greece, David Fredrick's collection *The Roman Gaze*¹⁰ also provides pieces on sex in art, the body in oratory, vision and penetrability, and visual politics in the theater. But here too are the body and sexuality, actors and spectacles. In contrast, this thesis will not focus on bodies or sexuality, and actors and spectacles. This is instead a reading of how, through gazing at others' public

⁷ Simon Goldhill, "The Erotic Experience of Looking: Cultural Conflict and the Gaze in Empire Culture," in *The Sleep of Reason: Erotic Experience and Sexual Ethics in Ancient Greece and Rome*, eds. Martha C. Nussbaum and Juha Sihvola (Chicago 2002), 374-99.

⁸ Michel Foucault, *The Use of Pleasure: The History of Sexuality, Vol. 2*, trans. R. Hurley (New York 1985); and *The Care of the Self: The History of Sexuality, Vol. 3*, trans. R. Hurley (New York 1986).

⁹ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (London 1991).

¹⁰ Ed. David Fredrick, *The Roman Gaze: Vision, Power, and the Body* (Baltimore 2002).

images, or by displaying public images of themselves or others, aristocratic men talked about gender; how men read an image, and offered one in response, in a discourse on masculinity and femininity as abstract ideals. This is not a reading of bodies, but a reading of words.

The presence of the emperor affected this discourse. In imperial society, the emperor was both all-seeing and the most visible individual; he was the most politically powerful man and the most prominent social member, he had the vantage point, the motives, and the power to allow this total command of and subjection to the gaze.¹¹ To help illustrate this point more clearly, a brief analysis of a few passages from Pliny's *Panegyricus* will help, as Pliny explicitly casts Trajan as the ideal emperor,¹² and one who should therefore be totally observed and total observer.

Trajan is by far the most visible character in the speech. The only other individuals identified are assorted figures from the Republican era (Fabricius, Scipio, and Camillus at 13.4, Pompey at 29.1, various consuls at 57.4-5, and Piso, Laelius, and Metellus at 88.6); Domitian, though he is not named; and of living contemporaries, only Cornutus Tertullus is specifically identified (he was Pliny's fellow consul in A.D. 100, the occasion for the *Panegyricus*), though two other men are mentioned who were thrice consuls, but no names are given. Later, Pliny speaks of Trajan encouraging those members who were descended from the consular families of the Republic, bestowing honors upon them especially (69.4-6), but again without specifics. The result is that apart from whomever occupies the highest office of consul, no individual members of the male aristocracy are known to the public or reader's eye.

¹¹ For the emperor's specific place atop the social hierarchy, see Geza Alföldy, *The Social History of Rome*, trans. David Braund & Frank Pollock (London 1985); for a general study of the emperor's power and position, see Fergus Millar, *The Emperor in the Roman World, 31 B.C. - A.D. 337* (London 1977).

¹² Keith R. Bradley, "The Imperial Ideal in Suetonius' 'Caesares'," *ANRW* II 33.5 (1991): 3717-18.

How exactly the public gaze identifies Trajan to be the rightful and ideal emperor involves an assessment of his visual accessibility and pervasive sight to determine if he embodies and practices each. For emperors, *Habet hoc primum magna fortuna, quod nihil tectum, nihil occultum esse patitur; principum vero non domus modo sed cubicula ipsa intimosque secessus recludit, omniaque arcana noscenda famae proponit atque explicat.*¹³ Trajan encourages such examination by opening his house and granting numerous and lengthy audiences (47.4-48.3);¹⁴ he also spends his leisure hours and takes his meals in public (49.4-5), even sitting in the cheap seats amongst the public at the Circus Maximus (51.5), whose seating he expanded and moved up the slopes of the Palatine (shortening the distance between populace and emperor).¹⁵ The virtue of this public examination of the emperor lies in the fact that the people can thus read their emperor clearly, determine his policies and moral character, and either know their faith in him is justified, as with Trajan (73.4), or judge him a criminal and tyrant. So, a (good) emperor was constantly exposed to the public gaze as no other Roman was.

But the other side of the coin was that just as the public gaze flowed upward, the emperor's gaze flowed downward as an omniscient and omnipotent quantity, watching over his subjects.¹⁶ One example is in Pliny's discussion of Trajan's military service prior to becoming emperor. He praises Trajan for *sic imperatorem commilitonemque miscueras, ut studium omnium laboremque et tamquam exactor intenderes et tamquam*

¹³ Plin. *Pan.* 83.1: "High rank has this primary feature, that no secrecy, no concealment is allowed; in fact, for principes, not only their homes but also bedrooms and innermost retreats are laid open, and every secret is displayed and revealed for inquiring rumor."

¹⁴ Approachability as part of visual accessibility was a key quality (Millar 1977, 467).

¹⁵ Mary T. Boatwright, "Public Architecture in Rome and the Year A.D. 96," *AJAH* 15, no. 1 (1990 [2000]): 78.

¹⁶ Part of this was from practical considerations: the emperor watched the masses and soldiers as a base of power and popularity, and the aristocracy and wealthy as a source of administration and potential danger.

*particeps sociusque relevares.*¹⁷ That is, the emperor in Trajan watches his men to improve their behavior, while his soldiership sets him among those he watches. Once he does succeed Nerva, that power of sight is matured, and even given divine qualities: *O vere principis atque etiam dei curas...velocissimi sideris more omnia invisere omnia audire, et undecumque invocatum statim velut adesse et adsistere! Talia esse crediderim, quae ille mundi parens temperat nutu....*¹⁸ Even statues of the emperor keep watch, one of Trajan *excubare pro templis postibusque praetexi.*¹⁹

The emperor's unique visual status as both focus and eye functions for Pliny as a, perhaps the, defining characteristic of imperial office; it is the duty of a Roman emperor to be completely visually accessible to his subjects, while simultaneously watching over those subjects not just as a political ruler, but as a father who influences and forms the moral character of his subjects/children (53.1; 67.1-3). This visual status is both a product of, and a determining factor in, the superior position of the emperor in the political, social, and visual hierarchies.

This type of interaction with the gaze was an abstract element of being emperor - each one gained it upon accession and held it until he vacated office. For example, while an emperor by virtue of his exalted status was supposed to be morally superior and virtuous and wise beyond his subjects, this was not always the case; good or bad moral quality made for a good or bad emperor, just as it made a good or bad man. Ideally an emperor was supposed to be the former, and in so being would not abuse his power of the gaze or shrink from the public eye, but some did - hence Pliny's criticisms of Domitian as a secretive emperor whose gaze was potentially lethal (44.5; 48.1; 49.2). But this only points to the fact that all emperors,

¹⁷ Plin. *Pan.* 19.3: "...mixing the emperor and comrade-in-arms in such a way, that you could stimulate the enthusiasm and exertion of everyone as much by your urging as by relieving their hardships through taking part as a comrade."

¹⁸ Plin. *Pan.* 80.3-5: "Oh! This is truly the concern of a *princeps*, or indeed of a god...like the swiftest heavenly body in motion, to inspect all, hear all, and be present at once to assist wherever you are called upon! It is just how, I suppose, that the father of the heavens himself governs by a nod...." For the association here with Jupiter, see D.S. Levene, "God and Man in the Classical Latin Panegyric," *PCPS* 43 (1997): 66-103.

¹⁹ Plin. *Pan.* 52.2: "...being on alert in front of the temples and guarding the doors."

good or bad, had this gaze; how they used it could make them bad or good, but having it made them emperors. Thus “the ‘principes’ had been ousted by the Princeps as purveyor to the eyes and appetites of the mob.”²⁰

With this the emperor’s status, then, no one could be more visible than the emperor, or have a greater power of the gaze - otherwise he/she would *be* emperor. This resulted in the emperor’s appropriation and control of nearly all public space in the city of Rome. Any senator or equestrian who appeared in such space (as a statue, in person at ceremonies) was granted the privilege of its use by the emperor, and activities in public spaces usually either featured the emperor personally or invoked him, emphasizing the emperor’s control of others’ visibility. Thus, his superiority is preserved by making him omnipresent, and so omnivisible.

The emperor’s control of public space and the powers of sight and visibility attributed to him created distortions in the Roman visual culture described at the beginning of this introduction. While gazing was evident in various aspects of culture, such as politics, gender, or sexuality, this thesis will focus on the distortions created in the realm of gender. The problematic with which Romans struggled in this realm was this:

One aspect of a person’s public image was his/her gender; in imperial Rome, an individual’s gender was performed daily, and daily reassessed in society’s gaze. Public spaces were testing grounds and display areas for gender; this was partially because public space was traditionally the province of men and where masculinity was acted out and judged,²¹ whereas the private or domestic sphere, outside the direct public gaze, was generally associated with femininity and traditional womanly virtues. That is, public space was a location where masculinity could be proved or demonstrated, and which was a negative space for women (that is, where they were not supposed to be, or in which they were not supposed to express their gender). So,

²⁰ Ronald Syme, *Tacitus*, Vol. 1 (Oxford 1958 [1963]), 41.

²¹ Amy Richlin, “Gender and Rhetoric: Producing Manhood in the Schools,” in *Roman Eloquence: Rhetoric in Society and Literature*, ed. William J. Dominik (New York 1997), 91-3.

a person's presence or residence in a particular sphere, or whether a person was watched, watching, visible, or invisible, could help categorize him/her as masculine or feminine in the eyes of onlookers, just as he/she passed gender judgments on whom he/she was watching. So, gazing was a way for gender on an individual and mass basis alike to be debated, regulated, and defined.

Now, one's presence in the public eye could be either physical or in effigy by way of his/her public image. This might be presented through the erection of artwork or inscriptions in public space, or the publishing of literature (with the individual as author, subject, or patron). However, since public statues could not be erected without the emperor's approval, and similar limits were placed on private construction or restoration of public buildings, the opportunities for men or women to disseminate and augment their public images were restricted.

Therefore, since public images and public visibility were important tools in the Roman cultural discourse on gender, and the expressions and deployment of public images in public spaces were limited by the emperor, the ways in which gender could be tested, defined, and displayed, were affected.²² This was particularly acute for masculinity, whose traditional sources of virtue and affirmation were located in the public sphere.

In the following chapters, this thesis will investigate the nature of the distortions in detail, and will describe the responses of men and women to this problematic. The focus will remain on how a man or woman fashions a particular image for him or herself, or participates in reading and interpreting the public image of another, an image meant for public consumption and viewing.

Since masculinity bore the brunt of these distortions, this study will be pursued from the perspective of the Roman elite male.²³ It will describe how men

²² It should be noted that this thesis is not attempting to describe or argue for a change from Republic to Empire, but is rather examining Roman culture once the emperor was already in place, permanently installed, and institutionally mature. That is, I am working with and looking at the conditions of Empire, and not what existed before them.

²³ In recognition of the multiplicity of elites discussed in John Matthews' article on their proliferation in the imperial period ("The Roman Empire and the Proliferation of Elites," *Arethusa* 33 (2000): 429-46),

talked about this problem; how they responded to the problem; and why they responded the ways in which they did. So, I will look primarily at the male regulation and definition of masculinity, and secondarily at male presentation and regulation of femininity.

The geographical locus of this investigation is the city of Rome in the late first and early second centuries A.D. (roughly the Flavian and Trajanic eras). I have chosen to examine incidents and people in Rome only, not the provinces, as its smaller size is more conducive to such a project as this, but also because as the seat of imperial power, the emperor's presence was greatest in Rome,²⁴ and therefore the distortions more noticeable there. In addition, city life itself, with its density of population, meant visibility was all but inescapable and an important element in the urban fabric.²⁵ Moreover, public visibility and the customs, rules, and ideologies surrounding it differed in the Empire between center and periphery; for example, in the East, public images of prominent citizens or members of the imperial household, such as Antony, Livia, and Augustus, incorporated direct associations with the divine more prominently and earlier than in Rome. Inscriptions detailing the contributions of women benefactors presented different images than those in Italy,²⁶ and one scholar argues that women could not have been as visible in Rome as in the provinces due to the politically charged nature of the capital.²⁷ Given these differences between the provinces and Rome on this subject, then, a specifically provincial or Empire-wide investigation would necessitate a separate investigation.

The time period which I have chosen, roughly A.D. 69 to the death of Trajan, is also significant. This years saw the imperial office strengthen; autocratic powers and control over the government were consolidated. The construction of significant

I shall define 'elite' here as meaning those official members of the senatorial, equestrian, patrician, or *nobilites* orders in Rome.

²⁴ Millar 1977, 20-4.

²⁵ Ramsey MacMullen, *Roman Social Relations: 50 B.C. to A.D. 284* (New Haven and London 1974), 62.

²⁶ Elizabeth P. Forbis, "Women's Public Image in Italian Honorary Inscriptions" *AJPh* 3 (1990): 493-512.

²⁷ Ramsay MacMullen, "Women's Power in the Principate," *Klio* 68, no. 2 (1986): 434-43.

public buildings, such as the Colosseum, a temple to the Flavian gens, Domitian's palace on the Palatine, and the Forum of Nerva, also contributed to a significant reordering of public space focused around the emperor. The Forum of Trajan in particular overshadowed everything around it, being the largest ever built, encompassing such impressive structures as the Basilica Ulpia and the Column of Trajan, and displaying magnificent materials; its purpose and effect was to project the success and glory of Rome with the emperor at the helm.²⁸ These emperors' strong control of public space therefore created strong distortions in gender, an optimal environment in which to place this study. This period also saw heightened literary output, which makes for a richer body of evidence.

For sources, I have chosen to focus on said literature, largely because this was the primary mode of expression for the male elite at the time,²⁹ given the restrictions on statues and public benefactions (and resultant inscriptions). In my discussions on the gender roles for the emperor and his female relatives, some reference to artwork will be made, since this *was* an important mode of expression for the imperial family, though focus will remain on their portrayal in literary sources.

Of the literature used for this study, the Younger Pliny's *Epistles* and *Panegyricus*, Statius' *Silvae*, Tacitus' *Agricola*, and Suetonius fall firmly within the Flavian and Trajanic eras of focus. Pliny and Statius had mutual friends and almost certainly knew of one another; Pliny corresponded with Suetonius and Tacitus, making the four authors contemporaries and peers whose works provide different viewpoints in different genres of their time and culture.³⁰ Though Suetonius published under Hadrian as well, he was definitely writing under Trajan, as Pliny's

²⁸ John R. Clarke, *Art in the Lives of Ordinary Romans: Visual Representation and Non-Elite Viewers in Italy, 100 B.C.-A.D. 315* (Berkeley and Los Angeles 2003), 30-3.

²⁹ For the importance of writing in disseminating aristocratic images and power, and the problems inherent in setting free such images for uncontrollable interpretation, see Thomas N. Habinek, *The Politics of Latin Literature: Writing, Identity, and Empire in Ancient Rome* (Princeton 1998), 103-04, 119-21.

³⁰ For more on their connections and their place in literature and culture under Trajan, see Eugen Cizek, "La Litterature a l'Epoque de Trajan," *ANRW* II 33.1 (1989): 25-32

Epistles demonstrate.³¹ They therefore provide excellent sources of contrast or corroboration of claims or viewpoints they may advance individually.

The other sources used in this study - namely Seneca's *Ad Marciam* and *Ad Helviam*, the *Consolatio ad Liviam*, and in minor roles, passages from the *Laudatio Turiae*, Sallust, and Apuleius - do not fall within this time period. They are all, with the exception of Apuleius, prior to A.D. 69, and with the exception of Sallust, all are at least well into or after the Augustan period. Finally, they all are used in my coverage of women or ideals of femininity and feminine virtues. This is partially from the difficulty of finding extending treatments of individual women in Latin texts, but it also reflects one point I shall make in this study: that the traditional symbols and sources of femininity did not change significantly despite the presence of the emperor.

My main criteria for the selection of specific texts was the aim of displaying an individual Roman. So for example, the sole subject of Pliny's *Panegyricus* is Trajan; of Statius' *Silvae*, his patrons and Domitian; of Suetonius, the respective emperors; of Tacitus' *Agricola*, only Agricola; of Seneca's *Ad Marciam* and *Ad Helviam*, Marcia and Helvia are center stage; in the *Laudatio Turiae*, 'Turia' is the focus. The focus of all these works, and my selections from Pliny's *Epistles*, Sallust, and Apuleius, falls on a single individual who is being put on display by the author. They are consciously presenting and interpreting a specific image for visual consumption by the reader, and in so doing are helping to create these individuals' public images. They are each therefore providing a body of evidence of sufficient size and specificity with which to pursue this study of gender and public image.

My technique will be to analyze the texts within the context of their time and provide close readings of particularly important passages, with the following questions in mind: whose image is being presented? Why is it being presented? To whom is it being presented? Then, what is being put on display, and why? Finally,

³¹ Plin. Ep. 5.10.

how is that display gendered by its presenter, and how does that rendering of gender reflect or diverge from traditional Roman models of masculinity and femininity?

These interrogatives are the investigative tools in pursuit of the main question of this thesis: how was gender used or portrayed in public image, what does that say about how masculinity and femininity were regulated and defined by elite men, and what kind of (alternative) models of gender were being created in the process?

In answer, this thesis will argue that two different standards of masculinity and femininity were applied to the imperial household and to the senatorial and equestrian orders; these were created in recognition of the emperor's status as alpha male and imperial women's unprecedented visibility and proximity to political power. For emperors, the standard of masculinity was exaggerated and they were held strictly to its ideal, for as he was superior to all other Romans in political and social power, his masculinity was expected to be superior to all other Roman men, as well. For imperial women, their public visibility and proximity to power via their positions in the *domus* created anxiety among elite male readers of their images; in response the ideal for femininity was also exaggerated, and the women measured strictly against it to assure the viewer they were not exercising that power. Moreover, both emperors and imperial women were expected to embody their ideals because they were role models for their subjects

For aristocratic men, I will argue that their partial exclusion as active agents from public space meant alternative sources for masculinity had to be found, given that men could no longer rely on public office or military service as paths to *virtus*, and the emperor's standard of masculinity as alpha male was one which they could never reach. This thesis will identify two alternate models being presented in the above sources (though I will not claim these were the *only* two being offered in Roman culture at the time). In one, elite men now found role models for morals and manly *virtus* in women, and their pursuits in the private sphere now had increased bearing on their masculinity. In the second, men kept traditional sources of masculinity but

de-linked public performance as a necessary condition for masculinity; they no longer looked to the public gaze for the affirmation and legitimization of their *virtus*.

For aristocratic women, since neither their femininity nor their womanly virtues relied on public performance for them for definition or regulation, alternative sources of femininity did not have to be found or created. Even though women were independent and active in public life, with public images and reputations of their own, these conditions were merely construed as virtues as well, provided they did not detract from the women's duties in the household and to her husband and children, and that she continued to project adherence to traditional feminine virtue. So, aristocratic femininity, while flexible enough to accommodate for female participation in semi-public activities, was not conditional or dependent upon such participation - in other words, to be an ideal woman one did not have to be a patroness, or cultivate a public image.

In presenting these arguments, the thesis will be structured as follows: Chapter 1 will focus on men and masculinity, using the *Panegyricus* and the *Silvae* to describe in more detail the emperor's position and the distortions caused by it within masculinity at large, but especially for aristocratic men. It will also describe one alternative model of masculinity as offered by Tacitus in his *Agricola*. Chapter 2 will examine the phenomenon of the use of women as elements in the male construction of men's public images and masculinity, and identify another male response to the distortions in the form of greater use of the private sphere in defining and regulating masculinity. By extension, Chapter 3 will round out the thesis by looking at what effects this use of the feminine and private had upon the definition and regulation of femininity, by examining how both men formed and presented female public image. It will demonstrate that such effects were not significant enough to alter the ideal or sources of femininity.

Chapter 1

Men Looking at Men to See Men

Introduction

This chapter will examine in more detail the initial precepts of the problematic described in the introduction: that Roman masculinity was contingent upon its performance in public spaces; that being in public and maintaining a public image as a projection of one's masculinity were therefore crucial to one's fulfillment of the masculine ideal, and the definition of manliness at large; and that the emperor's status as alpha male and his control of public space created deformities in this model, and forced aristocratic men to respond with alternative models of masculinity.

I will first establish why exactly public visibility and image were crucial to the definition of masculinity, looking at the traditional ideal of the Roman man and the sources of *virtus*, the key quality of Roman men. From there I will proceed to an examination of the emperor's position in society and culture, arguing through readings of Pliny's *Panegyricus* and selected poems of Statius' *Silvae* that the emperor was not just the highest-status member of society and politics, but also as the manliest man, the alpha male, and that aristocratic male representations of him recognized and deferred to this alpha status. I will close the chapter by examining one mode of response by aristocrats to their status as beta males, as men who could not be as manly as the emperor; I will argue that Tacitus in his *Agricola* offers his father-in-law as an alternative ideal man, one who lives in accordance to traditional sources of *virtus*, but does so in submissive acceptance of his beta status and recognizes that the public no longer plays as significant a role in determining and legitimizing *virtus*.

The first and most obvious criteria for maleness is possessing the biological attributes of a man. Legally, sex was determined visually by examination of the genitalia; if there was a recognizable penis, "Once a man, always a man," even if the

penis or testicles were dysfunctional or damaged.¹ For example, according to Gaius' *Institutes*, *Masculi [autem cum] puberes esse coeperint, tutela liberantur: p[uberem autem] possunt, quales sunt spadones, eam aetatem esse spectandam, cuius aetatis puberes fiunt; sed diversae scholae auctores annis putant pubertatem aestimandam, id est eum puberem esse existimant.*² Here it is never questioned whether eunuchs are males or not; the question is simply one of how to date adulthood in a person who does not exhibit signs of physical maturity. His identification as male is not questioned, despite his inability to procreate and the lack of or damage to his testicles; the identifying marker must therefore be his penis. The presence of a penis thus appears to be the criteria for entrance into the general category of male, an identification made visually and dependent upon the body's appearance.

The passage from immature boy to mature male, the outward signaling of the inward change Gaius describes, was also played out publicly. A boy's manhood was declared publicly and affirmed in the public gaze; for example, the donning of the *toga virilis* usually happened around 17 March, in association with the Liberalia festival, and was accompanied by ceremonies in the forum or in temples.³ Another passage into manhood, the cutting of a boy's first beard, also was done publicly: "Shaving could occur at the public festival known as the Iuvenalia, or at another public occasion. It was a key moment of transition that would seem to occur in the early 20s and was marked with the sacrifice of bullocks and the dedication of the first beard to a deity."⁴

Other outward signs of maturity and maleness included dress and adornment, which the senate and emperors tried to regulate, encouraging especially

¹ Jane F. Gardner, "Sexing a Roman: Imperfect Men in Roman Law," in *When Men Were Men: Masculinity, Power, and Identity in Classical Antiquity*, eds. Lin Foxhall and John Salmon (London 1998), 137.

² Gaius, *Institutes*, trans. W.M. Gordon and O.F. Robinson (London 1988), 1.196: "Guardianship ends for boys when they reach puberty. Sabinus, Cassius, and others of our teachers certainly think that a boy shows he has reached puberty by physical development: that is, he is capable of begetting. However, in the case of those who cannot reach puberty such as eunuchs, regard must be had to the age at which puberty is normally reached.."

³ Richlin 1997, 92.

⁴ Harlow and Laurence 2002, 73.

the use of the toga among elite Roman males. Such a dress code was intended to guard both physical and psychological images of Roman masculinity.⁵ For example, when Augustus saw some men in public dressed in dark clothes, he *indignabundus et clamitans*: ‘en Romanos, rerum dominos gentemque togatam!’ *negotium aedilibus dedit, ne quem posthac paterentur in Foro circave nisi positis lacernis togatum consistere.*⁶ Here the toga serves as an unambiguous symbol of a dominant, hegemonic, elite version of masculinity,⁷ and a peculiarly Roman masculinity at that - the people of the toga. Why, Augustus asks, would Romans, as masters of the world, abandon their national dress and the clothing of the men, the real, traditional Roman men, who made Rome great? His effort to reinforce the customary dress was therefore an effort to reinforce traditional Roman masculinity with the toga as the mark of the ideal Roman *vir*,⁸ and a male citizen who was a social and political actor. Moreover, the areas in which it must be worn - the Forum and its immediate surrounding area - were the heart of Roman political and social life, and therefore the areas in which men would be most on display and under the public gaze. Augustus is thus crafting a visual image of Roman dominance, identity, and masculinity for public view, as well as delineating and enforcing “proper” male gender roles by utilizing a rhetoric of dress to display what was appropriately masculine for a Roman male - a Roman elite male, at that.⁹ Other adornments (or lack thereof) which marked a man’s visual demeanor included practice of basic hygiene and keeping a neatly groomed appearance.¹⁰

⁵ Gardner 1998, 147.

⁶ Suet. *Aug.* 40.5: “...was highly indignant and shouted, ‘Hey Romans, masters of the world and people of the toga!’ He gave the aediles the responsibility that after this, they should not allow anyone to attend the Forum arranged in a cloak, only if in a toga.”

⁷ Lin Foxhall, “Introduction,” in Foxhall and Salmon 1998, 4.

⁸ Caroline Vout, “The Myth of the Toga: Understanding the History of Roman Dress,” *G&R* 43, no. 2 (October 1996): 213-15.

⁹ However, it is questionable how many men actually wore the toga; due to prohibitive cost, even the less wealthy members of the upper orders would not have been able to afford the material for togas, even if they did want a garment as impractical and difficult to don and wear as the toga (Vout 1996, 212 & 216).

¹⁰ Ov. *Ars* 1.508-23. Cf. a similar description at Quint. *Inst.* 11.3.137.

Bad or effeminate men were also determined through visual appearance. There were several different aspects to the effeminate male, and while some may indicate “womanishness,” or female qualities, in a man, other aspects were concerned with power. The effeminate man was often described with *mollitia*, a term denoting softness of body and/or character, weakness, and effeminacy.¹¹ Such a quality was detected in a man visually - through his use of colored, elaborate garments, perfume, his gestures (such as scratching the head with one finger), walk, and speech.¹² The effeminate male was expected to have a physically weak body and one which was obviously well-groomed beyond the simple and austere standard for men, as indicated by depilation of the body, and the wearing of perfume, jewelry, or expensive fabrics. Their voices were also accused of being weak or soft and high-pitched, like a woman’s. thus, the Roman man toed a slippery line “between sophistication, elegance, and urbanity on the one hand, and effeminacy on the other.”¹³ Difficulty in distinguishing where the one ended and the other began created a pervasive theme in Roman society of regulating and policing the behavior and appearance of elite men to ensure that they did not slip into the realm of the effeminate.¹⁴

Many of the abstract qualities attributed to the ideal man were included in the term *virtus*, which could encompass military courage, The *vir* was also expected to possess and display *virtus*, self-control, self-sufficiency, *dignitas*, and moderation.

Outside of his person, his life was expected to be given to the service of Rome, and the pursuits of the mind which most prepared and aided him in that

¹¹ Edwards 2002; also *OLD*. Effeminate men were also associated with sexual passivity, the penetrated rather than the active (masculine) penetrator - see Jonathan Walters, “Invading the Roman Body: Manliness and Impenetrability in Roman Thought,” in *Roman Sexualities*, eds. Judith P. Hallett and Marilyn B. Skinner (Princeton 1997), 29-43; and Holt N. Parker, “The Teratogenic Grid,” in Hallett and Skinner 1997, 47-65.

¹² Bartsch 2006, 118.

¹³ Edwards 2002, 68.

¹⁴ From a philosophical or medical perspective, men were superior, but needed ‘fine-tuning’ to maintain the heat that kept them from being ‘womanish.’ So, a man’s speech, walk, dress, and self-control were under surveillance to make sure they were virile (Peter Brown, *The Body and Society: Men, Women, and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity* [New York 1990], 10-12.)

service.¹⁵ Such action was conducted in public spaces or under the eyes of other men. For example, military service was traditionally one of the first ways for a young man to hone his masculinity and begin building a public image for himself: “deployment on the battlefield created a division whereby the young were always placed in front of the older and more experienced citizens. The tension and pressure on the young to perform in the face of the enemy was increased by the fact that the older men stood behind them watching their exploits.”¹⁶ In return, the young men observed the older soldiers and commanders, learning the codes of masculine behavior and *virtus*. Military service was thus important in beginning a career by building a reputation for *virtus*, in addition to serving the state. It was the beginning of a man’s public image, by which his peers and the Roman populace would judge his masculinity.

Military service in particular formed traditional ideas of *virtus*,¹⁷ not simply because it strengthened and trained the body and provided an arena for the demonstration of courage and personal character, but also because that service was under observation. A similar aspect of physical training and performance was also associated with public oratory, another activity which served the state and was performed in public spaces. In oratory, masculinity was encoded in bodily disciplines engineered to communicate an ideal and unquestionable masculinity: in gestures, tone of voice, the pose of the body, and the mastery of these gestures and therefore the self and body.¹⁸ Observers were therefore not simply listening to a speech and judging its persuasiveness, but were also watching a performance of masculinity and judging the speaker’s success at manliness; and the more manly and authoritative, the more convincing.

¹⁵ e.g. Sen. *Con. Pref.* 1.8-9.

¹⁶ Harlow and Laurence 2002, 75.

¹⁷ Myles McDonnell, *Roman Manliness: Virtus and the Roman Republic* (Cambridge 2006): 1-11.

¹⁸ Erik Gunderson, *Staging Masculinity: The Rhetoric of Performance in the Roman World* (Ann Arbor 2000), 75-85. For the instruction of gender in rhetorical schools, see Richlin 1997, 94--6; and Anthony Corbeill, “Political Movement: Walking and Ideology in Republican Rome,” in Fredrick 2002, 188 and 197-8.

Other occasions for manly ritual also took place in public - funerals and funeral orations, participation in political or religious ceremonies, attending political assemblies, or making the rounds in the forum. However, military service and public oratory, as sources for traditional *virtus* and therefore masculinity, are the most important for this study, as these were the activities most impacted by the emperor's presence. For example, triumphs, the public acclamation of *gloria* and courage, were the sole prerogative of the emperor after Augustus, denying aristocratic men the chance to publicly display their *virtus* by displaying what it has accomplished on the battlefield. Public oratory was similarly constrained, as the emperor carried out many duties and made many of the decisions oratory once decided in the courts and senate.¹⁹ Bans or limits placed on these activities and the abilities of aristocratic men to perform them therefore also put constraints on their abilities to be men, declare their masculinity, perform it, and be judged as men by the public and their peers. In effect, if nobody can witness *virtus*, for all intents and purposes it does not exist.²⁰

In short, to recall Gaius' definition, a man's public image was his visible penis, by which society and culture classified him as male and judged his masculinity. Nearly each aspect of masculinity was communicated visually, to an audience schooled in both the symbols of manhood and how to read them, making public appearance and image the primary vehicle for the expression and definition of masculinity. To be a man was to be gazed upon, and to watch other men in a fluid system of regulation and participation in what it meant to be men. As stated above, this was problematic for aristocratic men because of the emperor's co-option of the methods of expression for masculinity. However, the emperor's superior status and control of masculinity also meant that he himself was held to that masculine ideal, and as will be seen next, an even stricter ideal than for his aristocratic male subjects.

¹⁹ Millar 1977, 228-40.

²⁰ Bartsch 2006, 119.

The Emperor

While the introduction briefly discussed the emperor as standing atop the social, political, and masculine hierarchies, this section will delve into this position in more detail. I will examine the emperor's public image through two aristocratic male responses and interpretations of it, first Statius' *Silvae*, and second Pliny's *Panegyricus*. Together these two works are uniquely placed to provide a rounded portrait of the ideal emperor as envisioned by the aristocratic man of the late first and early second centuries A.D. This is because while each are praising their respective emperors, Statius is praising Domitian, the very emperor Pliny constructs in the *Panegyricus* as the anti-Trajan, the worst emperor to contrast with the best.²¹ Significantly, each author is using similar praise techniques and describing similar virtues in each emperor, indicating that certain features of the imperial office were recognized and accepted in a common ideal of the good emperor. In addition, Pliny and Statius complement each other by focusing on different aspects of that ideal. Statius' poems focus on the emperor's demonstrations of imperial socio-political power; Pliny portrays this power too, but also includes detailed descriptions of the emperor as a man and of his private life. So, when used together, Pliny and Statius form a complete picture of the emperor's dominant socio-political status, his interaction with the public gaze, and his projected image of an assured, unambiguous, Roman masculinity. In examining this picture, I will argue that the Roman masculine ideal was exaggerated for emperors, as by virtue of their position as the most powerful man in society, they were expected to be the most masculine as well; in other words, just as they are portrayed in Pliny and Statius as occupying other extremes - omnipotent, omniscient, and all-seeing - they ought also to embody the extreme of masculinity.

²¹ It should be noted here that the question of the accuracy of Pliny's and Statius' portrayals of Domitian and Trajan, while an important issue, is essentially tangential to this thesis and so will not be discussed. What is being examined is the cultural representation of the emperors, public image, and gender - not an attempt to find the "real" Trajan or Domitian.

But first, a bit of background. They were rough contemporaries; Statius wrote and published his *Silvae* between A.D. 92 and 95, and Pliny first gave the *Panegyricus* as a speech in 100 and developed it in writing through about 106. Both were active under Domitian, Statius as a court poet and Pliny as an official, most notably serving from 88 to 93 as quaestor, tribune of the people, and praetor. Both seemed to have had the favor of Domitian; in fact, the emperor granted Pliny a particular honor by issuing a dispensation allowing him to skip the usual interval between tribunate and praetorship.²² Immediately following Pliny's tenure as praetor, Domitian appointed him one of the three prefects of the military treasury.

It is thus a fairly safe assumption that Statius and Pliny at least knew of each other, if not personally. Also, neither were natives of Rome and probably moved in the same social circles; indeed, they had at least one mutual friend, Vibius Maximus (*Silv.* 4.7 and *Ep.* 3.2). However, neither is mentioned in the other's writing - though the absence of Statius in the *Epistles* may simply be due to the fact that he was estimated to have died around 96, and the first book of the *Epistles* is dated to 97.

As to if they were influential on each other or not, it is difficult to say. Pliny can not have taken kindly to poems (*Silv.* Books 1-3) celebrating Domitian being published in 93, the same year Domitian began the purges against the "Stoic opposition," with colleagues and friends of Pliny being executed or exiled. His connections to the movement were largely personal, however, and not necessarily political,²³ and so this is perhaps the reason Pliny escaped unscathed and still in the favor of Domitian. Besides potential personal reasons, both did their primary work in different genres, Statius in poetry and Pliny in oratory and letter-writing. But both are practicing epideixis, Statius through poetry and Pliny through oratory, specifically panegyric.

²² J. Wight Duff, *A Literary History of Rome in the Silver Age: From Tiberius to Hadrian*, 3rd ed., ed. A.M. Duff (London 1964), 427.

²³ Betty Radice, introduction to *The Letters of the Younger Pliny*, trans. Radice (London 1969), 25.

Stattus' Silvae

Epideictic works are meant to put something on display; invective condemns and ridicules, while panegyric praises. The *Silvae* are panegyric in poetry; but while Stattus puts much on display - villas, lions, statues, grief, parrots - his display of the emperor is more problematic. Authors such as Carole Newlands²⁴ have often asserted the dominant status of Domitian throughout the *Silvae*, his pervasive presence evident in most poems, whether he is the direct subject or not, rendering him the most visible character. And true, Domitian does loom large. One demonstration of this dominance is his command of the gaze atop the social hierarchy; nothing escapes his notice, he is possessed of great insight into people, and his position on the Palatine (4.2.30) extends that gaze over the city, not just over the aristocratic orders. For example, Domitian watches Flavius Abascantus grieve for his wife, Priscilla, taking it as proof of the man's virtuous and loyal character (5.1.39-40). At the Saturnalia, Domitian himself also dines amongst the crowds, his gaze and power felt dominant over the intended sense of public Roman *libertas*; he personally provides the food, the entertainment - the festival, and its license.²⁵ The audience's only recorded response is adulation of Domitian and adulation of his position, as they clamor to call him *dominus*.

However, this reading is not complete in light of analysis provided from the viewpoint of the reader's gaze. That is, Domitian may be dominant, but Stattus does not put the emperor himself on display, choosing instead to offer images of the lives of courtiers, senators, and their wealth; Domitian himself is only once put on display to the public, at *Silvae* 1.6, where he dines amongst all orders at the Saturnalia. Indeed, of the *Silvae*, only five poems (1.1, 1.6, and 4.1-3) deal directly with Domitian or his achievements, although he is mentioned in several others; it is these poems on which this paper will focus. The result is a much more subtle and shadowy view of Domitian himself, a view which emphasizes instead his power and its effects and

²⁴ Carole E. Newlands, *Stattus' Silvae and the Poetics of Empire* (Cambridge 2002).

²⁵ Newlands 2002, 239.

never gives the reader a clear view of the emperor himself. In other words, Statius is drawing a picture of how an emperor hides in plain sight.

Historically, there is evidence for Domitian's seclusion from the public. Domitian's palace encompassed about 40,000 square meters, with the private section twice as large as the public.²⁶ Pliny records that Domitian spent many hours in these locked rooms, secluding himself from the public,²⁷ a circumstance he uses as a weapon against Domitian in his panegyric of Trajan (a theme to be discussed in more detail later). Suetonius records that *Inter initia principatus cotidie secretum sibi horarum sumere solebat nec quicquam amplius quam muscas captare ac stilo praeacuto configere...*²⁸ In between dinner and the hour for retiring, he reportedly did nothing more *quam solus secreto deambulabat* ("than go for a walk alone in an isolated spot" - Suet. *Dom.* 21.1). Dio also describes Domitian as secretive, spending much time at his Alban villa, which he had set up as a kind of acropolis (67.1.2). Indeed, Domitian apparently often spent time outside of Rome, going on five campaigns along the Rhine and Danube and using Alba as a second court, there performing "a surprising variety of his imperial duties,"²⁹ further distancing himself from the Roman public. That their reaction upon notification of his murder, according to Suetonius, was indifference,³⁰ demonstrates the absence of popularity with the masses and feelings of loyalty given to, say, a Nero.

Add to this isolation feelings of suspicion, fear, and uncertainty felt by courtiers and senators alike, and one is left with a less than ideal reign, even if viewed in the most favorable light possible. He was openly autocratic,³¹ and his unpopularity with the senate is notorious. However, recent efforts to rehabilitate his

²⁶ T. Corey Brennan, "Principes and Plebs: Nerva's Reign as Turning-Point?" *AJAH* 15, no. 1 (1990[2000]): 43.

²⁷ Plin. *Pan.* 49.1-3.

²⁸ Suet. *Dom.* 3.1: "At the beginning of his reign, he was in the habit of inflicting seclusion on himself every day for hours, and not doing anything more than catching flies and piercing them with a very sharp stylus."

²⁹ Brian W. Jones, *The Emperor Domitian* (London 1993), 28.

³⁰ Suet. *Dom.* 23.1.

³¹ A.J. Boyle, "Introduction: Reading Flavian Rome," in *Flavian Rome: Culture, Image, Text*, eds. A.J. Boyle and W.J. Dominik (Leiden 2003), 15-19, 26-35.

reign have highlighted Domitian's policy of attempting to placate the senate and gain its cooperation and support through various methods, including increasing the number of suffect consulships "to relieve the feelings of those still dissatisfied senators who felt that their chances of gaining the *fasces* had either suffered or disappeared because of the large number of adlected praetors in 73-4."³² But the dissatisfaction was not alleviated: Domitian also granted consulships to senators who were not part of the [original] Flavian support base, including those who numbered among the opposition and others who were from the East (the presence of easterners in the senate of course did not necessarily please the traditional, Rome- or Italy-based membership).³³ Also displeasing to the senate was Domitian's advancement of the equestrian order, appointing various equestrians to military commands, suffect consulships, and heads of imperial bureaus; this, combined with his limitation of offices available to ex-praetors and his promotion of Eastern senators, produced the hostility in the senate and alienated a majority of senators.³⁴ The executions of various senators, it goes without saying, cannot have helped. Their reaction upon his death - the *damnatio memoriae* and their joy recorded by Statius, Pliny, and Dio - while probably not shared by all senators, certainly shows the ultimately negative relationship between Domitian and the senate. Fear amongst the courtiers with the executions of Epaphroditus, his confidential secretary, and Flavius Clemens, father of his heirs, resulted in a situation where Domitian was viewed with indifference or slight warmth by the Roman public, hostility from the majority of the senate, and feared or kowtowed to by his court, leaving the emperor with a trusted circle of advisors, the traditional Flavian support base, and the soldiers, arguably the most important prop for support. But in Rome itself, his support was likely more thin than he would have liked.

³² Brian W. Jones, *Domitian and the Senatorial Order: A Prosopographical Study of Domitian's Relationship with the Senate, A.D. 81-96* (Philadelphia 1979), 28.

³³ Jones 1979, 28-9 and 41; see also John D. Grainger, *Nerva and the Roman Succession Crisis of A.D. 96-99* (London 2003), 7-8.

³⁴ Jones 1979, 50-5; Pat Southern, *Domitian: Tragic Tyrant* (London 1997), 50-2.

And Statius' task is to offer praise of this emperor to a Roman audience, a predominately elite one, and reinterpret his image for that audience in a positive way. His praise must therefore celebrate an emperor not particularly loved, one known for his preferred physical seclusion, autocratic policies, mercurial and suspicious personality, an emperor isolated in his office.

The result is that the reader cannot see Domitian, though the people in the poems sometimes can. His presence is pervasive and often invisible, making both it and the reading of it by the audience uncertain, given its lack of full visibility. After all, seeing the emperor's physical self was more than a simple honor or an occasion for thanks; it was also an opportunity to interact with him politically and socially, and given the importance of visual appearance in determining a person's character, social rank, and gender, seeing the emperor in person was also a way of affirming his qualities as an emperor and a man. So, the Roman public and reader, deprived of such visual contact with Domitian, were also deprived of the chance to suss him out, be political actors, and interact with him on the level of Roman citizens. This ambiguous representation, a sort of dark half-affirmation, both betrays and is a source of unease in the *Silvae* as a whole.

Immediately established in the poems is Domitian's complete control of the gaze. *Silvae* 1.1, written about A.D. 91 or shortly thereafter, is in honor of the equestrian statue of Domitian erected in the Forum. The statue was voted by the Senate after his double triumph over the Chatti and Dacians in 89 and was placed in the most central, visible location, the Forum, which was also the political heart of the old Republic - the triumph of the Caesars was never more visible. When the statue is first introduced, it is done so in progressing specificity - *moles* to *colosso* to *opus* to *effigies* - until the reader finally realizes it is a colossal statue of Domitian: "The effect is that of an object suddenly appearing, at first scarcely discernible but slowly becoming sharper and more identifiable as it comes into focus."³⁵ The statue was

³⁵ John W. Geyssen, *Imperial Panegyric in Statius: A Literary Commentary on Silvae 1.1*. (New York 1996), 36.

obviously the object of the gaze, and the public audience could look upon Domitian's visage: *iuvat ora tueri / mixta notis, bellum placidamque gerentia pacem. nec veris maiora putes: par forma decorque, par honor.*³⁶ He is also under the gaze of the various deities whose temples immediately surround the statue, including Caesar, Vespasian, Concord, and Paullus (1.1.29-31). Even the ghost of Curtius pops up for a view, giving praise and thanks for Domitian's proximity: *...nunc veneranda palus, cum te prope nosse tuumque / immortale iubar vicina sede tueri concessum.*³⁷ Of course, Domitian the statue is not merely there to be looked at; he also gazes back. Shining above the temples with lofty head high, he seems to gaze before him [*prospectare videris*], watching his new palace on the Palatine and the Vestals' house (1.1.34-6) - both his hearth and that of the Roman people and state.

Now, one might assume that introducing the *Silvae* with this image of Domitian so clearly meant to be gazed at would be a stellar opportunity for Statius to present his readers with an image of the emperor to hold in their minds throughout the rest of the poems. But the image has a particular artificiality about it. The statue Domitian's face holds beauty, grace, and dignity; his right arm bans battles while his left holds Minerva; he gazes before him; and that he has a sword at his side and a cloak down his back. His mount has a lifted head, with body coiled and ready for action, as one hoof paws a German captive.³⁸ These are phrases and symbolic gestures which could apply to any emperor claimed as good by a panegyrist. And in fact, Statius does his best to equate the statue Domitian with the real one. The language Statius uses to describe both the statue and the audience's reaction to it, and the speech addressed to the statue itself by Curtius, all present the reader with an impression that the statue is directly representative of, and in some sense contains the essence of, the living Domitian. Both statue and living man are meant to

³⁶ Stat. *Silv.* 1.1.15-18: "It is a delight to gaze upon the expression, in which marks blend together, displaying war and quiet peace. Nor should you think the truth is exaggerated: equal is his image and beauty, equal his honor."

³⁷ Stat. *Silv.* 1.1.75-8: "...now my swamp is venerable, with you close by, and that it is appointed to me to know you and permitted to gaze upon your immortal residence next door."

³⁸ Stat. *Silv.* 1.1.46-51.

be looked at, gazed at, meant to be learned from (as Caesar from his temple learns clemency³⁹), meant to be all-seeing and capable of looking after his own house as well as an empire (domestic mastery and order is often shorthand for public and political reliability and virtue) - all functions that the good emperor was supposed to fulfill. Such an emperor was supposed to exist in the public eye and be the most visible being in the social universe; as such, he was also supposed to be a role model for all Romans. The statue of Domitian as presented in 1.1 is all these things.

Going one step further, Statius also introduces the divine nature of Domitian the man through the statue. Statius' images of the fine quality of the sculpture and its possible creation, as either floating from heaven completed already or created in the volcanoes of Sicily, all imply that "only a god would have the ability to fashion a likeness of Statius' emperor."⁴⁰ More explicitly, Statius describes the statue as possessing divine qualities itself, as the representation of a god: *iuvat ipsa labores / forma dei praesens, operique intenta iuventus / miratur plus posse manus.*⁴¹ That his head reaches into the sky and his person is radiant also intimates Domitian's divinity.

However, this idealized portrait is tempered by two strange details. In the left hand of the statue, Domitian holds a statuette of Minerva, who herself holds her shield; on the shield is the Medusa's head (1.1.37-9). Of course, anyone who looks at the Medusa's head is turned to stone. Now, Minerva's presence in and of itself is not strange. Domitian considered her the patron goddess of the Flavians and his own special protectress. He kept a shrine to her in his bedroom, and imagery in sculpture (as in the Cancelleria reliefs) and coinage often included Minerva or her symbols.⁴² Furthermore, the image of the Gorgon is present on other images of Domitian, including, significantly a bronze equestrian statue from Misenum whose cuirass bears "a winged gorgoneion flanked by rosettes," a choice motivated by his

³⁹ Stat. *Silv.* 1.1.25-7.

⁴⁰ Geysen 1996, 43; Stat. *Silv.* 1.1.1-7.

⁴¹ Stat. *Silv.* 1.1.61-3: "The god's form itself, being present, helps the labor, and those intent on their work are surprised that their hands are more powerful."

⁴² Jones 1993, 100. See also Suet. *Dom.* 4.4 and 15.3; and Dio Cass. 67.1.2.

associations with Minerva and his appropriation of Hellenistic kingship imagery.⁴³ The presence of the statuette is therefore primarily to indicate this special relationship between the goddess and Domitian, and as well as to associate him with Alexander and other Hellenistic monarchs (thus also emphasizing his autocratic dominance).

However, there is a secondary message at work. While Statius uses the image of the head as a spur forward for the horse, there is another implication to the deliberate inclusion of this detail: that it is dangerous to gaze at Domitian. This is contradictory to the image created just a few lines before of a Domitian who invites the gaze, is pleasant to look at, and indeed should be watched as an example to be followed. An ominous thing is an emperor who sees all as supreme master of the gaze, and yet cannot be watched himself - for people cannot then know on whom his gaze is landing, and for what purpose. The balance of visual, political, and social power is thus skewed heavily in favor of the emperor. This is the first instance of an ambiguity towards the emperor Statius flatters, an impression reinforced by the portrayal of other, similar signals from Domitian which discourage the public gaze.

At 1.1.32 the statue is described thusly: *Ipse autem puro celsum caput aere saeptus / templa superfulges...*⁴⁴ This scene is reminiscent of the entrance of Aeneas into Carthage in the *Aeneid* at 1.411, in which Venus wraps him in a concealing mist.⁴⁵ *Saeptus* itself “generally carries the sense of hiding something from view, clearly Vergil’s intention in the *Aeneid* passage.”⁴⁶ Frederick Ahl interprets this particular phrasing and Statius’ use of *aere saeptus* as meaning that Domitian can see the city without being seen.⁴⁷ Here again is a hint that gazing at Domitian is not

⁴³ Steven L. Tuck, “The Origins of Roman Imperial Hunting Imagery: Domitian and the Redefinition of Virtus Under the Principate,” *G&R* 52, no. 2 (2005): 231, 233-4.

⁴⁴ Stat. *Silv.* 1.1.32-3: “But you yourself shine above the temples with your head held high, surrounded by the pure air....”

⁴⁵ Verg. *Aen.* 1.411-14: *at Venus obscuro gradientis aere saepsit, / et multo nebulae circum dea fudit amictu, / cernere ne quis eos neu quis contingere posset / molirive moram aut veniendi poscere causas.*

⁴⁶ Geysen 1996, 88.

