The Construction of Authority in Ancient Rome and Byzantium

The Rhetoric of Empire

Sarlota A. Takács

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In *The Construction of Authority in Ancient Rome and Byzantium*, Sarolta Takács examines the role of the Roman emperor, who was the single most important law-giving authority in Roman society. Emperors had to embody the qualities or virtues espoused by Rome's ruling classes. Political rhetoric shaped the ancients' reality and played a part in the upkeep of their political structures. Takács isolates a reoccurring cultural pattern, a conscious appropriation of symbols and signs (verbal and visual) belonging to the Roman Empire. She suggests that contemporary concepts of "empire" may have Roman precedents, which are reactivations or reuses of well-established ancient patterns. Showing the dialectical interactivity between the constructed past and present, Takács also focuses on the issue of classical legacy through these virtues, which are not simply repeated or adapted cultural patterns but are tools for the legitimization of political power, authority, and even domination of one nation over another.

Sarolta A. Takács is professor of history and founding dean of the School of Arts and Sciences Honors Program at Rutgers University. A recipient of fellowships from the Center for Hellenic Studies (Harvard University) and the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation as well as grants from the Loeb Classical Library Foundation, the Ford Foundation, and Fondation Hardt, she is the author of *Isis and Sarapis in the Roman World* and *Virgins, Sibyls, and Matrons: Women in Roman Religion*.

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Sarolta A. Takács

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To My Friends
Inspirations and *Psychēs Iatroi*

And

To My Teachers
Motivators of Ideas and Questions

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Abbreviations

AE	*L'Année épigraphique*
AHR	*The American Historical Review*
BMCRE	*British Museum Coins of the Roman Empire*
CIL	*Corpus inscriptionum Latinarum*
HThR	*Harvard Theological Review*
IG	*Inscriptiones Graecae*
IGUR	*Inscriptiones Graecae urbis Romae*
ILS	*Inscriptiones Latinae selectae*
MGH Poet. Lat.	*Monumenta Germaniae historica poetae Latini*
OCD	*Oxford Classical Dictionary*
OLD	*Oxford Latin Dictionary*
RE	*Realencyclopädie der Altertumswissenschaften* (Pauly-Wissowa)
REB	*Revue des études byzantines*
REL	*Revue des études latines*
RhM	*Rheinisches Museum*
TAPA	*Transactions of the American Philological Association*
WS	*Wiener Studien*
ZPE	*Zeitschrift für Papyrologie and Epigraphik*

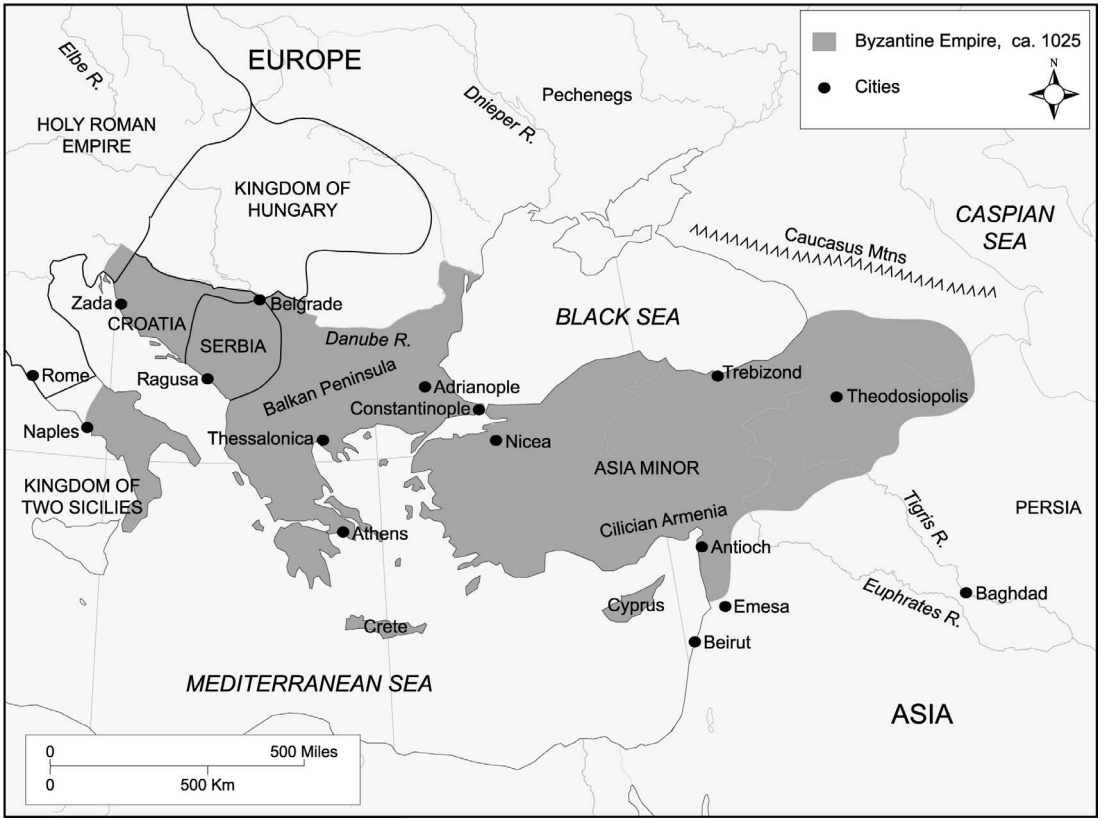
Abbreviations of Ancient Authors

Ach. Tat.	Achilles Tatius
Aug.	C. Iulius Caesar (Octavianus) Augustus
RG	*Res Gestae*
August.	Augustine
C.D.	*De civitate Dei*
Basil	Basil of Caesarea
Ad. adol.	*Oratio ad adolescentes*
Cato	M. Porcius Cato
Origines	
Cic.	M. Tullius Cicero.
Arch.	*Pro Archia*
Fin.	*De Finibus Bonorum et Malorum.*
Marc.	*Pro Marcello*
Phil.	*Philippicae*
Pis.	*In Pisonem*
Rab. Perd.	*Pro Rabirio Peduellionis Reo*
Sest.	*Pro Sestio*
Ver.	*In Verrem*
D.C.	Dio Cassius
D.H.	Dionysius of Halicarnassus
Enn.	Ennius
Ann.	*Annales*
Euseb.	Eusebius
Hist. eccl.	*Historia ecclesiastica*
Vit. Const.	*Vita Constantini*
G. Pis.	George of Pisidia
Ex. Pers.	*Expeditio Persica*
Rest. Cruc.	*In Restitutionem S. Crucis*
Isoc.	Isocrates
Arch.	*Archidamus*
J.	Josephus
BJ	*Bellum Judaicum*

Julian.	Julian (the Apostate)
Ep.	*Epistulae*
Lactant.	Lactantius
De mort.	*De mortibus persecutorum*
Lib.	Libanius
Liv.	Livy
Per.	*Periochae*
Malal.	John Malalas
Chronogr.	*Chronographia*
Mart.	Martial
Sp.	*Spectacula*
Petr.	Petronius
Plb.	Polybius
Plin.	Pliny (the Elder)
Nat.	*Naturalis Historia*
Plin.	Pliny (the Yonger)
Pan.	*Panegyricus*
Psellos	Michael Psellos
Chron.	*Chronographia*
Sen.	Seneca (the Younger)
Cl.	*De clementia*
Serv.	Servius
A.	*In Vergilium commentarius*
SHA	Scriptores Historiae Augustae
Comm.	*Commodus*
Heliogab.	*Heliogabalus*
Pert.	*Pertinax*
Sev.	*Severus*
Suet.	Suetonius
Aug.	*Divus Augustus*
Dom.	*Domitianus*
Nero	*Nero*
Tac.	Tacitus
Ag.	*Agricola*
Ann.	*Annales*

Hist.	*Historiae*
Theoph.	Theophylact Simocatta
Hist.	*Historiae*
Tyrt.	Tyrtaeus
Var.	Varro
Verg.	Vergil
A.	*Aeneid*
G.	*Georgics*
Zos.	Zosimus

Map 1. The Roman Empire.



Map 2. The Byzantine Empire.
Map from Sarolta A. Takács, ed., *The Modern World*, vol. 4: *Civilizations of the Middle East and Southwest Asia* (Armonk, NY: Sharpe Reference, 2008), p. 27.

Introduction

Two dictators shaped my family's life: Adolf Hitler and Josef Stalin. Their respective tyrannies, as well as their immeasurable brutality in the name of ideologies, had an impact even on those of us born long after they held sway over their nations. My father, who experienced the atrocities of World War II as a young boy and teenager, went on to fight the Stalinist regime of his beloved Hungary only to end up in the worst prison imaginable. He was one of the lucky ones. Imprisoned for life, he was released under Imre Nagy's general amnesty. After the failed uprising of 1956, he made his way to Switzerland, which became his new home. It is no surprise, then, that politics and history were topics our family discussed often and most intensively. In particular, we explored how well-employed rhetoric influenced public opinion; how rhetoric of the kind employed by Hitler and Stalin can shape public opinion and construct authority.

Later, as a graduate student, I had the opportunity to study with the Byzantinist Paul Speck (1928–2003). The horrors of World War II and the Nazi ideology that led to the abandonment of humanity gave Speck a particular insight into Byzantine history and texts. He taught

me to look for, and isolate, powers and processes that transformed events into historical memory. At times, this transformation created an imaginary world that was as important and formative as actual, tangible events. Our historical matrix is thus wrought, I believe, of both the actual and the imaginary. Rhetoric functions as the bond and the promulgator of this matrix.

The purpose of this study is to provide a historical analysis of the process by which Roman traditional virtues became absorbed and embodied in the emperor, and of the dynamic behind Rome's discourse of power, authority, and legitimization.[1] I propose to look at a political institution, the Roman emperor, who was the single most important instance or authority of that which was said. The emperor was the one perceived or constructed as the ultimate political and law-giving entity. This authority embodied, or at least appeared to possess, qualities or virtues that the group espoused. What the group espoused, of course, was constructed as well. Arguably, the most important medium that generated and upheld the construct of what was considered virtuous behavior was the spoken and the written word.

In addition to the Roman republic and the principate, I base this study on two of its successors, the Byzantine and the Carolingian empires, although the latter is represented only by a short analysis of Charlemagne's reign. The reader I have in mind is not the specialist but the person curious about the formative power of political rhetoric: verbal and visual expressions that persuade and thus shape our perception of a political leader. To sustain the Roman empire, a successful leader displayed *virtus* (virtue, manliness, moral stature, courage, and other qualities) to secure loyalty and employed rhetorical discourse, grounded in traditional virtues (the *mos maiorum*) established and accepted by the ancient Romans. The most virtuous leaders received the honorific "father of the country" (*pater patriae*) and could claim divine favor. Although Christianity introduced a new

[1] M. Foucault, *Archaeology of knowledge and the discourse of language*, translated by A. Smith (New York: Pantheon, 1972), *passim* but especially pp. 215–37.

"Father," the tripartite God, classical education (*paideia*) ensured the continuation of the established rhetorical discourse, comprised of words, behavior, and performance. Because literature is the premier carrier of classical education, analyses of texts play a significant role in this study.

Rome is one of the few city-states in history in which a republic was transformed into an empire, and, even when the original empire broke up into new political entities, it retained the same discourse that had shaped its history. In the republic, Rome's aristocracy linked achievements that resulted in glory (*gloria*) and commemoration (*memoria*) to virtuous behavior. The Latin word for virtue, *virtus*, has as its root *vir*, man. The best among men, or the real man, was the one who displayed all-around virtuous behavior. Roman writers explained the acquisition and maintenance of empire as a result of virtuous behavior. In their view, politics and morality went hand in hand. It was their traditional moral code that guided and defined these virtuous men, guardians of a vast, multicultural, and transforming empire.

Roman history was filled with stories of heroic deeds that resulted in Rome's primacy over the Mediterranean world. These virtuous displays of uprightness and personal sacrifice for the state, although often fictitious, had the power to demand replication. At the moment of imitation, the fictitious construct becomes real. The carrier of the core Roman virtues was the best among the elite men, the father of the country. From the time of Augustus, the emperor held this title; he was the living embodiment of these virtues. He, in fact, could be seen as the "Father" who generated a symbolic order of laws or a "discourse of the Master," in the terminology of Lacan, which, when disrupted, resulted in violence. At such moments of irrationality or ruptures, a new Father emerged, regenerating the old order at a heightened state of intensity.

Four historical periods will demark and provide the chapter structure of this examination. The chapters will trace republican Rome's ascent to hegemony over the Mediterranean world; its move from the republican system to the rule of one; the transformation of the pagan

to the Christian Roman empire, with its capital in Constantinople; and, finally, the transition from an orthodox to a fundamentalist Christian state. In the first chapter I will address the construction of Rome's virtuous man as a public figure. Key to this development were members of the Scipio family and Cato the Elder (214–149 BCE). Speeches of Cicero (106–43 BCE), in particular the *Verrines*, further defined the concept of the virtuous, the traditional behavioral code, and the idea of the "father of the country," the public figure who upheld all that was honorable, virtuous, and worthy of imitation.

The second chapter will primarily focus on Augustus (r. 27 BCE–14 CE) and Nero (r. 54–68). Augustus, his person and his reign, set the stage for, and put into motion, the acceptance of the emperor as a most extraordinary entity. The emperor became a symbolic figure who defined and perpetuated "Rome," the empire with its diverse history, its laws, and its traditions. The dynasty Augustus had put into place ended with Nero, whose rule was, in essence, a performative act. Consequently, his ability to rule, that is, his ability to be the respected father of the empire, was fatally reduced. The remaining part of the chapter will focus on three subsequent emperors, Vespasian (r. 69–79), Domitian (r. 81–96), and Trajan (r. 98–117). Civil war produced Vespasian, who successfully reactivated the symbolic force of the ruler, something his second son, Domitian, was unable to uphold due to his alienation of the Roman nobility. "Bread and circuses" may have pacified the mob but they did nothing to mollify the elite, who were made painfully aware of their political irrelevance. Trajan, like Vespasian, a victorious general, emerged as Rome's new emperor. The all-encompassing, virtuous father that had emerged with Augustus returned in the person of Trajan.

In the third chapter I will look at the emergence of Christianity and its defenders, the martyrs, whose belief in God brought about a completely new system of ethics under which pagan virtues received a Christian interpretation. The virtuous Christian was the one who disengaged from worldly affairs and rejected the body. The goal of one's life was the attainment of the kingdom of heaven, to be in

the presence of God the Father. Unlike their pagan predecessors, Christians, both men and women, were ready to sacrifice their lives in acts of great virtue for a "Father" and a kingdom not of this world. Constantine I (r. 306–337) brought the Christians back into the political sphere as a means of unifying the empire under his leadership. In the process, Constantine fused the Christian ethics of the virtuous with those of Rome's pagan past. Thus, the foundation of the Christian Roman empire rested on the relationship between the spiritual Father and the emperor, who was perceived as His viceroy on earth.

The final chapter will begin by taking a closer look at the reigns of Justinian I (527–565), arguably the last Roman emperor, and Heraclius (610–641), the first Byzantine emperor and a crusader in the name of Christianity against non-believers, in this case the Zoroastrian Persians. When the Eastern Roman empire came under pressure in the seventh and eighth centuries, which saw the formation of empires under the Franks and Bulgars in the West and the Arabs in the East, the Byzantines diverted their political anxieties of a diminished empire to the religious sphere. Iconoclasm, the question of whether icons ought to have a place in religious worship and whether God could be pictorially represented, absorbed the Eastern Roman empire and left us with very little literature and artistic output from the period.[2]

While Byzantium was wrapped up in religious questions, the new empires in the West and the East embraced Greco-Roman culture or selected aspects useful to them from this cultural and political heritage. The Western empire under Charlemagne saw itself as a continuation of the Roman empire. Like its Eastern counterpart, it also had to contend with a commanding power, the Arabs or Saracens in Spain, who challenged its dominance. In the West as

[2] See P. Speck, *Understanding Byzantium: Studies in Byzantine Historical Sources*, edited by S. A. Takács, Variorum collected studies series CS631 (Aldershot and Burlington: Ashgate/Variorum, 2003), esp. "The origins of the Byzantine renaissance," pp. 143–62, "Further reflections and inquiries on the origins of the Byzantine renaissance," pp. 179–97, and "Badly-ordered thoughts on philhellenism," pp. 280–95.

well as in the East, newly formed empires clung to the rhetoric and moral blueprints of old. The Roman emperor, whether Byzantine or Frank, continued to embody the virtues that defined him as the father of the country.

Eventually, however, the Eastern and the Western Roman empires embarked on different ideological courses when legislation of Alexius I Comnenus (r. 1081–1118) moved higher education to the so-called Patriarchal School. Therefore, the princes of the Church alone determined explorations of the mind, which were only to take place within a Church-approved context. Orthodoxy gave way to fundamentalism in the East.

If one takes the fall of Constantinople in 1453 as the terminal date, Rome had created and perpetuated the notion of empire for more than two millennia. And, even when it no longer existed, Rome still set the standard. Empire created the space for virtuous behavior. The custom or tradition of the ancestors, the *mos maiorum*, put forth a set of core virtues and behavioral standards that not only were emulated but also determined a Roman's socio-political and, consequently, his economic status. Essentially, it provided a vocabulary for how public achievements were evaluated. The best of all Romans was the one who acted virtuously, or projected the act of being virtuous; in every circumstance glory (*gloria*) and commemoration (*memoria*) were his. A person thus perceived was believed to be extraordinary and might earn the honorific title "father of the country." When the republic gave way to the principate, this title became attached exclusively to the emperor. This singular and extraordinary entity, the emperor, however, was also the Father, the perpetual embodiment of the traditionally accepted and proliferated virtues that generated the dynamic of Rome's discourse of power, authority, and legitimization. In turn, this Father existed as long as the rhetoric, embedded in *paideia* (classical education), fueled the discourse.

The political consequences of 9/11 made me think again of questions of rhetoric, historical memory, and ideologies. If political rhetoric shaped the ancients' reality and played a part in the upkeep of their political structures and ideologies, it may do

the same in the modern world. Although I shall not venture outside my area of expertise, I hope that the present analysis of an ancient pattern within an imperial discourse will show how rhetoric has shaped, and continues to shape, public opinion.

CHAPTER ONE

Republican Rome's Rhetorical Pattern of Political Authority

Virtual Reality: To Win Fame and Practice Virtue

Rome, pagan or Christian, was a militaristic, patriarchal society. Virtuous behavior, the most noble form of which was self-sacrifice for the good of the state, generated honors.[1] Glory was reaped in battle, and, in turn, produced other honors for the soldier as well as his family and his descendants. All of Rome's leading families claimed such exemplary, virtuous family members. Glory also bestowed remembrance. Words in the form of inscriptions, speeches, or poems, for example, and artistic representations were vehicles of this remembrance.

Because war and battle played such a prominent role in this definition of the self, military glory was at the core of the honors-remembrance-immortality system. Glory initiated and perpetuated

[1] See W.V. Harris, *War and imperialism in Republican Rome, 327–70 B.C.* (Oxford: Clarendon Press; New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), pp. 9–53; on p. 17: "Military success allowed them [the Roman aristocracy] to lay claim to, and to a considerable extent to win, the high esteem of their fellow-citizens – on one level *laus* [praise], on a higher level *gloria*."

the discourse. Each generation experienced the pressure at least to keep up with, if not to outperform, its ancestors. Death masks (*imagines*), displayed on the walls of homes, were visual reminders of forefathers. They were also periodically displayed in public, especially at a funeral of a family member. The second century BCE historian Polybius, a member of a prominent Greek family who came to Rome as a hostage after the battle of Pydna (168 BCE), writes:

> On the occasion of public sacrifices, these masks are displayed and decorated with much care. When any distinguished member of the family dies, the masks are taken to the funeral and are worn by men who are considered most closely to resemble the original ancestor both in height and general bearing. . . . There could not easily be a more ennobling spectacle for a young man who aspires to win fame and practice virtue. For who would not be inspired by the sight of images of men renowned for their excellence, all together as if alive and breathing? What spectacle could be more glorious than this? Moreover, the speaker who delivers the oration of the deceased, after finishing that speech, goes on to relate the successes and achievements of each of the others whose images are present, beginning with the oldest. By this constant renewal of the famed excellence of brave men, the renown of those who performed the noble deeds is immortalized and the glory of those who have served their country is a matter of common knowledge and legacy for future generations. But the most important result is that young men are inspired to undergo every extreme for the common good in the hope of winning that glory that attends upon the brave.[2]

The images were meant to inspire the young "to win fame and practice virtue." Combined with orations that reinforced the achievements of their prominent ancestors, they encouraged young

[2] Plb. 6.53.6–54.3; see also D.C. 56.34 and 42. On death masks and the power they symbolize see H.I. Flower, *Ancestor masks and aristocratic power in Roman culture* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996).

men to do their utmost for their country. In return, the individual who sacrificed himself won lasting, intergenerational glory. His virtuous act made him extraordinary and immortal, and a hero was born. In ancient thought, a hero occupied a position between mortals and the gods. A hero was in the process of becoming divine or encapsulating both mortal and immortal aspects. Moreover, in the Roman belief system, a dead person, as long as s/he was remembered, was a god (*deus* or *dea*). The antiquarian Varro (116–27 BCE) classified *dii* (gods, the plural of *deus*) as deified entities, hence *dii manes* (translated as 'the dead' or 'spirits of the dead'), and *divi* ('deified ones') as eternal.[3]

Religion played an essential role in upholding the socio-symbolic structure by which Roman society defined itself. Rome's acquisition of empire, it was believed, was the result of the exact execution of a traditional formula, a prayer or a ritual act, at the appropriate time. In other words, the gods were well disposed toward the Romans as long as they performed their religious duties properly. Roman religion was inherently conservative. Ritual practices were handed down from generation to generation. While the adherence to tradition made Roman religion, on the one hand, static, on the other hand, newcomers to the Roman empire brought their own religious practices, which were integrated into the Roman system. Roman religion was in this aspect dynamic. Rome's senate, the socio-political elite, was the political body that oversaw the introduction of new gods and cults. Among its peers was the head of Roman religion, the *pontifex maximus*.

The virtues of the ancestors, the *mos maiorum*, operated in the same way as religion did; they gave structure. The established discourse continued, fed by generations of men. They operated within a shared behavioral code structure grounded in traditional values. Or, put differently, these men were brought into line and their

[3] Var. frg. 424 = Serv. *A.* 5.45. When the senate decreed that Julius Caesar and subsequent emperors were to receive apotheosis, they became, in this sense, gods. The epithet given to a deified emperor was *divus* (deified one).

actions regulated with the goal of furthering the state. If the state benefited from these actions, the benefactors in turn reaped rewards for themselves and their families. Originally, this dynamic ethos of doing one's utmost for the state had been anchored within a family but with Rome's acquisition of empire, beginning roughly in the fifth century BCE, it expanded to become the overarching discourse of the nobility. Mythic history provided many examples of nobles demonstrating virtuous excellence for the well-being (*salus*) of the state. These heroes formed a "virtual reality" of a Roman ancestry that a political leader could activate and employ.

Creation of a Public Image: Rome's Virtuous Man

ROME'S TRADITIONAL moral-political concepts, the ancestral customs (*mos maiorum*), have been the subject of detailed studies.[4] Roman literature of the early third century BCE and the funerary inscriptions honoring members of an elite Roman family, the Cornelii Scipiones, most often determine the point of departure for these discussions. A surviving fragment by the poet Ennius presents an additional framework. Ennius (239–169 BCE) came from a leading family of Rudiae (modern Rugge near Lecce) in Calabria, a town where Oscan, the indigenous language, Greek, and Latin were spoken. The Romans had annexed the region in the mid-third century BCE. Ennius served in the Roman army and was brought to Rome by Marcus Porcius Cato, Rome's moral conscience of the post-Second Punic War period, in 204 BCE. In Rome, Ennius

[4] Scholarly inquiries into the customs and authority of the ancient Romans began to appear when Germany slipped into a totalitarian dictatorship in the early 1930s. This, in fact, repeats a traditional pattern. In times of political transition, ideologies shift and intellectual pursuits tend to focus on topics that run parallel to contemporary moral and socio-political phenomena. The intellectual, the scholar, the researcher, like the proverbial canary in the coalmine, picks up the imminent change of condition. This awareness can then be transferred or deflected onto a research project; in essence, the project serves as political involvement in an environment that progressively cuts down any mode of free speech.

became the protégé of Scipio Africanus, the victor over Hannibal, and Scipio Nasica. His *Annals*, an epic poem consisting of 18 books, of which 600 lines survive, describe Rome's history from Aeneas's coming to Italy until Ennius's own day, a period dominated by Rome's struggle against the Carthaginian Hannibal (the Second Punic War, 218–201 BCE). Ennius was the first Latin poet to adopt the dactylic hexameter of Greek epic.[5] His choice of meter set the standard for the genre and, until Vergil's composition of the *Aeneid*, Ennius's *Annals* were the didactic tool of choice to present the story of Rome's foundation and acquisition of empire. The production of Rome's first national epic is strongly linked to one of Rome's most distinguished families, the Scipiones, just as its successor epic, Vergil's *Aeneid*, would be connected to the emperor Augustus.

A fragment of Ennius's *Annals* reads: *moribus antiquis res stat Romana virisque* ["the Roman state stands firm because of ancient customs and men"].[6] The Roman state was built upon ancient customs (*mores antiqui* = *mos maiorum*) on the one hand and men on the other. An integral feature of this behavioral code, the ancestral customs, was that a noble's duty was to increase the level of his family's achieved glory. Men (*viri*) who displayed *virtus* (manliness, courage, virtue)[7] attained glory, which was everlasting. Those whose ancestors had demonstrated virtue attained glory and belonged to Rome's nobility. Thus, such a man distinguished himself as well as his family from all others. To be a man, the gendered entity, meant to compete, be exceptional, and, if possible, outdo one's peers. Cicero's description of the interaction of Roman boys points very nicely to this.

> With what earnestness they pursue their rivalries! How fierce their contests! What exultation they feel when they win, and what shame when they are beaten! How they dislike reproach!

[5] O. Skutsch (ed.), *The Annals of Q. Ennius* (Oxford: Clarendon Press; New York: Oxford University Press, 1985).

[6] Enn. *Ann.* 500 = Skutsch (ed.), *The Annals of Q. Ennius*, p. 156.

[7] On manliness, *virtus*, and being a man see M. McDonnell, *Roman Manliness. Virtus and the Roman Republic* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

> How they yearn for praise! What labors will they not undertake to stand first among their peers![8]

What were determining factors for little boys remained the same for adults. Ultimately, success in war brought territorial gain to the state and glory to the individual who outperformed his peers in military exploits.[9] The two highest annual political offices, those with *imperium* (basically, power over life and death), the consulship and the praetorship, came with the right to lead legions. The two consuls, in fact, served as commanders-in-chief during their one-year tenure. Competing for, and holding, political office translated into prestige, so that the higher the office, the greater a Roman's reputation. The system worked as long as there were mechanisms in place to control violence; in the external sphere, wars and battles were waged and in the internal arena, there was peer competition for political offices. These mechanisms were linked to discipline (*disciplina*) and the traditional behavioral code, essentially the rules of conduct.

Rome had continued success, or in Ennius's words stood firm, as long as its citizens adhered to agreed rules of conduct. The word order of the Ennian fragment is telling: "the ancient customs" and "the men" frame "the Roman state." A successful Roman man was competitive yet disciplined and was in the public sphere. The latter provided the mechanism for the behavioral controls. Whenever

[8] Cic. *Fin.* 5.22.61. The translation is from C. A. Barton, *Roman honor: The fire in the bones* (Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 2001), p. 11. Barton deals with the emotion of honor but she is fully aware that "the values of the ancient Romans, especially during the Republic, were overwhelmingly those of a warrior culture." Barton's *The sorrows of the ancient Romans: The gladiator and the monster* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993) gives some additional insight into the Roman understanding of honor. See especially pp. 176–87. W. Blösel, "Die Geschichte des Begriffes *mos maiorum* von den Anfängen bis zu Cicero," in B. Linke and M. Stemmler (eds.), *Mos maiorum: Untersuchungen zu den Formen der Identitätsstiftung and Stabilisierung in der römischen Republik*, Historia Einzelschriften 141 (Stuttgart: F. Steiner, 2000), pp. 25–97, offers a survey of the development of the concept of ancestral customs. He concludes, pp. 90–91, that this ethos of the Roman nobility was of great legitimating and disciplinary power until the first century BCE, but then became nothing more than an "empty cliché." It had lost its cultural meaning.

[9] Harris, *War and imperialism*, esp. pp. 17–27.

the control mechanism and the checks-and-balances of government failed, the competition turned violent, became uncontrollable, and spilled inward. The political structure was thus vulnerable to internal upheaval.

The steady breakdown of Rome's political system in the late republican period is an excellent example of this inward turn.[10] In their analysis of the problem, the Romans, however, explained the system's disintegration in moral rather than political terms.[11] The historian Sallust (86–35 BCE) provides us with an invaluable insight into Roman political language in which reflections about politics were couched in moral terms. Sallust, a new man (*novus homo*)[12] from Amiternum (north of modern Aquila) who had been expelled from the senate in 50 BCE for immoral behavior, knew what he was talking about. The actual reasons for his expulsion were most likely political – Sallust, the tribune of the people in 52 BCE, had trodden on senatorial toes. The expelled politician joined the ambitious Julius Caesar and thus found a way to return to politics. Sallust's last position, as governor of the newly formed province of Africa Nova (Eastern Numidia), was in 46 BCE. But again, when he returned to Rome after his gubernatorial tour, Sallust was charged with, but not convicted of, misconduct. Caesar may have intervened on his behalf, but nonetheless, Sallust withdrew from public life and devoted his time to historiography. In his work, the politician-turned-writer took as his subject Rome's political and moral decline since the destruction of Carthage (201 BCE).[13] The more Romans embraced the fruits of empire and succumbed to luxury, Sallust reasoned, the more they lost their moral verve.

The "rhetoric of empire," analogous to Roman historiography as represented by Sallust, was based on the ancestral customs. The

[10] L. R. Taylor, *Party politics in the age of Caesar* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1949) addresses this problem with a particular focus on the ancestral customs.
[11] See Earl, *The moral and political tradition*, pp. 16–19.
[12] A "new man" was the first of his family to become a member of the Roman senate.
[13] On Sallust as a historian see the reissued R. Syme, *Sallust* (Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 2002), esp. pp. 29–42.

nobility's behavioral code, which Wolfgang Blösel felt had lost its defining power by the first century BCE,[14] remained a vital part of a discourse that, I believe, continues today among nations that have imperial ambitions. The demise of the republic would mark a fundamental change in that the virtuous actions of noble Romans now belonged to the emperor. It was he, not the victorious generals serving in the field, actively fighting, and winning battles, who celebrated triumphs. The military leader was no longer singled out for admiration as a result of his virtuous actions in accordance with the ancestral customs. There was no longer a choice of who was the most virtuous. The one who held the single most extraordinary political position, the emperor, was the embodiment of virtues. He was the living, symbolic reality of Rome's behavioral code. Everybody and everything was dependent on him, the center, as he reflected outward and bound peripheries to himself. He was the living discourse, a dynamic embodiment ever-amassing powers, pronouncing prohibitions, and generating fear as well as respect. Still, the rhetorical discourse established in the republic remained the same. In his words, his behavior, even in his performance, the chosen one, the father of the country, had to display moral stature at the highest level.

The rise of Rome's virtuous man was closely associated with the city's military engagement with Carthage. The first two wars with Carthage (264–241 BCE and 218–201 BCE) made Rome the preeminent military power in the Mediterranean basin. The integration of Greece into the empire in the first half of the second century BCE brought a measure of cultural self-confidence to Rome. The principal spokesperson of this new confidence was Cato the Elder (214–149 BCE), a new man from Tusculum (near modern Frascati). He was the first of his well-to-do equestrian family to enter the Roman senate and thus become a member of Rome's ruling aristocratic elite, the *nobilitas*. This group's ethos, the ancestral customs, had begun as family traditions.[15] Competition marked Greco-Roman life and

[14] Blösel, "Die Geschichte des Begriffes *mos maiorum*," p. 85.
[15] Blösel, "Die Geschichte des Begriffes *mos maiorum*," pp. 46–56.

so, not surprisingly, Rome's elite vied for leading positions in the resulting social hierarchy. The function of the ancestral customs was twofold: it served both to establish ground rules for the competing aristocracy and as a barrier to be overcome by newcomers.[16] A new man like Cato the Elder depended on the support of patrons from the already well-situated elite, along with his own competitiveness, to outdo rivals. After all, new men were at a disadvantage because they lacked ancestors (*maiores*) who had paved the way to excellence.[17] New men were obliged to outperform those who had the advantage of ancestors, thus ensuring that these newcomers to the senate would more intensely embrace the traditional ethical values.

It is not surprising then that Cato the Elder, like Cicero after him (both of whom addressed the moral code of Rome's elite in their writings), became a paragon and champion of the ancestral customs, indeed, of Romanness itself. New men did not and could not question the ground rules because these rules were the only vehicle used to climb the socio-political ladder. Challenges to the ancestral customs would only occur when socio-political positions were no longer determined by Rome's aristocratic elite but by a single person, the emperor, the most extraordinary member of that elite.

Literature and inscriptions from the second century BCE provide our first insight into the formation and the discussion of "the virtuous Roman." Among the writers, it was Cato the Elder who insisted that Latin be established as a cultural equivalent of Greek and made virtue the focus of his account of Rome's origins (*Origines*). In Cato's understanding though, military valor and self-sacrifice were not the sole province of Rome's aristocratic elite. The Roman people (*populus Romanus*), in Cato's context Rome's fighting men, also

[16] On this class ethos and its family as well as state impact see once more Blösel, "Die Geschichte des Begriffes *mos maiorum*," p. 53.

[17] In *Phil.* 13.7 [15], Cicero says of Marcus Lepidus, the pontifex maximus, that he, Lepidus, has precedents, both ancient and of his own family, he can follow. Later on in the same speech, 13.21 [50], Cicero says of Pompey's son: "He has acted with heart and soul on behalf of the state corresponding to his father and his ancestors with his own accustomed [in a sense linked to ancestors] virtue, energy, and good will. . . ."

demonstrated these behavioral characteristics. That they did so rigorously, Cato further argued, was ultimately due to their Sabine origin.[18] These two points – an inclusive Roman group of ancestors and the Sabine origin of the ideal behaviors – have much to do with Cato's own background. Tusculum was Sabine and Cato was new to the capital's aristocracy (*homo novus*). Thus, the importance of ancestors to any definition of Romanness was established. The other new man, Cicero, from Arpinum (modern Arpino), went further and developed the ethical meaning of "our ancestors" (*nostri maiores*).

Whether Cato intended to criticize the aristocratic elite's rhetoric is difficult to say since the surviving evidence is fragmented. He did, nonetheless, postulate that the Romans had emulated the *mores* of the Sabines, a statement that made the Roman elite imitators rather than originators. Early Roman history, which can also be labeled mythic history, made the Sabine Numa Rome's second king. Numa was, in contrast to Rome's founder Romulus, a man of thought and peace. The historian Livy has Numa realize that a city born of force and arms (*vi et armis*) had to be founded anew on laws and customs (*legibusque ac moribus*).

> He recognized that in wartime – since warfare brutalized the mind of men – this was not possible. Thinking that the aggressiveness of the people might be mitigated by the disuse of arms, he built the temple of Janus at the foot of the Aventine as indicator of peace and war; open, it indicated that the state was at war, closed, that all surrounding people were at peace.[19]

Numa, Livy suggested, replaced a state of perpetual violence with one of law and order. Roman brutes were transformed into civilized citizens obeying laws and customs. They lived in an organized

[18] Cato *Origines* frg. 51 in H. W. Peter (ed.), *Historicorum Romanorum reliquiae* (Stuttgart: Teubner, 1967), p. 70 = Caton, *Les Origines: fragments*, texte établi, trad. et commenté par M. Chassignet (Paris: les Belles lettres, 1986), pp. 26–27, and, especially, Blösel, "Die Geschichte des Begriffes *mos maiorum*," pp. 54–59.

