

THEMATIC RINGS AND STRUCTURE IN SUETONIUS' *DE VITA CAESARUM*

By

Matthew Wade Ferguson

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ACTORIBUS ET NOMINATIS ET IGNOTIS  
QUI PROGRESSUM HUMANUM PROTULERUNT

## Abstract

The compositional structure of the imperial *Lives* in Suetonius' *De Vita Caesarum* has long been a puzzling aspect of the author's style. Whereas previous scholarship has traditionally viewed the structure of the *Lives* as a catalogue of information, or even a garbled heap of anecdotes, this thesis follows recent studies that have identified more intricate patterns within the work. The study here argues that Suetonius bound all twelve of the biographies within *De Vita Caesarum* by ring composition. Far from being a crude collection of information, the imperial *Lives* instead contain artful and meaningful cross references that contribute to the understanding of their biographical subject. The goal of Suetonius' narrative is not to record a broader history, but to capture the *ethos* of the Roman emperor. By arranging material, not chronologically, but through subject headings, Suetonius is able to align parallel themes in a chiasmic structure that develops the underlying *ethos* of the *princeps*. In these references, the ancestry of a *princeps* can correlate with his final legacy, his virtues can be contradicted by his vices, and early anecdotes in the *Life* can foreshadow eventual outcomes. The thematic pairs are ultimately built around the center ring of the biography, where Suetonius imparts a unique character portrait of each emperor. No two *Lives* are the same, and Suetonius employs the ring composition to convey a complex and meaningful message about each of his subjects. In light of these intricate patterns, Suetonius can no longer be viewed as an author who lacked the literary talent and rhetorical technique of his contemporary historical authors.

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## Appendices: Thematic Diagrams

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## Introduction

The purpose of this thesis will be to investigate the use of ring composition throughout all twelve of Suetonius' imperial biographies. This investigation is intended not only to demonstrate that Suetonius composed all of the *Lives* according to comprehensive ring structures, but also to question and interpret the messages communicated by arranging specific material according to thematic pairs. In order to concisely illustrate the findings of this inquiry, I have compiled thematic diagrams at the end of the thesis (Appendices: pgs. 68-79) for all twelve of the biographies, beginning with *Julius Caesar* and ending with *Domitian*, and included an adaptation of Benediktson's (1997: 173) thematic diagram for *Galba*. These diagrams will be the primary point of reference for discussing the ring patterns throughout the thesis. They organize the parallel items according to letter pairs (e.g. A and A<sup>1</sup>) arranged in alphabetical order starting from the center of a *Life*. The final aim will be not only to demonstrate and discuss the use of ring composition in the imperial *Lives*, but also to demonstrate that this biographical approach, rather than divorcing significance from content, instead provides meaningful insight into the character of its subject through the careful use of ring comparisons.

The Roman biographer Suetonius Tranquillus has not been without his critics, and neither has the puzzling structure of his *De Vita Caesarum*. Even as far back as the early seventeenth century, Francis Bacon in *The Advancement of Learning* bluntly claimed that Suetonius' accounts of the Caesars "gathered into titles and bundles and not in order of time" seemed "monstrous and incredible" (2.8.5). Indeed, the peculiar style, lack of chronological organization, and often shocking anecdotes found in Suetonius' *De Vita Caesarum* can call into question the historical and literary value of the work. Continuing in

the same strain of criticism, John Mackail (1895: 231) described Suetonius as “an author who is frankly without style,” claiming that the biographer merely “says what he has to say straightforwardly,” and even disdainfully views the Latin prose in his *Lives* as “the beginning of barbarism,” measuring far beneath “the fine familiar prose of the Golden Age.”

Fortunately, modern scholarship has been more forthcoming in treating Suetonius as a serious classical author. As Townend (1967: 91) explains, “many of the least favorable verdicts passed on [the *Lives*] come from historians who are disappointed that Suetonius was not an historian.” Indeed, it is important to remember genre when evaluating Suetonius’ contribution to imperial literature. Unlike Tacitus, Suetonius was not an annalistic historian, who recorded events on a yearly basis for the aim of evaluating a broader history. Instead, Suetonius was a biographer, whose *Lives*, as Townend (1967: 84) explains were “withdrawn from topics other than the character and career of the central figure,” and were bound by “what it is convenient to term the Law of Biographical Relevance.” Thus in order to better understand his works, Mellor (1999: 149) argues, “It is important that we judge the *Lives* on Suetonius’ own terms as biography and not regard them as an inferior form of history.” Whereas the goal of history is to evaluate broader human affairs, the goal of biography is to capture the underlying character, that is, the *ethos*, of the subject it analyzes. This then must be the test for evaluating how Suetonius performs as a biographer.

Nevertheless, during the imperial period even the structure of historical writing was rapidly changing. As Woodman (1977: 45) explains, “Whereas historians of an earlier period had come to see history in terms of a variety of individuals ... imperial historians saw history primarily in terms of one individual, the emperor of the day.” In this new



context, where all eyes were on the emperor, Momigliano (1993: 99) argues, “Biography was the natural form of telling the story of a Caesar.” Even Tacitus, despite his determined effort to adhere strictly to an annalistic structure, cannot avoid crucial turning points in his narrative centered on the accession and death of a *princeps*. As Mellor (1999: 85) likewise points out, “Tacitus’ interests never wandered very far away from the imperial palace.” In such a context, Suetonius’ approach would not seem so unusual, and yet, it remains distinctive. Compare Suetonius with a biographer like Plutarch, for example, in their two separate *Lives* of Julius Caesar. As Wallace-Hadrill (1995: 12) observes about “the campaigns of Julius Caesar ... Plutarch gives a very adequate section to the narrative (*Caesar* 18-27). But Suetonius dismisses the Gallic wars in one brief paragraph [*Jul.* 25], reducing a decade of campaigning to a numerical summary of success and reverses.” Instead, Suetonius spends twenty-three chapters (*Jul.* 57-70) focusing on the aspects of Caesar’s generalship, gathering various examples from his different campaigns to illuminate his military principles. Thus, rather than following the progression of the military events in Caesar’s life, Suetonius instead probes the underlying *ethos* that shaped Caesar’s decision-making throughout the assorted examples.

Given this focus on attributes, rather than chronological sequence, critics such as Seager (2005: 238) have described Suetonius’ style as an “arid, mechanical, and tedious way of writing,” asserting that “all Suetonius does is to clothe [his] traditional skeleton with a patchwork of dubious anecdotes and garbled examples.” Even Mellor (1999: 149) who has a greater appreciation for Suetonius’ methods, states, “Unlike the historians of antiquity, Suetonius is not primarily a literary artist.” Not all secondary sources, however, view Suetonius’ focus on subject headings as either a deterrent to the historical content or

artistry of his narrative. Most notably, Benediktson (1997: 168) in an article about Suetonius' *Galba* has found through "an analysis of the structure of the biography" that "Suetonius bound the entire work carefully by means of ring composition, and that the rings provide a clue to Suetonius' notion of fate and history."

Mary Douglas in her recent work *Thinking in Circles: An Essay on Ring Composition* has observed that many ancient works and genres, ranging from Homeric epic to biblical scripture, possess intricate ring structures that organize the narrative not from front to back, but in interlocking thematic pairs. As Douglas (2007:1) points out, "This antique literary form is being discovered in documents that the scholars have known for centuries and have translated without recognizing that they have any formal structure." As Douglas (1) elaborates, "The minimum criterion for a ring composition is for the ending to join up with the beginning ... A ring is a framing device. The linking up of a starting point and end creates an envelope that contains everything between the opening phrases and the conclusion." Fleshing out this structure, Douglas (2) states that the content "from the beginning to the middle should parallel with the other series going from the middle back to the start ... It is basically the chiasmic structure, ABBA, or ABCBA." Far from being an arid and tedious literary form, Douglas (1) argues, "It takes skill to compose a polished specimen."

In Suetonius' *Galba*, Benediktson (1997: 172) observes, based on the parallel narrative sections of the biography, that Galba's "appearance and behavior are implicit in those of his ancestors, his abuse of power implicit in his use of power, his death implicit in his birth." Based on this intricate layout, Benediktson (172) concludes that the "structural cross-references in the *Galba* demonstrate that the *Life* "can no longer be perceived as a

biography barren of research or of creative shaping by Suetonius.” However, the greater question of how Suetonius employs ring composition throughout all twelve of his imperial biographies still remains to be addressed. Arguably, Suetonius’ *Galba* should not be treated in isolation, since it belongs with *Otho* and *Vitellius* in Suetonius’ seventh book of *De Vita Caesarum*.

Scholars have debated where *Galba* was originally located within *De Vita Caesarum*, i.e. whether it was written after or before the first six *Lives*, beginning with *Julius* and ending with *Nero*, and on what account the content size of the last six *Lives* are considerably smaller than the earlier ones. Syme (1958: 501) speculates that the last six *Lives* “might be a later edition.” Townend (1959: 293) further argues that the ten biographies following *Augustus* were published only after Suetonius’ dismissal as Hadrian’s secretary [119 CE], when the author would have had less access to source material, and “were laid aside in despair, to be resumed after an interval.” Benediktson (1997: 172) and Powers (2009: 220) have defended the later *Lives*, particularly *Galba*, against the notion that they are an inferior edition to the work by demonstrating their structural complexity. However, there is still much to be addressed about the original publication of *De Vita Caesarum* and what effect Suetonius’ career had on the completion of the work. The purpose of this thesis will not be to directly answer these questions, however, a broader look at the structural layout of *De Vita Caesarum*, particularly under the lens of ring composition, may offer clues for further investigation on these issues.