⁴⁷ Fredrick M. Ahl, “The Rider and the Horse: Politics and Power in Roman Poetry from Horace to Statius,” *ANRW* II 32.1 (1984).

something which is entirely permissible and is discouraged. (Even from a practical perspective, trying to view the statue would have been difficult by virtue of its height and sheer size, in contrast to the limitless imperial eye atop that height.)⁴⁸

So, *Silvae* 1.1 opens with a bang but an ambiguous one - fireworks or cannon shot? The fact that the most detailed description of Domitian has to come from a statue, an idealized image - well, it is like introducing the Queen from her wax figure in Madame Tussaud's, or Bill Clinton from his official portrait in the White House. Of course, perhaps for Statius, this is the point - that this idealized, divinized image is the one which will instruct the rest of Domitian's appearances in the *Silvae*. Funny that his ideal is an inanimate, stylized effigy which he has to imbue with human and divine powers to make it a true representative of the emperor himself - that his revelation of the emperor is a stand-in. It is as though he is saying that this is how Domitian is most visible, and most often visible, to Romans, given his secretiveness and absences from the city - through an image Domitian chooses to present, an idealized image which perhaps hides or glosses over an uglier reality hinted at in the warnings against gazing at Domitian the man.

1.6 is the next appearance of Domitian in the *Silvae*, this time as the man himself and not a statue. The date of its writing is uncertain, and its theme is a Saturnalia. Statius here sets himself up explicitly as the observer of the scene and recorder of events (1.6.7-8). Throughout the poem, the presence of Domitian is evident; he is the provider of all luxuries at the festival, from the food and wine to the novelties of women and dwarf gladiators at the games. He makes a physical appearance at the feast when he eats with everyone: *una vescitur omnis ordo mensa, / parvi, femina, plebs, eques, senatus...et tu quin etiam...nobiscum socias dapes inisti*.⁴⁹ Interestingly, Statius here differentiates the emperor from the rest of society - Domitian is not listed as an order or member of any order, but is separate

⁴⁸ David Fredrick, "Architecture and Surveillance in Flavian Rome," in Boyle and Dominik 2003, 220.

⁴⁹ Stat. *Silv.* 1.6.43-5: "All orders feast at one table, children, women, commoners, equestrians, senators...and even you in fact...entered the feast with us in common."

and unique, apart from society.⁵⁰ That he chooses to join the orders in feasting is cast here as a praiseworthy action, but the traditional nature of the Saturnalia allows for the overturning of normal social conventions and hierarchies; so Statius' praise of Domitian for sharing the common lot is undermined by the implication that this was not something Domitian would normally do, that in fact Domitian *is* separate from society.

The people's own efforts to set him apart by praising Domitian's generosity and attempting to proclaim him *dominus* are stymied by Domitian himself, who (according to Statius) prohibits the use of that title as the one license he would not allow (1.6.81-4). While Statius may set up Domitian as protesting his isolation from the Roman citizenry, he also furthers that sense of isolation by continuing in 1.6 the notion of Domitian as divine by referring to Domitian as *nostris Iovis* who sends downpours of rarified food.⁵¹ Also, as night fell over the festival, *escendit media nitens arena / densas flammeus orbis inter umbras...collucet polus ignibus nihilque / obscurae patitur licere nocti*:⁵² everything could be seen and nothing left to obscurity. And, of course, nothing left to obscurity to Domitian; the (eye)ball, sponsored by him, illuminates the arena (a microcosm of Rome at this festival)⁵³, leaving everything open and available to his gaze, the ball as a seeing tool utilized to view his domain. While this could also be interpreted as a continued opportunity for the people to gaze at Domitian, two things make such an interpretation difficult: first, the warning provided in 1.1 through the Medusa that gazing at Domitian is a potentially dangerous prospect; second, that nowhere in 1.6 is Domitian the object of the gaze. While he is identified as attending the feast and therefore available to the sight of everyone, the focus of the poem is quickly turned back towards the action taking place in the arena, and the emperor's person is never returned to; all attention

⁵⁰ Newlands, "The Emperor's *Saturnalia*: Statius, *Silvae* 1.6," in Boyle and Fredrick 2003, 511.

⁵¹ Stat. *Silv.* 1.6.25-7.

⁵² Stat. *Silv.* 1.6.86-7, 89-90: "a flaming ball climbed up from the middle of the arena, shining amidst the dense shadows...The sky was completely illuminated with flames, and nothing was allowed to be exposed to the dark of night."

⁵³ Newlands 2003, 503 and 512.

is instead on the fruits of his generosity - the food, wine, prostitutes, and games - which are described in detail. But no verbs of seeing are ever applied to the emperor as in 1.1; in fact, the only seeing or seeing-related word used in the poem is *spectandi*, to describe the scene in the arena. Perhaps this is because as the spectacle, the Saturnalia itself is the focus, but the emperor is not included in the description of the *spectandi*. He is not part of the spectacle, and therefore not to be gazed at. So, in 1.6, Domitian is further isolated from Roman society and continues to elude the gaze.

Book Four opens with a poem on the occasion of Domitian's seventeenth consulship, which began 1 January A.D. 95. While it does not address the gaze, it instead emphasizes Domitian's divine qualities and status. *He oritur cum sole novo, cum grandibus astris, / clarius ipse nitens...*⁵⁴ Such astronomical imagery was a common convention of Augustan and Alexandrian encomia and portraiture, gaining prominence after the comet of 44 B.C. at Caesar's funeral games; his use of this particular imagery therefore demonstrates the influence upon Statius of imperial panegyric tradition.⁵⁵ One can infer, of course, that such a lofty perspective also gives Domitian an all-encompassing view of his domain, a platform for his gaze which nothing escapes. His influence takes a similar scope, as he, like Augustus, has the ability to order Janus about and bind his power (4.1.13-15). The tamed Janus then gives a speech about how Domitian is better than his predecessors, including Augustus; how he is honored by Minerva; how all people rejoice; and how his future will hold military glory. After he finishes, and as the poem finishes, *tunc omnes patuere dei laetoque dederunt / signa polo, longamque tibi, dux magne, iuventam / annuit atque suos promisit Iuppiter annos.*⁵⁶ Here Domitian is not only

⁵⁴ Stat. *Silv.* 4.1.3-4: "he rises as a new sun, with the grandeur of the stars, himself shining more brightly...."

⁵⁵ Geysen 1996, 100.

⁵⁶ Stat. *Silv.* 4.1.45-7: "Then all of the gods stood open and gave signs from heaven, and Jupiter promised to you, great leader, a long youth, and accorded you years like his own."

better than his deified predecessors, but he is honored by other gods as an equal, and is even granted immortality.

Interestingly, the reader is offered almost no specific image in this poem - while it is supposed to be epideictic, it is hard to say exactly what is being put on display. There is lots of rejoicing - on the part of the senate, the gods, all citizens and public officials - and sweeping rhetoric that lauds Domitian as being *iuvēnis praegressus avos* ("young when you surpassed your forefathers" - 4.1.33). But the exact accomplishments are never described, and his future deeds and triumphs are given vague terms. There are only two instances in the poem which approach the type of imagery the reader is bombarded with in 1.1 and 1.6. The first is an emphasis on light, and Domitian as both luminous and a light-bringer. The beginning of his seventeenth consulship is as the beginning of a new dawn, likening him to the sun, a common motif in panegyric of monarchs - of course, the thing about the sun is that you cannot look directly at it. Furthermore, he himself not only outshines the stars (4.1.3-4), but the initiation of his new consulship brings illumination: *aspicis ut templis alius nitor, altior aris / ignis et ipsa meae tepeant tibi sidera brumae...*⁵⁷ The light, in other words, is a divine light, evident in both the heavens that the emperor outshines and the earthly homes of the gods (the temples). Moreover, this light is also indicative of his presence. A vision of Domitian as filled with divine light and that light manifesting where he is not physically present reinforces an impression of a divine Domitian as omnipresent and all-seeing; and gazing upon a god in his shining glory is dangerous, as the myths tell us. In other words, Domitian illuminates the world over which he reigns, he can gaze down at it all, but that world cannot gaze at him - there is a lethal danger in doing so.

The second image is of Domitian being robed in the toga praetexta as he assumes the consulship: *...hos umeros multo sinus ambiat ostro / et properata tuae*

⁵⁷ Stat. *Silv.* 4.1.23-5: "You see how a different glow is in the temples, the flames higher on the altars, and how the stars of my winter grow warm for you"

manibus praetexta Minervae.⁵⁸ So, the reader clearly sees Domitian being robed - but how to picture Domitian? As discussed earlier, Statius has never provided a physical description of the emperor, has never given the reader a direct look at Domitian, but only at his statue; the man himself has only been a shadowy, abstract presence refracted through the eyes of others. The effect for the reader is thus the clothing of an effigy, the toga being swung around the body of a colossal statue, with the real Domitian somewhere else.

4.2, a description of Domitian's new palace (completed in A.D. 92) and a thanksgiving for a banquet, has the first one-on-one eye contact with the emperor. Statius is the eyes of the piece, all people and events are from his personal perspective. Continuing the divine theme, Domitian's superhuman nature is emphasized at 4.2.52, where Statius compares the emperor to various heroes and mythical figures, none of whom can match Domitian's "aspect" (*visus*). Statius also declares the palace equal to the gods' own, and likens the banquet to dining with Jupiter (4.2.10-12). Turning his gaze to the god in his midst, he says, in wonder, *tene ego, regnator terrarum orbisque subacti / magne parens, te, spes hominum, te, cura deorum, / cerno iacens? datur haec iuxta, datur ora tueri / vina inter mensasque, et non assurgere fas est?*⁵⁹ Statius says it is finally permissible for him to gaze on Domitian, having been invited by him to the banquet, and invited to gaze. Statius' wonder is twofold here: one, that he is seeing the emperor in a relaxed, informal position, and two, that he is seeing the emperor thus while he himself is reclining in informality; convention held that one should stand in the presence of the emperor, and so Statius emphasizing both his and the emperor's similar positions is his attempt at portraying the emperor as fair and egalitarian, as in 1.6 when Statius dines amongst people of all ranks at the Saturnalian feast.⁶⁰ This *civilitas*,

⁵⁸ Stat. *Silv.* 4.1.21-2: "...the fold embraces these shoulders with mounds of purple, and the bordered toga from the speedy hands of your Minerva."

⁵⁹ Stat. *Silv.* 4.2.14-7: "Reclining, do I see you, the great parent who rules countries and conquered the world, you, hope of mankind, you, care of the gods? Is this permitted me, granted to me, to gaze upon this face from close by among the wine and tables, and yet it is lawful for me *not* to rise?"

⁶⁰ K.M. Coleman, *Statius Silvae IV* (Oxford 1988 [2001]), 88.

egalitarianism, is a virtue often employed in panegyric as indicative of a good emperor. But in contrast with the Saturnalia, at this *cena*, the spectacle includes Domitian. Statius holds his gaze on nothing but Domitian: *...ipsum, ipsum cupido tantum spectare vacavit, / tranquillum vultus et maiestate serena / mulcentem radios summittentemque modeste / fortunae vexilla suae; tamen ore nitebat / dissimulatus honos.*⁶¹ This passage partially echoes the feast in 1.6. Once again Domitian is attempting to set aside his high status to join society at his banquet (he sponsored both feasts), but just as the farce of the Saturnalia showed his true singularity, here too his true position cannot be hidden. Statius describes his *honos* as visible in his face, regardless of his attempts to downplay his status. More concretely, Domitian would have been reclining above his guests in an elevated apse at one end of the hall, turning the banquet into a performance by the emperor of power and dominance.⁶² So, Domitian can watch his party, but never truly be a party to it.

Here also Domitian is making himself visually accessible, but again there is a catch: he is allowing only a select group of people to view him, and to do so in such leisurely and intimate surroundings. That he developed a special “power set” of confidantes and courtiers for both social and administrative circles only emphasizes his isolation from the larger part of society and the aristocracy,⁶³ and lends support to his visual isolation from these sections. 4.2 may therefore be Statius’ attempt to let people outside this circle into the realm, to humanize the emperor, to give people a glimpse of the man rarely seen in public and to show them that what happens behind Domitian’s closed doors is not all plotting and stabbing of flies; of course, the other message is that Statius is blessed and trusted enough and of high enough status and influence to be allowed to see and interpret Domitian the man, and to see him in such intimate surroundings to boot. So, 4.2 is a rehabilitation of Domitian’s image, or

⁶¹ Stat. *Silv.* 4.2.40-5: “...there was only time to eagerly watch him, him alone, his expression calm and appeasing the radiance with serene dignity, modestly lowering his standard of rank; nevertheless, the concealed esteem shone in his face.”

⁶² Fredrick 2003, 218.

⁶³ Jones 1993, 197-8.

an effort by Statius the spin doctor to form a new image for the elite and public of their emperor.

4.3 was written in early summer A.D. 95 in honor of the completion of the Via Domitiana between Sinuessa and Puteoli. There is little gazing in this poem, which is rather all about Domitian as a god and conquerer of nature. Among other accomplishments, Domitian restores fields to Ceres, forbids emasculation, deifies his family and builds a temple to the Flavian gens (4.3.9-19). However, the particular accomplishment of completing the road is the theme of the poem, and is particularly miraculous for the type of ground it has conquered; previously the route was sandy, swampy, and treacherous, but with the road it now takes little time and presents no threat to traveller or wheel (4.3.27-35). Just as Domitian's road has tamed the earth, so it has also tamed the waters, specifically Volturnus, the main river of Campania; Volturnus personified says that he once was wild but now is tamed by Caesar's bridge and road: *sed grates ago servitusque tanti est / quod sub te duce, te iubente, cessi, / quod tu maximus arbiter meaeque / victor perpetuus legere ripae.*⁶⁴ In return for the river's servitude, Domitian tends the banks and keeps it running free, presumably by dredging (4.3.85-94). Having tamed the natural elements, a Sibyl in revelatory language hails Domitian's divine abilities: *en hic est deus, hunc iubet beatis / pro se Iuppiter imperare terris....*⁶⁵ In fact, his adeptness at administering the elements to better benefit humans would make him a better Nature, too (4.3.136). If Domitian's divinity needed any reinforcement by this point, it comes immediately when the Sibyl exclaims, *Salve, dux hominum et parens deorum, / provisum mihi conditumque numen!*⁶⁶ Befitting his divinity, the Sibyl declares Domitian will be granted a long lifetime, long enough to outlive his great-great-grandsons, and that

⁶⁴ Stat. *Silv.* 4.3.81-4: "But I give thanks, and my service is of value because I yielded under your command, your order, and because you are to be read forever as the greatest ruler and conqueror of my banks."

⁶⁵ Stat. *Silv.* 4.3.128-9: "Hark! He is a god, whom Jupiter commands to govern the fertile earth on his behalf..." This is an expression of a larger Hellenistic and Roman belief of rulers as ordained by Jupiter (Coleman 1988 [2001], 131 v128).

⁶⁶ Stat. *Silv.* 4.3.139-40: "Greetings, leader of men and parent of gods, divinity foreseen by me and written!"

those years will be spent in perpetual youth (just as Jupiter promised earlier at 4.1.145-7).

Now, Domitian himself is not present or visible in this poem. The speeches by Vulturinus and the Sybil are addressed to him, but the one who witnesses them directly is Statius as the narrator. The deities themselves are described in a fair amount of detail: Vulturinus' hair is blond and tangled with plants, and he leans against the bridge while speaking (4.3.67-71). The Sibyl, with hair and fillets of white, brings laurels as she spins and wanders all over the road (4.3.114-22). Descriptions of the road, its surrounds, and the arch are also included at 4.3.40-55 and 97-100. The only character physically missing is the emperor himself; he is present only in spirit, evoked by the words of Statius, Vulturinus, and the Sibyl. All that is seen is the effects of Caesar's power - the road, bridge, arch, tamed river and earth - in other words, the invisible hand of the emperor. Incidentally, this is often how godly power was supposed to work, according to the Romans; one rarely saw the god, but one often saw the effects of his power, and manifestations of his will or [dis]favor.

Thus does Statius' portrait of the emperor as divine and hidden intersect: the shadowy, isolated, reclusive Domitian is that way simply because he is a god. Gods do that. So, this is one way in which Statius gives the historical reality of Domitian as hidden, which Romans found unsettling because of their reliance on the visual to politically and socially interact with an individual male, a positive twist, and one in line with Domitianic ideology, demanding as he did that he be addressed as *dominus et deus*.⁶⁷ This is not Ahl's picture of constant encoding of subversion,⁶⁸ nor Newlands'

⁶⁷ Dio Cass. 67.4.7; Suet. *Dom.* 13.2. For a lengthy discussion of Domitian's use of *dominus*, see Leonard Thompson, "Domitianus Dominus: A Gloss on Statius *Silvae* 1.6.84," *AJPh* 105 (1984): 469-75.

⁶⁸ Ahl 1984, 40-110. Others have read subversion in Statius as well; John Garthwaite ("Statius' Retirement From Rome: *Silvae* 3.5," *Antichthon* 23 [1989]: 81-91) reads *Silvae* 3.5 (on his move to Naples) as a rejection of Domitian as the reason for his defeat at the Capitoline Games and his withdrawal from Domitian's court, while D.E. Hill and William J. Dominik read the *Thebaid* as a condemnation of monarchic power and autocracy (Hill, "Statius' *Thebaid*: A Glimmer of Light in a Sea of Darkness," in *The Imperial Muse: Ramus Essays on Roman Literature of the Empire, Flavian Epicist to Claudian*, ed. A.J. Boyle [Bendigo 1990], 98-118; and Dominik, "Monarchal Power and Imperial Politics in Statius' *Thebaid*," in Boyle 1990, 74-97.

rejection of a monstrous Domitian - it agrees with her in that Statius is negotiating complex Flavian society, but that negotiation is of a mercurial but not monstrous, praiseworthy at times but also problematic, newly emphasized autocratic emperor. Statius is praising, but he is doing so with reservations, which show up in his ambiguous picture of Domitian's visibility - he is negotiating how to praise a problematic and not universally liked emperor: making the best of a sticky situation.

The poems that briefly mention the emperor but do not deal directly with him or his achievements also have a few valuable things to say regarding the emperor's visibility. For example, 2.5 is a short poem of thirty lines written on the death of a tame lion in the arena. While initially the focus of attention is naturally the lion and his attitude and appearance during death, at the end Statius turns the lens on the audience witnessing the death, recording the reactions of the different ranks. He states that the people [*populus*] and Fathers [*patres*] groaned in dismay and sympathy, and *Caesaris ora...unius amissi tetigit iactura leonis*.⁶⁹ Here the reaction of the emperor is noted by the change of his expression, casting Domitian as object of the gaze even while he is a subject, watching the lion's death. Moreover, seeing Domitian is a way of ascertaining his attitude towards something, of knowing his stance on an event or person, and how that opinion compares to that of his people, whether it is consonant or dissonant with their sentiment. Here, the audience is comforted by the fact that the emperor can be moved to sympathy and pity by the simple death of a lion,⁷⁰ for if he can feel in such a manner for a lion, he can do so for his subjects.

At 3.3, Statius praises Domitian's *clementia* in a consolation for Claudius Etruscus on the death of his father. For some reason, early under Domitian the father fell out of favor and was exiled to Campania and then Apulia, although Statius attributes this not to Domitian's caprice but to either the doddering age of the man, or

⁶⁹ Stat. *Silv.* 2.5.27-30: "...losing one lion moved to pity Caesar's expression."

⁷⁰ John J. Garvey, "*Silvae* 2.5 and Statius' Art," *Latomus* 48 (1989): 630. See also Stephen Thomas Newmyer, *The Silvae of Statius: Structure and Theme*, Mnemos. Suppl. 53 (Leiden 1979), 74.

the withdrawal of Fortune's favor (3.3.156-7). Later, Domitian recalled him, *...maerentemque foves inclinatosque penates / erigis. haud mirum, ductor placidissime, quando / haec est quae victis parcentia foedera Cattis / quaeque suum Dacis donat clementia montem....*⁷¹ Clemency, *clementia*, is a primary virtue praised in panegyric, and indeed comprises one element in a canon of imperial virtues which "provided an instant template against which any ruler, including an emperor, could readily be measured."⁷² Domitian's great clemency is also implied in 1.1 where Julius Caesar learns from the equestrian statue *quantum tu mitior armis*⁷³ is Domitian, but this reference at 3.3. is more explicit. A different kind of *clementia* is described at 3.4 when Statius claims it was *pulchra ducis clementia* ("the fair clemency of the ruler" - 3.4.73) which inspired his edict to ban castration of children. While this concept of an ideal emperor and his virtues will be explored in more detail in the following section on Pliny, it is important to recognize here that Statius is praising Domitian using a standard panegyric method and placing him high on a commonly used scale of imperial virtue.

At 5.1, a consolation to Abascantus on the death of his wife, Priscilla, while recounting Abascantus' position as head of imperial correspondence, Statius says he obtained the post both through Priscilla's prayers and by the observation of Domitian: *vidit quippe pii iuvenis navamque quietem / intactamque fidem succinctaque pectora curis / et vigiles sensus...vidit, qui cuncta suorum / novit et inspectis ambit latus omne ministris.*⁷⁴ That is, Domitian sees the mind and character of his servants, knows their actions and whereabouts, and is a good judge of a man's nature; he sees it all. Here is Domitian the omniscient, the all-seeing, in

⁷¹ Stat. *Silv.* 3.3.166-9: "...soothing his grieving and setting upright the sunken house. Not at all surprising, most gentle ruler, since it is this clemency which administers sparing treaties to the defeated Chatti and gives their mountain to the Dacians...."

⁷² Susanna Morton Braund, "Praise and Protreptic in Early Imperial Panegyric: Cicero, Seneca, Pliny," in *The Propaganda of Power: The Role of Panegyric in Late Antiquity*, ed. Mary Whitby, Mnemos. Suppl. 183 (Leiden 1998), 57.

⁷³ Stat. *Silv.* 1.1.25: "...how much gentler in war [you are]...."

⁷⁴ Stat. *Silv.* 5.1.76-80: "Of course he saw the pious young man's calm energy and intact loyalty and mind ready for responsibility, and his attentive attitude...he saw, who learns everything about them and encircles all his sides with inspected attendants."

control of what he sees by seeing it - the total subject of the gaze, rather than the object.

In short, these mentions in 2.5, 3.3, and 5.1, while embedded in poems whose themes have little or nothing to do with Domitian himself or his achievements, are still valuable because they provide additional examples of the overall picture of the emperor presented in 1.1, 1.6, and 4.1-3: the Domitian as a shadowy presence who is rarely physically visible to either the author, the personages in the poems, or the reader. While he is the object of the gaze in certain cases - as a statue in 1.1, at the games in 2.5, and at his banquet in 4.2 - this is offset by other instances in which he is only the subject (5.1) or where imagery discourages direct gazing at Domitian (as with the Medusa's head at 1.1). Rather, it is his presence manifested in his power, achievements, and favors which is most visible: the statue, Saturnalia, consulship, lavish banquet, road, appointment to offices, clemency, and edicts. These are described in detail, while no equal description of Domitian's physical appearance is given; readers are therefore able to picture them more clearly than the emperor himself, who from his statue is only known to have beauty, grace, and dignity, with his face bearing marks of war and peace - scars? lines? a frown? - and from whose person emanates an inner radiance or light. Even at 2.5, when Statius describes the emperor's expression as touched by the death of the lion, it merely marks a change in his face; the reader is left to surmise what precise emotion it portrays and imagine how a sorrowful or sympathetic Domitian might appear. For a culture in which physiognomical description and facial expression (in both life and literature) were definitely of interest and considered important to determine character and motivation,⁷⁵ the lack of overall detail is striking.

So, Statius' portrait of Domitian is split. On the one hand, he is an emperor who displays many of the virtues panegyric assigns to good emperors, including *clementia* and *civilitas*, and who as a benevolent deity and moral man does not

⁷⁵ Bartsch 2006, 123.

abuse his clear powers of omniscience and the penetrating gaze. On the other hand, there is the sense that Domitian should not be gazed at and thus interacted (competed?) with on the political or masculine levels. Indeed, Statius rules out any thought of competition or challenge by identifying Domitian as the only political actor in the *Silvae*. But nor can Domitian himself truly interact with his public; he cannot disguise his superior status and essential isolation outside society at large. This ambiguity infuses the *Silvae* and is the result of an intersection of the historical, autocratic, suspicious, negative Domitian and the panegyricized, cultured, egalitarian, positive Domitian, and Statius' efforts to negotiate this divide and interpret Domitian's public image for a potentially hostile or skeptical aristocratic audience. The *Silvae* are thus a unique example of epideictic literature in that one of their subjects on display - Domitian - is not himself seen, but rather his effigy or ideal is the focus of the gaze, leaving the real emperor to hide in plain sight; a lesson in how not to be seen.

Pliny's Panegyricus

Pliny's Trajan is anything but an effigy, though he is certainly presenting as carefully crafted an image of his emperor as Statius did Domitian.

What was the purpose of the *Panegyricus*? Some argue that the written form which survived was primarily meant as a work of literature. For the expanded form of the speech, Pliny's audience "consisted of a small literary circle of senators"⁷⁶ amongst whom he circulated copies and gave recitations.⁷⁷ The speech was important to Pliny not for what it said, for that was "common knowledge and has been said before," but for its "arrangement, the transitions and figures of speech;"⁷⁸ that is, its value to or for a literary audience. Both they and Pliny viewed the panegyric "first as a work of literature and only second as an instrument of politics."⁷⁹ Unlike the late antique panegyrists, he did not need to announce a political program "and interpret imperial policies for a local audience,"⁸⁰ making its literary value and intentions primary, and any political angle secondary.

However, the only topics of the speech are "the virtues of Trajan and the ideology of a perfect ruler and his regime," certainly lending it a propagandist intent.⁸¹ Besides, displaying literary virtuosity is not an incompatible goal with making propaganda, and can indeed frame the message in a format both glorifying to the emperor (propaganda in itself) and comprehensible to the audience. After all, silver orators recognized that "the rule of the emperors - even when they were beneficent - left no real scope for either forensic or deliberative oratory, at least of the kind in which Cicero had made his mark...All that remained was the panegyric..."⁸²

⁷⁶ Sabine MacCormack, "Latin Prose Panegyrics," in *Empire and Aftermath: Silver Latin II*, ed. T.A. Dorey (London 1975), 150.

⁷⁷ MacCormack 1975, 150; Plin. *Ep.* 3.13; Michel Molin argues for the speech as an integration of literature and Stoic philosophy which advises on the role of the ideal emperor, but which does not serve as a mouthpiece for the Senate nor as propaganda for Trajan ("Le *Panegyrique de Trajan*: éloquence d'apparat ou programme politique neo-stoicien?" *Latomus* 48 (1989): 785-97).

⁷⁸ Plin. *Ep.* 3.13.

⁷⁹ MacCormack 1975, 150.

⁸⁰ MacCormack 1975, 150; see also Roger Rees, *Layers of Loyalty in Latin Panegyric: A.D. 289-307* (Oxford 2002).

⁸¹ Julian Bennett, *Trajan, Optimus Princeps: A Life and Times* (London 1997), 63.

⁸² M. Winterbottom, "Quintilian and Rhetoric," in Dorey 1975, 81.

While it is always almost Impossible to determine an author's true mentality at the time of writing, certainly in its published form Pliny was aiming for literary greatness with the *Panegyricus*, but the core of the speech and the ideals it proposes were firmly in the context of the new regime under Trajan, and use Domitian as a foil to illustrate the ideal emperor and the benefits of the new reign versus the evils of the old. Regarding the ideal, it was discussed in the introduction that the emperor should at least be all-seeing, all-visible, and morally upright. In other words, the speech provides a view of Trajan's impeccable public image - an image Pliny is helping create with this poem. In this section, close analysis of selected passages from the *Panegyricus* will round out the picture by examining Trajan's masculinity, brought into relief by comparison with Domitian.

Pliny introduces Trajan not as a statue, but as the man himself, in the flesh, at the same time as he is revealed to the populace of Rome as their new emperor: ...*ab love ipso coram ac palam repertus electus est...*⁸³ This event is fleshed out in more detail later, as Pliny describes Trajan as *ascendenti de more Capitolium* (5.3) to the Temple of Jupiter to make sacrifices and prayers before beginning his appointment as legate of Upper Germany in A.D. 96; at the top, he was mistakenly hailed as emperor by the public, thinking he was Jupiter himself: ...*quamquam non id agentium civium clamor ut iam principi occurrit...*⁸⁴ This mistake was interpreted as a divine omen that Trajan would be emperor one day (5.4).

This curious episode allows Pliny to introduce a range of themes. First, Pliny establishes Trajan's association with the divine without actually calling Trajan a god himself, though the associations become more explicit over the course of the speech; Trajan is chosen by Jupiter himself to be emperor, and is instilled with this command even before he holds the office. Second, Pliny reinforces the legitimacy of Trajan's accession to power as an adopted heir by identifying him as both divinely

⁸³ Plin. *Pan.* 1.5: "...by Jupiter himself he was elected and realized openly and before our eyes...."

⁸⁴ Plin. *Pan.* 5.3: "...although the citizenry was not there for that reason, they met him with a shout as if he were now *princeps*...."

chosen, a common theme in legitimizing reigns, and chosen by the people on the Capitoline, the old political heart of Rome under the Republic. This latter association is also an indication that Trajan would rule with the Senate as first among senators, and not over them.

Moreover, in this version of events, he was chosen publicly, *coram ac palam*. *Coram*, with verbs of perceiving, means before the eyes and in one's presence or the presence of many, that is the public gaze; *palam* means openly, publicly, without concealment, by open action; professedly, ostensibly, outwardly, unambiguously, explicitly, discernibly. So, Trajan was revealed as the new emperor not by deception or hidden selection, but truthfully and visibly - publicly and before the gaze, which is the legitimizing body and here legitimizes Trajan's appointment. Of course, the historical reality was different; Trajan was not present in Rome at the time of Nerva's announcement of his adoption, which was given upon the receipt of a report of victory from the Suebic-Sarmatian war on the Danube - far from Trajan's post in Germany. Indeed, it is unknown if Nerva bothered to hold a meeting of the *comitia* to hold up the adoption for the people's approval; a coin issued under Nerva commemorates the adlocutio of Trajan's adoption by Nerva, but there is no record of a *comitia* meeting. It is possible that "the scene's appearance on a bronze coin is the equivalent of the announcement itself, so that non-attenders [of the adlocutio] might participate vicariously."⁸⁵ So, Pliny's account of Trajan being chosen and revealed as the rightful heir to Nerva as happening on the steps of the Temple of Jupiter on the Capitol is historically incorrect, but its intent is political rather than historical; Pliny wishes to attribute to himself, the senate, and the populace an active role in choosing the emperor.

In fact, Pliny's personal perspective in all this is as a participant, in contrast with Statius, who is only a participant when he is addressing people or topics other than the emperor or his works; with public and official activity, he is no longer a

⁸⁵ Grainger 2003, 39.

participant, but a simple mirator.⁸⁶ Even at 4.2, in which Statius attends a banquet given by the emperor, certainly a quasi-private occasion, he casts himself as simple observer, gazing upon the emperor and recording the magnificence of the palace. In the other poems, he is always a member of the audience - gazing at the equestrian statue, narrating the Saturnalia, merely recording and celebrating Domitian's seventeenth consulship, and describing the Via Domitiana. Never does Statius play a political or active role in any of these achievements or occasions beyond that of onlooker. Nor, on the other hand, does the senate play much of a role - they succeed in their entreaties to Domitian to take another consulship, and they voted him the equestrian statue, but the rest is all Domitian; it is by his private munificence that he provides the Saturnalia and private banquet, by his initiative the Via Domitiana is completed. However, in the *Panegyricus*, the senate enjoys a more active political role and is more visible; Pliny's own agency is an indication of this, even though he is not truly visible himself and gives the spotlight completely over to Trajan, reflecting the reality that those senators who were visible were so by the will of the emperor (to be discussed in more detail in the next section).

This contrast with Domitian informs much of the speech. One reason for this prominent use of Domitian lies in chronology; besides Augustus, no other [good] princeps was really popular with the senate, and he was too far removed for an effective comparison.⁸⁷ Domitian made for an easy target, given the *damnatio memoriae* and could therefore highlight exactly how exemplary Trajan was. To this end, Pliny makes use of litotes, which "results in [the] implicit amplification of a given concept through denial of its opposite," so "even normal administrative conduct on the ruler's part, by mere avoidance of past practices, is presented as exceptional."⁸⁸ So, for example, Pliny continues the theme of visual accessibility introduced in 1.5 and 5.3, praising Trajan while condemning Domitian for his secretiveness: "From the

⁸⁶ Alex Hardie, *Statius and the Silvae: Poets, Patrons, and Epideixis in the Graeco-Roman World* (Liverpool 1983), 183.

⁸⁷ Federico Gamberini, *Stylistic Theory and Practice in the Younger Pliny* (Hildesheim 1983), 398.

⁸⁸ Gamberini 1983, 395.

outset, every detail of Trajan's reign was a studied and calculated rejection of those features which had characterized Domitian's...And while Domitian had secluded himself from the public, Trajan championed accessibility, especially at the Palace."⁸⁹ According to Pliny, the transition between the closed imperial office and the open one began with Trajan's predecessor, Nerva, who *publicarum aedium nomine inscripserat*⁹⁰ to Domitian's palace. This detail is corroborated by ILS 9358, the inscription itself set up by Nerva naming Domitian's *domus Flavia* the *aedes publicae* and opening most of it to the public.⁹¹ In this house Domitian had remained secreted, avoiding public audiences and like occasions which would make him the object of the gaze, while watching his subjects and abusing that all-seeing power through executions, exiles, and confiscations.

Trajan, on the other hand, spent nearly every waking moment in the public eye. He held frequent public audiences in the palace, turning away no one, and receiving and hearing them himself (48.1). This was also a reflection of his godlike status, however: "Giving is of the essence of a god, but likewise being asked: a god does not shower his bounties spontaneously and indiscriminately, but in response to individual prayers. The same is true of the emperor, whose goodness can therefore be measured by his accessibility to petitioners."⁹²

At public political events such as the consular ceremony at 73.4, all present examine his reactions to determine his character and political intentions:

Comprobasti et ipse acclamationum nostrarum fidem lacrimarum tuarum veritate.

*Vidimus...tantumque sanguinis in ore quantum in animo pudoris.*⁹³ Trajan, through his sincere reactions of modesty and tears to expressions of trust and loyalty, signals to the audience that he is not a tyrant, does not consider himself worthy of his high

⁸⁹ Bennett 1997, 56-7.

⁹⁰ Plin. *Pan.* 47.4: "...ascribed the name of public house..."

⁹¹ Brennan 1990[2000], 62.

⁹² Ruurd R. Nauta, *Poetry for Patrons: Literary Communication in the Age of Domitian*, Mnemos. Suppl. 206 (Leiden 2002), 339.

⁹³ Plin. *Pan.* 73.4: "You even confirmed yourself our shouts of confidence by crying honest tears...and we saw how much the blood in your face displayed the extent of the modesty in your heart."

position, and therefore will not abuse that position. In the most literal sense, being visually available to the people means that they can read him clearly, and know their faith in him as a leader is justified. This is reminiscent of a passage in Cicero's *Pro Marcello* in which Cicero and the senators discern Caesar's intentions as dictator by watching him: *Te vero, quem praesentem intuemur, cuius mentem sensusque et os cernimus, ut, quicquid belli fortuna reliquum rei publicae fecerit, id esse salvum velis, quibus laudibus efferemus?*⁹⁴ Just as with Trajan, Caesar's audience examines his expressions and appearance in order to determine his sincerity and determination to carry out his promises as a way of predicting his behavior both towards them and the state as a whole. In both passages the face-to-face contact is the key factor in being able to discern the emperor's political agenda and true character, and in the people's ability to interact politically with him by approving or disapproving of these truths.

That the emperor is able to gaze back on these occasions is no longer a cause for worry, as it was under Domitian: *...salva est omnibus vita et dignitas vitae, nec iam consideratus et sapiens, qui aetatem in tenebris agit.*⁹⁵ So, senators are no longer afraid of being visible in his eyes. They and the rest of Roman society can see how he uses the gaze, who he is watching and for what reasons. This is similar to the problem of Foucault's panopticon, that the emperor's behavior produces "no reciprocity of the gaze, no symbiosis in the enforcement of societal mores and the simultaneous production of power."⁹⁶ So, visual contact is the most important form of interaction between emperor and people because it is the most truthful way.

But it was not just at political ceremonies that such visual contact took place: Trajan conducted nearly every aspect of his life in public. Closing the gap between people and emperor, "Trajan restored the Circus Maximus...adding seating so that it

⁹⁴ Cic. *Marcell.* 3.10: "To be sure, you, whom we gaze at face to face, whose mind and emotions and expression we see speak that, whatever the fortune of war has made of the ruins of the state, you wish to make it whole, so what praises can we utter?"

⁹⁵ Plin. *Pan.* 44.5: "...everyone's life and life's dignity is safe, nor now do caution and sense cause a man to spend his whole life in hiding."

⁹⁶ Bartsch 2006, 137-8. For modeling of the panopticon, see Foucault 1991, 200-02. However, the emperor is different from the panopticon in that the subjects under surveillance may also gaze back - unless the emperor, as Domitian does here, exercises his power to remove himself from view.

could accommodate a quarter of a million people. His work, inaugurated in 103, moved the Circus' seating up the slopes of the Palatine, thus lessening the distance between emperor and populace."⁹⁷ According to Pliny, in the improved Circus, ...*nec magis proprius spectanti Caesari suggestus quam propria quae spectet*,⁹⁸ and because he is seated amongst the public seats, the people *dabitur non cubiculum principis sed ipsum principem cernere in publico, in populo sedentem*....⁹⁹ His private life was public as well, as his leisure hours and meals were spent in the public eye (49.4-5) and the behavior of the members of his household was scrutinized (83-4), as was his treatment of friendship (85-6).

Thus, Trajan is firmly linked by Pliny with the public sphere, and Domitian with the private or domestic sphere, as the respective spaces in which each emperor spent the majority of their time and performed the majority of their activities. This contrast between Trajan's public visibility and Domitian's hidden secretiveness is gendered, given that public activity and visibility were linked with masculinity (as previously discussed), and public invisibility and activity within the home were linked with femininity. Pliny is therefore subtly feminizing Domitian by demonstrating his reluctance to spend much time in the public eye either executing his official duties or relaxing in leisure - a reluctance, in other words, to perform his masculinity for the scrutiny and judgment of others. What kind of man would rather remain hidden in his home than participate in public life, particularly if he was supposed to be his society's alpha male?

Pliny continues this gendered contrast in a more detailed description of Trajan's leisure activities:

Quae enim remissio tibi nisi lustrare saltus, excutere cubilibus feras, superare immensa montium iuga et horrentibus scopulis gradum inferre, nullius manu nullius

⁹⁷ Boatwright 1990[2000], 78. See also Plin. *Pan.* 51.3-5.

⁹⁸ Plin. *Pan.* 51.4: "...it is not as much that Caesar watches from his own platform as that he watches from that same level."

⁹⁹ Plin. *Pan.* 51.5: "the citizenry shall be permitted to view not the emperor's box, but the emperor himself, among the public, sitting amongst the people..."

*vestigio adiutum, atque inter haec pia mente adire lucos et occurrere numinibus?
 Olim haec experientia iuventutis, haec voluptas erat, his artibus futuri duces
 imbuebantur...Enimvero, si quando placuit idem corporis robur in maria proferre, non
 ille fluitantia vela aut oculis sequitur aut manibus, sed nunc gubernaculis
 adsidet...*¹⁰⁰

When off-duty, in other words, Trajan spends all his time engaged in demanding outdoor activities which strengthen his body and prove his courage - activities, that is, which constantly hone his masculinity and prove it to all who watch him at the hunt, or trekking in the mountains. Pliny reminds his audience that these trials of masculinity were once de rigeur for Roman youths, and provided them with ways in which to practice leadership skills and express *virtus*. The rugged landscape which Pliny describes is thus both a metaphor for Trajan's own seasoned, hyper-masculine *virtus*, and the stone upon which that *virtus* is constantly tested and sharpened.

Domitian displayed no such taste or ability for the outdoors or strenuous activity in general; his leisure time was spent in a completely opposite manner: *Usurpabant gloriam istam illi quoque principes qui obire non poterant; usurpabant autem ita ut domitas fractasque claustris feras, ac deinde in ipsorum (quidni?) ludibrium emissas, mentita sagacitate colligerent.*¹⁰¹ This is no test of *virtus*; there is no risk of life or limb in the slaughter of tame animals, no *gloria* in killing that which cannot or will not fight back; these animals are not worthy opponents. Now, Domitian is not directly referenced as an emperor who engaged in such slaughter, but it is implied he is among the number who did, given that as the evil foil for Trajan, he displays the immoral opposite of every good, moral action of Trajan's. Suetonius also

¹⁰⁰ Plin. *Pan.* 81.1-2, 4: "For what is your recreation but to traverse the woods, to shake wild beasts out of their holes, to ascend endlessly immense mountains and to take on dreadful crags, with no assistants to lend a hand or show the path, and in the meantime to approach the sacred groves in a pious attitude and to meet with the divinities? Once these were trials for young men, they were pleasures, the leaders of the future were instructed by these skills...To be sure, if and when it seems right to bring out the same bodily strength on the sea, he does not follow the flapping sails with eyes or hands, but now sits at the helm..."

¹⁰¹ Plin. *Pan.* 81.3: "Emperors also assumed that glory themselves, who were not able to undertake it; but they usurped it by faking skill, through gathering animals broken and cowed by being caged, and then let loose as their own toys (why not?)."

describes staged hunts at Domitian's Alban estate involving *centenas varii generis feras*,¹⁰² which is likely the basis of Pliny's charge here. Domitian's known preference for archery over arms, an Eastern skill associated with Hellenistic monarchs, was also the source of Pliny's derision: aim did not require strength¹⁰³ or courage, that is, *virtus*.

Pliny's contrast may also have been an attempt to discredit Domitian's attempts to replace military action with hunting as a source and expression of *virtus*; unlike war, hunting could be readily seen by the Roman people, as it was not on the distant borders of the empire, and one could certainly hunt in times of peace.¹⁰⁴ It was also attractive to Domitian because of its status as a private activity. It did not involve politics, the hunter did not provide services to the state, and he did not gain individual military *gloria* and a prominent public image to potentially elevate him above the emperor in *virtus* and status. Thus, in contrasting Domitian's and Trajan's hunting skills to the former's detriment and the latter's credit, Pliny is taking advantage of imagery created by Domitian to expand the definition of *virtus* and using it to discredit his masculinity, while enhancing Trajan's, who is the real hunter.

The criticism of past emperors' hunting "skills" directly follows the above description of Trajan's prowess, providing a stark contrast, and this structure is paralleled in Pliny's description of each emperor's seamanship and leadership. 81.4, included above, portrays Trajan as the ideal captain, courageous and unflappable in adverse conditions and taking direct responsibility for piloting the ship. At 82.1-3, Pliny shows Domitian to be the exact opposite:

Quantum dissimilis illi, qui non Albani lacus otium Baianique torporem et silentium ferre, non pulsum saltem fragoremque remorum perpeti poterat, quin ad singulos ictus turpi formidine horresceret! Itaque procul ab omni sono inconcussus ipse et immotus, religato revinctoque navigio non secus ac piaculum aliquod trahebatur.

¹⁰² Suet. *Dom.* 19.

¹⁰³ Tuck 2005, 242.

¹⁰⁴ Tuck 2005, 244.

*Foeda facies, cum populi Romani imperator alienum cursum alienumque rectorem
velut capta nave sequeretur.*¹⁰⁵

This passage describes a Domitian who is not just incompetent at seamanship, but is actually afraid of the ocean and sailing, and who (like a woman) must be sheltered from any rough motion or view to the outside in order to protect his delicate constitution. Moreover, also like a woman, he is incapable of providing leadership on the water, and in fact must follow the lead of others, clearly failing in the emperor's roles as supreme leader and alpha male. By acting in this manner, in Pliny's eyes surrenders his right to the imperial office, and in fact Pliny compares him to a victim being led to sacrifice, or as a prisoner, also feminizing roles.

If there was any doubt now that Trajan as the ideal emperor is also the pinnacle of manhood, Pliny dispels it with a detailed personal sketch of his appearance and character. Until Trajan came along, he could not picture the ideal emperor: *cum interea fingenti formantique mihi principem...numquam voto saltem concipere succurrit similem huic quem videmus.*¹⁰⁶ But Trajan is the ideal in the flesh, whose exact attributes Pliny proceeds to describe are also those of the ideal Roman man:

*At principi nostro quanta concordia quantusque concentus omnium laudum omnisque
gloriae contigit! Ut nihil severitati eius hilaritate, nihil gravitati simplicitate, nihil
maiestati humanitate detrahitur! Iam firmitas, iam proceritas corporis, iam honor
capitis et dignitas oris, ad hoc aetatis indeflexa maturitas, nec sine quodam munere
deum festinatis senectutis insignibus ad augendam maiestatem ornata caesaries,
nonne longe lateque principem ostentant?*¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁵ Plin. *Pan.* 82.1-3: "How much different is he, who could not endure the calm of Alba's lake or the flat and silent lake at Baiae, nor was he even able to stand the slap and splash of the oars without shaking in disgraceful terror at each single stroke! And so, by himself, far from all sounds or motion or shock, his ship was tied and towed just as though he were some victim being led to the sacrifice. Disgraceful display, when the emperor of the Roman people follows another's course and another's lead as though a prisoner on his own ship."

¹⁰⁶ Plin. *Pan.* 4.4: "In the meantime, when I imagined and shaped for myself a *princeps*...not even in my prayers did it occur to me to conceive the likes of him whom we see."

¹⁰⁷ Plin. *Pan.* 4.6-7: "But in our *princeps*, everything praiseworthy and all glories attain such great harmony in concert! So his seriousness loses nothing by his cheerfulness, nor his authority by his

Not only does Trajan possess self-discipline and moderation, all virtues are balanced within him, so there is not an excess of any one to potentially develop into a vice. Physiognomically, he is also in proportion, with no feminine features: he is tall, strong, with a finely formed head and face, and hair gone prematurely gray; this last attribute signifies that his judgment and character are also mature beyond their years. These characteristics all add to Trajan's personal majesty and dignity and fulfill the masculine bodily ideal,¹⁰⁸ so that he has no equal. In each aspect Trajan stands out from the crowd visually, embodying authority and masculinity so completely that Pliny may imply that any who look upon him will know that he is emperor.

A Roman emperor's role as alpha male also included the traditional male gender role of *paterfamilias*. This fatherly authority extended over his own personal household, the imperial *domus*, but also over his subjects in general. In both cases his presence influences and forms the moral character of those whom he watches as a father. Since Augustus, emperors at some point in their reigns accepted the title *pater patriae*, and this term is interpreted quite broadly by Pliny when he applies it to Trajan. At 21 he describes Trajan's reluctance to adopt this title, only relenting at the repeated insistence of the senate; this hesitancy for Pliny signals that Trajan in fact deserves it more than his predecessors:

Itaque soli omnium contigit tibi, ut pater patriae esses ante quam fieres. Eras enim in animis in iudiciis nostris, nec publicae pietatis intererat quid vocarere, nisi quod ingrata sibi videbatur, si te imperatorem potius vocaret et Caesarem, cum patrem

candor, or his majesty by his compassion! Now his strength and tallness of body, now his honorable head and dignified face, at this unbending maturity of age, not without early signs of old age decorating his hair, which are gifts of the gods for augmenting the look of dignity - do these qualities not reveal him far and wide as *princeps*?" Pliny also repeats this description at 67.1 in slightly different language, but still focusing on his *corporem* and *virtutes*.

¹⁰⁸ Arist. *Phgn.* 3. On the use and development of physiognomical standards and descriptions of individuals to determine masculinity, see Maud W. Gleason, *Making Men: Sophists and Self-Presentation in Ancient Rome* (Princeton 1995).

*experiretur. Quod quidem nomen qua benignitate quod indulgentia exerces! ut cum civibus tuis quasi cum liberis parens vivis!*¹⁰⁹

The granting of the title *pater patriae* was therefore merely recognizing feelings already present in the relationship between the *princeps* and his subjects: benign love and supervision on the part of the emperor, and love and respect as for a parent on the parts of the citizenry. In this relationship the people, as children, are inferior to the emperor, and owe him the respect inherent in the title *pater* - they would be *ingrata*, ingrates, ungrateful, by not recognizing this debt. The use of this word also indicates another expectation inherent in this relationship, that of *beneficium* (kindness or favor). That is, the people recognize the *beneficia* of love granted by the emperor, and repay it by offering honors (such as the title *pater patriae*) and loyalty; if they did not reciprocate, it could be cause for the emperor to withdraw his patronage and *beneficia*, since the people would have violated the law of reciprocity inherent in patronage relationships.¹¹⁰ In this way, the personal relationship of father and child segues into the relationship of *patronus* and client.