[19] Liv. 1.19.2–3.

community (*civitas*) where violence was no longer random but structured. Charles Tilly's description of the European experience of the past few centuries can also be applied to ancient Rome. "[A] state that successfully eradicates its internal rivals strengthens its ability to extract resources, to wage war, and to protect its chief supporters." [20] State-produced violence was legitimate and it resulted in the organization of a state. State making had begun. Numa, the state builder, introduced a structure-giving sign, the temple of Janus. His Romans fought for, and as, a unified group. Without the fear of enemies and military discipline, though, Romans, Livy's narrative goes, succumbed to leisure and luxurious living. As a countermeasure, the wise king instilled in their minds the fear of gods.[21] As violence was controlled internally, its psychological cause, the fear of an external (real or imagined) force, was maintained. One object of fear (enemies) was simply replaced by another (gods).

Anthropologists tell us that human societies have out-groups, groups that do not participate in the status quo. These groups have the potential to upset the status quo. To keep out-groups at bay and eliminate fear of others, the in-group must remain cohesive. Rome's societal cohesiveness also kept the status quo intact. Fear of the gods synchronized the activities of the Roman populace, the in-group, who performed religious rituals to ensure divine benevolence on behalf of the community. The replacement of the object of fear, the shift of focus from enemies to gods, also provided the Romans with a means to explain their success. The Romans feared (or respected) the gods, and worshipped them appropriately (as tradition demanded).

[20] C. Tilly, "War making and state making as organized crime," in P.B. Evans, D. Rueschemeyer, and T. Skocpol (eds.), *Bringing the state back in* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985), pp. 169–91. Under the heading "What do states do?" Tilly isolates four different activities of the agents of states (p. 181): "1) War making: Eliminating or neutralizing their own rivals outside the territories in which they have clear and continuous priority as wielders of force. 2) State making: Eliminating or neutralizing their rivals inside those territories. 3) Protection: Eliminating or neutralizing the enemies of their clients. 4) Extraction: Acquiring the means of carrying out the first three activities – war making, state making, and protection."

[21] Liv. 1.19.4.

The gods, in turn, made the Romans successful. A growing empire was the result of appropriate behavior. When the cohesion of the state structure was threatened, the cause was sought in the religious sphere, and the remedy was found there as well. Religion, keeping the reciprocal relationship between Romans and their gods intact, was one of Rome's defining features.

Among many other religious customs, Numa is said to have introduced the Salian priests of Mars. The Salii were grouped into two colleges, the Collini and the Palatini. The former were linked to the god Quirinus and had their cultic center on the Quirinal hill, the latter to Mars Gradivus and had their seat on the Palatine. Both deities, Quirinus and Mars, were associated with war, which was, in essence, the attempt to acquire new arable land. The bifurcation, Quirinal–Palatine, indicates a fusion of two distinct groups, which in turn reflects the complex ethnic composition of the Roman people. The Salii wore old-fashioned military garments and carried archaic shields while performing a ritual dance and song.[22] Ceremonies took place in March, the month of Mars, and October. In antiquity, the interval between these two months was the usual season for war. Religion, state-sanctioned and controlled worship (Livy's fear) of gods, structured violence and through ritual, the expression of violence, war, became a civilized affair.

In his discussion of aggression and conflict, David Gilmore points to Georg Simmel's view that:

> antagonistic groups unite to fight. When regularized by universally accepted norms, by the "rules of the game," conflict is "synthetic," a "form of sociations" . . . It brings people together, creating mutuality and reciprocal involvement: "contact." . . . Implicit . . . is the idea that aggression, which causes conflict, may be of some use in society.[23]

[22] Liv. 1.20.4–5.

[23] D. Gilmore, *Aggression and community: Paradoxes of Andalusian culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), p. 23. Simmel's work referred to in this passage is *Conflict*, in *Conflict*, translated by K. Wolff; *The web of group affiliations*, translated by

The coming together of Romans and Sabines, originally residents of two different hills, the Palatine and Quirinal respectively, that was brought about forcefully by Rome's first king, Romulus, was commemorated and re-enacted in religious ceremonies. Numa's "rules of the game," his invention of religious structures, regularized these ceremonies. Mutual aggression was transformed into the symbolic acts of singing and dancing, which, in turn, became a signifier for Rome's impending unified aggression or violence (warfare) against other, not yet incorporated, groups. Mythic Roman history is filled with stories of group incorporation, assimilation, and acculturization processes that possessed a reciprocal dynamic. Rome, an aggressive warrior culture, expanded until it controlled the Mediterranean World. As a result of this expansion, its normative structures began to fail and the re-establishment of a sound political structure took place haphazardly over almost a century.

Aggression and violence affect human history. Whether they are innate or culturally determined characteristics, while important, is a discussion that has to be left aside in this analysis. It is worth pointing out, though, that a binary prevails in all theories that deal with war and aggression. Humans instinctively are driven to be either aggressive and fight, or to make a decision to do so.[24] Whatever the basis for combat, aggression and violence are channeled against an "other," defined as the enemy who has the ability to endanger an established order or the existence of a community. Individual feats displayed in combat, then, become virtuous action on behalf of this community. Soldiers engaged in altruistic fighting, to the point of

R. Bendix (London: Collier-Macmillan, 1964). L. Coser, *The functions of social conflict* (Glencoe: Free Press, 1956) also picked up what Gilmore calls Simmel's "intriguing paradox".

[24] See this conclusion in M. Kostial, *Kriegerisches Rom?: Zur Frage von Unvermeidbarkeit und Normalität militärischer Konflikte in der römischen Republik* (Stuttgart: F. Steiner, 1995), p. 21: 1) an individual's self-responsible decision potential ("eigenverantwortliche Entscheidungsmöglichkeit des Individuums") and 2) innate instinct behavior ("angeborenes Instinktverhalten"). Thus, p. 22, war is a phenomenon linked to human nature ("ein Phänomen . . . in der Natur des Menschen angelegt") or a sequence of decision making processes ("Folge von Entscheidungsprozessen").

self-sacrifice, could then reap honors while any who shirked their duties were humiliated, deserving no respect.

Roman society, like many others in the Mediterranean, was based on public honor and shame. As William Miller noted:

> [f]or in an honor-based culture there was no self-respect independent of the respect of others, no private sense of "hey, I'm quite something" unless it was confirmed publicly. Honor was then not just a matter of the individual; it necessarily involved a group, and the group included all those people worthy of competing with you for honor.[25]

While honorable individuals became examples for others to behold, they also had to be "ever-vigilant against affronts or challenges to their honor," since the "shortest road to honor was . . . to take someone else's." The "man or woman beyond challenge was no longer in the game of honor, but in the world of lords and kings who conferred honors. . . ."[26] During the republican period (509– ca. 30 BCE), Rome's aristocratic elite competed against each other, a competition that ceased with the coming of the principate. Honor, or what Gilmore termed competitive masculinity, was no longer a political dynamic of the group, having been transferred into the hands of the emperor who dispensed it as he saw fit. The emperor, the father, was the arbiter of what was considered honorable and memorable behavior on behalf of the state.

In the Roman world of understanding, a man's virtuous behavior consisted of following and implementing the ancestral behavioral code. This action then translated into honors such as glory and remembrance. Gilmore observed, "[v]ery frequently in the literature on Mediterranean societies, the concept of manliness is broached in discussion of honor. The latter figures as a catchall term used to

[25] W. Miller, *Humiliation: And other essays on honor, social discomfort, and violence* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), p. 116.
[26] Miller, *Humiliation*, pp. 116–17.

encompass the entirety of masculine components of public reputation."[27] Laudatory inscriptions placed in publicly accessible areas functioned as markers of honor and signs of achieved reputation. They conveyed the excellence of the honored; an excellence in being, that is, being virtuous, courageous, manly, and so on, and possessing the means to greatness. Holding public offices (*honores*) was the expression or result of being an extraordinary individual. The more a man surpassed his peers in action, the higher his public position and rewards were. A successful ancestor gave a man a head start, but it also put pressure on him to do more.

The *cursus honorum*, a Roman politician's career path, offered only a finite number of slots in a fixed hierarchical structure.[28] A senatorial career began with membership in one of the boards of minor magistracies collectively known as the vigintivirate (the board of 20 men). The quaestorship followed, and the number of these stood at 20 as well. Quaestors were, broadly speaking, financial administrators. The next position was the aedileship. There were six men holding this position in any one year. They oversaw the city's grain supply, its public works, the police force, and put on games for public entertainment, the *ludi*. The aedileship was the lowest rung on the senatorial ladder that justified the production of a death mask and the accompanying ritual of remembrance. The next position in the hierarchy was the praetorship, which carried chiefly judicial functions. Under Julius Caesar, there were 16 praetors, a number Augustus reduced to 10 and then increased to 12. The highest position a Roman politician could attain was the consulship, of which two consuls were elected each year. Consuls oversaw Rome's military and civil administration.

[27] Gilmore, *Aggression and community*, p. 126. Although the focus of Gilmore's study is the "sex-linked" nature of honor, some of his insights are, in my opinion, applicable to the discourse of empire studied here.

[28] The numbers for each position changed over the course of Rome's history; fewer in earlier times and the highest number during Caesar's dictatorship. The numbers Augustus preserved or introduced were kept throughout the principate and are stated here.

C*ursus* terms were only a year long, but their limited number made seeking office an intensely agonistic affair. What Cicero had observed of little Roman boys was even truer of the adults: "How fierce their contests! . . . What labors will they not undertake to stand first among their peers!"[29] Successful election to a political position was a double-edged sword since it might either incite or paralyze the enmity of one's rivals. In the economic sphere, by contrast, competition was by no means as fierce. Here the rules of the game were more flexible. The system of advancement was more open, but wealth in itself did not translate into readable success. This came only through political appointments. In order to be recognized, and remembered, as a success, an ambitious man had to enter politics and the virtue-based discourse.

Virtue and Remembrance: The Tomb of the Scipiones

THE TOMB of the Scipio family was located outside Rome's Porta Capena within the Servian and Aurelian walls. Funerary inscriptions, also known as the *Elogia Scipionum*, placed on sarcophagi in the tomb were discovered in the first quarter of the seventeenth century.[30] These are the earliest inscriptions detailing the achievements of Roman aristocrats. The timeframe of the inscriptions extends from the turn of the third century BCE to the first half of the second century BCE. The following inscription for Lucius Scipio Barbatus, consul in 298 BCE and most likely censor in 280 BCE, highlights his bravery, wisdom, and virtue. Barbatus's virtue was linked to his appearance, a Greek notion, namely, that the best members of society were also beautiful (*hoi agathoi kai kaloi*).

> Lucius Cornelius Scipio, the son of Gnaeus, Cornelius Lucius Scipio Barbatus, progeny of his father Gnaeus, a brave and wise

[29] Cic. *Fin.* 5.22.61.
[30] For the description of the discovery see *CIL* I, pp. 11–12.

> man whose appearance was fully equal to his virtue, he was consul, censor, and aedile among you. He captured Taurasia and Cisauna from Samnium – he subdued all of Lucania and took hostages.[31]

Barbatus's son was consul in 259 BCE, censor in 258 BCE, and, according to the triumphal *Fasti* (Records), received a triumph for one of his military achievements. Under the republic, the senate voted to give generals who had accomplished extraordinary deeds for the state triumphal processions. Generals were members of the political elite, the senate. Public acknowledgment depended, just as in the case of apotheosis, on the decision of one's peers. They made up the political body that decided on the extraordinariness of a fellow senator. During a triumphal procession, the sacred and profane sphere became one. The victorious general, the *triumphator*, was an incarnation of Jupiter, a living god. A slave, representative of the lowest social group, was positioned behind the triumphant general to remind this most noteworthy of the ruling class that he was still mortal.[32]

> Lucius Cornelius Scipio, son of Lucius, aedile, consul, censor, this one man, most in Rome agree, was the very best of all good men. Lucius Scipio, the son of Barbatus, was consul, censor, aedile among you. He captured Corsica and the city of Aleria. He dedicated a temple to the Seasons fulfilling a vow.[33]

The key phrase in this latter inscription is: "this one man, most Romans agree, was the best of all good men." The Romans who agreed on this were, of course, Scipio's peers, his fellow competitors in the endeavor to attain everlasting glory for themselves and

[31] *CIL* VI 1284 = 1285 = 31587 = 31588 = 37039a = *CIL* I 6 = 7 = *ILLRP* 309 = *CLE* 7 = *AE* 1991, 71 = 1997, 129 = 2001, 205.

[32] For a detailed discussion of the Roman triumph, see H.S. Versnel, *Triumphus: An inquiry into the origin, development and meaning of the Roman triumph* (Leiden: Brill, 1970).

[33] *CIL* VI 1287 = 37039c = I 9 = *ILLRP* 310b = *CLE* 6.

their progeny. Memory, as manifested in various media, played an important role in the rhetoric of empire. An inscription, a public announcement, or a literary piece, for example, could serve as a vehicle of remembrance. As such, however, memory served a specific function. Remembering an individual for his achievements also benefited the state as it exalted the empire that had produced these extraordinary citizens.[34]

A funerary inscription for Scipio, possibly the son of Africanus, mentions his office (*honos*), fame, virtue, glory, and innate ability (*ingenium*). He had died prematurely but, if time had been given, the inscription suggests, he would have surpassed the achievements of his ancestors. This Publius Cornelius Scipio had both the pedigree and the innate ability to do so.

> For you who wore the *apex* of the Flamen Dialis [priest of Jupiter], death has seen to it that all your accomplishments have been short: office, fame, and virtue, glory and innate ability. If a long life had been given to you to use, you would have easily surpassed your ancestors with your deeds. For this reason Earth willingly receives you into her bosom, Publius Scipio, son of Publius Cornelius. . . .[35]

The inscription for Scipio Hispanus indirectly stresses the agonistic conditions under which Roman citizens operated. Every generation was engaged in outdoing the previous one.

> Gnaeus Cornelius Scipio Hispanus, son of Gnaeus, praetor, curule aedile, quaestor, tribune of the soldiers twice, member of the Board of Ten for judging law suits, member of the Board of Ten for making sacrifices. By my conduct I heaped virtues on the virtues of my family. I begot offspring. I sought to

[34] For example, Cicero's defense of the poet Archias, whose poetry served the state. See C.E.W. Steel, *Cicero, rhetoric, and empire* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 82–98.

[35] *CIL* VI 1288 = 37039d = I 10 = 33 = *ILLRP* 311 = *CLE* 8.

> emulate the achievements of my father. I upheld the praise of my ancestors so that they rejoice that I am born of their line. The offices, which I have held, have ennobled my stock.[36]

A member of the Scipio family, if granted a full life, excelled in virtue suggested the inscription. It also asserted that there was an inherent quality (*ingenium*) that allowed a man to do extraordinary and virtuous deeds. As the previous inscription proclaimed, every member of the family, every new generation added to the list of honors.

> L. Cornelius Scipio, son of Gnaeus, grandson of Gnaeus. This stone [the sarcophagus] encloses great wisdom and many virtues along with a short life. The brevity of his life, not his honor, deprived him of honors. Here lies one who was never excelled in virtue. At the age of 20 he was buried in this place. Seek not an office here, for none was granted him.[37]

These inscriptions from the tomb of the Scipio family provide an insight into the workings of the elite's behavioral code. They reveal a transgenerational dynamic that demanded achievements and, above all, excellence in the public sphere. Granted, these funerary inscriptions might not have been publicly accessible. Nonetheless, they point to the significance of ancestral customs in the elite's definition of its own civic importance.

Like these inscriptions, ancient authors reflecting on Rome's superiority point to courage and virtue as determining factors. Polybius, who in his reflections on Rome's rise to power had observed, as we have seen above, that a noble's funeral was an "ennobling spectacle for a young man,"[38] elaborated in his history on the virtue of his friend Scipio Aemilianus'. The praise occurs within a discussion that

[36] *CIL* VI 1293 = 37039i = I 15 = 38 = *ILLRP* 316 = *CLE* 958 = *D* 6 = *AE* 1997, 130.
[37] *CIL* VI 1289 = 37039e = I 11 = *ILLRP* 312 = *CLE* 9 = *D* 7 = *CSE* 5.
[38] Plb. 6.53.7.

attempts to pinpoint the causes of Rome's political pre-eminence. Aemilianus's virtue and reputation for goodness, Polybius argues, were based on his well-balanced physical and emotional life. Still, Polybius recognized that Rome's political dominance depended on

> the courage of [its] own citizens and the aid of [its] allies. . . . For, as the Romans are fighting for country and children, it is impossible for them to relax the ferocity of their struggle; but they carry on with determined resolution until they have overcome their enemies. . . . The fact is that Italians as a nation are by nature superior to Phoenicians and Libyans both in physical strength and courage; but still their habits also do much to inspire the youth with enthusiasm for such exploits.[39]

Romans, this excerpt shows, were persistent. In a militaristic society the ultimate form of this persistence was self-sacrifice for one's family or, on a larger scale, the state, both of which one protected from enemies who challenged the status quo. This sacrifice of the self was specifically encouraged. To Romans, their strength and courage set them apart from other ethnic groups. But there were also customs that "inspire[d] the youth with enthusiasm for such exploits," that is, fighting and persistence until victory was won.

Polybius, taking what might be called an anthropological approach, gives one example of a Roman's readiness "to endure anything to win a reputation in their country for courage."[40] This reputation guaranteed continued remembrance beyond the confines of the family because living a courageous life for the state brought public remembrance, which translated into immortality. The mechanism for remembering lay, as we have seen, within funerary customs, which had both a verbal and a representative aspect. The deceased's greatness was set in the context of his ancestors. A eulogy recounted the glorious deeds of all the ancestors whose death masks were

[39] Plb. 6.52.5–10.
[40] Plb. 6.52.11.

displayed. At a noble's funeral, these ancestors even came alive with actors wearing and parading ancestral masks.

> [T]he glorious memory of brave men is continually renewed; the fame of those who have performed any noble deed is never allowed to die; and the renown of those who have done good service to their country becomes a matter of common knowledge to the multitude, and part of the heritage of posterity. But the chief benefit of the ceremony is that it inspires young men to shrink from no exertion for the general welfare, in the hope of obtaining the glory that awaits the brave.[41]

The past was made present through words, telling and re-telling extraordinary deeds, and the display of masks.[42] In other words, rhetoric was at work. The past intersected with the present and thus informed the future. Like Polybius's example, Publius Horatius Cocles, every Roman man "valued the safety of his country and his own future reputation more highly than his present life."[43] Roman customs, according to Polybius, assured this. And, as the example of Cocles and others was to suggest, every man had the opportunity to embrace the elite's behavioral code and reap an appropriate reward. This openness in the system gave the municipal elite, those in the provinces, the chance to move from the periphery of power into the political center of the empire. The reward was to be counted among Rome's aristocratic elite and to have, economically, the whole empire available to them through extensive patronage networks.

[41] Plb. 6.54.2–3.

[42] Flower, *Ancestor masks* (1996), passim.

[43] Plb. 6.55.3. After the ousting of Rome's last king, the Etruscan Tarquin the Proud, Horatius Cocles (the "one-eyed") single-handedly defended the Tiber bridge (*pons sublicius*) against Etruscan advances. When the Romans, in their efforts to safeguard Rome, had to destroy the bridge, Cocles jumped fully armed into the Tiber and, escaping enemy missiles, made it safely to shore (Liv. 2.10.2–11). Cocles, in Friedrich Münzer's words, "was downright at the forefront" of examples of Roman virtue (*RE* 8, 2331).

In Polybius's view, nature demonstrates that things decay and change, and systems of government proceed along a similar trajectory. The historian asserted that great prosperity and undisputed power harbor the seeds of their own destruction. In the process of a state's disintegration, "[r]ivalry for office, and other spheres of activity, will become fiercer than they ought to be."[44] Polybius, without explicitly saying so, suggested a psychological analysis of Rome's political breakdown. As the empire's territorial possessions increased, so in turn the number of the municipal elite increased. These elites needed to be accommodated, since they replenished the empire's core elite, the Roman aristocracy. But competition, aggression with the aim of a reward, was only for a limited number of political offices, a number that was not adjusted to accommodate the influx of elite families from across the empire. Moreover, the newcomers, in embracing Roman self-definition, needed to outstrip those already in the system in order to be recognized, accepted, and moved ahead; Rome's new men had to work harder. It was this state of heightened competition for honor and reputation that upset stability and undermined the control mechanisms.

Polybius contemplated reasons for a societal and political breakdown. What he observed in the mid-second century BCE can be found in later historiographical accounts as well. In Polybius's thinking, a destabilized state "will prove the beginning of deterioration," in much the same way as "ostentation and extravagance of living,"[45] that is to say luxury, would. A political system's shift occurred at the moment when "passionate resentment and acting under the dictate of anger"[46] rendered obedience ineffective and suspended government as well as its laws. The change came from the bottom up. Which of the lower social strata were involved depended on how disenfranchised different groups felt, the leadership available, and its ideological convictions. When citizens "demand to have all or far

[44] Plb. 6.57.5.
[45] Plb. 6.57.6.
[46] Plb. 6.57.8.

the greatest themselves . . . [then] the constitution will receive a new name, which sounds better than any other in the world, liberty or democracy; but, in fact, it will become that worst of all governments, mob-rule."[47] And, one might add, the mob knows no limits, obeys no laws, and displays no honor. Rome, as a construct of a specific discourse, would have ceased to exist the moment the rules of conduct, the value system of Rome's elite (the ancestral customs), were suspended.

One major role of the ruling elite then was to ensure that such a suspension did not occur. It could be argued that it was the fear of annihilation that allowed the expansion of the elite base, the introduction of new members, and, as the political system shifted to that of a single ruler, the continuance of the system of honors with its necessary proliferation over time. In compensation for their loss of political power to one individual, the emperor, the elite received honorific titles, which became more and more specific over time, and economic rewards. Despite the emergence of a new political system, the structure of Rome's value and honor system remained intact.

Rome's military and political dominance gave rise to a rhetoric of the virtuous Roman, the individual who was ready to make a personal sacrifice for the larger good in order to reap glory for himself, his family, and the state. There was an additional dynamic in that successive generations were obliged, at least, to try to outperform their ancestors. The funerary inscriptions of the Scipiones are good examples of this. The discourse of empire then was based on the competitive individual operating in a society of honor and shame. Rome, which lacked any actual records for its early history, relied on fictions that took the place of historical reality. This mythic history was filled with heroic examples designed to incite each generation of men anew. Any man ready to enter the competition for social,

[47] Plb. 6.56.11. F.W. Walbank, *A historical commentary on Polybius*, vol. 1 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957), p. 742: "[T]he view that the masses are 'unstable, full of lawless desires, irrational anger, and violent passion' derives from Plato (cf. *Rep.* iv.431 B–C); it appears earlier in Pindar's λάβρος στρατός [labros stratos] (*Pyth.* 2.87), and reflects the view of any oligarchy towards its commons. . . . "

political, and economic advancement found in heroes such as Publius Horatius Cocles role models who had served the state until death. These examples of heroic action immediately activated meaning and thus helped to define as well as to maintain an empire.

Variations on the Theme: Cicero's Virtuous Roman

As had Cato the Elder before him, Cicero (106–43 BCE), a member of Arpinum's municipal elite, found ways to compensate for his lack of recognizable ancestors (*maiores*) and, thus, of *nobilitas*, Rome-based nobility. Cicero's education brought him into the sphere of the Mucii Scaevolae, Quintus Mucius Scaevola the Augur (170–87 BCE), and Quintus Mucius Scaevola the Pontifex (140–82 BCE). Later, he studied with Lucius Licinius Crassus (140–91 BCE) and Marcus Antonius (143–87 BCE), the grandfather of the infamous triumvir. These men were the most prominent orators of their time. The Antonii and Licinii were plebeian families that traced their ancestry back to the fifth and fourth century BCE. The Mucii were also a plebeian family that became prominent toward the end of the third century BCE but could claim a patrician ancestor, Gaius Mucius Cordus Scaevola, hero in the war against the Etruscan Porsenna in 507 BCE.[48]

These men were not only Cicero's teachers in jurisprudence and rhetoric, they also served as the connections through which an ambitious and talented newcomer could enter Rome's aristocratic elite. Patronage functioned on three specific levels: it provided the patron with a power base; it added new men to the elite pool; and it rendered

[48] Mucius entered the camp intending to kill Porsenna. He mistook Porsenna's scribe for the Etruscan leader, killed him, and was captured. When Mucius was brought before Porsenna and questioned, he did not bow to the Etruscan's authority. Instead, he placed his right hand into a fire and let it burn, exclaiming that all Romans were willing to endure and sacrifice. This impressed Porsenna and he let Mucius go. Mucius was known as "Scaevola" ("Lefty") from that moment on. In recognition of his heroic stance, Scaevola received land from the state.

flexibility to a pyramidal hierarchy by allowing these newcomers to join Rome's aristocratic elite. This flexibility also guaranteed the continuation of the status quo, including the moral values. The ideas that we saw developing at the turn of the second century BCE, in the writings of Cato, for example, and the sarcophagi inscriptions of the Scipio family, came to full fruition in the works of Cicero.[49]

70 BCE proved to be a decisive year for Cicero the lawyer and orator. In that year, he argued on behalf of the Sicilians against Gaius Verres, the former governor of the island. Cicero won the case and in doing so surpassed Quintus Hortensius Hortalus (114–50 BCE) as Rome's leading orator. In his speeches against Verres, Cicero made frequent references to the ancestral customs and to Rome's ancestors, the *maiores*. The utterly corrupt Verres had trampled well-established traditions as well as ignoring these ancestors who, through their actions and uprightness, made Rome the extraordinary power it was. Verres, like Cicero, did not come from a long-standing Roman family. His father may have entered the Roman senate under the dictatorship of Sulla (82–80 BCE). Verres was a political opportunist; he did not embrace the behavioral code that was so much a guide to Cicero in his self-representation and his writings. The political situation was, of course, not conducive to keeping traditional means operative.[50] The political reality of the late republic was that individuals and their interests superseded those of the community. The republic, the rule of the Roman oligarchic nobility, was disintegrating. The stage was set for the rise of the individual, the dictator

[49] Blösel, "Die Geschichte des Begriffes *mos maiorum*," pp. 68–85, outlines the development of the notion of *mos maiorum* and *maiores* in Cicero. He concludes that it was Cicero who broke the nobility's monopoly on these value concepts. Despite this break, the ancestral customs remained an expression of an elite ethics (p. 83).

[50] G. Alföldy, *The social history of Rome*, translated by D. Braund and F. Pollock (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988), p. 86: "Though the tensions within this society were only solved to a limited extent in the century of crisis, all the tensions and conflicts of the Late Republic could not explode the social system. . . . Although the mos maiorum was no longer a common value system even for the senatorial aristocracy, most contemporary theorists nevertheless deeply regretted its disintegration: the dominant intellectual direction was towards its revival. . . . "

or monarchical ruler in the political sphere and the poetic *I* of literature.

The late republic was a time of great economic opportunities. Fortunes could be made on the backs of those less fortunate. As Géza Alföldy observed, "[t]he standard of 'wealth' was . . . quite different from that . . . in the time of the Scipiones. . . . "[51] Verres took every chance to propel himself forward. Political positions and provincial assignments were springboards to acquire wealth and artifacts. The latter signaled wealth. Loyalty and reciprocal respect (*fides* and *pietas* respectively) did not guide Verres's actions. His governorship of Sicily (73–70 BCE), marked by terror and legal irregularities, brought the empire's key cereal-producing region of the time to the brink of economic collapse.[52] Sicily was Verres's personal playground, his land of unlimited possibilities, his to terrorize and deplete.

It so happened that the senate of the post-Sullan period was weak and lacking in leadership. Sulla's political reforms were no longer in place and personal ambitions took precedence over the state's needs. Circumstances eventually forced Rome's senatorial order to share political power with the equestrian order. Pompey (106–48 BCE) and Crassus (115–53 BCE) were chosen consuls for 70 BCE. The ambitious Cicero, an *eques* (a knight, member of the second order), understood that times were changing and, in this change, he saw an opportunity for himself. He used the trial of Verres to show that political power and authority were vested in the equestrian as well as the senatorial order. The two orders had to work together for the well-being of the state, Cicero's beloved republic; the concordance of the orders (*concordia ordinum*) should guide both groups.[53] During the consulship of Pompey and Crassus, the *equites*, Rome's second order, supported the full re-establishment of the tribunate of the people and, in return, they received, together with their close allies,

[51] Alföldy, *The social history of Rome*, p. 87.

[52] H. Habermehl, "C. Verres," in *RE* 8a.2 (Stuttgart: Druckenmüller Verlag, 1958), pp. 1561–635.

[53] H. Strasburger, *Concordia ordinum: Eine Untersuchung zur Politik Ciceros* (Borna and Leipzig: R. Noske, 1931), passim.

positions as tribunes of the treasury (*tribuni aerarii*) and two-thirds of the seats on the various courts.[54]

Before the entrance of the *equites* into these positions, an accusation of abuse of power against an ex-governor had no chance of succeeding in court because bribery was widespread and the senators sitting in judgment preferred to look the other way. Cicero's case against Verres, both procedurally and in terms of its delivery, was brilliant.[55] The prosecutor depicted a ravenous and unbridled governor who had no respect for tradition or law. After the first part of the trial, Verres chose to go into exile rather than go through the next trial phase, since it was clear that even a court still in the hands of senators could not and would not acquit him.[56]

The Verrine speeches, especially the second one, provide a unique insight into Cicero's construction of the virtuous Roman, the Roman who stood in antithesis to men like Verres who paid no heed to ancestral customs. The standards established by his ancestors meant nothing to the accused former governor of Sicily. This lack of respect for established behavior turned the perpetrator into an internal enemy of the order. He was the worst kind of enemy, for "no treacherous acts are more obscure than the ones lurking in the guise of service (*officium*) or any other name of necessity."[57] Whatever job one was allotted, Cicero argued, one must perform to the best of one's ability for the good of the whole state. This was one's duty. Verres,

[54] See C. Meier, *Res publica amissa: Eine Studie und Geschichte der späten römischen Republik* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1988), pp. 84–86.

[55] On the literary, social, and legal importance of the Verrines see M. Bartošek, *Verrinae: Die Bedeutung der Reden Ciceros gegen Verres für die Grundprobleme von Staat und Recht*, translated by A. Dressler (Prague: Univerzita Karlova, 1977), passim.

[56] Verres lived comfortably among his art treasures in Marseille (Massilia) until 43 BCE, when, a victim of the triumvirate's proscriptions, he was killed. Tradition has it that he had refused to send Marc Antony, the most prominent member of the triumvirate at the time, Corinthian pottery. Whatever the actual reason, a petty dispute over ownership of art objects seems unlikely; the truth is that the triumvirate was in great need of funds. Proscribing and killing off rich Romans helped fill the state's, in this case, the triumviri's coffers. It also removed real and potential political adversaries. Money was what the triumvirate, Marc Antony, Lepidus, and Octavian, needed to restore the republic and make their work on behalf of the state worthwhile.

[57] Cic. *Ver.* 2.1.15 [39].

assigned to Gnaeus Papirius Carbo as proquaestor in Gaul in 83 BCE, joined Sulla with the money designated for Carbo's endeavors. "There may be those who detest Carbo,"[58] who had a hand in dismantling the republic, but it was disloyalty that was to be feared most, given that, as Cicero points out in his speech, it undermined societal bonds and thus damaged the ruling elite from within.

> You, when sent as quaestor to the army, were not only the custodian of the money but also of the consul (Papirius Carbo), you were a participant in all his actions and councils. You were treated like a son, just as the tradition of the ancestors (*mos maiorum*) put forth. In an instant you forsake [him], desert [him], and go over to the opponents? Oh wickedness (*scelus*)! Oh monstrosity (*portentum*) to be banished to the ends of the world![59]

Cicero's words are laden with religious overtones. The relationship between Carbo and Verres, we are to imagine, was akin to that between a father and a son. According to tradition, the ancestral customs, such a relationship required loyalty and respect (*fides* and *pietas*). By abandoning or suspending these notions of proper conduct, Verres undermined the social fabric. Such a wrongdoing moved from the social to the religious sphere. Cicero's exclamation and use of *scelus*, a religious word, makes this very point.[60] A *portentum*, Cicero's pointed word choice in characterizing Verres, was an aberration, a phenomenon that had the power to foreshadow a crucial event. Aberrations manifested themselves when there was a rift between the world of the gods and that of the Romans. In other words, the reciprocal relationship between gods and humans

[58] Carbo had supported Marius's march on Rome (87 BCE), shared the consulship with Cinna (85 and 84 BCE), and then was once more consul with Gaius Marius the Younger (82 BCE).

[59] Cic. *Ver.* 2.1.15 [40].

[60] *OLD*, s.v. *scelus*: "[T]he original idea and the derivatives" of *scelus* have "been taken to be of a religious taboo incurred by guilt."

(the *pax deorum – pax hominum*)[61] had become imbalanced due to irreligious, deviant behavior. A natural anomaly, a portent, was a sign of this imbalance. Once such a portent was reported to the senate, the senate ordered one of its priestly subcommittees to consult the Sibylline Books, a collection of prophetic sayings, for a remedy.[62] Hence, often when we encounter a report of a political or societal problem that threatened Roman unity, the author's explanation of a past event moves the narrative into a religious discourse. Religion was the ultimate sphere of rules and regulations, because it preserved traditional structures of authority and dependence. It is this larger religious context that informs Cicero's choice of words and makes the passage rhetorically successful.

Marcus Piso, Cicero's counter-example to Verres, kept his personal views without harming "his sense of duty (*fidem*), the tradition of the ancestors (*morem maiorum*), or the necessity of the lot (*necessitudinem sortis*)."[63] Verres let his own well-being take precedence over that of the state. He consistently ignored established behavioral standards, snubbing ancestral traditions. What Verres called benefactions were in the final analysis, according to Cicero, bribery and corruption. Double-speak might be employed but Sicily's defender was having none of it.

> Indeed then, by your action, which you yourself describe along the lines of benefaction (*beneficium*), but actuality shows it to be a bribe (*pretium*) and payment (*merces*), you have diminished the majesty (*maiestas*) of the republic, you have diminished the resources of the Roman people, you have diminished the resources of our ancestors (*copias maiorum*) garnered by virtue (*virtute*) and wisdom (*sapientia*), you undermined imperial law

[61] J. Linderski, "Roman religion in Livy," in W. Schuller (ed.), *Livius. Aspekte seines Werkes*, Xenia 31 (Konstanz: Universitätsverlag Konstanz, 1993), esp. pp. 56–59.

[62] S.A. Takács, "Forging a past: The Sibylline books and the making of Rome," in J. Ryan and A. Thomas (eds.), *Cultures of forgery: Making nations, making selves* (New York and London: Routledge, 2003), pp. 15–27.

[63] Cic. *Ver.* 2.1.14 [37].

(*ius imperii*), obligation toward allies (*condicionem sociorum*), commemoration of a treaty (*memoriam foederis*).[64]

Cicero showed the judges the reality of Verres's self-centered actions, which amounted to high treason against the state (*maiestas*). The accused's all-but-money-related theft (*pretium* and *merces*) weakened the state not only in terms of its self-defining moral code but also in its relation with other states. "Note the difference between your desire (*libidinem*) and the authority of the ancestors (*auctoritatem maiorum*), between your love and fury (*amorem furorumque*) and their council and sagacity (*consilium atque prudentiam*)."[65] Cicero's Verres is driven by unbridled, destructive emotions, whereas the *maiores* are symbols of temperance, the authority through which the state, if not propelled forward, is at least kept intact. "If the lot[66] will have no binding force (*religionem*), if the sharing of good and bad fortune will produce no community (*societatem*), if the customs and the practices of the ancestors (*mores atque instituta maiorum*) will have no authority (*auctoritatem*), life would be dangerous, treacherous, and unsafe."[67] In other words, Cicero proposes that human society needs structure, rules, and regulations, to survive. An integral part of keeping Roman society intact was the rhetoric tied to the traditional virtues, for these functioned as the dynamic behind the discourse of Rome's empire.

In the last political speeches of his life, the *Philippics*, Cicero speaks, not surprisingly, yet not as incessantly as one might expect, of the ancestral customs. The world of which the champion of Rome's republic had dreamt and to which he had dedicated his life was no more. "By the immortal gods! Where is that very custom and virtue of the ancestors?"[68] The times were such that a descendant of the heroic Decii Mures, Publius Decius, sacrificed himself not for the

[64] Cic. *Ver.* 2.5.20 [50].
[65] Cic. *Ver.* 2.5.32 [85].
[66] Political assignments, like governorships of provinces, were arranged by lot.
[67] Cic. *Ver.* 2.1.14 [38]. For the purpose of my argument, I did not follow the Latin construction in my translation.
[68] Cic. *Phil.* 8.8 [23].

state, as his exemplary ancestors had done, but for debt.[69] Neither were Marc Antony's ambitions aimed at the well-being of the state. It was the dawn of the age of the self-serving politician, or so it seemed to Cicero. Conversely, the public career of Marcus Iunius Brutus (85–42 BCE),[70] one of the leading conspirators in Caesar's murder, had been that of a devoted, properly behaved Roman. "Quintus Caepio Brutus . . . has acted well and in the interest of the state, in accordance with the very dignity of his ancestors and the customary manner of the state."[71] Whatever fortune dealt, a *true* Roman bore on behalf of the state any kind of hardship, to the point of self-sacrifice. Roman history, both mythic and real, supplied examples and the ancestral customs provided the guidelines for correct and rewarded behavior. The Roman empire was a shared enterprise of Rome's old and new nobility and its engagement with dead and living paragons of virtue.