## Chapter 1: Methods of Ring Analysis

Before analyzing the structural and biographical implications of organizing a *Life* according to ring patterns, the critical methods and terms for both identifying and discussing ring composition must be addressed. First, it is important to consider the terminology Suetonius himself provides about the organization of the text. A critical programmatic statement occurs early in *Augustus*<sup>1</sup> where Suetonius explains the organization of the *Life*:

proposita uitae eius uelut summa parte<s> singillatim neque  
per tempora sed per species exsequar, quo distinctius  
demonstrari cognoscique possint (*Aug.* 9.1).<sup>2</sup>

With a summary, as it were, of his life set forth, I will follow the parts one by one, not chronologically, but through subject headings,<sup>3</sup> whereby they can be demonstrated and understood more distinctly from one another.

While Suetonius does not explicitly state in this passage his intent to use ring composition, a number of important details are made clear. First, Suetonius plainly states that the organization of the biography will not be chronological. Although this does divorce the content somewhat from its historical context, it also grants Suetonius considerably more flexibility in how he chooses to arrange his material, which would be a very valuable tool

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<sup>1</sup> One may question why this programmatic statement is located in *Augustus* rather than in *Julius*, which was the first *Life*. However, both Suetonius' *praefectio* and the opening sections of *Julius* have been lost from all manuscript traditions (Reynolds 1983: 399). It is possible that Suetonius made a similar preface in either of these sections. However, as the subsequent ring analysis in this thesis will demonstrate, the organizational layout spelled out by the programmatic statement in *Augustus*, particularly that the biography will follow material *per species* ("by subject headings"), can clearly be identified in the structures of the other imperial *Lives*.

<sup>2</sup> All citations of Suetonius are to the Ihm Teubner edition. All translations are my own.

<sup>3</sup> *s.v.* *OLD species* 10a "A subdivision of any class or kind," here best understood as topic or subject heading.

for adapting the content into a broad and intricate ring structure. Suetonius likewise states that the material will be arranged according to subject headings, which similarly could be helpful for organizing parallel subjects according to thematic pairs. Thus while it must be acknowledged that this programmatic statement in *Augustus* is not decisive regarding Suetonius' use of ring composition, it does open up considerable room for its feasibility. Suetonius' preface that this method of organization will render the individual parts of an emperor's life *distinctius demonstrari cognoscique possint* ("capable of being demonstrated and understood more distinctly") reveals that his approach is not haphazard, but designed for meaningful elucidation, and clues the reader to pay close attention to the thematic divisions.

#### **A. Methodological Approaches**

Part of this investigation will involve the use of the chapter numbers provided within the Ihm Teubner, in order to both reference the material, as well as to demonstrate its structural position within the narrative. One may object to this approach on the grounds that Suetonius himself did not provide these chapter divisions. As Benediktson (1997: 168) points out, however, "While Suetonius did not provide these chapter numbers, they are rough division of topics or rubrics, as they are usually called." Providing chapter divisions is a necessary reference tool for all ancient works; Suetonius' programmatic statement, however, about organizing his material *per species* ("according to subject headings") further justifies their use in *De Vita Caesarum*. The chapter divisions generally stand where previous editors have identified a change in subject matter. Thus, when I organize thematic sections (e.g. *Julius M*) with reference to chapter numbers (6-7), I have done so not only for

the sake of citation, but also because the chapter divisions already contain thematic breaks. This, however, does not mean that the chapter numbers determined the sections on my thematic diagrams. In fact, in many instances, such as in *Vespasian A* (8.5-9.1) and *A*<sup>1</sup> (9.2-10), I have openly deviated from the chapter divisions given in the Ihm Teubner. Ultimately, identifying the shared subject theme found in the individual sections is the best objective approach for following the *per species* organization towards which Suetonius is guiding the reader.

The approach in this thesis will likewise look for philological connections that join parallel sections of the biography. Such connections can be found through both repeated or similar vocabulary, as well as intratextual references. For example, *Claudius G*<sup>1</sup> directly references *G* through us of the phrase: *ut diximus*. This connection, however, does not imply that every parallel section will include a similar phrase, or that Suetonius uses *ut diximus* solely in this fashion.<sup>4</sup> In fact, it would be overly mechanical to allow for such intratextual references to only refer to parallel sections, and one would hardly expect every passage in the second half of the biography to have explicit references to the first half. Repeated vocabulary can often provide a more subtle allusion than a direct reference. For example, in *Tiberius C*, Suetonius elaborates on Tiberius' reforms *in publicis moribus* ("in public morals," 33.1); however, in *Tiberius C*<sup>1</sup> he states *in ipsa publicorum morum correctione* ("during his very correction of public morals," 42.1) that Tiberius took part in a gratuitous

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<sup>4</sup> Throughout all of *De Vita Caesarum* the phrase *ut diximus* occurs three times (*Tib.* 70.3; *Cl.* 35.1; *Nero* 22:2), its equivalent *ut dixi* occurs once (*Cl.* 29.1), and the similar phrase *supra diximus* occurs once (*Cal.* 8.2). Not all of these intratextual references refer to parallel chapters. *Tiberius* 70.3, for example, seems to refer to multiple chapters (32.2; 56.1), and *Caligula* 8.2 refers to the chapter immediately above it (7.1). Some of the other intratextual references do reflect structural significance, however, such as *Claudius* 29.1, which discusses Claudius' domination by his freedmen and wives and refers to *Claudius* 25.5, where there is the *diuisio* discussing how this defect undermined the whole conduct of Claudius' reign.

feast. The repeated use of the phrase, *publici mores*, here provides a philological link that joins the two sections. Such philological connections will be useful to identify throughout this thesis for the sake of illustrating the ring composition. Parallel sections, however, neither need to contain intratextual references nor shared vocabulary to be ring paired. Ultimately, the adjoining themes of two sections must always be the critical factor that demonstrates their thematic link.

Finally, there remains a question concerning whether Suetonius' deliberate use of ring organization detracts from the historical credibility of the material he presents. One must remember, however, Suetonius' stated goal of organizing the portions of an emperor's life so that they *distinctius demonstrari cognoscique possint* ("can be demonstrated and understood more distinctly from one another," *Aug.* 9.1). The goal of Suetonius' biographical approach is not to convey a broader history, but to capture the *ethos* of his central subject. At the most basic level, Momigliano (1993: 11) defines biography as "An account of the life of a man from birth to death." However, Suetonius, through use of the ring composition, employs a very sophisticated and elaborate approach to illustrate his central characters. Suetonius' use of ring composition undoubtedly shaped the information he chose to present, the source traditions he followed, and how he represented his material. However, this is not unlike the artful rhetorical strategies employed by the great historians, such as Thucydides or Tacitus, even if Suetonius' biographical goal and structural approach are vastly different. Does his method convey the truth? Such a question may seem superfluous, when one considers the observation of Roland Barthes (1970: 155) that "the touchstone of history is not so much reality as intelligibility." Suetonius' true

merit must be evaluated according to whether or not his approach improves our understanding of the Caesars.

The manner in which ring composition joins the various portions of a Caesar's life, the thematic link it provides, and final message it conveys, can manifest in a variety of fashions. Benediktson (1997: 168) points out, "the rings provide a clue to Suetonius' notion of fate and history." Indeed, aligning an event or characteristic early in a *Life* with one that occurs later can certainly serve as a powerful method of foreshadowing. If the connection is so strong that the later action is even suggested as unavoidable, it can even point to an act of fate. However, if such repetition is caused by a critical attribute within the character of the *princeps*, it can also point towards a natural result shaped by his *ethos*. The two need not be exclusive, as the recurrence may also be the result of both of these determinations. Beyond just these uses, however, the rings can likewise pair issues of morality. The virtues and vices of a *princeps*, issues with which Suetonius is so intimately concerned, can be represented, as it were, on a moral scale when they are placed in parallel sections of the *Life*. The following categories of comparisons will be useful for discussing how Suetonius addresses these issues:

### **B. Anecdotal Pairings**

One of the perhaps more obvious methods of highlighting ringed materials is to place two very similar anecdotes in corresponding sections of the biography. As Saller (1980: 82) explains, "anecdotes should be evaluated and interpreted according to whether they reflected ideology or beliefs about reality." For Suetonius, the anecdotes can demonstrate the Romans' perception of a man's central *ethos*, which remains unchanged



throughout the *Life* and guides his important actions. One of the most interesting of these 'anecdotal pairs' can be demonstrated through a well-known anecdote in the life of *Julius*. By referring to the thematic diagram of *Julius Caesar* (Appendix: pg. 68) it is noted in *Julius* M that Caesar saw a statue of Alexander the Great during his quaestorship in Spain (7.1). Caesar's reaction is to become frustrated that Alexander had conquered the world at the same age at which he had done nothing of notoriety. Later, however, in M<sup>1</sup> during the Latin Festival, a laurel wreath is placed on Caesar's own statue right before mention is made of his plans to invade Parthia (79.1-3).