This transition is elucidated more clearly at 26, which describes the distribution of grain to the *plebs urbana frumentaria* and the addition of 5,000 children to the list of those eligible to receive the *frumentationes*:

*Adventante congiarii die observare principis egressum in publicum, insidere vias examina infantium futurisque populus solebat. Labor parentibus erat ostentare parvulos impositosque cervicibus adulantia verba blandasque voces edocere... Tu ne rogari quidem sustinuisti... omnes tamen ante quam te viderent adirentve, recipi incidi iussisti, ut iam inde ab infantia parentem publicum munere educationis experirentur....*¹¹¹

¹⁰⁹ Plin. *Pan.* 21.3-4: "And so it happened that you alone among all were father of your country before it actually happened. For you were so in our hearts and judgments, nor did it make any difference to the devotion of the people what you were called, unless we should seem to be ingrates if we called you emperor or Caesar when instead we felt you a father."

¹¹⁰ Richard P. Saller, *Personal Patronage Under the Early Empire* (Cambridge 1982 [2002]), 14; 19; 69-71.

¹¹¹ Plin. *Pan.* 26.1-6: "On the day of the *congiarium*, it was the custom for a swarm of children, the future populace, to watch the emperor coming close and passing by in public. It was the task of the

The nature of the *beneficia* which the emperor provides to his citizens becomes more concrete than the fatherly love described above in 21; here the gift is grain. This *beneficium* was only granted to a specific section of the city's population, though, marking them out more clearly as clients. The Flavians marked seats in Colosseum for the *plebs frumentaria as clientibus* (ILS 5654); "the thought here must be that those who were eligible for the *frumentatio* and *congiaria* were deemed clients of the state and clients of the Emperor, a usage attested in the younger Pliny [Pan. 23.1] and elsewhere."¹¹² The children of the masses, on the day of their enrollment, thus become politically significant themselves, apart from their parents.

Significantly, Trajan does not allow the children to see him, does not allow them into the visual hierarchy, until they have been enrolled as his clients; even the practice of previous emperors, to walk a gauntlet of children, is marked by the parents teaching their children how to participate politically as a member of the masses - the appropriate words and behaviors to both flatter and attract the attention, the gaze, of the emperor for favors, a lesser version of the game senators and equestrians play. This passage therefore also illustrates the importance of gazing as political ritual, and that those who gaze upon the emperor enter into a political relationship with him. That the children in this passage are only described as male emphasizes that girls are excluded from this process and effective participation in political public life.

However, that the emperor is literally providing for the children of this order by disbursing food - and providing for others through alimentary schemes and the distribution of *congiaria* (27) - is more than a simple patronal role, it is also a paternal one; he is providing for Roman children as if they were his own. Indeed, he can even replace the parents themselves: [the distribution list] *Augetur enim cotidie et crescit,*

parents to display their children situated on their necks and to teach them well fawning words and flattering voices...You even put off requests...before all could see or approach you, you ordered they must be pledged and admitted, so that now from that time, being raised from infancy on public monies, they experience you as father...."

¹¹² Brennan 1990[2000], 55.

*non quia cariores parentibus liberi, sed quia principi cives.*¹¹³ In other words, more children are being born because the emperor can and will provide and care for them, not because the parents themselves want them or can care for them. Trajan is therefore the true parent, though he may not be biologically fathering the children himself.

Pliny continues Trajan's role as *paterfamilias* of his subjects throughout the *Panegyricus*, and even includes himself amongst the emperor's 'children' by referring to him elsewhere as *parens noster* (53.1) or *parentis* (67.1). A brief description of Trajan's ability to rule his own household, the imperial *domus*, completes Pliny's image of Trajan as completely fulfilling the *paterfamilias* role. Though he had no children himself, Trajan's wife and sister were a great credit to his character, as they emulated him in modesty and moderation and always behaved in accordance with the *matrona* ideal; Trajan therefore kept complete control over his household and prevented any discord or strife from causing scandal (83-4). (These passages will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 2).

Thus, Pliny's ideal emperor fulfills every role and displays every virtue associated with the Roman masculine ideal: physically he is tall, strong, and well-proportioned, and capable at any physical task, from hunting to sailing; he is a potent leader and a brilliant military commander; he possess self-discipline and moderation, so that all virtues are balanced within him, and he is immune to vices such as *avaritia* or *ambitio*; he is an excellent *paterfamilias* and a generous patron; never self-indulgent, even his leisure is spent in work, often physical outdoor activities; and he is transparent, visually accessible to his subjects so that they may judge and approve his masculinity, and residing nearly continuously in the public sphere. Pliny's ideal emperor is therefore also the ideal man, expressing the expectation that the emperor would also be his society's alpha male.

¹¹³ Plin. *Pan.* 28.7: "For it [the distribution list] increases and swells every day, not because parents care more for children, but because citizens are cared for more by their *princeps*." Cf. also 26.5-6, in which Pliny suggests the prolific procreation of the lower orders is due to their confidence in a *bonus princeps*.

To conclude, the emperor was expected to display supreme leadership and masculinity in all situations, whether public or private. These qualities were symbiotic: the ability to command demonstrated his *virtus*, and his *virtus* allowed him to fulfill this political and military role. If the emperor could or would not fulfill these expectations of his subjects and audience, if he could not perform *virtus*, then those who depended on his lead and looked to him as a role model for personal behavior and political leadership began to both question his position in office and resent his position atop the social, political, and visual hierarchies. His ability to fulfill male gender roles and display *virtus* in his public image was therefore important in maintaining his authority. In order for the public to affirm and legitimize that authority by witnessing his performance, the emperor was expected to be visually accessible at all times and in all places; he was the ultimate focus of the gaze, just as his position atop Roman society and politics gave him ultimate power over the gaze. No other citizen could therefore surpass him in visibility, or exercise his own power of the gaze too freely, lest he tread on the prerogative of the emperor and inadvertently usurp imperial authority and position. In other words, these qualities were unique to the imperial office, just as there could be only one alpha male.

Aristocratic Men

What, then, was the aristocratic man's response to his own status as a beta male? For him, the major question was, how can a man be honorable and a man while he is a subject? And inferior he was; in the center, in Rome, the emperor was the undisputed head of society, government, and culture, as just discussed. A senator's own individual gaze was disabled, as he could no longer watch whom he wished, especially the emperor, for his own political and social purposes; the only way in which it was safe to gaze freely like this was in the manner of the masses: there was safety in numbers. Thus, the terms of senatorial conduct had changed

“both in and out of office; it precipitated philosophical discussions about the morality of affiliation with a tyrannical government as well as literary probings into the ramifications of criticizing such a regime.”¹¹⁴ This section will examine one of these literary probings in particular, Tacitus’ *Agricola*.

But first, a brief background will be provided on post-Domitianic senatorial relations with the emperor, in order to place the *Agricola* in a firmer cultural context. Pliny paints a picture of senators and citizens celebrating *universi* (2.7) as *quam commune quam ex aequo* praise his and their own good fortune. The senate and masses alike gaze upon Trajan, voicing appeals and begging him to retain his moderation and modesty, and hear their prayers (2.8). Significantly, the senate and senators are treated as a single body, unified in their support of Trajan. He hints at speeches by individuals in 2.8, describing the senators one by one coming forth to praise Trajan, with the emperor responding with modesty: *Ad quas ille voces lacrimis etiam ac multo pudore suffunditur...*¹¹⁵ This emperor, in contrast with Domitian’s fake blushes in the face of blatant flattery,¹¹⁶ reacts with embarrassment and near-shame, though his praise is justified. Here is an emperor who will not enslave, but inspire men to service, as Roma herself did once. But with no one of the speakers individually identified or his words recorded, and all united in their praise of Trajan, the effect of the passage is of a chorus, rather than soloists, through the consistent use of *nos*, *-mus*, and *-mur*. So, no individual voice or senator is differentiated from the group.

This sets the tone for the rest of the *Panegyricus*, in which (as previously mentioned) no individual senator is named apart from Pliny and his consular colleague, Cornutus Tertullus; such recognition could only acceptably have come from the emperor, given the imperial political environment. Indeed, Trajan did specifically single out those members who were descended from the consular

¹¹⁴ Shadi Bartsch, *Ideology in Cold Blood: A Reading of Lucan’s Civil War* (Cambridge and London 1997), 1.

¹¹⁵ Plin. *Pan.* 2.8: “At these voices he sheds tears, and what is more, blushes color his face....”

¹¹⁶ Suet. *Dom.* 18.

families of the Republic, bestowing honors upon them especially (69.4-6), thereby inadvertently putting emphasis back onto birth as a prerequisite for office and prestige; however, Pliny does not provide specific names of the individuals and families involved. Specifics are known in a few other cases. Trajan used his new forum to replace the Forum Augustum as the location for honorific statues of privati, notably Q. Sosius Senecio, A. Cornelius Palma, and L. Publilius Celsus, all twice consuls and eminent senators and military men.¹¹⁷ In other words, the visibility of an individual senator in the public gaze depends on the emperor's gaze being turned on him; in the case of the statues in the Trajanic forum, Trajan is literally granting those senators traditional public visibility through his personal favor - no man visible but that the emperor makes him so.¹¹⁸ The sense is not that the emperor scrambled for the attention of the senators and equestrians, but that they expended great effort to attract his gaze to them; or, in the case of Domitian, expended great effort to avoid his gaze.

This represented one aspect of the new Trajanic propaganda: a greater cooperation with the Senate and a restoration of its importance and influence in political affairs (even if the emperor did not relinquish any real power or control). The implication of this for senators was that they need not feel emasculated or useless anymore. For example, adoption of heirs meant the Senate was (theoretically) more involved in determining the imperial succession, that the dynastic and monarchic aspects to the office were ameliorated, and that the philosophers' demand that the best man succeed was met; so, this era can be characterized as "a time of reconciliation between the Senatorial nobility and Imperial power. Nevertheless, the actual distribution and mechanisms of power remained almost unaffected."¹¹⁹ This

¹¹⁷ Boatwright 1990[2000], 82.

¹¹⁸ Millar 1977, 341 points out that senatorial status itself, as well as appointments for senatorial offices, were the direct products of imperial patronage, which helped perpetuate the senate's prestige and corporate identity through the fourth century, especially among the provinces.

¹¹⁹ Albrecht Dihle, *Greek and Latin Literature of the Roman Empire: From Augustus to Justinian*, trans. Manfred Malzahn (London 1994), 213. See also P.A. Roche, "Mixed Messages: Trajan and the Propaganda of Personal Status," in *Studies in Latin Literature and Roman History XI*, ed. Carl Deroux (Brussels 2003), 428-46.

reconciliation and program of rewarding loyalty and service with visible markers of gloria, such as statues, also served to prevent independent individuals from breaking out of the crowd. A senator with his own independent agenda and outspoken public image could threaten the emperor's superiority, especially if he was outside Rome and enjoyed the backing of his peers. It was thus "important that Trajan maintained a *modus vivendi* with the senate. Any potential opposition could only come from dissatisfied provincial commanders, all senators and former magistrates...On a practical level, the simplest method of achieving continued good relations was by reward."¹²⁰

Thus, an individual aristocratic man was limited, and limited himself, to service, not necessarily the pursuit of *auctoritas* or *fama*, though both were welcomed if offered by the emperor as rewards of service. Most "men now were content to find their satisfaction within their particular sphere rather than see political activity as a means to improving their position in the state as a whole."¹²¹ This was part of an emerging aristocracy of service of which Tacitus constructs in the *Agricola*.¹²²

Indeed, if Tacitus is to be believed, this kind of specialization without ambition may have been the best option available to Roman men of the time, as he argues in the *Agricola*. His purpose in providing for posterity a portrait of his father-in-law was not just to ensure Agricola's immortality, but also to provide a case study of the ideal Roman man, updated for the principate, that tried to reconcile traditional male virtues with contemporary political realities to create a new ideal of masculinity. The issues of what is a good man in the principate, and how a good man should behave, are dealt with to some degree in all of Tacitus' writings. He was troubled by the "gap between a man's public persona and his inner self," between *princeps* and senator, between the behavior of *virtus* and the reality.¹²³ These concerns are dealt with

¹²⁰ Bennett 1997, 75.

¹²¹ R.M. Ogilvie, *Roman Literature and Society* (Harmondsworth 1980), 225.

¹²² Matthews 2000, 440-1.

¹²³ Ronald Martin, *Tacitus* (Berkeley & Los Angeles 1981), 10.

head-on by Tacitus in the *Agricola*, which “expounds the moral and political ideals of the new aristocracy.”¹²⁴

The man of the hour was born around A.D. 40 in Gallia Narbonensis, to a father recently made a senator by Tiberius. At eighteen Agricola was given a legionary commission in Britain, beginning his career in a rather traditional way, with military service. He returned to Rome in 61, and married into another Gallic family through Domitia Decidiana. Agricola’s career advanced rapidly, becoming quaestor in 64 in Asia, plebeian tribune in 66, and praetor in 68.¹²⁵ Tacitus relates that when violence broke out in 69, Agricola immediately joined Vespasian’s side, and in 70 was made commander of the twentieth legion in Britain. He returned to Rome once again in 74, was elected a patrician, and sent to govern Aquitania for a brief time. In 77 he was recalled to serve a suffect consulship, and finally in 78 was elected pontifex and made governor of Britain, to begin his famous tenure in that position. While there, he was an exemplary general, completing the subjugation of Wales and defeating the Highlands tribes at the battle of Mons Graupius in 84. He also pushed the Romanization process in Britain as part of his strategy of asserting Roman control of the province. In 85 he was recalled by Domitian, who awarded him the triumphal regalia, but no other position; Agricola lived the rest of his years in leisure, dying in 93.¹²⁶

A few elements immediately pop out from this brief biographical sketch; these will be important for later analysis of passages from Tacitus. First, Agricola, though his career advanced untraditionally fast and slightly out of order, gained his fame and reputation from the most traditional source of Roman masculinity: the military. Second, from the time he entered the public sphere in 58, he was outside of Rome

¹²⁴ Syme 1958 [1963], Vol. I, 26.

¹²⁵ Anthony Birley speculates Agricola’s success under the Flavians was laid down during this time, as he probably at least knew Titus, if not as friends, and the loyalty Agricola displayed in 69; this might also explain his apparent disfavor with Domitian, as the emperor did not generally grant advancement or favors to friends of Titus (“Agricola, the Flavian Dynasty, and Tacitus,” in *The Ancient Historian and His Materials*, ed. Barbara Levick [Farnborough 1975], 139-54).

¹²⁶ All that is known about Agricola comes from Tacitus’ biography and a few extant inscriptions; cf. Syme 1958 [1963], Vol. 1, 20-26.

and Italy more often than he was there. Third, the position of his family and his own career and honors were (nearly) always the product of the emperor's favor, or were specific rewards given by the emperor himself. Echoing these themes, analysis of the *Agricola* will focus on the construction of Agricola as the ideal man for the imperial era, that is, the new ideal of masculinity, and how criticism of Domitian and the system of the principate formulates the reasons behind that construction: why the ideal is the ideal, in other words.

Tacitus establishes quite early Agricola's qualifications as an ideal man in a description of his upbringing. Chapter 4 begins the work proper, as 1-3 are spent laying down Tacitus' reasons for writing, and writing at the time he did. Agricola had good lineage, from an old and respected equestrian family in Gallia Narbonensis; his father was made a senator under Tiberus and later put to death under Caligula for refusing to make accusations against one Marcus Silanus, displaying strong moral character in the face of tyranny (4.1-2). His mother, Julia Procilla, was an exemplary woman, *rarae castitatis*, who passed that virtue on to her son through proper education and guidance; when he displayed an excessive interest in philosophy, it was she who curbed that interest: *prudencia matris incensum ac flagrantem animum coercuisset*.¹²⁷ Julia Procilla is here fulfilling the role of the ideal Roman mother *a la* Cornelia in educating her son and shaping his character¹²⁸ - and in teaching him self-control and moderation, qualities discussed earlier as integral to the ideal Roman man, she is also shaping his masculinity.

Upon entering the public sphere on a military commission in Britain, these qualities served him in good stead. He struck a balance between bravado and cowardice, being both *anxius et intentus*, and worked hard *noscere provinciam* and *nosci exercitui* (5.1). His purpose in building a reputation for himself and learning all he could about Britain and the military was to one day earn distinction for military service: *...intravitque animum militaris gloriae cupido, ingrata temporibus quibus*

¹²⁷ Tac. *Agr.* 4.3: "...the good sense of his mother restrained his inflamed and blazing mind."

¹²⁸ cf. Suzanne Dixon, *The Roman Mother* (London 1990), 174-6.

*sinistra erga eminentes interpretatio nec minus periculum ex magna fama quam ex mala.*¹²⁹ Tacitus is here casting Agricola into a very traditional role for Roman men, that of soldier; in his desire to serve the state militarily and gain *gloriam*, Agricola is a throwback to earlier times when, pre-principate, an aristocratic man was expected to undergo military service and distinguish himself on the battlefield. Tacitus is also signalling that Agricola's masculinity is very old-school, rooted in military *virtus* - Agricola is therefore in the mold of and adhering to a traditional ideal of masculinity. But the caveat that such traditional masculinity was not welcome in the times in which Agricola lived, concisely sums up both Tacitus' problematic of a good man's place in bad times - the problem of being traditional when the tradition is no longer possible - and why Agricola is an appropriate case study for addressing this issue. In Agricola he has found his traditional, ideal man, and in the reigns of Nero and Domitian he has found his bad times.

His marriage to Domitia Decidiana was also to his credit; her family was also of illustrious lineage, *splendidis natalibus* (6.1), higher than Agricola's, and so she accordingly elevated him in status.¹³⁰ She was an excellent wife, and their marriage was harmonious, a *decus ac robur* to him and his burgeoning career (6.1). In other words, his marriage and private life displayed nothing but good morals and character, and lacked any material for scandal. This was a credit to his career as well, by preserving and enhancing his good reputation.

And his career was indeed advancing quickly; his quaestorship was followed a year later by the plebeian tribunate, and then a praetorship. However, his tenures in office were quiet ones, as was his year in between the quaestorship and the tribunate, which was passed in *quiete et otio* (6.3).¹³¹ That is, while outside public

¹²⁹ Tac. *Agr.* 5.3: "...and a desire for military glory entered his heart, which was unwelcome in times which considered eminence unfavorably, and there was no little danger from great report as from bad."

¹³⁰ R.M. Ogilvie & Sir Ian Richmond, eds., *Cornelii Taciti: De Vita Agricolae* (Oxford 1967), 148; Syme 1958 [1963], Vol. 1, 21.

¹³¹ Other men also chose the path of quies and otium, which could also mean avoiding a career altogether: see Nauta 2002, 308-9.

office, Agricola avoided attention and the public eye by abstaining from public affairs or politics and pursuing leisure activities instead. Even while inside public office, Agricola kept a low profile, as Tacitus states his praetorship also followed *tenor et silentium*: the same course and silence (6.4). Agricola is already practicing a strategy of survival, that of keeping as invisible as is possible for his high position, out of sight or notice of the emperor or the public, who might bring him to the attention of the emperor through praise or blame.

But the words Tacitus uses to describe this strategy are ambiguous, and it is not completely clear if he is praising or condemning this strategy. *Silentium* can also mean inactivity; so where the reader might naturally assume, given Agricola's industry in his first post in Britain, that he is merely prosecuting his duties as praetor unobtrusively and without fanfare, perhaps instead of doing his duties silently, he is simply not doing his duties, preferring to fill the role only symbolically. Furthermore, at 6.3, after describing Agricola's *quiete et otio*, Tacitus states that Agricola has chosen this path because he was *sub Nerone temporum, quibus inertia pro sapientia fuit*.¹³² S.J. Bastomsky suggests that *pro* here means not 'the same as', but 'in place of': so Agricola is replacing wisdom with inactivity, implying that a different reaction to Nero's reign is wiser or more justified, and that Agricola was not being wise, just lazy instead.¹³³ But the only other path possible under tyrants which Tacitus mentions is the resistance and martyrdoms of the Stoics; Tacitus criticizes this path,¹³⁴ decrying such protest and the uselessness of deaths which did not provide any great, tangible benefit or change to the state (42.4) - for there will always be a principate. So, it is unclear exactly how Agricola could respond to Nero's tyranny without being suicidal or servile, or what path was more wise than inactivity. In this light Bastomsky's reading becomes shaky.

¹³² Tac. *Agr.* 6.3: "...under the reign of Nero, in which inactivity was the same as wisdom."

¹³³ S.J. Bastomsky, "The Not-so-perfect Man: Some Ambiguities in Tacitus' Picture of Agricola," *Latomus* 44, no. 2 (1985): 389.

¹³⁴ For discussion of his criticisms see D.C.A. Shotter, "Tacitus' View of Emperors and the Principate," *ANRW* II 33.5 (1991): 3315-16.

Rather, any criticism of Agricola in this passage is encoded more in the readings of *silentium* and *inertia*, that is, in Tacitus' picture of a do-nothing praetor. The only acts Agricola conducted during his tenure were *ludos et inania honoris*, public games and empty vanities of office (6.4), though he did execute these with an admirable moderation, short of luxury but still pleasing the public. So, while he performed the superficialities of public office, he delved no further into responsibilities to bring more significant benefits to the state. Perhaps this strategy of *silentium* and *inertia* allowed Agricola to survive, but it does not fit in with Tacitus' advice that from Agricola one may learn how to be a good man under the principate (42.4); such a strategy is dissonant with both Agricola's industrious nature and militant *virtus* celebrated in 4 and 5, and with Tacitus' argument that service to the state is still possible under bad emperors. But Tacitus is also criticizing just how empty public office has become, or at least is under bad rulers,¹³⁵ when even a good man like Agricola can not or will not fulfill any duties beyond hollow gestures or indulging the public appetite.

Significantly, Agricola's *inertia* and suppression of his own abilities occurs in Rome, where he was readily visible to the emperor and the public eye, and this period of his life will be echoed in his retirement after governing Britain. For now, the upheaval of A.D. 69 afforded Agricola both the opportunity to put his abilities to use once again, and to get out of Rome, the one dependent upon the other. After displaying exemplary loyalty to Vespasian in the civil wars, Agricola was awarded command of the twentieth legion in Britain, which had been slow to declare allegiance to Vespasian and were semi-mutinous. In solving the matter Agricola displayed *rarissima moderatione* (7.3). But he still was serving a superior, here the governor Vettius Bolanus, whose policies did not encourage proactiveness, and so once again he had to revert to his strategy: *temperavit Agricola vim suam*

¹³⁵ cf. Plin. *Pan.* 93.1; Pliny lambasts Domitian's repression of the consulship and his threat to any who held it lest they try to operate independently of the emperor's interference.

*ardoremque compescuit...peritus obsequi eruditusque utilia honestis miscere.*¹³⁶

This is a more detailed description of Agricola's behavior under Nero, and somewhat less flattering. Agricola is skilled at obedience, at deference, and alternates practicality with integrity to preserve his place and position. *Utilia* and *honestis* are opposing concepts, and here they form a picture of an Agricola scheming to both preserve and advance his career.¹³⁷ And this is Tacitus' ideal man, who can compromise his own self and integrity in subsuming them in deference to a bad leader? In an era with no good options, an otherwise good man must learn to compromise; reality is not as he wishes, nor will it be, and so a certain pragmatism is necessary to navigate the new political realities successfully, where success is defined as survival of himself and his family, and as serving Rome productively. Indeed, under Bolanus' successor, Petilius Cerialis, Agricola could exercise his *virtutes* more freely, and Cerialis shared *gloriam* with him as well, though Agricola continued his *obsequi* in attributing his successes to Cerialis (8.2-3). Moreover, by not engaging in self-advertisement of his achievements, Agricola managed to gain the *gloriam* of his ambition without making enemies or attracting envy (8.3). In other words, by adapting to his environment, not making too visible his own successes and talents, and even transferring some of his own growing fame to his superior, he managed to advance his career, achieve *gloriam*, and contribute to the subjugation of Britain and the consolidation of Flavian power.

Upon Agricola's return to Rome, Vespasian rewarded him by enrolling him as a patrician, placing him in charge of Aquitania, and marking him for a consulship in the near future (9.1). Agricola's advancement in status and career, then, was due to the emperor's personal favor and direct intervention. His tenure in Aquitania was relatively brief, less than three years, and evidently uneventful; all Tacitus can praise is Agricola's daily behavior and manner of governance, again mentioning his *naturali*

¹³⁶ Tac. *Agr.* 8.1: "Agricola tempered his own strength and restrained his ardor...he was skilled at deference and educated in mixing usefulness with integrity."

¹³⁷ Bastomsky 1985, 391.

prudencia and moderation in balancing *gravis* and *severus* with *misericors* and *facilitas*, a product of his *virtutes* (9.3-4). Here Agricola is an ideal leader, strict in discipline and procedure while still being merciful and amiable, and rejecting *tristitiam et adrogantiam et avaritiam* (9.3). Tacitus also continues to emphasize the military nature of Agricola's *virtus* by continuing to distinguish him even in this office as a soldier *inter togatos* (9.2), who disproves the world about the quality of a soldier's leadership in the civilian world: *credunt plerique militaribus ingeniis subtilitatem deesse, quia castrensis iurisdictio segura et obtusior ac plura manu agens calliditatem fori non exerceat*.¹³⁸ Agricola is an exception to the world's perception of the soldier as good for governing other crude soldiers, but who is ill-equipped to master the subtleties of public life; he possesses the cunning and shrewdness of a lawyer or official, along with the strength and *virtus* necessary in military life.

Interestingly, however, Tacitus does not integrate the official, public Agricola and his more amiable soldier self. Instead, he portrays them as separate aspects of Agricola's character, and his father-in-law's balancing act between them as a conscious act. As governor, *ubi officio satis factum, nulla ultra potestatis persona*.¹³⁹ He dropped his public persona when off-duty, shed his *gravitatem*, and presumably adopted a new persona, the nature of which is left somewhat unclear. Tacitus simply leaves the reader to assume Agricola's private persona resembles his soldier self, since this has been the source of his virtue, and soldiers are constructed by Tacitus in this passage as oppositional to public officials. This is a further confirmation of the conclusions of the previous chapter: that a good man must preserve his virtue and act in accordance with it when he may, but he must also adapt to a particular leader or office, and cultivate a public persona separate from his actual beliefs or character in order to continue serving the state and ensure personal and career survival. Here

¹³⁸ Tac. *Agr.* 9.2: "Most believe soldiers' natural characters fall short in subtlety, as they govern camps carelessly and bluntly with a high hand, and do not wield the cunning of the lawyer."

¹³⁹ Tac. *Agr.* 9.3: "When his official duties were satisfied, his official mask went no further."

in Chapter 9 that hypocrisy is less distasteful or pervasive than in 8; Agricola is out of Rome and may therefore prosecute his duties more freely in reduced visibility, as well as the fact that there are more duties than just public games for him to fulfill. Moreover, the emperor whom he serves, Vespasian, is a much better emperor than Nero, and so Agricola may also for this reason feel more free to express his private self in the public sphere. Nevertheless, Agricola did not skirt the line very closely: *ne famam quidem, cui saepe etiam boni indulgent, ostentanda virtute aut per artem quaesivit: procul ab aemulatione adversus collegas, procul a contentione adversus procuratores...*¹⁴⁰ In other words, he avoided fame and notoriety, preferring a low profile, and did not make a show of his talents nor plot any intrigues to advance himself or his name. Even under a good emperor, Agricola kept his visibility low, choosing instead quiet competency and focusing his attention on service. He does not engage or compete politically with his colleagues, he does not gaze at them to judge their status, weaknesses, or measure of influence; nor does he compete with procuratores for their positions, or argue with them about policy. By only competing with himself and his ambition for military *gloria*, and not his peers or imperial agents for the emperor's favor and gaze, during this time Agricola manages to preserve elements of his own character in his public persona - his modesty, moderation, and *virtus* - while maintaining a non-threatening official image of loyalty and competency.¹⁴¹

After this governorship, Agricola returned to Rome to serve his suffect consulship. Tacitus is completely silent on his deeds and behavior as a consul; the only details he adds about this time in Agricola's life are about the rumors that he would be assigned Britain as his province, and that he gave Tacitus his daughter in marriage (9.5-6). This leaves the reader once again with an impression of near-total

¹⁴⁰ Tac. *Agr.* 9.4: "Indeed, even fame, to which even good men are often addicted, he never sought by either displaying his virtues or through intrigue: at a distance from rivalry against his colleagues, at a distance from quarrels against the procurators...."

¹⁴¹ Seneca also constructs an idea of false persona which one must maintain in public, contradictory to inner beliefs and self (Bartsch 2006, 225-29).

inactivity on the part of Agricola while occupying public office in Rome. The casual treatment also implies that for Agricola this consulship, unlike for many men, was merely one more honor on the path to the true highlight of his career: his governorship in Britain.

Tacitus' coverage of this period in Agricola's career comprises the bulk of the biography; chapters 18-27 and 29-40 deal directly with his rule there, and of these only 19 and 21 are dedicated to Agricola's skill in civil administration. The rest describe his generalship and military conquests, thereby emphasizing again his militant *virtus* and the traditional nature of Agricola's *gloria* and *ambitio* - he is of the school of Caesar or the Scipios, a conqueror and general, a Roman role model and masculine man.

Regarding his civil policies, Agricola proved an able administrator and an official of considerably more action than was evident in his public offices in Rome. He attempted to remove the local population's grievances against Roman rule by removing corruption and nepotism from his administration, appointing officials only for their quality of character and abilities (19.2-3). In addition to these internal reforms, Agricola also enacted new policies for the population at large, most prominently a reform of the grain distribution and tribute system which nearly eliminated corruption and embezzlement (19.4). To further pacify the population he pursued vigorous policies of Romanization: encouraging the construction of temples, baths, *fori*, and homes; educating the natives in Latin and rhetoric; and giving Roman culture as a whole prestige within the province, so that the adoption and display of such culture was a mark of distinction (21). Agricola earned respect and established his place as the superior man of status and authority in the province, and so *honoris aemulatio pro necessitate erat*.¹⁴² That is, people sought his attention and compliments not because he was the ruler, but because he was a good ruler, and so he did not have to compel people to follow him or force them into peaceful

¹⁴² Tac. *Agr.* 21.1: "...rivalry for his acknowledgment took the place of compulsion."

subjugation. Both the wording here and the thought behind it echoes the rivalry in Rome for the attention of a good emperor (Vespasian or Trajan),¹⁴³ as though Agricola and Britain are the emperor and empire in microcosm.¹⁴⁴

In fact, Agricola's civilian leadership style emerges as parallel to the behavior expected of a good emperor.¹⁴⁵ In the style of his predecessor in Britain, Caesar, Agricola was also merciful: *parvis peccatis veniam, magnis severitatem commodare; nec poena semper, sed saepius paenitentia contentus esse...*¹⁴⁶ Although Tacitus does not explicitly use *clementia* here, it is implied, lending Agricola an almost imperial air of the merciful ruler, as *clementia* was one of the stock virtues in the imperial canon which panegyrists and literary and artistic propaganda would attribute to the emperor under praise.¹⁴⁷ This impression of Agricola as a mini-emperor is strengthened by Tacitus' preceding description of his leadership style: *omnia scire, non omnia exsequi*.¹⁴⁸ Over his own sphere of influence, then, Agricola has his own omniscient gaze roving, knowing everything, even if he did not act at times on that knowledge, or if the knowledge did not require action. He was governor of the province and the highest-ranking official there, and so it was his business to know everything, just as the emperor knew everything that happened in Rome and the empire, as a matter of power.

Moreover, Agricola fulfills one of the major roles of emperor, that of general, better than most emperors, certainly for Tacitus better than a Nero or Domitian. Tacitus' portrait of Agricola's generalship often adheres to standard examples of

¹⁴³ cf. Plin. *Pan.* 2.8; 48.1,

¹⁴⁴ This also ties in with Tacitus' idea of role-playing: good emperors play senators (as Trajan did), and senators play emperors, but bad emperors (like Domitian) violate the rules and emphasize honors (like deification) that senators could never emulate, reminding them all of the fiction of the game (Stanley E. Hoffer, *The Anxieties of Pliny the Younger*, American Classical Studies, 43, ed. Harvey Yunis [Atlanta 1999], 6).

¹⁴⁵ Syme 1958 [1963], Vol. I, 19.

¹⁴⁶ Tac. *Agr.* 19.3: "He lent forgiveness to small mistakes, severity to large; he was content not with punishment always, but more often with repentance."

¹⁴⁷ cf. n.66.

¹⁴⁸ Tac. *Agr.* 19.3: "He knew everything, even if he did not pursue everything." This phrasing is also reminiscent of Plin. *Pan.* 70.3 and 80.3 (Heinz Heubner, *Kommentar zum Agricola des Tacitus* [Göttingen 1984], 65).

good generals such as Caesar, the Scipios, and Germanicus; in fact, Tacitus' image of Agricola as a model general is based more on these conventions of a good commander than the individual, historical reality of Agricola himself.¹⁴⁹ He is efficient, aggressive but with suitable caution, inventive, self-disciplined, and authoritative. In his first campaign upon arrival, he immediately took the offensive and finished the season by conquering the Isle of Anglesey; though he had no ships with him, due to the hasty nature of the campaign, the *ratio et constantia ducis transvexit*.¹⁵⁰ On his second campaign, Tacitus describes him as being present everywhere and always visible to his soldiers, a model of behavior, *virtus*, and courage: *...multus in agmine, laudare modestiam, disiectos coercere; loca castris ipse capere, aestuaria ac silvas ipse praetemptare...*¹⁵¹ Agricola is out in front, proactive, taking risks himself in doing advance patrols of the territory, and providing personal compliments and notice to good soldiers, and personal discipline to bad. He is the role model in action, recalling Pliny's Trajan in his general days prior to becoming emperor;¹⁵² and the specific comments Tacitus makes are commonplaces, "stating the sort of thing that was expected of any good Roman general,"¹⁵³ fitting Agricola into an identifiable mould for the reader.

In the third campaign, Agricola continued his strategic brilliance by choosing the best possible sites for forts, none of which were abandoned or overrun (22.2-3), and begins overrunning Scotland. But he remained modest about his achievements, never taking credit for others' deeds or successes (22.4), and when his campaigns finally built to the climax of Mons Graupius, Agricola reached the shining moment in his career, the event which granted him the "right to be regarded as a *magnus vir*."¹⁵⁴ Tacitus extends that moment by creating pre-battle speeches for Agricola and his

¹⁴⁹ Ogilvie and Richmond 1967, 217-18.

¹⁵⁰ Tac. *Agr.* 18.4: "The reasoning and perseverance of the general made the crossing."

¹⁵¹ Tac. *Agr.* 20.2: "...in many places on the march, praising discipline, checking stragglers; choosing the campsites himself, exploring in advance the estuaries and woods himself...."

¹⁵² Plin. *Pan.* 12-13, 15.

¹⁵³ Martin 1981, 42.

¹⁵⁴ Martin 1981, 43.

opponent, Calgacus; they are modeled on those of Scipio's and Hannibal's in Livy, and in phrase borrow from Sallust,¹⁵⁵ extending Agricola's associations with great generals of the past, and his campaign in Britain with great wars of the past. Calgacus himself goes first at 30-2, and offers in sophisticated rhetoric an indictment of Roman culture, imperialism, and the army's structure; in reality there was little likelihood that the Scottish chief would know of such details about his soon-to-be conquerors, and these criticisms were in fact standard objections to imperialism as rehearsed in rhetoric schools of the time.¹⁵⁶ Calgacus' passion and eloquence convey the impression of a worthy enemy for Agricola, his own Hannibal, and therefore in defeating him Agricola truly proves his own *virtus*.¹⁵⁷

Agricola addresses the troops as *commilitiones*, reminding them of his own core identity as a simple soldier.¹⁵⁸ He exhorts them to bravery, reminding them of all their efforts to reach this point, and how those achievements have outdone any army or leader previous to Britain (33-4). He closes the speech with an appeal to the soldiers not to disappoint an authority larger than himself: ...*adprobate rei publicae numquam exercitui imputari potuisse aut moras belli aut causas rebellandi*.¹⁵⁹ Strikingly, that authority is not the expected emperor, but rather the *rei publicae*, the state itself, Rome. This is the very entity which Agricola serves and which Tacitus advises his readers to serve, rather than the emperor directly; when he speaks of providing a tangible benefit to the state, he means something that will last beyond the current emperor's reign. Rulers come and go, but expanding the borders of the empire and providing a secure and peaceful province,¹⁶⁰ will last. A good man, in the eyes of Tacitus, can still be good under the principate if he serves the same authority

¹⁵⁵ Ogilvie and Richmond 1967, 254

¹⁵⁶ Ogilvie and Richmond 1967, 253.

¹⁵⁷ Martin 1981, 44.

¹⁵⁸ cf. Plin. *Pan.* 13.3, on Trajan: *Non tibi moris tua inire tentoria, nisi commilitonum ante lustrasses...* The sense here is very strong of Trajan's sympathy with the soldiers and of his own self-identity as a soldier, especially outside Rome.

¹⁵⁹ Tac. *Agr.* 34.3: "Prove to the state that it has never been possible to blame the army for either the delay of war or grounds for rebellion."

¹⁶⁰ Tac. *Agr.* 40.3.

Roman men have always served, the *rei publicae*. The accoutrements of Tacitus' ideal man, therefore, retain traditional symbols and roles, but in the eyes of the public and a man's peers, the meanings have changed.

As is evidenced in the twilight of Agricola's life. After the battle and his return to Rome, he was granted the triumphal regalia but no further offices or appointments followed; his last nine years of life were spent in leisure, returning to his low profile: *adeo ut plerique, quibus magnos viros per ambitionem aestimare mos est, viso aspectoque Agricola quaerent famam, pauci interpretarentur.*¹⁶¹ If Agricola had been viewed by an audience 150 years earlier, he might well have been marked as a great man by a public whose descendants now scorn him as a nobody. Modest appearance and the lack of a large entourage might once have been a mark of excellent character, as indeed they display here Agricola's own modesty, self-discipline, and lack of *avaritia*, but his audience, the public and his peers, now read these aspects of his image as marks of unimportance and lack of wealth and influence. They cannot recognize a good man when they see one, in other words. Hence the necessity of Tacitus' biography of his father-in-law, of deciphering a good man's public image and internal, moral character for his audience - because the good man was no longer self-evident.

This portion of the text covering Agricola's early retirement at age 44 and his death, Chapters 40-45, also contains the most vitriol directed at Domitian. He is portrayed in such a manner as to both explain and justify Agricola's behavior in acquiescing to his retirement and returning to his previous patterns of inactivity: *Domitiani vero natura praeceps in iram, et quo obscurior, eo inrevocabilior, moderatione tamen prudentiaque Agricolae leniebatur, quia non contumacia neque*

¹⁶¹ Tac. *Agr.* 40.4: "For the rest, so that he could temper with other virtues the military reputation so troublesome among civilians, he drank in tranquillity and idleness thoroughly; modest in dress, easygoing in conversation, just one or two friends attending him, to the end that the majority, for whom it is the custom to judge great men by their pomp, having seen and gazed at Agricola, questioned his reputation, and few understood it.

*inani iactatione libertatis famam fatumque provocabat.*¹⁶² Domitian's own character is predisposed to violence and persecution in the face of any perceived threat to or defiance of his position, and that which placates him is obedience, acquiescence, and discretion. A low public profile, especially if one has gained *gloria* and military or political success outside of Rome, was the way in which to communicate these qualities to Domitian, as well as submissiveness to his greater social and political position. Agricola did not attempt to translate his military conquests into political influence in the capital, nor did he use them as leverage in negotiations with the emperor for future appointments or other favors; he did not trumpet them at all, in fact, and went quietly into that good night. Thus did Agricola preserve his family and his position in the face of a naturally jealous and violent emperor, and though his new borders were soon rolled back by Domitian and his armies recalled, the Romanization which he pushed onto the province lasted longer, as did the peace he established there. This was the service he provided to the state - that, and serving as a role model for the new Roman man. The lesson of Agricola is thus that a life of *obsequium* and *modestia* combined with *vigor* and *industria* may provide *rei publicae usum* and win *gloriam*.¹⁶³

This course is preferable to the *ambitiosa morte* of the martyrs of resistance, Stoics and others; such deaths are in fact self-indulgence, as they produce no *rei publicae usum* and are mere ostentatious displays of useless resistance to a political system which was by this point never going to revert to a republic. The death of Cato Minor did not forestall the fall of the Republic and rise of the principate. The martyrs' deaths were a luxury, ultimately useless, and even theatrical; hence Tacitus' search

¹⁶² Tac. *Agr.* 42.3: "In truth Domitian's nature, violent in anger, and the more secretive, the more relentless, was nevertheless calmed by the restraint and discretion of Agricola, in whom there was neither defiance nor hollow displays of *libertas* which could provoke renown and ruin." Cf. also 22.4, on Agricola: *ceterum ex iracundia nihil supererat secretum, ut silentium eius non timeres...*; the reference there is to Domitian, and the implication is that his anger and violence led to resentment and hatred on the part of the aristocracy, and whose silence was just as feared as those outbursts of anger.

¹⁶³ Tac. *Agr.* 42.4; T.A. Dorey, "'Agricola' and 'Germania'," in *Tacitus*, ed. T.A. Dorey, *Studies in Latin Literature and Its Influence*, eds. D.R. Dudley and T.A. Dorey (London 1969), 7-8. *Vigor* here may carry a particularly military connotation (Heubner 1984, 122).

for meaning in service, as without meaning one becomes an actor going through his lines and motions in a spectacle, a humiliation for an elite man.¹⁶⁴ So, the rest of us, Tacitus seems to be saying, must find a way to live, the more difficult but ultimately more rewarding path.¹⁶⁵

The traditional masculine virtues of military service, public service of the *res publica*, self-discipline, moderation, austerity, and a *virtus* sourced on the battlefield thus shape Tacitus' ideal man and masculinity. But the ends to which they are put have been altered: one must be self-disciplined in order to display obedience to each emperor, while in one's heart the true object of service is the continuing empire. Self-discipline can also accustom one to such hypocrisy. Military service no longer simply forges a strong *virtus*, but provides an arena for its demonstration outside of Rome and the emperor's gaze, as posts outside of Rome also allow for the fuller expression of one's talents and virtues. Moderation and austerity enable one to maintain a low-profile public image, all but invisible to one's peers or the public, in order not to provoke the jealousy and hatred of either a bad emperor or other aristocrats, or to involve oneself in political competition. Be a bureaucrat, not a hero; be a soldier, not a politician or flatterer. Agricola is the Roman man with the competition removed, in other words, with a gaze limited to the tasks in front of him, and a minimal public image.

¹⁶⁴ Bartsch 2006, 152-64. For the negative associations with the theatre, see Gardner 1993, 135-40; also Catharine Edwards, "Unspeakable Professions: Public Performance and Prostitution in Ancient Rome," in Hallett and Skinner 1997, 66-95.

¹⁶⁵ Shotter 1991, 3321-2 sees an essential optimism and pragmatism in Tacitus that frames this ideal of service not as a dreary compromise, but rather as life of value and meaning, especially under good emperors such as Trajan who value such qualities as *modestia* and *industria*.

Conclusion

What has become evident through Pliny and Statius is the following: the emperor, either in person or via his public image, was the most visible person in Roman society, the total object of the gaze. His political power ensured that this was so, as from him came honors, influence, recognition, and favor. His social position also ensured this, as people watched him as a role model for masculine behavior and to determine his true character, feelings, and political policies. In other words, watching the emperor was the way in which the rest of society interacted with him as political and social actors. Attempting to deprive the people of this avenue by avoiding the public gaze turned the emperor into an autocrat and led to distrust and suspicion in a society dependent on visual contact for political and social relations. On the flip side of the coin, the emperor also watched, and his gaze was total, the complete subject of the gaze. To him is attributed the ability to see all things, as divinities can - in a practical sense through friends and admirers (for a good emperor) or informers and spies (for a bad emperor) - an ability which works even if he himself is hidden. In this he is the supreme political actor, since the act of watching is itself political.

This visual accessibility was also important to determine an emperor's ability to fulfill this role, for which an ideal masculinity was required. The emperor was expected to embody the Roman masculine ideal, for as the alpha male - the most visible male, the most politically powerful, the best role model for *virtus* - he is the harbinger and arbiter of masculinity in Roman culture. In any particular setting - be it the battlefield, the forum, a hunt, a voyage by sea - the emperor was expected to be stronger, braver, more commanding, and more disciplined than anyone around him. He was, in other words, expected to be the extreme of masculinity, just as he embodied the extremes of political power and social status in Rome.

Aristocratic men, as beta males, could never attain this ideal. They could no longer prove their masculinity publicly, lest they threaten to become both more masculine and more publicly visible than the emperor. One aristocratic response to

this is offered in Tacitus, who constructs Agricola as his ideal of aristocratic manhood. He bases this ideal in traditional sources, military and public service, but in performing these, Agricola's audience was no longer the public at Rome; it was the emperor, and he tailored his performance according to whether the ruler in office was good or bad, practicing either efficiency or inactivity. In either case he kept his public image low-profile in order not to challenge the emperor's visibility. Another crucial difference from the ideal was that Agricola did not engage in political competition with his peers for appointments, favors, or honors from the emperor; nor did he engage politically with the emperor through flattery. Tacitus therefore alters public service to mean civil service; Agricola is a bureaucrat, not a politician, and while he can be a micro-emperor in his own province of Britain, far from Rome, the ultimate legacy of that administration is the administration itself (his conquests being rolled back by Domitian shortly after his retirement). Tacitus is therefore advocating an ideal man who aspires and adheres to military and civil service as sources of *virtus*, but whose success or failure in that task is judged by himself or his emperor (if a good one).

But the de-linking of masculinity from public politics, and the shifting of activity to outside the city and its public spaces, also served to focus attention more on men's private lives. Chapter 2 will examine this phenomenon in more detail, as well as its effects of creating another alternative model of masculinity, one which took its cues from the private, "feminine" sphere.

Chapter 2

Men Looking at Women to See Men

Introduction

“In the early empire, marriage and family as images and ideals, as well as the quality of an individual’s familial relationships, became an increasing part of even men’s public life.”¹ This was not just because the domestic or private sphere was now more important as a source of masculinity, but also because the women within that sphere had a unique ability to reflect upon men. A man’s leisure and private time had always been considered in determining a man’s true nature, as will shortly be discussed, and sources now increasingly emphasized the link between women in that private world and his true character, putting women on display to comment on men and masculinity. Women were mirrors men saw themselves in, and other men saw them in, and so they needed the reflection to be positive. From this perspective, women are often presented as a two-dimensional element, a piece of adornment, of her husband’s or family’s public image and masculinity in order to show him in the best possible light (or an enemy in the worst).

This chapter will therefore use sources which are directed towards men, or whose subject is men, but which include representations of women to make a point about their male subjects. For imperial women, Suetonius is ideal, since his biographies are specific studies of individual emperors as men. They are not accounts of politics between the emperor and senate or Rome and foreign territories, nor do they describe the background or meaning of events and deeds under each emperor, instead focus on how the emperors revealed themselves through speech, act, and rule.² Where and why he inserts information on the emperor’s wives and female relatives is thus deliberate as part of his message to the reader, his overall

¹ Beth Severy, *Augustus and the Family at the Birth of the Roman Empire* (London 2003), 249.

² Bradley 1991, 3713-14.

judgment on each emperor, and his recreation of each emperor's public image for his audience. For aristocratic women, excerpts from Pliny's *Epistles* and Statius' *Silvae* provide insights into how this process was executed by and for aristocratic men; that is, they are presenting their own images and those of their addressees, patrons, and friends for a larger (male) audience, and deploy mentions of wives and female relatives strategically to put beyond doubt the *virtus* of their male subjects. In this portrait, a dichotomy will emerge between the imperial and aristocratic landscapes: as masculinity expressed through aristocratic women was more flexible, masculinity expressed through imperial women was rigid.

This chapter will parallel Chapter 1 in following a top-down assessment, beginning with imperial women and then proceeding to aristocratic women. In analyzing how the distorted reality of their men changed how they were represented as an element of male public image, I will argue that imperial women were generally deployed as abstractions to elicit positive or negative judgments on their emperors. Aristocratic women, on the other hand, while still often discussed in terms of generic stereotypes, were also identified as potentially active agents in forming aristocratic masculinity; that is, they were not just passive abstractions, but could also help shape their men's masculinity through actions or symbolic gestures. In both the imperial and civilian spheres, however, men were using private spaces, themes, and women themselves to discuss masculinity as a concept and to form alternate sources of masculinity for aristocratic men.

How Can Women Reflect Men? Traditions and Models

How could women say something about masculinity? How were they used to do so? This chapter will not be a discussion of the simple identification of women as links between men through marriage and kinship, where women could add, or even build, a man's public image and political influence by virtue of their own lineage and

kinship contacts; this point is well-documented³ but has little to say about how women added to or built masculinity.