The importance of focusing all one's energies on the state and thus ensuring its well-being had already come to the fore in Cicero's *Pro Archia*, delivered almost two decades before the *Philippics*. In his defense of the poet's Roman citizenship, Cicero argues that Archias, who wrote in Greek, deserved citizenship because of his service to the state. "It is because he writes in Greek," according to C.E.W. Steel, "that he can assist the project of cultural, as opposed to military, imperialism. . . . What, after all, could be more satisfying or a better indication of Rome's power than having one of the defeated praising Rome's glory?"[72] In the process of constructing and legitimizing power that resulted in empire, a poet in the service of the state was to receive rewards, just as a virtuous Roman did on the battlefield. Poets, like Roman aristocrats and the municipal nobles eager to join their Roman counterparts, could claim standard-setting "ancestors."

[69] Cic. *Phil.* 11.6 [13].
[70] After the death of his father at the order of Pompey in 77 BCE, Brutus was adopted by his uncle Quintus Servilius Caepio.
[71] Cic. *Phil.* 10.11 [25].
[72] Steel, *Cicero, rhetoric, and empire*, p. 97.

Archias's poetic "ancestor" was Ennius, Rome's premier epic poet of the period. Military force acquired and maintained empire but the remembrance of these conquests, in all their heroic detail, Cicero asserts, was ensured by artists.

> But with these praises it is certainly not just the one who is honored but also [on account of these praises] the name of the Roman people is enhanced. Cato the forefather is lifted to the skies. Great honor is added to the achievements of the Roman people. And in the end all those Maximi, Marcelli, Fulvii are not embellished without praise, which is common to all of us.[73]

Ultimately, Cicero argued, "Archias' poetry is not valuable simply in augmenting and disseminating glory: it is crucial to the very survival of the state."[74] What can be called the discourse of empire held up the traditional socio-political and economic structure. At the core of retaining and maintaining empire was aggression toward "barbarians," or the out-group, and self-sacrifice for the in-group, or one's native country. Cultural output in various media kept the fabric of empire intact by describing, explaining, and thus justifying and perpetuating imperial rule.

Pater Patriae: Symbol of Authority and Embodiment of Tradition

In the late republic, another avenue emerged for the acknowledgment of extraordinary service rendered on behalf of the state. Cicero (106–43 BCE) was named "father of the country" (*pater patriae*) for his action as leading consul against Catiline and his fellow

[73] Cic. *Arch.* 22.

[74] Steel, *Cicero, rhetoric, and empire*, p. 87; H. Eisenberger, "Die Funktion des zweiten Hauptteils von Ciceros Rede für den Dichter Archias," *WS* N.F. 13 (1979), 88–98.

conspirators in 63 BCE.[75] As a "father," he upheld the moral standard and, as a politician and intellectual, he promoted what he called the harmony of the orders (*concordia ordinum*), the working together of Rome's premier social classes, the senatorial and equestrian orders, in a time of political upheaval. Julius Caesar (100–44 BCE) received the same honorific title, but in contrast to Cicero, this "father" was a dynamo of change and the generator of a new political system.

Cicero received the highest recognition for his efforts on behalf of the state when Quintus Lutatius Catulus (121–61/60 BCE) named him father of his country (*pater patriae*) in 63 BCE.[76] For some of his contemporaries Cicero's actions, under the cover of an ultimate decree of the senate (*senatus consultum ultimum*) that authorized the consuls to take deadly measures against Catiline, could be justified in terms of state security. For others, however, they constituted nothing less than the illegal murder of fellow Romans and in the end the political establishment turned against Cicero. As a consequence of his implementation of the ultimate decree in 63 BCE, he was forced into exile. Cicero, the new man from Arpinum, the champion of the ancestral customs and a believer in a republic that existed in name only, had lost his political influence.

Even as one *pater patriae* was forced to leave the stage, a new one was entering. This was Gaius Julius Caesar (100–44 BCE) for whom the senate eventually decreed the honorific *parens patriae* ("parent of his country") at the time of his lifelong dictatorship in 44 BCE.[77]

[75] Our primary ancient sources for this conspiracy against the Roman state are Cicero's four speeches against Catiline (*In Catilinam*) and Sallust's *Conspiracy of Catiline* (*Bellum Catilinarium*).

[76] Cic. *Sest.* 121.14; Cic. *Pis.* 3.6, and Plin. *Nat.* 7.117.2. Catulus had a thoroughly distinguished political career in a difficult period, opportunely siding with Sulla and then Pompey. In 73 BCE he defended Lucius Sergius Catilina (108–62 BCE) successfully against a charge of incest. Such charges were connected to a misconduct of a Vestal Virgin but always had political causes that went back to a breakdown within the ruling elite. The primary problem of a socio-political rupture, however, was never addressed, because it was transferred and dealt with in a religious context, the system of symbolic rules. Catulus who reached the censorship in 65 BCE stopped his support of Catilina and, in 63 BCE, joined in Cicero's quest to save the republic.

[77] Liv. *Per.* 116.3. Livy called Camillus, Rome's second founder (*conditor*), a *parens patriae*: Liv. 5.49.7.

In an inscription from the port-city Brundisium (Brindisi) Caesar is termed *pater patriae*[78] and with Augustus's acceptance of the title in 2 BCE, *pater patriae* became an established part of the emperor's honorific titulature.[79] Cicero himself had explained in his defense of Gaius Rabirius, accused of treason, what the term "father of the country," held by a consul, entailed. As a consul "the safety of the republic, and also that of each individual citizen in it was entrusted" to him. A country's father takes care of its inhabitants just as a father watches over his family. Individuals are bound to each other in a reciprocal, hierarchical network. In this structure, the father of the state is the ultimate entity, the embodiment of authority and wisdom.

> [I]f it is the part of a good consul when he sees all the defenses of the state undermined and weakened, to come to the help of his country . . . thinks his own safety secondary to that of the community, it is also the part of good and honorable citizens . . . to block all avenues of sedition, to fortify the defenses of the state, to think that the supreme power is vested in the consuls, the supreme council in the senate; and to judge the one who follows these things, worthy of praise and honor. . . . [80]

This praise (*laus*) and honor (*honos*), depending on virtuous actions on behalf of the state and acceptance of the political hierarchy, moved the actor into the divine sphere and rewarded him with glory. Men like Marius, in Cicero's words, the wisest and most honorable citizens (*sapientissimi ac fortissimi*),

> . . . departed from the life of mankind to the religious sphere and sacredness of gods that I declare to contend for their fame, glory, and memory no less than for my country's shrines and

[78] *ILS* 71.

[79] Tiberius refused the title, but his successors accepted it during their reigns. From the time of Pertinax (r. 192–193 CE) onward, *pater patriae* was bestowed at the time of accession. *Pater* or *parens patriae* are interchangeable terms and occur rarely in literature.

[80] Cic. *Rab. Perd.* 2 [3].

> temples. . . . The fact is, Romans, that nature has defined for us a small span of life but an immense one of glory.[81]

The good man (*bonus*), a man who lived obedient to the state and upholding its tradition, became not only an example to emulate but also, in receiving everlasting glory, a divine being. His extraordinariness, his having moved beyond the confines of normalcy, propelled him into the sphere of religion. The virtuous man moved into the realm of the symbolic.

The political system championed by Cicero was the republic, the rule of Rome's elite composed of (ideally virtuous) men from the senatorial and equestrian orders. The two orders were to work together harmoniously (*concordia ordinum*) for the well-being (*salus*) of the state. From the time of Tiberius Sempronius Gracchus's tribuneship (133 BCE), however,[82] the ruling elite's inertia and, ultimately, its refusal to respond to social pressures brought about by empire led to a prolonged crisis with occasional ruptures and, ultimately, the republican system's disintegration. It seems likely that both Catulus, in naming Cicero "father of the country," and Cicero, in proudly accepting, displaying, implementing, and reflecting on this honor, understood the need for a symbolic figure that embodied the highest standard of behavior. This figure not only helped construct "Rome" but also guaranteed its continuation.

Roman social traditions granted the father of a family (*pater familias*) powerful, immediate control of society's smallest unit. What was true for the smallest constituent of society was equally so for the

[81] Cic. *Rab. Perd.* 10 [30].

[82] As tribune of the people in 133 BCE, Tiberius Sempronius Gracchus tried to initiate long overdue land reform. Post-Second Punic War Rome faced, as E. Badian points out (*OCD*, s.v. *Sempronius Gracchus*), a complex set of "interlocking problems: departure or expulsion of small landowners from their properties, leading to insuperable difficulties in recruiting armies; danger from increasing numbers of slaves; and lack of an assured food supply for the capital." Tiberius's idea was to confiscate surplus land and from it supply poor citizens with small plots. His "tribunate marks the beginning of the 'Roman Revolution': the introduction of murder into politics and the breakdown of *concordia* (the tradition of not pushing legal powers to extremes) on which the republic was based."

largest group. Thus there was the understanding that the father was in control as well as a concept of extraordinariness, which was the product of nobles competing in virtuous deeds with their ancestors and their peers. The resultant everlasting glory readily allowed the elevation of a man of such eminence into the socio-political and, ultimately, into the religious, symbolic sphere. The times, however, privileged single-minded military commanders over compromise-seeking politicians and intellectuals. Caesar demonstrated that the republic no longer existed. Only a dictator, a sole ruler, could reorganize the state and thus enable "Rome" to survive. It was not to be Caesar, but his great-nephew, Octavian, who would emerge as the all-encompassing, uncompromising, virtuous father. The crisis of authority had been resolved. With Augustus (the increaser), the son of the deified Caesar (*divi filius*), as the new captain of the ship of state, the crisis of authority that had disturbed the peace of Rome for almost a century would finally be resolved.

The Virtuous Father: Gaius Julius Caesar

JULIUS CAESAR had returned triumphant to Rome in the summer of 46 BCE. He celebrated four triumphs, ostensibly for his conquests of Africa, Egypt, Gaul, and Pontus (southern region of the Black Sea), but really for his defeat of his Roman adversaries. A 40-day thanksgiving celebration added to this spectacle of victory. In addition, the senate bestowed upon Caesar the dictatorship for ten years, designated him overseer of morals (*praefectus morum*) for three years, gave him the right to sit on a curule chair between the two consuls at all meetings and to be the first to speak, and permitted him to appoint extraordinary magistrates for popular elections. A golden chariot, which held a statue of Caesar with a globe at its feet, was placed in the temple of Jupiter. An inscription at the statue's feet, later removed on Caesar's own orders, described him as demigod (maybe *divus*), descendant of Venus and Anchises. Henk Versnel concluded his study on the Roman triumph with a description of Caesar's triumphal procession.

> Here we see a king, even though he did not bear the title *rex*. The title *imperator* is to take over this function. The time is also ripe for a deification of the ruler: Caesar is the first who is given unmistakably divine honours. The impulse for the coming into being of the ideology of this kind of ruler was unquestionably given by Hellenism. But its germs are to be found in a ceremony which, rooted in the sacral kingship, also . . . closely linked up with the coming of a new era of prosperity, never quite denied its origin: the triumph.[83]

The triumphal celebrations of 46 BCE, as well as the extraordinary honors and powers accorded to Caesar, pointed toward a new political order. Nonetheless, Caesar's pardon of Marcus Claudius inspired Cicero with hope that the republic, with political powers vested in the senate and popular assemblies, might be restored.[84] The reality, though, was otherwise. In 44 BCE, Caesar became dictator in perpetuity (*dictator perpetuus* or *perpetuo*) and was honored as "parent of the country" (*parens patriae*). While *parens* (parent) can be understood as a synonym of *pater* (father), it also suggests an understanding of the fact that Caesar had suspended the old political order and initiated a new one. He was the parent, the one who had given birth to a new era.[85]

Three of Cicero's speeches of this period (46–45 BCE) stress the extraordinarily virtuous behavior of Caesar.[86] The return of Marcus Claudius Marcellus, consul of 51 BCE, to Rome, through Caesar's clemency, first persuades Cicero to break his public silence. As consul, Marcellus had strongly opposed Caesar and demanded his return from Gaul. Caesar, of course, did no such thing. He crossed the Rubicon in 49 BCE and forced Pompey's hand. Later, Marcellus sided with Pompey and fought beside him at Pharsalus (48 BCE). After Pompey's defeat there, Marcellus wisely retired to Lesbos. By an

[83] Versnel, *Triumphus*, p. 397.

[84] For more detail see M. Gelzer, *Caesar: Politician and statesman*, translated by P. Needham (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1968), pp. 272–82.

[85] *Parens* is the present participial form of *pareo* 'to give birth.'

[86] *Pro Marcello*, *Pro Ligario*, and *Pro Rege Deiotaro*.

act of clemency toward a political enemy, Caesar had the opportunity to utter a "yes" rather than the paternal, prohibitive "no." This yes, however, ultimately fed the no. The latter's prohibitive power increased the dictator's power. At this moment, Cicero seized the opportunity created by Caesar's act of clemency to remind Rome's ultimate political entity that he should make long-standing ethical traditions his guide.

Cicero's speech in praise of Caesar's action makes this clear. "For I cannot by any means pass over such a civilized conduct, such unusual and unheard of clemency, such moderation at the height of universal power, such incredible and almost divine wisdom."[87] Caesar had tamed barbarous peoples, integrated far-away lands, and made their resources accessible. But, according to Cicero, no conquest compares to surmounting anger or showing moderation, for therein lies everlasting glory. A man of that sort "I do not compare to the most illustrious men, but I judge him most like a god."[88] Caesar had reaped glory, demonstrated valor, acted virtuously and wisely, but now, Cicero reminded him, it was time to turn his attention to the ailing state. In the reconstitution of the republic lay genuine glory and immortality. These, of course, were the words of a man whose own military achievements had been limited. Caesar's magnanimity toward Marcellus signaled hope for the reconstitution of a previous ideal status quo, but even Cicero understood that this process could only proceed through Caesar. In order to achieve this return to an ideal state the person who alone could effect this change had to be truly extraordinary. The Latin concept for this was divine (*divus*) or, in Cicero's rendering, most like a god (*simillimus deo*).

Cicero's speech nicely shows that acknowledgement, praise, and devotion activated this change-inducing force.[89] But, once activated, traditional virtues would keep such a dynamic from spinning out of control. The set of ethics that inspired, through actual or fictitious accounts, assertiveness simultaneously controlled that assertiveness.[90]

[87] Cic. *Marc.* 1.
[88] Cic. *Marc.* 8.
[89] Cic. *Marc.* 10.
[90] Cic. *Marc.* 9.

Rome's most influential philosophy, Stoicism, postulated that the virtuous politician was able to realize the greatest good, everlasting glory, and immortality for his services to the state. The status of *divus* was thus attainable. In this transformation from an ordinary to an extraordinary being, a virtuous man sacrificed his own interests to those of the state. This sacrifice, the self for the community, was the crucial, initial exchange.

The changing of the political system from oligarchy to autocracy also had an effect on the "selfless" self. All things regarding the state now flowed from and back to the ruler. The all-consuming collective entity absorbed each selfless act performed on behalf of the state and reconstituted the performer's glory as its own. Hence, Caesar and the Roman people were intrinsically linked. In Cicero's view, the Roman people could only be safe if Caesar was safe. All efforts then were to be harnessed to guarantee his safety, and in essence, to guarantee the survival of the state.

> Unless you, Gaius Caesar, are safe . . . we cannot be safe. Therefore, all of us . . . both encourage and beg you to take care of your life, that you look after your own safety, and we all promise you . . . not only to keep guard and watch but also to put forth our sides and bodies in defense.[91]

The murder of Caesar in 44 BCE, and the failure to keep him safe, unleashed a further period of civil war. The paradigm shift that had been introduced in the late republic and enacted by Caesar took permanent form in the person of Augustus. The experimental mode had given way to the autocratic.

[91] Cic. *Marc.* 32.

CHAPTER TWO

Empire of Words and Men

He who names it and frames it, claims it[1]

Augustus's Achievements: A Memory Shaped

Augustus (r. 27 BCE–14 CE) fared infinitely better than his maternal great-uncle, Julius Caesar, whom nobles, preferring oligarchic over monarchic rule, murdered. Augustus consolidated power, helped by a civil war that had wiped out most of Rome's nobility, and emerged as the unquestioned singular authority of the state. When the political structure changed from the republic to the principate, the all-absorbing father subsumed all the highest political and religious positions. Augustus assumed all that was considered positive, including the traditional virtues, but he also pronounced the uncompromising "no" in the form of prohibitive laws. This Father then was himself beyond all rules, because, in a tautological twist, he

[1] Ted Koppel, "Take my privacy, please," *New York Times* Editorial, June 13, 2005.

said that he was.[2] Roman emperors, because of their socio-political, economic, legal, and religious standing, were extraordinary beings. Their extraordinariness gave rise to a symbolic authority. As such, their function was twofold: first, to embody the rules through which others could be integrated into this symbolic order, and, second, to uphold the socio-symbolic structure by which Roman society defined itself.

In his writings, Cicero had shaped the virtuous Roman. He did so at a time of great political change, as the republic gave way to the rule of one. Cicero was a key figure in the formation of a tradition that upheld the prestige and authority of Rome. His historical narrative was based on the conviction that the ruling orders, men of senatorial and equestrian rank, shared the same republican traditions. In Cicero's lifetime, the Roman republic, an imaginary, or what can also be termed an ideological construct, was no longer (if it ever had been) a shared collective memory.[3] Augustus changed this, while he promulgated the idea that the republic under his guidance and care was safe. He was a skillful creator of memory and commemoration, and rhetoric was his vehicle. Throughout his principate, Augustus manipulated the way he was perceived and eventually remembered. He became Rome's sole ruler as he simultaneously claimed the "republic restored."[4] He was a master of employing the familiar while changing its original content. Augustus saw to it that Rome and its monuments became mnemonic devices pointing to him[5] and

[2] S. Žižek, "Whither Oedipus?," in *The ticklish subject: The absent centre of political ontology* (London and New York: Verso, 1999), pp. 313–99, inspired this interpretation.

[3] On historical and collective memory as well as historical narrative see, for example, P. Hutton, "Recent scholarship on memory and history," *The history teacher* 33.4 (2000), 533–48, and S.A. Crane, "Writing the individual back into collective memory," *AHR* 102.5 (1997), 1372–385.

[4] Aug. *RG* 34.

[5] Augustus remarked (*Suet.* Aug. 28) that he "found Rome of brick and left it of marble." He restored 82 temples (Aug. *RG* 25) and his building projects included, among many others, the Field of Mars, where his mausoleum stood, and the forum of Augustus with the temple of Mars Ultor (the Avenger), avenging and thus commemorating Julius Caesar. Thus, Rome signaled its supremacy through architecture.

his accomplishments, which he insisted were carried out on behalf of the "republic."

The perception and memory of Augustus that endures today originated from the man himself, but it was Rome's elite that carried out the perpetuation of this very memory. We are fortunate to have a marvelous example of recollection in Augustus's own account of his life. His *Achievements*, the *Res Gestae*, follow the genre of the *elogia*, the basic form of which can be found on the sarcophagi of the Scipiones. Augustus's first-person account, however, also is reminiscent of a Roman magistrate's accounting after completing his tenure. Augustus's control over the state, which he nicely termed service, spanned half a century. Every deed of his was translated into a virtuous action that further legitimized his power and authority.

Augustus left the *Achievements*, among other writings, in the safekeeping of the Vestals. Upon his death, the text was made public in the Roman senate. The emperor's instructions regarding the *Achievements* were that they be inscribed on bronze tablets and placed in front of his mausoleum in the Field of Mars. These particular bronze tablets did not survive antiquity; however, a Greek and a Latin version of the text were found in what is today Turkey where the municipal elite of Ankara had the *Achievements* inscribed on the interior vestibule wall of the temple honoring Rome and Augustus.[6] The survival of these two versions suggests that copies of the *Achievements* were displayed not only in Rome but also in provincial capitals. Across the empire then, Augustus's accomplishments were a

See D. Favro, "Making Rome a world city," in K. Galinsky (ed.), *The Cambridge companion to the age of Augustus* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 234–63.

6 The more complete Latin version can still be seen in Ankara, on a wall of a temple honoring Rome and Augustus. For detailed discussion of the inscription see R. Ridley, *The emperor's retrospect: Augustus'* Res Gestae *in epigraphy, historiography and commentary*, Studia Hellenistica 39 (Leuven and Dudley: Peeters, 2003). The temple at Ankara served a similar mnemonic function as the monuments at Rome; for this see S. Güven, "Displaying the *Res Gestae* of Augustus: A monument of imperial image for all," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 57.1 (1998), 30–45.

visible memory, something to be read, but above all seen in various spatial contexts. In the case of the surviving text, initially, the target audience of Augustus's recollection of his achievements would have been the ruling elite of Ankara who, in return for their political and administrative dependence, stood to reap social and economic benefits by accepting Rome's authority. That is to say, the authority of Augustus and subsequent emperors. These benefits, coupled with a strong military, cemented Rome's success in conquered territories. Vergil, the creator of Rome's premier epic, the *Aeneid*, provided his own poetic account of this:

> Others will cast their bronze to breathe more softly
> (I indeed believe), draw from marble living designs,
> plead causes better, outline the movements of heaven
> with a wand and tell of rising constellations:
> but you will rule peoples with imperium, Roman remember
> (these will be your arts), to pacify and impose custom,
> to spare the defeated and tame the proud.[7]

There is other epigraphic evidence, besides the *Achievements*, that offers insight into the workings of Augustus's political system. An inscription from Turkey (Roman Galatia)[8] and another from Spain (Roman Baetica)[9] show that inhabitants of the Roman empire swore oaths of loyalty to Augustus, his family, and successors. "I will spare neither body, soul, life, nor children, but will in every way undergo every danger in defense of their interests . . . ,"[10] the inscription from

[7] Verg. *A.* 6.847–853.

[8] *OGIS* 532 = *ILS* 8781). The inscription is from Gangara in Paphlagonia (Armenian Outi or Otene), which was assigned to the province of Galatia in 6 BCE. Ankara, ancient Ancyra, was the capital of Galatia.

[9] J. González, "The first oath *pro salute Augusti* found in Baetica," *ZPE* 72 (1988), 113–27. The inscription is from Conobaria (Las Cabezas) in Baetica. This Roman province approximately corresponds to what is today Andalusia.

[10] N. Lewis and M. Reinhold (eds.), *Roman civilization: Selected readings*, vol. 1 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), p. 589.

Turkey proclaims. "I will take up arms, and I will hold as friends and allies the same ones I understand are theirs. And I will consider those to be my enemies, those whom I observe to be theirs,"[11] declares the text from Spain.

Polybius (ca. 200–120 BCE) recorded that each newly recruited soldier had to swear an oath stating that he would "obey his officers and execute their orders as far as is in his power."[12] This oath was originally between a military commander and a soldier. With the ascent of Augustus, the ultimate military commander became the emperor. What was true for soldiers and their publicly expressed allegiance to the ruler was also true for civilians. The inscription from Turkey reveals that inhabitants' allegiances were from the time of Augustus set up between an individual and the emperor (and by extension the imperial family) rather than between an individual and the Roman people and senate (*senatus populusque Romanus* = *SPQR*) as Augustus's own public account would have it. The same was true of Augustus's treason law (*lex Julia maiestatis*), which stated that a crime committed against the Roman people and its security was also one against the emperor and his family.

The relationship reflected in these inscriptions was one between an inferior and a superior. Like a father of a family (*pater familias*), the father of the country (*pater patriae*) demanded, as the supreme authority, devotion, respect, and utmost loyalty. The family structure was projected onto the state. An inscription on a bronze tablet from Rome gives us a glimpse of the all-encompassing imperial powers an emperor had from the time of Vespasian (69–79 CE) onward,[13] powers that began to be accumulated under Augustus. Once the elite had had to share these powers, but from the time of Augustus onward all were concentrated in the hands of the emperor. However, without the guarantee of the personal loyalty of (most of) the inhabitants of the empire, Augustus could never have amassed powers

[11] R. Mellor (ed.), *From Augustus to Nero: The first dynasty of imperial Rome* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1990), p. 590.
[12] Plb. 6.21.
[13] *CIL* VI 930 translated in Mellor (ed.), *From Augustus to Nero*, vol. 2, pp. 89–90.

and transformed himself into a prohibitive authority. Everyone was engaged in empowering and maintaining the state's foremost authority, Rome's emperor.

Having seen what happened to his adoptive father, Julius Caesar, Augustus understood the importance of keeping the notion alive that the Roman senate, the empire's supreme (socio-political) elite, was the foremost authority in the state. This was a most wonderful fiction, which through perpetual reiteration came to be a rhetorical truth, part of Rome's historical narrative and memory. The historian Tacitus (ca. 54–ca. 117 CE), however, pointed out this fictitious truth[14] and urged his readers "not to prefer incredible tales – however widely circulated and eagerly believed – to the truth unembellished by romance."[15] In his opinion, the prevailing historical narrative was flawed because the rule of one had brought the loss of freedom of speech, once a crucial part of public debate. Tacitus was "determined to expose the lies that form the basis of imperial rule."[16] And yet, even he was enthralled by a rhetorical construct, that of the Roman republic, which had ceased to function by the late second century BCE.[17]

Roman writers of the late republic surmised that the cause of Rome's internal disintegration, which had led to civil war, was the influx of luxury due to the acquisition of empire. Frugality and simplicity were ideals associated with the mythic and glorious past, even though the sources for this past were historical accounts fashioned long after the fact. Among these accounts were Greek writings from the time when Rome had expanded into areas occupied by Greek colonists in Southern Italy and Sicily, and family traditions handed down, most likely orally, from generation to generation. Quintus Fabius Pictor was the first Roman to write a history of Rome

[14] R. Mellor, *Tacitus* (New York: Routledge, 1993), p. 10, characterized Tacitus as "the most experimental and adventurous of all ancient historians."

[15] Tac. *Ann.* 4.11.

[16] Mellor, *Tacitus*, p. 27.

[17] The tribuneships of Tiberius and Gaius Gracchus (133 and 123–122 BCE respectively) and their failed attempts at reform indicate that the political structure of the republic was no longer feasible for an empire.

shortly before the end of the third century BCE. He wrote in Greek, the language of culture, at a time when Rome was emerging as the Mediterranean's leading power. This Roman past produced a Cincinnatus and other paragons of "Romanness" who aspired, lived, and sacrificed themselves for the well-being of the republic. Called to duty, they left the plough and their plot of land behind. These men were triumphant generals who never lingered in the public arena once the state's business was concluded. They lived frugal and simple lives. The glory they reaped on the battlefield was for the state and the common good: their actions were never meant to satisfy personal ambitions and amass wealth.

This was a rhetoric that Augustus reinforced. As the quintessential Roman who had brought peace and order to a civil-war-torn world, he exhibited principles of traditional Romanness. His clothes were homespun, his household goods parsimonious, and his eating habits simple.[18] Statues of extraordinary citizens of old wearing triumphal clothing populated the two colonnades of Rome's new marketplace, the Augustan forum. Set beside the statues, an announcement read: "I have contrived this in order to lead the citizens to require me, while I live, and the rulers of later times as well, to attain the standards set by those worthy of old."[19] Notwithstanding this rhetoric, the man who proclaimed, embraced, and enacted behavioral standards of old, amassed a personal fortune. In his *Achievements*, Augustus declares: "By new laws, passed on my advice, I have revived many exemplary practices of our ancestors, which in our age were about to fade away, and myself transmitted to posterity many models of conduct to be imitated." At a later point in the document, he adds: "I assisted the public treasury with my own money four times. . . ."[20] These monetary infusions and other kinds of assistance make clear that Augustus had the means to rescue state, citizens, and soldiers

[18] Suet. *Aug.* 64 and 75–76.
[19] Suet. *Aug.* 31 and P. Zanker, *The power of images in the age of Augustus*, translated by A. Shapiro (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1988), pp. 210–15.
[20] Aug. *RG* 8 and 17.

from economic distress. Egypt, the empire's major wheat producer, was his personal possession and any revenue connected to it went directly into the imperial treasury, which he controlled. Ruling the Roman world with all its riches had made Augustus the wealthiest man in the whole empire.

In contrast to Louis XIV who declared: "I am the State" and made no secret of his autocracy, the rhetoric surrounding Augustus, the sole ruler of the Roman empire, portrayed him as a virtuous Roman of the same caliber as the exemplary, mostly fictitious, heroes of old. Everything the emperor did was perceived as being done for the good of the republic. This kind of propagated perception enabled the discourse of legitimization, power, and authority. Augustus's attainment of power was embedded in the rhetoric of the virtuous Roman from the outset. This creation of the quintessential Roman stood in contrast to Marc Antony and, indirectly, to Julius Caesar. The former had been portrayed as the Dionysian lover of the Egyptian queen, Cleopatra, and the latter as a Hellenistic potentate. There was no hint of anything Eastern (Greek or Egyptian) about the way Augustus presented himself. He was Roman, and Rome and its culture reigned supreme.

Augustus, the superb politician, never hesitated to pull a public relations stunt to get his laws passed and upheld. In January 27 BCE, Octavian, who for more than a decade had called himself imperator Caesar, the son of the deified one (*divi filius*), became Augustus (the "illustrious" or "increaser"). With the senate's power utterly curtailed and the leading Roman families no longer able to push their agendas through the various political assemblies, Augustus emerged triumphant. He had rescued Rome's citizens and restored the republic, or so the rhetoric and the historical narrative went. In recognition of his efforts, Augustus received a golden shield from the senate and the people (*SPQR*). This shield, on which were written the particular virtues the emperor embraced: valor, clemency, justice, and piety, was placed in the Senate House. These four behavioral qualities and standards of old recalled and joined together every aspect of life: the

private and public, the military and civilian, the judicial and unofficial, the religious and secular. The shield belonged to Augustus, the virtues were his, and the shield's presence in the senate functioned as memory and reminder. In short, the shield was a symbol of Augustus the person, his virtues and his accomplishments, just as Augustus was now a constructed symbol of Rome's core virtues.

Augustus, the law-generating and implementing father, was everywhere. He revised existing laws and enacted new ones. His legislative arm touched everyone. Because of falling birth rates and a gender imbalance, there were overall more men than women. This had the potential of triggering, if not social unrest, social instability. Augustus ordered Rome's and Italy's nobility to marry and reproduce. He provided financial incentives for those who obeyed but penalized those who refused to marry. In this case, however, Augustus was heavy handed and "was . . . obliged to withdraw or amend certain penalties exacted for the failure to marry."[21] When equestrians demonstrated against his marriage law at a public event, he, the father of only one daughter, responded by putting on a show:

> [He] sent for the children whom his grand-daughter Agrippina had born to Germanicus, and publicly displayed them, some sitting on his knee, the rest on their father's – and made it quite clear by his affectionate looks and gestures that it would not be at all a bad thing if the equestrians imitated that young man's example.[22]

Modern-day politicians, especially dictators, have availed themselves of similar fatherly displays. These men bring a private moment into

[21] Suet. *Aug.* 34. The final amendments to the marriage law came in 9 CE (*lex Papia Poppaea*). Both the law on marriage (*lex Julia de maritandis ordinibus*) and the law on adultery (*lex Julia de adulteriis*) were first put in place in 18 BCE. On the marriage laws see A. Mette-Dittmann, *Die Ehegesetze des Augustus: Eine Untersuchung im Rahmen des Gesellschaftspolitik des Princeps*, Historia Einzelschriften 67 (Stuttgart: F. Steiner, 1991).

[22] Suet. *Aug.* 34.

the public sphere as if to demonstrate their devotion and affection, which is often antithetical to their public ruthlessness.[23] This demonstration of caring signals the politician's bond with his people and indicates a promise: this political father loves and protects his children, his subjects, who are society's most vulnerable members. Family, after all, is at the core of society and society's most powerful (and potentially most destructive) citizen is charged with its protection.

Augustus may have demonstrated fatherly caring in public, but he also remained severe and unrelenting when he judged it necessary. In 2 BCE, his daughter Julia was involved in a political conspiracy. Julia, who had been married off as a child to seal political alliances and secure Augustus's succession, was not, however, tried on political charges, but rather for her adulterous affairs, which only at this moment became contentious.[24] Augustus could have dealt privately with his daughter's adultery, but instead he brought her case before the senate. Pronounced guilty, she was banished to the island of Pandateria (modern Ventotene), off the coast of Campania in the Tyrrhenian Sea. In this way, the public was given to understand that Rome's laws were equitably enforced. Neither Augustus, nor any member of his family, stood above them. The turning of a private matter into an affair of state demonstrated that the state's ultimate authority, the law-generating force and symbolic power, was random and adamant. It was for the Father to decide which crime, treason or adultery, was to be judged, and in the implementation of the ordered punishment Augustus was unrelenting. Justice, the categorical imperative of the law, had to remain intact because anything less would result in a breakdown of the political system, a rupture.

[23] Images of Hitler, Stalin, Saddam Hussein, Leonid Brezhnev, Erich Honegger, Alyaksandr Lukashenka et al. as caring fathers abound.

[24] E. Fantham, *Julia Augusti: The emperor's daughter* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), pp. 85–91, and R. Syme, *The crisis of 2 B.C.*, Sitzungsberichte, Bayrische Akademie der Wissenschaften, Philosophisch-Historische Klasse 7 (München: Verlag der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1974), pp. 24–31.

The emperor had to speak the uncompromising "no," renouncing clemency for the sake of stability.

Horace's Poem 3.2: *Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori*

AUGUSTUS'S REIGN brought political stability. Strife was relegated to the empire's periphery. Internal peace, the *pax Augusta*, generated economic well-being, and enough wealth to support the arts and transform Rome architecturally. Besides the emperor, patrons like Maecenas and Messalla helped usher in what was later called the Golden Age of Latin literature. The hexameter lines of Vergil, the lyrics of Horace, the elegiac lines of Tibullus, Propertius, and Ovid established a literary norm. Besides writing aesthetically pleasing and enduring pieces, these writers also took issue with Augustus and his Rome. No matter how veiled their criticism, these poets commented on the elite's loss of power to one man who, instead of the collective, maintained empire.[25]

The first six poems of Horace's third book of odes comprise a unit, the so-called *Roman Odes*. With the exception of the first poem, politics is the underlying theme of these verses. The poems share the same metrical pattern, the Alcaic stanza. They focus on topics Augustus reintroduced into the political discourse, among them forgotten, or almost forgotten, traditions and moral stances. These newly packaged old traditions were religious and moral in nature. Rhetoric powerfully reinforced these standpoints, emphasizing that the "good old days" truly encapsulated strengths that had made Rome great. In order to regain these forces, Romans must return to the core values that had initiated prominence among the ancients and now sustained newly found greatness. Recording his achievements for posterity, Rome's first emperor wrote: "By new laws, passed on

[25] On politics in Latin literature see T.N. Habinek, *The Politics of Latin literature: Writing identity and empire in ancient Rome* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998).

my advice, I have revived many exemplary practices of our ancestors, which in our age were about to fade away, and myself transmitted to posterity many models of conduct to be imitated."[26]

Above the west entrance of the Memorial Amphitheater of the United States' most hallowed burial ground, Arlington National Cemetery, we read the following words: *Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori* ("It is sweet and honorable to die for one's country"). Horace provided the line (*Carm.* 3.2.13). Although the phrase points to classical erudition, it also points to a belief, ratified by age, and with the cachet of authority, that dying for one's country is never in vain. Dying for one's country is the ultimate heroic and courageous act. But how, we may ask, did this act of self-sacrifice become "sweet and honorable?" Or, can we elicit from Horace's poem rhetoric's role in turning a courageous act into ideology?