The connections between the age, statues, and plans to invade the East all show considerable anecdotal pairing. The connection between the two events demonstrates how Caesar's desire to emulate Alexander the Great was a central and permanent aspect of his character. Furthermore, Suetonius seems to have favored a tradition that allows these events to be connected more smoothly. As Butler (1982: 51) explains. "Plutarch (*Caes.* 11.3) and Dio (37.52.2) both record this incident as occurring in Caesar's praetorship. But the story has more point if Caesar were approximately the same age as Alexander after his conquest in the East, than if he were several years older as he would be in 61-60 B.C.E. Plutarch says that he read about Alexander in a book. But there is no reason to doubt the story about the image." If Suetonius had followed the version given by Plutarch, however, the lack of the statue in the earlier passage as well as the age comparison and plans to conquer the East would have both lacked emphasis. Instead, the tradition allows for the two anecdotes to be ring paired and to convey a greater rhetorical message about Caesar's underlying character motive to emulate Alexander the Great.

### C. Corollary Attributes

Beyond the connection of anecdotes, the ring composition can likewise be revealed through correlating themes of behavior. For example, in *Caligula C* Suetonius discusses the emperor's scandalous sexual behavior, including his incest with his sisters and his shameful ways of beginning and ending his marriages (24-25). This behavior is likewise repeated in C<sup>1</sup> when the narrative covers Caligula's homoerotic activities, his seduction of senators' wives, and his love for unnatural pleasures and luxuries (36-37). *Caligula C* is located 23 chapters from the beginning of the biography, just as C<sup>1</sup> is located 23 chapters from the end. The fact that these two sections are spaced at exactly the same number of chapters from their respective ends of the biography, and even more so the correlating theme of their content, strongly suggests that they are ring paired.<sup>5</sup> The correlation between the two sections suggest a proclivity towards sexual immorality that is consistent throughout Caligula's life, and which is rendered the more vivid through the use of ring parallels.

### D. Contradictory Attributes

Matching rings need not suggest that the content always correlates and shows consistency. To the contrary, Suetonius more often than not employs cross-structural references to demonstrate contradictory, and even hypocritical, behavior on the part of the *princeps*. A strong example of this is in *Claudius G* when Suetonius' discusses the emperor's

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<sup>5</sup> It must be conceded that not all of the rings discussed in this thesis will align at exactly the same chapter numbers from each end of the biography. However, as has been previously addressed above (see pgs. 13-14), these chapter numbers were not the exact basis for my thematic diagrams. If the chapter divisions happen to align, it just further shows that textual editors have also identified these subject changes before.

early *ciuilitas* during his reign: *At in semet augendo parcus atque ciuilis praenomine Imperatoris abstinuit* (“But in establishing himself he was sparing and courteous, refraining from the title Imperator,” 12.1). This behavior in G<sup>1</sup> is explicitly abandoned and contradicted: *Sed nihil aeque quam timidus ac diffidens fuit. primis imperii diebus quanquam, ut diximus, iactator civilitatis, neque conuiuia inire ausus est nisi ut speculatores cum lanceis circumstarent* (“But he was fearful and distrusting equal to nothing else. Although in the first days of his reign, as we have discussed, he was a displayer of courtesy, he did not dare to enter banquets unless guards with lances stood around him,” 35.1).

Thus the depiction of Claudius in *Claudius* G explicitly contrasts with the one of him in G<sup>1</sup>. As Mottershead (1986: 126) explains, “In chapter 12, Suetonius recorded examples of Claudius’ *ciuilitas*. Now he offers a glimpse of aspects of Claudius’ behavior which would certainly have offended the Senate.” Beyond the thematic distinction, many other indications between these two passages point towards their ring pairing. First, G and G<sup>1</sup> are each located precisely 11 chapters away from their respective ends of the biography. Next there is shared vocabulary between the two sections: *ciuilis* in G and its noun form *ciuilitas* in G<sup>1</sup>. Furthermore, Hurley (2001: 107) observes that there is a similar alignment of adjectives in each of the two chapters: *parcus atque ciuilis* (12.1) and *timidus ac diffidens* (35.1). Finally, and perhaps most revealing, G<sup>1</sup> even explicitly refers to the previous section with the statement *ut diximus*. Thus the text effectively acknowledges a ring pair for these two sections. The contradiction between the behaviors in these two sections suggests an inconsistency within the *ethos* of Claudius that caused him to act in a hypocritical fashion, ultimately detracting from the previously praiseworthy behavior.

## E. Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated the methods and terms by which the ring composition can be organized and conveyed. Throughout the rest of this analysis, attention must be paid to how the chapter divisions help follow the progression of the subject headings (*per species*) towards which Suetonius has directed the reader. Key philological indications, such as intratextual references and repeated vocabulary, can likewise demonstrate concrete links between parallel sections of the biography. While evaluating the historical value of Suetonius' technique, the critical issue at stake is how Suetonius' narrative structure improves our understanding of the central subject. Suetonius employs several anecdotes to illustrate key moments that shaped the life of a *princeps* and influenced his later decisions. Correlation between an emperor's actions in two sections can be used to highlight a consistent attribute in an emperor's *ethos* that persists throughout his life and reign. Contradictory behavior, however, can illustrate the defective aspects of an emperor's character, many of which can even result in open hypocrisy. These terms and trends will serve as the methods by which we can evaluate ring composition throughout the remainder of this thesis in order to both identify the structure and to elucidate how Suetonius uses it to convey a rhetorical message about his subject.

## Chapter 2: Common Thematic Pairs

The next stage of this thesis will be to analyze the most common thematic pairs that are found throughout the twelve biographies of Suetonius' *De Vita Caesarum*. Each biography follows a general pattern of organization. As Mellor (1999: 148) explains, "Each *Life* begins with a brief account of the birth and family background and concludes with a record of the emperor's death." While the organization at the beginning and end is fairly uniform, Mellor (148) continues, "the bulk of the biography is organized by categories like appearance, style of life, intellectual interests, entertainments provided, virtues and vices." I have organized such categories under similar terms into thematic pairs, but no two *Lives* are identical in their arrangement of theme. Thus I have arranged the order of the material in the most common sequence I could identify, starting from the outside of the biography (ancestry/legacy) and working towards the middle (center rings). The most frequently occurring thematic pairs are important for identifying what Suetonius views as the principal aspects of a *princeps*, in terms of both his private life and public career, and how these subject headings flesh out his central *ethos*.

### A. Ancestry/Legacy

The first chapters of the standard Suetonian *Life* begin with an account of both the distant and more recent ancestors of the *princeps*. Correspondingly, the average closing for a biography does not normally end immediately at the subject's death, but usually contains a few final chapters reflecting on the subject's legacy. In terms of the sections' composition, an emperor's ancestry and legacy are plainly ring paired. This connection becomes particularly evident when we consider that the *Lives* with longer sections at the beginning

discussing the subject's ancestry tend to have more chapters at the end treating his legacy. The narrative of the first five chapters of *Nero* (1-5), for example, discusses Nero's ancestors before reaching the chapter discussing his birth (6.1); accordingly, after Nero's death, the final seven chapters (51-57) deal with reflections upon his life and legacy. Likewise, in *Tiberius* the first four chapters (1-4) discuss Tiberius' ancestors before his birth (5.1), and the final three chapters (74-76) deal with his legacy after his death (73.1).

The opposite occurs in those *Lives* whose opening sections contain a relatively shorter account of the subject's ancestry, a phenomenon that generally occurs when an emperor's heredity has already been discussed at length in a previous biography. In *Claudius*, for example, the prominent ancestors of the Claudian family had already been discussed in *Tiberius*. As a result, only Claudius' father is discussed<sup>6</sup> in the first chapter prior to Claudius' birth (2.1), while after the account of Claudius' death (45.1) only one chapter at the end (46) is spent reflecting on Claudius' legacy. For an emperor whose ancestors and father both have been discussed in a previous biography, such as in the case of *Titus*, there appears an even shorter section at the end reflecting upon his legacy; in *Titus* the emperor is born in the first chapter (1) and dies in the last (11), with only one sentence at the end discussing Titus' legacy. Thus in *De Vita Caesarum* we find a rather consistent stylistic pattern in *De Vita Caesarum* of ring pairing the ancestry content with relatively equal portions of legacy content.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> The same pattern occurs in *Caligula*: his father's cremation is mentioned at the end of the first chapter (1.2), just as Caligula's cremation is mentioned in the second chapter to the close of the biography (59.1). This leaves one chapter at the end (60) to discuss Caligula's legacy.