One key to this latter problem is Pliny's statement in Chapter 82 of the *Panegyricus*: *Voluptates sunt enim voluptates, quibus optime de cuiusque gravitate sanctitae temperantia creditur. Nam quis adeo dissolutus, cuius non occupationibus aliqua species severitatis insideat? Otio prodimur.*⁴ In other words, the private had much to say about the public because men's private lives, their pleasures, were unregulated except by the individual man in question and ostensibly free of the need for public performance, thus providing a more true reflection of his moral character and his ability to perform well for the state - therefore affecting his public image. What happened in private and domestic spaces thus mattered politically, and could become the knowledge of the public gaze without directly engaging it by gossip or the gaze of a few. One's public reputation was all-important because *Melius omnibus quam singulis creditur: singuli enim decipere et decipi possunt, nemo omnes neminem omnes fefellerunt.*⁵

Indeed, it was the household which was the nexus of the different visibilities in Rome, the meetingplace of public and private; behaviour in the home was often visible, literally, as household design meant women's labour, kids, etc. took place in public parts of the house too, and people could see who went into whose bedrooms, a place culturally earmarked/expected as the place for sex.⁶ The household was also one of the forums where gender was negotiated and determined - the last has perhaps traditionally been seen as more active in shaping gender for women than men, since the private household was more the domain of women. This traditional

³ e.g. Harlow and Laurence 2002; Susan Treggiari, *Roman Marriage: Iusti Coniuges from the Time of Cicero to the Time of Ulpian* (Oxford 1991 [2002]); Plin. *Ep.* 1.14, 5.11

⁴ Plin. *Pan.* 82.8-9: "It is one's pleasures, yes, pleasures, which best reveal one's dignity, integrity, and self-control. For who is so careless, whose occupations do not possess at least some appearance of seriousness? We are betrayed by our leisure."

⁵ Plin. *Pan.* 62.9: "It is better to believe everybody than individuals: for individuals are able to be deceived and be deceived, but no one misleads everyone, and everyone misleads no one."

⁶ Harlow and Laurence 2002, 27-8, 30-1; for these and other themes evident in the *domus*, see eds. Jane F. Gardner and Thomas Wiedemann, *The Roman Household: A Sourcebook* (London 1991).

division has limited the development of a vision of the Roman household as a key factor in shaping, defining, and measuring masculinity. As Pliny implied above, the private provides a completion of a man, and he is not a *vir* - or one cannot confirm his status as such - without consideration of this sphere.

To make this reflection more effective, representations of women in Roman literature are often stereotypical and illustrative of [attitudes on] female character in general, rather than individual females: "References to women by biographers and historians tend to be anecdotal, and so not necessarily pinned down to particular times or events; rather, they are illustrative of character in general and timeless ways."⁷ The use of stereotypes thus is a kind of cultural shorthand, in that by producing a general image, the audience is meant to understand immediately the author's larger message about the woman's character and that of her husband's or male relative's. Scholarship has identified two basic, polar stereotypes apparent in Roman literature: good women, and bad women.⁸ The primary criteria for determining which is which is that "women are praised for their service to men; evil women are distinguished by their selfishness."⁹

The good woman is an ideal *matrona*, who is mainly of good character. Physical attributes of beauty are a plus, but they are not necessary; unlike for men, women's bodies were not constantly examined for signs of deviations or adherence to their gender ideal.¹⁰ Traditional feminine virtues included chastity, loyalty, wool-working, fecundity, modesty, generosity - and a few male ones. This "manly" *matrona* possesses courage, *virtus*, and interestingly, often swords or knives; examples include the elder Arria stabbing herself (Plin. *Ep.* 3.16.6); Lucretia stabbing

⁷ Mary R. Lefkowitz, "Influential Women," in *Images of Women in Antiquity*, eds. Averil Cameron and Amelie Kuhrt (London 1983), 55.

⁸ Susan Fischler, "Social Stereotypes and Historical Analysis: The Case of the Imperial Women at Rome," in Archer, Fischler, and Wyke 1994, 117-20; Gordon Williams, "Representations of Roman Women in Literature," in Kleiner and Matheson 1996; and Susan Treggiari, "Women in Roman Society," in Kleiner and Matheson 1996.

⁹ Mary R. Lefkowitz, *Heroines and Hysterics* (London 1981), 36.

¹⁰ This is reflected in the general lack of physiognomical descriptions for women (Anthony A. Barrett, *Livia: First Lady of Imperial Rome* [New Haven and London 2002], 103).

herself (Livy 1.58); Staius' wife scorning Penelope's patience and responding to any threats to the household with a sword (*Silv.* 3.5.10); and Charite in Apuleius avenging her new husband's death and stabbing herself (*Met.* 8.11-14). For some modern commentators, references that include women as possessing *virtus*, such as the above listed plus *Theb.* 12.177-9 and the *Laudatio Turiae*, "seem to canvass the possibility that the female is fully capable of manly courage and to hint that female nature itself may not be fixed and immutable."¹¹ The inclusion of *virtus* in the ideal *matrona's* makeup indicates just such a fluid nature, but one which is channeled and stabilized by herself and the men around her. The use of male terminology to describe a good Roman woman, however, is also a demonstration of the "limitations of the Latin language," which often associated terms for moral qualities with one gender or the other based on the larger generalizations of women as weak, and men as strong.¹²

A glowing example of the ideal good woman is encapsulated in the *Laudatio Turiae*. Though much earlier (Augustan-era) than Suetonius, Staius, or Pliny, the *LT* is useful for illustrating that the symbols and vocabulary accompanying the stereotypically ideal woman did not change significantly between the Augustan and Trajanic periods, though their meanings and contexts may have. This will emerge more clearly in later analysis of the above authors. 'Turia' was formed, tried, and tested in the birth of the principate, when women could and did get involved in their husbands' business, and then never retreated from that more public involvement; she is thus one of the first examples of the new Roman woman, and her husband's use and assimilation of her into his own public image is one of the first examples of male negotiation of the new political realities and gender ideals.

¹¹ A.M. Keith, *Engendering Rome: Women in Latin Epic*, Roman Literature and Its Contexts, series eds. Denis Feeney and Stephen Hinds (Cambridge 2000), 35.

¹² Rebecca Langlands, "A Woman's Influence on a Roman Text: Marcia and Seneca," in Fiona McHardy and Eireann Marshall, eds., *Women's Influence on Classical Civilization* (London 2004), 118 and 120.

As a funerary inscription, the *LT* participates in the tradition of portraying the woman in an ideal manner, but it goes beyond the usual clichés on such inscriptions of wool-working and chastity to flesh out a picture of a wife so good, she is the manly *matrona*. The longest inscription erected by a private individual, it was dedicated by a husband to his wife around 10-2 B.C. upon her death. The inscription is the text of a *laudatio funebris*. The identity of the couple is not known from the text, but scholars since Mommsen¹³ have often chosen to associate them with Quintus Lucretia Vespillo, an ex-consul, and his wife Turia. According to Appian and Valerius Maximus, after Caesar's death, Turia aided her husband's escape from the proscriptions and engineered his recall in ways similar to the *laudata*'s. However, the current scholarly view holds this attribution as incorrect for several reasons; first, the text, with its brief, simplistic style, indicates the composer as a man of only mediocre education and rhetorical training.¹⁴ Second, there is no mention in the extant text of either the husband's or the wife's family or political accomplishments. Third, it is uncertain that this Lucretia Vespillo was a commander under Pompey at Illyria and the consul of 19 B.C.; either he was sixty-two years old when he was consul, or there is a missing generation.¹⁵ Thus, all that can safely be said of the couple is that they were of noble status and very wealthy, as evidenced not just by the length and quality of the inscription, but by hints in the text: the purchase of Milo's house (2.9a-10a), her gold and jewels (2.2a-4a), and the provision of her sisters with dowries (1.44-9).

A first reading of the *LT* yields the usual impression gleaned from funerary inscriptions: this woman was virtuous, a good wife, loyal to husband and family. Although the *laudata* was childless, the *laudator* is careful to emphasise that she was willing to go to any lengths to ensure her husband had children to continue his family line, even suggesting that he divorce her and find another, younger wife who might

¹³ E.g. W. Warde Fowler, *Social Life at Rome in the Age of Cicero* (London 1908), 160.

¹⁴ Nicholas Horsfall, "Some Problems in the '*Laudatio Turiae*'" *BICS* 30 (1983), 90-1.

¹⁵ Horsfall 1983, 91-2.

provide him with children;¹⁶ such an offer demonstrates a mentality consonant with the Augustan moral and legal policy encouraging children.¹⁷ And though the husband refused his wife's offer, the refusal preserved her *univira* status, a group specially honoured in Roman tradition.¹⁸ The *laudata* also embodied the usual domestic virtues of obedience, wool-working, piety, chastity, and modest appearance.¹⁹ In other words, she was a proper *matrona* in the old style.

Closer examination of the text, however, reveals a rhetoric that consistently casts the *laudata* as masculine. Structurally speaking, the text does not conform to the usual standards of a *laudatio funebris*. This was because the subject was a woman, and the eulogist worked with rules set up by rhetoricians for male panegyric (as generally only men performed the great civil and military deeds that provided such subject matter).²⁰ Usually, the eulogist covers external benefits (*res externae*) first, such as "family, upbringing, wealth, [and] offices," and then focusing on a man's actions and virtues (as revealed through the actions).²¹ In the case of the *LT*, the *laudata*'s wealth and marriage are treated as among the *res externae*, and her actions and virtues are split between the traditional and domestic of the *matrona*, and the public *res gestae* of a man.²² These manly deeds began even before the couple's marriage, when the *laudata*'s parents were murdered; she not only successfully secured her patrimony by defending her father's will, which designated her and her husband as heirs, but also avenged their deaths.²³ In recounting this, the *laudator* states proudly that *si praesi[---]jissimus non ampliu[s---]*,²⁴ the 'we' being Cluvius (her sister's husband) and the *laudator*. In other words, even if her menfolk had been home to avenge her parents' deaths and resolve the legal matters, they

¹⁶ *LT* 2.31-9. Text that of Dieter Flach, *Die Sogenannte Laudatio Turiae: Einleitung, Text, Uebersetzung, und Kommentar* (Darmstadt 1991).

¹⁷ Dio Cass. 54.16.1-2.

¹⁸ Treggiari 1991 [2002], 233-6.

¹⁹ *LT* 1.30-6.

²⁰ E.S. Ramage, "The So-Called *Laudatio Turiae* as Panegyric," *Athenaeum* 82, no. 2 (1994): 347.

²¹ Ramage 1994, 342.

²² Ramage 1994, 350-1.

²³ *LT* 1.3-6 & 1.10-26.

²⁴ *LT* 1.8: "we could not have done more if we had been present."

could have done no better or more. Thus, the *laudata's* actions were equal to a man's.

After they married, she defended the house against Milo's thugs; aided his escape from the proscriptions and supported him in exile; and successfully petitioned Octavian for clemency. These were normally tasks performed by men, especially those which required a public appearance, such as prosecuting a case and pleading for clemency on another's behalf. These deeds, the *laudata's res gestae*, are therefore similar to the *res gestae* of a man, and so the *laudator* is able to fit his wife's life into a panegyric structure tailored for men. Granted, her *res gestae* are a bit more modest than, say, a triumph or high magistracy - but the protection of patrimony, avenging the deaths of one's parents, successfully petitioning the triumvirs for clemency, and defending the household were praiseworthy actions no matter the gender of the one who performed them. This panegyric, plus the commitment of the entire *laudatio* to stone, elevates the *laudata's* visibility so she becomes part of her husband's public image, as well as raising her status to the point where that reflection is an overwhelmingly positive one.

One aspect of this positive portrait is that the reference point for all her actions is first her agnate family, then her husband - she never acts on her own behalf for her own ambitions or interests. She acts to preserve her agnate family's honour and wealth against opportunists who would invalidate her father's will, her resolve rooted in her duty to her father and devotion to her sister.²⁵ She martials her courage and *virtus* against the triumvirs and the gangs of Milo in order to protect her husband's household, honour, and life. And when the challenges cease and peace restored to the world through the reign of Augustus, with her husband and family safe, she retires this *virtus* to return to her supreme domestic virtues.²⁶ This is the reason he turns down her offer of divorce when it became clear the marriage would not produce any children; in the *laudator's* eyes, the *laudata* is the linchpin of his household, the

²⁵ *LT* 1.25-6.

²⁶ *LT* 2.25.

person in whom he has total confidence and trust, knowing she has only his best interests and those of her family at heart.

Another aspect that emerges is that the best of matrons did not need to be watched by their husbands or male relatives to make sure they behaved properly. Indeed, their finest hours often come when their husbands are not present. The *laudata* took care of her family business while her sister's husband was in Africa, and the *laudator* was in Macedonia,²⁷ and later secured his escape from the proscriptions and his pardon while he was in hiding and exile. One may recall Lucretia here as a classic example in this tradition; while her husband is off dining with the men, she alone among all the wives is hard at work. The others, free from their husbands' supervision, are partying at leisure. The good *matrona's* lack of a need for male supervision may stem from several things - innate virtue and character, good training by her husband, her assumption that she was always under the gaze of her menfolk - and the question of which reason takes precedence gets to the heart of what makes a good *matrona*: training or natural virtue. According to Pliny, in the following discussion on imperial women, both make the perfect *matrona*.

However, a lack of both do not necessarily create the evil woman who is the manly *matrona's* opposite. This stereotype takes several shapes and characteristics: the witch, poisoner, adulteress, ambitious and power-hungry wife or mother, nymphomaniac, avaricious hedonist, and more. These women may on the surface appear to be perfect matrons; they may have male traits, such as the courage or cunning of a good matron, as well as education or noble lineage or traditional feminine virtues like fecundity, but they are wolves in sheep's clothing. In the hands of a woman with an irrevocably flawed internal character, these normally positive attributes are put to evil purposes, and things go all wrong. Without male supervision and strict upbringing and training by her husband, such a woman can run amok, damaging men's reputations and sometimes their lives. She may act too

²⁷ LT 1.6.

independently of her family and husband, pursuing her own ambitions and interests at the expense of these entities, or she may campaign too avidly on behalf of her family or husband, especially a son - enter the evil [step]mother who is handy with the hemlock.

Two specific examples at opposite ends of the time period examined in this thesis amply demonstrate these qualities. At the later end is a woman from Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*, written around A.D. 170; just as his good women (such as Charite, mentioned above) are indicated by the same symbols and virtues laid out in the *LT*, so his bad women exhibit the precise opposite of those virtues. The epitome of his evil women is the wife of a baker, who was a good man but

*...pessimam et ante cunctas mulieres longe deterrimam sortitus coniugam, poenas extremas tori larisque sustinebat, ut hercules eius vicem ego quoque tacitus frequenter ingemescerem. Nec enim vel unum vitium nequissimae illi feminae deerat, sed omnia prorsus ut in quandam caenosam latrinam in eius animum flagitia confluxerant: saeva scaeva, virosa ebriosa, pervicax pertinax, in rapinis turpibus avara, in sumptibus foedis profusa, inimica fidei, hostis pudicitiae.*²⁸

The baker's wife is the personification of the traits listed above, traits which manifest themselves in the woman's actions. She commits adultery with a number of men, and when her husband discovers her latest lover (after, incidentally, he tells her of a cuckolded husband with much condemnation by her of the woman's adultery), he expells her from his home; to avenge the insult, she recruits an old witch to first try to banish his anger and win back her husband's affections, and when those potions fail, to then try to destroy him (9.26-29). The witch summons the ghost of a murdered woman, who takes the baker into his bedroom and presumably persuades him into hanging himself, the slaves finding him hanging from the rafters (9.30). In breaking

²⁸ Apul. *Met.* 9.14: "...had drawn as wife the most villainous and by far the worst woman in all the world; his bed and home sustained such extreme punishment that I too, by Hercules, often groaned in silence for his plight. For in fact, not a single fault was absent in that most wicked woman, but absolutely every disgrace flowed into her character as into some filthy latrine: savage and sinister, a stinking drunkard, headstrong and stubborn, greedy in shameless thefts, lavish in foul extravagances, hostile to honesty, and an enemy of chastity."

up her home, violating the bonds of marriage first through adultery then murder, indulging herself in wine, lust, and luxury, the woman mocks every virtue traditionally held dear in women, and exhibits every vice men feared and despised.

Another example of this type is Sallust's Sempronia. Written during the death throes of the Republic, she is for Sallust both the epitome and product of the new order. In his description of Catiline's supporters, he states that some women were attracted to his cause, among them Sempronia,

...quae multa saepe virilis audaciae facinora commiserat. Haec mulier genere atque forma, praeterea viro atque liberis satis fortunata fuit; litteris Graecis et Latinis docta, psallere et saltare elegantius, quam necesse est probae, multa alia, quae instrumenta luxuriae sunt. Sed ei cariora semper omnia quam decus atque pudicitia fuit; pecuniae an famae minus parceret, haud facile discerneres; libido sic accensa, ut saepius peteret viros quam peteretur.²⁹

A decidedly mixed portrait, Sempronia is an illustration of Statius' judgement concerning women: *laudantur proavis et pulchrae munere formae / quae morum caruere bonis falsaeque potentes / laudis egent verae...*³⁰ Sempronia has all the false esteem; Sallust acknowledges her talents and attributes, and portrays her as having all those qualities Statius lists as belonging to a woman whom even a Venus or Juno might grant a man: beauty, simplicity, graciousness, wealth, birth, charm, elegance.³¹ Sempronia is beautiful, fecund, of noble family and noble marriage, talented and intelligent - but empty inside. She is the false *matrona*, since qualities Sallust identifies in her - beauty, wit, charm, noble birth, fertility, education - were

²⁹ Sall. *Cat.* 25: "...who had committed many acts of masculine boldness. This woman was sufficiently fortunate in birth and beauty, and moreover in husband and children; she was learned in both Greek and Latin literature, able to play the cithara and dance more elegantly than was necessary or decent, and had many other accomplishments which are the repertory of luxury. But these were always all her cares, rather than virtue and chastity; you could not easily distinguish whether she was less sparing of her money or her reputation; her desires were aroused to such a degree that she sought men more often than she was sought."

³⁰ Stat. *Silv.* 5.1.51: "They are praised for their ancestors or gift of beautiful looks, who are without good morals; having acquired false glory, they lack the true...."

³¹ Stat. *Silv.* 2.7.85-6.

praised by Roman authors in their ideal elite *matrona*,³² yet she does not live out this ideal: she lacks *pudicitia*, indulges her appetites for sex, luxury, wine, and contributes to Catiline's effort to undermine the Roman state.

Sallust also treats her as an individual agent; while he mentions that she is married with children, no names are provided, and emphasis is put on her own characteristics and motivations; none of her actions are for the benefit of her children, husband, or natal family, as a good matron's actions would. Sempronia is thus the opposite of the wife of the *LT*, who only acted on behalf of her family and husband. She is the personification of a general trend in ancient discourse: that "women take political action only under certain closely defined conditions, and that unless they do so at least ostensibly on behalf of a male relative, they and others around them come to a bad end."³³

Some scholars believe that she is fictitious, a construct displayed to the reader by Sallust to demonstrate exactly how deviant Catiline's cause was from the traditional morals and mainstream political scene in Rome - that is, he is so bad he even has women like this supporting him!³⁴ Sallust is thus using the image of Sempronia to comment on Catiline's character and morals; perhaps her value is even increased by her careful construction, since she is then even more a conscious reflection of men. The irony is that she could simultaneously be the reflection of the deviant *and* the mainstream - this is the state of politics now, that women are involved and for their own ends, and how deviant is this state from the noble, virtuous past.

With these stereotypes in mind, let us now turn to a detailed examination of their use in literature. It will emerge that when men are constructing their own public images and projections of masculinity, or examining those of others, the symbols of these female stereotypes has not changed (as mentioned earlier), though their

³² Fischler 1994, 119.

³³ Lefkowitz, "Influential Women," 1983, 49.

³⁴ Barbara Weiden Boyd, "*Virtus Effeminata* and Sallust's Sempronia," *TAPA* 117 (1987): 183-201.

functions and sometimes meanings in the gender discourse have. For imperial women, this meant that the *matrona* ideal was intensified and became more rigid, as the ideal of masculinity was exaggerated for the emperor.

Imperial Women

For contemporaries, ironically, this publicness was important in assessing the health of the imperial private life, since “it would be improper to investigate the lives of upper-class women too closely, impossible and dangerous to scrutinize what the emperor’s wife or sister was doing. So conjecture was based on deductions from public appearances, arguments from probability, and guesses.”³⁵

Analysis of passages from Pliny’s *Panegyricus* provides the clearest model for the ideal imperial woman. At the end of the speech, having done with coverage of Trajan’s political, military, and social accomplishments and policies, Pliny turns to his emperor’s private life (much like a Suetonius biography), describing Trajan’s habits in leisure, his athletic ability, and finally his household. This coverage provides the final embellishment on Pliny’s picture of Trajan’s spotless character as the last secret revealed. Pliny’s message is that Trajan is free of all vice, an idea which will be demonstrated through analysis of Chapters 83 and 84, which provide a discussion of the significance the private household holds for a man’s public image, and offers up Trajan’s household for inspection, namely his wife and sister. After all, controlling the household was an extension of controlling the self, and self-discipline for a man was one of the most important qualities; and keeping the house in order meant watching the women:

Sed tibi, Caesar, nihil accommodatius fuerit ad gloriam quam penitus inspicere. Sunt quidem praeclara quae in publicum profers, sed non minora ea quae limine tenes. Est magnificum quod te ab omni contagione vitiorum reprimis ac revocas, sed

³⁵ Treggiari 1996, 123.

*magnificentius quod tuos; quanto enim magis arduum est alio praestare quam se, tanto laudabilius quod, cum ipse sis optimus, omnes circa te similes tui fecesti.*³⁶

Pliny first emphasises the extreme visibility of the Roman nobility, saying it permits no privacy, and then says that for emperors, not just their homes but the inner rooms of that home, which for normal senators are hidden from eyes and were perhaps a refuge, are visible to the public (recall his horror at Domitian veiling large parts of his palace, including those inner rooms, from public view and hiding from the gaze). And where hidden things may be (and probably are) bad, visible things can be affirmed to be good, and the scrutiny Trajan submits to only reveals more about the man's good moral character. He then establishes the relevance of the information he provides about the innards of the Trajanic household by linking assessment by the public and personal influence in the public sphere with not just his own personal behaviour at home, but the behaviour of his dependants and the rest of the household: not just the man himself must be free of vice, but also the family. In Trajan's case, this condition is given a literal sense by Pliny as he states that Trajan fashions the behavior of his relatives and wife to conform to his own high standard (*cum ipse sis optimus, omnes circa te similes tui fecesti* - 83.3). The household and its members are thus a mirror held up to a part of the man the public could not immediately see, completing the public's image of him, forming a whole man for judgement.

But just as a good wife produces a "transference of virtue by association," reflecting well on her husband and natal family,³⁷ so too can a bad wife. A man's image can be harmed irreparably if what is shown to the public is not in line with cultural ideals of gender and morality: *Multis inlustribus dedecori fuit aut inconsultius uxor adsumpta aut retenta patientius; ita foris claros domestica destruebat infamia,*

³⁶ Plin. *Pan.* 83.1-3: "But for you, Caesar, nothing is more accommodating to glory than such thorough inspection. Indeed, the behavior which you advance in public is excellent, but not less is that which you control in the home. However splendid it is for you to suppress and refrain from all contagion of vice, it is more magnificent for you to do so for your family; for how much more difficult it is to be responsible for others rather than simply oneself, how much more praiseworthy, when you yourself are the best, and you fashion everyone around you in your image."

³⁷ Harlow and Laurence 2002, 82.

*et ne maximi cives haberentur, hoc efficiebatur, quod mariti minores erant.*³⁸ Here Pliny recognizes that though a good man and successful husband is supposed to control and shape his wife's character, if the raw material is deficient to begin with - if she has already learned bad habits, or perhaps does not come from the best of families, or is simply willful - then she resists the husband's shaping of her self and can run amok with dangerous notions of independence or debauchery or ambition in her head. So, choosing a woman of good or malleable character is important, as is being of enough quality and ability to make that good choice.

Significantly here, Pliny says that the failure of a man as a husband and *pater* is his failure as a *citizen*; and a deficient citizen can not be a complete success as a man. He is collapsing the private into the public, and making the man's public reputation conditional upon his ability to perform his masculinity in private. To detect any failure, Pliny chooses to highlight the women of the household as the ruler by which a man should be measured, instead of, say, his treatment of slaves or their behaviour, or his children. The women are the supreme test because, as he says, *quanto enim magis arduum est alio praestare quam se* (83.3). And women are certainly difficult to vouch for, weak creatures they are with an easily swayed, emotional, passionate nature and lack of reason. They are therefore the ideal litmus test to see how well men are keeping their private lives in order, and thus how well they are maintaining their public images - because women cannot be expected to control themselves, it is up to men to do it. And if there was a failure, well, Valerius Messalinus in the reign of Tiberius had this to say in a debate over whether to let wives accompany their magistrate husbands to their assigned provinces; arguing in favor, he declares, "*Frustra nostram ignaviam alia ad vocabula transferri: nam viri in*

³⁸ Plin. *Pan.* 83.4: "Many distinguished men were disgraced either by taking an ill-advised wife or in resignedly retaining her; thus their fame abroad was damaged by disgrace at home, and they could not be great citizens, when this happens, because they were inferior husbands."

eo culpam si femina modum excedat.”³⁹ Applying the test to detect such a fault, it is to the women Pliny now turns:

*Tibi uxor in decus et gloriam cedit...Quam illa nihil sibi ex fortuna tua nisi gaudium vindicat! Quam constanter non potentiam tuam, sed ipsum te reveretur!...Eadem quam modica cultu, quam parca comitatu, quam civilis incessu! Mariti hoc opus, qui ita imbuat ita instituit...An, cum videat quam nullus te terror, nulla comitetur ambitio, non et ipsa cum silentio incedat, ingredientemque pedibus maritum, in quantum patitur sexus, imitetur?*⁴⁰

Trajan in public is not a spectacle; he does not use a large entourage or draw undue attention to himself. His wife follows his lead, taking a similarly low profile when she must venture into public - a good woman's entrance should not attract the gaze. Significantly, all the specific admirable attributes listed above deal with her appearances in public, which are then specifically linked with the efforts and character of her husband - hence Plotina is a walking, visible commentary on Trajan's character, and an element of his public image.

Here also the idea of woman as a reflection of man is developed in more detail, as Pliny states that since men, or husbands in particular, ought to train their female relatives and wives, fashion and form their habits, control them and administer to their moral health, and since women are to use their husbands as models for behaviour, women therefore reflect the moral health of their men, and the ability of these men to control themselves (an important masculine trait). Such a woman takes her identity from her husband, wanting no recognition or glory for herself; she is happy for her husband that he has such power and high position, but does not love him for it, nor wants a share in it. This, of course, is a reference to

³⁹ Tac. *Ann.* 3.34: "It is useless to transform our laziness with another name: for if a woman exceeds limits, the man is to blame."

⁴⁰ Plin. *Pan.* 83.4-8: "Your wife concedes glory and honor to you...How she claims nothing for herself from your position unless it is happiness! How she constantly reveres not your power, but you yourself!...Likewise how modest is her dress, how few her entourage, how unassuming her procession! This is the work of her husband, who both instructed and trained her...Or how, when she sees how you are accompanied by no intimidation or ostentation, she herself moves with nothing but silence, and she imitates her husband in walking on foot, as much as is permitted by her sex."

Agrippina or Livia or Messalina, or any woman of the imperial household attempting to become a political actor in the public sphere, something no proper woman would do. Such intrusion is a clear gender issue, and a gender boundary was being crossed in such cases. Here Pompeia Plotina is being set up against her predecessors just like Trajan was against Domitian - to provoke a comparison between them favourable to Trajan and to throw into relief what roles are acceptable, and more specifically how those roles are appropriately filled. The focus of this comparison is gender; how being the ideal woman, and the woman at the top of the social hierarchy, should act. Plotina is the ideal, as she is modeling herself on Pliny's ideal emperor. She is modest, chaste, loyal, obedient, without ambition or avarice, and does not indulge in luxury. She has submitted to the husband-fashioning of herself, and her embodiment of traditional feminine virtue reflects Trajan's own traditional masculine virtue, both through the individual virtues that they share (such as modesty) and through his execution of the traditional process itself of shaping Plotina's character.

So too Trajan's sister:

*Soror autem tua ut se sororem esse meminit! ut in illa tua simplicitas, tua veritas, tuus candor agnoscitur! ut si quis eam uxori tuae conferat, dubitare cogatur, utrum sit efficacius ad recte vivendum bene institui an feliciter nasci...Suspiciunt invicem invicem cedunt, cumque te utraque effusissime diligat, nihil sua putant interesse utram tu magis ames...te enim imitari, te subsequi student. Ideo utraque mores eosdem, quia utraque tuos habet....*⁴¹

Ulpia Marciana is here the ultimate compliment to Plotina - where Pliny emphasizes the latter's training by Trajan, Ulpia is naturally good through birth, being Trajan's sister and therefore naturally containing elements of his character, though she too

⁴¹ Plin. *Pan.* 84.1, 4-5: "But your sister remembers that she is your sister! That in her can be recognized your own simplicity, honesty, and candor! That if one compares her with your wife, one thinks to wonder, whether it is good instruction or fortunate birth that results in an upright life...They respect and yield to each other in turn, and since each loves you most excessively, they think it makes no difference which of them you love more...for they are eager to imitate you, and support you. Therefore the character of each is the same, as each is modeled on yours...."

uses him as an everyday role model for behavior. Together Ulpia and Plotina form the complete woman. In addition to the traditional virtues discussed earlier, a woman ought to be “strict, steadfast, grave and chaste, yet not boring but on the contrary sweet, affable, gentle and charming; intellectually well educated but using that education only in her husband’s interest; loyal even in death.”⁴² Plotina and Ulpia embody this ideal, a fact the senate wished to reward: *Obtulerat illis senatus cognomen Augustarum, quod certatim deprecatae sunt, quam diu adpellationem patris patriae tu recusasses, seu quod plus esse in eo iudicabant, si uxor et soror tua quam si Augustae dicerentur.*⁴³ Implied here is the ideal that good women, ideal matronae, did not want public visibility but gloried instead in anonymity;⁴⁴ Trajan’s wife and sister are never named in the Panegyricus, and are simply referred to as “wife” and “sister,” named by their roles in the imperial household and the personal relationship of each to Trajan.⁴⁵ Indeed, they prefer to be nameless and to be known only as wife and sister, for a good woman gains public recognition and distinction through those roles, not through any individual achievements, unlike men; nor is she to be identified by public titles which confer on her, however ceremonial, a political and public identity and honour separate from her husband. Their public portraits also reflect this simplicity and anonymity: Plotina and Ulpia had only one portrait type, in

⁴² Gunhild Viden, *Women in Roman Literature: Attitudes of Authors Under the Early Empire* (Goteborg 1993), 106.

⁴³ Plin. *Pan.* 84.6 and 8: “The senate offered them the title Augusta, which they pled against with a struggle, as long as you refused the title *pater patriae*, or because they judged it to be better, if they were simply called your wife and sister, than if they were called Augusta.”

⁴⁴ In fact, women in general are not mentioned often in the text; one notable exception is in Pliny’s description of Trajan’s entrance into Rome as emperor for the first time. He specifically includes women as part of the public that rushes to gaze upon Trajan (22.2), saying they *etiam tunc fecunditatis suae maxima voluptas subiit, cum cernerent cui principi cives, cui imperatori milites peperissent.* (22.3)

⁴⁵ This may also have been a mark of respect emphasizing Plotina’s and Ulpia’s spotless reputations; orators in Athens, for example, did not use a woman’s given name but instead identified them by familial or marriage relationships, unless they were dead, of dubious reputation, or associated with the orator’s opponent (David Schaps, “The Woman Least Mentioned: Etiquette and Women’s Names,” *CQ* 27, no. 2 (1977): 323-30).

which their hairstyles are very simple, braided affairs, with no jewelry or adornments.⁴⁶

The full ideal of Plotina and Ulpia Marciana as paragons among women is brought out here - just as their husband is the exemplum for men, they are the exempla for women, by virtue of their imperial status. The contrast with previous empresses hinted at earlier in 83.4-8 emerges more strongly when one considers one other aspect of Pliny's ideal as personified in Plotina and Ulpia - they are not mothers (to sons: Ulpia had a daughter, Matidia). Nor is fertility even mentioned as a virtue in the *Panegyricus*. Because neither was mother to a potential heir, and therefore concerned with her progeny's succession, their power and influence was significantly more limited in the imperial *domus*: "It was only the mothers of imperial children that could most easily cross the divide between public and private space."⁴⁷ This ideal, notably, is in marked contrast to that mould provided by Livia, whose shadow fell long over the years and over each successive empress. But as Pliny is offering Trajan as a new ideal for an emperor, superseding Augustus, so is his image of Plotina meant to supersede Livia to stand as the new ideal for imperial women,⁴⁸ as well as being an image crafted to provide the best possible reflection upon Trajan and his regime.

What was wrong with Livia? After all, the traditionalism and conservatism evident in Pliny's ideal were introduced into the image of the imperial woman in the Augustan period, as were the ideas of both the importance of imperial women's images and the importance of crafting that image, pioneered in representations of Livia. The new reality of a Roman imperial household forced the grafting of new roles onto old; for though the empress and her relatives were still matrons in a *domus*, that household happened to be headed by the emperor and their children potential heirs,

⁴⁶ Klaus Fittschen, "Courtly Portraits of Women in the Era of the Adoptive Emperors (98-100) and Their Reception in Roman Society," in Kleiner and Matheson 1996, 42. Interestingly, Fittschen also notes that their types were almost never imitated by contemporary women.

⁴⁷ Ray Laurence, "History and Female Power at Rome," in *Gender and Ethnicity in Ancient Italy*, eds. Tim Cornell and Kathryn Lomas (London 1997), 138.

⁴⁸ Laurence 1997, 132.

making her domestic acts political ones as well.⁴⁹ So, the realization that “the proximity of the imperial women to the functioning of the state lent new meaning to normal family activities, and granted them [women] the capacity for public acts of a new order,”⁵⁰ meant that the public images of imperial women had to be carefully regulated to reflect well on the imperial office in general and each regime in particular. Coin, altar, and sculpture portraits thus betray “the creation of a consistent ideology associated with their public persona. In allowing the use of portraits of these women in the context of state ideology, the emperors firmly bound the images of the female members of their family to the image of the Roman state and to themselves as dynastic rulers.”⁵¹ So, on the Ara Pacis, the presence of women indicates “a new emphasis on women and their role in the state as well as the family. The imperial women appear as exemplars for the rest of society to follow, and as such the image they present is important: they represent the Augustan ideal of matronly womanhood,” as signaled by the voluminous, well-draped, clothing that provides total coverage of the body, and the traditional gesture of modesty for women, the arm placed across the chest.⁵² In Augustan ideology, these traditional voluminous garments, the *palla* and *stola*, meant to guard women’s bodies from the public gaze and especially the eyes of men not her husband or relatives, became the female equivalent of the toga in demonstrating the wearer’s Romanness, virtue, and status.⁵³ Imperial women thus achieved a greater visibility in Roman society than was previously possible for women, and to make the change more palatable, their adherence to traditional roles was projected.⁵⁴

⁴⁹ Severy 2003, 239.

⁵⁰ Fischler 1994, 122.

⁵¹ Fischler 1994, 129.

⁵² Glenys Davies, “Gender and Body Language in Roman Art,” in Cornell and Lomas 1997, 105.

⁵³ Judith Lynn Sebesta, “Women’s Costume and Feminine Civic Morality in Augustan Rome,” in *Gender and the Body in the Ancient Mediterranean*, ed. Maria Wyke (Oxford 1998), 107 and 111-14. See also Elizabeth Bartman, *Portraits of Livia: Imaging the Imperial Woman in Augustan Rome* (Cambridge 1999), 41-2.

⁵⁴ Barrett 2002, 121-26.

Livia's portraits also express this simultaneous traditionalism and innovation, and were crafted as carefully as Pliny does his vision of Plotina, and for the same purpose - to burnish the reputation of emperor. Her image is part of Augustus' image, and part her image. In the 30s and 20s B.C., her portraits "conveyed a reassuring message of Italic nativism. The relative simplicity of the hair, choice of the nodus as its primary decorative feature, and lack of jewelry or other adornments found ample Roman precedents."⁵⁵ This emphasis on Roman modesty in Livia was in part a volley against the luxurious and lascivious Antony and Cleopatra, distinguishing her husband's campaign values from Antony's, but also functioned more generally to reassure the public that the new dominant couple were not going to turn into decadent Hellenistic-style rulers. Later portraits begin to include subtle adornments, such as earrings or hair fillets, and her divinized portraits include the dress and hairstyle common to goddesses, and hands busy with holding implements like cornucopias; but the nodus, traditional *stola*, and overall simplicity remained her trademarks.⁵⁶

So what was wrong with Livia? Why was this official image of her not unanimously adopted, either at the time or later in the Empire, and why was her memory more ambiguously received than her husband's? After all, though deified and revered by many, she was also portrayed negatively as a scheming murderous stepmother in some sources, most notably Tacitus.⁵⁷ Though he comments on her virtue as very old-school and traditional, for him, her political meddling and visibility were not;⁵⁸ hence he did not approve of the new mould of the empress and woman Livia (and Augustus) formed. Tacitus' reaction also a part of a new traditionalism that

⁵⁵ Bartman 1999, 36.

⁵⁶ Bartman 1999; see also Susan E. Wood, *Imperial Women: A Study in Public Images, 40 B.C. - A.D. 68*, Mnemos. Suppl. 194 (Leiden 1999).

⁵⁷ Tac. *Ann.* 1.3, 5; 4.71; 5.1; Barrett 2002, 53-4, 58, 60, 66; and Caroline A. Perkins, "Truth in Tacitus: The Case of Livia Augusta," in *Studies in Latin Literature and Roman History XI*, ed. Carl Deroux (Brussels 2003): 419-27.

⁵⁸ Tacitus had similar objections to Messalina, who had some of the ambition of Livia but none of the virtue; see Sandra R. Joshel, "Female Desire and the Discourse of Empire: Tacitus's Messalina," in Hallett and Skinner 1997, 221-54.

frowned upon any involvement of women in public or politics, and of the Trajanic ideology program.⁵⁹ It was the new, the innovation, which troubled people. Livia was an empress, but was too independent, too powerful, too visible, amassing more public honors and roles than Roman women before her, roles which possessed significance in the male world but not in the feminine.⁶⁰

Livia was thus problematic in that she took a far more active role in the public sphere than authors of the early second century A.D. preferred - and she did so on behalf of her son, Tiberius, to ensure his accession - this Tacitus gives as the main reason for her aggressiveness and murders. Let us look at Plotina again; as discussed earlier, Pliny never mentions is that she is not a mother. Motherhood was crucial to the *matrona* ideal; it factored heavily in imagery of Livia and the Julio-Claudian women; it was the traditional role if ever there was one for a Roman woman; but the mother-son bond was also one through which women could exercise political influence and all but run the empire. So, we must adjust our view of Plotina - she was a model woman, yes, but a model woman for empresses and not necessarily for even other elite women. And in the new traditionalism, this meant that she had little power, and her lack of progeny in the new era of adopted emperors was a virtue, not a flaw.

But Livia - Livia was a mother; Livia was prominent; Livia was public and political; Livia was not Plotina. This, at first glance, might seem to give her a public image independent of her husband (an issue discussed further in the next chapter), or might seem to limit the ability of others to see Augustus in her, though, as discussed above, her image contributed to, commented on, and was an integral part of the Augustan regime. Indeed, it is sometimes difficult to detect any deliberate link between Livia's behaviour and persona, and Augustus; authors seem reluctant to spin their relationship to that end, perhaps out of reverence for him, perhaps

⁵⁹ Laurence 1997, 133-5; Mary T. Boatwright, "The Imperial Women of the Early Second Century A.C.," *AJPh* 112 (1991): 513-40.

⁶⁰ Nicholas Purcell, "Livia and the Womanhood of Rome," *PCPS* 211 [31] (1985), 85-90, 96.

because his reputation is burnished the more if they are treated separately - if she is his evil doppelganger, she is the elements that either do not exist in him or are not active - thereby throwing into higher relief his good quality as emperor. Suetonius mentions her five times in his biography of Augustus: once when he marries her, twice when he dies, once to say she procured virgins for him, once in a slur Antony cast upon his character (referring to the manner in which he married her). These references take place after chapter sixty-one, in which Suetonius states he is finished with Augustus' public, civil, and military achievements, and is moving on to an account of his private and domestic life. This excludes her completely from having any ownership in the achievements of the regime, and denies that she had any official *auctoritas*, or even *potentia*, or any role in Augustus' decisions.⁶¹ In the biography, Livia has no lineage, no character sketch, no associations, no personality - she is a woman to whom Augustus happens to be married, and one with no relation to his power or significance in the imperial household (she is also never even specifically identified as Tiberius' mother).

But in fact, for Pliny and his cohorts in the late first and early second centuries A.D., this independence is how she reflects on Augustus. Livia, with her independence and revolutionary visibility, was a source of opportunity for criticism of Augustus, his moral character, and his masculinity. The dubious circumstances under which they married was one problem, with her pregnant with her first husband's child and Augustus 'stealing' her away from him.⁶² Later, he is characterized as too much under her influence.⁶³ To ask what was wrong with Livia is thus also to ask what was wrong with Augustus. For Pliny, then, Trajan is Augustus as he should have been; and Plotina is Livia as she should have been⁶⁴ - nameless, childless, invisible. Augustus' moral revolution and renaissance is finally

⁶¹ This is also reflected by Livia's exclusion from the *Res Gestae*, Augustus' account of his public achievements (Barrett 2002, 138).

⁶² Marleen B. Flory, "Abducta Neroni Uxor: The Historiographical Tradition on the Marriage of Octavian and Livia," *TAPA* 118 (1988): 343-59; Barrett 2002, 22-4.

⁶³ Tac. *Ann.* 1.3; Laurence 1997, 134-5; Purcell 1985, 94-5.

⁶⁴ See also Laurence 1997, 132.

brought to fruition, nearly a hundred years after his death. Livia was thus an anomaly; while she was the first and the prototype empress, nobody follows her - the mould created by her is never used again.⁶⁵

The Livia problematic demonstrates something else, however. Women reflect on men, but they mainly reflect on their masculinity. The power to comment on a man's political legacy is secondary, coming as a result of women's effect on masculinity, and how masculinity determines effectiveness as a citizen and political agent. So, Livia does not determine how good an emperor Augustus was; "there is not a direct relationship between transgressive women and poor emperors. Claudius was said to have been dominated by his women and freedmen, yet it is ambiguous whether his rule was seen as 'good' or 'bad'."⁶⁶ Thus, where some argue that imperial women are a signifying factor of the emperor's success as an emperor,⁶⁷ I argue that imperial women are a signifying factor of the emperor's success as a man.

Suetonius' omission of Livia from Augustus' biography should be read in this light.⁶⁸ By downplaying Livia's role, he is enhancing Augustus' abilities as a paterfamilias: firmly in control of his wife and the household, though her ambitions do appear in the biographies of Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius, and Galba. Though he was certainly aware of the critical tradition of Livia, he buries it here to preserve Augustus' reputation and masculinity as far as possible. So not only does he try to keep Livia in a more traditional setting, he also distances Augustus from the actions of his daughter Julia.

⁶⁵ Diana E.E. Kleiner, "Imperial Women as Patrons of the Arts in the Early Empire," in Kleiner and Matheson 1996, 39.

⁶⁶ Laurence 1997, 131.

⁶⁷ Fischler 1994.

⁶⁸ cf. Bradley 1991, 3726: "The ideal standard of imperial comportment had grown to embrace the private as well as the public domain. It is this standard of private excellence that informs and governs Suetonius' treatment of the personal lives of his emperors. Using an implicit model of the Trajanic kind, Suetonius measures the private acts against the ideal image, contrasting or comparing the private record with that of public achievement."

Julia's adultery was problematic for several reasons. Tacitus has Augustus damning adultery as a crime against *maiestas* (*Ann.* 3.24.2). When Augustus banished his daughter Julia, though acting lawfully as a *paterfamilias*, he did so also from the interests of a *pater patriae*, because he recognised her adultery threatened the dynasty and its public prestige by damaging the system of marriages for the Julio-Claudian family.⁶⁹ Adultery in aristocratic families had similar implications.⁷⁰ So events in the *domus* affected the public persona of the *paterfamilias*, as it was his "personality or actions [which] determined the nature or age of the household. After all, it belonged to him...The house ideally reflected his personality and honour, just as its inhabitants did whether slaves, children or his wife."⁷¹ But Augustus' masculinity in this respect is preserved by authors by attributing his daughter's faults not to his failure as a father, but rather to fickle Fortune.⁷²

So, Suetonius was keeping in the Julio-Claudian tradition of revering Augustus as *pater patriae* and *princeps* without compromising his quality as a man and private *paterfamilias*, by downplaying his problems in private life. This is his strategy for good emperors in general, such as Titus and Vespasian.

For his bad emperors, such problems are utilized to good effect in drawing portraits of them as failed men. One way of doing so is by their placement in the structure of the biographies, which follow a certain pattern: family background, birth, youth, first emergences into public life, accession, and then an account of his public/civil/military accomplishments - which may, in the case of bad emperors like Domitian, Nero, Caligula, and Tiberius, be split into good and bad deeds - then an account of private life, including his physiognomical characteristics, habits, marriages, children, education, and interests, and finally ending with his death, its manner and aftermath. As with Livia, where the women appear is often a signal of

⁶⁹ W.K. Lacey, "2 B.C. and Julia's Adultery," *Antichthon* 14 (1980): 138-41. See also Viden 1993, 58; and Richard A. Bauman, *Women and Politics in Ancient Rome* (London 1992 [1994]), 117.

⁷⁰ Harlow and Laurence 2002, 32.

⁷¹ Harlow and Laurence 2002, 33.

⁷² Suet. *Aug.* 65; Laurence 1997, 131-2.

their appropriateness. Also, the women mentioned lack personality or personal context; beyond a very brief identification of any important relatives, they are always identified in terms of their relationship to the emperor in office, and are often passive objects the emperors act upon. The actions and efforts of those women who do have some measure of influence and use it are not judged, precisely, but rather measured in terms of their effects on the images and status of their men, especially sons. With these general principles in mind, examining more closely the biographies of Nero, Claudius, and Domitian demonstrates how imperial women, traditional or not, could reflect their emperors' masculinity for the public eye to judge.

With Nero, aside from a few briefly named in the section on his youth, all women he was involved with or which matter in his life appear in the section on his crimes as emperor. His mother, on the other hand, is a pervasive presence throughout his life until her death (discussion of her will follow).

As Suetonius says at 35.4, there was almost no personal relationship Nero did not treat with violence, and those which he contracted for his pleasure or for some particular end (like a murder) engaged and empowered individuals to whom recognition and influence should never have come. To emphasize that the responsibility for these issues is purely within Nero, Suetonius treats his victims briefly, giving no indication of personality or individual history or circumstances except for name and social status, and relationship to Nero.⁷³ Nor does Suetonius even pass judgment on the character of the victims, which, given the lack of personal information, would be difficult anyway and unsupportable. However, he does emphasize the outrage of such crimes by casting nearly all of his victims as ones of high status. His mother? His aunt Domitia? Antonia, daughter of Claudius? Murdered. His wives? Even the ones he liked fell under his sword, never mind Octavia. Nero's treatment of his first wife Octavia:

⁷³ e.g. Suet. *Ner.* 28.1.

*Octaviae consuetudinem cito aspernatus, corripientibus amicis sufficere illi debere respondit uxoriam ornamenta. Eandem mox saepe frustra strangulare meditatus dimisit ut sterilem, sed improbante divortium populo nec parcente conviciis, etiam relegavit, denique occidit sub crimine adulteriorum adeo inpudenti falsoque,*⁷⁴

that he had to resort to bribes to produce witnesses against her. His marriages are a public concern, and his treatment of Octavia illustrates his problematic virtue. After all, sources laud her as an ideal wife, one of impeccable family and virtue, and one almost superhuman in her tolerance and obedience, modesty, and chastity, especially when compared with his later wives. Tacitus and others make note of Poppaea Sabina's reputation for luxury and licentiousness,⁷⁵ but strangely, Suetonius is silent on this point. Poppaea is only noted as the daughter of an ex-quaestor and previously married to an equestrian (35.1), who provoked Nero's wrath *quod se ex aurigatione sero reversum gravida et aegra conviciis incesserat*,⁷⁶ as any wife might. Of his next wife, Statilia Messalina, Suetonius is even more silent, giving no mention of her fate or even of why Nero chose her as wife; all that is told is that she was the great-great-granddaughter of Taurus, who had been twice consul and awarded a triumph (35.1), and to possess her Nero killed her husband, Atticus Vestinus, while he was consul, giving the impression that she was perhaps an unwilling wife - yet another matron he defiled through his excessive lust.

The manner in which a man, an emperor, treats his wife is also under scrutiny for public judgement and reflects upon him. The issue at stake in Nero's rejection of Octavia is the quality of women the public wants to see in the imperial household. She, a Roman matron of impeccable family and virtue, was appropriate; Poppaea,

⁷⁴ Suet. *Ner.* 35.1-3: "He soon rejected living with Octavia, and being reproached by his friends, he responded that for her, to be given wifely insignia ought to suffice. Presently, after frequent plans to strangle her ended in vain, he sent her away because of barrenness, but the people disapproved of the divorce and did not refrain from cries of reprimand; even then he banished her, and finally killed her under a charge of adultery so shameless and dishonest,...."