> Let a boy toughened by military campaign take
> gladly to and learn thoroughly pressing dearth,
> and as a formidable horseman, with a spear,
> vex the ferocious Parthians.
>
> Let him live beneath the open sky and amidst
> dangerous happenings. Observing him from the
> enemies' walls, let the wife of the warring tyrant
> and the unmarried young woman sigh:
>
> "Ah," do not let the bridegroom inexperienced in
> warfare incite the lion uneven to touch
> whom cruel anger sends into
> the midst of killings.
>
> Sweet and honorable it is to die for one's country:
> Death follows the man who runs,
> it neither spares the cowardly back nor
> the knee-joints of the youth not-fighting.
>
> Virtue, ignorant of repulsive defeat,
> shines with untarnished honors,

[26] Aug. *RG* 8.

it neither picks up nor lays down the axes,
because of the wind of popular opinion.

Virtue, opening the heavens for those who
are not deserving to die, it risks a path, a road denied
and spurns the vulgar crowd and the dark
earth with a flying wing.

There is a secure reward for faithful silence:
I deny the one, who made public the rite
of secret Ceres, to be under the same roof
or untie with me the fragile boat.

Often when Dispater was neglected
he added the pure with the impure,
the wicked one goes ahead, but Punishment,
With a lame foot, rarely deserts him.

Horace's boy (*puer*) was to become a formidable warrior, a menace to any foe. Commentators have pointed out that Augustus, at the time of the poem's composition and publication (23 BCE), was planning a campaign against the Parthians, though he never set out against Rome's most eastern foe. Instead his victory was a diplomatic one, commemorated on the breastplate of the Prima Porta statue; the Parthians returned to Augustus the three legionary standards that had been in their possession since the defeat of Marcus Licinius Crassus's legions at Carrhae (in modern Iraq) in 53 BCE. The Roman boy of Horace's poem, hardened by the environment as well as paucity, was trained in warfare and outmatched any opponent. Horace set up a mismatch between a younger and an older opponent, a Roman boy against a foreign bridegroom (*sponsus*). The women moan at the sight of a mismatch that favors, in a reversal of the typical Homeric or Vergilian situation, a younger, experienced fighter, over an older, inexperienced warrior.[27] In the *Aeneid*, it is

[27] The antecedent of this image is also in Homer; for example, Andromache watching Achilles drag Hector's body around the walls of Troy. See G. Williams, *Figures of thought in Roman poetry* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980), p. 185 and R. Basto, "Horace *Odes* 3.2 and *Aeneid* 12, *CJ* 78.2 (1982/3), pp. 127–130.

Turnus, the more experienced indigenous warlord, who fights and kills the younger and inexperienced Pallas, the son of the Arcadian Evander, who had settled on the Palatine Hill before the beginning of the Trojan War.[28] When the indigenous people unite against the Trojan newcomers, Evander allows Pallas to join the war effort under Aeneas's protection.[29] Turnus's killing of Aeneas's protégé, the mismatch and the trophy from it, Pallas's belt, incites Aeneas to show the begging Turnus no mercy at the end of the *Aeneid*.[30] Evander, who had left Arcadia in Greece to found a new city in the West, coexisted with locals, whereas Aeneas, the Trojan/Greek newcomer and divinely ordained city founder, eliminated the leader of the indigenous Rutuli. Conquest outstripped coexistence. Italy's and, on a larger scale, the empire's inhabitants were to be ruled by a single Father whose cultural heritage was Greek. Horace's poem is a multivalent literary modulation on this theme of cultural heritage and a reminder that conquest is brutally bloody.

Horace's poetic boy is likened to an untamed, bloodthirsty lion driven to slaughter. The metaphor of the lion is Homeric, but the lion's adjective, uneven (*asper*), and the words anger (*ira*), and cruel (*cruenta*), as well as the choice of killing (*caedes*) over, for example, battle (*proelium*) or fight (*pugna*), implies that the boy knows no limitations. This Roman fighting machine lacks civic and emotional boundaries, but, like Achilles in the *Iliad*, it is anger that drives him into battle. Horace created yet another reversal of a Homeric image, which points to the beginning of Homer's epic. Achilles, the

[28] Verg. *A.* 8.51–54.

[29] Verg. *A.* 10.514–17.

[30] Commentators from antiquity onward have grappled with Aeneas's killing of Turnus. A good summary of the various scholarly explanations is C. Renger, *Aeneas und Turnus: Analyse einer Feindschaft* (Frankfurt am Main and New York: P. Lang, 1985), esp. pp. 49–50 and 72–103. J. Dyson, *King of the wood: The sacrificial victor in Virgil's* Aeneid (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2001), pp. 190–94, discusses the link between Turnus's downfall and his stripping Pallas of his swordbelt. J. Reed, *Virgil's gaze: Nation and poetry in the* Aeneid (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), explores how, with an eye on the imagery of Adonis, the epic thematizes youth, death, and desire, and how gaze functions narratologically. See Reed's discussion on Pallas (passim) and Turnus, pp. 44–72.

best of the Achaeans, withdrew from battle because he was angry over Agamemnon's demand that he, Achilles, surrender Briseis, his war-prize and bride, to the high commander of the Greek forces. Agamemnon's demand caused a rupture of accepted norms; Achilles, obligated to follow orders despite his semi-divine status, retreats and, consequently, the Greeks, without their best fighter, fare badly in battle. It is this underlying image of uneven combat and the use of the word bridegroom that leads to the well-known line: *Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori*. Still using Greek heroic-epic imagery, in this case the source is the lyric Spartan poet Tyrtaeus,[31] Horace continues by adding that "patriotic self-sacrifice gives pleasure to the sacrificing individual." This extraordinary thought is repeated, as S.J. Harrison has suggested, only in Achilles Tatius's novel *Leucippe and Clitophon*.[32] There, the hero's (Clitophon's) friend, Menelaus, helping in the rescue of Leucippe, says: "This is a necessity, a considerable deed, but for friendship, if we must die, then the risk is good, death sweet."[33] Harrison proposes that: "The sentiment . . . can thus be paralleled to some degree in ancient literature by a prospective *Liebestod* [love death] for a friend." The friend, in Horace's poem, is one's country. As Cicero had outlined in his *On Duties* (1.57), the bond between an individual and the state surpassed that of any other human relationship.[34] In Roman moral terms, the country took the place of the beloved. The imagery of Horace does, in fact, support this notion of "love" and familial relationships. The married woman (*matrona*) and the adult, about-to-be-married maiden (*adulta virgo*) watch the bridegroom as the lion approaches to fight; the only motive for an inexperienced warrior to oppose the wild, untamed, and blood-thirsty animal is, at least to try, to keep his loved ones safe, even at the cost of his own life. Horace created a desperate situation of mismatched warriors, which leads to the ultimate sacrifice, the surrender of the self in a hopeless situation.

[31] Tyrt. frg. 10, lines 1–2.
[32] S. Harrison, "Dulce et decorum: Horace *Odes* 3.2.13," *RhM* 136.1 (1993), 91–93.
[33] Ach. Tat. 3.22.1.
[34] Harrison, "Dulce et decorum," pp. 92 and 93.

The line *Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori*, however, begins a new strophe and thus may also insinuate that the aggressor, the lion, died in fulfilling his duty. The ambiguity is important for fighting, whether as aggressor or defender, has the objective of killing. Only in its rationalized form, that is, by explaining that there was a just cause, can a war or battle be relieved of its depressing psychological burden. Soldiers need to have a good, just cause, if they are to put their lives and those of their opponents on the line. Still, war is the last resort of a broken-down dialogue and aggression sets in when words have no longer any effect and diplomatic means fail. In the portrayal of a mismatched military encounter, Horace shaped the ultimate heroic act – dying for one's country – into an exigent action. Dying for one's country may be considered "sweet and honorable," but the perishing occurred in battle, whose objective is killing. Love is an emotion arguably antithetical to killing and death, but death, in this case the ultimate altruistic action on behalf of others, is the praised outcome. Opposites to love and life, killing and death become the espoused and the rewarded in a context where aggression has replaced dialogue.

Nero: What an Artist Dies with Me![35]

Political dialogue was no longer possible in Rome. From Augustus onward, the emperor was the supreme political and law-giving instance. The ruling elite, the ones best positioned to benefit from the new political system, became an integral part in its upkeep as they propagated its rhetoric. As long as the authority of "the said," the emperor, was believed to be the most virtuous Roman, the system remained stable. The moment the emperor stopped being perceived as extraordinary, when, in essence, he failed to uphold the construct of projecting virtuous behavior, a rupture occurred.

[35] Suet. *Nero* 49.1: "*Qualis artifex pereo.*" On Nero's principate see M. Griffin, *Nero: the end of a dynasty* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985).

The emperor Nero (r. 54–68 CE), the last of Augustus's dynasty, the Julio-Claudians, provides an excellent example of such a fissure that inevitably led to civil war and the need for a new, strong father.

For the first five years of Nero's reign, the *quinquennium*, Seneca (ca. 4–65 CE), the Stoic philosopher and Nero's tutor, and Sextus Afranius Burrus, the prefect of the praetorian guard, advised the young emperor and ensured that his perceived public persona remained within established norms. Seneca composed a treatise on clemency, *De Clementia*, after the murder of the emperor Claudius's son and Nero's stepbrother, Britannicus.[36] Because Nero was the driving force behind Britannicus's death, Seneca's piece would have had an air of hypocrisy, at least for those who belonged to the emperor's inner circle. For the wider public, however, *On Clemency* was meant to signal that the new emperor embraced traditional values, of which clemency was the most prized, and, furthermore, that moderation was to guide his reign. Since the time of Augustus, in choosing safety over freedom of expression, the Roman people had opted for the rule of one. Seneca did not cloak the fact that Nero was an absolute ruler. He was the state. Or, in the philosopher's words: "He was the bond which holds the state together; he is the breath of life drawn by these several thousands. They themselves would be nothing but a burden, a prey, were that mind of the empire withdrawn."[37] This interconnectivity of state and ruler, Seneca goes on to remind us, quoting Vergil's *Georgics*, had once been restricted to the kingdom of bees and to Eastern empires, but now was a Roman reality.[38]

Even more, Ptolemaic Egypt, once the scene of Augustus's contest with Marc Antony for supreme political power, provided a source for the etiological explanation of Rome's first ruling dynasty of which Nero was the last. Like the pharaohs, who were generally understood to be incarnations of the god Horus and whose political authority the priests of Memphis, the guardians of the god Apis,

[36] In *De Clementia* (1.9.1), Nero is said to be eighteen. He was born on December 15, 37 CE. Seneca's composition of the piece fell between December 55 and 56 CE.
[37] Sen. *Cl.* 4.1.
[38] Verg. *G.* 4.212–18.

acknowledged and thus legitimized, Seneca's Roman emperor was the gods' representative on earth.[39] The emperor, like the sun, was the pinnacle of all life.[40] A hymn dedicated to Amenophis IV, the infamous Akhnaton, relates how the rays of the sun created the pharaoh. Seneca's metaphor seems much indebted to this Egyptian imagery.[41] The Stoic philosopher Chaeremon, a native of Alexandria and priest of Egyptian cults, belonged to Nero's inner circle and could have introduced the court to Egyptian writings of the sort. However, there were, as we will see below, Roman factors that paved the way as well.

A Roman emperor was an extraordinary, divine entity. Since the deification of Julius Caesar, the title "son of the deified one" had been attributed to every emperor. The emperor was also perpetually imperator, triumphator, and father of the country. Augustus features prominently in Seneca's *On Clemency*. "Your great-great-grandfather spared the defeated; for, if he had not spared them, whom would he have ruled?"[42] The philosopher's focus is on the Roman elite toward whom Augustus showed mercy. He had won a contest fought among peers, the group composed of senatorial and equestrian elites, and as victor he exercised political power (*imperare*) rightfully over them. Submission was won, yet only the act of granting clemency produced, on the one hand, safety and security, and on the other, popularity and favor. Safety and security pertained to Augustus's peers, for they had to be subdued and appeased enough

[39] Sen. *Cl.* 1.2.

[40] Sen. *Cl.* 7.3.

[41] Akhnaton embraced the sun god, Aton (sun disk). His move to subordinate all Egyptian gods to one god failed, and his successor Tutanchamon returned to the established religious order. For discussions on the sun theme in Seneca's treatise and its Egyptian precursor, see T. Adam, *Clementia Principis: Der Einfluss hellenistischer Fürstenspiegel auf den Versuch einer rechtlichen Fundierung des Principats durch Seneca*, Kieler Historische Studien 11 (Stuttgart: E. Klett, 1970), p. 41, n. 2. See also P. Grimal, "Le *De clementia* et la royauté solaire de Néron," *REL* 49 (1971), 205–17, and his *Sénèque: ou, La conscience de l'Empire*, Collection d'études anciennes, (Paris: Belles Lettres, 1978), pp. 119–31, as well as R. Turcan, *Sénèque et les religions orientales*, Collection Latomus 91 (Bruxelles: Latomus, 1967), passim.

[42] Sen. *Cl.* 1.10.1.

to remain supportive of the regime. Popularity and favor extended to the general populace whose favor and support were won more easily. A good gladiatorial show, food distribution, or a monetary handout satisfied the masses.

Ancient historians and biographers described emperors who did not display, or seemed not to display, virtuous behavior, choosing instead to provide Romans with extraordinary public spectacles. The bread-and-circus approach, the writers suggested, was the antidote for their failure to achieve the pinnacle of Romanness. At such moments of imperial failure, in an attempt to stress the magnitude of moral erosion, these writers describe senators and equestrians joining the ranks of professional gladiators. The amphitheater took the place of the battlefield as the locus of criticism. Fighting skills and, by extension, displays of virtue were conducted in the wrong arena but one in which the established rhetoric of power was retained. The head of state was the *princeps*, the *imperator*, *triumphator*, and *pater patriae*. His traditional field of operation was the military arena where he and his peers performed and displayed virtuous actions for the welfare of the state. When the emperor's demands of and actions toward his peer group became connected to the amphitheater, then his superiority, his symbolic power as the embodiment of Roman traditional virtues, was in question and rupture not far off. An emperor controlled his subjects and conjured fear, though it had to be done properly and very much in tune with tradition and established rhetoric.

> Although he [Augustus] had placed his hand on the necks of the Roman people, which had never been subdued before; to this very day this grants him glory . . . we believe him to be a god without being ordered to do so; Augustus was a good *princeps*, well befitting the name "parent". . . . [43]

Only if a parent had self-control and exercised moderation could his severity, placing his hand on his people's neck, putting them at his

[43] Sen. *Cl.* 1.10.2–3.

mercy, so to speak, also be acceptable. Only a superior could grant clemency because the very act created and inferred a hierarchical relationship. In Seneca's exhortation, true clemency (*clementia vera*) meant, in part, "absolute power (*maxima potestas*) exercised with the truest moderation of temper and love (*amor*) for human kind rather than desire (*cupiditas*)."[44] Seneca's distinction between love and desire harks back to Cicero's accusation of Verres.

Nero, like Verres, lacked moderation. Nero's sword of imperial power (*acies imperii*) became sharp and lashed out against advisors and peers alike. While Seneca may have wished for a blunt sword and extolled the 18-year-old ruler as one who had not yet "shed one drop of human blood," his words that "no one can wear a mask for long; pretences soon fall back into their true nature"[45] proved closer to the mark. By 56 CE, Nero's behavior became difficult to control. He disagreed with his mother, Agrippina the Younger (15–59 CE), mostly over her insistence on proper behavior. Their difference of opinion ended in Nero ordering Agrippina's murder. The "second golden age," of which Calpurnius Siculus had sung at Nero's accession,[46] had come to a dreadful end. Burrus died in 62 CE and Seneca retired from politics the same year. In 65 CE, Seneca was implicated in a plot (the Pisonian conspiracy) to kill Nero and was ordered to commit suicide.

After the Pisonian conspiracy, Nero left Rome and toured Greece. The emperor celebrated a triumph at Rome in 67 CE, to commemorate his athletic victories in Greece. Nero, the triumphator of artists but not generals, drove "the chariot, in which Augustus had celebrated his triumphs over a century before"[47] on a reversed course of the traditional triumphal route. This pseudo triumph offended the elite men who had fought on behalf of the state and been forced to yield to Nero the performer. There was a performance of triumph but the changes, the pretext for the triumph and the reversal of the processional route, pointed to a suspension of its traditional content.

[44] Sen. *Cl.* 1.11.2.
[45] Sen. *Cl.* 1.1.6.
[46] C. Messina, *T. Calpurnio Siculo* (Padova: Liviana, 1975), pp. 62–75.
[47] D.C. 62.20.3.

The performer had undermined himself and, in doing so, provoked a reaction from the elite who upheld the rhetoric. The result of that reaction was to regenerate, at a heightened level, the virtues that were believed to have made Rome the mistress of the world.

Under Nero's leadership Rome may have finally stripped Greece of its artistic primacy but a triumph was meant to be the culmination of a successful military campaign where men were "to practice virtue and win fame." The senators and spectators chanted:

> Hail, Olympian Victor! Hail, Pythian Victor! Augustus! Augustus! Hail, Nero Hercules! Hail, Nero Apollo! The only victor of the Grand Tour, the only one from the beginning of time, Augustus, Augustus! Divine Voice! Blessed are those who hear you![48]

Dio Cassius, consul of 229 CE and author of a *Roman History*, felt the need to justify the inclusion of these laudatory expressions in his text. "They do not dishonor my history," even more "the fact that I have not suppressed them lends it honor."[49] In contrast to the senators of Nero's time who disgraced themselves by uttering these praises, Dio's remarks recall the duty of every member of the Roman elite to act honorably in all circumstances.

Acting appropriately was important. Even the buffoon characters in Petronius's *Satyricon* tried to act properly when, at a dinner party, they noticed "something especially holy about [a] dish, scented as it was in this ceremonial fashion, we rose to our feet, crying, 'Hail, Augustus, Father of the Country!'"[50] It is believed that the author of this novel was Nero's arbiter of elegance, an insider who was close to the emperor. The joke throughout the *Satyricon* is that the characters misinterpret actions and physical surroundings. Reality and fiction become interchangeable. Nero also had it wrong, he performed and enacted the virtues of old, but he did so in the wrong venue.

[48] D.C. 62.20.5.
[49] D.C. 62.20.6.
[50] Petr. 60.

The *Satyricon* depicts an antithetical ruler. His actions toward the elite were random and ferocious, toward the common people, predictably as well as necessarily, generous. If we accept that actions and reactions tend to balance each other out, then the emperor's misbehavior toward the Roman elite had to be offset by his over-the-top kindness toward the common people. The emperor was the prohibitive father, ferocious and unpredictable toward his peers, and yet, he also generated entertainment and pleasure for his subjects. This balance was tenuous, to say the least, and Nero, whether or not the author of the *Satyricon* was his arbiter of elegance, failed to maintain it. Nero's final downfall was a result of his mistrust of the senatorial aristocracy and his reluctance to honor Roman generals for their military achievements. The father's unwillingness to give praise, as tradition dictated, unmoored his generals. "Ultimately, all Nero's army commanders came to feel insecure as well as underappreciated, and it was only a matter of time until one of them initiated or supported an attempt at revolution."[51]

Nero, whom the senate declared a public enemy in 68 CE, is said to have lamented, as it became clear that nothing would spare his life: "What an artist dies with me!" Even close to death, as recounted by Suetonius, the descendant of commanding and virtuous Augustus demonstrated cowardice embedded in rhetorical theatrics. In Roman terms, Nero's life had been offensive to moral standards (*deformis*) and was dishonorable (*turpis*).[52] He had no experience of politics or military affairs nor, after his appointment as emperor at the age of seventeen in 54 CE, did he show much interest in either. His world was that of the arts. Nevertheless, while art might propagate glory, which memorialized virtuous deeds, it was not a viable substitute for military actions. In Tacitus's rendering, "The emperor's virtue is good generalship."[53]

[51] Griffin, *Nero*, p. 118.

[52] In Suet. *Nero* 49.3, Nero says: "I live offending moral standards and dishonorably (*vivo deformiter et turpiter*)."

[53] Tac. *Ag.* 39.3.

Nero strove to be the best as he, conversely, ignored the customary venue of the military and political sphere and adhered to performance "rules." He was "the artistic tyrant" who inflicted "the tyranny of art" on his subjects.[54] Performative expression, however, was an inappropriate setting for a military culture. In matter of fact, this kind of expression eroded the center's integrity and resulted in the need for compensation. Such compensation might take various forms. For example, emphasis on a traditional virtue or a positive trait could offset a perceived weakness. Again, rhetoric played an important role as it helped shift perception away from weakness and toward strength.

The emperor, the symbolic father figure, was either lenient or harsh. Yet, as long as the dispenser of leniency and harshness was perceived as temperate in his actions, the dispensed was considered appropriate. When the emperor's actions became too aberrant and perception could no longer be modulated to fit even the lowest acceptable norm, the periphery, the elite residing outside Rome, compensated for the loss and a power shift occurred. Nero may have thought that he was untouchable, that his position shielded him from mounting criticism and the necessity to behave within the established norms, but he misjudged the power of the elite, the guardians of tradition.

Vespasian: The Upstart from Reate

NERO'S FAILURES, which had shifted power temporarily to the periphery, resulted in an overcompensation in the consolidation of power at the center. As always in the history of the Roman empire, the center-periphery relationship was one of continuous balance; its power structure stayed in place as long as there existed a compensating reciprocity between the two. When the reciprocity broke down

[54] On Nero and his artistic achievements, see Griffin (1985), the chapters: "The tyranny of art" and "The artistic tyrant," pp. 119–163.

and power compensation was no longer possible, as under Nero, the power structure and its political system disintegrated.

"To be a virtuous Roman" was not only the privilege of an elite man familiar with the literary and rhetorical examples of Rome's aristocratic best. Municipal honorary inscriptions from Italy, dating from the late republic to the third century CE, show that "virtue and the glory of public honor were . . . evidence of simply the best in Roman character at work in everyday municipal life."[55] Those most involved in their communities received public acknowledgment for their contributions. The synergistic interaction between the periphery and the center was driven by the pool of municipal inhabitants who embraced and displayed the traditional Roman virtues. Ever since Augustus's creation of the principate, the empire's single most virtuous and powerful Roman was the emperor. An inscription from Rome records the extraordinary political powers accorded to Nero's successor, Vespasian (r. 69–79 CE), as emperor:

> . . . the right and power, just as the deified Augustus and Tiberius Julius Caesar Augustus and Tiberius Claudius Caesar Augustus Germanicus had, to transact and do whatever things divine, human, public, and private he deem[ed] to serve the advantage and the overriding interest of the state. . . .[56]

These powers had their own continuous dynamic; that is, each emperor built on the extraordinariness of his predecessors. Emperors such as Nero and later Vespasian's son, Domitian (r. 81–96 CE), suspended the rhetorical fiction that the emperor was "first among equals." They ruled as absolute monarchs and as such did not receive apotheosis, the ultimate acknowledgement of the senate, the political body of their peers, that they had moved beyond the ordinary. Roman potentates such as Nero and Domitian are always missing

[55] E. Forbis, *Municipal virtues in the Roman empire: The evidence of Italian honorary inscriptions* (Stuttgart: Teubner, 1996), p. 103.

[56] *CIL* VI 930 = *CIL* VI 31207 = *AE* 1938, 31 = *AE* 1952, 77 = *AE* 1977, 16 = *AE* 1991, 69 = *AE* 1993, 116.

from the line-up of emperors. Their absence signals peer disapproval and, at the same time, stresses them as anomalies. The fiction of a functioning oligarchy, senators being peers of the emperor and judging him accordingly, persisted until the end of the third century CE, when the emperor was termed lord (*dominus*) and no one pretended otherwise. Nero's autocratic behavior shattered the fiction of senatorial power, but it also cost him his life.

After Nero's death, Rome's new father presented himself, predictably, from among the generals who were busy securing Rome's territorial possessions. "Peace and quiet cannot be established without virtue,"[57] wrote Tacitus in his *Histories*. Vespasian, who emerged as the successful contender for the throne after a civil war that produced three unsuccessful emperors in rapid succession, encapsulated traditional Roman virtues. Rome's new emperor ensured that glorious action and its display were joined together again. Vespasian's behavior matched the perception of him; he was virtuous. He was 60 years old, down to earth and not afraid to be depicted the way he looked: bald, double-chinned, and wrinkled. Imperial busts of him accentuate republican realism in marked contrast to the idealized portraiture that Augustus had introduced.

Vespasian was "an upstart emperor in a society that knew that he was their only hope of peace and stability."[58] This Roman "upstart" had moved through the *cursus honorum* and reached the praetorship during Caligula's principate, in 39 or 40 CE. He then helped the emperor Claudius in successfully reclaiming Britain and received the consulship in 51 CE. A period of retirement followed, due not only to the required five-year waiting period between a consulship and a governorship, but also to Nero's accession and the ensuing death of Claudius's son Britannicus with whom Vespasian's oldest son and successor, Titus, had been educated.

The Flavians, Vespasian and his sons, returned to the center of power when conspiracies, starting with the Pisonian of 65 CE,

[57] Tac. *Hist.* 4.1.
[58] B. Levick, *Vespasian* (London and New York: Routledge, 1999), p. 202.

began to unravel Nero's rule. Vespasian had a distinguished military and political career even under the most unpredictable emperors, which, one assumes, leaving luck aside, meant that the future emperor possessed political and military astuteness. The "upstart" Vespasian found himself, with his son Titus as legate at his side, in control of three legions in Judaea. Nero may have questioned Vespasian's loyalty and resented Vespasian's falling asleep during one of his performances, but he did not let that get in the way of putting a competent and successful general at the head of his Eastern legions in a volatile region. The condition of the empire after Nero's suicide and the failed succession of three contenders set the stage for Vespasian, the triumphant general who, according to Tacitus, "outstripped expectation"[59] in the political sphere. Tacitus's remark implies a moral dimension. The new emperor outstripped expectation because he went beyond normal political conventions. Vespasian set "the example of an old-fashioned life-style that helped to change the habits of the aristocracy."[60] The moral values of old brought stability and renewed Rome.

Vespasian's leadership brought political and financial stability. The men in the inner sphere of imperial power, the members of Rome's senate, reinforced the emperor's authority not only by "bestowing the customary honors" but also by giving the two highest offices, the consulship and the praetorship, to Vespasian's sons. Political power was now consolidated in the hands of one family. The center, the emperor residing in Rome, was in control again. The newcomer Vespasian, the general-turned-emperor, was Rome's version of a Horatio Alger dime novel hero who rose from rags to riches. If the American myth is one where the economically downtrodden individual makes it to the top, the Roman one was of an elite citizen receiving rewards for his moral uprightness. Vespasian, like Augustus, signaled a new beginning and portraiture was an excellent way to signal a new start. The new emperor was a man from the

[59] Levick, *Vespasian*, p. 203.
[60] Levick, *Vespasian*, p. 203.

periphery who had moved up through the ranks because his actions were regarded as virtuous. Tacitus thought Vespasian "equal to the generals of old."[61] This emperor's actions reflected the rhetoric surrounding Rome's best and the rift, which Nero's conduct had caused, was mended.

> At Rome the senate, delighted and full of confident hope, decreed to Vespasian all the honors customarily bestowed on emperors. And indeed the civil war, which . . . had traversed . . . every province, and every army, this war . . . seemed to have reached its close. Their swiftness was increased by a letter from Vespasian . . . the writer . . . expressed himself as an emperor, speaking modestly about himself, in admirable language about the state. There was no want of deference on the part of the senate. On the emperor and his son Titus the consulship was bestowed by decree; on Domitian [Vespasian's youngest son] the office of praetor with consular authority.[62]

In addition, the triumph over Judaea, which Vespasian and Titus celebrated together in the early summer of 71 CE, also marked the coming of a new era. The destruction of the Jewish Temple in Jerusalem and the subjugation of a rebellious region increased the treasury of the new dynasty and spurred a building boom in Rome. At the time of the triumph, Vespasian was named father of the country and *pontifex maximus*. *Fortuna Redux* (Good Fortune the Restorer), Roman coins proclaimed, had smiled on the empire once more, for an extraordinary leader grounded in traditional virtues was at the head of state.

Josephus, a Jewish hostage and protégé of the Flavians, described the triumph of 71 CE in his *Jewish War*.[63] The celebration of Vespasian and Titus's "glorious exploits" began near the temple of Isis where the two successful generals had spent the night. Isis was not only a link to Alexandria, where Vespasian's principate began when

[61] Tac. *Hist*. 2.5.
[62] Tac. *Hist*. 4.3.
[63] J. *BJ* 7.5.3–7.

his legions proclaimed him emperor, but also signaled a continuation of a dynastic etiology, introduced by Augustus, that had its base in Egypt. After the suicides of Marc Antony and Cleopatra VII in 30 BCE, Egypt became a Roman province and Augustus its first Roman pharaoh. Augustus visited the priests of Memphis who tended the sacred Apis Bull and functioned as Egypt's most important political powerbrokers. Alexander the Great's successor in Egypt, Ptolemy I Soter (r. 323–283 BCE) had chosen Sarapis, a prophetic healing god linked to the Apis Bull, as the guardian deity of his dynasty. Unlike Augustus, who paid homage to the Egyptian bull god of Memphis, Vespasian's connection was with the guardian gods of Alexandria, Isis and Sarapis. The association with Sarapis had been established when, in Alexandria, the newly hailed emperor healed two sick men who had come to him at the behest of the god.[64] Vespasian chose as his guardian deity Sarapis's consort, the ancient goddess Isis, the personification of the throne. Alexandria and pharaonic tradition were preferred to the Memphite and Ptolemaic one. Vespasian, like Augustus, used traditions to signal and, above all, implement changes.

At the triumphal ceremonies of June 71 CE, Vespasian and Titus set out from the temple of Isis to meet their soldiers. They made their way to a dais, on which two ivory chairs had been placed, and they sat down,

> [w]hereupon the soldiery made an acclamation of joy . . . gave them attestations of their valor; while they were themselves without their arms, and only in their silken garments, and crowned with laurel: then Vespasian accepted their shouts . . . [and] gave them a signal of silence.[65]

Vespasian and Titus, Rome's supreme commanders, were seated above the common men. Weaponless and dressed in non-military clothing, their appearance and their position signaled that they were

[64] Tac. *Hist.* 4.81.
[65] J. *BJ* 7.5.4.

advancing from an ordinary to an extraordinary status. They were becoming god-like. After receiving their soldiers' acclamation, the emperor and his oldest son prayed. Religion regulated the progression and conclusion of war. War began with a declaration of the fetial priests and the opening of the doors of the temple of Janus.[66] At the end of a war period, the temple doors were closed again and triumphs celebrated. The *triumphator* was the living Jupiter for the duration of the procession.[67]

The triumphal procession gave Rome's inhabitants a further indication of their empire's might. Magnificent floats recounted the conquest of Judaea most vividly. "There was," as Josephus recounted, "to be seen a happy country laid waste."[68] Among the spoils, those from the temple, including the Torah, were the most splendid. In procession, after the temple spoils and before the chariot of Vespasian and Titus, were placed gold and ivory images of the goddess Victory. Domitian "also rode along with them, and made a glorious appearance, on a horse that was worthy of admiration."[69] The processional train made its way to the temple of Jupiter Capitolinus, where it remained until word came that the captive general had been executed in the forum. There were shouts of joy, sacrifices and prayers were offered, and then dinner festivities followed, "for this was a festival day to the city of Rome, as celebrated for the victory obtained by their army over their enemies, for an end now put to civil miseries, and for the commencement of their hopes of future prosperity and happiness."[70]

Roman conquest and its final moment of triumphal recounting ended in the execution of an enemy general. Human sacrifice,[71] the war's final slaughter, marked the end of the engagement and, at

[66] D.H. 2.72.3–4; Liv. 1.19.1–3 and 32.6–14; G. Wissowa, *Religion und Kultus der Römer*, Handbuch der Altertumswissenschaft 5.4. (München: C.H. Beck, 1912), pp. 550–54, and J. Rüpke, *Domi militiae: Die religiöse Konstruktion des Krieges in Rom* (Stuttgart: F. Steiner, 1990), pp. 97–117.

[67] See Versnel, *Triumphus*, p. 92.

[68] J. *BJ* 7.5.5.

[69] J. *BJ* 7.5.5.

[70] J. *BJ* 7.5.6.

[71] H. Dohrmann, *Anerkennung und Bekämpfung von Menschenopfern im römischen Strafrecht der Kaiserzeit*, Europäische Hochschulschriften, Reihe 2, Rechtswissenschaft 1850

the same time, hailed a new beginning. In this case, the beginning brought a new dynasty, which employed signs and symbols that reached back to Rome's imagined, glorious past. The new emperor was a *good* man, virtuous and honest. He returned the empire to a standard of ethics by setting a virtuous example. The triumph over Judaea had not only been a religious procession symbolizing Rome's military might but also a sign that performances on the theme of tradition, the way Nero had performed them, had come to an end. Military exploits, in this case the total subjugation of Judaea, produced a financial windfall. In contrast to Nero, whose artistic tours had depleted the state's coffers, Vespasian's reign brought Rome revenue. Unlike Nero, Vespasian was also known for his parsimony. Rome had at its helm the ideal, virtuous man, an image the historical narrative perpetuated.

The Flavians invested monies in a building program that included the construction of an amphitheater. What today has become antiquity's signature structure, the Colosseum, took the place of a colossal statue of Apollo whose head was said to have Nero's features and which stood in the hollow between the Palatine and Esquiline hills. An inscription at the main entrance of the new amphitheater commemorated its source of funding, the Judaean War.[72] After Vespasian's death in 79, his oldest son and successor, Titus, inaugurated the space where up to 50,000 spectators could watch gladiators fight for honor and glory. Roman virtues thus became visible and readable on the body of the gladiator.[73] Gladiators displayed virtuous behavior in the arena as enactors and replacements of the Roman people. A gladiatorial show, which was originally embedded in a

(Frankfurt am Main, Berlin, and Bern: P. Lang, 1995), pp. 7–9 and 20–22, provides a general overview of sacrifice in the context of thanksgiving.

[72] G. Alföldy, "Eine Bauinschrift aus dem Colosseum," *ZPE* 109 (1995), 195–226.

[73] Even before the successful movie *Gladiator* (2000), gladiators and the Roman amphitheater had captured the public imagination. A most informative study on gladiators is K. Hopkins, *Death and renewal*, Sociological studies in Roman history 2 (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp. 1–30, esp. pp. 14–20 ("Political theatre") and 20–25 ("Gladiators as heroes"); the most thought-provoking, however, is C. Barton's *The sorrows of the ancient Romans* and *Roman honor* referred to above.

religious context, reaffirmed the necessity of virtuous behavior but it also allowed the audience to view the action from a position of power. In fleeting moments of empowerment, they judged the contestants and pronounced who was to live or die. The audience had, of course, bought into a fiction, for any real power was solely in the hands of the emperor. Even the final decision in the amphitheater was the emperor's. Kant's dictum: "Think as much as you like, and as freely as you like, just obey!" is at work here. The inhabitants of the empire were placed in secure social servitude and the obeying became difficult only when the generator of laws, the Father, blatantly inhibited freedom of thought and speech (*parresía*) by acting on impulses and failing to embody the normative virtues.

Nero's colossal Apollo had been uprooted and replaced by a public entertainment structure that celebrated the glorious warrior, a man who was ready to fight to the death. It was the warrior, the man ready to sacrifice himself, who made Roman conquests possible. Those who had undermined the state with their illegal behavior and thus were condemned to death had a chance to redeem themselves in the arena. Pitched against professional fighters or wild beasts, they had little chance of survival. On the other hand, the state gave these criminals a chance to demonstrate courage and thus reap honor in their final moments. This spectacle of death reinforced the rhetorical discourse of power. The state, that is the Father, meted out punishment on those who failed in their civic and legal obligations. The audience, the obedient ones, as they witnessed attempts to overcome insurmountable odds, were also reminded of the Father's power. The audience was also allowed to pass judgment, deciding whether a fighter was to live or die, although the emperor could accept or deny their decision. The amphitheater then was a place where the rhetoric of power was made visible as it was also experienced. In this microcosm comprised of ruler and subjects, the Father's actions were unpredictable.

The Roman empire, built on military victories, had in Vespasian and Titus once more leaders who were exemplary Romans and successful generals. The Father was a figure of moderation as these

two men embodied the traditional Roman virtues and under their guidance the empire, on sound footing, prospered. The "venerable amphitheater," as Martial described it, eclipsed visual reminders of Nero, the "ferocious king" who had lived in an "odious palace."[74] Martial (ca. 40–ca. 103 CE) was a client of the philosopher Seneca and is known for his epigrams satirizing city life, especially that of Rome, and the mores of his age. The first of his 12 published books is the *Liber Spectaculorum*, in which the poet explores the world of the amphitheater. Comparing Nero with the new ruling dynasty, Martial's choice of words contrasts the uncivilized with the civilized. The adjective modifying the amphitheater, "venerable," evokes religion, the lateral and vertical web of ritual ties that forge a society and keep it civilized. "King" points to Nero but also harks back to the time of the Etruscan kings whom historiography described as rulers given to luxury. "Rome had been restored to itself and under your guardianship, Caesar, pleasing things, which belonged to a master, belong now to the people."[75] The new amphitheater was the concrete proof of this.