<sup>7</sup> There does occur an exception to this pattern in *Domitian*. Both Domitian's ancestors and father had been discussed in *Vespasian*, and, accordingly, the first chapter (1) begins immediately with Domitian's birth; however, the closing chapter (23) does not deal with Domitian's death, which occurs instead in 17. This then leaves six chapters (18-23) at the end

This pattern could even be helpful for estimating the length of the lost portion of Julius Caesar's biography. As Reynolds (1983: 399) explains, "The archetype for the text we now have had lost its first quaternion, so that we lack not only the prologue but also the beginning of the first life, *Divus Iulius*." Accordingly, the text for *Julius* does not begin at the normal starting point discussing Caesar's distant ancestors, but instead picks up at the death of Caesar's father, the likely ending point for the ancestry. A comparison between the language and structure of *Julius* and *Augustus*, biographies of relatively equal length,<sup>8</sup> could provide a probable estimate for how much content is lost at the beginning of *Julius*. The text for *Julius* begins with the following language: *Annum agens sextum decimum patrem amisit* ("He lost his father in his sixteenth year," 1.1). In the eighth chapter of *Augustus* very similar language likewise appears: *Quadrimum patrem amisit* ("at the age of four he lost his father," 8.1). This statement in *Augustus*, occurring after the first seven chapters (1-7), could suggest that the very similar statement in *Julius* may have occurred likewise after about seven chapters of content.

This possibility becomes strengthened when we observe that the final legacy chapters of *Julius* (83-89) following the account of Caesar's death (82) likewise cover a span of seven chapters, matching the estimated number of chapters suggested by the structural parallel in *Augustus*. While the beginning content of *Julius* is lost from the surviving manuscript tradition, the use of ring composition could provide valuable clues for reconstructing that lost material. This unknown content would most likely include a

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treating Domitian's legacy. While this goes against the usual Suetonian pattern, a strong counter point to raise is that *Domitian* is the last biography of *De Vita Caesarum*. Thus it makes sense to spend more time on Domitian's legacy, even though it breaks from normal stylistic patterns, as it provides a final and less abrupt ending to the entire work.

<sup>8</sup> *Julius* consists 89 chapters, subtracting the missing content, whereas *Augustus* is 101 chapters in length.

discussion of Caesar's distant ancestors, followed by his recent ancestors, and an account of his father's career. The discussion, however, could also have included an ancestral theme pertinent to the biography. For example, in *Caligula* 60 Suetonius says that every Caesar with the praenomen "Gaius" had died by the sword.<sup>9</sup>

In addition to the structural symmetry in having the ring composition match the comparative length of an emperor's ancestry with that of his legacy, the thematic pairing of the subject's forbears with his eventual destiny carries significant symbolic and literary value. While it may be objected that this is reading too much into the text, Suetonius himself explicitly states that the ancestry of a *princeps* reflected on his eventual destiny. At the beginning of *Nero*, when providing a list of Nero's prominent ancestors, including discussion of their virtues and much more numerous vices, Suetonius makes this claim:

pluris e familia cognosci referre arbitror, quo facilius appareat  
ita degenerasse a suorum uirtutibus Nero, ut tamen vitia  
cuiusque quasi tradita et ingentia retulerit (*Nero* 1.2).

I deem it useful to report that many members of his family are noteworthy, by which it will become apparent more easily that while Nero degenerated from the virtues of his own, nevertheless he still repeated the vices of each, as though handed down and innate.

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<sup>9</sup> Gaius Julius Caesar Strabo, for example, "The great uncle of the dictator ... became involved in a political conflict when he stood for the consulship without serving as praetor first (*Cic. Phil.* 11.11). He was killed during the bloody years when the dictator L. Cornelius Cinna (consul 87-84 B.C.E.) was in power" (Hurley 1993: 217). The shared themes of unconstitutional behavior regarding the consulship (cf. *Suet. Jul.* 20.1) and being persecuted by a dictator, as Caesar was by Sulla (1.2), would certainly have made Caesar Strabo a good ancestor to discuss for foreshadowing purposes.



Suetonius' claim that Nero's vices were *quasi tradita et ingentia* strongly suggests that the attributes of an emperor's ancestors can anticipate and even reveal parallels between his and their final destiny.

This need not imply an exact correlation between a specific ancestor's actions and the later actions of a *princeps*. As Bradley (1978: 29) points out, "It would be unwise and overly artificial to argue that the bulk of the biography takes up every single characteristic described in [chapters] 1-5." On a thematic and more general level, however, the discussion of Nero's ancestors certainly foreshadows many of Nero's own qualities, and even Bradley (1978: 29) admits "is of importance for establishing Suetonius' view of Nero's personality." For example, in *Nero M* Suetonius writes that one of Nero's ancestors<sup>10</sup> *in consulatu Allobrogibus Aruernisque superatis elephanto per prouinciam uectus est turba militum quasi inter sollempnia triumphi prosequente* ("after the Allobroges and Averni were defeated in his consulship, was carried through the province on an elephant with a crowd of soldiers following, as if among the ceremonies of a triumph," *Nero* 2.1). This passage in *Nero M*, however, need not imply that Nero himself will ride on an elephant in *M*<sup>1</sup>, as the relevant themes of ostentatious and immoderate behavior are certainly discussed in the corresponding ring pair. In *M*<sup>1</sup> Suetonius explicitly states that Nero possessed *aeternitatis perpetuaeque famae cupido, sed inconsulta* ("an avid desire for immortality and eternal fame, though ill-advisedly," 55.1). Thus there is a clear parallel between the attention-seeking and self-glorifying actions of Nero's ancestors in *M* and Nero's own legacy for desiring immortal fame in *M*<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>10</sup> Namely, Nero's *atavus* ("great-grandfather's grandfather," *Nero* 2.1), Gnaeus Domitius, the consul of 96 BCE.

While the ancestors of a *princeps* and his legacy can often correspond, as in *Nero*, the ring composition can also demonstrate contradiction and degeneration from ancestral glory. This may be observed in the first chapter of *Tiberius* when Suetonius discusses the patrician heritage of the Claudian family and how even the plebian branch of the family *nec potentia minor nec dignitate* (“was distinguished by neither less influence nor dignity,” 1.1). As Du Four (1979: 15) explains, “Pride of race was in the Claudians, and unbounded arrogance.” This aristocratic pride, however, is contradicted at the end of the *Life* when Suetonius’ states that Tiberius *obsignaueratque etiam humillimorum signis* (“sealed [his will] with the tokens of even the most low-ranked individuals,” 76.1). Lindsay (1995: 188) describes it is “a peculiar statement” that “these documents had been signed and sealed by witnesses of the lowest class,” but concludes that the passage shows “connection with Suetonius’ characterization of Tiberius as a debauchee, and hence associating with unsuitable types.”<sup>11</sup> Thus ring pairing here highlights Tiberius’ degeneration from his noble heritage into an ill-reputed and ignoble state.

Many of the biographies, however, contain statements to the effect that a *princeps* possesses both positive and negative aspects of family tradition. Again in *Tiberius*, Suetonius writes that *Multa multorum Claudiorum egregia merita, multa etiam sequius admissa in rem p. exstant* (“several distinguished merits of many Claudians stand out in service to the state, but conversely many offenses as well,” 2.1). In these situations, a *princeps* can often gravitate towards one or the other extreme. For example, during the discussion of the negative attributes of the Claudian family in *Tiberius* M, Suetonius writes

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<sup>11</sup> Lindsay (1995: 188) also states that the unusual statement can be plausibly explained “as a calumny invented by Caligula to justify the invalidation of the will.” While this explanation could provide a good argument that Suetonius obtained this detail from unreliable source material, it need not detract from the thematic spin it places in the narrative.

that many of the Claudians were *aduersus plebem adeo uiolentos et contumaces, ut ne capitis quidem quisquam reus apud populum mutare vestem aut deprecari sustinuerit* (“so violent and contemptuous towards the plebs that not even when being prosecuted for a capital offence before the people would any one of them bear to put on his mourning dress or beg for mercy,” 2.4). Likewise, this section includes the oft-quoted incident (cf. Cic. *Nat. D.* 2.7) wherein Tiberius’ infamous ancestor, Claudius Pulcher, is defeated at sea, after he drowns the sacred chickens that are unwilling to accept their feed, with the scandalous remark: *ut biberent quando esse nollent* (“may they drink, since they are not willing to eat [alt: “to exist”]” 2.2).<sup>12</sup>

This contemptuous behavior of Tiberius’ ancestors finds a parallel in *Tiberius* M<sup>1</sup> following the announcement of Tiberius’ death. This time, however, it is the people who are able to show their disdain and disrespect towards the aristocrat. Suetonius writes that *Morte eius ita laetatus est populus, ut ad primum nuntium discurrentes pars: "Tiberium in Tiberim!" clamitarent pars Terram matrem deosque Manes orant, ne mortuo sedem ullam nisi inter impios darent* (“At his [Tiberius’] death, the people rejoiced so much that, as soon as it was announced, some of them running about shouted: ‘Into the Tiber with Tiberius!’ Others begged Mother Earth and the infernal Shades that no resting place be granted to him in death except among the damned,” 75.1). Here we find many connections between the people’s actions in M<sup>1</sup> and those of Tiberius’ ancestors in M. First, it is stated that the Claudians did not wear mourning garb when on trial before the people. Accordingly, on the announcement of the emperor’s death, an occasion where mourning dress would be appropriate, the people instead run about in exultation mocking Tiberius’ memory. Clodius

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<sup>12</sup> A pun can be gleaned from two alternate readings: *ēsse* (“to eat”) and *esse* (“to be/exist”).