⁷⁵ Tac. *Ann.* 13.45.

⁷⁶ Suet. *Ner.* 35.3: "...because he returned late from the chariot-races, and pregnant and sick, she reproached him through heckling." Amusingly, Suetonius uses the same word here, *conviciis*, as he uses to describe the public's protest at Nero's exile of Octavia - the emperor is being heckled from all sides, be it a wife or his subjects!

while of good family and also beautiful, with her reputation for luxury and licentiousness, was not. Good emperors recognised this and made their choices accordingly. Picking carefully which women would be involved in the imperial household, Titus (one of Suetonius' good emperors) set aside his various women when he became emperor, sending away his love Queen Berenice, and cutting off contact with several dancers who were his paramours.⁷⁷ Associations with such women of doubtful reputation and/or origin would reflect badly on him and the imperial office, and degrade his own authority by betraying an immoral and problematic nature; such actions and associations were not appropriate for an emperor and the imperial office.

In contrast, the female individuals Nero favors and empowers are often ones of low status. He almost married the freedwoman, and actually did marry a castrated boy named Sporus (28.1), whom he treated as a woman. He also makes use of the master poisoner Lucusta and rewards her well for her services in killing Britannicus (33.2-3).

Suetonius' assessment of his relationship with his mother is more complicated, as Agrippina was not seen as an ideal *matrona* and *mater* because of her restless ambition and exercise of power to achieve it. Nero was no simple protege, however: *Nam matris concubitum appetisse et ab obtrectatoribus eius, ne ferox atque impotens mulier et hoc genere gratiae praevaleret, deterritum nemo dubitavit....*⁷⁸ While Agrippina would undoubtedly be seen as depraved in submitting to such a relationship, or encouraging its prospects, Nero here is portrayed as the instigator of the incest and the more avid partner in the relationship, emphasizing his own depravity while rendering Agrippina more passive. This is part of a larger, subtle theme that paints Agrippina as, if not a perfect Roman woman, at least one not without her merits, and certainly better than her son. In fact, Suetonius lays no blame

⁷⁷ Suet. *Tit.* 7.1-2.

⁷⁸ Suet. *Ner.* 28.2: "For no one doubted that he attempted sexual intercourse with his mother and was deterred from it by his detractors, lest this act generate influence and the fierce and uncontrollable woman fly out in front...."

on Agrippina for the way Nero is - his faults are his own, not the product of youth or of a bad childhood,⁷⁹ though he does implicitly criticize his upbringing in noting that after Agrippina was exiled, *egens apud amitam Lepidam nutritus est sub duobus paedagogis saltatore atque tonsore*.⁸⁰ Note that these conditions were in the absence of his mother; and the neglect of Lepida was well repaid by both, for later Agrippina used all her efforts to ruin Lepida, and Nero helped in publicly testifying against his aunt.⁸¹ Upon Agrippina's return from exile, she rededicated her efforts to advancing her son's public image and family position (as any good *matrona* would be expected to do): *Gratia quidem et potentia revocatae restitutaque matris usque eo floruit, ut emanaret in vulgus missos a Messalina uxore Claudii, qui eum meridianam, quasi Britannici aemulum, strangularent*.⁸² Finally, Suetonius, in including Nero's accession and his actions immediately afterward as part of the good acts of his reign, puts in this section Agrippina's influence: *Matri summam omnium rerum privatarum publicarumque permisit. Primo etiam imperii die signum excubanti tribuno dedit 'optimam matrem' ac deinceps eiusdem saepe lectica per publicum simul vectus est*.⁸³ Coinage from this time reflects the prominence of Agrippina as a de facto emperor ruling alongside Nero, with her image sharing the obverse with Nero's, and his name relegated to the reverse - only she is named on the obverse.⁸⁴

When Nero finally felt he no longer needed her or that she should no longer have a role to play, he eliminated her from the imperial *domus*. One reason offered by Suetonius for this estrangement turned murderous: *Matrem facta dictaque sua*

⁷⁹ Suet. *Ner.* 26.1.

⁸⁰ Suet. *Ner.* 6.3: "...he went to be brought up in want in the hands of his aunt Lepida under two tutors, a dancer and a barber."

⁸¹ Suet. *Ner.* 7.1.

⁸² Suet. *Ner.* 6.4: "Indeed, prestige and influence abounded for him since the recall and reinstatement of his mother, so that it became known to the public that Messalina, wife of Claudius, sent agents to strangle him in his midday siesta, on the grounds that he was a rival of Britannicus."

⁸³ Suet. *Ner.* 9: "He relinquished to his mother all of the most important public and private affairs. On the first day of his rule, he also gave to the tribune standing guard the password 'best of mothers', and after that often traveled about in public with her, together in the same litter."

⁸⁴ Diana E.E. Kleiner, "Family Ties: Mothers and Sons in Elite and Non-Elite Roman Art," in *I Claudia II: Women in Roman Art and Society*, eds. Diana E.E. Kleiner and Susan B. Matheson (Austin 2000), 50.

*exquirentem acerbius et corrigentem hactenus primo gravabatur....*⁸⁵ She, a woman, is subjecting the emperor to her gaze, one meant to regulate, control, admonish, shape, judge its object; discussed in Chapter 1 was the emperor's status and ideal role as arbiter of the gaze, its supreme object and subject, and the apex of the visual pyramid. Thus, Agrippina, by asserting her own gaze over him independent of his control or leave, is simultaneously asserting her power over him and her position as superior to his. That she could assert her gaze is an indication that her power did indeed rival his.

To eliminate her influence and the threat to his own power and position her independence posed, he first had to erase her public visibility - hence his attempts to reduce her public popularity, such as through threats of abdication, followed by stripping her of her public titles and honors and personal guard, then forbidding her to live with him and drove her from the palace, and eventually from the city (34.1). By driving her from the imperial *domus* both literally and symbolically, he is also denying her status as a mother, his mother, thereby cutting off the source of her *potentia* - and he is performing this separation publicly, thereby dissociating his public image from hers. Denying her honors and protection also reduced her individual honor and availability to the public gaze, another measure to both effect her unpopularity and reduce her individual *potentia* by demonstrating to society as a whole that she is no longer an appropriate avenue to the emperor, sending the message to her clients and friends that to continue to associate with her is dangerous and a losing proposition.

In Suetonius' final verdict on Nero, his lack of self-discipline, excessive desires, undignified and immoral behavior are all displayed in his very person with his

cervice obesa, ventre proiecto, gracillimis cruribus, valitudine prospera; nam qui luxuriae immoderatissimae esset...circa cultum habitumque adeo pudendus, ut

⁸⁵ Suet. *Ner.* 34.1: "He was annoyed foremost by his mother harshly examining his words and acts and correcting him so much...."

*comam semper in gradus formatam peregrinatione Achaica etiam pone verticem summiserit ac plerumque synthesinam indutus ligato circum collum sudario prodierit in publicum sine cinctu et discalciatus.*⁸⁶

The man was less than a man - between his lack of self-discipline (except when it came to training his voice and acting abilities), effeminate appearance described here,⁸⁷ and excessive and depraved lusts, his masculinity was in doubt, or at least debatable. The manner in which he treated his women as *paterfamilias* of the imperial *domus* was shameful and abusive, and the women whom he admitted into the household did not merit the high favor and honors shown them. Nero is therefore a failure as a husband (adulterous, killing his wives); a failure as a father (killing his unborn child within Poppaea, and the mother herself); a failure as a *paterfamilias* (upsetting the internal hierarchy of the family and abusing his power of life and death over its members); a failure as a son (killing his mom). These factors Suetonius uses to build an image of Nero as a failure as a man, including them in his section on his crimes as an emperor, but marking them as separate from his abuse of his *auctoritas* politically and socially within the public sphere. Those are reasons why Nero fails as an emperor; these he gives as reasons Nero fails as a man. The same character faults are at the root of both failures, but the actions have different consequences.

Claudius is presented more ambiguously. As stated previously, reception of him in Rome was mixed. He was often portrayed as being subject to his freedmen, slaves, and women, weak of character and possibly of intellect. Part of this ambivalence may be shown by the fact that Suetonius' biography of Claudius, unlike those of Nero, Domitian, Tiberius, and Caligula - all emperors whom Suetonius condemns as bad rulers - is not split in two. That is, Suetonius does not divide his civil, political, and military actions as emperor into good and bad, as he does for the

⁸⁶ Suet. *Ner.* 51: "...swollen neck, belly jutting out, very skinny legs, and good health, for all he was excessive in excess...concerning personal care and appearance, he was shameless to such a degree that his hair was always shaped in rungs, and also while abroad in Greece he let it grow long and hang behind his head; and for the most part he appeared in public wearing a dinner shirt with a handkerchief tied around his neck, without a belt or shoes."

⁸⁷ e.g. Arist. *Phgn.* 3 identifies weak legs as characteristic of a coward.

other four. The good and bad are mixed in together: so as a judge in the imperial tribunal, he was sometimes careful and shrewd, other times inconsiderate, unjust, and crazy (15.1); as censor he was similarly variable, now properly severe, now inconsistent and lenient to people who did not deserve it (16); he gave largess to the people, and put on magnificent gladiatorial games, but showing too much enthusiasm and cruelty as a spectator (21, 34); he gave the consular regalia and senatorial rank to undeserving, low-status people, but restored ancient functions to the other magistracies, such as the oversight of the Treasury of Saturn to the quaestors (24). He conquered Britain and celebrated a triumph, but Suetonius casts doubt on the true nature of this triumph by noting that the campaign was of little importance, and the new province surrendered sans battle or bloodshed, taking Claudius away from the capital for less than six months (17.2). This was, and is, not an emperor people could categorize easily or condemn or approve without reservation.⁸⁸

As an emperor. As a man, it was a different proposition. Suetonius is clearer on this matter, and issues a fairly definitive statement on Claudius' masculinity, one developed throughout the biography.

Suetonius portrays Claudius as a failed *matrona*, or at least being treated like one. Because of his weakness, *ne progressa quidem aetate ulli publico privatoque muneri habilis existimaretur. Diu atque etiam post tutelam receptam alieni arbitrii et sub paedagogo fuit...*⁸⁹ So, like a woman, even when he is of age he is in a state of tutelage - and unlike a normal *matrona* at this point in time, when tutelage was more of a formality and women could choose their guardians and prosecute them, Claudius was firmly subjugated and subject to punishment by his guardian, the identity of whom was an insult, being a barbarian and muleteer (2.2). Even when he is finally granted the *toga virilis* and the associated rights, it is done surreptitiously

⁸⁸ Bradley 1991, 3728-9.

⁸⁹ Suet. *Claud.* 2.1-2: "...not even when he was advanced in age was he judged suitable for any public or private duties. And indeed, for a long time after the age of release from tutelage, he was in another's power and under a guardian...."

and hidden from the public eye as far as possible: ...*et togae virilis die circa mediam noctem sine sollemni officio lectica in Capitolium latus est.*⁹⁰ The public gaze could therefore not judge his masculinity, and affirm or deny it; Suetonius' implication is that the imperial family knew Claudius' masculinity was deficient, and chose not to make the fact known.

Moreover, with the women in his family being so strong and successful, it was clear the roles were reversed - he was the lame-duck woman, and they the men:

*Mater Antonia portentum eum hominis dictitabat, nec absolutum a natura, sed tantum incohatum...Avia Augusta pro despectissimo semper habuit, non affari nisi rarissime, non monere nisi acerbo et brevi scripto aut per internuntios solita. Soro Livilla cum audisset quandoque imperaturum, tam iniquam et tam indignam sortem p. R. palam et clare detestata est.*⁹¹

His female relatives - grandmother, mother, and sister - are passing judgment on his masculinity, Antonia even explicitly claiming that he is not a complete man, not just because of his physical infirmities, but also because of his weak mind and character. They are qualified to pass these judgments; they are strong *matronae*, portrayed by the imperial family as ideal women, virtuous, able, and relatively independent. Their proximity to him and status as judges throw into relief his lack of the good qualities they possess - they are more men than he. They are the arbiters of family opinion on him, as extracts from letters by Augustus to Livia included in Suetonius' biography of Claudius betray:

'Collocutus sum cum Tiberio, ut mandasti, mea Livia, quid nepoti tuo Tiberio faciendum esset ludis Martialibus...Nam si est artius, ut ita dicam, holocleros, quid est quod dubitemus, quin per eosdem articulos et gradus producendus sit?...In

⁹⁰ Suet. *Claud.* 2.2: "...and on the day he took up the *toga virilis*, he was taken in a litter to the Capitoline around the middle of the night, without the usual ceremony."

⁹¹ Suet. *Claud.* 3.2: "His mother Antonia kept calling him a monster of a man, and not completed by nature, but only hardly begun...His grandmother Livia Augusta always held the greatest of contempt for him, and did not address him except most rarely, not advising him except through harsh, brief treatises or through messengers. When his sister Livilla had heard that he would rule someday, she openly and loudly cursed so unfair and so undeserved a fate for the Roman people."

*praesentia tamen quibus de rebus consulis, curare eum ludis Martialibus triclinium sacerdotum non displicet nobis, si est passurus se ab Silvani filio homine sibi affini admoneri, ne quid faciat quod conspici et derideri possit. Spectare eum circenses ex pulvinari non placet nobis; expositus enim in fronte prima spectaculorum conspicietur.*⁹²

Augustus never came to a decision in this letter, telling Livia to consider his views and pass the letter on to Antonia if she wished. Suetonius states that from the evidence that Claudius was never given an office higher than augural priesthood, and that Tiberius only gave him the consular regalia while denying him any office, it was clear that Augustus' and the Julio-Claudian family's decision was to keep him as hidden as possible, never to contribute to the official public image through accomplishments or civil service⁹³ - much like a *matrona*, and indeed less than the *matronae* with whom Augustus confers on the issue of Claudius' future and masculinity. Limiting Claudius' visibility was thus a clear strategy throughout the reigns of Augustus and Tiberius employed by his family out of concern for the family image (under Caligula he finally gained the consulship); he did not live at the palace but rather at villas in the suburbs of Rome or in Campania, and indulged in gambling and wine in his obscurity (5). But he still *numquam aut officium hominum aut reverentia publice defuit*.⁹⁴ The equestrian order chose him as patron on two occasions (6.1), and the senate voted him a special membership of the priests of Augustus (6.2). The spontaneity of these honors under Tiberius may be compared

⁹² Suet. *Claud.* 4.1 and 3: "I discussed with Tiberius, as you enjoined me, my Livia, what is to be done with your grandson Tiberius [Claudius] at the games of Mars...For if he is sound in mind and body, so that I may say accordingly he is complete, why is it that we doubt that he should be promoted through the same steps and ranks through which his brother progressed?...However, as to the things on which you consult me at present, it will not displease us for him to take charge of the banquet of the priests at the games of Mars, if he will allow himself to be advised by a man related to him, Silvanus' son, lest he do something which could attract attention and be laughed at. It is not acceptable to us for him to watch the races from the imperial seat; for he shall be conspicuous, displayed above all in the front of the theater."

⁹³ Suet. *Claud.* 4.7; 5.

⁹⁴ Suet. *Claud.* 5: "...he never lacked in either the favor of men or respect from the public."

with similar spontaneous gestures and recognition given to women of the imperial household for their services and generosity.

While his female relatives may not have been eager to claim him publicly, Claudius was certainly eager to include them in his public image. By including his female relatives, ones who privately cast doubt on his masculinity, in ceremonies bringing honor to him or in direct celebrations of his accomplishments, he is using them to add to his prestige and raise his masculinity value by integrating them into his imperial ideology and image, and putting them on public display as embellishments of his own imperial image and his personal lineage.⁹⁵ Upon becoming emperor, Claudius voted divine honors to Livia and had an elephant-drawn chariot bear her image in Circus processions; he also granted a carriage to carry his mother Antonia's image in said processions and gave her the surname of Augusta (11.2). These deeds Suetonius number amongst his praiseworthy actions immediately following his accession. In addition, at his triumph for Britain, his wife Messalina followed his chariot in a *carpentum* (17.3).

The last incident was perhaps not as praiseworthy, however; Claudius had little luck with his wives. After two failed engagements, he married Plautia Urgulanilla, whose father celebrated a triumph, and whom he divorced *ob libidinum probra et homicidii suspicionem*.⁹⁶ His second wife, Aelia Paetina, was the daughter of an ex-consul; he divorced her *ex levibus offensis* ("on account of trivial offenses" - 26.2). Next was Messalina, daughter of his cousin, whom he executed when he discovered that amongst other scandalous and immoral deeds, she had married Gaius Silius in a proper ceremony with witnesses while still married to him (26.2); she exercised her influence by getting rid of enemies, such as Appius Silanus, in secret plots with Claudius' freedmen (37). And last but not least, his niece Agrippina,

⁹⁵ Indeed, the presence of imperial women at triumphs becomes commonplace, whereas females have no recorded role in Republican triumphs "except as spectators or participants in the general thanksgiving to the gods undertaken by the whole populace" (Marleen B. Flory, "The Integration of Women into the Roman Triumph" *Historia* 47, no. 4 (1998): 490).

⁹⁶ Suet. *Claud.* 26.2: "...because of shameful lusts and suspicion of murder."

yet another marriage he later regretted (43). He entered his last two marriages from desire and affection, his emotions ensnared by the charismatic and ambitious women (26.3, 36); common to all of them, however, is that the women ran roughshod over his dignity and amok in the imperial *domus*, doing what they pleased until finally discovered - a failure of Claudius' gaze to keep them in line. His wives therefore cast doubt on his masculinity because they showed up his *auctoritas* as *paterfamilias* to be distinctly lacking, and demonstrated his judgment also to be wanting through his poor choices of wives.

This portrait is closely followed in Suetonius by an account of the favors and affection he bestowed on his freedmen. He gave the eunuch Posides a military prize at his British triumph, gave military commands and provincial office to Felix, granted Harpocras the rights of riding in a litter and giving public entertainments, and gave Narcissus and Pallas the insignia of quaestors and praetors, honors through senatorial decree, numerous and pricey gifts, and let them amass enormous wealth through plunder (28). As with his wives, his affection only increases their power over him, so that they can do what they want; and in turn he increases their public visibility and sets them on a equal footing with equestrians at the least. Claudius is not just subject to his freedmen, he makes that subjection public, so the gaze can see his weak character and deficient masculinity. Ergo Suetonius' judgment: *His, ut dixi, uxoribusque addictus, non principem, sed ministrum egit, compendio cuiusque horum vel etiam studio aut libidine honores exercitus impunitates supplicia largitus est, et quidem insciens plerumque et ignarus.*⁹⁷

Claudius' masculinity takes even further blows - he is immoderate in food and drink (33.1), indecent in laughter and disgusting in anger with foaming mouth and runny nose (30), very lustful for women and gambling constantly (33.2), bloodthirsty and cruel (34), fearful and paranoid (35), inappropriate in public word and act

⁹⁷ Suet. *Claud.* 29.1: "As I have said, being a slave of these men [his freedmen] and his wives, he acted not as a princeps, but as a servant; he bestowed freely punishments and pardons and military offices for the interests of each or even according to their wants or fancies, and even doing so most of the time in ignorance and unaware."

(40)...in other words, he is self-indulgent, physically weak, half-crazy, intemperate, lacking in modesty, a deficient *paterfamilias*, and mentally a slave, with a personal *auctoritas* so weak his wife Agrippina can plot his death for her own political purposes without his knowledge, and succeed (44). For Suetonius, Claudius is thus a bad man...but as discussed earlier, not a totally bad emperor.

Finally, his portrait of Domitian parallels in some ways that of Nero. Suetonius also categorizes him as a bad emperor, and is generally hostile to Domitian, downplaying some deeds that would have been commended in other emperors, and exaggerating or misrepresenting other deeds as damnable.⁹⁸ One early indication of his true character offered by Suetonius comes before he becomes emperor, during his presence in Rome before Vespasian's return in late 70; amongst other details of his abuse of his position, Suetonius considers his marriage one of the two most notable: *...contractatis multorum uxoribus Domitiam Longinam Aelio Lamiae nuptam etiam in matrimonium abduxit.*⁹⁹ That is, Domitian is excessively lustful, an adulterer, and picks a wife from a completely inappropriate source: another man's bed (Lamia would later be killed by Domitian for witty remarks he made at the time of losing his wife, 10.2). This is reminiscent of Nero stealing Statilia Messalina away from her husband (Nero 35.1), but Domitian's prize lasted longer. Domitia was well-connected: daughter of Corbulo, Aelia Lamia was a prominent patrician, and her father, brother-in-law (Annius Vinicianus), and his brother (Annius Pollio) were all killed in the aftermath of the Pisonian conspiracy.¹⁰⁰ The choice of her, in other words, would not have been a bad one, given her status and connections, if she had not already been married to a prominent noble.

Immediately upon his accession, Domitian gave Domitia the title Augusta (3.1), an honor somewhat rare among imperial women; Livia only received it after

⁹⁸ Brian Jones and Robert Milns, *Suetonius: The Flavian Emperors, A Historical Commentary* (Bristol 2002), 10.

⁹⁹ Suet. *Dom.* 1.3: "...having slept with the wives of many, he took in marriage Domitia Longina, still the wife of Aelius Lamia."

¹⁰⁰ Jones and Milns 2002, 123.

Augustus' death, Claudius gave it posthumously to Antonia, Nero approved it for his mother, wife Poppaea, and daughter Claudia, Vitellius' mother received it, and finally Titus' daughter Julia.¹⁰¹ Domitia had a son who died, and was divorced by Domitian after she had an affair with the actor Paris, but recalled soon after, on the grounds of his love and that the people demanded it (3.1). Indeed, the people seemed to take Domitia's side in the whole affair; one may recall the public's similar reaction to Nero's treatment of Octavia here, as they demanded Nero take her back as his wife (Ner. 35.1-3), both examples demonstrate the ability of the public gaze to regulate or influence imperial behavior. Domitian could not respond to the masses at large, but could at least suppress one public expression of censure: *Occidit et Helvidium filium, quasi scaenico exodio sub persona Paridis et Oenones divortium suum cum uxore taxasset.*¹⁰²

Even though she is little mentioned after this, Domitia retained some measure of influence; Suetonius and Dio have her privy to the conspiracy to assassinate Domitian.¹⁰³ Suetonius also has them remarrying, which would be a highly unusual action; "it is more likely that Domitian exiled her c. 83, but later was obliged to recall her to counteract the rumours about his relationship with his niece Julia. Dio Cassius associates Domitia's recall (not remarriage) with stories about Julia (67.3.1)."¹⁰⁴ Julia, Titus' daughter, appears in Suetonius' examination of Domitian's character and personal life; after refusing her in marriage, *non multo post alii conlocatam corruptit ultro et quidem vivo etiam tum Tito; mox patre ac viro orbatam ardentissime palamque dilexit, ut etiam causa mortis exstiterit coactae conceptum a se abigere.*¹⁰⁵ He uses *palam* to describe how publicly Domitian's liaison with Julia played out

¹⁰¹ Jones and Milns 2002, 127.

¹⁰² Suet. *Dom.* 10.4: "And he killed the younger Helvidius, on the charge that he reproached his divorce from his wife in a stage farce through the characters of Paris and Oenone."

¹⁰³ Suet. *Dom.* 14.1; Dio Cass. 67.15.4.

¹⁰⁴ Jones and Milns 2002, 128.

¹⁰⁵ Suet. *Dom.* 22: "...he seduced her not long after she had been given in marriage to another and even moreover during Titus' lifetime; soon after she was bereaved for father and husband, he loved her most passionately and openly, while also being conspicuous as the cause of her death by forcing her to expel a fetus by him."

before the public gaze, the word emphasizing the explicit and open nature of the affair.

It is significant that coverage of Julia is placed in chapter 22, at the end of the biography and in the middle of Suetonius' final judgment on Domitian's character. She is an unofficial part of his life; a symptom of his inner flaws; and despite the publicness of the affair, if one takes Suetonius' biographical schema in mind, more an element of his private life as a citizen than of his public life as emperor. That Domitia was recalled to counteract the damaging rumors of the affair¹⁰⁶ shows how wives form their husbands' public images, how they can reinforce or rehabilitate them. And Domitia is exclusively discussed in the sections on Domitian's public life - first his visibility as son of the emperor Vespasian, then as the emperor himself, affecting the relationship between him and his public/subjects. Indeed, in Suetonius, all the official wives, the official chosen women of the emperor's public image, make their first appearance as he does in public: choosing a wife is part of building a public image, like starting out in junior offices. And mentions of them continue in Suetonius' sections on public achievement, if the women have specific, important effects on their men's public images - like with Nero and Octavia, Domitian and Domitia, Claudius and his female relatives and Messalina. In biographies of good emperors, the women appear at their marriage, and then disappear from their husband's achievements until his death, and then appear afterwards in Suetonius' final account of personal character and private life. That is, they appear where they should in good emperors' lives; in bad emperors' biographies, they appear in public. But these should not be misconstrued as judgments on the women: Suetonius rarely offers specific praise or condemnation of individual women. Rather, the women's appearances are there to comment on the emperor's success as men, and if they appear in the public sections, it is a rebuke and an example of the failure of the emperor as a paterfamilias; a husband; a man, to lose control of his public image

¹⁰⁶ For a more detailed discussion of Domitia's recall and the involvement of Julia, see Southern 1997, 41-3.

and household in allowing what should be a passive element - the wife - to become an active one through the activating public gaze.

In sum, then, the ideal imperial woman for Pliny and his peers was very traditional, nameless, childless, sans political influence, and as close to publicly invisible as possible for a member of the imperial household. Any faults or problems surrounding her was a reflection of the faults or outright failure of the emperor as *paterfamilias* and man - but not as political *princeps*. If the emperor was good, and she was ideal, then she reflected a positive judgment of his masculinity - but she could not add to it or improve on that quality. Imperial women had to stay the passive pawns in the male debate over and regulation of imperial masculinity. As will be discussed next, however, aristocratic women played a more active role in the construction of aristocratic male image and masculinity.

Aristocratic Women

While the imperial woman was supposed to serve as a role model for Roman women in general, the ideal that is actually presented to reflect well on aristocratic men is different than the imperial woman ideal. That is, the stereotypes of good and bad women used for comment on aristocratic men and in the construction of their public images are more nuanced, and employed in different ways than imperial women were in the construction of the emperor's image and masculinity. The result is that aristocratic women played a more active role in reinforcing and even improving their men's masculinity. For aristocratic women, the manly *matrona* model allows them a greater role in male constructions of image and masculinity because their own *virtus* can influence and instruct the *virtus* of their men. They become the natural instructors of *virtus* in the private sphere, because that is the source of female *virtus* - protecting the family and home. In their turn to the private sphere for sources of masculinity, men now increasingly appropriate this model in their images,

and learn from it. To illustrate this point, rather than providing a parade of anecdotes, I will examine a selection of Pliny's *Epistles* and Statius' *Silvae* to show how these authors develop a cohesive theme of men looking at and using women to formulate aristocratic masculinity. Both sources include women as part of their portrayal of their male addressees and subjects. In doing so, the different genres utilize women similarly. The vast majority of the women they discuss are cast as good or ideal *matronae*; and each author places women (and especially wives) firmly in the context of her husband or male relative(s).

To begin with Pliny, 4.19 is to his wife's aunt, Calpurnia Hispulla, about his wife. It is the longest description of their marriage, and she is a traditional wife; the ideal he describes here is pervasive throughout his letters and provides a view of what he looks for in the perfect wife and woman:

Summum est acumen summa frugalitas; amat me, quod castitatis indicium est. Accedit his studium litterarum, quod ex mei caritate concepit. Meos libellos habet lectitat ediscit etiam. Qua ille sollicitudine cum videor acturus, quanto cum egi gaudio adficitur! Disponit qui nuntient sibi quem adsensum quos clamores excitarim, quem eventum iudici tulerim. Eadem, si quando recito, in proximo discreta velo sedet, laudesque nostras avidissimis auribus excipit...Non enim aetatem meam aut corpus, quae paulatim occidunt ac senescunt, sed gloriam diligit...talemque qualis nunc uxori meae videor, ominari solebas.¹⁰⁷

His wife Calpurnia can do the traditional wifely tasks, such as tend the household, as Pliny mentions briefly at the beginning of the passage; later, he also turns a negative into a positive by viewing her miscarriage at 8.10 and 8.11 as evidence of her fertility. But her true virtue lies in the fact that she is willing to submerge her public

¹⁰⁷ Plin. *Ep.* 4.19.2-7: "She is highly intelligent and highly frugal; she loves me, which is proof of her chastity. Because of this she has taken up studies of literature, and which of mine she absorbs most affectionately. She even now has my books, reading and learning them by heart. How anxious she seems when I plead a case, how great her joy when I am done! She arranges to be informed herself about applause or shouts I receive, about what verdict I win in the case. Likewise, if I recite something, she sits veiled and discreet nearby, and with most avid ears listens to our praises...For she loves me not for my age or body, which little by little grows old and decays, but for my fame and ambition...and you used to predict that I should become such a man as I now seem to my wife."

image and identity into Pliny's. She takes on his interests, memorizing his writings and keeping informed on his cases. She takes glory in the appreciation given him at readings, hiding behind a curtain to avoid the gaze herself - his glory is hers. And she even takes on his ultimate obsession: immortality through reputation and writing. He states that she loves him not for himself, but for his *gloria*. Throughout the *Epistles* Pliny emphasizes the importance of image and reputation, and how written works are the only sure way to immortality and fame through the ages, as statues and buildings can be torn down or destroyed. His belief was that such fame was the true and noble pursuit of the elite gentleman - and her his wife honors him for it, loves him for it, and aids and supports him in that pursuit. That he portrays her as so devoted and ideal burnishes his reputation in itself; he projects their marriage as total harmony, an image offered from his intent to both inform and instruct the reader,¹⁰⁸ and the effect such information would have on his reputation. He has shaped her to his mould, and she has also shaped herself to that mould, since he implies some initiative on her part, and that the result is such a positive one indicates the quality of the mould itself, that is to say Pliny. The reader is therefore impressed not just by the couple's *concordia*, but Pliny's high quality as a man and husband, and her high quality as a woman and assistant to Pliny's efforts towards *gloria*.¹⁰⁹

This would be the effect on the general reader, the audience at whom these letters were aimed through publishing. But the letter itself is written to a woman, Calpurnia Hispulla; why would she be interested in what kind of wife her niece is? Why present this somewhat formal and extremely rosy, ideal picture of their relationship, to a close relative? In other words, what would Calpurnia Hispulla read into this image Pliny presents? Obviously the girl reflects on her agnate family by her behavior and quality as a wife, and Calpurnia Hispulla would have an interest in

¹⁰⁸ Jo-Ann Shelton, "Pliny the Younger, and the Ideal Wife," *C&M* 41 (1990): 163-86.

¹⁰⁹ The wife/pupil and husband/teacher theme emerged in the late first/early second centuries A.D. and reflected an emphasis on marital harmony and open love and devotion between spouses (Emily Hemelrijk, *Matrona Docta: Educated Women in the Roman Elite from Cornelia to Julia Domna* [London 2004], 33-4.

maintaining her family's reputation. But more than this, Pliny identifies the specific reason Calpurnia Hispulla cares, or should care, about the details of his relationship with Calpurnia: *nec tantum amitae ei adfectum verum etiam patris amissi repraesentes, non dubito maximo tibi gaudio fore cum cognoveris dignam patre dignam te dignam avo evadere.*¹¹⁰ Pliny is writing to Calpurnia Hispulla as if she were Calpurnia's father, not her aunt, and reporting on what he assumes a father would want to know, and saying what a father would want to hear - that the girl, his daughter, is being an obedient, loyal, and moral wife, exhibiting no scandalous behavior and running her husband's household efficiently. In other words, a father wants to know that she is preserving the honor of her agnate family and creating or augmenting honor for her husband. Her behavior is an indication of both the father's and husband's training, an important way in which she reflects on them and their abilities as men to control their women. Pliny further emphasizes Calpurnia Hispulla's symbolic role as Calpurnia's father by stating later that he should not have expected otherwise: *Nec aliud decet tuis manibus educatam, tuis praeceptis institutam, quae nihil in contubernio tuo viderit, nisi sanctum honestumque...*¹¹¹ She has thus given the girl a strong moral upbringing, shaping and training the girl to a wife's role, with Pliny, as discussed earlier, shaping the girl to the individualized role of being his wife.

This theme of shaping is also put forward in 1.16. Writing to Erucius Clarus, Pliny sings the praises of Pompeius Saturninus, a consummate orator, talented writer, and mutual friend; he notes that Saturninus *Legit mihi nuper epistulas; uxoris esse dicebat. Plautum vel Terentium metro solutum legi credidi. Quae sive uxoris sunt ut adfirmat, sive ipsius ut negat, pari gloria dignus, qui aut illa componat, aut*

¹¹⁰ Plin. *Ep.* 4.19.1: "...Treating her not so much as an aunt, but truly rather representing the father she lost, I do not doubt that you will be most joyful to know she has turned out to be worthy of you, her father, and her grandfather."

¹¹¹ Plin. *Ep.* 4.19.6: "Nor would anything else be proper for one educated under your hands, directed by your instructions, who saw nothing in your house unless it was pure and honorable...."

*uxorem quam virginem accepit, tam doctam politamque reddiderit.*¹¹² This echoes Pliny's picture of Calpurnia as learning his work by heart, even setting some verses to music, thereby absorbing his tastes and interests. Saturninus' wife is similarly to his credit, and adds to his reputation as a man of letters, because if she is the author of the disputed letters, her talent must be a product of his teaching and his own talent. He formed her - she reflects him: "Saturninus takes a virgin out of circulation, educates her, then re-enters her, via her writings, into the public sphere, as a more valuable commodity."¹¹³ So, her skill at writing - perhaps not a traditional activity for women - is cast as virtue, and his virtue, to enhance his reputation as a man, statesman, and litterateur.

Other women in the *Epistles* also exhibit this mix of traditional virtues with education, literary interests, and initiative, and as a result often fit the manly *matrona* model. The relationship between fathers and daughters continues to be a persistent one, as well. At 5.16, Pliny informs Aefulanus Marcellinus about the death of their friend Fundanus' daughter:

*Nondum annos xiiii impleverat, et iam illi anilis prudentia, matronalis gravitas erat et tamen suavitas puellaris cum virginali verecundia...quam studiose, quam intellegenter lectitabat! ut parce custoditeque ludebat! Qua illa temperantia, qua patientia, qua etiam constantia novissimam valetudinem tulit!...iam destinata erat egregio iuveni...Est quidem ille eruditus et sapiens, ut qui se ab ineunte aetate altioribus studiis artibusque dediderit...Amisi enim filiam, quae non minus mores eius quam os vultumque referebat, totumque parem mira similitudine exscripserat.*¹¹⁴

¹¹² Plin. *Ep.* 1.16.6: "He recently read to me some letters; he said they were by his wife. I judged them by Plautus or Terence, believing them to be read in prose. Whether they were by his wife as he asserted, or by himself as he denies, the glory and honor can be given to him, either if he composed them, or if he welcomed his wife as virgin, then teaching and polishing her."

¹¹³ Habinek 1998, 132-3; he also notes the inadequacy of Sherwin-White's 1966 commentary on the letter, as it ignores the implications and benefits of this transaction, only noting that Roman women married young. I have found that this omission of Sherwin-White's extends to his analysis of other letters which include similar themes of gender, image, and virtue.

¹¹⁴ Plin. *Ep.* 5.16.2-3, 6, 8: "She had not yet taken up her fourteenth year, and still was both serious as a matron with the good sense of age, and yet with the charm of a young girl and the modesty of a virgin...how eagerly, how intelligently she read! So that she played and kept watch with restraint! How she bore her most recent illness with self-control, patience, and even perseverance!...She already

Since she died before being married, Pliny can only discuss her effect on Fundanus' image. The girl was already an ideal maiden and woman, and her father an ideal man. His extreme grief and the display of it, in rejection of his reason and other virtues, is justified by the loss of such a perfect and virtuous daughter: one who embodied his virtues and teachings, and even resembled him physically. Her image was his image, its source clear to all, and had she lived she would have adorned his image further through the continuation and propagation of his reputation, virtues, memory. Looking at the daughter, Pliny sees the father; this is an expression of the high valuation which Roman fathers placed upon their daughters, as they identified themselves with their daughters' own accomplishments and public images just as they did with their sons'.¹¹⁵

The story of Rufus and his female relatives continues at 4.17, where Pliny responds to Clusinius Gallus' request that he take up the defense of Corellia, Rufus' daughter: *An ego tueri Corelli filiam dubitem?...Ille meus in petendis honoribus suffragator et testis, ille in incohendis deductor et comes, ille in gerendis consiliator et rector...Quantum ille famae meae domi in publico, quantum etiam apud principem adstruxit!*¹¹⁶ In public, he is supporting Corellia because of her father.¹¹⁷ He will associate with her in the case because of her father. His reputation would suffer otherwise: Corellius was Pliny's patron and close friend, and he would appear an ingrate not to honor that relationship by denying aid to Corellia. So when other people look at Corellia, and look at Pliny defending her, they see him defending

was marked for an exceptional young man...He is indeed a learned and wise man, who from the beginning of his life has dedicated himself to profound studies and arts...The girl he lost, who recalled him not less in character than in expression and face, had amazingly resembled every part of his likeness."

¹¹⁵ Judith P. Hallett, *Fathers and Daughters in Roman Society: Women and the Elite Family* (Princeton 1984), 82.

¹¹⁶ Plin. *Ep.* 4.17.2-7: "And can I waver to defend the daughter of Corellius?...He supported me as a witness in my campaigns for office, he led me in the beginning as advisor...How great he shaped my reputation at home and in public, until it even occupied the attention of the emperor!"

¹¹⁷ He had also lent her aid earlier, at 3.3, where he recommends Julius Genitor as a potential guardian, mentor, and tutor in Latin rhetoric for her son, Corellius (Pansa? See A.N. Sherwin-White, *The Letters of Pliny: A Historical and Social Commentary* (Oxford 1966), 212.

Corellius; Pliny is preserving his image and reputation just as much as he is Corellia's. As before, in looking at the daughter, Pliny sees the father.

Pliny again intervenes in a father-daughter relationship in 6.32, where he informs one Quintilianus that he is gifting his daughter with 50,000 sesterces. For despite Quintilianus' own temperate, austere tastes, which he has transferred to his daughter in bringing her up, *cum tamen sit nuptura honestissimo viro Nonio Celeri, cui ratio civilium officiorum necessitatem quandam nitoris imponit, debet secundum condicionem mariti <uti> veste comitatu....*¹¹⁸ The bride-to-be, in other words, is going to be an important and visible element of her groom's public image, and so she needs clothes to fit the role of the prominent wife. Just like he needs to look the part for his public duties, so does she, for her public duties, which are in service of his public image.

6.24 is a departure from these cases, as it does not involve a woman reflecting the virtues of her man, but shaping them instead. Pliny describes a woman urging her husband to commit suicide; he had been suffering a long disease which produced ulcers on his genitalia, *uxor inspiceret exegit; neque enim quemquam fidelius indicaturum, possetne sanari. Vidit desperavit hortata est ut moreretur, comesque ipsa mortis, dux immo et exemplum et necessitas fuit; nam se cum marito ligavit abiicitque in lacum.*¹¹⁹ It is perhaps symbolic that the source and visible manifestation of his disease was on his genitalia, the source of his manhood, which she diagnoses as irreparably damaged and the source of the disease incurable. She can perform such a diagnosis because she is a manly *matrona*, with *virtus* herself. She helps him into the right decision, the courageous and honorable one - suicide. Her resolve in this course is stronger than his, as she leads the way into the jump,

¹¹⁸ Plin. *Ep.* 6.32.1: "...since however she is to marry as distinguished a man as Nonius Celer, whose civic affairs and duties necessarily demand a certain amount of elegance, she should be given attendants and clothes in accordance with her husband's position...."

¹¹⁹ Plin. *Ep.* 6.24: "His wife demanded to see them; for no one would disclose more honestly whether it was able to be cured. She saw that it was to be despaired and so she encouraged him to die, and was herself his partner in death, indeed was the leader in compelling him to follow her example; for she tied her husband to herself and jumped into the lake."

and ties him to her - her *virtus* is stronger than his. And hers is the honorable deed, one not less than Arria - see *Ep.* 3.16.¹²⁰ Now, the role of Roman mothers traditionally and ideally included making their sons into ideal men, as discussed in Chapter 1; but here is a wife helping to improve and reinforce her husband's masculinity, a grown man. This is a new twist on an old gender role, in other words.

In 1.12, a letter to Calestius Tiro, Pliny mourns another death, that of Corellius Rufus, and includes a brief description of his character and life. Rufus committed suicide to end a prolonged and painful disease, and Pliny mourns that the death of this man had to come at his own hand, *quamquam plurimas vivendi causas habentem, optimam conscientiam optimam famam, maximam auctoritatem, praeterea filiam uxorem nepotem sorores...*¹²¹ Said wife, Hispulla, sent for Pliny when neither her entreaties nor those of her daughter could bring him back from his resolve to die. In a similar case, at 1.22 Pliny discusses with Catilius Severus the illness of Titius Aristo, a friend who is trying to decide whether to kill himself or live with his disease, if the doctors decide it would not be terminal, but painful and long. Among his reasons for putting up with the disease: *dandum enim precibus uxoris, dandum filiae lacrimis...*¹²² Both Rufus and Aristo were ideal men, wise and moral, living simply and in good service to Rome, with impeccable reputations and wide influence, virtue manifest in all their dealings; of their women Pliny says little other than what I have already quoted, but implied in these short statements is their loyalty to and love for Rufus and Aristo, and the fact that they were sources of inspiration for living itself points to their virtuous natures, for who could be proud of, or find a reason to live in, an adulterous wife or ungrateful daughter?

¹²⁰ Pliny states both are role models for men to follow; another example of female modeling of *virtus* is via Cloelia's status as described in Seneca's *Consolatio Ad Marciam*. The male reading of the statue (and other such exemplary women) also functions as a shaming tool; the statue taunts (*exprobat*) the young men who see her, shaming them into reforming their behavior (Langlands 2004, 124).

¹²¹ Plin. *Ep.* 1.12.3: "Although he had many causes for living: an excellent conscience and public reputation, the greatest authority, and a wife and daughter and sisters and a grandchild, besides...."

¹²² Plin. *Ep.* 1.22: "he owed it to the prayers of his wife and the tears of his daughter...."

An episode similar to that described in these letters, which casts more light on their significance and identifies their Stoic overtones, is found in Seneca's *Epistles*. Seneca describes his situation with his wife Paulina, who pleads with him to linger through his illnesses and degeneration in old age for her sake and for the sake of all who feel affection for him. Seneca gives in to her appeals, on the principle that *Ille, qui non uxorem, non amicum tanti putat, ut diutius in vita commoretur, qui perseverabit mori, delicatus est.*¹²³ In this case Paulina keeps him strong, keeps his resolve from slipping into indulging himself in suicide as an escape, the easy way out - she keeps him upright and his courage intact, and prevents his masculinity and *virtus* from slipping in his old age. It is a peculiar situation in these letters that the primary appeal to the inflicted's masculinity comes not from male friends or relatives, but wives and daughters. When Hispulla calls Pliny in to persuade Rufus to live, it is as a last resort. Moreover, it appears that they appeal not necessarily to his rationality, but rather to his emotions, through prayers and tears.

Pliny's women, therefore, are assigned both active and passive roles in shaping their husband's public images and masculinity. His own wife helps him with his literary career, as does the wife of Saturninus, who also produces quality work of her own. The women with *virtus* actively shape their own husbands in turn, when the men's masculinity is under threat by illness, old age, or political environment. The daughters of Corellius Rufus and Fundanus are exemplary women, ideal in every way, and firmly shaped by their fathers to be their images in life and after death. The men's public images are thus bolstered by their relationships with their wives and daughters, and many of the situations Pliny describes occur in private, with the exception of his own defense of Corellia; so, by writing about these private contexts, Pliny is emphasizing the importance of that sphere in determining and shaping a man's image and masculinity. And by portraying his own domestic life and that of his

¹²³ Sen. *Ep.* 104.3: "He who doesn't consider his wife and friends as much, doesn't linger in life for very long, he who persists in dying, is self-indulgent."

subjects and addressees as ideal, he is offering their *virtutes* for public affirmation of their masculinity.

Stattius also uses private and domestic activities, or private in quasi-public situations, as encomium settings to display a man's virtue; while some of his addressees were retired or semi-retired from public life, such as Pollius Felix, others, like Stella, were young and prominently involved in public office.¹²⁴ This was a product of his attempts to marry "public epideixis of the Greek world and the mainstream Roman tradition of the private communication between poet and addressee."¹²⁵ Women, as part of the images of individual men, appear almost invariably as the stereotypical manly *matrona* - equal to Cornelia as wives and mothers, equal to their husbands in mind and courage. His married couples are always true partnerships, with the women equal to the men in personal character and ability.

In 1.2, Statius sets out his wifely ideal; written in A.D. 90 on the marriage of L. Arruntius Stella to Violentilla, the ode was commissioned by Stella, to whom Statius also dedicates Book 1 of the *Silvae*. Stella was an upcoming young aristocrat, having held curule office and membership in the College of Fifteen, and would be suffect consul in 101 or 102. Violentilla was a rich widow from Naples. Statius casts both bride and groom as ideals of their genders, and together they make the ideal couple. Stella possessed the virtues of noble birth and good looks: *...quem patriciis maioribus ortum / Nobilitas gavisata tulit praesagaque formae / protinus e nostro posuit cognomina caelo*.¹²⁶ Though pierced fully by Cupid's arrow, Stella is able to control his desire, exhibiting excellent self-discipline: *ex illo quantos iuvenis premat anxius ignes / ...quantum me nocte dieque / urgentem ferat: haud ulli vehementior*

¹²⁴ Nauta 2002, 212, 218, 222-3, 227-9.

¹²⁵ Hardie 1983, 150-1. For Statius' conversion of private loss into public occasion, see Donka D. Markus, "Grim Pleasures: Statius' Poetic *Consolationes*," *Arethusa* 37 (2004): 105-35.

¹²⁶ Stat. *Silv.* 1.2.71-3: "...he whom Nobilitas bore in joy from patrician ancestors and without hesitation fixed with a name from our heavens, in a presentiment of beauty."

*umquam / incubui, genetrix, iterataque vulnera fodi....*¹²⁷ He is also a skilled poet, especially when it comes to love (later Statius describes his verses as *docta carmina*, 1.2.172-3): *...armiferos poterat memorare labores / claraque facta virum et torrentes sanguine campos, / sed tibi plectra dedit mitisque incedere vates / maluit....*¹²⁸ Stella has specifically rejected war and acts of courage, that is *virtus* as traditionally defined, as topics to honor and immortalize through his writing, instead preferring love and the female object of his affection. In fact, Statius, by emphasizing above the wounds (*vulnera*) of love which Stella endures with such patience, is casting Stella's struggle with love as a battle in which he displays courage, perseverance, and loyalty, just a soldier would in war. Thus, Stella is acquiring *virtus* through his own private war, a *virtus* which can be affirmed and legitimized by the public gaze because Statius is here producing it for public consumption and immortalizing it in poetry.

When Cupid is done with his panegyric of Stella, Venus sets in with her praise of the bride, Violentilla. She, too, is beautiful and aristocratic, leaving Venus *formae / egregium mirata decus, cui gloria patrum / et generis certabat honos...mihi dulcis imago / prosiluit.*¹²⁹ But beauty and birth are not her only assets: *huic quamvis census dederim largita beatos, / vincit opes animo.*¹³⁰ Statius is showing the substance under the surface, impressing upon the reader that Violentilla is rightly honored as an excellent woman, possessing not just the virtues he labels earlier as false - birth and beauty - but also the true ones, which he continues to detail. Though this is her second marriage, she remains loyal to her first husband's memory, denying suitors, yielding to this second marriage only because of Venus' pressure

¹²⁷ Stat. *Silv.* 1.2.81-4, 91: "The anxious young man suppresses such great fires in himself...how he bears my urging through night and day: hardly anyone have I leaned on more violently, mother, and prodded wounds repeatedly...."

¹²⁸ Stat. *Silv.* 1.2.96-9: "...he could have spoken of armed efforts and famous deeds of men and fields of action running with blood, but he gave his lyre to you and preferred to walk as a gentle bard...."

¹²⁹ Stat. *Silv.* 1.2.107-09 and 112-15: "...admiring the exceptional beauty of her shape, which is contested by the glory of her forefathers and the renown of her family...She has shot up in my pleasant image."