The "radically innovative" amphitheater[76] displayed renewal through its uniqueness. "All labor surrenders to Caesar's amphitheater, Fame shall speak of one work in place of all," declared Martial.[77] Other architectural wonders faded in comparison to Vespasian's and Titus's structure. Flavian Rome, so its premier building signaled, had surpassed, because of its leadership and the virtues inherent in those leading, the ancient empires. Rome stood supreme for all to see. Spectators from all across the world, speaking many languages, flocked to Rome. Despite their language diversity, they could assert univocally: "you [Caesar] are called the true father of the country."[78]

[74] Mart. *Sp.* 2.
[75] Mart. *Sp.* 2, lines 11–12.
[76] See K. Coleman, "The *liber spectaculorum*: Perpetuating the ephemeral," in F. Grewing (ed.), *Toto notus in orbe: Perspektiven der Martial-Interpretation*, Palingenesia 65 (Stuttgart: F Steiner, 1998), p. 15.
[77] Mart. *Sp.* 1, lines 7–8. Not surprisingly, the poem begins with Egyptian Memphis referring to its pyramids.
[78] Mart. *Sp.* 3, lines 11–12.

Although Domitian, Vespasian's youngest son and Titus's successor, was a successful general and a committed ruler, his reputation suggested otherwise.[79] Full of arrogance, Domitian ordered others to call him lord and god (*dominus et deus*).[80] Ancient authors, particularly those with a senatorial bias, bemoan the fact that the Augustan motto *primus inter pares* ("first among equals") had been cast aside. The equality was not genuine, to be sure, but belief in that equality was of paramount importance, suggesting as it did an underlying equality of those competing virtuously on behalf of the state. Domitian's demands exposed this equality as a fiction, reducing the senatorial and military elite to the level of subjects.

Brian Jones, discussing Domitian's military achievements, noted that Domitian was "[a]lways prepared to cast tradition aside . . . just about the only emperor with sufficient courage to adopt such a policy."[81] Pat Southern, on the other hand, suggests that Domitian was a man with an authoritarian personality. Such a person's "judgements are governed by a punitive conventional moralism; his conventionality has a heavy investment in maintaining a status quo." Any challenges to the proper order of things are seen as extremely threatening. "If such persons feel personally vulnerable to attack . . . their authoritarian aggression might especially arise. Suetonius would have agreed with this judgement; he recognized that fear made Domitian cruel."[82]

Divergent views are not surprising in this case because the surviving sources, mostly hostile, make it very difficult to elicit the *actual* Domitian. I would argue that Domitian did not "cast tradition aside." In matter of fact, Jones remarks that there was, for example, no withdrawal from Britain, although the army's engagement there was nothing but "a loss for the Roman treasury" and Domitian

[79] For biographies see B. Jones, *The emperor Domitian* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992) and P. Southern, *Domitian: tragic tyrant* (London and New York: Routledge; Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997).

[80] Suet. *Dom.* 13. The word *dominus*, 'master' or 'lord', is linked to *domus*, 'household'. The *dominus* owned and dominated all that made up his household.

[81] Jones, *The emperor Domitian*, p. 197.

[82] Southern, *Domitian*, p. 123.

added to the monetary drain "by increasing the army's pay."[83] His actions show a ruler intent on maintaining the status quo. He had as an imperial model the best manipulator and inventor of traditions, Augustus, who successfully introduced changes by rhetorical sleights of hand that created the impression of ancient precedents. As long as the established structures, which, in essence, constituted the status quo, remained intact, their contents could be changed.

The Roman empire was not a static entity but, like all states, reacted to changing conditions; it was a living political organism that was guided by laws and customs. The former provided the dynamic necessary to bring about changes, while the latter supplied stability that helped to absorb these changes so that the structure did not collapse. While the emperor had the authority to bring about changes, he also represented the established structure. Domitian was unable to uphold this structure and the symbolic force of the ruler. "Bread and circuses" might pacify the mob but they did nothing to mollify the elite, which was made painfully aware of its political irrelevance. Rome's alienated elite reacted forcefully against the one brazenly demonstrating superiority. Rome's snubbed elite moved into a mode of "damage control," which resulted in the murder of the revealer of the fiction of equality, Domitian. One of the first acts of the new head of state was the re-establishment of the fiction that the senate was the most important political body. The princeps, in other words, was instrumental in the perpetuation of illusion as he obscured political reality.

Trajan: Jupiter on Earth

Trajan (r. 98–117 CE), like Vespasian a victorious general, worked the fiction of "the first among equals" (*primus inter pares*). He was proclaimed the best emperor (*optimus princeps*) and likened to Jupiter, the father of the gods. The all-encompassing, virtuous Father was

[83] Jones, *The emperor Domitian*, p. 197.

back with added luster. The celebrated Trajan was the ideal emperor, in contrast to Domitian, who was portrayed as the most savage monster, a despoiler and butcher, a man jealous of other men's virtues.[84] It is my view that this new idealized emperor of the panegyric existed only because he was the successor to such an utterly vilified ruler.

Under Trajan's rule, elite intellectuals such as Pliny the Younger (62–ca. 115 CE) asserted that they could speak their minds freely again, so that the truth about the emperor no longer needed to be scripted.[85] This assertion could only create the impression that the double-speak employed under Domitian was laid to rest and fear no longer curtailed a man's expression of his virtues. "[T]he machinery of imperial propaganda tended to arrogate to itself all moral values," but in this case, "the emperor . . . the focus about which all moral and political discourse tended to gather, like a grain around which a crystal forms,"[86] was a man of the highest moral character. Who would argue differently? Rhetoric was situated to serve simultaneously as a point of reference and as an explanation. Thus the explanatory loop was inescapable. Trajan did not have to claim divinity; he was divine. Or at least he was "worthy of power equaling that of immortal gods." Pliny writes in his panegyric of the emperor:

> Conscript Fathers, silently I have often thought what kind and how much quality was proper to a man whose word or gesture could rule land and sea and determine war and peace; but when I tried to imagine to myself a princeps worthy of power equaling that of immortal gods [*di immortales*] . . . In fact until now there has been no one whose virtues [*virtutes*] remained unblemished

[84] Plin. *Pan.* 48.3: *immanissima belua*, 90.5: *spoliator et carnifex*, and 14.5*: alienis virtutibus invidus imperator.*

[85] S. Bartsch, *Actors in the audience: Theatricality and doublespeak from Nero to Hadrian* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994), pp. 148–87, discusses Pliny's *Panegyricus* in detail using J.C. Scott's public transcript vs. hidden transcript as a pattern.

[86] S. Hoffer, *The anxieties of Pliny the Younger*, *American Classical Studies* 43 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1999), pp. 6–7.

> by their closeness to vices. But how much concord [*concordia*] and how much agreement [*concentus*] among all our praise and all glory [*gloria*] touches our princeps! So that nothing of his seriousness [*severitas*] detracts from his humor and nothing of his solemnity [*gravitas*] from his sincerity [*simplicitas*], nothing of his sovereignty [*maiestas*] from his humanity [*humanitas*]![87]

Pliny's task in praising Trajan is difficult for the line between flattery, which fear produces, and praise, which truth generates, is indeed slim. The extent to which we, as readers, can distinguish praise from flattery depends on the rhetorical mode. Flattery "must appear far-fetched and contrived to its audience," whereas praise "has the ring of simplicity that marks it as true."[88] The excerpt from Pliny's speech, admittedly a piece of gross flattery, demonstrates this economy of language and thus signals Trajan's genuine greatness. This emperor's virtues remained pure even when exposed to vices. It was left to the reader to infer that Domitian's immoral behavior had not tainted Trajan despite the fact that he had had a successful military career under the Flavians.[89] His political and military involvement with Domitian had not corrupted him because no vice blemished his virtue. Even as emperor, when power might have been expected to corrupt and incite the loss of humanity, this "best man" remained virtuous. So much so that all praise, based on concord and agreement,[90] and glory coalesced in the person of the emperor.

Trajan's physical body, Pliny's panegyric continues, contained and reflected his imperial qualities.

[87] Plin. *Pan.* 4.4–6.

[88] Bartsch, *Actors in the audience*, p. 158.

[89] Nerva (r. 96–98 CE), Domitian's immediate successor, was appointed emperor on the day of Domitian's murder. This immediate appointment, however, is no indication that Nerva was involved in the assassination plot. See C. Murison, "M. Cocceius Nerva and the Flavians," *TAPA* 133.1 (2003), 152–3, as well as R. Syme, "Domitian: The last years," *Chiron* 13 (1983), 137–8.

[90] Concord (*concordia*) was Cicero's choice of word to express his political dream of the harmony of the orders. Agreement (*concentus*) can be understood as the unison of voices as a result of *concordia*.

> Further [his] vigor [the sense of the word here is military/political strength], height of body, grace of head, in addition maturity that has not declined through age, even as some sort of gift the gods have added the mark of sovereignty to his hair by hurrying signs of old age, do they [these signs] not display far and wide [what he is, our] princeps?[91]

The word for this living sign was princeps, a figure that encapsulated all that was considered virtuously good, worthy of praise and glory. Pliny went even further. He proposed that Jupiter, the parent of the world (*mundi parens*), had designated Trajan to conduct human affairs as a Jupiter-like figure.[92] Coins conveyed the same message. The father of the universe and Rome's premier god, Jupiter the Best and Greatest (*Iuppiter Optimus Maximus*), was connected to Trajan the best (*optimus*) emperor.[93] For all his deeds, Dio records, Trajan wanted to be regarded with affection rather than to be honored. Trajan received what he sought from the Roman people and the senate, his subjects, because he demonstrated affability toward the former and dignity toward the latter.[94] This father, who had reaped honor in the military and political arena, demonstrated *humanitas*. Trajan was in every aspect extraordinary; he was truly, in Roman terms, a god (*deus*) among men.

There were also monuments in stone that recorded Trajan's military achievements, like Trajan's Column in Rome, or pointed to his virtues, like the Arch of Beneventum, which Julian Benet termed "a panegyric in stone." The Arch's "principal metopes are . . . a lavish decoration and detailed catalogue of his *auctoritas* [authority] and *beneficium* [kindness], and his *pietas* and *virtus.* Nothing less, in fact, than an illustrated manifesto of the regime."[95] The Arch further

[91] Plin. *Pan.* 4.7.
[92] Plin. *Pan.* 80.4.
[93] *BMCRE*, vol. 3, nos. 224, 229, 434, 448, and 462.
[94] D.C. 78.7.3.
[95] J. Bennett, *Trajan optimus princeps: A life and times* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), p. 205.

proclaimed that this ideal emperor held sway over a people united by the harmony of the orders, Cicero's *concordia ordinum*, and that his absolute power was thoroughly legitimized. This was an image that persisted well into the Middle Ages, when, according to legend, Pope Gregory the Great offered an intercessory prayer on behalf of Trajan. The pope is said to have uttered on this pagan's behalf: "Forgive, O dear and almighty God, the errors of Trajan, because he always maintained right and justice."[96]

Maximus: Hollywood's Ideal Roman

Like any moral story, the history of the principate offers both the good and the bad. The period of the so-called "good emperors," which Trajan's adoptive father, Nerva, had inaugurated, ended with Marcus Aurelius, the philosopher-emperor and author of personal Stoic reflections, the *Meditations*. In the Hollywood movie *Gladiator* (directed by Ridley Scott, 2000), Marcus Aurelius selects his most trusted commander, Maximus, as his heir. The fictional Maximus is a successful general and devoted family man. The script-writers got it right. Their Roman hero is the most virtuous among all fighting men, in accordance with Rome's mythic history, and ready to resurrect what, in this celluloid version at least, the old and wise emperor most cherishes: the republic. The viewer soon learns, however, that the republic is but a dream and the empire is here to stay. Even in Hollywood's loose adaptation of Roman history, Marcus Aurelius's psychotic son, Commodus, aided by his position and the prevailing corruption, gets the upper hand. Virtuous Maximus, the empire's foremost soldier and the republic's hope, fights off his assassins only to end up a gladiator. The movie features a fight between Maximus and Commodus in the Flavian amphitheater, the Colosseum. It is

[96] J. Trumbower, *Rescue for the dead: The posthumous salvation of non-Christians in early Christianity*, Oxford studies in historical theology (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 143–53.

the quintessential epic struggle of good versus evil: on the one side, there is the virtuous hero, on the other, there is the immoral and corrupt autocrat. The movie ends with both men dead, but it is the quintessential Roman, Maximus, who is the unmitigated moral victor over the cunning, murderous, and un-Roman emperor. Maximus, the gladiator and champion of the republic, fought valiantly despite knowing that he was doomed.

In this celluloid version, the republic triumphed over the corrupt empire in the arena of the amphitheater. The movie left open the question of whether the body of Maximus might become the propagating symbol of a republic redux. In reality, nonetheless, the Roman empire and the rule of one were too well established to allow a return to oligarchy. Just as history records Marcus Aurelius as one of the most upright of all Roman emperors, so his son, Commodus, stood in utter contrast to his father. Commodus was "an emperor on display"[97] who fought as a gladiator in the arena and had himself depicted as Hercules, the most formidable of mythological heroes. In the arena, before a large audience, his body was on display. Spectators were no doubt eager to see this living Hercules in the Colosseum, the place where the virtues that had made Rome great were made visible in the gladiators and the condemned.

But performance, even in the context of the amphitheater where ancient warrior values were exhibited and celebrated, had never been an emperor's means of personal expression. The gladiators' duty was to fight valiantly and be ready to die at the will of the audience and the emperor in whose hands lay ultimate control over life and death. Gladiators were, in a sense, religious victims, *sacra*, as they went willingly to their death. They fought on behalf of, and for, the Roman people and its empire. The emperor's duty, on the other hand, was to pay for gladiatorial shows, and on occasion even to choose gladiators. These men were objects demonstrating Roman virtues, in contrast to the emperor who was the embodiment of

[97] O. Hekster, *Commodus: An emperor at the crossroads*, Dutch monographs on ancient history and archaeology 23 (Amsterdam: Gieben, 2002), pp. 137–62.

those virtues. By joining the ranks of the gladiators, Commodus inevitably made himself the target of vilification.

Aelius Lampridius, the author of *Commodus's Life*, presented the senatorial view pointedly, when he exclaimed:

> Let honors be taken away from the enemy of the country, let honors be taken away from the parricide, let the parricide be taken away! Let the enemy of the country, the parricide, the gladiator be cut up in the *spoliarium*![98] The enemy of the gods, the butcher of the senate, the enemy of the gods, the parricide of the senate . . . while you [Pertinax, the new emperor] are safe, we are safe and free from danger. . . .[99]

Commodus, the son of the admired philosopher-emperor, went down in history as a ruler "more savage than Domitian, more morally foul than Nero."[100] In fact he was a notional, not an actual parricide, for Marcus Aurelius had died of natural causes (possibly plague) while campaigning along the Danube (March 17, 180 CE). What Commodus killed by his inappropriate behavior was not his father but the symbolic order. As the symbolic generator and guarantor of Rome's greatness, he had attacked the country from within; he was an enemy (*hostis*) of the state and the gods. By his inappropriate behavior, Commodus had upset not only the fictional symbiosis but also the delicate balance between the gods and the Romans (the *pax deorum – pax hominum*).

The empire was at risk for even the senate, the emperor's peer pool, suffered at the hands of this butcher (*carnifex*).[101] Even those in Commodus's inner circle, the praetorian prefect Laetus, his chamberlain Eclectus, and his lover Marcia, came to the conclusion that

[98] The *spoliarium* was a room in the amphitheater where a defeated (dead) gladiator was stripped of his armor. In battle, taking spoils, originally skin, and then later armor, from a defeated enemy, was the final combat action. Victorious generals dedicated these spoils to gods and placed them in temples on the completion of the war.

[99] SHA *Comm.* 18.3–14.

[100] SHA *Comm.* 19.2.

[101] A term Pliny used for Domitian, see above.

his reign had to be terminated. The emperor's end was a most ignoble one; he was strangled while taking a bath (December 31, 192 CE). Like Nero, Commodus was a performer, an actor rather than an enactor of virtue. Consequently, he had to be eliminated in order to allow the re-emergence of a new father. A political killing, however, always spurs political turmoil or creates a power vacuum or a state of heightened anxiety until a new father emerges.

CHAPTER THREE

Appropriation of a Pattern

Mending the Known World Order

The reign of Helvius Pertinax, Commodus's successor, was extremely short (January 1 to March 28, 193 CE). He was murdered by the praetorian guard when a dispute arose over Pertinax's inability to pay soldiers the promised donatives. There was simply not enough money left in the treasury. Contenders then arose on the periphery and, in 197 CE, Septimius Severus (r. 193–211 CE), governor of Pannonia superior (Eastern Austria and Western Hungary, 191–193 CE), emerged as the sole emperor.[1] Although one of the contenders, Marcus Didius Julianus, had been legitimately

[1] Following the murder of Helvius Pertinax in March 193 CE, the senate confirmed Marcus Didius Julianus as emperor. Didius Julianus has the unique distinction of having bought rather than earned the position. Rome's populace, rejecting the senate's choice, proclaimed Pescennius Niger, governor of Syria, emperor. The armies in the provinces, however, rebuffed both choices. In Britain, Clodius Albinus was chosen and, in Upper Pannonia (modern eastern Austria and western Hungary), Septimius Severus. Severus was closest to Rome and made his way to the capital, where Julianus's position and authority deteriorated quickly. The senate, wisely, had Julianus executed and proclaimed Septimius Severus emperor.

appointed by the senate, Septimius Severus did not refer to Julianus as his immediate predecessor but Helvius Pertinax. Pertinax offered Septimius Severus a sound reputation based on glory and honor onto which the new ruler could graft his own virtuous actions. Pertinax had been a successful general under Marcus Aurelius and a man of excellent reputation among senators,[2] and with a nudge from his self-proclaimed immediate successor, the senate deified him. As emperor and successor of a deified emperor, Septimius Severus was now notionally the son of a divine being, which further legitimized his position as the empire's new father. The dynastic lineage went back to Nerva,[3] the adoptive father of Trajan.

After 18 years in power, Septimius Severus died in Eburacum (modern York) in 211 CE and left the empire to his two sons, Caracalla (r. 211–217 CE) and Geta (r. 211–212). He is reported to have said on his deathbed: "I received a state disturbed everywhere, I leave it behind pacified, even among the Britains . . . to my Antonines [his sons] I leave a stable empire, if they will be good; a weak one, if they are bad."[4] This moralizing tone is a familiar part of ancient historical narrative. The statement, though, proved to be nothing more than literary fancy, for Caracalla had his younger brother killed in 212 CE and nothing bad happened, either to the fratricide or the empire, as a consequence. Caracalla was a random Father. On the one hand, he instilled fear and left his subjects incapable or unwilling to question his rule, and, on the other, he was generous enough that his subjects were able to reap benefits, which kept them content enough not to question his actions. In this sense Caracalla's rule was successful. As long as Rome's elite and army reaped benefits and the emperor's endeavors did not interrupt their lives, there was no concerted effort on their part to defy the emperor.

[2] D.C. 73.1–10; Hdn. 2.1–5, and SHA *Pert.*

[3] D.C. 73.14–76.17; Hdn. 2.9–3.15; SHA *Sev.* See also the biography by A. Birley, *Septimius Severus: The African emperor* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988).

[4] SHA *Sev.* 23.3: *turbatam rem publicam ubique accepi, pacatam etiam Brittannis relinquo . . . firmum imperium Antoninis meis relinquens, si boni erunt, inbecillum si mali.*

Caracalla also continued his father's policy of privileging provincials over the old senatorial elite. This policy culminated in the extension of Roman citizenship to all free inhabitants of the empire in 212 CE. Above all though, Caracalla took care of his soldiers, the group through whom imperial power was exercised and secured. This emperor was keenly aware that keeping Rome's empire safe meant keeping soldiers content and well paid. The connection between Caracalla and his army was such a strong one that he described the Roman military as the source of his life and aim of his affection. "I am one of you," he said, "and I wish to live because of you alone, in order that I may grant you many things, for all the treasuries are yours."[5] The rising budget of the military further pressured an already strained economy, and around 214 CE a new coin was issued. This coin, a double denarius (*antoninianus*), had only the silver weight of one and a half denarii.

One consequence of circulation-debased money was increased inflation. By the mid-third century CE, Rome's mints had ceased to produce the silver denarius, instead issuing only the "double" denarius. Its silver content was also steadily reduced until it was a bronze coin with only the thinnest layer of silver. This denarius, the *antoninianus*, was a scorned coin for decades. Rome's economy was in dire straits and Caracalla's efforts to stabilize it were unsuccessful. Contrary to Septimius Severus's deathbed prediction, the empire's instability did not result from his successor's misbehavior, but from Rome's ailing economy. Once economic pressure reached the upper classes, in the form of more and higher taxes, the emperor's position became untenable. When Caracalla set out to secure the Mesopotamian frontier, members of the praetorian guard murdered him.

When criticism of the emperor was voiced, safely, after his death, it took the form of the moral binaries, virtuous/good: immoral/bad, which had been established in republican times. The collective memory of the senatorial order was permeated with this type of assessment

[5] D.C. 78.3.2.

and, as a result, the historical narrative presents us with a bad, even lunatic, emperor. The emperor, writes Dio Cassius, "thought that victory lay in the performance of the humble duties . . . rather than in good generalship."[6] Dio's remarks, like those found in the *Historia Augusta* (a collection of biographies of later Roman emperors),[7] display a senatorial bias. Rome's senators saw themselves as the guardians of the traditional virtues and as the political body endowed with the power to appoint the country's father. If Caracalla performed humble duties well, then, his character must be lowly. And a man of such character could only be a failure in the most important pursuit and virtuous expression of an elite man, generalship.

The praetorian guard acclaimed their prefect, M. Opellius Macrinus (r. 217–218 CE), emperor. Macrinus was the first equestrian to become emperor but he failed to persuade Rome's senate to accept him as one of its own. Predictably, the primary sources present us with a parvenu incapable of being emperor.[8] The empire's new father, especially since his predecessor had met a violent death, was obliged to be more pronounced in his display of virtues and to enact laws ever more powerfully. Macrinus failed in every respect. Even as he attempted to restore privileges to Rome's senatorial elite, the very same group slighted him. But even if Macrinus had been able to satisfy Rome and Italy's elite, they no longer had any real power. Rome was no longer a hegemonic city controlling vast territorial acquisitions but the capital of an integrated empire whose successful

[6] D.C. 78.13.1.

[7] The *Historia Augusta* (= *Scriptores Historiae Augustae*) is a collection of 30 lives of Roman emperors, from Hadrian (r. 117–138) to Numerianus (r. 283–284 CE), with a gap from 244–253 CE. Although there are six named authors, the work is thought to be of one author. The date of the composition, based on internal evidence, is placed in the period 405–525 CE. For an overview of the various issues see R. Syme, *Historia Augusta papers* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1983). Especially on Caracalla, see M. Meckler, "Caracalla and his late-antique biographer: A historical commentary on the 'Vita Caracalli' in the 'Historia Augusta,'" unpublished PhD dissertation, University of Michigan (1994).

[8] D.C. 78, Hdn. 4–5, and SHA *Macr.* See also D. Baharal, *Victory of propaganda: The dynastic aspect of the imperial propaganda of the Severi, the literary and archaeological evidence AD 193–235*, BAR international series 657 (Oxford: Tempus Reparatum, 1996), passim.

inhabitants demanded a share of political power. In order to avoid disintegration, the center had to meet the periphery's demands. Macrinus was unable to do so and, furthermore, his military campaigns in the East met with defeats. Losing battles only heightened the perception of the emperor as incapable of leadership. Macrinus was executed and the empire was in need of a new father.

When the periphery failed to produce a viable candidate, for the first time, a mother, a placeholder as it were, emerged from the center. This is to say, at the moment of the periphery's inability, the center produced an entity that transmitted status, in our case symbolic power, from one generation to the next. This emergence of a mother was not entirely without precedent; Livia, Augustus's powerful wife, had held the designation "mother of the country." Livia was the mother of Tiberius, Augustus's successor, and female ancestor par excellence of the remaining Julio-Claudian emperors. After two and a half centuries of one-man rule, a monarchy thinly disguised as the rule of "the first among equals," the wife of an emperor was also an extraordinary figure. The "empress" was an entity that had acquired symbolic powers. The Severan women had been formidable political powers behind the throne since Septimius Severus's ascent to power. Caracalla's mother, Julia Domna, had been designated *mater patriae* ("mother of the country"), *mater senatus* ("mother of the senate"), and *mater castrorum* ("mother of the military camps").[9] As such, her titles went beyond even those of her first century CE imperial predecessor, Livia. Julia Domna, the wife of the princeps and the mother of the designated successors, was mother of the country and mother of the body politic, which was comprised of the senate, the emperor's peers, and the soldiers, the enforcers of empire.

The new authority that emerged at a moment of the central authority's weakness was in fact a composite Mother, the mother-daughter team of Julia Domna's sister, Julia Maesa, and her daughter,

[9] On these titulatures see H. Benario, "Iulia Domna mater senatus et patriae," *Phoenix* 12 (1958), 67–70, and "The titulature of Julia Soaemias and Julia Mamaea," *TAPA* 90 (1959), 9–14.

Julia Soaemia. These powerful and extraordinary women promoted Soaemia's son, Elagabalus (r. 218–222 CE), as imperial alternative to Macrinus. When Macrinus lost yet another battle in 218 CE, he was murdered and the armies proclaimed the 14-year-old Elagabalus their emperor. Elagabalus, however, turned out to be an even poorer choice than his predecessor. Not only did this new emperor dress, behave, and rule in un-Roman fashion, he also broke established gender roles. He invited his mother to the senate "as if she were an honorable member,"[10] and "would go to taverns by night, wearing a wig, and there pursue the trade of a prostitute."[11] Historical sources present Elagabalus as performing no actions within recognizable Roman cultural and moral norms. The father of the country acted in a most un-Roman and un-manly fashion. The symbolic order was perceived as suspended and in need of reinstatement to assure Rome's integrity and continuity. Elagabalus's mother, Julia Soaemia, could not muster enough political support to offset the perception of her son as an incompetent Father. The reaction was as horrific as the emperor's behavior was unconventional; members of the praetorian guard bludgeoned him and his mother to death.

Despite this gruesome elimination, the authority of the mother, in the person of Elagabalus's grandmother, Julia Maesa, was not weakened. She successfully put forward as emperor her other grandson, Severus Alexander (r. 222–235 CE), the son of her daughter Julia Mamaea. With this choice, the "mother of the country" returned to her time-honored place next to and in support of the father. The traditional symbolic order was restored. Alexander's policies promoted Rome's senatorial aristocracy, even if this meant alienating the army, and he was in general a successful father. He understood that retention of power depended on perceived military success and celebrated a triumph despite the fact that Rome's struggle with the Sassanid empire, the successor to the Parthian, was at a stalemate. Roman territories, Syria and Cappadocia, had been lost and tribute

[10] SHA *Elag.* 4.1–2.
[11] D.C. 80.13.2.

paid to the Sassanid ruler, Ardashir I. Nevertheless, the rhetoric proclaimed Severus Alexander conqueror of the Eastern menace and the enactment of a triumph enforced this perception. Alexander the *triumphator* was the Father who shaped reality.

There was a precedent for this defeat reshaped as a success. In 20 BCE Augustus had retrieved three legionary standards, whose loss symbolized total military defeat, from the Parthians through diplomatic means. In the end, though, Alexander was unable to generate the same perception and loyalty from his subjects as Augustus had. The military remained dissatisfied with Severus Alexander's diplomatic arrangement and refused to embrace the fiction. In the terms of our discussion, the Father was incapable of commanding respect. When Alexander, accompanied by his mother, set out in 235 CE on a military campaign against German tribes that had poured into Gaul and Raetia (France, southern Germany, eastern Switzerland, and eastern Austria), they were murdered in Mogontiacum (Mainz, Germany). The reign of Severus Alexander's successor, Maximinus Thrax (r. 235–238 CE), ushered in almost 50 years of civil war that was exacerbated by the collapse of the empire's frontiers. The periphery was no longer capable of furnishing a Father, and there was no Mother to compensate for the loss. The symbolic order was utterly disturbed and was not mended until the last decades of the third century, when Diocletian (r. 284–313 CE), the commander of the mounted imperial bodyguard, finally emerged as the Father and re-instituted order.

By selecting a superior team of loyal advisors and generals, Diocletian was able to restore the empire. Since the empire was subject to constant frontier breaches, mainly brought about by the pressure of migrating peoples, more than one commander was needed. Diocletian, whose focus was on the East, chose Maximian, an old comrade-in-arms, for the position in the West. In time, both Diocletian and Maximian selected a helpmate to serve as their deputy commander and eventual successor. The senior members of these partnerships held the title Augustus, the junior members Caesar. Modern scholarship has termed this arrangement tetrarchy (the rule

of four). The Caesar of the West was Gaius Flavius Julius Constantius, the father of Constantine I. This arrangement originated the division of the empire into East and West.

The *Historia Augusta* labeled Diocletian the parent of a golden age.[12] The word *parens* (parent) as opposed to *pater* (father) had been applied to Julius Caesar who, like Diocletian, modified the empire's political structure. Diocletian styled himself a son of Jupiter, with his fellow Augustus, Maximian, a son of Hercules. Both men were extraordinary leaders, fathers who gave the empire new life. The duplication of the highest office generated a further distancing of the empire's fathers from its ordinary inhabitants. The pretense, which was key to Augustus's success, was that the emperor was merely the first among equals (*primus inter pares*) and that these equals had an actual voice in decision-making processes. With Diocletian, this persistent fiction came to an end. The emperor was in every aspect removed from his subjects as ceremonial rituals and architecture emphasized.

> Delegations, for example, would be ceremonially conducted through long, vast marble halls by successive grades of priestly officials . . . to an inner sanctum. There was the enthroned, impassive godlike source of all earthly power: the Lord of the World with a crown of the sun's rays, robed in purple and gold, and encrusted with precious stones down to his very shoes, holding the emblems of absolute power. To such quasi-divinity the proper gesture was no longer salutation, but prostration . . . on the many occasions when this mighty Emperor showed himself to his people or addressed his soldiers, it was automatically a form of festival, an epiphany in which the god-king imparted grace by his very appearance to them.[13]

[12] SHA *Elag.*: *Diocletianus, aurei parens saeculi*. . . .

[13] S. Williams, *Diocletian and the Roman recovery* (New York: Methuen, 1985), pp. 111–12.

Diocletian and subsequent emperors lived and acted their extraordinariness. The reality of absolute political power was now synchronized with its performance. The Roman emperor, the embodiment of traditional virtues and giver of laws, was now a wholly removed entity. He was, as it were, a sacred being. The vocabulary of Diocletian's court emphasizes this very notion of sacredness and even those who came into regular contact with the emperor, his advisors, were drawn into this extraordinary realm when they met with him in the *sacred* council. In this constellation, the emperor was also the embodiment of the performative acts; in all he did and said, he reflected empire. Diocletian, the Father, was the empire's rhetorical sign of absolute power.

Rome was thought to prosper only when the gods were on her side. Since the Roman empire was in dire straits in the third century, it was thought that the gods no longer favored the Romans. Diocletian's restoration of the old world order was also extended to the religious sphere because the Romans had to reconnect with their gods to ensure continuity and prosperity.

> There is no doubt that the immortal gods, as always friendly toward Rome, will be reconciled to us only if we have ensured that everyone within our empire pursues a pious, religious, peaceful life. For our laws safeguard only what is holy and venerable; and it is in this way the majesty of Rome, by the favor of all the divine powers, has attained its greatness.[14]

A New World Order

The proper execution of religious rites, in particular the acknowledgment of the emperor and Rome as divine entities, was key to mending the perceived rift between the Romans and their gods. A small group, the Christians, however, refused to participate in the

[14] Corpus Iustinianus 5.5.2.

religious affirmation of the extraordinariness of these two interconnected entities. Their loyalty lay solely with the Christian God and not in the temporal world. Hence Christians, who refused to worship Rome's divinities on behalf of the state, were visible targets and easily scapegoated as causing divine disfavor. Diocletian was not the first emperor to persecute Christians, but in order to regain the gods' favor, which, in turn, translated into "the well-being of the emperor and the state [*salus imperatoris et rei publicae*]," his was the most severe persecution.[15] There could be no rival to the emperor and there was only one supreme Father, who issued commands that were obeyed.

Christians, all the same, were tenacious foes of the state. Their focus on the heavenly world, their willingness to die for their God in imitation of Christ who had died for them on the cross so that they could join him and God the Father in a better life, made them fervent martyrs. Christian abhorrence of the material world and their rejection of their bodies turned the punishment of death into a welcome occasion. The Gospel of Luke phrases this renunciation of life in the following way: "Whoever comes to me and does not hate father, mother, wife, and children, brothers and sisters, yes, even life itself, cannot be my disciple."[16] Death became liberation, the most glorious occasion that changed a common person into a hero or heroine of the church. Eusebius (ca. 260–340 CE), bishop of Caesaria in Palestine, was the first to write a history of the church. In his *Church History*, he, an eyewitness to the executions, describes the enthusiasm of those who defied Diocletian's imperial edict of 304 CE and refused to sacrifice on behalf of the emperor and the state.

> . . . always I observed a wonderful, truly divine enthusiasm in those who put their trust in Christ. No sooner had the first group been sentenced, than others from every side would jump

[15] Lactant. *De mort. pers.* 34.5: *unde iuxta hanc indulgentiam nostram debebunt deum suum orare pro salute nostra et rei publicae ac sua, ut undique uersum res publica praestetur incolumnis et securi uiuere in sedibus suis possint.*

[16] *Luke*, 14.25–26.

up to the platform in front of the judge and proclaim themselves Christians.[17]

Echoing the original republican rhetoric, the martyr, like the Roman soldier who sacrificed his life for the state or the successful gladiator who displayed virtuous behavior in the amphitheater, reaped everlasting honor and remembrance of his/her courageous act. The display and commemoration of virtues, which was once the prerogative of Rome's elite and enacted in the religious context of gladiatorial shows, became for the Christians an honor a common man or woman was able to attain without any reference to the state. Moreover, glory realized in violent death did not remain solely with the martyred person but was also transferred onto the tripartite God. The Christian God, like his Jewish and Islamic counterparts, was an omnipotent and omnipresent creator, a God of prohibitive laws and dogmas, all-powerful, ubiquitous, and all-knowing. There was a dialectical relationship between this creator and his creation. Believers were, and are, obligated to accept divine laws and dogmas as well as to give unconditional adulation to their creator. This God then was the ultimate Father, the one who uttered the most prohibitive "no." While the state retained the emperor as the ultimate authority, Christianity replaced the earthly Father with a heavenly one.

The most telling of narratives, in which this clash of two Fathers in a shared cultural context is related, are the *Lives* of the early martyrs. These ardent Christians died for refusing to acknowledge any other authority than God. By their refusal, most dramatically displayed in the amphitheater, they appropriated the enactment of virtues, which belonged to gladiators and the pagan world. In this enactment women participated as zealously as men; the vocabulary, the metaphors, and the rhetoric of virtue was applied to men and women alike. One of the earliest accounts of a woman martyr is the *Passion of Vibia Perpetua* who was executed in the amphitheater in Carthage (March 7, 203 CE). Sections of the *Passion* are thought to

[17] Euseb. *Hist. eccl.* 8.

be autobiographical (3–10). Before her execution, Perpetua related a dream she had.

> And I was stripped naked, and I became a man. And my helpers began to rub me with oil as their custom is for a contest; and over against me I saw that Egyptian wallowing in the dust. . . . And I rose up into the air and began so to smite him as though I trod not the earth. . . . And I caught his head, and he fell upon his face; and I trod upon his head. And the people began to shout, and my helpers began to sing. And I went up to the master of gladiators and received the branch. And he kissed me and said to me: Daughter, peace be with you. And I began to go with glory to the gate called the Gate of Life.[18]

Perpetua had given birth to a child but, rather than opting to care for her newborn, she embraced death that was to free her from worldly life and grant her eternal life. Her self-renunciation in the name of Christ was a demonstration of her determination to carry out the most virtuous act, self-sacrifice, which previously belonged to the realm of virtuous men who put their lives on the line for the Roman state. Here we see a Christian heroine appropriating an established rhetoric and infusing it with a different telos.