Pulcher in M drowns the sacred chickens after expressing the pun that the chickens should drink rather than eat (or exist), just as the people in M<sup>1</sup> pun that the waters of the Tiber should be the burial place for Tiberius' body. Finally, just as Tiberius' ancestors refused to beg for mercy from the people, the people in return pray that Tiberius be granted no mercy in the judgment of his deceased soul. The two passages show noteworthy parallels that highlight Tiberius' position among the worst members of his family during the final portrait of his character.

Suetonius also begins some of the *Lives* with statements that the ancestry of a *princeps* is uncertain and that there are conflicting accounts about his lineage, often with one account being positive and the other being negative. This is particularly demonstrated in *Vitellius* F when Suetonius discusses Vitellius' ancestry: *Vitelliorum originem alii aliam et quidem diuersissimam tradunt, partim ueterem et nobilem, partim uero novam et obscuram atque etiam sordidam* ("Some hand down one version, others another, and in fact of a most varying substance, concerning the origin of the Vitellii, some that the family was ancient and noble, others that it was actually recent and obscure, and even disreputable," 1.2). The positive tradition in 1.2 traces Vitellius' ancestry back to Faunus, king of the Aborigines, and early Sabine immigrants to Rome. Contrarily, in 2.1 Suetonius states that other traditions maintain that the founder of the Vitellian family was a *libertinum* ("freedman") and that one of his forebears was a *sutorem* ("cobbler") and that another followed the trade of a *furnariam* ("baker"). It is here made obvious that all of these occupations are characteristic of lowborn, non-elite persons.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Suetonius does, however, conclude *quod discrepat, sit in medio* ("may what disagrees [about these traditions] remain uncertain," *Vit.* 2.1). While Suetonius here is certainly taking a neutral position concerning the factual accuracy of either of these traditions, this need not suggest that

During the final days of Vitellius' reign in *Vitellius* F<sup>1</sup>, it becomes apparent that Vitellius, based on his companions and behavior, embraces the undistinguished and disreputable ancestral tradition. When news arrives that Vespasian's forces are approaching Rome, Suetonius writes: *Continuo igitur abstrusus gestatoria sella duobus solis comitibus, pistore et coco, Aventinum et paternam domum clam petit, ut inde in Campaniam fugeret* ("Immediately therefore he [Vitellius], concealed in a sedan chair with only two companions, a baker and cook, secretly sought the Aventine and the house of his father, so that from there he might flee into Campania," 16.1). Vitellius' plan to flee specifically through the Aventine and the reference to his paternal house could very well allude to the plebian background of the hill<sup>14</sup> and thus to Vitellius' lower status. After Vitellius despairs of this attempt, the account then goes on to say that Vitellius finally *confugitque in cellulam ianitoris* ("fled into the porter's lodge," 16.1). Murison (1992: 172) in noting that "Tacitus omits the number and occupations of Vitellius' companions," points out, "The *pistor* and *cocus* seem unlikely but Suetonius cannot resist one last stab at Vitellius' gluttony." In addition to this observation, it is likewise noteworthy that the occupations in *Vitellius* F, namely the freedman and cobbler, are no less ignoble than the cook and janitor mentioned in F<sup>1</sup>. In fact the two sections both share references to a baker, i.e. *furnariam* one chapter from the beginning of the *Life* (2.1) and *pistore* two chapters from the end (16.1). The ring pairing highlights how Vitellius (while his ancestry may remain uncertain) clearly takes on

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Vitellius cannot thematically embrace one tradition over another. Vitellius' ancestry may be uncertain, but his legacy, as will be shown, is clear and reflects the negative tradition.

<sup>14</sup> Syme (1956: 259) explains, "the Aventine signifies not the *Populus Romanus* but the plebs." Curiously, Syme finds evidence that Tiberius' praetorian prefect, Sejanus, had tried to garner plebian support by staging elections on the Aventine for his consulship in 31 CE. The connection is intriguing since both Vitellius and Sejanus died from public executions, had their statues torn down, their public memory obliterated, and were thrown into the Tiber after their deaths.

the worse tradition and embraces a retinue of ignoble persons and legacy of disreputable behavior.

### **B. Father, Birth, and Youth/Death**

Typically placed inward from the outermost ring of 'ancestry' and 'legacy' is the ring pairing of birth and death. As Lounsbury (1987: 64) observes regarding Suetonius' personal beliefs, "a man's demeanor in his last moments" is an important "test of his character." Accordingly, Suetonius provides a variety of symbolic details for the death of each emperor, some of which can be ring paired. For example, a subject can die very near to the location of his birthplace. In *Vespasian* K, Vespasian is born at Falacrina located in the area around Reate (2.1); likewise, in K<sup>1</sup> he dies at Cutiliae, also located near Reate (24.1), and as Braithwaite (1927: 67) points out, "very near to Vespasian's birthplace." An emperor's birth and death can also be paralleled in their circumstances. Suetonius discusses in *Claudius* L how the emperor was very sickly in his youth, so much so that the imperial family even tried to conceal Claudius' identity by having him assume his gown of manhood unattended at midnight (2.1). In L<sup>1</sup>, after the *princeps* is poisoned, his family once more tries to keep his death a secret until the situation can be fully exploited (45).

One of the most frequent parallels the ring composition connects with an emperor's death is the life and death of his father. Betts (1993: 48) points out that at the beginning of "the Suetonian rubric system, an account is generally given of the family history, which is followed by a separate heading covering the subject's father." The father's early placement at the beginning of a *Life* is often ring paired near the end with the subject's death. This is not a surprising connection, as in a broader Roman cultural context the death of one's

father was both an important legal and social turning point.<sup>15</sup> In the case of the emperor Claudius, for example, the beginning of the biography in *Claudius* L starts out with the career and death of Claudius' father, Drusus, and ends with an account of Drusus' tomb being struck by lightning in L<sup>1</sup>. Hurley (2001: 243) observes, "the biography returns to Claudius' father, with whom it began," and points out how in Tacitus' (*Ann.* 12.64) and Dio's (60.35.1) accounts it was instead the "praetorians' standards that were struck by lightning." Suetonius appears to be favoring a tradition that allows him to connect the beginning of the biography with the ending through references to the subject's father.

An even more striking parallel can be found in *Caligula* when Suetonius discusses Caligula's father Germanicus. Hurley (1993: 1), commenting on Suetonius' account of Germanicus (1-6), observes "The conspicuous juxtaposition of Germanicus and Gaius Caesar here at the beginning of the text introduces the comparison between them that is implicit throughout the *Life*, and it anticipates a second comparison, that of Gaius with his famous ancestor, another Gaius Julius Caesar, with which the text ends." Thus the ring composition compares Caligula with two of his famous ancestors. The comparison with his father is perhaps more prominent. *Caligula* L, for example, discuss Germanicus' widespread esteem and popularity among the people; L<sup>1</sup> in contrast discusses Caligula's widespread hatred among the people and the conspiracies undertaken against his life.

Perhaps even more striking is an anecdotal pairing found in the description of both Germanicus' and Caligula's cremation. In *Caligula* N, when Germanicus' body is cremated, Suetonius writes: *cor inter ossa incorruptum repertum est, cuius ea natura existimatur, ut*

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<sup>15</sup> As Frier and McGinn (2004: 18) explain, "when the *pater familias* dies, all the individuals who were subject to him start to have their own households, for they each assume the status of *pater familias*." Thus, the death of the subject's father and the subject's own death mark the beginning and end of his independent legal status.

*tinctum ueneno igne confici nequeat* (“the heart was found among the bones intact; the nature of which is judged to be that of [an organ] steeped in poison and not able to be consumed by fire,” 1.2). Before any other comparison is made to another section of the *Life*, it should be noted that this anecdote discussing a poisoned heart’s inability to burn is a telling trope for beginning Caligula’s biography. The audience would have certainly known beforehand of Caligula’s negative reputation, including his penchant for poison.<sup>16</sup> Thus, although this early reference to poison does not suggest that Caligula himself poisoned his father, it does foreshadow that poison will be a major theme of the biography.<sup>17</sup>

The ring composition, however, appears to highlight a yet darker aspect of this anecdote in *Caligula* N<sup>1</sup>. At the end of the life, when Caligula’s body is initially cremated, Suetonius writes: *Cadaver eius clam in hortos Lamianos asportatum et tumultuario rogo semiambustum leui caespite obrutum est* (“His body was carried away secretly into the Lamian gardens and, having been half-burned on a hastily constructed funeral pyre, was buried in shallow soil,” 59.1). Although Suetonius in the passage mentions immediately afterwards that Caligula’s sisters later returned and fully burned the remains, the discussion of the body’s original and only partial cremation carries considerable symbolic power. Hurley (1993: 213) points out, “The hastily constructed pyre, the body not fully burned and the shallow grave are tokens of haste and disrespect.” Further, Caligula’s

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<sup>16</sup> For example, near the end of the biography (*Cal.* 49.3), Suetonius states that one of Caligula’s chests was found to contain a wide variety of poisons, and that when Claudius had this thrown into the sea many dead fish floated up to the surface of the water.