¹³⁰ Stat. *Silv.* 1.2.121-6: "Although I have given her the gift of generous wealth, she conquers riches with her spirit."

and her own virtuous feelings for Stella: *...thalami quamvis iuga ferre secundi / saepe neget maerens. ipsam iam cedere sensi / inque vicem tepuisse viro.*¹³¹ And: *Quonam hic usque sopor vacuique modestia lecti...quis morum fideique modus? numquamne virili / summittere iugo?*¹³² This reluctance is a further indication of her virtuous character, and is a theme Statius expresses elsewhere. His own mother continues her loyalty after his father's death: *certe seiungere matrem / iam gelidis nequeo bustis; te sentit habetque, / te videt et tumulos ortuque obituque salutat.*¹³³

Statius argues that while her loyalty is admirable, she should love Stella also because he is the ideal husband, thereby shifting the focus of the poem back to him:

*at enim hic tibi sanguine toto / deditus unam omnes inter miratur amatque, / nec formae nec stirpis egens...hunc et bis senos...cernes attollere fasces / ante diem...iamque parens Latius, cuius praenoscerent mentem / fas mihi, purpureos habitus iuvenique curule / indulgebit ebur, Dacasque (et gloria maior) / exuvias laurosque dabit celebrare recentes.*¹³⁴

In other words, Stella will be completely loyal and loves her with all his heart, guaranteeing their marriage will be one of *concordia*, similar to Statius' own marriage to Claudia (3.5), or Pliny's to Calpurnia. As he enjoys Domitian's favor, Stella will also be politically successful, achieving *virtus* in the public sphere, just as he also displays it in private.

Once Violentilla has submitted to being Stella's wife, the marriage ceremony itself becomes a spectacle which draws the eyes of all Rome: *omnis honos, cuncti veniunt ad limina fasces, / omnis plebeio teritur praetexta tumultu...felices utrosque*

¹³¹ Stat. *Silv.* 1.2.138-9: "...although she often refuses to bear the yoke of a second marriage, still mourning. But already she is giving in to her feelings and is warming to the man in turn."

¹³² Stat. *Silv.* 1.2.162-5: "Just how much longer for this sleep and modest emptiness of couch...what limit to custom and and loyalty? Or will you never yield to the yoke of a man?"

¹³³ Stat. *Silv.* 5.3.241-3: "It is certain that I am unable to separate my mother from your now cold tomb; she feels and has you, sees you and greets your grave at sunrise and sunset."

¹³⁴ Stat. *Silv.* 1.2.170-81: "But certainly this one is devoted to you with his whole life, among all he loves and admires you, and he lacks for neither beauty nor lineage...you will see him lift up the twice six fasces before the time...and now the Latian father, whose mind it is permitted me to foreknow, will grant the young man purple robes and curule ivory, and allow him (a greater glory!) to celebrate Dacian spoils and the latest laurels."

*vocant, sed in agmine plures / invidere viro.*¹³⁵ The crowd here beholds and approves the pair's virtues as individuals and as a couple. Statius thus has both the crowd and the reader of the poem as witnesses to the creation of Violentilla's public image as Stella's ideal wife, and of Stella's image as an ideal Roman man. That Stella commissioned the poem and chose specifically his wedding as the topic which Statius should display is a clear indication that Stella considered his private life as crucial to the construction and enhancement of his image as an ideal Roman man.

Book 5's dedication is addressed to Abascantus, the official in charge of the imperial correspondence, and is solely concerned with the subject of 5.1, a consolation on the death of Abascantus' wife, Priscilla, a woman much like Violentilla. Incidentally, Statius mentions Abascantus' position as one reason for writing: *...latus omne divinae domus semper demereri pro mea mediocritate conitor. nam qui bona fide deos colit amat et sacerdotes.*¹³⁶ Statius sees this as an occasion to strengthen his friendship with Abascantus and to express his devotion to Domitian through the emperor's servants; this further indicates that private occasions are subject matter for public reputations. However, not all Statius' reasons are calculating: *amavit enim uxorem meam Priscilla et amando fecit mihi illam probatorem. post hoc ingratus sum si lacrimas tuas transeo.*¹³⁷ In other words, Priscilla's favor to his wife must be repaid by him, as his public image may be damaged otherwise by appearing to lack gratitude - his wife's associations and debts are his as well. Unity in marriage, indeed.

Abascantus' devotion and extreme grief are evident; he weeps endlessly, tears his clothes, and finds no respite from his bereavement (5.1.1-42). Despite the fact that these are more typically female behaviors in mourning, as women were perceived to be uncontrolled in their grief, his excessive lamentation is praiseworthy

¹³⁵ Stat. *Silv.* 1.2.232-7: "All offices, all *fasces* together come to the threshold, all togas crush together in the common tumult...and they call them both lucky, but more in the crowd envy the man."

¹³⁶ Stat. *Silv.* 5.Pref.9-11: "I always strive to serve any person of the divine house through my mediocrity. For who worships the gods in good faith, loves also the priests."

¹³⁷ Stat. *Silv.* 5.Pref.6-8: "Indeed, Priscilla loved my wife and, loving her, made herself more esteemed to me. After that I am an ingrate if I pass over your tears."

for Statius, and is even encouraged by the poet.¹³⁸ In the Preface to Book 5, the poet notes pithily, *uxorem enim vivam amare voluptas est, defunctam religio*.¹³⁹ The imperial gaze also notes and approves his devotion: *...maerentemque videt, lectique arcana ministri / hinc etiam documenta capit, quod diligis umbram / et colis exsequias. hic est castissimus ardor, / hic amor a domino meritis censore probari*.¹⁴⁰ In other words, his behavior reflects his true moral character, its chastity and loyalty, and therefore improves his public image - one officially approved by the emperor Domitian. At the funeral itself, the public gaze also studies him and passes similar judgment: *sed toto spectatur in agmine coniunx / solus, in hunc magnae flectuntur lumina Romae / ceu iuvenes natos suprema ad busta ferentem*.¹⁴¹ His womanish, excessive lamentation is thus accepted and approved by the public gaze as an indication of his good masculine virtues; it demonstrates that he is a reliable, loyal, moral man whose private life is chaste, and who therefore must also be loyal and moral in his public duties.

Like Violentilla, Priscilla was once married herself, but the first marriage was a footnote: *sed tu ceu virginitate iugatum / visceribus totis animaque amplexa fovebat*....¹⁴² Statius emphasizes how Priscilla was still like a virgin, coming like Violentilla to her second marriage, with the second husband the true love and the real marriage. So, he can speak of her as *univira*: *ex te maior honos, unum novisse cubile, / unum secretis agitare sub ossibus ignem*.¹⁴³ In other words, as a “virgin” and therefore still naive and girlish, it is implied that Priscilla is willing to take Abascantus’ lead and be formed by him. Like Pliny’s wife Calpurnia, she also

¹³⁸ Markus 2004, 126-7.

¹³⁹ Stat. *Silv.* 5.Pref.4-5: “Indeed, to love a living wife is pleasure, to love a dead wife is religion.”

¹⁴⁰ Stat. *Silv.* 5.1.39-42: “...and he sees you grieving, and takes from this private proof indeed of his reserved servant, that you love her shade and perform your worship. This is a most chaste passion, this a love deserving of commendation by the chief censor.”

¹⁴¹ Stat. *Silv.* 5.1.216-20: “But in the whole procession, the husband alone was watched, the eyes of great Rome directed upon him as though he was carrying young sons to the final tomb.”

¹⁴² Stat. *Silv.* 5.1.46-7: “But you she cherished as if she was a virgin bride, embracing you with her entire flesh and soul.”

¹⁴³ Stat. *Silv.* 5.1.55-6: “Greater is the honor from within yourself, to spend your life in only one bed, with one flame inside your secret, innermost parts.”

concerns herself solely with supporting her husband: *fovet anxia curas / coniugis hortaturque simul flectitque labores*.¹⁴⁴ Priscilla was thus ideal in every way possible: beautiful and of noble birth, with the true esteem given to women of moral virtue (5.1.51-4); like Cornelia, faithful to her husband and immune to offers of wealth and power to abandon that chastity (5.1.60-3); taking complete joy and deriving all pleasure and satisfaction from her husband's advancement, but remaining frugal and temperate with him (5.1.108-26); her image she subsumes in his, in other words, and her esteem comes from her virtue as his wife. Finally, she also possesses *virtus* of a martial brand: *Quod si anceps metus ad maiora vocasset, / illa vel armiferas pro coniuge laeta catervas / fulmineosque ignes mediique pericula ponti / exciperet...si castra darent, vellet gestare pharetras, / vellet Amazonia latus intercludere pelta*,¹⁴⁵ just to see her husband in battle with the emperor. Here she recalls Turia, though unlike that matronly model, Priscilla never had to actually defend her man, but Statius makes it clear she would have done so if called upon (rather like his own wife, Claudia, at 3.5.10). At her death, like a good *matrona*, her husband is the last thing she sees or cares about: *Iamque cadunt vultus oculisque novissimus error / obtunsaque aures, nisi cum vox sola mariti / noscitur. illum unum media de morte reversa / mens videt...*¹⁴⁶ Statius thus makes clear that in all her actions and virtues, Priscilla took her lead from Abascantus, and that even in death, her gaze was upon on her husband. Even by her death, then, she augments Abascantus' public image, as it provides an occasion for Statius, Domitian, and the public to remember her *virtus*, associate Abascantus as its source and guiding force, and

¹⁴⁴ Stat. *Silv.* 5.1.119-20: "She anxiously supports the responsibilities of her husband, and encourages his efforts and at the same time guides them."

¹⁴⁵ Stat. *Silv.* 5.1.66-9; 127-31: "Because if a fearful danger called her to greater things, for her husband she would even have gladly taken on armed bands and lightning fire and perils in the middle of the sea...if the army had allowed, she would have wanted to bear quivers, wanted to block her flank with an Amazonian shield...."

¹⁴⁶ Stat. *Silv.* 5.1.170-5: "And now her face falls and her eyes wander a final time and her ears deafened, except when the voice of her husband only is known. Her mind sees him alone, returning from the middle of death...."

observe his *virtus* further as he publicly mourns in an extreme display of an ideal husband's love and devotion.

3.3 is another consolation, but the wife plays a much smaller part. Addressed to Claudius Etruscus on the death of his father, contains a woman, Etrusca, who parallels Violentilla in many ways. The elder Etruscus was once a slave, freed by Tiberius, and subsequently served the emperors, with Vespasian making him a knight; he fell afoul of Domitian in some way, and was exiled, with the younger Etruscus accompanying him, though returning to Rome at some point. When Domitian later pardoned him, the elder Etruscus returned to Rome and shortly thereafter died. He had married Etrusca:

*Quis sublime genus formamque insignis Etruscae / nesciat? haudquaquam proprio
mihi cognita visu, / sed decus eximium famae par reddit imago...nec vulgare genus:
fascēs summamque curulem / frater et Ausonios enses mandataque fidus / signa
tulit...sic quicquid patrio cessatum a sanguine, mater / reddidit, obscurumque latus
clarescere vidit / conubio gavisā domus. nec pignora longe....¹⁴⁷*

Etrusca echoes Statius' other women in displaying many of the same ideal virtues: she is beautiful, of noble birth (higher than her husband's, who was a freedman), and fertile (producing two sons). Here, the elder Etruscus' reputation and status is raised not just by the fact that she is of higher birth than her husband's own as a freedman-turned-equestrian, but also because Statius is casting her as a traditional elite woman, equating her with Violentilla or Priscilla. This is reminiscent of funerary monuments portraying freed couples using elite symbols and virtues, with the message that the wife can be traditional and adhere to the elite model because the couple can afford it. Moreover, Etrusca also transfers honor to her son Claudius Etruscus, the addressee of the poem, who, though the son of a freedman, can claim

¹⁴⁷ Stat. *Silv.* 3.3.111-22: "Who does not know of distinguished Etrusca's exalted family and beauty? By no means did I know her with my own sight, but her bust, on par with her renown, renders her exceptional beauty... nor was her family common: her brother held the *fascēs* and the highest curule office, and loyally commanded Ausonian swords and standards... Thus whatever was remiss in the father's blood, the mother delivered, and the house saw its dark side become brighter in rejoicing in the marriage. Nor were children far off...."

more prestigious lineage through his mother. Her image as an ideal elite woman here is also meant to imply that she gave him an upbringing proper to an ideal elite man, further enhancing his image. Etrusca is thus the keystone for the construction of both her husband's and her sons' public images and masculinities as ideal elite men.

2.2 contains a similarly brief mention of a woman, but she is even more important to her husband's image than Etrusca was to Etruscus'. The poem was written on the villa at Surrentum of Statius' friend, Pollius Felix; though outside Rome, Statius is bringing the villa into view of the Roman public via publication of his ephrastic poem. The villa being the main subject, everything inside it is also being put on display by Statius, turning Pollius' private world inside out for viewing (metaphorically also turning his character inside out). Included in the contents is, of course, Pollius' wife, Polla. Statius provides her at the end of the poem, closing the litany of ornaments of the villa, implying that she is perhaps the greatest ornament of all. Speaking directly to her, Statius says,

*Tuque, nurus inter longe <praedocta Latinas / parque viro mentem, cui non>
praecordia curae, / non frontem vertere minae, sed candida semper / gaudia et in
vultu curarum ignara voluptas: / non tibi sepositas infelix strangulat arca / divitias
avidique animum dispendia torquent / feneratoris...non ulla deo meliore cohaerent /
pectora, non alias docuit Concordia mentes....*¹⁴⁸

The key in this passage is *concordia*. Here again harmony in marriage emphasized - both the husband and wife are ideal and work in unison. Moreover, her *mens* is equal to and in perfect agreement with his.

Interestingly, though Statius suggests that Polla ran the household finances, as per the traditional wifely role, the wealth specifically referred to in the passage is

¹⁴⁸ Stat. *Silv.* 2.2.147-55: "And you, by far among <Latin ladies the most learned and whose mind is equal to your man, whose> cares have not changed your heart, nor threats your brow, but who always carries bright joy and unsuspecting pleasure in your expression: for you an unfruitful chest doesn't strangle reserved riches, nor do the costs of greedy interest twist your spirit...No hearts are more blessed by the gods in harmony, no other minds have Concordia so instructed...."

attributed to her alone, implying that she held and cultivated this wealth independently of her husband. This would in turn seem to give her some degree of independent influence and visibility. However, Statius has conditioned the statement by his claim that Polla and Pollius are of one mind and character, sharing virtues and opinions. So, the fact that she is skilled at dealing with wealth, and does so without contamination by *avaritia*, is a reflection also of how Pollius uses and responds to his wealth, which is the focus of the poem.¹⁴⁹ The reader is thus guided into believing that Pollius' behavior with riches parallels that of Polla's - neither are governed by their wealth, but rather govern it.

Emphasizing this equation between Pollius and Polla is the absence of praise for more traditionally feminine virtues. Nowhere does Statius mention any more feminine virtues of chastity, modesty, obedience, or fertility that appear in his portrayals of Violentilla or other women, and that also appear in the imperial woman ideal and in accounts of perfect *matronae* from the past, such as Cornelia or Lucretia. Her virtues are ethical and intellectual virtues, which appear also in the masculine ideal - she is temperate, moderate, self-disciplined, free of avarice, and intelligent. This de-feminization of Polla's character encourages the Roman male reader to complete the equation of wife with husband by mapping Polla's virtues onto Pollius - transferring her *virtus* to his.

Finally, the carefree peace which Statius sees in Polla (2.2.148-50) is an echo of the peace he has already noted in Pollius: *quem non ambigui fasces, non mobile vulgus, / non leges, non castra terent...tempus erat cum te geminae suffragia terrae / diriperent...sed tua securos portus placidamque quietem / intravit non quassa ratis*.¹⁵⁰ Despite his extensive public service to two cities (Dicarchus and Naples) and to Rome itself, he has emerged into retirement and leisure without enemies, unscathed, and with peace of mind, largely because Pollius Stoically accepts what

¹⁴⁹ Statius even compares his wealth to that of Croesus, 2.2.121.

¹⁵⁰ Stat. *Silv.* 2.2.123-4; 133-4; 140-1: "You will not be worn out by the untrustworthy *fasces*, nor the impressionable mob, nor the laws, nor the armies...There was a time when the ballots of two lands split you...but your ship, unshaken, entered a safe port and quiet peace."

comes and is master of himself (2.2.124-7). He has withdrawn himself from public competition, leaving only his leisure for Statius to celebrate here as his continuing glory. Pollius is gone, but not, as Statius ensures through the publication of this poem, forgotten.

In short, Polla is perhaps the most extreme example of the use of women to comment on men, as Statius literally equates her with Pollius. She is the personification of Pollius' inner self, meant to display his character as an ideal Roman man, just as Statius' display of the villa and wealth contained in it is meant to communicate Pollius' culture, influence, and status.

In Statius and Pliny, the ideal aristocratic woman is thus seen as an agent in improving her husband's or male relatives' masculinity and image. This is done in two ways: passively through transference of virtues, where the woman's display of *virtus* and ideal feminine characteristics is meant to both parallel and map onto her men's *virtutes*; or actively, where the woman uses her *virtus* to reinforce her husband's masculinity, remind him of its requirements, force upon him its duties, and press him into acting it out. Both authors also emphasize ideal marriage as primarily characterized by *concordia*; this harmony meant not only that the couple fulfilled their respective roles and complemented each other, but also that the husband's public image was his wife's concern, and her actions were on behalf of that image. In attributing such agency to women in the defining and regulation of masculinity, and recognizing the appropriation of feminine *virtus* and the private sphere into the Roman masculine ideal, Statius and Pliny are thus identifying femininity as a source for Roman masculinity.

Conclusion

In discussing imperial and aristocratic masculinities, a common thread which emerged was the use of the private sphere (and women as its inhabitants) to help discuss and redefine masculinity. Most prominently was the case of imperial women;

despite Livia's official image of traditionality and conservatism, the senate voted her public honors and an arch, an untraditional and public move which demonstrates "the complete redefinition of public service, public and private gender roles, and the other lines between family and state which had come with the imperial system."¹⁵¹ On both the imperial and aristocratic levels, women's lineage becomes increasingly used to champion one's aristocratic descent (especially for claims to ties with noble Republican families);¹⁵² hence Claudius' eagerness to emphasize his familial ties with Livia, or Statius' emphasis on Violentilla's birth. Some aristocratic men also chose to represent themselves in speeches and other media as good husbands with harmonious, strong marriages – the new public virtues.¹⁵³ Using the cultural language of gender stereotypes and ideals helped the male speaker or author signal quickly and efficiently to his audience the nature of the masculinity of himself or the man he was representing or interpreting.

In this language, women could be several things: a statue (wife) made in the sculptor's (husband's) image and put on display to reflect the sculptor; a sometimes anonymous part of the backdrop to the imperial show, an object acted upon, a pawn without control, the treatment of which reveals an emperor's manliness; a convenient propaganda opportunity to be mined and controlled; or independent actors whose sole concern is improving their husbands' masculine performances. These nuances in the representation of women as comments on men demonstrate the flexibility (some Romans might have said instability) of the gender ideals with which the authors examined above were working. They also indicate how aristocratic men appropriated and shaped different aspects of femininity in order to increase their relevance in the gender discourse on masculinity, and did so according to their purposes and whose image they were portraying, if it was of themselves, their peers, or the emperor.

¹⁵¹ Severy 2003, 242.

¹⁵² Matthias Gelzer, *The Roman Nobility*, trans. Robin Seager (Oxford 1969), 151; also Stat. *Silv.* 3.3.111-22.

¹⁵³ Severy 2003, 247.

Aristocratic men's use of feminine virtue to inform masculinity thus thrust the home and women increasingly into the public sphere by creating the private as an alternate public arena. This increased importance of women and the private sphere in this visible discourse contributed to the other growing trend in imperial Rome at the time, the expanding presence and visibility of women in the public sphere due to their increased wealth and independence. The next chapter will examine this trend in more detail, focusing on how femininity was defined and regulated and how (or if) it was affected by these changes.

Chapter 3

Looking at Women to See Women: Female Public Image in the Gaze

Introduction

So far this study has examined the effects of Empire on the discourse of Roman masculinity, including how women were utilized in that discussion. This chapter will complete the picture of the shifts Roman gender underwent by examining the discourse on femininity, as seen through women's public images.

But first, what exactly is meant by a woman's "public image?" After all, for men, this meant a publicly known reputation, a political persona, and a performance of masculinity. However, femininity did not have to be performed publicly, and traditionally was not supposed to be - activities which were traditionally female, such as wool-working, child-bearing and -raising, and managing the household, took place within the *domus* and out of the public eye. Women's images were thus based on private behavior, and they did not require a public persona to complete their femininity.

However, as hinted in Chapter 2, women were increasingly acquiring public images in the Empire, due in part to the loosening of legal restrictions, the visible role of imperial women, and the greater intrusion of the private sphere into the public.

There were several factors which could affect a woman's independence, including personal wealth, geographical location, education, and marital status. During this time, education for women became more acceptable, and as a result there were more learned women among the aristocracy; in fact, "*Doctae puellae* become important commodities in the symbolic economy."¹ Aside from running the household and performing social duties with and on behalf of her husband, a woman maintained "social links with her own family; if legally independent she could be

¹ Habinek 1998, 131.

managing her own estates and incomes.”² Certainly the imperial women were often financially independent, but aristocratic women also could possess impressive portfolios.

With this combination of education and wealth, a woman could cultivate her own social networks of *amici* and through them wield *potentia*, influence. Though women did not and could not have official political power, were not recognized as political agents within the state structure, and could not hold office or vote, access and control of indirect channels of influence was available to them. This *potentia* was characterized as informal and unofficial to contrast with official *auctoritas*. However, informal influence “cannot be fitted into neat[ly visible] structures such as ‘emperor and senate’, ‘emperor and army’, and ‘emperor and plebs’.”³ By its nature, it is behind the scenes and outside official, and officially visible, structures and symbols of power. With real power shifting outside the old governmental structures, this influence became more important in the day-to-day workings of the imperial government, with personal influence over the emperor trumping many official channels. Though women could not hold offices or appointments themselves, they could still wield their influence on behalf of others, which brought them under the gaze of the emperor: the increasingly common charge of adultery, and “that charges were made against Plancina in addition to her husband Piso in this affair is indicative of another new trend in the principate - the charging of aristocratic women with political crimes...Positions of prestige and opportunities for social and economic enrichment were dispensed by a small imperial circle rather than by an electorate, and women could participate in this game of influence and connections just as well as men.”⁴

This belies the assertion of some scholars that it was easier for women to have power in the provinces, the periphery, rather than at Rome the center, because

² Harlow and Laurence 2002, 79.

³ Laurence 1997, 129.

⁴ Severy 2003, 244. This trend was also started by Augustus; see G. Williams 1996, 131.

cultural and social protocol regarding gender roles, political offices, mattered more in the capital.⁵ This also represents a difference from the East, where from the Hellenistic age onwards, women benefactors and those with honorific titles were named in inscriptions, and their male relatives and traditional virtues listed along with their accomplishments; however, they were never given official political roles or responsibilities,⁶ making them fronts for their families as elements of familial public image but without any real power or independence.⁷

Inscriptions in Rome and Italy, rather, attest to the accumulation and exercise of influence by wealthy women. True, Latin literature and epitaphs praised women for the standard litany of traditional virtues, like chastity, loyalty, or fertility; but in honorific inscriptions between A.D. 1 and 300, when they include descriptions of the reasons for the honor or some quality of the honoree, Italian cities “did not conflate the image of patroness and matron.”⁸ The language of benefaction replaces the language of traditional virtue, and the language of benefaction is not changed from what was used for men; familial connections named are more about establishing status of the women than necessarily lending honor to the men.⁹ Inscriptions which honor women for the generosity of their male relatives sometimes included mention of traditional virtue, but these mentions were not the reason for the inscription; other inscriptions which mention traditional virtue do so in conjunction with the generosity of the female honoree or of a female relative of the honoree, and in all these cases the generosity is named as the reason for the honor - the virtues named are vague epithets and are meant to garnish the portrait of the honoree, not to take center stage as the reason for the honor.¹⁰

⁵ MacMullen 1986, 434-43.

⁶ Lefkowitz, “Influential Women,” 1983, 56-7.

⁷ See also Riet van Bremen, “Women and Wealth,” in Cameron and Kuhrt 1983, and *The Limits of Participation: Women and Civic Life in the Greek East in the Hellenistic and Roman Periods* (Amsterdam 1996).

⁸ Forbis 1990, 496.

⁹ Forbis 1990, 497.

¹⁰ Forbis 1990, 503-6.

This implies that when women thrust themselves or were thrust into the public eye by virtue of their position (as with imperial women) or their personal wealth or influence (as increasingly happened with aristocratic women), public activity was not included in the construction of femininity, either as a virtue or a necessary space for its performance. This distinction, a reflection of the pre-Empire discourse which excluded the public sphere as a site for the performance of femininity, therefore created a tension between non-traditional, unfeminine activities and the *matrona* ideal.

I will argue that in negotiating this tension, the mix of tradition and innovation which was briefly discussed in Chapter 2 in regards to Livia emerged (in a less public form than Livia's) as the predominant model after which the images of aristocratic women were made. That is, the public images of aristocratic women emphasized traditional feminine roles and virtues to gloss over the innovation of having more visible, independent public images. So, since Roman women still needed an image that was comprehensible within Roman gender language and was socially acceptable, the stereotypes introduced in Chapter 2 were still useful as a shorthand language to represent a woman who should be taken seriously and respected - to wield influence a woman had to work within the system, as it were.

In this analysis, I will use sources where the addressee or primary subject of the text is a woman; where the authors are providing specific comments on women directly and men, if at all, only indirectly; or where a female gaze is evident, either as author or reader. To parallel the previous chapters, the authors used will include the Younger Pliny and Statius, with additional examinations of the *Consolatio ad Liviam* and Seneca's consolations to Helvia and Marcia. Why reach back to the Julio-Claudian era for Seneca's consolations to Marcia and Helvia, or the *Ad Liviam*? In general, there is a dearth of material addressed directly to women, or that extensively treats women as objects of the public or reader's gaze. The value of Seneca's consolations are therefore twofold: one, that they are directly addressed to women and examine female subjects, and two, even more rarely, they also assume

a female as well as male readership. So, through the *Ad Helviam* and *Ad Marciam* it can be seen how a Roman man constructed femininity and a woman's public image for public consumption, and how those constructions might be read in both the male and female gaze. It may be that what men present about women, was equally compelling for women, and was in a language they too valued and understood. The *Ad Liviam* is also valuable because it addresses a female directly, though it may not have been written while Livia was alive; but in so doing, it still presents an elite reading of and response to Livia's public image. As the work also contains parallels in style and content with the *Ad Marciam*,¹¹ the use of both Seneca and the *Ad Liviam* in comparison will help to draw out the similarities and differences in how femininity was constructed and displayed in both imperial and aristocratic women's public images.

Imperial Women

Imperial women, the most visible females in Roman society, often had distinct public images by virtue of their unique place in the continuation of the political dynasty. As discussed in Chapter 2, these images were often regulated and constructed by the imperial household, if not the emperor himself, with an unknown degree of input by the woman herself. The image, whether seen through sculpture, public appearances, inscriptions, or literature, was meant to be individualized, since the woman needed to be identified within the regime and household, but incorporated more generic cultural symbols and virtues to make suggestions to the viewer about what judgments he should come to concerning her personal character, household rank, and political status - that is, her position relative to the emperor, and if she was

¹¹ John Richmond, "Doubtful Works Ascribed to Ovid," *ANRW* II 31.4 (1981): 2776-78; also Henk Schoonhoven, *The Pseudo-Ovidian Ad Liviam De Morte Drusi: A Critical Text with Introduction and Commentary* (Groningen 1992): 38-9.

in favor or not. For example, symbols were mined from the realm of religion to associate themselves with divinity and divine virtues;

“these virtues reflected the requirements of their public role in the dynastic politics of the empire as the wife, mother, or daughter of the emperor; as priestess; and as a benefactor of the empire’s cities and citizens...The public nature of the images in which imperial women were associated with goddesses, specifically coins, state relief, temples, and statues dedicated in public spaces such as marketplaces and civic squares, suggests that it was the woman’s role, rather than her individual personality, that linked her with divinity.”¹²

This preference for the generic over the individual placed the woman’s image more firmly in the context of her family and her contributions to it. It also kept her image closely in line with the *matrona* ideal and feminine models. In this case, imperial women seem to have less “independent” public images.

This tension in art between having to individualize imperial women to make them recognizable, while keeping them within a strict framework of symbols and ideals, also emerges in literary representations. This section will analyze the navigation of this tension in the literature, specifically the *Consolatio Ad Liviam*, and will identify one key method used by aristocratic men to resolve this problem of individual vs. ideal in imperial women’s images. Livia was the most prominent and powerful of the empresses and one who still informed Pliny’s, Statius’, and Seneca’s ideas of an empress; she was extremely wealthy on her own, largely as a result of her position as empress and its facilitation of forming networks of *amici* and investments.¹³ She also held special prominence continuing after her lifetime, and was honored by Trajan. The *Ad Liviam*, though earlier than the Flavian-Trajanic focus of this study so far, is useful as the longest single literary treatment of an imperial woman. For example, Tacitus’ portrayals of imperial women in the *Historiae*

¹² Susan B. Matheson, “The Divine Claudia: Women as Goddesses in Roman Art,” in Kleiner and Matheson 1996, 191-2.

¹³ Barrett 2002, 175.

and the *Annals*, while also extensive at times, are fragmented by their placement in his larger histories of Roman political and military struggles; they are also meant to fit within his greater purpose of edifying his readers on the problems in Roman political and social systems. So, these texts do not fit the main criteria laid out in the Introduction. As an extensive treatment of Livia's public image and its interpretation by an elite man, the *Ad Liviam* is therefore uniquely useful for the study of imperial women's public images. From this analysis, I will argue that while the author openly acknowledges Livia's power and visibility, he attempts to relieve aristocratic anxieties about this influence by emphasizing Livia's strict adherence to traditional feminine ideals, and how these virtues provide a check upon her ability and willingness to access or use such power. Her visibility also provides a contrast to the Flavian and Trajanic women, to be examined second in this section; though these women were clearly not invisible to the public, their images were given a low profile.

Livia was certainly one of the empresses whose image lasted longest after her death, and even the death of her dynasty;¹⁴ the idea or image of Livia continued to resonate with Roman society. Livia became "something of a political football after her death,"¹⁵ largely because her image wielded significant symbolic capital and was thus useful to later generations. Her image, formed during her reign as *mater patriae* and solidified afterwards as Diva Augusta, was still compelling for Romans, and anything that could capture the public's attention could still be put to political use. Galba "issued several series of coins honouring her. She appears in the Arval record for Galba, Otho, and perhaps Vitellius. Trajan reissued Tiberius' type with a reverse

¹⁴ Barrett 2002, 223. One criterion perhaps for determining the independence of an imperial woman's public image from her family's is if the portraits, the images, the dialogue outlive her death, the emperor's death, or the end of the dynasty; for example, Drusilla disappears after her death and after Caligula's, but Agrippina I and II and Livia do not. Men keep using them, and their visible profile and relevance continues, and not necessarily as symbols of the Julio-Claudian dynasty, or Augustus, or Nero or Germanicus. Then again, Messalina, who was recognized as operating separately from Claudius - contemporaries perceived him as being under her control and influence, and she doing what she wanted according to her own agenda - met her downfall independently of Claudius, and the senate decreed "the removal of her name and statues from all public and private places." (Richard A. Bauman, *Women and Politics in Ancient Rome* (London 1992 [1994]), 177.

¹⁵ Bauman 1992 [1994], 137.

that depicts Livia, or at least strongly suggests her. A Trajanic inscription from an unknown colony...records that her birthday was still being observed then, with games and gladiatorial shows and a public banquet...[and] Livia's name was used in the marriage oath for more than a century after her death."¹⁶ In other words, she was still popular and important, still in the public eye and memory.

Another manifestation of this popularity is the *Consolatio Ad Liviam*, a short pseudo-Ovidian poem with the purported task of consoling Livia upon death of her son, Drusus, in 9 B.C. The author is decidedly not Ovid, as the style, meter, and taste all fall far short of an Ovidian standard; various other dates offered include A.D. 19/20,¹⁷ sometime between 12 and 37,¹⁸ or as late as 54.¹⁹ All that is known of the author is that he was an equestrian, as references in the poem make clear. Given the lack of an overt political message in the piece,²⁰ and without knowing the author's name, political connections, or anything apart from his equestrian status, his motives for writing the piece remain unclear. It certainly flatters Livia, but the author was an equestrian, not an emperor who had had her as a patroness (Galba), or an emperor who begged comparisons to Augustus (Trajan). Her image was used by such men because it was useful to them for its associations with traditional virtue and Augustan power and legitimacy, but how useful it would be to the consolation's author is unknown, nor does he claim any particular association with her in the poem.

The majority of the poem (through line 328) is a roughly chronological account of Drusus' death, funeral, and how Augustus, Livia, and his wife Antonia all grieved for him. It follows the usual consolation format, recounting both the loss recently suffered and previous ills; there is even a physiognomical description of Drusus as

¹⁶ Barrett 2002, 223.

¹⁷ P.H. Schrijvers, "A Propos de la Datation de la *Consolatio ad Liviam*," *Mnemos.* 41 (1988): 381-4.

¹⁸ Richmond 1981, 2780.

¹⁹ Schoonhoven 1992, 35-8.

²⁰ One such speculative reading might be that Livia's symbolism in the consolation as *mater patriae* who helped bring forth the empire, only to see the hopes for its glowing future die with her firstborn son, might give the political message that the original Augustan vision of the principate had been betrayed and killed.

he is burning upon the funeral pyre (259-62). Lines 329-474 then proceed as a quick listing of the usual justifications offered in consolations for ending mourning, with little transition between each reason. The stock reasons are offered: tears do not bring back the dead (427-8); death claims us all (357-60); Drusus' great deeds are comfort in themselves and will gain him great honor in the afterlife (if such a thing exists, the author adds) (329-42); Livia is a role model and should be moderate in her grief (343-56); and she still has the living, Tiberius and Augustus, to tend to and take joy in (471-4). But apart from these conventional features, a portrait emerges of a Livia equal in power and status to her husband, but who chose not to exercise that authority in deference to traditional expectations; a Livia who commanded great public esteem and affection, and who was very much in the public eye, but who constantly projected adherence to traditional form.

The narrator begins by addressing Livia directly, recounting her reasons for mourning: Drusus was a son who was an ideal man and an ideal commander while still a youth (13-20); his supreme character, strong morality, and overall virtues are lauded throughout the poem. She should have been leading his triumph as the first to greet him and publicly give thanks, but now she is leading his funeral (27-36) and the mourning efforts. After lamenting what good virtue serves, if bad things can still happen to good people, the author elaborates on just how Livia is, embodying the feminine ideal so fully that chastity is the least among her virtues: *quidque pudicitia tantum instituisse bonarum, / ultima sit laudes inter ut illa tuas?*²¹

But in fact, these traditional womanly virtues are downplayed in order to highlight a less traditional one: *Nec nocuisse ulli et fortunam habuisse nocendi, / Nec quemquam nervos extimuisse tuos? / Nec vires errasse tuas campove forove / Quamque licet citra constituisse domum?*²² That is, though she may have had

²¹ *Ad Liv.* 43-4: "And how chastity has rounded out such a quantity of virtues, that it is the last among your praises?"

²² *Ad Liv.* 47-50: "To have neither harmed anyone, yet to have had the chance to harm, nor that anyone feared your strength? Nor that your power strayed to either the campus or the forum, and that you arranged your house within what is permitted?"

potentia sufficient enough to ruin reputations and lives, and had the opportunity and perhaps also the cause to do so, she refrained; she had *potentia* outside the home, but chose not to use it. Livia's influence was certainly wide and widely recognized; sources portray her as a de facto *amicus* to her husband, whose counsel he sought in decisions, as with his male *amici*.²³ Moreover, within her appropriate sphere of power, the *domus*, she did not overreach her authority or create divisions or factions within the household. She held to her traditional role, though her powers and status were untraditional.

This very positive view of Livia is consonant with the official image projected during her lifetime as empress and Augustus' wife, an image which also combined tradition and innovation (as discussed in Chapter 2). Her public activities as a patroness provide examples of this. The Porticus Liviae, built on the site of a luxury villa once owned by Vedius Pollio and willed to Augustus and near to a market (Macellum Liviae) which she also sponsored, returned valuable land to public use, and included an interior garden and an art collection famed for its antiquities.²⁴ While Tiberius helped dedicate the new porticus in January of 7 B.C., within it was a shrine to Concordia financed and dedicated by Livia alone on 11 June; this shrine not only symbolized her harmony and *concordia* in marriage with Augustus, but also "her public identification, encouraged by Augustus, as the pre-eminent benefactor of family life, the first wife and mother in the state, and the exemplar of chaste and old-fashioned Roman womanhood."²⁵ She also sponsored restorations to temples or shrines of Bona Dea, Fortuna Muliebris, Pudicitia Patricia, and Pudicitia Plebeia, all goddesses associated with chastity, marriage, and fertility.²⁶ In these actions she was both exercising very publicly her wealth and influence, but in such a way that they were directed at supporting Augustus' moral program of renewed [traditional]

²³ Bauman 1992 [1994], 124-29; Barrett 2002, 130-1.

²⁴ Marleen B. Flory, "Sic exempla parantur: Livia's Shrine to Concordia and the Porticus Liviae," *Historia* 33 (1984): 326-7. See also Diana E.E. Kleiner, "Imperial Women as Patrons of the Arts in the Early Empire," in Kleiner and Matheson 1996, 32.

²⁵ Flory 1984, 317.

²⁶ Kleiner 1996, 33; Flory 1984, 317-18.

family and marriage values, and were representing herself as the first and most dedicated follower and proponent of the program. Livia wished to use her nontraditional role to support traditional female virtues and roles; that is, to be the exception that proved the rule. This message evidently worked, and was compelling enough for the author to perpetuate the image.

Such a role model must always be in public view to be effective, not only to influence the public's behavior by his/her example, but also so that the public can reaffirm the person's worthiness as a role model by observing if his/her behavior is up to the standard he/she has set. The author reminds Livia of this by emphasizing that imperial grief is always on public display: *vidimus* Augustus, mourning for his three other losses of Marcellus, Agrippa, and Octavia (59-74). He and Octavia wept openly and publicly [*palam*] for Marcellus (441-2). *Vidimus* Tiberius weeping for his brother, dazed and face heavily lined with grief (85-8). And Livia too: *Ad te oculos auresque trahis, tua facta notamus, / Nec vox missa potest principis ore tegi.*²⁷ Interestingly, Livia here is identified as a *princeps*. Earlier she is spoken of as having the power to harm, but not harming - she is powerful but merciful, reminiscent of Augustus' own approach to power (although the famous story of Cinna's plot illustrating this has Livia convincing him to be lenient²⁸ - so she rubs off on him). All eyes are on her by virtue of her position and power, and that position is not distinguished by gender; *princeps* is not qualified by *femina* as it is earlier in the text when referring to Antonia (303). *Princeps* is also used to describe Drusus at lines 285 and 344, so perhaps the word "could at this period still connote 'prominent person' without necessarily implying any constitutional status."²⁹ True enough, she might not have any enshrined constitutional powers, but the author adapts the term

²⁷ *Ad Liv.* 351-2: "You draw to you ears and eyes, we observe your acts, nor is the voice uttered by a princeps' mouth able to be hidden."

²⁸ Barrett 2002, 132-3.

²⁹ Barrett 2002, 133; cf. also Schoonhoven 1992, 151 v.261 and 172 v.352. That 'princeps' is used to describe Drusus and Antonia is not, on second reflection, that surprising; he was the potential heir to Augustus, and Antonia was his wife, in a sense they were the Augustus and Livia of the future; the princeps couple-to-be.

because no other word could describe a person of great public visibility, possessive of *maiestas*,³⁰ and high status. The political power is implied in the term itself, and follows from the author's above discussion of her virtue in not exercising that power. Rather, though her power and position is the same as Augustus, she chooses not to wield it like Augustus, instead using her status as *princeps* to uphold traditional Roman gender roles.

So, she is a role model for all the public, men and women alike, and can not afford to slip up. This is why the author admonishes Livia for displaying extreme grief, a womanish characteristic, immediately after his death; she accepted no food or water, and only the efforts of Augustus and Tiberius brought her back (417-26). She wept constantly (101-18), and she dwells heavily on Drusus' death in a speech the author puts in her voice about her loss (121-64). Perhaps this portrayal of her grief is the author's effort to show his consolation is needed, but her initial immoderation is also noted by Seneca in the *Consolatio Ad Marciam* (discussed below). So the author counsels her, after reminding her that she is being watched, to *Alta mane supraque tuos exurge dolores / Infragilemque animum, quod potes, usque tene. / An melius per te virtutum exempla petemus, / Quam si Romanae principis edis opus?*³¹ The author here reminds her of the behavior she ought to show because of her position as a Roman *princeps*, the behavior which the gazers ought to emulate; he is the voice of the regulatory public gaze. Moreover, she is not deserving of the title *princeps* because of her marriage to Augustus, but because she herself displays the virtues and the *opus* of a *princeps*.

The author of the *Ad Liviam* is thus presenting her in terms of her official image as a strictly traditional matrona, but there is one key difference which will distinguish her from Plotina and her peers. In using *princeps* to describe Livia, he is using a title which was *not* part of her official image. This title was only ever officially

³⁰ Barrett 2002, 134-5.

³¹ *Ad Liv.* 353-6: "Remain on high and rise above your grief, and because you can, keep an unbreakable spirit all the time. Or can we look for better models of virtues through you, than if you display the work of a Roman *princeps*?"

given to the emperor, and here it is superficially the author's private expression of esteem for Livia. But it also is his interpretation of her true place and influence within the government. Recall his description of her power at 47-50; the specific word he uses, *vires*, is the plural of *vis*, which often refers to strength or force in men or the military. And indeed, her *vires* extends over official spaces in Rome of political and military power, the campus and the forum. The other word he applies to her power, *nervos*, also carries these masculine and military connotations, along with an added emphasis on physical strength - an attribute not typically associated with *matronae*. Nor does the author temper this description with the disclaimer that her power and interests were for the benefit of her husband, as per the *matrona* ideal (cf. Chapter 2); her power and motives are her own. This description, along with his use of the term *princeps*, portrays Livia as possessing at least semi-official political powers and being involved in public affairs to the point where she has outlets for that power and reasons to use it; it also associates her with a physical and military capability normally attributed to the emperor (cf. Chapter 1). This sets up his later assertion that she is fact equal to Augustus and is no mere spouse, as she too does the *opus* of a *princeps*.

This picture of a Livia who, though traditional in private virtue, wields a high degree of influence and power in public affairs, and can execute such powers with the force of any man, even her husband, is contrary to the *matrona* ideal. Whether the author is writing during Livia's lifetime, or years afterward in the Flavian period, this clearly represents one interpretation of her image - that no matter its protestations of traditional virtues, her public visibility was still read by the public gaze as an intrusion into traditionally masculine spheres of influence and an indication of power and influence in these spaces. The author tempers this reading by emphasizing that though Livia possessed such power, and even though she had the opportunity and reason to use it, she did not, out of deference to her *matrona* role. For the author, then, it was not contradictory or mutually exclusive for an empress to exhibit traditional femininity while possessing and amassing public power

and having a high-profile public image. Livia is his living proof of this principle. He is thus reconciling the traditional Roman feminine models with the new importance and visibility of imperial women because of their proximity to and possession of power through the *domus*. It is acceptable for an empress to be powerful, if her image projects traditional virtue, and if she eschews using her political power for anything other than upholding those virtues.

This empress ideal became objectionable by the Flavian and Trajanic eras, as previously outlined in Chapter 2, and the acceptance of power-sharing largely disappeared. The images of the imperial women in these times changed accordingly.

The most visible Flavian woman in the literary sources was Domitia Longina, Domitian's wife. They married shortly after her divorce from Lamia in A.D. 70, and soon thereafter she bore a son, who died as an infant and was later deified after Domitian acceded to the throne; coins for the occasion depict him, Domitia, and their divinized son as Pietas.³² She also appears alone on the obverse of later coins, again with divine associations or with her dead son, after gaining the title Augusta in 81.³³ During their stormy marriage she kept the public on her side, who according to Suetonius even forced Domitian to take her back after divorcing her (as discussed in Chapter 2). It is difficult to say much about her own public image, since apart from Suetonius and Dio she is largely absent from the sources and material evidence, and neither author goes into much detail about her as an individual. However, since she evidently was popular with the masses of Rome, she must have been squarely in the public eye and in possession of her own network of supporters. This network likely helped her weather 96 and her husband's assassination, and even flourish afterwards, though her visibility diminished drastically and writers do not mention her further. Inscriptions and brickstamps, however, indicate that she owned substantial estates and brickyards.³⁴ But given the *damnatio memoriae* applied to her husband,

³² William C. McDermott and Anne E. Oventzel, *Roman Portraits: The Flavian-Trajanic Period* (Columbia and London 1979), 73.

³³ Southern 1997, vi pl.8.

³⁴ McDermott and Oventzel 1979, 82-3; Jones 1992 [1993], 37.

and the bitterness with which his reign was remembered by aristocrats such as Pliny and Tacitus, her withdrawal from the public eye may have been welcome, necessary, self-imposed, or all three. As she was also childless, her status depended on her marriage to Domitian, and when he disappeared, so did her public image and whatever political influence she may have had. (Other Flavian women's images were similarly fleeting. Titus' daughter, Julia Flavia, appeared on coins in portraits resembling Livia, and was deified by Domitian after her death; Vespasian's daughter, Domitilla, was also so honored and represented her coins, with her portrait resembling Agrippina I.³⁵)

Under Trajan, the only visible women in the imperial house were Trajan's wife, Pompeia Plotina, and sister, Ulpia Marciana. As discussed in Chapter 2, they are portrayed in Pliny's *Panegyricus* as stereotypes of the perfect, virtuous, traditional Roman *matrona* in reflection of Trajan's virtue and as contributions to his honor and glory. They are literally nameless, stay out of the public eye by staying inside the house, and have no influence beyond what a normal Roman wife or sister may have over her husband or brother.

Whether or not this ideal set forth in the literary sources did in fact correspond with reality for Plotina and her peers and successors is difficult to discern in the face of contradictory evidence. On the one hand, "examination of all epigraphical and other evidence for the second-century imperial women shows that they in fact enjoyed little power and autonomy...Lineage, high connections, and money are the main constituents of power and prestige for a Roman woman, yet all three characteristics are difficult to discern clearly for the Trajanic and Hadrianic women."³⁶ Specifically, Ulpia Marciana and Plotina "are attested with but few holdings in their own names, although the existence of an equestrian procuratorship for Plotina's possessions indicates that her property was vast and important."³⁷ Benefactions and

³⁵ Wood 1999, 317-18.

³⁶ Boatwright 1991, 513 & 515.

³⁷ Boatwright 1991, 523.

donations are very rarely attributed to any of the Trajanic or Hadrianic women as well, and most statues or inscriptions attesting to statues are from the East and appear to commemorate only any “influence they were supposed to have with the emperors.”³⁸ But this influence is hard to pinpoint, given both the unreliability of Dio Cassius’ later account of Plotina’s supposed affair with Hadrian and the emphasis of all other accounts on her modesty and domesticity, and that, contrary to some past emperors’ practices, “no imperial rescript of Trajan or of Hadrian ever even names the imperial women, aside from that recording Hadrian’s grant of privileges to the Epicureans on Plotina’s urging.”³⁹

One letter of Pliny’s, 9.28, does hint at some kind of influence; Voconius Romanus had charged Pliny with forwarding his letter introducing one Popilius Artemisius, likely a freedman of the family,⁴⁰ to Plotina, which Pliny gladly did. Why exactly this man was recommended to Plotina, rather than Trajan, is unclear; possibly this man could serve her particular interests instead of the emperor’s. It might be assumed that to introduce a man to the empress was to introduce him to the emperor, but given the independence of past empresses’ networks of contacts from their husbands, the possibility that Plotina governed her own network exists. That this network was not covered in the sources perhaps stemmed from the fact that such influence would not necessarily have translated into power within the *domus*, over the emperor, or over the succession.

After all, as mentioned in Chapter 2, Plotina was childless, depriving her of a crucial source of power within the household and a personal stake in its future. (That is not to say that the succession would not have been a matter of interest to her, or that she did not have favorites within the court.⁴¹ As mentioned above, Dio Cassius 69.1.2-4 records that she loved Hadrian and assisted in his accession.) But childlessness would result in her status being more dependent upon her marriage to

³⁸ Boatwright 1991, 530.

³⁹ Boatwright 1991, 534.

⁴⁰ Sherwin-White 1966, 510.

⁴¹ Kleiner 2000, 50.

Trajan, and so she would have had a vested interest in not threatening that source; hence perhaps her apparent preference for keeping a low profile and projecting a strict *matrona* image,⁴² in order to prevent any charges of scandal which could undermine or dissolve the marriage. What networks of influence she did possess, then, may have been more subtle than those of Livia or her other predecessors, and focused on locations and individuals outside the *domus*.