Perpetua's readiness for death on behalf of a higher power and a new symbolic order incited her imaginary transformation from a woman and mother to a man and gladiator. In her dream world, she was endowed with extraordinary powers and as a gladiator of Christ she overcame her opponent. For this incredible action she received the victory branch and "began to go with glory to the gate called the Gate of Life." At this point in the narrative it becomes clear that Perpetua's actual opponent was earthly life and that the "Gate of Life" was the entrance to eternal life after death. The vocabulary is, in its basic tenor, not different from that used by Rome's pagan elite: an honorable death incurred glory and remembrance. The martyrs'

[18] *P.Perp.* 10.

ultimate sacrifice, however, brought glory and honor to all Christians and, even more, increased the glory of Christ, the Son of God, who had sacrificed himself for all mankind. He was the all-encompassing martyr, intrinsically linked to God the Father who, in a dialectical twist, demanded and received human life in order to grant new life. The author of the *Passion of Perpetua* ends his tale of extraordinary Christian courage and ultimate sacrifice of the self as follows:

> O most valiant and blessed martyrs! O truly called and elected unto the glory of Our Lord Jesus Christ! Which glory he that magnifies, honors and adores, ought to read these witnesses likewise, as being no less than the old, unto the Church's edification; that these new wonders also may testify that one and the same Holy Spirit works ever until now, and with Him God the Father Almighty, and His Son Jesus Christ Our Lord, to Whom is glory and power unending for ever and ever.[19]

This earliest account of a martyr's death makes clear that no persecutor was in a position to eradicate Christianity. Glory and honor were the rewards for Christians defying Roman authority. Since both these marks of highest respect were deeply rooted in Roman tradition, persecution backfired in that it created models of exemplary behavior, inspiring rather than deterring Christians. Christian ideology had turned punishment into something to be desired as well as an expedited road to salvation.

Diocletian's colleague, the future emperor Galerius (r. 293–311 CE), was most likely the architect of what came to be termed the "great persecution."[20] Galerius's successful campaign against the Persians in 298 CE gave him a political boost and persuasive leverage over Diocletian who was more tolerant toward Christians. After concluding an advantageous treaty with the Persians, the two emperors returned to Syria in 299 CE. There they performed sacrifices, which

[19] *P.Perp.* 21.

[20] For Galerius's role in the "great persecution" see T. Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981), pp. 19–27.

Christians interrupted by making the sign of the cross. The emperors, who were consequently unable to elicit good omens from their gods, "ordered all the members of the imperial court to sacrifice to the gods. Further, they sent letters to all military commanders: all soldiers under their command were to sacrifice or else quit the army."[21] Four edicts against Christianity, following this first purge, were issued in 303–304 CE. The implementation of the edicts lacked coherence and the attempt at ordering the world by forcing Christians to conform to the old religious order failed. In 311 CE, Galerius issued an edict that noted the legitimacy of the persecution whilst terminating it. Since the Roman religious system, within which Christianity existed, was polytheistic and inherently open, the integration of a deity whose followers had been persecuted did not pose a problem. The state's objective was to mend the perceived breach between the Roman people and its gods. Galerius's original anti-Christian strategy had failed and the policy of toleration gained ground. Christianity was on its way to becoming an official religion (*religio licita*) of the state.

Constantine, Very Wisely, Seldom Said "No"[22]

In fact, Christianity had already had a defender in the emperor Gallienus (r. 253–268 CE) who had ushered in a 40-year respite period for Christians in the mid-third century.[23] His actions, though, have been totally overshadowed by those of Constantine I. Constantine issued the decisive edict of toleration in 313 CE and it was he, according to the collective memory put forth, who was the single most influential emperor in enabling Christianity to become the state's

[21] Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius*, p. 19.

[22] P. Brown, *The world of late antiquity, AD 150–750* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1971), p. 88.

[23] S. A. Takács, "Confusión en la tierra, paz en los cielos. Galieno y los Cristianos," in E. Grijalvo and R. Martínez (eds.), *Del Coliseo al Vaticano: Claves del cristianismo primitivo* (Sevilla: Fundación José Manuel Lara, 2005), pp. 153–73.

sole religion.[24] The historical narrative has Constantine behold a magnificent vision of a cross and hear a voice uttering: "Under this sign you shall conquer," before he eliminated his imperial rival at the Milvian bridge outside Rome in 312 CE.[25] Christian propaganda made Constantine the first imperial champion of its cause. This emperor, nonetheless, still operated within a polytheistic context, and his Christian vision was only one of many. The god Apollo, for example, appeared to Constantine in Lugdunum (Lyon) in 310 CE[26] and the unconquerable sun (*sol invictus*), which the emperor Aurelian (r. 270–275 CE) had championed, was Constantine's divine companion (*comes*), even after he became a devout Christian. In view of the political realities, Constantine's embrace of an all-powerful deity like the sun as a companion is not surprising. The Roman emperor was a living god; Rome's sole ruler was a man imbued with divine powers. The emergence of a new ideological landscape, in which a divine Father transcended the earthly Father as the giver of laws and the one uttering the ultimate "no," turned the emperor into a vice-regent of the Christian God. In Constantine I's case, however, this relegation to a subordinate position occurred only after death.

Systematic terror inflicted on Christians had further weakened the civic sphere that was already under pressure from increased demands to bolster the empire's frontier against invading peoples. The persecuted were and could not be contributing members of society. But Constantine's religious toleration politically stabilized the empire. The Constantinean integration of Christianity, which over the centuries had developed as a parallel society with elaborate philanthropic systems, was a stroke of genius because it reinvigorated the civic sphere, previously dependent on private monetary contributions, as well as integrating bishops with administrative expertise into the empire's executive branch. The integration of Christianity, of course, also turned a private belief into a public matter. A personal

[24] Eus. *Hist. eccl.* 10.5.4–8 and Lactant. *De mort. pers.* 48.
[25] Eus. *Vit. Const.* 1.28 and Lactant. *De mort. pers.* 44.8.
[26] *Pan. Const.* 7.21 in E. Galletier (ed.), *Panégyriques latins*, Collection des universités de France, vol. 2 (Paris: Belles Lettres, 1952), p. 72.

conviction became a political tool. Constantine, in Roman terms a divine entity, and in terms of the present analysis the Father, aligned himself vis-à-vis the Christian God, the heavenly Father. It was a compromise that accommodated both Fathers, the heavenly Father superseding the earthly one.

Constantine, who was the highest-ranking priest of the pontifical college (*pontifex maximus*), ruthlessly set out to become the sole emperor of a unified empire. His quest for supreme power first required the elimination of his brother-in-law and emperor of the East, Licinius. Eusebius's attempts to portray Licinius as an evil force who opposed Christianity are simply propaganda. The war on Licinius was unprovoked but Constantine had no intention of sharing his rule; he would be the sole Father.

> Both of them, father and son [Constantine and Crispus], under the protection, as it were, of God, the universal King, with the Son of God, the Saviour of all, as their leader and ally, drew up their forces on all sides against the enemies of the Deity and won an easy victory; God having prospered them in the battle in all respects according to their wish. . . . Constantine, the mightiest victor, adorned with every virtue of piety, together with his son Crispus, a most God-beloved prince, and in all respects like his father, recovered the East which belonged to them; and they formed one united Roman empire as of old, bringing under their peaceful sway the whole world. . . .[27]

Eusebius's explanation employs vocabulary worthy of the Father. Constantine's success was a result of, and incorporated, every virtue. These virtues are linked to piety, at this period still a notion that, besides the religious, also held a socio-cultural meaning. Piety was the proper behavior traditionally demanded from a person toward family, state, and god(s). The heavenly world headed by "God the Father" and "God the Son" was replicated on earth, where

[27] Euseb. *Hist. eccl.* 10.9.4–6.

Constantine and his son Crispus ruled an empire that, in Eusebius's words, "belonged to them." Their rule was the fitting result of their military achievements. They had won glory in battle, bringing honors and power. Constantine and Crispus reaffirmed and re-invoked the long-standing Roman discourse that virtuous behavior led to power. The political rhetoric of old had reached a new stage in its evolution as it was now part of a Christian political worldview.

Although Rome had become strategically unimportant in the late second century CE when the Rhine and the Danube ceased to deter migrating tribes from crossing into Roman territory and all military resources were deployed along these frontiers, it remained the empire's nominal capital. But a capital in name alone was unsuitable for an energetic, forceful, ambitious man like Constantine. The appropriate reflection of his greatness was a new capital forged from a city that did not even have a history as a secondary capital. In the East there was Antioch, even Diocletian's Nicomedia, but Constantine chose the insignificant Byzantium as the site of his new Rome. Constantine, the Father, generated his own political center and this new center of empire would reflect the emperor's extraordinary powers outward.

Constantine undoubtedly privileged Christianity but his thinking was still inclusive. In historical terms, as a cultural "product" of the third century CE, he could simply not have said "no," as Peter Brown noted, to other religious cults and beliefs legally operating under his purview. Eusebius, a contemporary of Constantine and present at the emperor's deathbed baptism, composed the emperor's Christian biography. He explained Constantine's acquisition of artwork from prominent pagan sanctuaries for his new capital, Constantinople, as an attempt to subvert the old religious beliefs.[28] Eusebius, unlike Constantine, operated within a Christian framework; acquisition

[28] P. Chuvin, *A chronicle of the last pagans*, translated by B. Archer (Cambridge, MA, 1990), pp. 23–35; M. Hollerich, "Myth and history in Eusebius' *De vita Constantini*: *Vit. Const.* 1.12 in its contemporary setting," *HThR* 82 (1989), 421–45, and A. Cameron, "Eusebius of Caesarea and the rethinking of history," in E. Gabba (ed.), *Tria corda: Scritti in onore di Arnaldo Momigliano* (Como: New Press, 1983), pp. 71–88.

of pagan artwork signified that Christianity had triumphed over paganism. Under no circumstances could Eusebius have allowed the possibility that Constantine's collection was related to his claim of imperial supremacy, or his ambition to turn the city that bore his name into the empire's premier city.

Constantine's order to have his son, Crispus, and then his own wife, Fausta, murdered, interrupted what Eusebius had called the "peaceful sway." Rather than explain the calculated elimination of members of the imperial family at the behest of the emperor, Eusebius chose to gloss over the incident. Silence was to cover this impious act of Rome's paragon of virtue. A pagan writer like Zosimus, by contrast, saw the act for what it was, a moral blemish on the emperor's reputation.[29] In a pagan explanatory framework, Constantine was forced to become a Christian because the Christian God, unlike any pagan one, forgave sins even as grave as murder. But Constantine did not need any god to forgive him. He was extraordinary and the ruler of the world, a god, in pagan terms, or, in Christian ideology, a Messiah.

Paul Speck has convincingly argued that Constantine's Mausoleum featured the emperor's sarcophagus in the middle surrounded by 12 sarcophagi signifying the 12 apostles.[30] Placed at the center of this circle, Constantine was not the thirteenth apostle but rather the anointed one, in Greek "christos," and a Messiah. The church, however, did not need another Christ or a new Messiah, and Constantine's surviving Christian sons by Fausta, guided by bishops, "degraded" him to a "normal" Christian emperor.[31] The clerics had political ambitions of their own and an emperor, who obeyed the divine Christian Father, was more equal in stature to them than not and easier dealt with.

Constantine personally headed the first council of the church (in Nicaea in 325) in an attempt to unify Christianity, which was divided

[29] Zos. *Hist. nova* 2.29.

[30] P. Speck, "Konstantins Mausoleum: Zur Geschichte der Apostelkirche in Konstantinopel," in *Varia 7*, Poikila Byzantina 18 (Bonn: Habelt, 2000), pp. 113–56.

[31] Speck, "Konstantins Mausoleum," pp. 155–56.

over the divinity of Christ and his relationship to the other parts of the Godhead. But he was the only emperor ever to exercise such supreme control over the Christian bishops. In the post-Constantinean period, an emperor's rule depended on the grace of God.

> Thus after all tyranny had been purged away, the empire which belonged to them was preserved firm and without a rival for Constantine and his sons alone. And having obliterated the godlessness of their predecessors, recognizing the benefits conferred upon them by God, they exhibited their love of virtue and their love of God, and their piety and gratitude to the Deity, by the deeds, which they performed in the sight of all men.[32]

This quote from Eusebius's *Church History* shows how the intellectual world and its explanatory configurations related to the figure of the emperor had changed. It was God who was now the recipient of love exhibited by those of virtue, and the dispenser of benefits. He was the new Father who was altogether removed from everyday politics, acting through those he chose to carry out his will. Under this construct, Christian emperors became subordinate executors of an entity that existed outside of, but also encompassed, the world it had created.

A Pagan's Last Stand[33]

Constantine's remaining sons, Constantine II (317–340), Constans (323–350), and Constantius II (317–361 CE), divided the empire between themselves. Within a few years, the ambitious brothers were fighting for supremacy. First, Constans and Constantine II, who ruled over the western part of the empire, fought against each other. Constans emerged as the victor and emperor of the West in 340. Ten years later, he was murdered but Constantius fought

[32] Euseb. *Hist. eccl.* 9.

[33] In his monody of Julian the orator Libanius lamented: "Gone is the glory of good" (*Or.* 17.2).

successfully against his brother's usurper, Magnus Magnentius, who committed suicide in 353. The empire had once more a single emperor, one father. Constantius's successor was his cousin Julian, whom he had appointed Caesar, a position that made Julian the highest official after the emperor, in 355. Julian's reign (361–363) was of short duration but of great magnitude.

Julian, the Father, uttered a "no" against Christians that incorporated an ethical dimension, one intended to dislodge the divine Father and place the emperor once more at the head of the symbolic order. But Julian's attempt to reduce the privileged status of the Christian religion and to revert to an inclusive polytheistic religious structure, which in the mid-fourth century still reflected the empire's multicultural realities, failed completely. Christian intellectuals, who understood that without pagan literature there could be no Christian *paideia*, termed Julian the Apostate and, even more dramatically, the Anti-Christ. They did this safely after the emperor's death.

Julian forced Christians to examine closely the relationship between their belief and *paideia*, the educational and, at its core, ideological system, which was based on pagan writings and thinking. He challenged Christianity's use of pagan texts such as Homer and Plato as being inconsistent with the pronouncement of faith.

> We believe that a proper education results in . . . a healthy state of mind . . . a mind that has understanding and true opinions concerning things that are good and bad, honorable and shameful. Therefore, when someone thinks one thing but teaches his students another he fails . . . to educate exactly in proportion as he fails to be a good man. . . . I think it necessary that those who associate with the young and teach them speeches (rhetoric) have to be of that character, for they, whether rhetoricians or grammarians or, even more, sophists [philosophers], explicate the writings of the ancients. For these claim to teach . . . not only the use of words, but ethics also. . . . [34]

[34] Julian. *Ep.* 36. 422 A-D.

Julian argued that Christians could not appropriate the pagan discourse, transmitted through education, since the ultimate source of power, legitimacy, and authority lay with God and therefore outside the actual socio-political and ideological structure. He insisted that the Christian intelligentsia invent a new political vocabulary and educational material suitable to their faith.

> If, however, they think that those [pagan] writers are in error with respect to the most honored gods, then let them go to the churches of the Galilaeans to expound Matthew and Luke . . . I wished that your ears and tongues were "born anew," as you would say, in regards to these things. . . . [35]

"In one fell swoop," writes Adrian Murdoch, "Julian had cut Christians off from potential converts and from the classical tradition, from Homer and Hesiod."[36] While Julian's untimely death in battle thwarted this "cutting off," the vexing problem of intellectual heritage remained. Christianity was intertwined with Greco-Roman culture primarily because neo-Platonism came to furnish the theoretical framework of a faith that had once only required a *credo* (I believe). Julian forced Christians to answer Tertullian's question: "What has Athens to do with Jerusalem?"[37] Because of Constantine I's actions in politicizing Christianity and bringing it into the emperor's realm, the answer could no longer be simply "nothing." Christianity was political and tightly bound to the imperial house. The emperor was the final arbitrator of questions concerning the

[35] Julian. *Ep.* 36. 423 D.

[36] A. Murdoch, *The last pagan*: *Julian the Apostate and the death of the ancient world* (Stroud: Sutton, 2003), p. 142.

[37] *On Proscription of Heretics* 7. The question continues: "What concord is there between the Academy and the Church?" G. Kennedy, *Classical rhetoric and its Christian and secular tradition from ancient to modern times* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), pp. 167–68, elaborates thus: " . . . the sentence following these questions, and the context as a whole, shows that what really concerns him was the way philosophical arguments became the basis of heresies or agnosticism. . . . he never directly attacked rhetoric as such. Christians should not teach it; they can and must study it (*On Idolatry* 10)."

faith and was obligated to convert non-believers. Piety toward the state, its citizens, and, ultimately, toward God alone demanded the emperor's engagement on behalf of the church.

Gregory Nazianzus (around 330–389), who had studied with Julian in Athens, reacted to the emperor's pronouncements against the Christian use of pagan literature. In matter of fact, Susanne Elm has even suggested that "Julian was the catalyst who spurred Gregory into action." The crucial questions put forth were: "Who is the true heir of Greekness within Rome, and who can claim to represent true Hellenism?"[38] Two contexts, the semantic and historical, were of paramount importance to Julian's argument because they shaped Greekness and Greek learning (philosophy). "No one who followed the god of the Galilaeans could lay claim to the universalism of Greece and Rome as represented in its divinely inspired philosophy."[39] Jesus Christ had lived and thus existed in a historical context, and so for Julian, history, a specific culture, and a geographical region defined Christ. There was nothing Greek about this Galilaean. Gregory, in contrast, extricated the terms from these concrete contexts and postulated them as concepts in relation to the Christian God, a universal in his omnipotence and omnipresence. "[F]or Gregory, Greekness and Greek learning, once properly guided toward the correct divinity, were integral to being Christian. . . . "[40] As a result, Christianity and the Classics were re-united. And Julian, who had argued for their separation, was termed a "ferocious beast,"[41] the traditional label attached to an emperor who, if not actually incapable of rule, was at least deeply disliked by the senate.

In Gregory's rendering of the past, Constantius became the virtuous ruler whom the successor, Julian, could not surpass. Julian was thus forced to outdo his predecessor by going to the opposite extreme, showing "outrageous behavior against religion and zeal for

[38] S. Elm, "Hellenism and historiography: Gregory of Nazianzus and Julian in dialogue," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 33.3 (2003), 494.

[39] Elm, "Hellenism and historiography," p. 506.

[40] Elm, "Hellenism and historiography," p. 506. See also for a bibliographical list of works dealing with Julian the Apostate.

[41] Greg. Naz. *Or.* 2.87.

the worse side."[42] This is, of course, fanciful history or selective remembrance. The fact is that Constantius, like his father Constantine I, had not hesitated to eliminate potential rivals when his own security depended on it. Julian and his older stepbrother, Gallus, were the only survivors of their family, all victims of a purge that followed on the heels of Constantine's death in 337 to ensure that only Constantine's sons were free to succeed their father.

Gallus and Julian, the survivors of a massacre, were put under house arrest but not deprived of their education. Indeed the empire's most prominent scholars and Christian thinkers were sent to teach them. According to Gregory, the brothers were in the company of

> the most excellent men, and in the exercise of the most pleasant of occupations, which offers a great field for the display of virtue . . . both brothers . . . enrolled themselves amongst the clergy; reading aloud the sacred books to the people, thinking that this tended not a little to their glory, and that piety was a greater decoration than all other things.[43]

In this explanatory construct, glory, the result of virtuous behavior and key to remembrance, was gained not in battle but by reading the Bible to the people. And piety, devotion to the Christian God, the church and its teachings, was now the most outstanding honor. The individual and his piety, which was driven by fear of God, had replaced the individual's concern for, and actions on behalf of, the state's well-being. The individual superseded the well-being of the group and, by extension, the state. And the most prohibitive Father, God, kept the individual in line even to the point of its self-destruction.

> By most sumptuous monuments to martyrs, by emulation in their offerings, by all the other marks by which the fear of God is characterized, did they make known their love of wisdom

[42] Greg. Naz. *Or.* 2.87.
[43] Greg. Naz. *Or.* 4.23.14.

> and their love of Christ: the one of them being sincerely pious . . . the other awaiting his opportunity, and concealing under a mask of goodness his evil disposition.[44]

"The doctrines of philosophy" belonged to the Christians, for the "power they derived from words was the weapon of virtue." In contrast, pagans used the power of words as "an incentive to vice." They understood the world as a social system defined by particular historical contexts, while Christians postulated a single universal context. Christian intellectuals proceeded to graft their interpretations onto the traditional virtues and, therefore, enabled the continuation of the symbolic order in which the emperor embodied these virtues. The pagan discourse of power and legitimization was now a Christian one.

Christian thinkers could even rationalize political murder. In 354, Constantius had Gallus, whom he had appointed Caesar, executed. By the skillful use of rhetoric, Gregory, the Christian philosopher, one of the cultivators of reason and truth, explained this execution as the result of justified or explainable anger: " . . . the man who raises the second brother to honors that no one could have expected, not even the recipient of those honors himself, makes it evident that he had not punished the first brother without just grounds of anger. . . . "[45] The subsequent elevation of Julian to Caesar does not explain, however, the "just grounds of anger" that led to Gallus's murder. The deduction is based on an inference, but there are not enough elements presented to infer any conclusion. This is certainly rhetoric at its best, and who could argue with a "cultivator of reason and truth?"

In Gregory Nazianzus's *Fourth Oration*, the first invective against Julian, published most likely in 364, a year after the emperor's death, virtue plays an important role. As we have seen, the lives or passions of the saints, as in the case of Perpetua, had already appropriated

[44] Greg. Naz. *Or.* 4.24.1.
[45] Greg. Naz. *Or.* 4.40.

the discourse. Thinkers such as Gregory moved this discourse from the socio-political into the theological realm. He argued against Julian that Christian philosophy "deals not with words alone . . . but conveys piety through moral training."[46] Thus piety, once a social virtue connecting humans to humans (horizontal) and humans to gods (vertical), was now a religious and solely vertical one dependent on moral training defined and driven by Christian dogmas. Practice was pitched against theory, the everyday against academic stances; or, more strongly, the useful against the useless. Julian's death, however, cut short the discussion between pagans and Christians concerning cultural appropriation and continuation. Christian thinkers were free to continue making Christianity heir to "Greekness within Rome." The Christian religion, while incorporating the vocabulary of virtues, was constructed as the legitimate representative of Hellenism.

A fellow student from Julian's days in Athens and a good friend of Gregory Nazianzus, Basil of Caesarea in Cappadocia (329–379), demonstrated in his *Address to Young Men on the Right Use of Greek Literature* that a new era had begun. The old discourse and the established rhetoric, which emphasized the extraordinary individual whose advancement, expressed by honor and glory, was linked to the well-being of the state, seemed to have been suspended.

> Neither pride of ancestry, nor bodily strength, nor beauty, nor greatness, nor the esteem of all men, nor kingly authority, nor, indeed, whatever of human affairs may be called great, do we consider worthy of desire . . . but we place our hopes upon the things which are beyond, and we do all things in preparation for eternal life.[47]

But the suspension was a limited one. A person's extraordinary deeds on behalf of the state, fellow men, or the Christian faith

[46] Greg. Naz. *Or.* 4.23.14.
[47] Basil, *Ad adol.* 2.

still generated glory, which, in turn, produced remembrance. The passions and lives of holy men and women conveyed their glory and brought honor to the family in Christ, the church. These were (and still may be) models to be emulated and as long as hagiographic texts are transmitted and read, or the names of saints pronounced, their lives are everlasting. In the pagan Roman sense, these human beings in this way remembered had achieved immortality; they are *divi* (divine). But the ultimate goal of the individual's actions, previously the worldly state, was now transferred to the heavenly sphere, the promise of an eternal life in the presence of God.

The Christian martyrs had shown that things quintessentially Roman, the amphitheater for instance, could be redefined and turned into a means of achieving the ultimate Christian goal of eternal life. The same was now true of pagan *paideia*, which became a vehicle for advancing the Christian way of life. Christianity, like its root Judaism, is a religion of the word. Texts, not ritual actions as was the case in Rome's pagan religion, are at its core. The adaptation of pagan *paideia*, based on texts, was thus essential. But in its post-Constantine assimilated context, the Christian *credo* required a more sophisticated philosophical structure and legitimization vis-à-vis pagan learning. Christianity had also to distinguish itself from its Jewish roots. The former postulated belief in conjunction with the oikoumenē (the inhabited world), while the latter was the religion of an ethnic group. After Julian, Basil could confidently promote a pick-and-choose method. He stated that, among the ancient writers, only the "useful was to be selected" and "after the manner of bees . . . [take] as much as is necessary for [one's] needs . . . [and] let the rest go."[48]

Since it was still virtue that brought a Christian to what Perpetua had called "the Gates of Life," Basil, the educator, suggested that "our attention is to be chiefly fastened upon those many passages from the poets, from the historians, and especially from the philosophers, in which virtue itself is praised."[49] The student was to glean

[48] Basil, *Ad. adol.* 8 and 4.
[49] Basil, *Ad. adol.* 5.

from these passages definitions of virtue in order to move toward an understanding of truth. Prepared in such a way, the student was then ready to *understand* the ultimate text, the Holy Scriptures, and "the deep thoughts contained therein".[50] These thoughts, in turn, pointed to the *Truth*, generated by and with God, who had now taken the place of the prohibitive Father.

Christians, like Rome's soldiers of old, were trained for combat and "then in battle reaped the reward of their training." The defiant martyrs had happily freed themselves of their burdensome bodies and left the world for a better life, but Christians of the post-Julian era could no longer do so. Since Christianity's official integration into the religious and political fabric of the empire, earthly life was cherished, not abandoned. The fight once waged against the imperial authorities now became an everyday struggle for the integrity of the Christian soul. Extreme believers still rejected their bodies by indulging in self-chastisement, but an ordinary Christian demonstrated his fighting abilities by enduring the everyday temptations life presented. In this way, power was gained and freedom bestowed; the victor's reward was entrance into the Kingdom of Heaven. Pagan Rome's rhetorical discourse had been successfully adapted and integrated into the new Christian political ideology.

Augustine: The Christian Cicero

In the Greek-speaking part of the empire, the Cappadocian fathers, among them Basil of Caesarea and Gregory Nazianzus, who were thoroughly educated in the classical (or pagan) tradition, "produced a new culture."[51] The Latin West, for its part, had Augustine of Thagaste in North Africa, a Christian convert. Before his conversion, Augustine held the state-appointed "chair" of Latin rhetoric in Milan (384–386), the administrative seat of the empire's western

[50] Basil, *Ad. adol.* 2.

[51] W. Jaeger, *Early Christianity and Greek paideia* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1961), pp. 75–85.

government and, then, after his conversion, he served as the bishop of the North African Hippo (395–430). The driving force behind Augustine's embrace of Christianity was the powerful bishop and politician, Ambrose of Milan.[52] Unlike Jerome of Jerusalem (ca. 348–420) who "was the one most torn between . . . love of eloquence and a belief that the art of rhetoric is a worldly product, at best of no true importance for a Christian and possibly inimical to Christian life,"[53] Augustine was able, like his Cappadocian counterparts, to turn Greco-Roman *paideia* into the handmaiden of Christianity.

Augustine's logic was impeccable. In his *On Christian Instruction*, the "professor" turned bishop argued that "the power of speech lies open to all" and, because it is used by those who "serve falsehood" (non-Christians), "the defenders of truth" (Christians) ought to employ it as well in order to serve the truth.[54] To make his point Augustine chose military terms. Christians were and still are, as the well-known hymn *Onward Christian Soldier* proclaims, soldiers under Christ's leadership in the service of God.[55] God, according

[52] P. Brown, *Augustine of Hippo: A biography* (New York: Dorset Press, 1986).
[53] Kennedy, *Classical rhetoric*, p. 168.
[54] 4.2 (3).
[55] Text by Sabine Baring-Gould (1834–1924):

Onward, Christian soldiers,
Marching as to war,
With the cross of Jesus
Going on before.
Christ, the royal Master,
Leads against the Foe;
Forward into battle
See His banners go!
Crowns and thrones may perish,
Kingdoms rise and wane,
But the Church of Jesus
Constant will remain.
Gates of hell can never
'Gainst that Church prevail;
We have Christ's own promise,
And that cannot fail.

Like a mighty army
Moves the Church of God;
Brothers, we are treading
Where the saints have trod.
We are not divided,
All one body we,
One in hope and doctrine,
One in charity.
Onward, then, ye faithful,
Join our happy throng,
Blend with ours your voices
In the triumph-song;
Glory, laud, and honour
Unto Christ the King;
This, through countless ages,
Men and angels sing.

In *On Christian Instruction*, Augustine defines Christ as the road to God (1.34) and God as unchangeable Wisdom (1.8), an ineffable entity (1.6).

to Augustine's definition, was an entity beyond all excellence, an entity we can only comprehend when prepared and of pure heart. Our relationship to God, Augustine established in his treatise *The Christian Combat*, was that of children to a nourishing parent.

> Let us be fed in Christ, nourished by the milk of a simple and unaffected faith . . . we are children . . . let us grow in Christ by wholesome nourishment . . . We ought . . . to long more eagerly for the clear and distinct knowledge of truth . . . "Blessed," indeed, "are the pure of heart," says Christ, "for they shall see God" (Matt. 5.8). "So that, being rooted and grounded in love," we may be able "to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, to know also the surpassing knowledge of the love of Christ, in order that we may be filled unto all the fullness of God" (Eph. 3.17–19). And when our struggle with the unseen enemy is over, may we deserve the crown of victory.[56]

The reference to the child in Christ, nourished by milk, goes back to St. Paul's letter to the Corinthians in which he juxtaposed the physical and the spiritual body.[57] Becoming a Christian is analogous to growing from infancy to adulthood, and hence is linked to an educational progression. Greco-Roman *paideia* furnished the cultural model for this: the (well-born) child was nursed either by his mother or by a wet nurse, then was given for basic instruction to a pedagogue, then to a grammarian, and, before entering the public arena, an orator, philosopher, or lawyer.

Clement of Alexandria (ca. 150–215) explored the Pauline passage in his *Paidagogus*: "The first lessons of a Christian, as for a child, are transmitted through milk . . . The nourishment taken in the breast . . . frequently serves as a metonym for all aspects of early

[56] God as a being beyond excellence, *On Christian Instruction*, 1.7. *The Christian Combat*, 35.

[57] 1 Cor 3.2.2: "I have fed you with milk and not with meat."

childhood rearing."[58] Christ was a Christian's nurse. His milk, which in a more philosophical mode can be equated to *logos*,[59] leads to knowledge, that is, an understanding of the truth, which ends in salvation.

Clement "compares God's fatherhood with human *motherhood*" in order "to argue for Christian unity based on shared substance."[60] God is an all-encompassing entity and, as such, beyond gender. Nonetheless, gender-based definitions gave Clement the metaphors to convey the notion of a Christian people, a new universal ethnos (tribe) wherein each member is connected to the other through the mother (the milk) while still under the authority of the father. Still, the father subsumed the nourishing mother and, ultimately, this led to the obliteration of every female aspect connected to God. Partial compensation for this loss came in the figure of Jesus Christ's mother, Mary, who was human.[61]

[58] D. Buell, *Making Christians: Clement of Alexandria and the rhetoric of legitimacy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), p. 123; on milk and the rhetoric of unity see pp. 118–79.

[59] The Greek word "logos" has many meanings besides "word." In classical times, ancient Greek philosophy put forth "logos" as reason and knowledge. Stoic philosophers postulated "logos" to be the originating material and rational principle of the universe, and as such it permeates everything. Christian "logos," the Word, is akin to the Stoic understanding in that it is the generating dynamic. It is also equated to reason or creative reason (Pope Benedict XVI, April 1, 2005 [http://www.zenit.org/english/visualizza.phtml?sid=74864] stated: "Only creative reason, which in the crucified God is manifested as love, can really show us the way. In the so necessary dialogue between secularists and Catholics, we Christians must be very careful to remain faithful to this fundamental line: to live a faith that comes from the "Logos," from creative reason, and that, because of this, is also open to all that is truly rational.")

[60] Buell, *Making Christians*, p. 149.

[61] The Jewish God, Yahweh, had a female companion Asherah (f. ex. Jerm. 7.17–18 and 44.17) or Shekinah "('Divine Presence'),which is often depicted as the feminine aspect of God." See R. Eisenberg, *The JPS guide to Jewish traditions* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 2004), p. 628. A branch of Gnostic thinkers postulated that the divine entity from which humans originated was female. Orthodox Christianity, like orthodox Judaism, subdued female aspects associated with God. Relegated to insignificance, the divine female nevertheless can be found, for example, in God's wisdom, Hagia Sophia (Holy Wisdom). Nestorianism also put forth the problem of Mary's nature. At the first Ecumenical Council at Nicaea, Christ's nature was defined as both divine and human in substance. This compromise, though, resulted in new problems; for example, one of them concerned Mary's nature, another Christ's will.

Like Clement's pedagogical exegesis, Augustine's exhortation was anchored in the contemporary cultural language of his time. Excellence and fighting for victory were notions with a succinct Roman heritage that Christian martyrs modulated and Christian thinkers were able to adapt to explain the new symbolic order. God was the ultimate "discourse of the Master" or "Father," eternally generating laws that led to the "Truth." Those who understood that the Scriptures, the privileged text, revealed and led to this Truth could utilize the intellectual products of the past.

In creating a Christian behavioral framework, Augustine reached back to the republican Roman understanding of virtue, glory, and honor. His guide in this was Cicero, who established that *true* glory (and honor) resulted primarily from virtue and secondarily from praise issued by a competent judge. Cicero did not define this judge, but for Augustine it was, of course, God. The state still benefited from a man's virtues, for a Christian still had to function within, and work for, a society composed of his fellow men. In order to advance toward the glory of the city of God, Augustine exhorts his readers to rouse their virtues. "O praiseworthy inborn Roman quality, desire these things then – o offspring of Reguli, Scaevolae, Scipios, Fabricii!"[62] The virtues of old, once exercised in the service of the state, and embodied in the self-sacrificing, mythic Roman heroes, were now appropriated as authoritative examples for virtuous behavior that led toward eternal life with God where true glory resided. Human life was transitory and every action was contingent on varied circumstances. But earthly examples, on the one hand, and God, on the other, provided signposts for those Romans who had awakened their innate abilities.

> [E]xamples are set before us, containing necessary admonition, in order that we may be stung with shame if we shall see that we have not held fast those virtues for the sake of the most glorious city of God, which are, in whatever way, resembled

[62] August. *C.D.* 2.29: *o indoles Romana laudabilis, o progenies Regulorum Scaevolarum, Scipionum Fabriciorum, haec potius concupisce . . .*

> by those virtues which they held fast for the sake of glory of a terrestrial city.[63]

The guardians of the Roman empire, now men of Christian faith, discussed politics and virtuous behavior within traditional confines because they shared *paideia* in common with their pagan ancestors. Augustine could turn Constantine I into an example of a ruler with unprecedented glory, and term Theodosius I (r. 379–395), the emperor who made Christianity the sole religion of the empire in 391/2, a paragon of virtue. Nonetheless, a Mucius Scaevola's virtuous actions on behalf of the Roman state, which culminated in self-mutilation, were still a more formidable example because of their mythical dimensions. In making a fiction real, the power of rhetoric can outweigh historical reality, especially when the fiction is one of such long standing and as securely embedded in tradition as the story of Mucius Scaevola.

Claudian's *On the Fourth Consulate of Honorius*

Newcomers, among them Goths and Huns, continuously battered the empire's frontiers. Internally, military men jockeyed for power. The year 375 saw the death of the emperor of the West, Valentinian, in an engagement against invading tribes, the Quadi and Sarmatians, at Brigetio in Pannonia (Szöny-Komárom, Hungary). Three years later, his brother, the emperor of the East, Valens, died fighting the Goths at Adrianople in Thrace (Bulgaria). Their successors, Gratian, eight years old at his accession as senior Augustus in the West, and Valentinian II, a mere four years old, both sons of Valentinian, were, of course, too young to rule. Consequently, East-West relations reached a nadir as usurpers tried to wrest supreme power from those

[63] August. *C.D.* 5.18. For a detailed discussion on Augustine and politics see J. von Heyking, *Augustine and politics as longing in the world*, Eric Voegelin Institute series in political philosophy (Columbia, Missouri, and London: University of Missouri Press, 2001), esp. pp. 150–71.

who were too young to exercise it. In the absence of a ruler and Father, powerful courtiers and bishops shaped imperial policies.