<sup>17</sup> In fact, *venenum* (“poison”) and its adjectival form *venenatus* have ten instances in *Caligula* (1.2 [twice]; 12.2; 23.2; 23.3; 29.1; 38.2; 49.3; 55.2 [twice]). Compared to the substantially larger biographies of *Julius*, which has no instance, and *Augustus*, which has two (11.1; 17.4) this vocabulary is a prominent trope. It is surpassed only slightly in *Nero*, which has eleven instances (2.3; 33.1; 33.2 [thrice]; 34.2; 35.5; 36.2; 43.1; 47.1; 47.3), and it is perhaps not surprising that the two bad emperors share this characteristic.



unburned corpse in 59 could be an allusion to the poisoned and unburned heart of his father in 1. The fact that Germanicus' heart does not burn because it is steeped in poison rouses some symbolic considerations for why Caligula's body is also not wholly burned.

While Suetonius is certainly not suggesting that Caligula's body is literally steeped in poison, it is worth considering the interpretation that Caligula's whole essence and character were so poisonous that the body did not fully burn, as is foreshadowed by the poisoned and unburned heart of his father. Some might criticize this as reading too far into the text; it should be noted, however, that Suetonius also writes that before Caligula's sisters fully cremated his remains, *hortorum custodes umbris inquietatos; in ea quoque domo, in qua occubuerit, nullam noctem sine aliquo terrore transactam, donec ipsa domus incendio consumpta sit* ("the watchmen of the gardens were haunted by ghosts; in the same house too, where he lay dead, no night passed without some terror, until the house itself was consumed by fire," *Cal.* 59.1). Thus while Caligula's body remains intact, so too persists the poisoned nature of his spirit, until at last both are extinguished by fire.<sup>18</sup>

A detail about an emperor's childhood can also provide foreshadowing for the eventual nature of his death. In *Domitian*, for example, a peculiar story is reported in *Domitian A* that as a child *corruptum Domitianum et a Nerva successore mox suo* ("Domitian was corrupted even by Nerva who was the next successor to himself," 1.1). Commenting on this somewhat abrupt detail, Jones (2002: 122) states, "At first sight, this reference is

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<sup>18</sup> The trope of incomplete cremations, such as with Germanicus and Caligula, occurs elsewhere in ancient literature and with mixed symbolism. For example, in Plutarch's *Pyrrhus* (3.4-5), Pyrrhus' right foot has the ability to cure spleens when placed on people's backs and, following his cremation, the large toe on the this foot remains intact and unharmed by the fire. Thus, while the incomplete cremations of Germanicus and Caligula represent sinister circumstances (i.e. poison and hauntings), Pyrrhus' suggests divine and positive attributes. The point to take away, however, is that an incomplete cremation is always symbolic.

puzzling, as Nerva is not only mentioned but identified precisely. Suetonius, writing almost certainly under Hadrian, appears to be accusing the emperor's (adoptive) grandfather of sodomy."<sup>19</sup> If one approaches the passage from a strictly historical point of view, the rumor certainly appears dubious and out of place. As Mooney (1979: 508) argues, "There does not seem to be any evidence in support of the charge against him mentioned here."

However, from the vantage point of ring composition, the story's placement is perfectly reasonable, and makes an interesting point. The mention of Nerva in the very first chapter of the *Life* provides foreshadowing for the eventual circumstances of Domitian's death and succession, where Nerva is specifically named as the successor. Furthermore, the fact that Nerva debauches Domitian anticipates that the nature of the succession will not take place in a legal or proper manner. Normally the succeeding *princeps* is younger and adopted by his predecessor. However, the pederastic relationship places Nerva early on in a position of greater age and superiority. Thus the result is that Nerva's accession, from the perspective of normal practice, appears to be almost a regressive movement. The same dilemma of an older *princeps* succeeding a younger one is likewise noted in *Galba* (8.2) and connected with the problem of heirship. This reference could allude to Nerva's similar problems with heirship that resulted in his adoption of Trajan, and thus to events beyond the work. Regardless, the ring composition clearly provides a beginning event in the childhood of the *princeps* that foreshadows the circumstances surrounding his death.

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<sup>19</sup> Given Hadrian's open relationship with Antinous, I have difficulty seeing why Jones finds this detail so surprising.

### C. Divinatory Signs

Connected with the birth and death of each emperor are the various signs that both predict and anticipate the nature of these events. These signs can manifest themselves through all manners of divination, ranging from augury and sacrifice to dreams and portents. Suetonius, as well as other imperial authors, treats these signs as pivotal points in his narrative. In *Augustus*, for example, Suetonius spends four lengthy chapters (94-97) discussing all the various signs connected with Augustus' birth, reign, and death. The emperor's accession and downfall (for those rulers who are overthrown) can likewise be a rich subject for divinatory signs. Prior to the downfall of Nero, Suetonius invests nearly a whole chapter in discussing the content of Nero's dreams, which include such vivid details as Nero being attacked by his wife Octavia, being walled in by statues in Pompey's theatre, and even being consumed by a swarm of winged ants (*Nero* 46). As can be seen in *Nero*, the divinatory signs can be both positive and negative, depending on the outcome of the predicted event.

Evidence that Suetonius sincerely believed in the predictive power of these signs is not only found not only in his *De Vita Caesarum*. A letter to Suetonius from the younger Pliny survives, in which Suetonius seems genuinely concerned about the outcome of a pending lawsuit, based on a foreboding he had received in a dream. Pliny responds to Suetonius:

Scribis te perterritum somnio uereri ne quid aduersi in actione patiaris; rogas ut dilationem petam, et pauculos dies, certe proximum, excusem (*Ep.* 1.18.1).<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> All citations of Pliny's *Epistulae* are to the Schuster Teubner. All translations are my own.

You write that frightened by a dream you dread that you will suffer some setback in our lawsuit; you ask that I seek a postponement, and that I excuse us for a very few days, or certainly for the next one.

Pliny's letter illustrates quite vividly how Suetonius trusted in the predictive power of dreams, enough even to apply his interpretation of one to an important legal decision in his own life. Given his personal attitudes about such signs, it is no surprise that his *Lives* abound in popular anecdotes about portents and prophecies concerning the emperors. Wallace-Hadrill (1983: 193) elaborates, "Suetonius himself clearly took prognostication seriously. But more important, his evidence shows how seriously it was taken by others at every social level, and how deeply imbedded it was in imperial culture." Although in a modern secular culture the use of such signs may appear irrational, it is important to remember that they can reveal much about Roman culture. As Wallace-Hadrill (1995: 191) elaborates, "Suetonius' signs are better not taken as evidence of his personal failings; it is more revealing to use them to interpret the norms of his society."

Given their prominent role in a broader Roman cultural context, it is not surprising that the signs very often serve as pivotal points in the narrative and are ring paired. In *Otho* B, for example, an important sign occurs relevant to both the downfall of Galba and the accession of Otho. During a sacrifice that both Galba and Otho are attending, a soothsayer predicts to Galba unfavorable auspices (*Otho* 6.2). Otho, however, who overhears this prediction, realizes that the omen is actually favorable to himself. Accordingly he proceeds with his conspiracy and succeeds in killing Galba (6.3). Otho's good fortune with signs ceases, however, in B<sup>1</sup> when he undertakes his campaign against Vitellius. Before the war begins, a victim to Dis reveals good auspices, even though, as Suetonius explains, adverse

auspices were considered more favorable in this type of sacrifice (8.3). Furthermore, the Tiber floods and collapsed buildings hinder Otho's war march. Here, the sign that predicts Otho's accession in B is ring paired with those that anticipate his downfall in B<sup>1</sup>. The ring pairing can likewise reflect on an emperor's desire to control and restrict signs that are unfavorable to himself. In *Tiberius* H Tiberius receives several good signs that predict his future reign (14); in H<sup>1</sup>, however, Tiberius attempts to ban all oracles near Rome, fearing the divine power that may take away previous good fortune (63).

Other scholars have found evidence suggesting that the ring pairs can join not only signs across the *Lives*, but also series of signs that occur in individual chapters. For the presages recorded in *Tiberius* H that predict Tiberius' future reign, Gugel (1977: 47) finds that the individual portents can be arranged in triadic pairs, following an a-b-c-a<sup>1</sup>-b<sup>1</sup>-c<sup>1</sup> pattern.<sup>21</sup> In the first set, (a) Livia hatches a male cock when attempting to determine the gender of her future child (14.2), (b) an astrologer predicts that Tiberius will one day be a king (14.2), and finally (c) the altars at Philippi catch fire of their own accord (14.3). The sets of portents are then divided by the account of Tiberius consulting an oracle and throwing dice yielding the highest possible number (14.3). The corresponding triadic pair

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<sup>21</sup> Gugel (1977: 47) elaborates, *Die erste Dreiergruppe deutet auf die kommende Herrschaft des Tiberius, die zweite auf die unmittelbar bevorstehende Heimkehr* ("The first group of three points to the coming reign of Tiberius, the second to the imminent return home"), charting the pattern as follows:

a Natur (Tier)		a Nature (animal)	
b Prophezeiung		b Prophesizing	
c Feuer		c Fire	
Orakel		Oracle	
	Glück		Fortune
a' Natur (Tier)		a' Nature (animal)	
b' Feuer		b' Fire	
c' Prophezeiung		c' Prophesizing	
	Heimkehr		Homecoming

Although the pairs' correspondence is not ordinal, each set still shows matching themes.

then manifests itself when (a<sup>1</sup>) an eagle perches on Tiberius's house at Rhodes (14.4), (b<sup>1</sup>) Tiberius' tunic suddenly blazes while being changed (14.4), and (c<sup>1</sup>) the astrologer Thrasyllus announces the ship bearing news of Tiberius' homecoming (14.4). Here it is demonstrated that ring composition occurs both comprehensively and in more limited patterns throughout the *Lives*.