While the *potentia* of the imperial women of this period was thus perhaps more limited, they still certainly were publicly visible and had official public images via dedications and statues. Moreover, “other manifestations of their prominence are the epithet Augusta decreed by the senate to many of them, rights of coinage granted by the emperors, consecrations voted by the senate after their deaths, the funeral laudations spoken by Hadrian for Plotina and Matidia the Elder, buildings erected in Rome for Matidia the Elder, Marciana, and Plotina, and the use of some of these women’s names for city tribes and cities themselves.”⁴³ When Matidia the Elder died, Hadrian not only gave the funeral oration, but also deified her and built a temple to her and her mother, Ulpia Marciana, who had already been previously deified.⁴⁴ Sabina, Trajan’s grand-niece and Hadrian’s wife, received a grand public cremation in the Campus Martius upon her death, and also was deified.⁴⁵ Statues of all the women appear to have been common in Rome; Marciana and Matidia appeared in the Forum of Trajan, and portrait heads of Plotina, Marciana, and Sabina have been found in the Ostian Baths of Neptune and of Marciana.⁴⁶ The imperial women of Trajan’s family were thus publicly prominent in Rome through their official images expressed in art and coinage, and through the actions of the

⁴² Dio Cass. 68.5.5 describes her conduct throughout Trajan’s reign as completely proper and blameless.

⁴³ Boatwright 1991, 534-5.

⁴⁴ Cornelius C. Vermeule, “Livia to Helena: Women in Power, Women in the Provinces,” in Kleiner and Matheson 2000, 21.

⁴⁵ Vermeule 2000, 21.

⁴⁶ Mary T. Boatwright, “Just Window Dressing? Imperial Women as Architectural Sculpture,” in Kleiner and Matheson 2000, 62-3 and 68-9.

emperors Trajan and Hadrian, who honored them with public ceremonies and orations.

However, the honors described above were given *to* them, not funded or erected *by* them. Such honors were commonly given to imperial women by this point anyway.⁴⁷ Furthermore, Plotina's portraits resemble Livia's early types with a relatively simple hairstyle and austere appearance: they "show realistic signs of age, and a dour facial expression that...probably conveyed the virtue of *gravitas*, or moral seriousness, quite well. Most also show a deliberately dry execution."⁴⁸ They also display the common feature in imperial portraiture of incorporating emperors' physiognomical traits into wives' or female relatives' portraits; besides the austerity, there is a "strong 'Trajanic' component, but also a definitely masculine appearance."⁴⁹ Their garments are often the voluminous *stola*, associated with feminine virtue and modesty, and their bodies are generally in modest poses. Coinage imagery of Plotina, Marciana, and Matidia also convey *gravitas* with their expressions severe and hairstyles tightly braided.⁵⁰

So the new conservatism was finding an official expression in portraits of the women of the imperial *domus*. These factors, in combination with the lack of financial displays by Trajanic women and the infrequent mentions of them in the literary sources of the period, indicate that the new conservative ideal did indeed have an impact; the Roman public would have known their faces, seen their persons at public ceremonies and other occasions, but the expression of their public images was limited to official portraits and public honors. Livian-style public benefactions, dedications, donations, and other visible and individual expressions of wealth contributing to image are not evident. So, Flavian and Trajanic women would have had public images, but more ephemeral ones that died with the masses with whom

⁴⁷ Boatwright 1991, 535.

⁴⁸ Wood 1999, 22.

⁴⁹ R.R.R. Smith, "Roman Portraits: Honours, Empresses, and Late Emperors," *JRS* 75 (1985), 214.

⁵⁰ J.P.C. Kent, *Roman Coins* (London 1978), pl.78 nos. 272-4.

they were popular (or at least contemporary); little trace of their individual lives is left, merely their names and to whom they were related.

Imperial women at this time thus exhibited less innovation than tradition. Their official public images were largely controlled by the emperor and senate, and displayed an austere, traditional femininity which adhered strongly to a rigid *matrona* ideal. This was a rejection of the ideal empress as embodied in Livia, a repudiation of her encroachment, even symbolically, upon masculine political space and powers. As with imperial masculinity, then, imperial femininity was exaggerated, in order to either act as a balancing force offsetting prominent public visibility, or as a renunciation of that visibility and power altogether. In either case, imperial women's images and reputations were held more strictly to this ideal than their aristocratic subjects', as will be seen next.

Aristocratic Women

The tensions between innovation and tradition, and individual and ideal are also evident in the public images of aristocratic women. In resolving these tensions, Statius' *Silvae*, Pliny's *Epistles*, and Seneca's *Ad Helviam* and *Ad Marciam* often take the route of the *Ad Liviam's* author in acknowledging the innovation and individual while still emphasizing the traditional ideal. So, their women project traditional public personas, but their visibility in the texts along with evidence for their influence, wealth, and independence point to a more active, complex reality visible to their contemporaries but partially obscured in the sources by the need to couch such realities in aristocratically, culturally acceptable language and imagery.

However, instead of portraying the women (like Livia) as disowning public involvement and influence and other activities associated with men (such as the study of philosophy), these authors praised such activities and virtues. But the praise was also conditional on whether the women continued to fulfill their traditional roles as wife and mother. There are also women who only or mainly represent the ideal,

and do not engage in public involvement; they also are praiseworthy. Through analysis of the above works, I shall detail these trends, and I will argue that they represent a definition of femininity essentially unchanged from the ideal established in Chapter 2; that is, the symbols and virtues of traditional femininity continued to be used, only with greater scope for their performance. Women may have been able to perform femininity in public as patronesses or through other male activities, but crucially, performance in these spaces was not an essential condition to be met to be an ideal woman - thus such public activities were embellishments for a good woman, but not a prerequisite for judgment of her as a good woman.

Seneca's Ad Marciam and Ad Helviam

Seneca's consolations to Marcia and Helvia provide a number of fascinating angles on the negotiation between public and private in defining femininity. He speaks to Marcia and Helvia as equals, addresses them with terms and advice used for men, and disavows their sex as a factor in his conclusions, despite his inclusion of traditional female imagery in his display of their characters and reputations. Both were socially prominent elite women - Marcia was a close friend of Livia's, and Helvia was his mother - and in writing and publishing these consolations he is raising their profiles further, as well as recreating and interpreting their public images for his audience. The works thus provide extended snapshots of an elite male using his female connections and relations to portray both them and him in an excellent light, with the added political purpose of making them and him visible to the emperor for political and social benefit. However, as will be seen, Seneca's audience (beyond Marcia and Livia) was not only male, but female as well.

The *Ad Marciam* is the earlier of the two consolations, though the date of its writing is debated. Many scholars think Seneca wrote it under Caligula, after A.D. 39 when the emperor supposedly changed his mind and began to rehabilitate Tiberius' memory; Suetonius dates the rehabilitation of Cremutius Cordus' works to his reign, and the lack of mentions of Gaius in the text simply indicates that Seneca did not

want to run afoul of him.⁵¹ Jane Bellemore has argued against either a Gaian or Claudian date, instead placing the work late in the reign of Tiberius, after the fall of Sejanus. She reasons that Suetonius can be unreliable, and only a Tiberian date could justify the numerous positive references to Tiberius, and the differing version of the trial of Marcia's father, Cremutius Cordus, which eliminates Tiberius completely as a character in the charging and trial process and instead places all the blame for Cordus' death and downfall on Sejanus.⁵²

I tend towards the Tiberian date for these reasons, and for a few of my own. First, in 14-15, Seneca gives Marcia examples of famous men who had suffered great losses. Seneca asks, *Quid aliorum tibi funera Caesarum referam?*⁵³ following with an account of Augustus' and Tiberius' losses of their adoptive and natural sons, respectively. And he ends there - these two emperors are the only "other Caesars" after Gaius Julius, implied by the use of *aliorum* combined with his statement at 15.4 that they complete the list.⁵⁴ In other words, Tiberius rounds out the list because he is the latest, still-ruling Caesar, the most eminent man in current society, and the most recent in a long line of eminent men.

Second, if the *Ad Marciam* was written under Gaius Caligula, why omit from these chapters a flattering account of the emperor's response to the death of Drusilla in 38? Why leave that emperor's loss, clearly one which hit Caligula hard, out of a list of the sorrows of the Caesars, thereby leaving the current emperor off his list of eminent men? Seneca acknowledges Caligula's grief later, in his consolation to Polybius: *Non possum tamen, cum omnes circumierim Caesares, quibus fortuna fratres sororesque eripuit, hunc praeterire ex omni Caesarum numero*

⁵¹ C.E. Manning, *On Seneca's Ad Marciam*, Mnemos. Suppl. 69 (Leiden 1981), 2-4; see also Miriam T. Griffin, *Seneca: A Philosopher in Politics* (Oxford 1976), 23.

⁵² Jane Bellemore, "The Dating of Seneca's *Ad Marciam De Consolatione*," *CQ* 42, no. 1 (1992): 219-34.

⁵³ Sen. *Ad Mar.* 15.1: "Why do I relate to you the sorrows of the other Caesars?"

⁵⁴ Sen. *Ad Mar.* 15.4: *Videsne quanta copia virorum maximorum sit...*

excerpendum....⁵⁵ Of course, Caligula in this work is an example of how *not* to mourn, and his loss of a sibling is more appropriate to the *Ad Polybium's* subject matter - Polybius lost a brother, while Marcia lost a son, and indeed all the famous examples Seneca cites in the *Ad Marciam* have lost children, not siblings. But the roll of the Caesars in the *Ad Polybium* is given in Claudius' voice, and includes Claudius' own loss of Germanicus, thereby involving the current ruler in the consolation. Here we are back to the question, why leave Caligula out of this particular consolation if he was emperor at the time of writing?

To revisit one scholarly view, because Seneca wanted to fly under Caligula's radar and avoid attention - but the problem is, he already *was* on the radar. According to Suetonius, Seneca was a very popular orator of the time, noted for his polish and elegance, two things which Caligula rejected in his famous judgment on the orator: that Seneca *harenam esse sine calce*.⁵⁶ A little flattery would probably not have harmed the situation, since Seneca was clearly not a favorite. An argument for silence, from silence, is therefore difficult to accept. A Tiberian date removes these difficulties, explains the positive references to Tiberius, and keeps Marcia herself, a close friend of Livia's, on the radar as a social figure by dating the work closer to Livia's death.

As for purpose or motive, it appears to be a genuine attempt at consolation for Marcia, although if it can indeed be dated to the reign of Tiberius, there are secondary political motives for Seneca of dissociating himself from Sejanus and flattering the emperor in the interests of getting his fledgling career off the ground - he did publish the work, and some of the language he uses indicates he does have a wider audience in mind than just Marcia alone; Seneca's use of masculine participles in sections on human loss in general, e.g. 9.1 and 17-18, and a plural imperative at 10.4 "strongly suggest that there are times when this wider audience is uppermost in

⁵⁵ Sen. *Ad Poly.* 17.3: "However, I am not able, since I have gone around all the Caesars whose brothers and sisters fortune snatched away, to skip him whose name should be left out of the Caesars...."

⁵⁶ Suet. *Cal.* 53.2.

the author's mind."⁵⁷ Although discussing the general human condition is a standard part of consolations,⁵⁸ here switching to a larger [male] audience is more striking because the addressee in need of consolation is a woman. In this case, he is taking advantage of her political and kinship connections to use as a springboard to identify himself politically to a wider male audience. He therefore has an interest in forming her public image in the best possible light, so that audience can see the quality of the company he keeps. But this is no different than how he would use a man: advertising his political connections and beliefs, and portraying them for his benefit.

Seneca sets the tone immediately by establishing the rules under which he will address Marcia:

*Nisi te, Marcia, scirem tam longe ab infirmitate muliebris animi quam a ceteris vitiis recessisse et mores tuos velut aliquod antiquum exemplar aspici, non auderem obviam ire dolori tuo...Fiduciam mihi dedit exploratum iam robur animi et magno experimento approbata virtus tua.*⁵⁹

She is free of womanish weakness, despite this lapse into excessive grief, and has *virtus*, so her grief can be dealt with and he is not without hope of curing it. Seneca acknowledges elsewhere (*Ad Helv.* 3.2 and 16.1, *Ad Mar.* 7.3, 11.1) the irrational, hysterical grief with its equally extravagant expressions as a quality of women's characters that can interfere with their potential for virtue, a potential shared with men.⁶⁰ But Marcia's is curable; while her grief is irrational, she herself is not. She is a manly *matrona*, a paragon of ancient feminine virtue and honored for her manly courage. So, he will speak to her as if she were a man.

It should be noted that while Seneca often referred to women negatively, focusing on (for example) their lusts and taste for luxury, there were exceptions, and

⁵⁷ Manning 1981, 6-7.

⁵⁸ Jo-Ann Shelton, "Persuasion and Paradigm in Seneca's *Consolatio ad Marciam* 1-6," *C&M* 46 (1995): 157; see also Manning 1981, 7.

⁵⁹ Sen. *Ad Mar.* 1.1: "Marcia, if I didn't know that you were as far removed from womanish weakness of character as from all other flaws, and that your morals are looked at as models of ancient virtues, I would not dare to go to meet your grief...."

⁶⁰ Manning 1981, 28; see also Manning, "Seneca and the Stoics on the Equality of the Sexes," *Mnemos.* 26 (1973): 170-77.

indeed most of the positive references to women occur in the consolations to Helvia and Marcia.⁶¹ Good or bad, Seneca mainly portrays women as stereotypes: “Good or competent women are either stock *exempla* or persons with whom the philosopher is personally acquainted, exceptions to the stereotyped rule. Seneca knows and admires Marcia; he knows and loves Helvia. His message to both is unmistakable: you are not like other women, so do not act like them.”⁶² But as these women are associated with him, and he is publicizing and imaging them according to his own particular agenda, they had better be good.

Marcia’s *virtus* has been amply demonstrated in the past. She was devoted to her father, A. Cremutius Cordus, who educated her and instilled in her a love for books (1.6). He committed suicide after being accused of treason, with Sejanus being held responsible for issuing the charge. Cordus was a historian, and later she reintroduced some of his works to the benefit of the state, him, and posterity - preserving an example of *virtus*, and his immortality: *Optime meruisti de Romanis studiis...optime de posteris...optime de ipso, cuius viget vigebitque memoria, quam diu in pretio fuerit Romana cognosci, quam diu quisquam erit...quid sit vir Romanus....*⁶³ By ensuring her father’s memory, she has not only done a great service for the state - the goal of many a politically active Roman male - but has also preserved a prime example, and therefore a part of, traditional Roman masculinity - *quid sit vir Romanus*. For Seneca, it was these actions of hers that convinced him of her *virtus* and masculine character: *Haec magnitudo animi tui vetuit me ad sexum tuum respicere...*⁶⁴ But here again, as with her grief, he is pointing to her essentially female sex, and essential femininity; by denying it so explicitly, he is also drawing

⁶¹ Gerard B. Lavery, “Never Seen in Public: Seneca and the Limits of Cosmopolitanism,” *Latomus* 56 (1997): 5-10.

⁶² Lavery 1997, 12.

⁶³ Sen. *Ad Mar.* 1.3: “You have rendered the best service to Roman studies...the best service to posterity...the best service to he himself, whose memory lives and shall live, as long as it is held in high esteem to learn about Romans, as long as there should be anyone who is a Roman man....”

⁶⁴ Sen. *Ad Mar.* 1.5: “This greatness of your spirit forbade me to consider your sex....”

attention to her womanhood, a reminder that at heart she is indeed a traditional *matrona*.

These two passages, in outlining Marcia's exceptional character and illustrious relatives establish two qualities to which Seneca will appeal in his attempts to console her: *magnitudo animi* and *libertas*, hers once in these actions for her father as she demonstrated both *virtus* and a willingness to uphold and preserve expressions of *libertas*, part of *libertas* itself, but now absent in her prolonged grief; Seneca must remind her of these things as her ancestral inheritance and what she could attain again by ridding herself of grief.⁶⁵

So, since Marcia is not a normal weak woman, he will do *confligere cum tuo maerore constitui* ("battle with your grief" - 1.5), and treat it as one does an old, festering wound: *tunc et uruntur et in altum revocantur et digitos scrutantium recipiunt...Non possum nunc per obsequium nec molliter adsequi tam durum dolorem; frangendus est.*⁶⁶ This is the first instance of Seneca's use of a military metaphor he employs throughout the *consolatio*, further removing her from her sex by associating her and her emotions with the world of men. This military metaphor is a common image used by Seneca in general, also showing up prominently in the *Ad Helviam*.⁶⁷

In tailoring the consolation format to Marcia, Seneca notes that some people are consoled primarily through reason, while others need famous examples;⁶⁸ Marcia is of the latter ilk (2.1). So, he puts before her two images, Octavia and Livia, "*maxima et sexus et saeculi.*" Octavia lost Marcellus, an exemplary man despite his young age and one earmarked as potential successor to Augustus (2.3). She

⁶⁵ Manning 1981, 10-11; see also Shelton 1995, 186.

⁶⁶ Sen. *Ad Mar.* 1.8: "Then they are cauterized and reopened to their depths to undergo examining fingers...As it stands now, I am not able to match such lasting grief through either indulgence or gentleness; it must be smashed."

⁶⁷ Ed. C.D.N. Costa, *Seneca: Four Dialogues* (Warminster 1994), 207-08.

⁶⁸ This distinction is not gendered by Seneca, though women were often considered more irrational than men; this was probably because of his Stoic belief that women and men alike carried the same potential for *virtus* and reason. In other words, this was not an approach he applied to all his women addressees; with Helvia he does not rely on or appeal to images primarily, but rather reason.

completely succumbed to grief, mind totally fixed on it, refusing help: *Nullam habere imaginem filii carissimi voluit, nullam sibi de illo fieri mentionem...Tenebris et solitudini familiarissima, ne ad fratrem quidem respiciens...A sollemnibus officiis seducta et ipsam magnitudinis fraternae nimis circumlucentem fortunam exosa defodit se et abdidit.*⁶⁹ Octavia withdrew herself from public view and refused to perform any [public] duties for the *domus* or her brother Augustus, refusing to participate in the regime (in which she no longer had a primary place as mother of the front runner for heir) and even the household; she also withdrew her son from both spheres, literally from the *domus* by forbidding his image and name in speech, and symbolically from the public by putting herself out of view as his mother and chief mourner, thereby foregoing her duty to remind the public of his greatness. On the other hand, when Livia lost Drusus, she did not let grief obtain mastery over her, but instead took the path of moderation: *ut primum tamen intulit tumulo, simul et illum et dolorem suum posuit, nec plus doluit quam aut honestum erat Caesare aut aequom Tiberio salvo.*⁷⁰ She talked often of him and placed his image in both private and public places (*ubique illum sibi privatim publiceque repraesentare* - 3.2) - keeping his memory alive (not killing it and thereby giving her son a second death, like Octavia), just as Marcia had kept her father's memory alive. In her actions, Livia was mindful of her public and private duties as mother, empress, and alpha female of Roman society.

So, Marcia should choose whether to emulate Octavia or Livia in her grief. If Octavia, *...eximes te numero vivorum; aversaberis et alienos liberos et tuos ipsumque quem desideras...quod turpissimum alienissimumque est animo tuo in*

⁶⁹ Sen. *Ad Mar.* 2.4: "She wanted to have no images of her dearest son, no one to make mention of him to her...Darkness and loneliness her closest friends, not even noticing her brother...Withdrawing from her usual duties and detesting the fortune that her brother's greatness shone all too brightly around her, she banished and hid herself."

⁷⁰ Sen. *Ad Mar.* 3.2: "Still, as soon as she placed him in the tomb, at the same time she laid aside both him and her grief, and she did not grieve more than was either respectful to Caesar or just to Tiberius, the living."

*meliolem noto partem, ostendes te vivere nolle, mori non posse.*⁷¹ If Livia, *quam in omni vita servasti morum probitatem et verecundiam, in hac quoque re praestabis...*⁷² Seneca presents Livia as the obvious path and role model to follow; it helps that Livia was also a very good friend of Marcia in addition to being a *maximae feminae*, and so for Marcia it should be irresistible to emulate Livia's honor and behavior rather than Octavia's.

To emphasize the parallel, Seneca recounts how Livia (like Marcia is now through his text) received advice from a philosopher, Augustus' friend Areus, on how to manage her grief. Seneca imagines his words:

*...cui non tantum quae in publicum emittuntur nota, sed omnes sunt secretiores animorum vestrorum motus - dedisti operam, ne quid esset quod in te quisquam reprobaret; nec id in maioribus modo observasti, sed in minimis, ne quid faceres, cui famam, liberrimam principum iudicem, velles ignoscere... Servandus itaque tibi in hac quoque re tuus mos est, ne quid committas, quod minus aliterve factum velis.*⁷³

In other words, like Marcia, Livia has exhibited a long history of proper moral behavior and strong character; and like Marcia, Livia is being reminded of that history and advised to keep following that path through this difficult time. Seneca also emphasizes how Livia is self-regulating her behavior, fashioning it with an acute awareness of the fact that she is being observed by the public,⁷⁴ whose opinion as a mass is one of the main checking forces on *principum*. This language is significant,

⁷¹ Sen. *Ad Mar.* 3.3: "You will remove yourself from the number of the living; you will turn away from both the children of others and your own and him whom you miss...because it is most disgraceful and alien to your character, which I generally observe going in a better direction, to now show yourself unwilling to live, unable to die."

⁷² Sen. *Ad Mar.* 3.4: "The moral uprightness and modesty which you conformed to your whole life, in this thing also you will show..."

⁷³ Sen. *Ad Mar.* 4.3-4: "I have known not just everything which you have let forth in public, but all the secrets of your minds – you have made efforts lest anyone find fault within you; and not only do you guard yourself in great matters, but also in the smallest, so that you may not do anything which you should want public opinion, the most open judge of *principum*, to pardon...And so it is that custom which you should keep to in this matter also, lest you commit something which you would want [to have done] not at all, or differently."

⁷⁴ That the bereaved should check his/her public behavior was a common theme in consolations, found in Cicero, the *Consolatio ad Liviam*, and in Seneca's own *Ad Polybiam*, and Jerome traces the theme back to Ennius (Manning 1981, 47).

for while Seneca's use of the term undoubtedly refers to Augustus, it also includes Livia as a *princeps* subject to public opinion (*famam*).⁷⁵ Marcia is not necessarily subject to this level of scrutiny, as she is not a member of the imperial household, despite being a close friend of Livia's, nor is she a *princeps*; but as an aristocratic woman and known associate of the empress, public opinion would no doubt make some kind of judgment on her, as would her own aristocratic associates, Livia not the least, and so like Livia she should fashion her own behavior, and after Livia's example. So, Areus continues, Livia should make herself approachable by friends, who take their cues for behavior from her (5.1), and talk about Drusus, and remember all the joy he brought her (5.2-4).

After finishing with Areus' speech, just in case Marcia missed the lesson, Seneca urges her to imagine herself in Livia's place; tears and wailing cannot change fate or recall the dead, so let grief cease (6.1-2). People lament because they never think bad things will actually happen to *them* - a failure of foresight - and so one should (Stoically) prepare oneself for Fortune's blows as if one were at war with Fortune, and life a battle against her (9). Life as battle is a theme employed in satire, rhetoric, and cynic philosophy, and "had become such a commonplace that it was probably part of Seneca's inherited thought pattern used without thought of its origin...Seneca makes frequent use of military imagery, sometimes using only a single word, as with *confligere* (1.5), on other occasions making more extended comparisons (cf. 16.6, 22.3)."⁷⁶ These comparisons show up throughout his letters, moral epistles, and other works, but are especially common in the consolations. Elsewhere in the *Ad Marciam*, he casts life as a war against death, the pillaging and thieving enemy (10.4). Later, he tells her, *Quattuor liberos sustuleras, Marcia. Nullum aiunt frustra cadere telum, quod in confertum agmen inmissum est: mirum est tantam*

⁷⁵ This usage recalls the use of *princeps* to describe Livia in the *Consolatio ad Liviam*, discussed earlier.

⁷⁶ Manning 1981, 62.

*turbam non potuisse sine invidia damnove praetervehit?*⁷⁷ The military metaphors, and the Stoicism that life is a battle, are thus prevalent in his works and this consolation as well. Seneca must therefore have expected them to be as powerful for her as for a male addressee, or have the same effect, for him to include them in his attempt to console her. They also serve to subtly militarize her *virtus* by portraying her as a soldier in the battle of life, with all the courage and strength of a (male) soldier. So, he is not treating Marcia or addressing her any differently from men in this respect; he is not adapting the consolation to the fact that she is a woman, in other words, but has instead adapted the consolation thusfar to her individual character as a person of virtue (cf. 2.1, discussed earlier, where he decides she is more susceptible to images before hard reason).

Part of this recognition of her virtuous character involves her status as an independent agent in control of herself and her mind. Where before Seneca hinted that Marcia fashions her behavior - see above at 4.3-4 - and should do so now in imitation of her most honorable friend Livia, this is stated more strongly at 8.3. Seneca notes at 8.1-2 that though time heals, even now that years have passed since her son's death, Marcia still grieves; and while she keeps watch on herself as her own custodian, *Nunc te ipsa custodis* (8.3), that gaze has become one that compels grief rather than permitting it, whereas it would accord better with her own character instead to force an end to grief. She has the masculine power of self-regulation, though she has gone a bit awry on this issue, and can monitor and discipline herself - she does not need a man to watch her to correct her behavior for her, as she can do that for herself. In other words, the new ideal woman is independent not only financially, but also mentally as a rational agent.

Marcia is certainly the specific addressee here, but Seneca's tone changes as he describes generalities, indicating a larger audience is in his mind. For example, in

⁷⁷ Sen. *Ad Mar.* 16.5: "Four children you have borne, Marcia. They say not one spear falls in vain, that is thrown amidst the crowded column: is it surprising that such a number is not able to be passed by without damage or envy?"

10 he expands on how all things are ephemeral, all good things simply borrowed, not ours for good; such things as children, honors, wealth, large houses and many clients, and *nobilis aut formosa coniux* (“a high-born or beautiful wife” - 10.1). Why would Marcia care about the transitory, ephemeral nature of a noble and beautiful wife? She might *be* one, but would not have one herself, for obvious reasons. It might be a reminder to her that her own status is ephemeral, but as it opens a general discussion on the common human condition that nothing lasts forever, it is more likely that Seneca has shifted his voice to direct it at a larger, assumed male audience. Indeed, he exhibits a pattern of switching audiences when he approaches general themes: the use of the masculine participle *genitus es* at 17.1, and other like occasions at 9.3, 10.1, and 18.4, “all occur in discussions ‘*de condicione humana*’.”⁷⁸

But sometimes the larger audience is *not* male; at 11.1, Seneca argues that life is full of dangers and ills, *Moderandum est itaque vobis maxime, quae immoderate fertis*....⁷⁹ *Vobis* as the plural is here noticeable as Seneca’s attention in the previous passages had turned from the general situation at the beginning of 10 to that of Marcia (*si mortuum tibi filium doles* - 10.5); but while Seneca is exhorting Marcia to exercise self-control, 11.1 is suddenly turned to the larger group of women who have ceased to do so⁸⁰ (cf. the above discussion of Seneca and excessive female grief). He continues speaking through the rest of 11.1 to this female audience by reminding them that they are mortal, and to mortals have they given birth; how can they have hoped that their children would be imperishable, if they are not? 11.2 returns to Marcia, but this tangent of Seneca’s clearly directed at the general female population might argue for his accommodation or expectation of a female reader and female audience.⁸¹ Moreover, he is applying his Stoic beliefs in persuading them of the transitory nature of both the human body and all the trappings, material and

⁷⁸ Manning 1981, 97.

⁷⁹ Sen. *Ad Mar.* 11.1: “And so you [women], who bear [grief] immoderately, must particularly be moderate.”

⁸⁰ Manning 1981, 67.

⁸¹ cf. Langlands 2004.

otherwise, with which women surround themselves; this indicates he at least expects them to resonate with the listening/reading women. However, since the passage appears in the midst of a specific address to Marcia, it may be a way for Seneca to couch his harsh message in softening terms, focusing them not on Marcia herself for Marcia to bear, but widening the message so that all women bear her fate as mothers themselves, with mortal offspring.

At 12.1, Seneca shifts to the second part of his strategy as laid out in 2.1; from focusing on images, he now turns to reason; the images have softened her resistance to such a method. In his own metaphor from 1.8, he has reopened the wound, and now must cauterize it. In so doing he runs through many tried and true themes of consolations, such as at 12.3 where he tells her it was a blessing to have had a son like that at all. In 12.4, he reminds her that everyone has a story such as hers, even *principes* and *magni duces*: *Circumfer per omnem notorum, ignotorum frequentiam oculos...*⁸² Seneca says, and she will find numerous examples of similar grief, or tragedy even greater than hers. He then directs her gaze to some of those very people (here briefly reusing the image-based approach of the first part of the consolation) - Sulla at 12.6, Xenophon and Pulvillus at 13.1-2, Paulus at 13.3-4, Bibulus and Caesar at 14.2-3., and various emperors at 15. The images are broad, basic sketches compared with his extensive treatment of Livia and Octavia in 2-5, but they focus on the same themes: the mourner, the mourned, and his reaction, sometimes also reflecting on how that reaction revealed the man's character and enhanced his reputation. For example, Seneca comments that Paulus gave thanks to the gods for granting his prayer that any loss balancing his triumph over Perses and the Macedonians would be dealt him, and not the state - *Vides quam magno animo tulerit? Orbitati suae gratulatus est.*⁸³ These images are thus not just reminding Marcia of the fact that others greater than her have suffered equal or

⁸² Sen. *Ad Mar.* 12.4: "Glance around over the throng of whom are known, of whom are unknown...."

⁸³ Sen. *Ad Mar.* 13.4: "You see what a great spirit he bore? He congratulated himself on being bereaved of his son!"

greater losses; they are revisiting the lessons of Livia and Octavia by subtly reminding her that private grief becomes public through the bereaved's reaction and its effects on his/her reputation. Displaying the proper reaction is therefore very important.

Of course, these examples are of men who do not let grief interfere with their service to the state (or to their own ambitions). Seneca forestalls Marcia's potential rejection of the applicability of these examples to her own situation by addressing the problem directly:

*Scio quid dicas: 'Oblitus es feminam te consolari, virorum refers exempla.' Quis autem dixit naturam maligne cum mulierum ingeniis egisse et virtutes illarum in artum retraxisse? Par illis, mihi crede, vigor, par ad honesta, libeat, facultas est; dolorem laboremque ex aequo, si consuevere, patiuntur.*⁸⁴

She should believe him, given that Marcia herself is an example of such virtue and endurance, as Seneca has pointed out again and again throughout the consolation. This key argument sprouts from the "orthodox Stoic doctrine that women have the same capacity for virtue as men and that virtue is essentially the same in both sexes since men and women share a common humanity."⁸⁵ This belief enables Seneca to address Marcia as he would a man, advise her as he would a man, with the arguments he would offer a man - for her reaction and attitude to death should be no different than Republican heroes like Paulus or any of the Caesars, given that she shares with them not just the same potential for *virtus*, but the same awareness of and concern for one's public image.

That is not to say Marcia's image or reputation was the same of a Republican statesman or Imperial Caesar. But she shares the same concern with [political] elite males that she be known to her peers and the public at large as a person of good,

⁸⁴ Sen. *Ad Mar.* 16.1: "I know what you are saying: 'You have forgotten that you are consoling a woman, the examples you relate are of men.' But who said that nature has spitefully discharged the natures of women and has restricted their virtues to a narrow space? Believe me, their capacity for strength, for virtue, is equal to men's, if they like; they can suffer pain and hardship on the same level, if accustomed to them."

⁸⁵ Manning 1981, 87.

moral character who adheres to Roman societal values. This concern for role and reputation is also a Stoic virtue, for “living consistently with nature...included maintenance of the social persona which one had been allotted in the universal scheme of things. (Cic., *De Off.* I, 32, 115)...so might a woman be expected to play the part of a woman, not only in dress and deportment (*De Off.* I, 36, 130) but also in other aspects of social life.”⁸⁶

Seneca then provides Marcia with such performances by women, closing the loophole he earlier opened by giving examples of only men’s performances of grief. Among the women he now includes are stock Roman examples of superb *matronae*: Lucretia, Cloelia, and the two Cornelias. Each woman provided a service to the state, whether it be simply by bearing a hero (as Lucretia did Brutus – 16.2), or more daring actions. For escaping the Etruscans by swimming the Tiber, Cloelia was given an equestrian statue on the Via Sacra, which provides a visible model of courage and virtue to the young men of Rome (16.2).⁸⁷ Cornelia, mother of the Gracchi, was renowned for her contribution to the state for raising and educating Tiberius and Gaius, and for her suppression of grief at their deaths in favor of joy at having borne them; Cornelia, wife of Livius Drusus, likewise lost her son, a tribune in 91 B.C. and a man of renown and ability, and bore the loss in like manner to the first Cornelia (16.3-4). Interestingly, only two of these exempla - the Cornelias - involve mourning; the other two provide examples of women’s capacity for virtue, how the display of that virtue rendered services to the state, and in Cloelia’s case, how the state enshrined and continued that display in statue form. In the Cornelias’ cases, their offspring were their contributions to Rome. Seneca’s purpose in this passage is both to portray Rome as a city “which particularly nurtures and acknowledges women’s valour” and “to encourage Marcia to feel confident in her own potential as a woman, and to aspire to imitate the virtues of men.”⁸⁸ So, these exempla are reorienting

⁸⁶ Manning 1981, 87.

⁸⁷ Langlands 2004.

⁸⁸ Langlands 2004, 123.

Marcia's thought back to her virtue, how it forms her image in the eyes of others, and how that virtue may be put to the service of Rome - perhaps that service may come in a different form from men, but the concerns are the same as men's.

Continuing the consolation, Seneca advances the Stoic view of death as neither good nor evil; indeed, a timely death, as in the cases of Pompey, Cicero, and Cato (20.4-6), may save the man in question from seeing his position and reputation thrown down and the state degenerate. And so, he asks Marcia regarding her son, *Unde...scis an diutius illi expedierit vivere?*⁸⁹ By his early death, this exemplary boy, who was handsome and chaste, even *inter luxuriosae urbis oculos* ("under the eyes of a dissolute city" - 22.2), is kept pure.⁹⁰ In this result she is like to Cornelia, mother of the Gracchi; her son is the product of her discipline and teaching: *Numquam e conspectu tuo recessit; sub oculis tuis studia formavit...*⁹¹ The mother's gaze is a regulatory one, meant to form him as a good Roman man, her virtue looking at his to shape it in her mold. This is reflective of the traditional task for Roman mothers to oversee their children's educations, but here it is put in explicitly visual terms to emphasize the degree and quality of Marcia's care; that she never let him out of her sight indicates her dedication to the task of producing a good son and Roman man. In his first steps into the larger political world, her good moral training and her own personal influence [*suffragatione*] gained him his first priesthood at a young age (24.3).⁹²

And now it is time for him to return the gaze. Now that he is on high with past heroes, including her father, who will take care of him, he can join Cordus in directing his eyes below; *Sic itaque te, Marcia, gere, tamquam sub oculis patris filique posita...Erubescere quicquam humile aut volgare cogitare et mutatos in melius tuos*

⁸⁹ Sen. *Ad Mar.* 22.1: "From whom...do you know that it was advantageous for him to live longer?"

⁹⁰ Interestingly, the virtues Seneca identifies in the boy - beauty or handsomeness, and chastity - are qualities praised more often in women, as virtues of the ideal woman. In this respect Marcia's son is almost cast as her daughter, inviting the identification of Marcia as father to complete two central familial relationships, mother-son and father-daughter.

⁹¹ Sen. *Ad Mar.* 24.2: "He never withdrew from your observation; he produced his studies under your eyes...."

⁹² See Manning 1981, 140-1.

*flere!*⁹³ Now it is her son's gaze, in tandem with her father's, that is the regulatory force; they are guiding Marcia's behavior, reinforcing the lessons she was taught by Cordus, and passed on to her son, reminding her of how she should bear this grief, and comport herself in the future. This triad encapsulates two key familial relationships - fathers and daughters, mothers and sons. As Marcia to her son, so her father to her, in terms of influence (26.1).

The *Ad Marciam* thus presents a picture of Marcia as an ideal Roman manly *matrona*: she possesses *virtus* and uses it on behalf of her household and her men in accordance with the traditional expectations outlined in Chapter 2. However, she is a role model not just for women, but also for men. That her *virtus* is a model for that of her son and other men is reflective of Chapter 2's assertion that aristocratic men were using women as role models for *virtus*. For Seneca, this is possible because for Stoics, the source of virtue is the same for both genders; the essence of virtue is the same for both; and so the only prerequisite for a role model is that they possess *virtus*. Hence why Marcia can be a role model of *virtus* for her son, just as her father was her model. Her position as a model is reinforced by the fact that some of the activities which she pursues are masculine activities, especially her very public editing and publishing of her father's works. But for the most part, her *virtus* is exercised in the private sphere. So, in short, Marcia is an ideal aristocratic woman whose activities, both traditional and untraditional, demonstrate *virtus*, and are therefore praiseworthy.

The *Ad Helviam* revisits the mother-son relationship in an unconventional consolation. Written by Seneca in his exile to his mother, it does not follow the pattern of a traditional *consolatio*, since the mourned is alive and comforting the mourner. He claims to have delayed writing the consolation to let Helvia's grief abate a little and give his own wound time to heal (1.1-2); the most likely date puts it some

⁹³ Sen. *Ad Mar.* 25.3: "And so in this way, Marcia, behave as if you assume you are under the eyes of your father and son...Blush to think anything low or vulgar, and to cry for yours who have changed for the better!"

time after mid-year A.D. 42.⁹⁴ As with Marcia, Seneca portrays Helvia as an woman with *virtus* who fulfills the ideal of the aristocratic woman.

The circumstances surrounding Seneca's exile have a direct bearing on the work's audience. He was exiled allegedly because he was politically involved with Caligula's sisters, whom Messalina (wife of Claudius) regarded as threats to her position and prestige: "One of them, Julia Livilla, was banished on the charge of adultery with Seneca...Since his exile had been arranged by Messalina...Seneca could have hoped that by renouncing his political ambitions and alliances he would secure his recall...There is little reason to believe that Claudius regarded Seneca with any particular animus. The emperor had interceded with the senate to save Seneca's life,"⁹⁵ and was the one who finally recalled Seneca to Rome. The *Ad Helviam* therefore was more than a consolation; as a polished piece of literature and philosophy, it was also part of his initial campaign to disavow his former political associations and ambitions, thereby allaying Messalina's suspicions and the animosity of her faction - hence the constant renunciation of material things and political life in the text.⁹⁶ These political undercurrents lend an interesting female dimension to the work - Seneca is writing to two women, Helvia, and Messalina, and doing so in terms both would understand. When this appeal to Messalina did not work, he wrote the *Ad Polybium*, which is aimed instead at Claudius; it is a consolation for one of the emperor's powerful freedmen on the death of his brother, and filled with specific flattery of Claudius (e.g. 7; 8.2; 12.3-14.2).⁹⁷

This is something of a political reversal - the wives are usually the softer, more sympathetic ones who urge mercy on their husbands for exiles or the accused. Here, however, it was the wife to whom Seneca appealed first, as the person who engineered his fate, and Claudius second, as the more moderate and sympathetic

⁹⁴ Arther Ferrill, "Seneca's Exile and the *Ad Helviam*: A Reinterpretation," *CPh* 61, no. 2 (April 1966): 254.

⁹⁵ Ferrill 1966, 254. See also Bauman 1992 [1994], 168-70.

⁹⁶ Ferrill 1966, 256; see also Griffin 1976, 21.

⁹⁷ Cf. Ogilvie 1980, 205.

one. Seneca was finally recalled in A.D. 49, significant since in 48 Messalina had secretly married Silius and was tried and executed upon discovery (Tac. *Ann.* 11.26-38), and 49 saw the marriage of Claudius and Agrippina, one of those Caligulan sisters whom Seneca supported prior to exile. In fact, Tacitus attributes his recall directly to Agrippina:

*...veniam exilii pro Annaeo Seneca, simul praeturam impetrat, laetum in publicum rata ob claritudinem studiorum eius, utque Domitii pueritia tali magistro adolesceret et consiliis eiusdem ad spem dominationis uterentur, quia Seneca fidus in Agrippinam memoria beneficii et infensus Claudio dolore iniuriae credebatur.*⁹⁸

The *Ad Helviam* is therefore unique in that it is a highly reasoned, philosophical consolation written to a woman [Helvia], and is also a sophisticated political message written to a woman [Messalina], disavowing political connections with other powerful women [Julia Livilla and Agrippina] and portraying both himself and his *mater optima* (1.2) to Messalina in the best possible light. Seneca is speaking to a world of women in terms which would appeal both to their individual sensibilities and interests, and to the public at large with whom he was popular.

The consolation opens much like the *Ad Marciam*, as Seneca utilizes his favored military metaphors once again in declaring that he will join battle [*concurram*] with her grief, but will first open her old wounds and remind her of all ills she's suffered (2.1-2).⁹⁹ His healing will not be gentle, but will come from cauterizing and cutting: *Ut pudeat animum tot miseriarum victorem aegre ferre unum vulnus in corpore tam cicatricoso.*¹⁰⁰ His strategy thus does not differ significantly from his approach to Marcia, whose wounds regarding her father he opened up to remind her of past virtuous action; Helvia is in the same position, having conquered past

⁹⁸ Tac. *Ann.* 12.8: "She obtained a pardon of exile for Annaeus Seneca, at the same time as a praetorship [for him], thinking that because of his literary fame the public would rejoice, and also in order to use him as such a great tutor for Domitius from boyhood to adolescence, and for his advice on their hopes for control, for it was believed that Seneca was loyal to Agrippina through the memory of her support and was hostile to Claudius through indignation at his injustice."

⁹⁹ These metaphors crop up elsewhere in the consolation; cf. 3.1, 4.1, and 5.3.

¹⁰⁰ Sen. *Helv.* 2.2: "So it shall shame a spirit, victor over so many miseries, to resent one wound more on a body so scarred."

sorrows but stumbling over this one, her son's exile. However, since Seneca himself is the mourned, and is alive (just not present), his goals differ slightly: he must first show that he's not miserable, and then that her condition and fortune are not bad.

Exile here is substituted for death - exile was, after all, generally regarded by the Romans as a form of death (5.6-6.2), or at least an evil. In persuading Helvia that it is not an evil (and therefore not to be mourned), Seneca argues that exile is part of human nature, people have always wandered (6.7-7.3), and when men move there is no loss so long as they take with them virtues and find Nature in their place of exile, such as in the cases of Brutus and Varro (8.1). Loss of money is no real loss at all; creature comforts are overrated and interfere with one's studies and relationship with Nature (9.1-3), and Seneca recalls the example of Marcellus (consul in 51 B.C.) to illustrate to his mother how he intends to bear his own exile (9.4-8). Moreover, poverty is no more than a man needs: warmth, food, drink (10.2). Concerning the other two bodily needs, Seneca launches a second diatribe on the fashion for luxurious clothes and household adornments (11). He concludes by pointing out that the poor are no sadder or more anxious than the rich; the very wealthy even pretend poverty sometimes, for relief and a change (12.1-3). Many illustrious men of Rome's past were poor, such as Scipio and Atilius Regulus (12.4-7). Finally, Seneca, in addressing the counterargument that separately these things can be endured, but not all of them together, offers the rebuttal that the strength to withstand one is strength to withstand all: *Cum semel animum virtus induravit, undique invulnerabilem praestat*.¹⁰¹

In 13 Seneca thus finally concludes his reasons for why exile is no evil, and why in some cases it can even be advantageous to the person in question, from a Stoic perspective. Thusfar the consolation has focused on himself - his own models for how to adapt and behave as an exile, demonstrating to his audience that not only is he not miserable, but is in fact thriving. Unlike the *Ad Marciam*, this portion of the

¹⁰¹ Sen. *Helv.* 13.2: "When once *virtus* has hardened the spirit, it maintains complete invulnerability."

text has been largely without any images presented, apart from the descriptions of luxury; he has largely stuck to arguments from reason. Interestingly, the counterarguments he addresses are not framed in Helvia's voice, but in a general one; the debate is not with her, but with an abstract.¹⁰² That is, this portion of the text seems pitched more generally at readers other than just his mother - perhaps at the Roman reading public, but are there specific messages here for Messalina and her faction? By casting himself as content with (or at least unaffected by) exile, Seneca could be saying that he does not bear a grudge or any ill-will for the engineers of his fate, and therefore plans no vengeance if recalled, nor will he plot from abroad.

Seneca then wonders why Helvia is mourning, if her son is not dead nor unhappy. It is not that she mourns a loss of influence or protection; she is not like self-interested, ambitious mothers who see their sons as vehicles to power:

*novi enim animum tuum nihil in suis praeter ipsos amantem. Viderint illae matres, quae potentiam liberorum muliebri impotentia exercent, quae, quia feminis honores non licet gerere, per illos ambitiosae sunt, quae patrimonia filiorum et exhauriunt et captant, quae eloquentiam commodando aliis fatigant...tu gratiae nostrae, tamquam alienis rebus uteris, pepercisti et ex honoribus nostris nihil ad te nisi voluptas et impensa pertinuit. Numquam indulgentia ad utilitatem respexit....*¹⁰³

Seneca's efforts here are meant to flag to the reader that neither Seneca nor his family possess political ambition to advance their clan; they are not self-interested. This is additional reassurance for Messalina and her faction that they do not intend to overstep their bounds in politics, or meddle where they should not - that is, attempt to gain more influence than what is granted the emperor, or comes through

¹⁰² Costa 1994, 211.

¹⁰³ Sen. *Helv.* 14.2-3: "For I know that your spirit loves nothing in your beloved ones other than themselves. Other mothers seem to, who exercise a son's power with a womanish lack of self-control; who, as women are not permitted to hold office, are ambitious through their sons; who both drain and strive after the inheritances of their sons; who wear out eloquence through lending it to others...you used our influence as if it was the property of strangers, sparingly, and nothing reached you from our offices except pleasure and the expense. Kindness never looked to advantage..."

service to him. Interestingly, Seneca mentions that all Helvia got out of his elections were personal pleasure at seeing his advancement - and the monetary cost! The “expense” he speaks of are public games and gifts to supporters, as per normal Roman electoral practice; friends would also contribute to these expenses.¹⁰⁴ In other words, she has the money to back him politically and aid his social advancement; the financially independent matron of the first century A.D. This should not be mistaken, he says, for political ambition; just his own role as an aristocratic Roman male in the service of the emperor, and Helvia’s role as the mother of such a man. They know their place, and will not attempt to be the new Livia and Tiberius, nor replace Messalina and Britannicus.

Since Helvia cannot therefore be mourning for loss of influence, either his or hers, she must just be mourning because she is deprived of her son, and so Seneca will now concentrate his efforts on this concern (15). He brings the consolation back to his original claims to her virtue in the face of previous wounds: *Sed quanto ista duriora sunt, tanto maior tibi virtus advocanda est et velut cum hoste noto ac saepe iam victo acrius congregiendum.*¹⁰⁵ He once again uses the military metaphor, here to indicate not just his change of approach, but what should signal *her* change of approach to her sorrow. He has gone from passively discussing what she should *not* be feeling (that exile is an evil), what she is *not* (a power-hungry mother), to what she once was and still is, what she has done in the past, and what she should be doing now - attacking her grief and conquering it, a soldier against Fortune. He is a general, and will accept no excuses from this legionary: *Non est quod utaris excusatione muliebris nominis, cui paene concessum est immoderatum in lacrimas ius, non immensum tamen...A te plus exigit vita ab initio fortior; non potest muliebris excusatio contingere ei, a qua omnia muliebria vitia afuerunt.*¹⁰⁶ That is,

¹⁰⁴ Costa 1994, 214.

¹⁰⁵ Sen. *Helv.* 15.4: “But however great are the hardships, the more *virtus* you must invoke, and, just as with an enemy known and often conquered, you must engage it more vigorously.”

¹⁰⁶ Sen. *Helv.* 16.1-2: “It is not that you should use the excuse of being a woman, to whom the right of immoderation in tears is granted, but not infinite weeping...Life, stronger from the start, demands

weaknesses like greed for power, unchastity, luxury, infertility; not for Helvia, who embodies the opposites of these weaknesses, embodies the virtues of women - and men.

At 16.5-7, Seneca touches on the examples of Cornelia (mother of the Gracchi) and Rutilia (mother of Cotta), who are “commendable because under pressure they thought and acted like men.”¹⁰⁷ They too responded with *virtus*, reasoned through sorrow, and abandoned it quickly. It is *Cum his te numerari feminis volo. Quarum vitam semper imitata es, earum in coercenda comprimendaque aegritudine optime sequeris exemplum.*¹⁰⁸ The ideal matron has thus always counted a male approach to grief and the display of *virtus* amongst her characteristics, copying men in these situations as their role models, and Helvia, as an ideal matron herself, and who has always looked to these women as role models, ought not to abandon their example now.

Because grief can still spring up in spite of one’s efforts, one must subdue it, not mask it with pleasures or spectacles (17.1). Helvia must therefore deploy reason as her primary weapon to fight her sorrow, and turn to her studies in the liberal arts (especially philosophy), in which she has a basic training but was not able pursue due to the strictness of her husband, Seneca’s father (17.3-5);¹⁰⁹ these will be her source of comfort and will safeguard her against future ills. This advice - to turn to philosophy and reason - is precisely the advice Seneca would and did give to any man or Stoic in the throes of grief. For instance, in the *Ad Polybium* at 8.2-4 and 18.1-2, he advises Polybius to bury himself in his books and studies: *...illa tibi velut*

more from you; the excuse of being a woman is not able to affect one from whom all womanish vices are missing.”