In 379, Gratian's court assigned a successful general, Theodosius, to rule the East with the young Valentinian at his side. Theodosius managed to emerge as the empire's sole ruler in 395, but he died unexpectedly the same year, leaving behind his underage sons, the nine-year-old Honorius and the six-year-old Arcadius, as his successors. The process of Christianity's integration, which had begun under Gallienus's in the late third century and had received full imperial support from Constantine I, had reached its natural conclusion.

Claudian, a forthright pagan and Honorius's panegyrist, was the most accomplished and celebrated Latin panegyrist of his age. He was a native of Alexandria, a Greek-speaking city, and before coming to Italy in 394 he had composed Greek poetry.[64] Claudian was a poetic celebrity of such high standing that his statue was placed in the Forum of Trajan. The inscription from the statue base is extant and reads:

To Claudius Claudianus, a most noble man, tribune
and notary, among other fitting arts most glorious
of poets, although the poems he wrote are enough
to preserve his memory forever, yet as testimony
of his intelligence and loyalty, the happiest and most learned
emperors, Arcadius and Honorius, at the request of the Senate,
have ordered that a statue is set up and placed
in the Forum of the deified Trajan.
[Greek addition] For Claudius [Claudianus], in whom is the mind of Vergil and the Muses of Homer, Rome and her emperors put this up.[65]

[64] Only a fragment of a Gigantomachy survives.

[65] *CIL* VI 1710 = *ILMN* 1, 48 = *IG* 14, 1074 = *IGUR* 1, 63 = *D* 2949 = *AE* 1999, 24: [*Cl(audi)*] *Claudiani v(iri) c(larissimi) / [Cla]udio Claudiano v(iro) c(larissimo) tri/[bu]no et notario inter ceteras / [de]centes artes praegloriosissimo / [po]etarum licet ad memoriam sem/piternam carmina ab eodem / scripta sufficiant adtamen / testimonii gratia ob iudicii sui / fidem dd(omini) nn(ostri) Honorius et Arcadius / felicissimi ac doctissimi / Imperatores senatu petente / statuam in foro divi Traiani / erigi collocarique iusserunt /* εἶν ἐνὶ Βιργιλίοιο νόον / καὶ μοῦσαν Ὁμήρου / Κλαυδιανὸν Ῥώμη καί / βασιλῆς ἔθεσαν.

Claudian was a man who performed in the service of the state. His panegyrics pronounced the extraordinariness of his employers, the emperors. He was the most glorious (*gloriosissimus*) of poets, a man of highest nobility (*vir clarissimus*), whose memory, resulting from his poetic production and his loyal support of the ruling regime, was to be eternal (*sempiterna*). A poet, creator of memory, attained glory in just the same ways as those virtuous ones whom he commemorated in poetry.

The inscription acknowledges the Roman senate, long bereft of any actual political power, as the body responsible for recognizing Claudian's memorable work for the state and for having his statue erected in one of Rome's most important public spaces. While the formulaic nature of inscriptions helped to maintain the venerable myth of emperors and senators being peers, it also perpetuated the Rome-specific rhetoric that the emperor, or in this case emperors, did the ordering (*iusserunt*).

In the Greek addendum, Rome replaces the senate as initiator of Claudian's honor, while the Greek language recalls culture at its highest pinnacle. Claudian united in his person both the greatest of Latin poets and creator of Rome's imperial epic, Vergil, and the ancestor of all poets, Homer, whose epics were Vergil's blueprint. The most brilliant of contemporary poets composed for the empire's most extraordinary individuals, the emperors. The veiled patronage of Augustus's time had given way to full-fledged and controlled patronage of the written word. The rhetoric of power was as a result integrated into poetic production and, since such texts were used in education, guaranteed continuation.

Paragons of virtue, noble Romans worthy of remembrance, were staples of historical narratives as well as rhetorical exercises. Embedded in *paideia*, these examples of virtuous behavior shaped historical and collective memory. Claudian's panegyric on behalf of the young emperor Honorius nicely demonstrates this dual aspect of shaping memory and creating realities. What is more, the poet and perpetuator of memory, Claudian, was himself worthy of glory, praise, and remembrance. Cicero, in defense of the poet Archias, had formulated

arguments that turned a wordsmith into a virtuous ideal. A 13-year-old emperor had, of course, had no opportunity to distinguish himself; or, as William Barr noted in his introduction to Claudian's panegyric, Honorius "had achieved nothing more noteworthy than the celebration of his thirteenth birthday."[66] Nonetheless, Honorius was the emperor and father of the country.

Claudian embedded in his fourth oration in honor of Honorius a fictitious speech by Theodosius (lines 214–352, 369–418). In this, the experienced father instructs the inexperienced son in the ways of governing the world. This prosopopoeia brings an extraordinary dynamic to the encomium. Claudian, or anyone reciting the oration, brings Theodosius to life and into a conversation with his own son. In the action of reciting (or reading), the father of the empire forever instructs the child, Honorius, and, by extension, the reader or listener, who will learn what Roman virtue is, and how true glory, honor, and nobility are won. The traditional understanding, codified in the *mos maiorum* and embodied in the father, forever legitimizes Rome, its empire, and those who exercise power over others in Rome's name. In other words, the discourse established centuries earlier can be activated and enacted over and over again.

In Claudian's oration, the king of Parthia, whose rule is connected to his noble birth (*nobilitas*), stands in contrast to the emperor who holds sway over the court of Rome (*Romanae aulae*). Rome's ruler is not in power because of family (*sanguis*, blood) but because of his display of virtue (*virtus*). Moreover, only a man who knows himself and knows how to appease his *animus*, the seat of his feelings and emotions, will succeed. "When you are able to be king over yourself, then you will hold everything rightfully."[67] Clemency (*clementia*) makes a ruler equal to gods (*deos aequat*). The emperor, who commanded all authority and power, displayed in acts of clemency his social superiority to those toward whom he showed mercy. These

[66] Claudianus, *Panegyricus de quarto consulatu Honorii Augusti*, introduction, text, translation, and commentary by W. Barr, Liverpool Latin texts (classical and medieval) 2 (Liverpool: Cairns, 1981), p. 20.

[67] 261–262: *tunc omnia iure tenebis, / cum poteris rex esse tui.*

actions also demonstrated that he was able to control his anger and be the man of moderation that his position demanded. Cicero, we may recall, said of such a man, "I do not compare [him] to the most illustrious men, but I judge him most like a god."[68]

Claudian's Theodosius then exhorts his son:

> Conduct yourself as a citizen and a father, take counsel for all not for yourself, do not let your wishes but the public ones move you. . . . the world conforms to the example of a ruler, and no edicts have such a power as to influence human feelings than the life of a ruler. The fickle mob changes forever with its ruler.[69]

The father sets the example and his yardstick for proper behavior is not the mob (*vulgus*) but the people (*populus*) who pronounce the public wishes (*publica vota*). The uneducated masses, the *vulgus*, could only represent unbridled emotions. The *populus*, in contrast, stands for the educated, the temperate peer group of the emperor, namely, the senate. Thus, implicitly, Plato's tripartite system of reason, temperance, and appetites is reaffirmed. The emperor, Honorius, is "to rule the Romans, who have ruled everything for a long time, who neither tolerate the arrogance of Tarquin nor the laws of Caesar."[70] Theodosius's examples, Tarquin the Proud, last of Rome's seven mythic kings, and Julius Caesar, make it clear that a Roman ruler should not ignore his peers and be perceived as surpassing them. The established discourse of parity among Rome's elite (*primus inter pares*) had to remain intact. In the lineup of emperors, Trajan is renowned not so much for his military triumphs as for his merciful treatment

[68] Marc. 8: . . . *non ego eum cum summis viris comparo, sed simillimum deo iudico*.

[69] 294–302: *tu civem patremque geras, tu consule cunctis, / non tibi, nec tua te moveant, sed publica vota. / . . . componitur orbis / regis ad exemplum, nec sic inflectere sensus / humanos edicta valent quam vita regentis*. W. Barr (Claudianus, *Panegyricus*, p. 79) noted for lines 296–302: "The importance of princely example is another commonplace." This commonplace, as we have seen, is part of a distinct discourse.

[70] 309–311: *Romani, qui cuncta diu rexere, regendi, / qui nec Tarquinii fastus nec iura tulere / Caesaris.*

of the country (*mitis patriae*).[71] His was the example to follow; he was the soldier-emperor par excellence!

In the oration, young Honorius, eager to join the battle lines, interrupts his father (lines 353–369), but Theodosius exhorts his son to apply his mind (*animus*) to the Muses, that is, to learn of examples by reading and "unfold [the examples] of leaders of old, get accustomed to future military service, put yourself back in time to the age of the Latins. . . . One may learn from these [examples] to what a degree poverty can be sobering."[72] A Horatius Cocles, a Cincinnatus, or a Cato was a man worthy of imitation because, despite their achievements and extraordinary position among their peers, they kept on working the land as if they were simple farmers. It was important that the economic and socio-political advantages that came with outdoing one's peers and perpetuating empire should not appear to corrupt Rome's best. Literature, an integral part of education, had fossilized these examples of Rome's incorruptible past, even if most of them were fictitious. The examples were part of an accepted tradition. As such, they functioned as models for proper behavior and became forgers of a reality within Rome's discourse of power.

The central elements of this political rhetoric endured over time. The quintessential virtues of Rome's republican period were incorporated into a Christian worldview that set a supreme creator-Father over the wordly Father. Constantine adapted Christianity for his own political purposes and, in doing so, set in motion a new chapter of Roman history. Constantine's policies encouraged Christians, who had originally rejected the physical world, to embrace it and reap the benefits that came with political power. Bishops quickly became political power brokers and, at times, even took the place of emperors. Nothing stood in the way of these ambitious ecclesiastical men, for their Christian God was the supreme Father who had trumped the earthly one. In this new world order, both emperor and bishop

[71] 315–319.

[72] 399–400 and 411: *antiquos evolve duces, adsuesce futurae / militiae, / Latium retro te confer in aevum. / . . . discitur hinc quantum paupertas sobria possit.*

alike were instruments for implementing and pronouncing God's all-encompassing law. The heavenly kingdom surpassed but did not eclipse the worldly one of the Caesars. Hence, Christian humanism remains a cultural and intellectual compromise, a continuous shuttling between the pagan Greco-Roman and the Christian world. If Julian the Apostate had not uttered the "no," pressing an ethical point by prohibiting Christian teachers to use pagan texts, would it even occur to us to think of Homer, Vergil, Horace, Aristotle, and Plato, to name only a few, as incompatible with Christianity. But, to borrow the "culling roses" metaphor from Basil,[73] we know very well, thanks to the fathers of the church, how to pluck a rose and enjoy its fragrance.

[73] Basil, *Ad. adol.* 4.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Power of Rhetoric

The Last Roman Emperor: Justinian

In the transition from a pagan to a Christian empire, three important shifts occurred with respect to the state's highest authority, the emperor. First, Christian martyrs sacrificed their lives for their belief in the Christian God, displaying virtuous behavior similar to that of Roman soldiers and successful gladiators before them. Their willingness to die garnered them everlasting honor and remembrance, and as a consequence martyrdom narratives appropriated the discourse of virtue that had been in place since republican times. Second, Julian the Apostate's questioning of Christians' acquisition of pagan intellectual output, although a singular instance, nonetheless forced Christian thinkers to explain why pagan literature and philosophy were an integral part of their worldview. Third, in the political sphere, a heavenly Father replaced the one on earth and the earthly Mother, once a placeholder, as we have seen, for the Father, was grafted onto the church. Both emperor and Mother Church (*mater ecclesia*) were subordinate to the ultimate instance of authority and law, God.

The church's emergence as premier stakeholder in the political structure began with Constantine I's embrace of Christianity

and his involvement in the Arian controversy, which led to the first church council at Nicaea in 325. The Roman emperor, residing in Constantinople, stood at the head of the Christian *oikoumēnē*. But, since the accession of Leo I (r. 457–474), the emperor had received the imperial crown from the patriarch of Constantinople. Thus it was the church, not the army, the people, and the senate, as had been traditionally the case, that invested an emperor with power. Mother Church, through its highest-serving clergy, chose the country's father, the ruler of the Roman world (*orbis Romanus*), at the behest of the divine and ultimate Father. The fathers of the church, the patriarchs of Constantinople and, eventually, the popes of Rome, became the interpreters of God's political will. The emperor's powers were therefore severely curtailed whenever the Mother, that is to say, the church and her worldly leaders, turned away from him. Religion and politics were fused and not until the formation of modern states, products of The Enlightenment, were the two separated once more. The historical narrative and memory of the Christian Roman empire was consequently a pagan-Christian fusion, or, as we have pointedly characterized it in the previous chapter, a cultural and intellectual compromise.

The mosaics of the Church of San Vitale in Ravenna represent visually this new configuration. A visitor entering the church sees the emperor Justinian I (r. 527–565) in the left mosaic panel of the apse, and his wife, the empress Theodora (ca. 497–548), in the right panel. Both wear full imperial dress and present gifts to the church of San Vitale. Guards, court officials, and ecclesiastics surround Justinian. Of these only the archbishop, Maximian, is named and all the church representatives are positioned slightly in front of the emperor. The Church symbolically and physically protects Justinian who, like Constantine I before him, controlled church matters for his own political ends. Justinian's mending of ecclesiastical ties with the Church of Rome was a means to accomplish his political ambition of re-conquering lost territory, particularly in the West. Since Diocletian's time the emperor of the eastern part of the empire had been considered the more senior. Justinian, based at Constantinople, saw himself at the head of a hierarchy of rulers, although these rulers were

independent regents and no longer looked eastward for recognition. A similar attitude of retention was applied toward Roman territory. "The lands which had once belonged to the Roman Empire were held to belong to her inalienably and in perpetuity."[1] Justinian's actions were anchored in an anachronistic ideology that promoted a re-conquest. It was the duty of the senior emperor to unify what usurpers had fractured.

The enterprise of reunification, however, required tremendous amounts of money. Justinian's predecessor, his uncle Justin I (r. 518–527), had left the state coffers too drained to allow for military engagements beyond the necessary. There had also been a devastating earthquake in 526 that had leveled Antioch and killed perhaps as many as 250,000 people, followed by another one in 529. In addition to the emergency expenditure earmarked for Antioch, a treaty with Chosroes I (Khosru), the Persian king, demanded a payment of 11,000 pounds of gold per year in order to halt Persian advances into the eastern part of the empire. Funds were needed and Justinian found in John the Cappadocian, whom he appointed praetorian prefect, a superb but ruthless raiser of capital. John filled not only the treasuries but his own pockets as well. Money flowed toward the capital but so did destitute inhabitants who hoped to find a livelihood in Constantinople. When Justinian alienated key sections of Constantinople's population, the Blue and Green circus factions, who rallied around horse racing teams, united against the emperor and, ultimately, all of Constantinople became entangled in a riot.[2]

The *Chronicle of Theophanes* preserves a dialog between the emperor and the spokesman of the Greens, at a period when the Greens and the Blues were at odds with each other.[3] Justinian favored

[1] G. Ostrogorsky, *History of the Byzantine state*, translated by J. Hussey (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1969), p. 69.

[2] A. Cameron, *Circus factions: Blues and Greens at Rome and Byzantium* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), pp. 278–80, and on the circus factions and the guilds as "vehicles of popular political expression" see S. Vryonis, *Byzantine dēmokratia and the guilds in the eleventh century*, Dumbarton Oaks papers 17 (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks Center for Byzantine Studies, 1963), pp. 289–314.

[3] Theoph. *Chron*. 181.30–184.1 and Cameron, *Circus factions*, pp. 319–22 (translation of dialog).

the Blues because the Greens had been supporters of Anastasius, whom Justin had deposed. "Long may you live, Justinian Augustus!" began the spokesman, "may you be victorious. I am oppressed, o best of rulers, and my grievances, God knows, have become intolerable." Justinian, however, did not react to the complaints and countered: "You come, not to see the games, but to insult your rulers?" The spokesman insisted, "We have good reason, o emperor, to mention all things now. For we do not even know where the palace nor where the government is." The dialog ended with a frustrated spokesman of the Greens: "The truth is suppressed. If it is the pleasure of your Majesty, I hold my peace, albeit unwillingly. I know all – all, but I say nothing. Goodbye Justice, you are no longer in fashion!"

Justinian, the prohibitive father, silenced the people's voice, but, in so doing, he suspended justice and suppressed truth, which made him politically vulnerable. He was no longer perceived as just and truthful, or neutral and above political bickering. Consequently, his authority, as well as the locus of power, was questioned; or, as the Green's spokesman phrased it: "Where is the palace, where the government?" This sense of a weak center gave those at the periphery power. United, they were able to pressure the imperial government, forcing it to act. Justinian's government was slow to respond and, consequently, agitation escalated. The original complaint developed into a wide array of dissatisfactions that united Constantinople's inhabitants, a dynamic that resulted in a riot, the Nika Revolt of 532.[4] At the height of the riot, when the people proclaimed Hypatius as their emperor,[5] Justinian was set to flee. Only the empress Theodora kept him from doing so. As Procopius wrote:

> It is impossible for a man, when he has come into the world, not to die; but for one who has reigned it is intolerable to be an exile. May I never exist without this purple robe and may I

[4] J. Bury, *History of the later Roman Empire from the death of Theodosius I to the death of Justinian*, vol. 2 (New York: Dover Publications, 1958), pp. 39–48.

[5] Hypatius was a nephew of Anastasius I (r. 491–518 CE) who had died without making provisions for a successor. The senate then chose Justin as Anastasius's successor.

> never live to see the day on which those who meet me shall not address me as empress. If you wish, o emperor, to save yourself, there is no difficulty . . . Yet reflect whether, when you have once escaped to a place of security, you will not prefer death to safety. I agree with an old saying that "*imperium* is a beautiful shroud."[6]

Theodora's manly stance at this time of crisis emphasized Justinian's weakness; the Mother stepped in at the moment of the Father's debility. The Theodora of Procopius's historical narrative understood who she was and what being an empress entailed: never to display powerlessness even if it meant death.

The quote from Isocrates (436–338 BCE), the Athenian orator and proponent of one strong leader for all of Greece, that "imperium is a beautiful shroud" (καλόν ἐστιν ἐντάφιον ἡ τυραννίς)[7] further legitimized her position. The Greek word *turannis* (τυραννίς) has its equivalent in the Latin *imperium*, the supreme military power and utmost authority vested in the emperor. Theodora retained this understanding of the necessity of *imperium* and, in this way reminded, Justinian took on the challenge of proving himself worthy of empire. Whether or not this episode has any historical veracity does not matter, for its purpose is to explain that the Father was reactivated from within. It was the Mother, the empress, who held up the behavioral norm and accordingly forced her husband into proper action. Justinian, who had shown frailty and thus could no longer be perceived as the country's father, had to correct this perception in order to retain his position as emperor. He returned as a ferocious Father. The level of his previous weakness dictated the magnitude of the subsequent violence. The very randomness of his actions gave him additional power over his subjects, for who knew what the Father had in store for them? By the end of the riot, more than 30,000 people were dead and the capital lay ransacked and smoldering.

[6] Procop. *Pers.* 1.24.33–38.
[7] Isoc. *Arch.* 45.

Justinian, who gave and took life as he saw fit, went about rebuilding the city and never again was his authority questioned. The emperor, the father, had returned to the center of power.

After the riots, the implementation of clemency increased Justinian's power over his subjects. The emperor could utter randomly "yes" instead of "no," conferring immediate benefit of those controlled. Although it was the slaughter of the rioters that re-established the status quo, Justinian's random acts of clemency solidified it. The usurper Hypatius and his brother Pompeius were executed. Their children, on the other hand, were allowed to live. 18 senators involved in the plot to overthrow Justinian were banished and their property confiscated, but the emperor later recalled them and reinstated their property, in cases where it had not been granted to others. He did the same for the children of Hypatius and Pompeius. The knowledge that a "yes" was possible and the hope that it might be uttered further confined the emperor's subjects to their inferior roles. Julius Caesar had made clemency a political tool and Justinian knew how to use it.

Justinian was, by many accounts, a traditional Roman emperor. In matter of fact, it has even been argued that he was the last Roman emperor. After him, Greek became the official administrative language of the empire, a shift that marked the beginning of the Byzantine empire. Belisarius, the general behind the brutal suppression of the Nika Revolt[8] and the re-conquest of North Africa and Italy, received a triumphal procession for his successful North African campaign in 534.[9] He was the first general to celebrate a triumph since 19 BCE, when Augustus made this extraordinary honor the exclusive preserve of the emperor. While Belisarius was a gifted general, he was less of a politician. After several moderately successful campaigns against the Ostrogoths, he retired, a rich man, in 548. Falsely accused of conspiring against Justinian in 562/3, he

[8] Proc. *B.* 1.24 and Malal. 473–4.
[9] Proc. *B.* 2.10–4.9. On triumphal procession see above.

was temporarily stripped of his honors and titles.[10] Although later reinstated, Belisarius was put on alert that the Father's long arm could reach, touch, and exercise random power. The reality was that even a man of Belisarius's stature was subject to an autocratic, as well as autonomous, political, and legal entity. Justinian's treatment of Belisarius demonstrated the power of the Father. He was the norm-shaping or law-giving entity, and he alone existed and acted outside the norms or laws guiding the empire's inhabitants.

Justinian's greatest and lasting achievement was the codification of Roman Law, which had last been codified during the reign of Theodosius II (r. 408–450). The project started shortly after Justin I's death. A 10-man commission, under the leadership of John the Cappadocian, drew up a new code to include legal decisions made and in effect since the time of Theodosius II. This code, eventually superseded by the *codex Justinianus*, has not survived. Justinian then chose Tribonian to head a second legal commission, which produced a collection of legal topics and expert opinions reaching back to the late republic, the *Digest* or *Pandects*. Tribonian's second charge was to produce a handbook for law students, the *Institutes*, which, like the *Digest,* had the force of law. The final task of Tribonian's commission was the topical arrangement of laws, starting with those issued during Hadrian's reign. Each law was dated and included the name of the emperor who had enacted it. Only the laws incorporated in this codex, known as the *codex Justinianus*, had legal force. New laws issued after the publication of the *codex Justinianus* were published as the *Novels* 15 years after Justinian's death. The eastern empire's last important codification of the law, the *Basilica*, was under Leo VI who ruled from 886 to 911.

The foreword to the *Institutes* highlights Justinian's role as the Father, the originator of laws. As the state's supreme authority, he was the champion of faith and tradition, and above him stood the supreme father, the Christian God. It is then not surprising that the

[10] Proc. *B.* 7.35, Malal. 494–5, and Ag. 5.15–17.

Word made flesh, Jesus Christ, is mentioned first. Justinian, who extends his greetings in the name of Jesus Christ, is described as "conqueror, pious, prosperous, renowned, victorious, triumphant, and ever august."[11] These honorifics encapsulate, and hearken back to, Rome's republic when these norms were established. "Good government," in the opinion of the foreword's author, depended in part on an "imperial majesty armed with laws." Therefore, "the ruler of Rome may not only be victorious over his enemies, but may show himself as scrupulously regardful of justice as triumphant over his conquered foes."[12] There is a distinct echo here of Vergil's lines:

> . . . but you will rule peoples with *imperium*, Roman remember (these will be your arts), to pacify and impose custom, to spare the defeated and tame the proud. . . . [13]

Valor remained a core virtue in Christian Rome's discourse. The emperor not only had a moral mandate based on the behavioral code of old, the *mos maiorum*, he was now also legally bound to Christianity, with its own set of dogmas and a specific moral code. The Christian worldview proposed that God bestowed blessings upon the emperor and granted Rome victories through him. The introduction of God and His authority did not change Rome's, or Constantinople's, claim of dominance over other nations.

> The barbarian nations, which we have subjugated, know our valor, Africa and other provinces without number being once more, after so long an interval, reduced beneath the sway of Rome by victories granted by Heaven, and themselves bearing witness to our dominion. All peoples too are ruled by laws, which we have either enacted or arranged.[14]

[11] Proemion of *Institutes*.
[12] Ibid.
[13] Verg. *A*. 6. 851–53: *tu regere imperio populos, Romane, memento / (hae tibi erunt artes) pacique imponere morem, / parcere subiectis et debellare superbos*.
[14] *Inst*. 1.

Tribonian's committee was commissioned "to produce by [Justinian's] authority and advice" the *Institutes* so that law students would learn their first lessons of law "no longer from ancient stories but grasp them by the brilliant light of imperial learning";[15] fortunate those students who "have been so honored and fortunate as to receive both the beginning and the end of your legal teaching from the mouth of the Emperor." While the foreword begins with Jesus Christ, it ends with Justinian, God's vice-regent on earth. He is "the ever august father of his country," the father from whose mouth the laws flow.

Justinian had set out "to inaugurate a new era, but [his reign] really marked the close of a great age. . . . [He] left his successors an Empire internally exhausted, and completely ruined financially and economically."[16] An eventual consequence of this exhaustion was internal violence. Without the stern father, the senate, the people, and the army voiced their opinions and made their own rules. This absence of a father triggered a rupture. A reign of terror under Phocas (r. 602–610) unraveled the empire's social fabric even as Persians, Avars, and Slavs, among others, hammered away at its borders and seized Roman territory. Despite the dire situation, however, Constantinople's periphery produced a new heroic and virtuous leader, Heraclius, the son of the eparch of North African Carthage. New Rome had a new Father and another chance at continuance.

The First Byzantine Emperor: Heraclius

The periphery, in this case in the person of Heraclius (r. 610–641), compensated for the center's loss of control. Peripheries, in general, are more conservative than centers in that they tend to retain the established patterns that shape everyday life longer than the center. When the center loses its defining entity or a disruption occurs, it is

[15] *Inst.* 3.
[16] Ostrogorsky, *History of the Byzantine state*, p. 78.

the periphery that re-injects the center with traditional and defining values. Once the Father is in place again, the living discourse reflects outward from the center and so binds the periphery. The Father, the dynamic embodiment of virtues, once more amasses powers, pronounces prohibitions, and generates respect as well as fear. With the rupture mended, the status quo ante of balance is restored again.

Heraclius, a member of the provincial elite of Carthage, was the carrier of traditional virtues who brought power back to the empire's center. Young, blue-eyed, fair-haired, and bearded, he stood in heroic contrast to the emperor Phocas (r. 602–610), the old, ugly, scarred, and red-haired murderer of the legitimate ruler, Maurice, and his family.[17] The pattern of hero and antihero is very much the same as we saw at work in Pliny's panegyric of Trajan. Trajan and his reign were glorious and beautiful; he was an earthly Jupiter who stood in contrast to the beast, Domitian. The man from the periphery brought peace and strength to the abused and exhausted.

Phocas had ruled most savagely as the Father who exacted vicious penalties indiscriminately, "a tyrant difficult to control and a life-eating noose,"[18] in the words of George of Pisidia. Consequently, the rupture, the utter disruption of the symbolic order of law, was profound. Militarily, the Balkans were lost to the Avars and their Slav allies, just as the Persians, under Shahrvaraz (Ferouk Khan), moved into Byzantine Mesopotamia and, under Shahen Patgospan, advanced as far as Chalcedon. The Persian king, Chosroes II (Khosru), whom Maurice had helped regain the throne lost to a usurper, had his own territorial ambitions but also a moral mandate to avenge Maurice's brutal murder. In his effort to gain and retain imperial power, Phocas had purged the armed forces of capable generals, a fact that hastened his undoing. At Constantinople the harsh winter of 609 delayed wheat shipments and a frustrated populace met a late-arriving emperor in the hippodrome with shouts

[17] For a historical sketch of the period see G. Regan, *First crusader: Byzantium's holy wars* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan 2001), pp. 45–55.

[18] George of Pisidia, *B. Av.,* 49–50. For the cruelties of Phocas see Theoph. *Hist.* 8. 13, 14, and 15.

of accusation. The emperor ordered his troops to attack the Green faction and their supporters. Some were killed swiftly while others were strung up to die slowly. Then fighting spilled into the streets and Constantinople exploded in violence. Phocas had lost control.

This breakdown allowed for the introduction of a new element into the historical narrative. The empire's savior arrived under the protection of the Mother of God (*theotokos*). An icon of the Virgin Mary was on Heraclius's ship when his fleet arrived in Constantinople on October 3, 610. Phocas, stripped of his regalia and bound in chains, was delivered to Heraclius on board his flagship. Heraclius performed the *calcato colli*, the ritualized trampling on an enemy's neck, and is said to have uttered: "Is it thus you have governed the empire?" To which Phocas responded: "Will you govern it any better?"[19] Heraclius's first act as emperor was to have Phocas executed. Although the execution was necessary to establish Heraclius's position as Father, it was still a far cry from a glorious act, supremacy won in battle.

On October 5, Patriarch Sergius crowned Heraclius and a new era began. The Roman was now the Byzantine empire, an empire that was part of "God's grand design."[20] Its official administrative language was Greek and the Virgin Mary, the Theotokos (Mother of God), was the guardian of the ruling house and protector of Constantinople. Heraclius was God's chosen vessel, elected by Christ and *philochristos* (beloved of Christ). But before he could lead a holy war against the infidels, the Persians, the eastern part of the Byzantine empire was to suffer at Persia's hands. Shahrvaraz's capture of Jerusalem in 614 epitomizes the horrors of a city's defeat. It was not only that the conqueror slaughtered his enemy, but also that the arrival of a stronger external force, the Persians, unleashed internal hatred. Jews, whom orthodox Christians had unduly subjugated, took their revenge.

[19] Nicephorus, *Opuscula historica*, C. de Boor, ed., (Leipzig: Teubner, 1880, repr. Arno Press, Amherst College Press, 1975), p. 4 (5B).

[20] R. Browning, *The Byzantine empire*, revised edition (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1992), p. 14.

In 617, Egypt fell to the Persians as well. Without Egypt's grain supply, it was only a matter of time before the inhabitants of Constantinople began to starve. Heraclius traveled to Chalcedon, a city held by the Persian general Shahen Patgospan, but nothing came of the negotiations since Shahen did not feel he could speak on behalf of his king. Shahen also failed to take Heraclius captive, as he later learned Khosru had wanted. The western territory was in the hands of Slavs, Avars, and Lombards, the eastern under Persian control. Additionally, the state's coffers were empty and Christendom's foremost relic, fragments of the true cross, taken from Jerusalem to Persia. Territorially, economically, and symbolically, the empire was in dire straits. Yet, Heraclius did the unexpected. He went on the offensive, setting in motion a heroic struggle of the weak against the strong. The church, led by the patriarch Sergius, supplied the cash. Treasures were melted down to support the emperor and his soldiers, "soldiers of Christ, fighting to regain the land that God had decreed the Greek Christians should rule. They were charged with regaining the True Cross, the holy city of Jerusalem and the Holy Land where Christ had walked on earth."[21]

George of Pisidia, the poetic voice of Heraclius's court, spoke of the emperor, his patron, as God's chosen vessel and called the campaign a holy war against infidels. The Byzantine forces set out on Easter 622. At the empire's helm stood the embodiment of all that was virtuous.[22] This heroic David took on the Persian Goliath and returned in triumph in 630 as Christianity's premier defender, the restorer of the True Cross to Jerusalem. The eastern Roman empire had entered a new cycle. What Constantine I had set in motion – the appropriation of Christianity and its symbols for his own imperial ambitions – Heraclius renewed. George of Pisidia, who participated in the Persian campaign's first year (622/3), composed three poems

[21] Regan, *First crusader*, p. 70.

[22] On the imagery of David see S. Alexander, "Heraclius, Byzantine imperial ideology, and the David plates," *Speculum* 52.2 (1977), 217–37, and J. Trilling, "Myth and metaphor at the Byzantine court: A literary approach to the David plates," *Byzantion* 48 (1978), 249–63.

about Heraclius's expedition in which he moved with ease between Greco-Roman mythology and biblical themes.[23] Heraclius, unlike his mythological and near-namesake ancestor Heracles, was truly divine in that his achievement benefited the world.[24]

Although many of his predecessors had been Christian, Heraclius was the first emperor to be likened to a martyr. The politicized aspect of Christianity, established by men and women rejecting earthly for heavenly life in the public arena, with their vocabulary of virtue, was now attached to the emperor. In a poem written after Heraclius had survived a storm at sea, George of Pisidia wrote of envy in the form of a stone striking the emperor's foot and described the blood from the wound as "dyeing the earth and calling it to witness."[25] His word choice unmistakably transformed the emperor into a champion of Christ, a martyr, whose piety was expressed through signs. The poet, however, elevated Heraclius's status beyond even that of a martyr when he used the term "stigmata" (τά στίγματα) for "signs." The stigmata associated Heraclius's wounds with those of Christ.[26] This Byzantine emperor was consequently a living Christ or a Messiah, and arguably similar to Constantine I's view of himself before his sons and the church fathers turned him into the 13th apostle. Heraclius emerges at the end of George of Pisidia's poem as the captain who "may rescue the ship of the world from all its storms." Heraclius, in other words, "does on a small scale what God does on a large one; he is the agent of the Holy Spirit in its cosmic design."[27] Heraclius is the Father through whom the omnipotent and omnipresent Father, God, structures the universe and our world.

[23] The panegyrics can be found in A. Pertusi (ed.), *Giorgio di Pisidia poemi: Panegirici epici* (Ettal: Buch-Kunstverlag, 1959). George of Pisidia was the first, but also the most accomplished, of those employing the 12-syllable meter.

[24] Trilling, "Myth and metaphor," p. 260: "Homer was wrong, says Georgios (1.65ff.), to deify Herakles, who was originally not divine at all. For what benefit did humanity . . . derive from slaying a lion or a boar? Instead we should marvel at the one true Herakles, restorer of the world–that is to say, Heraclius."

[25] G. Pis. *Ex. Pers.* 221–252 and 244–245. The translation and discussion of this sentence is from Trilling, "Myth and metaphor," p. 259.

[26] G. Pis. *Ex. Pers.* 246–247.

[27] Trilling, "Myth and metaphor," pp. 259–60 explicating lines 248–252.

Heraclius was a true son of Constantine I. Like his predecessor, he restored the empire. In Hercalius's case, he also wrested the premier symbol of the Christian Roman empire, the True Cross, from the infidels and restored it to its proper place, Jerusalem. George of Pisidia wrote in commemoration:

> May Constantine the Great praise such as you for another will not suffice in extolling you. Constantine, appear again in Rome, applaud your son, seeing how he restored [your legacy] which he received confused. It is proper that now you, having left the celestial city, take part with us in joy in the terrestrial city. . . . You have . . . a son by grace of divine providence, just as if a Constantine were found fortified by the life-giving wood.[28]

In this poetic rendering, Heraclius is the reincarnation of Constantine through the life-giving wood, the cross on which Christ, the son of God, died. The reversal, death to life, is a Christian motif. True life is lived in the afterlife as Christ, by dying on the cross and then being resurrected, has demonstrated. In addition, the cross gave strength to Heraclius, the new Constantine, who emerged as the country's Father after the fracture that had brought the empire to the brink of non-existence. The return of the cross to Jerusalem also forged an Old Testament connection. The Byzantine emperor was the "new David" and his "virtues [were] associated with those of the prophet-king." Suzanne Alexander further elaborates:

> Along with that of Constantine the example of David was held up to the Byzantine emperor and the populace as that of an ideal ruler. Because he was divinely chosen to rule, had forged a theocratic concept of government, and served as his people's intermediary with their divinity, David proved a multifaceted prototype for the ruler of the Christian Roman Empire.[29]

[28] G. Pis. *Res. Cruc.* 47–63.
[29] Alexander, "Heraclius," p. 227.

The vocabulary, symbolism, and imagery of the Old and New Testament characterized the reign of Heraclius. At the core of this representative concept was the contrast between the Christian and the Persian empire. This fierce opponent had very nearly destroyed the eastern Roman empire. It was Heraclius's daring and successful countermove under the unifying banner of Christianity, and using the traditional rhetoric of empire, that had turned the tide in favor of the Byzantines.

In his *Chronicle* Theophanes the Confessor (ca. 752–818) has Heraclius deliver a speech to his troops. The speech, couched in Christian rhetoric, resounds with the opposites: Romans and Christians against Persians and infidel.