#### **D. Religious Offices/Attitudes**

Closely related to the divinatory signs are an emperor's own religious attitudes and the religious duties he performs as *princeps*. In these situations, the emperor must walk a fine line between serving as a representative of divine will on earth and possibly committing religious blasphemy. Augustus, for example, in *Augustus* H<sup>1</sup> dresses in an Apollo costume when attending the δωδεκάθεος<sup>22</sup> banquet, which incites popular resentment due to a current famine (70). This behavior reflects somewhat poorly, however, on Augustus' public actions concerning Apollo in H. Adams (1959: 184) notes Augustus' popular connection with Apollo (70) and likewise notes that Augustus constructed the temple of Apollo next to his house (29) and stored the Sibylline books there (31). Both of these chapters average 30 chapters from the beginning, just as the description of Augustus' Apollo costume in H<sup>1</sup> is located 30 chapters from the end of the biography. Thus we find a contrasting ring pattern between H, where Augustus publicly sponsors the religious cultivation of Apollo, and H<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Carter (1982: 191) elaborates, "The winter of 39-38 B.C.E., when there were difficulties with the corn [grain] supply in Rome is a plausible time for this notorious 'banquet of the twelve gods,' but any time before 32 B.C.E is possible. The twelve gods were presumably the twelve Olympians: Juno, Vesta, Minerva, Ceres, Diana, Venus, Mars, Mercury, Jupiter, Neptune, Vulcan, and Apollo."

during the scandalous dinner party where Augustus is exposed for arrogantly dressing as the god.

### E. Liberal Arts, Greek, and Literary Studies

An emperor's liberal studies, particularly his Greek studies, can likewise be thematically paired across a *Life*. A unique aspect of Suetonius' biographies is that they occasionally include direct Greek quotes. As Townend (1960: 98) explains, "Throughout all branches of formal Roman literature there appears to have been a convention which prohibited the quotation of anything more than single words of Greek." Townend (99), however, points out, "In such a context, the Caesars of Suetonius are a striking exception to normal practice," as *De Vita Caesarum* contains "over forty passages ranging from single words to pairs of verses." The use of Greek quotations can often be ring paired. As Benediktson (1997: 168) observes, "The first oddity which strikes one reading the *Galba* for structural elements is the appearance of two *Greek* quotations, the only two occurrences of Greek in the *Galba*, four chapters from each end of the *Life* [4; 20]." Quite similarly, the only Greek phrases in *Tiberius* appear in F and F<sup>1</sup>, the former twenty-one chapters from the beginning and the latter twenty chapters from the end,<sup>23</sup> approximately with the same ring structure that Benediktson observes in *Galba*. In addition to the Greek, references to an emperor's early studies and his writings can also be connected through ring pairs. In *Claudius* J1. Suetonius discusses the liberal arts studies that Claudius pursued

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<sup>23</sup> There is a small exception, where a single Greek word appears in *Tib. 71: cum in quodam decreto patrum ἔμβλημα recitaretur, commutandam censuit vocem* ("When the word ἔμβλημα, 'emblems,' was read out in a certain decree of the senate, he judged that the word should be changed," 71.1). This passage merely treats a single word in the abstract; I judge it too minor to undermine the pattern of the Greek *phrases* being balanced proportionately.

in his youth, part of which includes mention of Claudius publishing some of his works (3.1). Mottershead (1986: 35), observing this early “reference to his published writings,” points out that “Discussion of Claudius’ writing is resumed in Chapter 41,” when Suetonius discusses Claudius’ histories, autobiography, and other published works in J<sup>1</sup>.

## F. Military Achievements

An emperor’s ability to wage war is another matter that receives substantial treatment in most of the *Lives*. The military achievements can be ring paired with a variety of other content. In *Julius* E<sup>1</sup> an interesting parallel is found between the discussion of Caesar’s written *commentarii* (56) and Suetonius’ actual account in E of the civil war itself (34-6). Likewise, there is a pattern in connecting an emperor’s physical portrait with his military prowess. In *Vespasian* H there is discussion of the emperor’s early military career in Britain for which he received triumphal regalia (4). In H<sup>1</sup> this account is paralleled with discussion of Vespasian’s body and his good health (20). The same pattern can likewise be found in *Claudius* D when Claudius receives triumphal ornaments worthy of his *maiestas* (16.2) and later in D<sup>1</sup> where Suetonius discusses the *auctoritas* and *dignitas* of Claudius’ body (30.1).

## G. Family Relations

The account of an emperor’s family also find parallels in ring structure. In *Claudius* K Suetonius discusses Claudius’ abuse from female members of his family, including his mother, grandmother, and sister (3.2), just as in K<sup>1</sup> he discusses Claudius’ murder at the hands of his wife (44). One of the most striking ring parallels dealing with family relations



is found in Nero. In *Nero E* when Suetonius discusses Nero's tragic stage performances, he specifically lists *Canac[h]en parturientem, Oresten matricidam, Oedipodem excaecatam, Herculem insanum* ("Canace in Labor, Orestes the Matricide, Oedipus Blinded, and Hercules Maddened," *Nero* 21.3). Warmington (1999: 50) observes that Suetonius' "readers might be expected to imagine connections between the incest motif in Canace and Oedipus with the allegations about Nero and Agrippina." A further interpretation of this passage, however reveals that Nero shares strong connections with all of these tragic characters.<sup>24</sup> In *Nero E*<sup>1</sup> Suetonius discusses Nero's murder of his family members, including his step-father Claudius, his step-brother Britannicus, his mother Agrippina, and his wives Octavia and Poppaea Sabina. All of these murders find parallels with the actions of the tragic characters in *Nero E*.

The most prominent connection is with Oedipus. Beyond the obvious parallel of maternal incest, which manifests in *Nero* 34.5 when Nero fondles and appraises his mother's corpse, there are perhaps more subtle parallels with Claudius and Britannicus. Suetonius states that Nero *parricidia et caedes a Claudio exorsus est* ("began his parricide and murders with the death of Claudius," 33.1). Just as Oedipus precipitated his rule in Thebes with the accidental murder of his father Laius, so too does Nero's reign begin with the murder of his step-father Claudius. Suetonius qualifies that Nero was not the *auctor* ("perpetrator") but was *consciis* ("aware") of his mother poisoning Claudius. Curiously, this is the reverse of Oedipus' situation, who actively killed his father but was not aware of what

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<sup>24</sup> It is noteworthy that both Seneca's *Hercules Furens* and *Oedipus* are contemporaneous versions of these stories, further demonstrating their popularity during this period. Given their submerged context in Roman society, it is not surprising that Suetonius' readers would be expected to understand implicit references to the events in these plays.

he had done, and so represents Nero as both less brave and more culpable than his tragic counterpart.

Nero next sets out on the murder of his step-brother Britannicus. Suetonius writes that Nero was motivated *metu ne quandoque apud hominum gratiam paterna memoria praeuuleret* (“by fear that he [Britannicus] might one day be more distinguished among people’s approval because of the memory of his father [Claudius],” *Nero* 33.2). The conflict between these two rival heirs once more finds a parallel with the Oedipus tragedy, this time in the case of the rivalry between Oedipus’ sons, Eteocles and Polynices. Just as the two brothers Eteocles and Polynices embark upon civil war in the *Seven against Thebes*<sup>25</sup> in order that one alone may obtain the throne, so too does Nero undertake the murder of his stepbrother to secure his position as *princeps*. Rather than openly fight Britannicus, however, as his tragic counterpart does, Nero instead resorts to a much safer strategy by employing his archpoisoner, Locusta, to poison Britannicus through a drinking vessel (33.3). Nero murders his stepbrother in a manner no less tragic than the brotherly war in *Seven against Thebes*, but once more by employing far more cowardly methods.<sup>26</sup>

The next murder described in *Nero* E<sup>1</sup> is that of Nero’s mother, Agrippina. Here a strong tragic parallel can be found between Nero and the *Orestes matricidam* (“Orestes the Matricide”) performance discussed in *Nero* E. This comparison between Nero and Orestes, identified here through the ring composition, is explicitly stated elsewhere in the biography, when Suetonius records a popular verse mocking Nero: Νέρων Ὀρέστης

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<sup>25</sup> Though written after Nero’s time, Suetonius and his audience would have been familiar with Statius’ *Thebaid*, which would further allow for implicit references to be understood about these events.

<sup>26</sup> Admittedly both Eteocles and Polynices die in their civil war, but Suetonius only has so much flexibility in adapting historical information to tragic archetypes.