¹⁰⁷ Lavery 1997, 10.

¹⁰⁸ Sen. *Helv.* 16.7: “I wish to count you in with these women. You have always copied the lives of these women, now you should follow their example as the best thing in suppressing and controlling sorrow.”

¹⁰⁹ “Seneca’s regret that Helvia was not allowed a deeper study of philosophy is turned into a criticism not of his father but of contemporary women” (Lavery 1997, 13), the criticism being that women use their education not to gain wisdom, but to display it, as another form of luxury to show off in the gaze of others.

*munimenta animi circumda, ne ex ulla tui parte inveniatur introitum dolor.*¹¹⁰ It is only later, as an afterthought, that he says she can also find comfort in her other sons, grandchildren, and family at large, advice he gave to Marcia, advice Areus gave to Livia, but which he tells Helvia only ...*quia, dum in illum portum, quem tibi studia promittunt, pervenis, adminiculis quibus innitaris opus est...*¹¹¹ In other words, such womanish (but appropriate) forms of consolation are not as effective or desirable as the comfort and fortification offered by reason and philosophy. The only other acceptable form of consolation is in an honorable task, which he recommends to her in the form of training his adopted daughter, Novatilla, taking Seneca's place as her father: *Nunc mores eius compone, nunc forma; altius praecepta descendunt, quae teneris imprimuntur aetatibus...multum illi dabis, etiam si nihil dederis praeter exemplum.*¹¹² Helvia is an exemplum just as much as Cornelia, or Rutilia, or any of the other figures he has mentioned throughout the consolation, and can step in to perform both the father's role in shaping a daughter because of her clear claims to *virtus* and ability to reason, and the mother's role by embodying the ideal *matrona* for the girl.

Oddly enough, Seneca concludes the consolation in the penultimate chapter by offering a final comfort in an extensive treatment of her sister, a matron very similar to Helvia in her virtues and qualities. This sister is modest to the point of extreme shyness, which she was able to overcome briefly to publicly and vocally aid Seneca in his campaign for the quaestorship, *pro me etiam ambitiosa fieret* ("indeed, on my behalf did she become ambitious" – 19.2). Not that this ambition is in any case for herself, or extends beyond ensuring Seneca gains public office; Seneca emphasizes heavily her preference for quiet and seclusion, once again dissociating

¹¹⁰ Sen. *Ad Poly.* 18.1: "...surround yourself with them as if they were ramparts for your spirit, lest grief find an entrance to you from any point."

¹¹¹ Sen. *Helv.* 18.1: "...because, until you arrive at that port, which your studies promise, you should lean on a prop (which is your work)...."

¹¹² Sen. *Helv.* 18.8: "Now arrange her character, now shape it; instruction sinks deeper, which is impressed in tender years...you shall give her much, if indeed you give nothing other than your example."

his family from any political ambitions to topple or replace the emperor, echoing his earlier protests to such ambitions. Her husband, Gaius Galerius, was prefect of Egypt A.D. 16-31, and during his tenure she scrupulously avoided the public eye, asked no favors of her husband, and did not grant any herself (19.6). This in stark contrast to, say, Livia, or any female member of the imperial house who was in a position to curry influence and be publicly visible; Helvia's sister, on a miniature, provincial scale, was what an empress should be - invisible, quiet, free of political ambition and eschewing any influence. One may recall here Pliny's own ideal empress as set forth in the *Panegyricus*, the quiet, anonymous Plotina, discussed in Chapter 2. Seneca is also saying that his relatives have been close to power before, and did not grasp it, or abuse it - further reassurance to Messalina and her faction. In this the *Ad Helviam* is like the *Ad Liviam*; in the latter, the author portrayed a Livia who was powerful but never touched or used that power. Similarly, Seneca is acknowledging the power and influence of he and his family, but is reassuring Messalina that neither he nor they will use their power against the imperial *domus*.

Finally, the sister showed her great worth when, during a voyage, her husband died, and she safely bore his body to land and burial through a storm and shipwreck - a deed which elicited the exclamation from Seneca, *O quam multarum egregia opera in obscuro iacent!*¹¹³ That is, acts of heroism by women often go unseen, unadvertised, though there may be as many of them as those performed by men. But that may be the very point - the women who do such deeds do not want to advertise them. Their images adhere closely to the traditional womanly ideal, though they are also used as role models for *virtus*, to be called upon by men, for men, when needed. Helvia and her sister are thus traditional women who are concerned with their homes and families; their (less traditional) exercise of influence is on behalf of their male relatives and husbands, and Helvia's untraditional philosophical studies are for personal edification and not for public display.

¹¹³ Sen. *Helv.* 19.5: "Oh, how many exceptional deeds lie in obscurity!"

So, both Helvia and Marcia represent ideal aristocratic women whose nontraditional activities only enhance their images and add to their *virtus*. Like Livia in the *Ad Liviam*, they eschew public power and influence, though they may possess it. Indeed, they are modeled in part on imperial women - Marcia on Livia, and Helvia's sister on Plotina. The difference here is that Seneca's women contribute to forming masculine *virtus* not just by raising sons to be ideal Roman men, but by embodying *virtus* themselves as role models. This again demonstrates the active and passive dichotomy described in Chapter 2, in which aristocratic women are active agents in defining and regulating masculinity, but imperial women are not. So Livia in the *Ad Liviam* does not "improve" Augustus or her sons, but Marcia can through her own courageous *virtus* preserve and enhance her father's masculinity for future generations of aristocratic Romans. This act in particular also demonstrates another similarity between Helvia and Marcia - they each have an awareness of and a concern for their public images. Indeed, Marcia demonstrates how visible aristocratic women could be if they were close to the imperial *domus*, but Seneca gives those images a distinctly traditional flavor by emphasizing the women's focus on their families and homes. And given the female audience which Seneca acknowledges in the *Ad Marciam* and implies in the *Ad Helviam*, these images of traditional and private life offered as public images would likely have resonated and carried weight with women too. In other words, public images of traditionality were what women wanted to see as much as men, even if they themselves (like Messalina) held untraditional power and position.

Stattus' Silvae

This emphasis on traditional femininity also appears in *Stattus' Silvae*. The two poems which are addressed to women, 2.7 and 3.5, will be discussed here; the former is an ode to Lucan on the anniversary of his birthday, and the latter is written from *Stattus* to his wife on the occasion of their move from Rome to Naples. Though 2.7 focuses on Lucan, with his wife Polla only appearing occasionally, it was commissioned by her for her own purposes, and therefore is revealing as an expression of her self-representation. 3.5 provides the more conventional representation of a woman's public image, via a man's perspective on behalf of his own motives, but *Stattus'* poem to his wife also contains variations both on her femininity and his masculinity which shed further light on contemporary gender ideals.

Each poem also closes their respective books; whether there is any particular significance in this is debatable. Generally speaking, closure can run according to a gendered opposition: male truth and closure, female error and openness - men finish, and women begin; feminist critics themselves "have often figured their own discursive practices as more 'open'."¹¹⁴ In this sense, *Stattus* is therefore reversing this opposition: emphasizing the female's role in closure, while opening Book 2 with a consolation poem to his friend *Atedius Melior* on the death of his slave, *Glaucias*, and Book 3 with a description of the *Hercules* of *Pollius Felix* at *Surrentum*. These books are largely dedicated to or on his friends and their private lives and ornaments¹¹⁵ - *Pollius'* villa and *Hercules*, *Melior's* slave, tree, and parrot, *Flavius Ursus'* slave, a consolation to *Claudius Etruscus* on the death of his father, and a send-off to *Maecius Celer*, later a suffect consul in 101. 2.5 is on a tame lion in the arena, the only public occasion besides the funeral of *Etruscus'* father, and 3.4 is on the hair clippings of *Flavius Earinus*, one of *Domitian's* boy eunuchs, which he sent

¹¹⁴ Don Fowler, *Roman Constructions: Readings in Postmodern Latin* (Oxford 2000), 292.

¹¹⁵ For more on *Stattus'* use of private wealth, see Noelle K. Zeiner, *Nothing Ordinary Here: Stattus as Creator of Distinction in the Silvae* (London 2005).

to the temple of Asclepius in Pergamum. Perhaps this emphasis on private life as opposed to public occasions and politics and flattery of Domitian demanded the inclusion of women, given their strong presence in the private sphere. Including them thus served to “close” the “space” of each book as a *domus*, since the other characters of a household - father, slave, child, parrot, tree - have already been introduced. This would also reflect one particular irony of the male/closure vs. female/open rhetoric, that women’s lives “have been seen as cloistered or confined in contrast to the open world of the male. The dark world of the women’s quarters has been set against the public space of the agora or forum, the small-scale female genres of private lyric or elegy contrasted with the wide-screen epics of masculinity.”¹¹⁶

Turning to 2.7 first, the poem was commissioned by and dedicated to Lucan’s widow, Polla Argentaria, who may also be the Polla who is wife to Pollius Felix in 2.2.¹¹⁷ In the preface written to Melior, Statius comments that *cludit volumen genethliacon Lucani, quod Polla Argentaria, rarissima uxorum...imputari sibi voluit*.¹¹⁸ Like Marcia with her father Cordus, Polla is attempting to preserve her husband’s literary legacy and the memory of his *virtus*: it is an ode to Lucan on the anniversary of his birthday. An odd combination of the genethliacon, birthday poem, and a consolation,¹¹⁹ despite its similarities with Statius’ other consolations - the presence of a *laudatio* and *lamentatio* - “the poem is fundamentally different from a *consolatio*, because the tension between grief and solace is absent...Moreover, only Lucan’s poetical achievements are praised, whereas praise of appearance, habits etc. is never omitted in Sts.’ consolations...Finally, there is no description of illness, death

¹¹⁶ Fowler 2000, 293.

¹¹⁷ For a concise discussion of the problem, see Harm-Jan van Dam, *P. Papinius Statius, Silvae Book II: A Commentary*, Mnemos. Suppl. 82 (Leiden 1984), 454-5. R.G.M. Nisbet favors identifying Polla Argentaria with the Polla in 2.2 - see “*Felicitas* at Surrentum (Statius, *Silvae* II.2),” *JRS* 68 (1978): 2-11. Arguments are inconclusive either way.

¹¹⁸ Stat. *Silv.* 5.Pref.: “A genethliacon to Lucan concludes the volume, which Polla Argentaria, rarest of wives, wanted from me as a favor.”

¹¹⁹ Betty Rose Nagle, *The Silvae of Statius* (Bloomington 2004), 7; Friedrich Vollmer, *P. Papinii Statii, Silvarum Libri: Herausgegeben und Erklärt* (Leipzig 1898), 373.

or funeral.”¹²⁰ As a birthday poem, the focus of the poem is Lucan; lines 41-104, nearly half the poem, is in the muse Calliope’s voice, speaking to the baby Lucan in her lap and telling him the history of his future. Polla appears only in a few places in the poem, first in Lucan’s early years, and then as the final feather in his cap immediately following Calliope’s description of his *Bellum Civile*. Both these mentions illustrate Polla as an embellishment on Lucan’s image, another thing that makes him great: when Calliope recounts his early works, she mentions *Hinc castae titulum decusque Pollae / iucunda dabis allocutione*.¹²¹ After finishing an account of his *Civil War*, she goes on to say, *Nec solum dabo carminum nitorem, / sed taedis genialibus dicabo / doctam atque ingenio tuo decoram, / qualem blanda Venus daretque Iuno / forma, simplicitate, comitate, / censu, sanguine, gratia, decore...*¹²² The message is clear: Polla graces Lucan, is a credit to him, a persona who is worthy of his talent and character. As the subject of his poetry, she is an appropriate and enviable muse, her attributes being suitable and lofty enough material for his talents, and her numerous virtues ornament his private life and, like his poetical talent, enhance his public image. Statius’ description of Polla as one Venus or Juno might grant is similar to his description of Violentilla in 1.2 as given to her husband by Venus. Statius’ laundry list of Polla’s characteristics also recalls the virtues displayed by the other women in the *Silvae*, such as Violentilla or Claudia Etrusca.

In 124-31, it is implied that Polla does not remarry but remains a *univira*, faithful to Lucan’s memory:¹²³ *Haec te non thiasis procax dolosis / falsi numinis induit figura, / ipsum sed colit et frequenta ipsum...*¹²⁴ This passage reinforces Polla’s image as Lucan’s wife and widow, the loyal woman who continues to focus

¹²⁰ van Dam 1984, 452.

¹²¹ Stat. *Silv.* 2.7.62-3: “Then this inscription addressed to chaste Polla shall give pleasure and glory.”

¹²² Stat. *Silv.* 2.7.81-8: “Nor will I give the glamor of poetry alone, but with the marriage torches I shall appoint you a wife, learned to adorn your talent, such a kind as charming Venus or beautiful Juno would grant simplicity, kindness, wealth, descent, charm, grace....”

¹²³ If she did indeed remarry and was Pollius Felix’s wife, then this representation is analogous to Statius representations of Violentilla and his own Claudia: they are de facto *univira*, remarried but still loyal to their previous husbands.

¹²⁴ Stat. *Silv.* 2.7.124-31: “She covers you in the form of a false god not with a brash, deceitful Bacchic dance, but reveres you yourself and visits you yourself....”

her life around her dead husband. Why would Statius present Polla with this image, emphasize this aspect of her life and image to her? Obviously for other readers it may raise their estimation of her; in tone and imagery it differs little from the poems he addresses to men and which involve their wives: she is presented as an ideal *matrona*. But she commissioned it and knew it would be for public consumption, and not for her own eyes only; the poem was an effort of hers to fashion or help shape her own image. It must then stand to chance that she wanted herself to be presented this way - or at least did not object to it. So, this poem says that women wanted the same things said about their public image that men wanted said about themselves and their women; that women were interested in crafting their public images in ways and language comprehensible and approvable by men, who might be the main audience for any public images anyway; why assume Roman women would want something different to say to men, or women?

In art, Glenys Davies notes that female posture often demonstrates defensiveness, submissiveness, taking up little space: the hand at chest or mouth, one knee in front of other, legs together, toes in, arms into the body; if women are in masculine, open poses, it is read as a sexual invitation; the subject is not thought of as a high-status, powerful person, as the message would read if the depicted was a man.¹²⁵ Clothes also communicate. Women's long dresses, large cloaks, sometimes veils, all hamper movement and perform as barrier gestures, while tilted heads also prevent statues from looking directly at the observer, and are generally seen on women; this was because nervous defensive postures were expected of women in public, and so for their statues.¹²⁶ A woman "who did not appear defensive would not be behaving according to her culture's notions of 'proper' feminine behavior. The sculptor has identified the gestures we recognise as being both typically 'feminine' and typically defensive, and has reproduced them to create a suitable image for

¹²⁵ Davies 1997, 101.

¹²⁶ Davies 1997, 102-03. For an example of just such a statue, see Boatwright 2000, 63. The statue was placed in the Forum of Trajan, as an idealized Roman woman.

displaying a great lady in public.”¹²⁷ So if artistic representations of women were symbolically modest and defensive in very feminine postures, it was because encoding their images as public senators or other notable men would not have made sense to the viewer and would not have been approved of.

Just like with these statues or other artistic representations, literary representations of women were culturally encoded so people could read into them cultural meanings, positive or negative attributes, and come to judgments on the person in question. In Polla’s case, it is the traditional virtues that are being encoded, even as being a wealthy and influential woman as Lucan’s widow and member of an elite family (and the fact that she was proactive in forming her own public image by commissioning this poem) meant she was not as traditional a *matrona* as perhaps portrayed. But the meanings people could read into that image were meanings they could easily approve of: Polla was talking to her culture (through Statius) in a language it would understand. Roman women, or at least this Roman woman, had public images - they just did not say what we want them to say,¹²⁸ they do not represent our cultural meanings, the strong independent [feminist] woman, because that is not what the women wanted, and not what would have worked for them.¹²⁹ As a wealthy and powerful woman, and as she was his patron, Statius is interested in portraying her in the best possible light within the cultural vocabulary of Roman gender and morality and society; just like he portrays his other, male addressees [and patrons] in the best possible light for them. And that means Polla is the loyal, brilliant, beautiful *matrona*.

Silvae 3.5 is dedicated to Statius’ wife Claudia, on their move to Naples in about A.D. 94. In the Preface to Book 3, Statius describes the poem as ...*sermo est, et quidem securus ut cum uxore et qui persuadere malit quam placere. Huic*

¹²⁷ Davies 1997, 103.

¹²⁸ Mary Lefkowitz reflects briefly on this scholarly problem of judgment from modern feminist expectations in her article “Wives and Husbands,” *G&R* 30, no. 1 (1983): 31.

¹²⁹ Cf. also Chapter 2’s discussion of Plin. *Ep.* 4.19, in which Calpurnia Hispulla is interested in knowing that her niece, Pliny’s wife Calpurnia, is behaving according to moral tradition and acting as a proper wife and household manager.

*praecipue libello favebis...*¹³⁰ It is written for his wife, but included for the pleasure of the male dedicatee of Book 3.

The image of Claudia presented is consonant with the ideal *matrona* presented in other poems. She has manly courage: if he were Odysseus and she Penelope, she would *thalamosque armata negasset* (“refuse marriage armed” - 3.5.10), no mucking about with shrouds! And like Odysseus, he is assured of his Penelope’s loyalty and dedication to him and their home (much like Priscilla, discussed in Chapter 2, who would also have defended her house with force [5.1.66-9]). She is temperate and virtuous, ignoring temptations; she ignores the theatre and Circus, the pleasures Rome offers: *...probitas et opaca quies et sordida numquam gaudia*.¹³¹ She lives for his triumphs, and concerns herself totally with his career - celebrates with him when he won the Alban contest, mourns and comforts him when he lost the Capitoline: *tu me nitidis Albana ferentem / dona comis sanctoque indutum Caesaris auro / visceribus complexa tuis, sertisque dedisti / oscula anhela meis; tu, cum Capitolia nostrae / infitiata lyrae, saevum ingratumque dolebas / mecum victa lovem...*¹³² She hears his poetry and knows his efforts and sufferings while composing the *Thebaid*: *...tu procurrentia primis / carmina nostra sonis totasque in murmure noctes / aure rapis vigili; longi tu sola laboris / conscia, cumque tuis crevit mea Thebais annis*.¹³³ This picture of Claudia parallels Pliny’s picture of Calpurnia (discussed in Chapter 2) - both women submerge their identities and take on their husbands’ interests, and encourage and show interest in their writings.¹³⁴ Interestingly, not mentioned among her assets as a *matrona* are beauty, charm, talents, or intelligence, unlike the other women of the *Silvae*, for whom these are

¹³⁰ Stat. *Silv.* 3.Pref.23-6: “...it is conversation, and indeed secure conversation with my wife, in order to persuade rather than to please. You shall especially favor this little poem....”

¹³¹ Stat. *Silv.* 3.5.17-18: “[...]you prefer] probity and shady peace, never vulgar joys.”

¹³² Stat. *Silv.* 3.5.28-33: “You joined me to your body in an embrace and gave me panting kisses when I bore the Alban gift on my glossy hair and wore Caesar’s consecrated gold; with our lyre denied by the Capitol, you felt the pain with me of cruel and thankless Jove’s defeat....”

¹³³ Stat. *Silv.* 3.5.33-6: “...you with wakeful ear hear first our verses as they run out during entire nights of murmuring; you alone recognize the long labor, and my *Thebaid* grew with your years.”

¹³⁴ Shelton 1990.

major attributes (remember Violentilla, or Polla). Instead, it is her virtue and character he emphasizes, her loyalty, courage, motherly devotion, and affection for him.

In this vein, he presents several reasons Naples will be good for them: pleasures like prestigious poetry contests, grand theatres, beautiful temples and urban spaces, not to mention all the tourist attractions nearby like Cumae, Baiae, Misenum, and Stabiae; and the presence of friends like Pollius Felix. Naples is a more civilized Rome: *Nulla foro rabies aut strictae in iurgia leges: / morum iura viris, solum et sine fascibus aequum.*¹³⁵ It has a gentle climate, and many young men who will make ideal husbands for her daughter. Statius here is appealing to each of those character attributes he outlined earlier: her love of peace and quiet; her dedication to him and his work and her joy in seeing him succeed at poetry; and her concerns as a mother. To further convince her, he compares her to ancient heroines and wonders where that virtue has gone in her reluctance to move:

*heu ubi nota fides totque explorata per usus, / qua veteres, Latias Graias, heroidas
aequas? / isset ad Iliacas...Penelope gavisia domos, si passus Ulixes; / questa est
Aegiale, questa est Meliboea relinqui...nec minor his tu nosse fidem vitamque maritis
/ dedere.*¹³⁶

This is the second reference Statius makes to Claudia being like Penelope, and the explicit association of his wife with figures of myth and legend is striking. Statius exhibits this technique of associating women with divine virtue to emphasize their particular qualities. So, for instance, Violentilla was given to Stella by Venus, and the goddess herself compares the girl with her divine beauty and virtue (cf. Chapter 2), saying she *mihi dulcis imago prosiluit* (“has shot up to be my sweet likeness” - 1.2.112-13). Recall also Polla as of stellar beauty, birth, and elegance, one whom

¹³⁵ Stat. *Silv.* 3.5.87-8: “There is no madness in the forum, or laws drawn in quarrels: men are ruled by morals alone, and rights without rods.”

¹³⁶ Stat. *Silv.* 3.5.44-51: “Oh, where is the familiar loyalty, tested through so many experiences, which equals you to ancient heroines of Latium and Greece? Penelope would joyfully have gone to the homes of Ilium, if Ulysses had suffered it; Aegiale complained, Meliboea complained at being left behind...nor less do you know this, how to be loyal and give your life for your husband.”

Venus or Juno themselves might grant a man, who when mourning Lucan's death and venerating his image, was more dignified than Laodicea (2.7.124-5). These divine references and associations, for aristocratic women, had somewhat different connotations than for imperial women: "it could be said that the representation of women in the guise of divinities was undertaken because Roman women desired to assimilate the virtues of these divinities in their public personae...For nonimperial women, whose public personae are reflected primarily in their funerary monuments, the goddesslike qualities celebrated in these images were presented as aspects of the individual's character."¹³⁷ With her as Penelope, Statius is therefore emphasizing the total harmony in their marriage and complete loyalty to one another, as Penelope and Odysseus were loyal to each other.¹³⁸ One might also say of her personality that like Penelope, she is feisty, or secretly rebellious, and very strong and determined - perhaps why it would make sense to Pollius Felix and even amuse him to read Statius' attempt at persuasion, that it would need all his skills to budge her from Rome!

But throughout the poem he presents himself as the junior partner in the relationship; he casts himself as hers, rather than she his, even implying himself as a male *univira* (a *unifemina*?): *et enim tua, nempe benigna / quam mihi sorte Venus iunctam florentibus annis / servat et in senium, tua, quae me vulnere primo / intactum thalamis...tua frena libens docilisque recepi, / et semel insertas non mutaturus habenas / usque premo.*¹³⁹ In this respect he is like his father, of whom he says at 5.3.240-1: *una tibi cognita taeda / conubia, unus amor* ("You knew marriage by a single torch, yours was a single love.") Claudia, however, is not *univira*; she was previously married to an unknown man, for whom *sic certe cineres umbramque priorem / quaeris adhuc, sic exsequias amplexa canori / coniugis ingentes iterasti*

¹³⁷ Matheson 1996, 191-2.

¹³⁸ D.W.T. Vessey, "Statius to His Wife: *Silvae* III.5," *CJ* 72, no. 2 (Dec. 1976-Jan. 1977): 137.

¹³⁹ Stat. *Silv.* 3.5.22-8: "For of course it is you, whom Venus joined to me by a kind fate in the budding of my years and preserves in my old age, you who wounded me (untouched by marriage) first...your reins I accepted easily and willingly, and once inserted I press the bit continuously and shall never change."

*pectore planctus / iam mea.*¹⁴⁰ This is another slight role reversal, and implies that she was at least close to his age, or perhaps slightly older than Statius, when they married. In reflection of this male *univira* sentiment, he declares that Naples *creavit / me tibi, me socium longos astrinxit in annos,*¹⁴¹ and it is to that cradle they return - perhaps a renewing of the relationship and its bond.¹⁴²

He finishes the poem with the literary equivalent of a forehead-slapping: *Sed ingratus qui plura annecto tuisque / moribus indubito. venies, carissima coniunx, / praeveniesque etiam. sine me tibi ductor aquarum / Thybris et armiferi sordebunt tecta Quirini.*¹⁴³ *Ingratus* he uses of himself, ungrateful to his wife, implying he owes Claudia a debt of gratitude; he is the beneficiary and she the benefactor, and implied superior, in the marriage. She will precede him and he will follow her, something of a reversal of what would be expected. But then, her life revolves around him - without him she would be bored in Rome, have no purpose there or roots.

Claudia's image is thus refracted through the mirror of Statius. She is an ideal manly *matrona*, but we would expect nothing less when Statius speaks of his own wife in a poem sent to a male friend, Pollius Felix. His efforts give no indication of her any activities outside the home, or of any public exposure she may have had aside from her attendance at his readings and this poem itself. In fact, their public images remain very distinct; she in the home, he a well-known, visible court poet and socialite. But their private images, the ones he is putting on display here as the poem gives insight into the marriage and marital discussions behind the *domus* walls, blur

¹⁴⁰ Stat. *Silv.* 3.5.51-4: "So of course you still seek his ashes and shade of him, so you pursued embracing your musical husband, beating your breast heavily again and again, when even now you were mine."

¹⁴¹ Stat. *Silv.* 3.5.106-07: "...created me for you, bound me fast as your companion for many long years."

¹⁴² It is difficult to find precedent for male *univira* outside Statius; one possible parallel is in the *Cons. Ad Liviam*, in which Drusus and Antonia's marriage is depicted as unusually close. At 299-328, she is his perfect match, a female version of Drusus, and she is Drusus' first and only love; his last words are of her. This is reminiscent of the stereotype of the loyal matron on her deathbed speaking her husband's name with her last breath.

¹⁴³ Stat. *Silv.* 3.5.109-12: "But I am an ingrate, who adds more things to you and doubts your character. You will come, dearest wife, and shall even precede me. For without me you will count worthless the Tiber, commander of waters, and the roofs of armed Quirinus."

together. He is the *univira*, and made for her; questioning her loyalty and ability in attempting to shame her into moving makes him an *ingratus*; he willingly obeys her. She would defend the house and their marriage with a sword if need be, and will lead their way to Naples; she is very strong, and his rock of support. Who is more husband, and who more wife? His virtues are more traditionally feminine, and hers more traditionally masculine. As Statius stated in the preface, the poem is meant to be, or at least to represent, private communication between he and his wife. So, while Statius is still emphasizing adherence to traditional gender roles for the consumption of his public audience, qualifying the poem as private correspondence allows him to simultaneously reverse those roles, highlighting the masculinity in his wife's femininity, and the femininity in his own masculinity.

Pliny's Epistles

In a departure from Statius' view into private Rome, Pliny's *Epistles* offers a window into what might have been the reality behind the traditional front of women's images: in other words, what Polla might have been doing when not worshiping the image of her dead Lucan. Two women in particular, Corellia and Ummidia Quadratilla, will be examined here; Corellia appears throughout the *Epistles* as both an addressee and subject, and Quadratilla's death inspired Pliny to discuss at length her life and character, concluding with his judgment on her worth. Both women were wealthy, independent patronesses, in a sense the true heirs to Livia, not the women of the imperial *domus*. For example, aristocratic women also followed their husbands to provincial posts and imitated Livia there; benefactresses like Eumachia consciously modeled selves on her.¹⁴⁴ In Rome also, aristocratic women (like Corellia and Quadratilla, perhaps) modeled their activities as patronesses on

¹⁴⁴ Severy 2003, 245-6.

imperial women.¹⁴⁵ So, Pliny's portrayal and judgment of their public reputations and private characters will fill out this chapter's examination of aristocratic femininity.

In 7.11, Pliny continues the saga of the Corellii he began in 1.12 with the death of Corellius Rufus. In the letter, he is justifying to his wife's grandfather, Calpurnius Fabatus, his decision to sell to Corellia a chunk of land on the shores of Lake Como at a discount; he had inherited this land, while other people received the other seven-twelfths of the estate. Corellia's brother is the Corellius Rufus of 1.12 and 4.17; this Corellia is not to be confused with Rufus' daughter, also Corellia, the subject of 4.17. The heart of his appeal to Calpurnius Fabatus lies in establishing Corellia as an associate and *amicus* of his. His connection with her comes primarily through Rufus, who was his patron, but also through her husband and son: *Corelliam cum summa reverentia diligo, primum ut sororem Corelli Rufi...deinde ut matri meae familiarissimam. Sunt mihi et cum marito eius Minicio Iusto, optimo viro, vetera iura; fuerunt et cum filio maxima, adeo quidem ut praetore me ludis meis praesederit.*¹⁴⁶ Here Pliny establishes his link to Corellia through male networks of patronage, but also through his own household - he describes her as *familiarissimam* to his mother, a word which denotes an intimate, private, domestic friendship, versus a more public relationship. That she and Pliny's mother have such affection for each other might justify his knocking down the price of the land to 700,000 sesterces from 900,000, but the woman's place in the center of a family with which Pliny has *amicitia* gives him an added incentive to be generous - he cannot afford to anger her male relations.

Perhaps also he did not want to anger her. She is clearly wealthy and independent, despite her marriage; Pliny makes no mention of her husband Minicius

¹⁴⁵ Margaret L. Woodhull, "Matronly Patrons in the Early Roman Empire: The Case of Salvia Postuma," in *Women's Influence on Classical Civilization*, eds. Fiona McHardy and Eireann Marshall (London 2004), 75-91.

¹⁴⁶ Plin. *Ep.* 7.11.3-4: "I esteem Corellia with the greatest reverence, first as the sister of Corellius Rufus...then as the dearest friend of my mother. And the ties of my friendship with her husband Minicius Justus, best of men, are old; and they go with her excellent son, whom I undertook to preside over my games as praetor."

Justus as participating in the deal, and only mentions his name as one reason why he should do *her* this favor. So she has disposable income of her own; prosecutes business deals on her own; and it was her own whim to buy the land (7.11.5). Her place in the family's networks was therefore more likely an active one, as a patron herself, rather than a more passive, domestic, linking role. Pliny also treats the network through her agnate family and the one through her husband as somewhat separate entities. Referring back to the quote above, he seems to list her connections in order of importance - Rufus his patron, listed as the *primum* connection, *deinde* as his mother's *familiarissimam*, end sentence; and then *cum* her husband and son. Corellia's agnate network is placed as the primary one, followed by Pliny's display of filial piety, with her husband and son treated separately at the end of the passage. Given her wealth and status as his patron's brother, it is possible she took over some of Rufus' client networks upon his death and operated them independently of her marriage and husband's family, as we know some women did.¹⁴⁷

Pliny gives two further hints that this might be the case, and that he is granting her the favor as he would a patron because she retained some of that patronal authority over him from her brother. First, back in 4.17, *Quin etiam moriens filiae suae (ipsa solet praedicare): 'Multos quidem amicos tibi ut longiore vita paravi, praecipuos tamen Secundum et Cornutum.'*¹⁴⁸ In other words, the father's *amici* will become his daughter's upon his death, and she may call upon them for favors (such as defense in court cases). Given that Pliny has made extremely clear his respect for and association with Corellia [the sister], one might very well substitute the *sororem* for the *filiam* here, as Pliny is clearly her friend as well, and as given to doing her favors as for the daughter. The second hint that Corellia is more than just a

¹⁴⁷ Cf. *Ep.* 1.4, where Pliny writes to his former mother-in-law, Pompeia Celerina, mother of his second wife, and exclaims at her lavish properties in Umbria and Etruria.

¹⁴⁸ Plin. *Ep.* 4.17.9: "And even when dying, he told his daughter (she is used to telling it herself): 'Many friends I have acquired in my long life, of whom however [Plinius] Secundus and Cornutus are outstanding.'"

familiarissimam and a respected friend is almost an outright acknowledgement. Closing the letter, Pliny says of the other inheritors: *Nec vero coguntur imitari meum exemplum: non enim illis eadem cum Corellia iura. Possunt ergo intueri utilitatem suam, pro qua mihi fuit amicitia.*¹⁴⁹ The word he uses to describe his relationship with Corellia is *amicitia*, which denotes the patronal, public, associational aspect to a friendship - for him, she is an *amicus*, not a *familiarissimam*.¹⁵⁰ Also, using *iura* to describe his ties to her lends a legal/official aspect to their relationship which emphasizes that she is an *amicus* and not a casual or passive friend, or just the sister of a man he respected. His wife's grandfather therefore ought to understand that Pliny is honoring his obligations to a patron and *amicus* by selling the property cheaply and without consulting his fellow inheritors; and he should also understand Corellia in male terms, that she should be treated no differently from a male associate, and honored as such.

The issue continues in 7.14, written to Corellia herself. She discovered that the property was appraised at 900,000 sesterces when she paid the inheritance tax on it, and insisted on Pliny demanding the full price from her, not the discounted 700,000. Pliny responds, *Invicem ego et rogo et exigo, ut non solum quid te verum etiam quid me deceat adspicias, patiarisque me in hoc uno tibi eodem animo repugnare, quo in omnibus obsequi soleo.*¹⁵¹ His tone is deferential here, asking her permission to defy her in her request, when he usually submits to her wishes; that is, this is an unusual situation and a reversal of the normal relationship and business conducted between them. This further marks Corellia as an important associate and perhaps a patron-figure in Pliny's life.

¹⁴⁹ Plin. *Ep.* 7.11.8: "In truth the other heirs should not be forced to imitate my example; for they don't have the same ties of friendship with Corellia. Therefore they are able to regard their own interests, though friendship came before my own."

¹⁵⁰ On *amicitia* and patronage, see Gardner and Wiedemann 1991, 166-83.

¹⁵¹ Plin. *Ep.* 7.14.2: "In turn I both beg and demand that you consider not just what is fair for you but also what is proper for me, and allow me to oppose you in this one thing in the same spirit which which I usually obey you in everything."

From these letters emerges a woman who is wealthy, influential, and independent. Corellia pursues business deals according to her own interests, not necessarily those of her male relatives. Her high social position may be the result of her brother's status and her good marriage, but she maintains that position and reputation by her public activities as a wealthy landowner and patroness. Pliny can thus easily represent her as an *amicus* and even as the senior partner in that relationship, with himself as the more junior. Moreover, the publishing of these letters demonstrates to the public both her power and place in the social networks, as well as her personal character: she is honorable enough to demand Pliny charge her the full price for the land, lest she appear as a spendthrift in unfairly taking advantage of his generosity. Pliny is thus presenting her public image primarily as an important and powerful figure, moral in her dealings and socially prominent. Interestingly, there is no mention here of the traditional feminine virtues discussed in Chapter 2 and above in Seneca and Statius. Corellia's image has no traditional front, as was the case for Polla; Pliny is instead representing her as he would any of his other male *amici*, via her business deals, social connections, wealth, and birth. He does not delve into her private life and habits, or discuss her relationship with her husband, both topics which Statius and Seneca used as touchstones in their representations of women.

However, Pliny does examine the private life of another wealthy woman, Ummidia Quadratilla. 7.24 is written to Rosianus Geminus upon her death, and is an assessment of her life. She was known to Pliny because she raised her grandson, Quadratus, who was a friend and protege of Pliny's:

...nepotem familiarissime diligo, adolescentem singularem nec iis tantum, quos sanguine attingit, inter propinquos amandum. Ac primum conspicuus forma omnes sermones malignorum et puer et iuvenis evasit, intra quartum et vicensimum annum

*maritus... Vixit in contubernio aviae delicatae severissime, et tamen obsequentissime.*¹⁵²

Pliny seemingly creates a paradox here: Quadratilla has raised an exemplary Roman man, a paragon of *virtus*, and yet she herself indulged in luxury and idleness:

*Habebat illa pantomimos fovebatque, effusius quam principi feminae convenit...Audivi ipsam cum mihi commendaret nepotis sui studia, solere se, ut feminam in illo otio sexus, laxare animum lusu calculorum, solere spectare pantomimos suos, sed cum factura esset alterutrum, semper se nepoti suo praecepisse abiret studeretque....*¹⁵³

This leisure time she emphasizes as a state of being both for herself and her other aristocratic women might reflect female exclusion from the public sphere, and that the slaves which wealth bought also rendered unnecessary the woman's role as household manager - so what else were they to do with their time and money?¹⁵⁴

And yet at a recent Sacerdotal Games, when her pantomime troupe performed, *alienissimi homines in honorem Quadratillae (pudet me dixisse honorem) per adulationis officium in theatrum cursitabant exsultabant plaudebant mirabantur ac deinde singulos gestus dominae cum canticis reddebant....*¹⁵⁵ The public crowd is paying honor to her, identifying her as honorable, though it is an honor that rings a bit false to Pliny's ears - the applause is paid for and honors her for her pantomime troupe (which she has put on display for the public's entertainment at the games), both conditions which, as he stated earlier, were not exactly proper to her high

¹⁵² Plin. *Ep.* 7.24.1-3: "...I love the grandson most dearly, a singular youth to such an extent that those not related to him by blood love him as if he was family. And first, despite his striking beauty, he escaped all malignant gossip as both boy and young man, a husband within his twenty-fourth year...He lived austerely, yet deferentially, in the same house with his lush of a grandmother."

¹⁵³ Plin. *Ep.* 7.24.4-5: "She had pantomimes and pampered them lavishly, more than was appropriate to a high-ranking women...I heard her, when entrusting me with the studies of her grandson, say that as a woman with the leisure of that sex, she usually relaxed her spirit through games of draughts, usually watched her pantomimes, but when she did one or the other, she always sent her grandson away, instructing him to study...."

¹⁵⁴ Sherwin-White 1966, 432.

¹⁵⁵ Plin. *Ep.* 7.24.7: "people who were strangers to Quadratilla were running to the theatre in order to honor her (if it is permitted me to call it honoring), jumping up and clapping in admiring her, and then repeating every single gesture of their mistress with songs."

position and birth (though she regains her honor in his eyes by raising Quadratus properly and producing such a fine young man who is a credit to her). Nevertheless, Quadratilla is here cultivating a public image as a wealthy benefactor to the masses, and flaunting the numbers of those on her payroll as a man would flaunt the number of slaves, freedmen, and clients in his procession in the streets of Rome.¹⁵⁶ Indeed, while women could accrue honor for themselves, they usually did so by virtue of the display of traditional female virtues and public acts of loyalty to their families, especially towards their husbands or fathers.¹⁵⁷ Quadratilla is foregoing those traditional routes to female honor by appropriating more public, male displays of honor-worthy characteristics - great wealth, a large public following, a crowded retinue, a great house and sizeable estate.¹⁵⁸

But why? She has disavowed politics or public influence by declaring herself as a woman of leisure, with many a spare hour in her day. Why does she need to hire people out to applaud her and her troupe in public, and put on the kind of display a man might in trying to curry political favor or notice? She very likely had her own networks of influence, but whether or not Quadratilla's motives were political, she obviously possessed and cultivated a public image, and had an interest in maintaining it. It is interesting that she did not choose to project a traditional front for that image, nor did Pliny give her one. This might suggest that the appearance of adhering to traditional ideals was not always necessary for independent, wealthy women to gain respect or legitimacy.

But the most interesting question is, why is Quadratilla a good woman in Pliny's eyes? To return to the beginning of the discussion on Quadratilla, because she produced a good Roman man. Whatever her indulgences, she kept them to herself; whatever her womanly weaknesses, she did not allow them to touch or influence her grandson Quadratus. Perhaps this quality, then, is the essential

¹⁵⁶ J.E. Lendon, *Empire of Honour: The Art of Government in the Roman World* (Oxford 1997), 36.

¹⁵⁷ Lendon 1997, 46. Cf. Lefkowitz 1981 and "Influential Women," 1983; Fischler 1994, 117-20; Treggiari 1996; G. Williams 1996.

¹⁵⁸ Lendon 1997, 36.

characteristic of aristocratic femininity in the late first/early second centuries A.D.: to be a good woman, one must make a better man. This has been the common thread in nearly all the works discussed: Marcia and her father Cordus, Helvia and her sons, Polla and Lucan, Claudia and Statius, Quadratilla and Quadratus. In each pair, the woman has worked to improve her husband's or male relative's public image and masculinity, either through ensuring the perpetuation of his memory, raising and forming his character, or reminding him of his duties and reinforcing his will to see them through. Each woman (except Quadratilla) has also been portrayed as adhering to the traditional ideals of femininity as outlined in Chapter 2, though the reality behind this image may have been less than traditional, as Corellia, Quadratilla, and Polla demonstrate.

Conclusion

In review, "As human beings, as carriers of aristocratic bloodlines, as social actors with the potential to shape the distribution of resources, [women] are poised to enter into full partnership in the management of private and public affairs. Strictures on their public performance thus become more important even as they become more difficult to enforce."¹⁵⁹ Perhaps because of these strictures, women often presented a public image which may not have been a true representation of their real feelings or daily reality - much like Agricola, whom Tacitus portrays as cultivating a public persona different from his true opinions and character. For women, the image projected was usually one of a traditional femininity centered around home and family.

However, as *Silvae* 2.7 and Pliny's *Epistles* demonstrate, women's visibility extended beyond the *domus*, as did their activities and interests; Corellia, Quadratilla, and Polla all sustain extensive social networks through their independent

¹⁵⁹ Habinek 1998, 131.

wealth, interests, and patronal activities, while Marcia and Helvia make their reputations more literary-based, with Marcia editing and publishing her father's works and Helvia studying philosophy. These pursuits communicate the sense that these aristocratic women are actively promoting their own interests relatively openly, or openly known to their peers. However, in all cases except Quadratilla and Corellia, the aristocratic male author reinterpreting and representing the women's images chooses to highlight more traditional aspects of their femininity: their chastity, loyalty, virtue, concern for family, and modesty. Only in Polla's case is it clear that this traditional front was of the woman's choice and preference, but there is no reason to think that the others would be displeased at being portrayed in a traditional manner. In portraying the women primarily as traditional *matronae*, the authors are emphasizing the qualities still associated most with femininity, illustrating that the ideal of femininity, at its core, had not changed (significantly) from the Augustan period through Trajan. The unofficial, public activities of the women were mere embellishments on these official qualities, especially if they performed them on behalf of their families (but as the cases of Quadratilla and Corellia show, familial interests did not have to be represented).

This dichotomy between a woman's traditional, official public image, and her unofficial, equally public activities behind the image, was also reflected in the portrayal of imperial women's femininity, but aristocratic male response was different. Imperial women's proximity to power, and possession of power themselves, required more strict regulation of their images and pursuits, lest they gain too much influence over the emperor or Roman state. So, they held imperial women to a stricter standard of femininity (the ideal discussed in Chapter 2). The *Consolatio Ad Liviam* approaches this problem by acknowledging what could not be totally denied – that imperial women had significant power and influence – but reassures his aristocratic male audience that she would never touch that power or seek to exercise it in any way. He also perpetuates the highly traditional official image of her projected

in the Augustan period, further reassuring his audience that she did not have any interests outside her own home and family.

However, even this approach lost its convincing tone after the Julio-Claudian women worked hard at gaining the throne and ultimate power and influence both for themselves and their sons – all still technically within the bounds of the imperial *domus*. So, Pliny and Tacitus describe the new, more conservative feminine ideal for imperial women, one which even excludes motherhood (discussed in Chapter 2) and did not tolerate activities outside the home. In this way they seek to solve the problem between ideal and reality, by forming a more narrow space and definition for each.

Like men, both aristocratic and imperial women's images are projecting adherence to an ideal, but unlike for men, this ideal of gender did not change significantly, largely because possessing and cultivating a public image was not necessary to the construction of femininity. Seneca's exclamation at *Ad Helviam* 19.5 at how many great deeds (by women) go unnoticed and unpublicised is one indication of this; one does not need to know that Helvia's sister bore her husband's body with courage through a storm to know that she is a good woman, but it helps. One does not need to know that Marcia edited and published her father Cordus' works, but it helps. As expressions of key feminine qualities like loyalty, these acts may make them more well-known in the public eye, but are still mere expressions of the ideal femininity they already embody – the expressions are not the qualities themselves, in other words. The feminine ideal therefore did not change significantly,¹⁶⁰ though enforcement did change slightly, becoming stricter for imperial women and more flexible for aristocratic women.

¹⁶⁰ Mary Lefkowitz also identifies continuity in gender, specifically in spousal relationships, wherein expectations of wives by husbands and vice versa did not change significantly ("Wives and Husbands," *G&R* 30, no. 1 (1983): 32-46.

Conclusion

This thesis has examined the Roman discourse of gender among elite men as represented through their public images. It has examined how the use and representation of individual Romans' public images commented on and participated in the definition and regulation of masculinity and femininity. It has also been an integrative study. Scholars cited in this study have examined women's public images through art and their portrayals of femininity; men's images through art and literature, and their portrayals of masculinity; and even how women's images could reflect on men. But this study has combined these threads and examined the relationships between them, seeing them not as isolated elements within culture but rather all part of the same field of discourse. I have also traced the effects on these elements of the presence of the emperor. Together with a focus on images through literature, these techniques have formed a cohesive picture of how gender was being talked about among aristocratic men in Flavian and Trajanic Rome, with other elite men (and sometimes women) looking on. In this discourse, participating meant not simply speaking or writing, but seeing – the public participated by gazing (or not gazing) on the emperor or aristocrats; the male aristocracy by seeing, judging, and re-presenting the images of the emperors and fellow aristocrats which they consumed with their eyes; and the emperor at least partially directed their visual paths by his own dominant gaze, forcing people to avert their eyes or turn them to him, or to avoid his gaze and the people's in seeking a low-profile public image. The gaze therefore affected which spaces people could use not only to act out gender, but also to discuss it.

In elucidating the complexities of this navigation of sight and gender, Chapter 1 pinpointed aristocratic expectations of the ideal emperor: that he should not only be the most powerful member of society, but also the most masculine, the alpha male, as befitting his superior position. This demoted aristocratic masculinity, which could never be as dominant or public as the emperor's, and so aristocratic men were

forced to find other sources of masculinity and outlets for its expression. One response emerges in Tacitus' *Agricola*, which elucidates a masculinity still based on traditional *virtus* as expressed through public and military service to the *res publicae*, but with one significant change: Tacitus warns his readers that such *virtus* can no longer be recognized or legitimized by the public gaze. The aristocratic male's audience is now the emperor, and such attention (under bad emperors) can be dangerous or lethal. The Roman man must therefore rely primarily on himself for regulation of his masculinity.

Chapter 2 identified another response to this crisis of masculinity: instead of finding its sources in traditional activities, other authors turned increasingly to the private sphere as both the space for performance of masculinity, and a source for its virtues. So, for example, being a good *paterfamilias* and husband became increasingly important in judgments on a man's character and masculinity. As a result of this focus on private life, women are used to comment on men's masculinity, given their prominence in the home and private sphere. Authors often represent women as abstracted stereotypes – the good or bad woman – to comment on men's behavior in the home. For emperors, this trend was primarily used by aristocratic male authors to judge whether emperors were good or bad men, not good or bad rulers. For aristocratic masculinity, this trend was used for the same purpose, but with the added dimension of assigning the stereotypical women an active role in shaping and reinforcing masculinity. In this model, women could serve as role models of masculine *virtus* and could remind men of, and prod them into, fulfilling the masculine ideal. Imperial women could not do the same for their emperors, however; they remained passive symbols instead of active agents.

Chapter 3 examined the effects of this trend in the discourse of femininity; what was being a woman, if women could model masculinity? I argued that there was little effect: the feminine ideal did not change significantly between the Augustan era and Trajan, largely because public activities and public images were not adopted as a prerequisite for a woman to be a good *matrona*. They enhanced her strong

femininity, particularly if carried out on behalf of her family or husband, but were not conditions to be met. In the case of imperial women, the ideal became even more traditional, ruling out even public activities on behalf of their families (especially sons). Aristocratic women, on the other hand, could even shed the traditional front to their official image and still be judged good women, as long as they produced good men. This brings the thesis full circle, returning to Chapter 2's argument that women shaped masculinity, as a response to the emperor's effect on aristocratic masculinity.

From these conclusions, one may go in any number of directions. More specific textual studies might be made, for example on the manifestation of this gender discourse in invective. Extending the chronological scope of the questions addressed in this work might also shed more light on changing Roman gender attitudes and ideals: what preconditions existed in the late Republic which might have affected the ways and directions in which the discourse developed? To what degree did the ideals remain consistent in late antiquity? One might also pursue comparison studies. Did a similar shift in the gender discourse in Greece accompany imperialism, empire-building, or tyranny? If not, why was the Roman imperial system different in its effects? One other question which might be investigated is the pervasive theme of role-playing: acting out one's gender, or pretending to, while the unofficial reality behind the front may differ from the ideal. The idea of a mask, a public persona which one fronts for the gaze, is one found both for men and women in this thesis; studying how these masks were used or identified in other texts would also add an extra dimension to an understanding of Roman imperial culture. The value here and through these questions is learning not just how the Romans viewed gender, but how they talked about it, and with a better understanding of that process one may achieve a greater understanding of gender in the ancient world at large.

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