> Brothers, let us keep in mind the fear of God and struggle to avenge insults to Him. Let us nobly oppose our enemies, who have done many terrible things to Christians. Let us respect the independent Roman state; let us resist our enemies, who are impiously in arms, and let us pledge murder for their murders. . . . Our danger is not without reward, but is the harbinger of eternal life. Let us bravely take our stand – the Lord God will work with us, and will destroy our foes.[30]

In this passage, God is the prohibitive Father, the entity one must fear. First and foremost, this figure has been insulted and, thus, demands vengeance. Then Theophanes's Heraclius moves beyond the symbolic to the human, concrete level. Like their ancestors before them, celebrated by Cato, Cicero, Horace, Augustine, and Claudian, these Christian Romans nobly opposed enemies who had inflicted harm on them. After all, Heraclius's war was a *just* war and, more to the point, the empire's opponents were "impiously in arms," all the more reason to "pledge murder for their murders." By

[30] Translation by H. Turtledove (ed.), *The chronicle of Theophanes: an English translation of anni mundi 6095–6305 (A.D. 602–813)* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1982), p. 16. Discussion of this passage also in Regan, *First crusader*, pp. 80–82.

vowing to do the work on behalf of their feared God, the Supreme Father, and his earthly representative, Heraclius, the Father, these Christian soldiers would reap in death the same reward as their martyr and Roman ancestors. The soldiers' bravery shown in battle would incite the ultimate master to come to the aid of His people and destroy the adversaries who undermined His authority.

The rhetoric employed here has two strands. One has its roots in pagan Rome, the other in the Old and New Testament. Together they formed the ultimate reality-creating matrix, one that traditional education (*paideia*) had retained. Constantine I had politicized Christian faith and symbolism. By the time of Heraclius, the church, once the handmaiden of imperial politics, was the empire's defining force. Faith dictated and defined politics. The Byzantine empire was a fundamentalist Christian state and, I would suggest at the risk of being provocative, on course to becoming a theocracy. The emperor was God's representative on earth whose primary purpose was to bring Christianity to peoples encountered and conquered. What made the Eastern empire different from the Western was the subordination of the state to the church in the East. This had its origins in the historical narrative that Heraclius had arrived in Constantinople under the protection of the Virgin Mary. The church had given economic support to Heraclius's war effort against the Persians. Although it has never been framed as such by historians, Heraclius's campaign against the Persians was in all its aspects, especially in its rhetoric, a Christian crusade.

A View to the West: Charlemagne

Charles Martel's defeat of the Saracens at the battle of Tours in 732 marks the starting point of the Carolingians' political domination that would last until 843. For the first time since the fall of Rome in 476, the Roman empire of the West was unified under a single government. Charlemagne (Carolus Magnus or Charles the Great, c. 742–814), the grandson of Charles Martel and defender of Christendom, expanded on his ancestors' achievements. At the

cultural core of Charlemagne's empire were Roman political and ideological traditions as transmitted through *paideia*.

Since the death of Dagobert I, a Merovingian (the ruling dynasty prior to the Carolingians), in 639, the mayors of the palace had in effect ruled the Frankish empire. Roman landowners who owned large and scattered estates had employed administrators (*maiores domus*) to oversee their holdings. At first, mayors of the palace (*maiores palatii*) fulfilled the same duties as these estate administrators, but over time they acquired more power and authority. The first of these mayors was Pippin of Landen (west of Liège in Belgium), the great-grandfather of Charles Martel. It was Charles Martel's son, Pippin III, who sought and received the church's help in removing the last Merovingian, Childeric III, in 751. Pope Zacharias pronounced, "those who exercised royal authority were to be named kings."[31] Hence, with the church's blessing, the Carolingians claim to the Frankish throne was legitimized.

The mid-eighth century was a time of profound changes for the successors of the Roman empire. The iconoclast controversy (726–87 and 815–43), a struggle between emperors and the church over the production and use of icons and the exact relationship of the depiction, the copy, to the holy person, the prototype, alienated the Byzantine empire from the West. On another level, this controversy represents a struggle between religious fundamentalism and intellectual freedom, the freedom of speech and thought (parresía). Parresía was embedded in education, which, for the medieval world, was still learning based on Greco-Roman traditions. The iconoclast controversy was eventually resolved by integrating icons into Greek orthodox worship. Behind this integration, however, stood a worldview that rejected innovation. The Father had uttered and would go on uttering "no."

While Byzantium's energies were devoted to this internal issue, its notional political supremacy came to an end. On Christmas Day of 800, the pope crowned Charlemagne Roman emperor, and

[31] G.H. Pertz and F. Kurze (eds.), *Annales regni Francorum* (*Annales laurissenses maiores et Einhardi*), Hannover: Hahn, 1895, 749.

Constantinople could do nothing more than accept the fact. Further east, the Umayyad dynasty gave way to the Abbasids; of its former territories only Spain remained in Umayyad hands. Charlemagne was convinced that this last outpost of the Umayyads was sufficiently weakened and would yield him new cities. The Spanish campaign of 778, however, yielded only defeat since Spain, even its Christian parts, was not ready to accept Frankish rule.

Another region, Saxony, which Charlemagne thought he had integrated into his empire, rejected Frankish authority as well. In 782, Slavic tribes from east of the Elbe River began raiding Saxony. Charlemagne sent troops under the leadership of three senior imperial officers to force the invaders back. Meanwhile, however, Widukind, one of the wealthiest Saxon landowners and brother-in-law of the Danish king, incited a popular uprising against the Frankish overlord. Once Charlemagne heard of this revolt he sent a relative, Theoderic, with reinforcements to Saxony. The three generals did not heed Theoderic's command to wait for, and join, his forces, but instead they charged the Saxons at Süntel and were cut down to almost the last man. Just as the Basque fighters at Roncesvalles in the Pyranees had done four years earlier, the victorious Saxon fighters disappeared. There was no enemy for the Franks to rout in revenge for their devastating defeat.

Charlemagne, the embodiment of virtues and to whom ever-amassing powers flowed, was forced to react to this humiliation. The prohibitive Father had to reestablish himself and he did so most cruelly. All Saxon noblemen were ordered to come to Verden (on the river Aller, south of Bremen), where, in an attempt to save themselves, they gave the names of thousands who, they claimed, had supported Widukind. All of those named, 4,500 it is said, were beheaded. After the slaughter, Charlemagne went to celebrate Christmas at Thionville, an unknown chronicler of the *Royal Frankish Annals* writes.[32] The author's matter-of-fact tone, shifting from murder to celebration, has troubled some, but exploring emotions or motives

[32] *Annales regni Francorum* (*Annales laurissenses maiores et Einhardi*), 782.

was not part of his purpose; rather it was to narrate straightforward facts. The ruthless killing of the Saxon nobility was a catharsis that reinstated and, more severely than ever before, enforced the symbolic power structure. "During the next several years," Winston notes in his biography of Charlemagne, "his cruelty was much talked about, and Charlemagne's own Frankish nobles . . . suddenly began fearing for their freedom."[33] Fear of the Father's arbitrary actions kept the subordinated in their places. They were forced to show reverence and respect toward the one who controlled them.

Alcuin (730–804), the emperor's advisor and head of the imperial school, tells us:

> The happy times of these peoples were in those days, / when a king and priest ruled by the law of harmony, / this one by church laws and the king following the guideline of kingship. / This one wears the garments sent from the apostolic shoulder, / that one puts on his head the diadem of ancient fathers; / this one is strong, that one is pious; this one is vigorous, that one benevolent, / observing reciprocally the law of peace for Germany / one happy brother helping the other in turn.[34]

For Alcuin, a king's characteristics were expressed in his physical attributes: he was strong and vigorous (*fortis / strenuus*), while a man of God was pious and benevolent (*pius / benignus*). These outer and inner manifestations of virtue had once defined any noble Roman worthy of commemoration. With the emergence of the princeps, the emperor came to embody them on behalf of the whole state. Alcuin's excerpt echoes nicely the Augustinian philosophical account of harmony (*concordia*). Cicero had pleaded for the same harmony when

[33] R. Winston, *Charlemagne from the hammer to the cross* (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1956), p. 161.

[34] *MGH Poet. Lat.* 1, p. 197, 1276: *Tempora tunc huius fuerant felicia gentis, / quam rex et praesul concordi iure regebant, / hic iura ecclesiae, rex ille negotia regni. / Hic ab apostolico humeris fert pallia missa, / ille levat capiti veterum diademata patrum; / fortis his, ille pius; his strenuus, ille benignus, / Germanae pacis servantes iura vicissim / ex alio frater felix adiutus uterque.*

civil war was destroying his beloved republic. Augustine replaced Cicero's *concordia ordinum* (the harmony of the equestrian and senatorial orders) with a concept more appropriate for a Christian state. Now the harmony was to be between the state and God. Augustine's concept still reflects the pagan Roman understanding of the reciprocal relationship between gods and humans (*pax hominum – pax deorum*). Harmony among God's creation, humankind, would guarantee His goodwill. Alcuin believed harmony within a state came about when each leader, the king in the secular and the bishop in the spiritual sphere, acted and led his respective flock according to the rules of that sphere. The Law had to be obeyed. Each leader was identified by specific markers of authority: the garment of apostolic ancestry for the bishop and the crown, handed down from the ancestral fathers, for the king. The ultimate Father and Law was, of course, God.

Charlemagne was, for Alcuin, a prophet with sacerdotal powers. The emperor's duty, according to Alcuin, was to convert pagans and spread God's law among his people.[35] Like Heraclius, Charlemagne was likened to the Old Testament David. In the West, as in the East, the Old Testament hero served as the prototype for Christian emperors. Imperial rule and its legitimization were tied to the church, but in the West the emperor was constructed as the defender of the church.[36] In the East, by contrast, the church, through its symbols, in particular the icons, was portrayed as the sacred guardian of the emperor and principal defender of the empire.

The development of the relationship between church and state in the West was different from that in the East. After the revival of the Roman empire in the West under Charlemagne the state, although Christian, would never again be under the complete control of the papacy. Popes could be powerful politicians and establish their authority over emperors and kings, but the controversy over lay

[35] H. Anton, *Fürstenspiegel und Herrscherethos in der Karolingerzeit*, Bonner historische Forschungen 32 (Bonn: L. Röhrscheid, 1968), p. 112.

[36] *MGH Poet. Lat.* 1, p. 258: *O rex, o rector, o decus ecclesiae!* See Anton, *Fürstenspiegel*, p. 115, n. 214.

investiture and, most succinctly for modern Western societies, the ensuing Enlightenment made it clear that the religious and secular spheres were separate. Education, carrier of the knowledge and force behind new discoveries, was in the hands of laymen as well as clerics. In the East, by contrast, the emperor Alexius I Comnenus (1048–1118) made the church the sole guardian of knowledge. In doing so, he brought to completion what Heraclius had set in motion when he made the church a full partner of the state in order to save the eastern Roman empire from annihilation. This completion, however, meant that a church focused on preserving tradition impeded innovation. The creator God was the sole Father and the Church the only nourishing Mother.

It could be argued that, while the West and the East shared the same rhetoric based in Christianized Greco-Roman *paideia*, the difference between the two Christian Roman empires lay in the relationship of the ultimate Father, the generator of law and prohibitions, to His creation, and in mankind's relationship to this Father. In the West, the secular and sacred spheres remained separate; rulers headed the former, popes and bishops the latter. In the East, this separation was less clear and when the church became the ultimate authority on higher education, the barrier between the two spheres collapsed. The result was an intellectual stagnation that would continue to characterize the Christian Roman Empire of the East until its eventual demise in 1453.

Back to the East: A Theocratic State?

The emergence of a rival empire in the West increased pressure on the Eastern empire that, in the period after Heraclius, found itself beset by new and formidable foes. These enemies laid claim to some or all of the Greco-Roman heritage of which the emperor in Constantinople considered himself to be sole guardian. The Persians had given way to the Arabs, whose religion functioned as a unifying

force, bringing together diverse ethnic groups that had fallen to them in conquest. In the Balkans, Bulgarians formed their own empire. Such a loss, not only of territory but also of prestige, connected to an emperor's worthiness based in traditional virtues, triggered a perceptual shift. The center was at a loss for a Father. Church leaders compensated for the weakness of secular rulers. And all the while new men from the periphery replaced the weak, in this way attempting to reinforce the center.

The fusion of church and state, initiated by Heraclius, had its own dynamic; for the eastern Roman empire, the church was to become the conduit through which political anxieties were expressed. Or, just as was the case in pagan Rome, politics and religion were intertwined. A political, natural, or any other kind of disaster was an expression of the divine or the ultimate Father's displeasure with human affairs. The controversy over iconoclasm is a good example. The integration of icons as a vital part of religious worship marked the end of a period of spiritual and cultural development. A new era began, a golden age in art and literature that lasted approximately from 843 to 1025.

The driving force behind the acceptance of icons was Irene, originally the regent for her son Constantine VI. In 797 she deposed her son and went on to rule for five years. Her official title was *basileus* (emperor) rather than the feminine form *basilissa* (empress). Her choice of title indicates an understanding of the rhetoric of power. Edward Gibbon writes of Irene:

> She was the first woman to control the Empire as an independent ruler . . . At a time when the office of Emperor according to Roman tradition was inseparably linked with the function of supreme military commander, the right of a woman to exercise this office was open to question, and it is significant that Irene described herself in the legal statutes not as Basilissa but as Basileus.[37]

[37] Ostrogorsky, *History of the Byzantine state*, p. 181.

Any question about Irene's resolve to be the empire's embodiment of power was answered by her order to have her son blinded in the Purple Room, where he had been born as his father's legitimate successor. By this gruesome act, she indicated that she had shed the role of mother. She was the Father. Allegedly, Charlemagne and the pope sent ambassadors to Constantinople to discuss a possible marriage between the two rulers in an effort to reunite the East and the West. Before any marriage could be arranged though, Nicephorus, the head of the treasury, led a successful coup d'état and Irene was deposed on October 31, 802.

Clearly, Gibbon was troubled that a woman, and a criminal at that, should have ruled the Roman world.

> The Roman world bowed to the government of a female; and as she moved through the streets of Constantinople the reins of four milk-white steeds were held by as many patricians, who marched on foot before the golden chariot of the queen. But these patricians were for the most part eunuchs. . . . Raised, enriched, entrusted with the first dignities of empire, they basely conspired against their benefactress . . . [38]

Committing crimes in pursuit of the state's highest political position was not unusual; the founder of Constantinople, Constantine I, for example, had done as much. Irene demonstrated clemency toward her adversaries but whatever virtues of the *mos maiorum* she might display, she moved in a masculine-gendered sphere. She could ride in a chariot through the streets of the new Rome like a *triumphator*, but she could not lead her army into battle, the source of military glory. Gibbon's description further undermines Irene's performance. The patricians, as peers of the emperor, ought not to have walked. These four did so because they were "for the most part eunuchs" and thus not truly men. Moreover, these supporters of Irene, deprived of

[38] E. Gibbon, *The decline and fall of the Roman empire*, Modern library classics (New York: Modern Library, 2003), vol. 2, p. 883.

their physical manhood, also showed their moral unmanliness. In the end, "they basely conspired against their benefactress."

As emperor, Irene made it possible for icons to have a central position in Greek orthodox worship and consequently shaped the culture of the Roman empire of the East. As a ruler, however, she suffered by her unwillingness to play the caring mother to her politically less capable son, Constantine VI. Mothers were conduits to, and retainers of, imperial power. Even when circumstances moved them into political leadership positions, they were not to be the Father. The roles were clearly defined and successful imperial women, the mothers of the fatherland (*matres patriae*), followed in the footsteps of Augustus's wife Livia. They made and unmade emperors, but they did not take on the role themselves.

Basil II was the last emperor of Byzantium's golden age, for which Irene and her iconophile policies had laid the groundwork. By this period, generals from leading landholding families effectively controlled the affairs of the state. They either worked through weak emperors or simply claimed the throne while the legitimate successors were relegated to "mere puppet[s] in the ceremonies of the court, and treated as decorative but basically inessential appendages of the powerful usurpers."[39] Basil II began as one of these decorative, inessential appendages but after a period of civil war he emerged as uncontested ruler. It was the removal of Basil's all-powerful great-uncle, the eunuch Basil, in 985 that marked the beginning of his independence as well as his sole rule. Basil II reviewed all laws passed in the nine years between his nominal accession and his actual claiming of imperial power. He noted that "many things happened which were not according to our wish, for he [Basil the great-uncle] decided and appointed everything according to his own will."[40] Basil II's wish and will were to be integrated; he was the emperor, the lawgiver.

Like any emperor before him, Basil II needed military glory to bolster his position. In his case, he also had to shed the image of being

[39] Ostrogorsky, *History of the Byzantine state*, p. 299.
[40] Basil novel of 996, Zepi, *Jus* vol. 1, 270. Psellos, *Chron*. 1.12.

a puppet. The Bulgarian empire, like the Byzantine, had "a tradition of empire with its own patriarchate" and in the mid-980s made a grab for additional territory in Thessaly. Basil II had a cause for a military campaign but the Bulgarian ruler Samuel was victorious in their first encounter: Bulgaria now extended from the Adriatic to the Black Sea. The emperor's defeat caused a rebellion among the Byzantine aristocracy and increased the likelihood that a usurper would emerge. But Basil II received help from the Russian prince Vladimir and, after a thirteen-year struggle, crushed the rebellion, aided by the Varangian Guard who were mostly Scandinavians. The subsequent adoption of Christianity by the city of Kiev was Byzantium's most impressive triumph of conversion. As Father, Basil now demanded utter obedience from his subjects. Both soldier and ascetic, he crushed internal and external enemies of the Byzantine empire.

The destruction of the Bulgarian empire serves as an excellent example of Basil II's zeal. The final blow was dealt the Bulgarian army in a narrow pass, the Kleidion, in the Belascia mountains in July 1014. It was for this victory that Basil received his epithet, the Bulgar Slayer (Bulgaroktonos). After the battle, the captives were blinded and sent off in groups of a hundred back to their leader, Samuel, who had escaped the scene of disaster and set up court at Pilep. A guide, blinded only in one eye, led each band of a hundred. Samuel died a few days after the arrival of his mutilated men.

Basil II was the ultimate Father. He was the law, the retaliator, and dispenser of clemency. Michael Psellos noted that Basil:

> . . . alone introduced new measures, he alone disposed his military forces. As for the civil administration, he governed, not in accordance with the written laws, but following the unwritten dictates of his own intuition. . . . Outbursts of wrath he controlled, . . . but if his orders were disobeyed in war, on his return to the palace he would kindle his wrath and reveal it. Terrible then was the vengeance he took on the miscreant. . . . most defaulters obtained forgiveness, either through his sympathetic understanding, or because he showed some other interest in

> their affairs. . . . Whatever estimate he formed, indeed, was to him an irrevocable and divinely inspired judgment.[41]

In the thirteenth century, the historian Michael Choniates judged Heraclius and Basil II to be the greatest Byzantine emperors.[42] Each was indeed the embodiment of virtues, the soldier who gave his life for the empire, the Father who demanded, and uttered prohibitions in the form of laws. Each was the giver and taker of life. The deaths of such rulers, as I have argued, create immense power vacuums. And, as we have seen, at these moments of rupture, the periphery, or else some other bastion of conservatism will furnish the replacement.

For Byzantium, the final rejection of intellectual development came during the reign of Alexius I Comnenus (r. 1081–1118). Alexius ruled at a time when the Christian Roman empire of the East faced two formidable new adversaries, the Normans in the West and the Seljuq Turks in the East. In 1095, Pope Urban II urged his flock to free their Christian brethren in the East from their Moslem overlords. The First Crusade (1096–1099) was a success. Jerusalem was brought back under Christian rule. But the crusade placed additional stress on the already beleaguered Constantinople, and the centralized state structure slowly gave way to feudalism.

Even at this time of duress, the Eastern emperor still believed in his notional supremacy over all kings who now ruled within what was once the Roman empire. He was the highest authority, the champion of faith and tradition; the discourse of power, authority, and legitimization was still linked to the virtues of old. Their

[41] Psellos, *Chron.* 29.24. The passage continues: "Consequently he paid no attention to men of learning: on the contrary, he affected utter scorn – towards the learned folk, I mean. It seems to me a wonderful thing, therefore, that while the emperor so despised literary culture, no small crop of philosophers and orators sprang up in those times." When explaining this phenomenon, Psellos points to a never changing reality of the academy of scholars seeking to know and others seeking personal gain: "One solution of the paradox, I fancy, is that the men of those days did not devote themselves to the study of letters for any ulterior purpose: they cultivated literature for its own sake and as an end in itself, whereas the majority nowadays do not approach the subject of education in this spirit, but consider personal profit to be the first reason for study." On Basil's wrath, vengeance, and forgiveness see *Chron.* 34.

[42] Michael Choniates 2.354.

enactment and pronouncement, which can be called the rhetoric of power, generated honor and everlasting glory for, and in the name of, the omnipotent Christian God, the supreme father and creator of the world. An empire under siege needed a strong, categorical Father and, for the secular world, Alexius was just that.

Alexius's family belonged to the landed, military aristocracy of Asia Minor. The Constantinopolitan aristocracy invested some of its monetary surplus in the arts, but powerful men from the countryside, the periphery, shied away from such investments. These politicians were conservatives and their interests focused on tradition rather than innovation. It was during Alexius's reign that the latter was curtailed, and the administration of *paideia* handed over to the clergy. Henceforth, the church would control education and, in essence, the formation and expression of the mind.

Constantinople's last independent thinker, the philosopher John Italos, was forced to leave the city in 1082.[43] With his departure, the study of philosophy was no longer separate from the doctrinal wishes of the state and the church. Philosophical debates were carried out within the context of Christological problems and under the auspices of what Robert Browning labeled the "Patriarchal School." Like the so-called Constantinopolitan "university," this "School," which Alexius may have founded in 1107, was essentially a hierarchically organized group of teachers who taught in rooms attached to churches. The state, embodied by the emperor, regulated and provided payment for these teachers.[44] By the twelfth century CE, the appropriation of secular "higher" education by the church was complete. Philosophy had become a handmaiden of theology. As John Meyendorff put it so succinctly:

> . . . the traditional monastic abhorrence of "Hellenism" constituted a serious new handicap for the development of humanism.

[43] P. Stéphanou, *Jean Italos: Philosophe et humaniste*, Orientalia Christiana Analecta 134 (Roma: Pont. Institutum Orientalium Studiorum, 1949).

[44] P. Gautier, "L'édit d'Alexis I[er] Comnène sur la réforme du clergé," *REB* 31 (1973), 165–201.

> Greek in its language and culture, Byzantium thus took a much more negative stand toward Greek philosophy than the West ever did. On the eve of the period when the West would commit its mind to the philosophy of the ancients and enter the great epoch of Scholasticism, the Byzantine Church solemnly refused any new synthesis between the Greek mind and Christianity. It assigned to the West the task of becoming more Greek than it was.[45]

In Constantinople, the development of free thought and speech was not to exceed church-prescribed boundaries. Almost a century after Italos's excommunication, Michael of Anchialos, patriarch of Constantinople from 1170 to 1178, gave his inaugural lecture as "consul of philosophy" in the presence of the emperor Manuel.[46] The lecture is in part a panegyric of the emperor's virtues and deeds. In its choice of metaphors, not surprisingly, it is a mixture of pagan and Christian elements. Manuel, as Michael made clear, was the embodiment of military virtues, a victor in the mold of Alexander the Great, a ruler who in fame surpassed all previous Roman emperors. God had sent Manuel to be the protector of His people. He was the ideal ruler, the true father of his country.[47] For the adversaries of the Byzantine empire, both in the East and in the West, the past would provide the inspiration for intellectual and scientific discovery. At fundamentalist Byzantium, conversely, that same glorious past was fashioned into a noose, strangling innovation and development. A new epoch had begun.

[45] J. Meyendorff, *Byzantine theology. Historical trends and doctrinal themes* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1974), 64. As E. de Vries-van den Felden has shown in *Théodore Métochite: Une réevaluation* (Amsterdam: J.C. Gieben, 1987), we should be careful in using the terms "humanism" and "humanist."

[46] R. Browning, "A new source on Byzantine-Hungarian relations in the twelfth century," *Balkan Studies* 2 (1961), 173–214 (Greek text and notes, pp. 186–214).

[47] Browning, "A new source," lines 178–190.

Conclusion

Catalogs of imperial or royal virtues have a long history, of course, and begin long before the Romans fashioned their own historical and educational narrative. Homer's epics outlined the kind of education that was to result in a virtuous ruler.[1] How to behave virtuously was, and still is, part of a shared collective memory. What was identified as virtuous and worthy of emulation drove ancient historical narratives, which very much inform our recollection of the past. Modern empires have drawn cultural and political legitimization from Rome with its retroactively construed history. Writers and artists of modernity, such as Thomas Babington Macaulay and Constantino Brumidi, have found in Cincinnatus and Horatius, for example, heroes worth depicting because these Romans encapsulated qualities that had meaning beyond their original context. Now, as then, adherence to old-fashioned virtues (or values) was held, or rather was rhetorically fashioned, "to create the basis

[1] J.M. Schulte, *Speculum Regis. Studien zur Fürstenspiegel-Literatur in der griechisch-römischen Antike. Antike Kultur und Geschichte* 3 (Hamburg: Lit, 2001).

of a moral revival,"[2] the key to a new political era; in other words, the means to exert dominance over others is presented as a moral mandate. The foremost proponent of this mandate was, and still is, the politician eager to explain his country's hegemony as a justified, even as a divinely ordained, act. It is also the leader of such a hegemony who symbolically embodies the country's defining virtues.

In ancient Rome, such a leader was termed "father of his country." In the earliest Roman law, the *Twelve Tables*, the head of a family, the *pater familias*, had the power over life and death. Simply put, he *was* the law. Rome's state was a macrocosm of the family structure, familial patriarchy reproduced in the public sphere. The father of the country, like his private counterpart, set and pronounced law. He represented the symbolic order, the supreme authority, the Father. There was a continuous cycle of regeneration, in which the virtuous Roman played a key role as he did his duty for the benefit of the state. Self-sacrifice, dying for one's country, was the ultimate virtuous act. Honor was reaped by performing virtuous acts and this in turn endowed families with lasting rewards. Gaining honor was the elite's obligation. Ruptures, the removal of the embodiment of the traditional virtues, the law-generating Father, occurred when a particularly virtuous emperor died or one who was perceived as lacking or failing to uphold virtues. That is to say, in the latter case, the ruler, the one who had to be dutiful, acted without reflection on what was required of him as the Father or the Law; he merely went through the motions, performing duty for duty's sake. The historian Tacitus focused on such system breakdowns, which he found most disturbing. In Tacitus's narrative, this unquestioned performance of duty coincided with the loss of freedom of speech. He further suggested that the unexamined act, duty for duty's sake, was carried out under the guise of virtue.

In Tacitus's *Agricola*, a eulogy for the historian's father-in-law, governor of Roman Britain from 77–84 CE, Agricola demonstrated that "even under bad emperors men can be great."[3] Even so, the

[2] LeoGrande, *Our own backyard*, pp. 4–5.
[3] Mellor, *Tacitus*, p. 13.

historian has Calgacus, a tribal chief of the Britons, describe the Romans' pretense in this way:

> Plunderers of the world, after they exhausted everything on earth by their plunder, they probe the sea. If the enemy is rich, they are greedy; if poor, they strive for self-interest (political ambition); neither the east nor the west has satisfied them. They alone among men desire riches and dearth with equal eagerness. To robbery, slaughter, plunder, they give the false name of empire; they make a desert and call it peace.[4]

Tacitus's criticism of the empire through the non-Roman voice of Calgacus is stark: Romans annihilate and employ double-talk. Nothing is safe from the "plunderers of the world," for material gain and political ambition drive them on. In fact, Rome's concept of the successful citizen, the virtuous man, embraced an inexhaustible verve for the acquisition and retention of empire. The paradox was that these virtuous Romans who profited personally from Rome's vast empire had to model themselves on traditional norms, the ancestral customs. There was a gap between reality and what tradition demanded. At the very least they had to pretend to adhere to traditional norms, since the ostentatious display of wealth, the actual economic fruits of empire, was considered un-Roman. Luxury was the seed of Rome's moral decay. In Tacitus's view, "lust for money" bred "lust for power." "Friendships and enmities" were not judged "on the basis of fact but on that of advantage, to have a fair face rather than a fair mind."[5] But as long as the empire was successful, there were economic, social, and political advantages for its premier administrators, Rome's best men who made up the nobility. As well as a gap between reality and what tradition demanded, there was also a rhetorical paradox at work, which Tacitus's Calgacus formulated

[4] Tac. *Ag.* 30.5–6.

[5] D. Earl, *The moral and political tradition of Rome* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1967), p. 19.

in the following way: "They alone among men desire riches and dearth with equal eagerness."[6]

An elite Roman's socio-political reality entailed navigation between two worlds, the one of wealth and power and the other of a constructed moral tradition, an ideology. While we acknowledge, with the Romans who reflected and wrote on these issues, that they "saw political issues . . . in terms of morality,"[7] they also realized the discrepancy between reality and the demands of tradition.[8] Writers like Tacitus who depicted reality through the veil of morality, would draw the veil aside from time to time, allowing their readers to glimpse the workings of the construct that was Rome.

The *mos maiorum* was a set of core virtues and behavioral standards that shaped a Roman's life. Peer recognition of actions as virtuous, actions most often performed on behalf of the state, garnered glory and remembrance. The best of all Romans, because his acts were virtuous or perceived as such, was an extraordinary person, someone who had surpassed his peers. In the late republic, this Roman began to receive from the senate the honorific "father of the country," a title eventually reserved for the emperor. The emperor was also constructed as the ultimate political and law-giving instance. This construct, the enunciator of the prohibitive "no," which we have labeled "Father," was generated and upheld through rhetoric embedded within classical education. A primary medium of classical education (*paideia*) was literature which provided the rhetorical vocabulary. Leaders, or Fathers, as defined within this context, were the political heirs of Greco-Roman culture and functioned as political manifestations of the Roman empire.

Surviving epigraphic sources help us to date the creation of the virtuous Roman as a public figure to Rome's emergence as the Mediterranean's leading military power in the third century BCE. In this process, members of the Scipio family played an important

[6] Tac. *Ag.* 30.6.

[7] Earl, *The moral and political tradition*, p. 17.

[8] I understand reality as factual truths, which are historical tangible occurrences such as social, political, and economic events, and tradition as the interpretations thereof.

role. Inscriptions on sarcophagi celebrate esteemed family members as paragons of virtues. Those of the family less fortunate in their achievements, or whose lives were cut short before they could achieve anything worthy of praise, were imagined as having at the least the potential for memorable success. Ennius, a client of the Scipios, established in his *Annals*, Rome's first national epic, a moral ideology that entered into Rome's literature. Appropriate behavior as defined by Rome's ancestral customs became a literary topos and a rhetorical tool that advanced Rome. A Roman's goal was to achieve glory on the battlefield and in the political arena, and thus be remembered for generations. Besides physical monuments that memorialized worthy achievements, the works of poets, orators, and historians became conduits of commemoration.

Two statesmen, Cato the Elder and a "father of the country," Cicero, were, through their lives and writings, instrumental in this creation of the quintessential Roman. Cato's Roman was proud to speak and write in Latin. Greek culture was no longer to be the defining context. Cato also championed the idea of the Roman cultivating his land as well as fulfilling his obligations toward the state. Cicero, at the end of the republic, appealed to the ruling elite in the hope that they would work toward a status quo beneficial for the whole state. The collection of ideal Romans, tradition-and-law-abiding men, that Cicero postulated, did not exist, but Cicero continued to promote the ideal of the virtuous Roman.

As Rome's political system changed from the rule of an aristocratic elite to the rule of one, the emperor absorbed and came to represent all virtues. He emerged as the living discourse. He was the representation of empire and empire was defined through him. The emperor, as a symbolic figure, perpetuated "Rome" with its diverse history, laws, and traditions. Augustus, Rome's first emperor, severely curtailed the legal powers of the senate and the tribunes of the people while at the same time creating the perception that Rome's elite played an integral and active part in policy making. Poets, sponsored by Rome's first princeps and his clients, celebrated and pondered Rome's greatness, which was anchored in the virtues

of old. Vergil's *Aeneid* and Horace's *Roman Odes* are pinnacles of literary production that perpetuate the discourse of the virtuous and glorious. Literature, through its employment in education, functions as a premier carrier of discourse. Or, more generally, rhetoric (both written and spoken) shapes reality.

Nero, the last of the Julio-Claudian dynasty, employed the same discourse of power that Augustus had established, but did so in the artistic rather than the political sphere. Nero's rule was ultimately a performative act that, as one would expect, ended in a rupture. The historical narrative remembered Nero, like any other emperor of this ilk, as a-moral and un-Roman. Roman historiography was steeped in moral judgment and Nero's portrayal was in stark contrast to that of the new Father, Vespasian, who emerged from the periphery and embraced traditional values. Under him, order was restored. Trajan played the same role after the murder of Vespasian's youngest son, Domitian, and went down in history as a paragon of virtue, a Jupiter on earth.

History's judgment of Commodus, the son of the philosopher-emperor Marcus Aurelius, is in the same vein as that of Nero and Domitian. After a rupture of the kind engendered by Commodus, a strong Father was indispensable. Septimius Severus, a formidable general of Rome's Eastern legions, came forward as Rome's new ruler. At his side was Julia Domna, a daughter of one of Syria's most prominent priests, who would receive the honorifics "mother of the country," "mother of the senate," and "mother of army camps." Just like the emperor, Rome's empress developed into an extraordinary figure with symbolic powers. Moreover, the struggles for succession after Septimius Severus's death demonstrated that, when no viable successor emerged from the periphery to revitalize the center, a Mother close to the center could serve as placeholder.

In an ideological world that was tradition-bound and a political landscape that suppressed freedom of speech, radical changes in ideology and politics were necessarily incremental. Such changes as did take place were bound to do so within the existing structure and to

employ traditional vocabulary, the rhetoric of power. Thus Christianity, which changed the religious landscape of the Roman empire, did not sweep away the original discourse, in which the concept of republican moral tradition was firmly embedded. "For the most glorious city of God," Augustine argued, "the virtues, which are similar to those which they clung to for the sake of the glory of an earthly city," were held onto, "unless we may be pierced with shame."[9]

Christian martyrs, gladiators for God, refused to partake in the empire's civic life or to acknowledge the emperor as a superior being. Following in the footsteps of the heroic ancestors of republican Rome, martyrs were first memorialized for their extraordinary feats of defiance and later for their everyday struggles that led to salvation. Disengagement from an active, political life, and equality among God's children, however, was not to be. Constantine I connected political power and civic authority to the Christian religion. The new ruling elite, made up of the guardians of the Christian faith, had to reconcile, just as their pagan ancestors had, two conflicting agendas: the political one of power and economic advantages and the moral one stressing virtues and humility. In this new political formation, wealth and power stood in opposition to the world of which Christ spoke as well as to the long-standing political-moral tradition. At its core, this tradition overlapped with the republican Roman tradition first observed in the third century BCE when Rome emerged victorious over its chief rival Carthage.

Constantine I set the political stage and Christian intellectuals created the rationale that re-engaged Christians in community life. The pagan discourse became a Christian one, made possible by the pragmatic use of pre-Christian education. Claudian, the last pagan orator employed by Roman emperors, devised in his speech for Honorius the rhetorical blueprint of a *speculum regis* (king's mirror, an account of a king's duties and virtues). Together with Augustine's political theory, this formed the core material from which praise

[9] August. *C.D.* 5.18.

for an emperor or king was fashioned.[10] The old and the new were seamlessly forged into a synergy, ensuring that the heavenly kingdom sustained the worldly one and vice versa.

While ancient authors and their texts inspired intellectual and scientific discoveries among Constantinople's adversaries in the West and the East, the Byzantine emperor Alexius I Comnenus made the Church the sole guardian of education. This fundamentalist move deprived the Eastern empire of its creative energies and its glorious cultural past was soon nothing more than a distant memory. Tradition became static and was no longer engaged. For the Byzantine (Eastern Roman) empire, *paideia* impeded, rather than encouraged, intellectual exploration.

Classical education preserved the rhetoric of the noble and virtuous self. It was the basis on which Rome's empire was built. The discourse of empire was based on ancient texts and employed traditional rhetorical tools. Despite the many political and ideological changes, the understood father of any subsequent state that claimed or had an actual link to the Roman empire necessarily embodied virtues that had once been defined for an aristocratic elite securing territory for republican Rome. The Father is both the constant and the generator of new beginnings, preserving the behavioral core and moving a country toward greatness. In this dynamic, political rhetoric expresses and upholds fidelity to defining virtues. The Father is always.

[10] H.H. Anton, *Fürstenspiegel und Herrscherethos in der Karolingerzeit. Bonner Historische Forschungen* 22 (Bonn: L. Röhrscheid, 1968), 46–48.

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