Ἀλκμέων μητροκτόνος (“Nero, Orestes, and Alcmaeon - all matricides,” 39.2). A number of shared characteristics can be found between Nero and Orestes throughout the biography. One of the most striking parallels is found in an anecdote dealing with Nero’s infancy. While Nero is still very young, Claudius’ former wife, Messalina, send emissaries to strangle him, but the following sign frightens them away:

Additum fabulae †ad eosdem dracone e puluino se proferente conterritos refugisse. Quae fabula exorta est deprensus in lecto eius circum ceruicalia serpentis exuuiis; quas tamen aureae armillae ex uoluntate matris inclusas dextro brachio gestavit aliquamdiu ac taedio tandem maternae memoriae abiecit rursusque extremis suis rebus frustra requisit (Nero 6.4).

It is added to the story that the same men terrified by a snake creeping out from the cushion had fled away. This story arose from a [snake] skin being discovered in his bed around the pillows, which moreover enclosed moreover at the will of his mother in a golden wristband he wore for some time on his right arm, but at length threw away out of loathing for his mother’s memory and later, during his most desperate moments, sought for in vain.

This description of the snake in Nero’s bed in many ways resembles Clytemnestra’s nightmare about a serpent in Aeschylus’ *Libation Bearers* (523-539). In Clytemnestra’s dream she gives birth to a snake that then feeds upon her breast, which predicts her murder at the hands of her own son. While the account of the serpent in *Nero 6* does not exactly match Clytemnestra’s nightmare, it is striking how many parallels the two situations share: the mother, the infant, the emblematic snake,<sup>27</sup> and future matricide. The fact that Nero specifically associates the snakeskin with his mother’s memory strengthens

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<sup>27</sup> One might also imagine possible allusions to Hercules strangling serpents in his cradle and Zeus fathering Alexander by seducing his mother Olympias in snake form. Whatever the allusion, the snake symbolism certainly connects Nero to famous tragic and historic figures.

the connection between the snake and his mother's murder. Following Agrippina's death, yet another parallel arises between Nero and Orestes. Suetonius writes that after murdering his mother, Nero *saepe confessus exagitari se materna specie uerberibusque Furiarum ac taedis ardentibus* ("often confessed that he was tormented by the image of his mother and by the lashes and burning torches of the Furies," 34.4). Nero's fear again resembles the Furies hunting Orestes at the end of *Libation Bearers*. Unlike Orestes, however, who is pardoned during his trial in *The Eumenides*, Nero is never absolved from the guilt of his own matricide.

Nero concludes slaughter of his relatives in *Nero E*<sup>1</sup> with the murder of his wife Poppaea Sabina. Suetonius writes that Nero *ipsam quoque ictu calcis occidit, quod se ex aurigatione sero reuersum grauida et aegra conuiciis incesserat* ("also killed her by the strike of his heel, because while pregnant and sick she had confronted him with complaints when he returned home late from the races," 35.3). By murdering his wife in this fashion, Nero finds parallel with his stage play *Herculem insanum* ("Hercules Maddened") in *E*. In both Euripides' *Heracles*, and in Seneca's contemporaneous version of the story, Hera causes Hercules to fall into a state of delusion, during which he shoots his wife, Megara, and their children. While Nero's mental state is not explicitly discussed in 35, Suetonius' description of Nero *sero reuersum* ("having returned late"), in addition to Nero's reputation for debauchery, implies that Nero was drunk. The fact that Nero kills Poppaea while she is *grauida* ("pregnant") further parallels Hercules murdering his own children.

Thus we find strong and multiple connections between Nero's stage plays in *Nero E* and the murder of his relatives in *E*<sup>1</sup>. Each of the tragic characters Nero plays in *Nero 21.3* can be linked in some way to the murders he later commits. Warmington (1999: 50)

further points out that “All Suetonius’ examples ... involved extremes of emotion,” highlighting the dramatic nature of both Nero’s character and his actions. The account of Nero’s stage performances in 21 are placed twenty chapters from the beginning, just as the deaths of his family members in 33-35 are located at an average of twenty-three chapters from the ending. While the chapter spacing is not numerically exact, the numbers are nevertheless considerably close, and the strong thematic parallels between the two sections suggest a solid ring pairing. The ring structure between these two sections could be interpreted to show how Nero’s desire for theatrical fame doomed him to suffer the same familial strife characteristic of the tragic figures he emulated. While his desire was for the immortal fame of these characters, the full consequence of his pursuit was to likewise reap all of their misfortunes. This fits well into the theme of Nero’s immoderate desire for fame, discussed at the conclusion of the biography (55.1), and perhaps demonstrates that the real outcome was infamy.

#### **H. Public Morals/Sexuality and Luxury**

An emperor’s public enforcement of morals is very frequently contrasted with his private moral behavior through ring structure. By making such a comparison, an emperor’s virtues can be weighed alongside his vices, and the connection can even imply pure hypocrisy. In *Tiberius C* Suetonius discusses Tiberius’ measures to enforce public morals and to prevent licentiousness (*Tib.* 33-35). These actions are strongly contrasted with Tiberius’ own personal behavior after he retires to Capreae in C<sup>1</sup>, where Suetonius provides an extensive and detailed list of Tiberius’ perverse and extravagant behaviors (42-45). Likewise, early immorality can anticipate similar behavior later in the *Life*. In

*Caligula* H Suetonius writes that Caligula before becoming emperor used to disguise himself in a wig and robe in order to engage in drunken revelry at nighttime (11). Hurley (1993: 31) points out how “These youthful visits to low haunts in disguise prefigured” the “transvestitism (52) to come,” when Caligula in H<sup>1</sup> dresses in the costumes of various gods, including even Venus.

### I. Building Projects

What an emperor builds during his lifetime often figures as an important monument of his reign. The ring composition frequently pairs different aspects of the subject’s building projects. In *Julius* B Suetonius provides an account of Caesar’s public building projects (44.1-44.4) in comparison to the account in B<sup>1</sup> of Caesar’s private dwellings (46). The same pattern can be found in *Augustus* I when Suetonius discusses Augustus’ public works, including his famous claim that *marmoream se relinquere, quam latericiam accepisset* (“[The city] he had received in brick he left in marble,” (28.3). This is intriguingly contrasted in I<sup>1</sup> when Suetonius specifies that in his private dwellings Augustus made no use of marble decorations (72.1). A darker account of how the emperor treats the city can be found in *Nero*. In *Nero* G Suetonius describes Nero’s project to build fire-fighting platforms throughout the city (16.1). This stands in sharp contrast to G<sup>1</sup>, when Suetonius provides his account of Nero setting fire to the city (38). Bradley (1978: 100) comments, “The distinction between the commendable action, the replanning of the city, and the non-commendable action, the burning of the city by Nero (38.1) is sufficient for Suetonius to dissociate the two events in his biography.” But, while the two actions may appear

dissociated in a linear narrative, the ring composition is able to join them through their location in parallel sections of the biography and highlight their disjuncture.

## **J. Conclusion**

The analysis of the common thematic pairs in this chapter shows that certain attributes, such as ancestry and legacy are paired consistently throughout the *Lives*, as they are always located at the outermost edges of the biography. In these instances, Suetonius has shown that no matter the *princeps*, one's lineage plays an important role in shaping their character development. Other thematic pairs can be far more specialized to an individual *princeps*, such as we saw in the case of the family relationships in *Nero*. Regardless of their positioning or their extent of their articulation, however, the common thematic pairs demonstrate the qualities that Suetonius believes are important for every emperor. Every *princeps* is born from a heritage that influences his life, and he must leave a legacy to follow the transition of his death. The emperor's death connects with his birth, and often with the death of his father. The divine portents that foreshadow the rise of a *princeps* also predict his end. The religious offices an emperor performs and his private attitudes towards religion both reflect on how he performs his duty as a public religious figure. Literary studies, family relations, and sexual behavior are private aspects of an emperor's life that also bear public implications. His military achievements and building projects reflect on the initiative he took to improve and maintain the Roman state. These are the subject headings that, despite being placed in different orders and with different emphasis, Suetonius discusses repeatedly throughout *De Vita Caesarum*, but there is also the central *ethos* that is unique to each emperor.

### Chapter Three: The Center Rings

Of particular significance and interest to the study of ring composition in Suetonius are the center rings from which the other pairs emanate. These rings, located approximately in the center of the total chapters and content of each *Life*, tend to provide turning points within the narrative or at least momentary pauses in which to reflect upon the character and development of the subject. What is particularly interesting is that the center rings for each of the twelve imperial biographies tend to be unique in their content and theme relative to the nature of each individual emperor. Thus, far from finding a repetitive and tedious pattern generated uniformly throughout each *Life*, the center rings instead provide a distinct trope for each *princeps*, thereby demonstrating that no two are exactly the same. In essence, the center ring provides the culmination of the man's *ethos*, as it is, built up to by the other rings in the *Life*. Therefore, examining the center rings for all twelve *Caesares* will greatly aid in establishing Suetonius' view of their characters and personalities.

As has already been noted, one of the general functions for the center ring is to provide a turning point within the narrative. Many of the biographies contain explicit *diuisiones* where the text openly refers to a thematic change in the content. The most conspicuous and well known of these *diuisiones* are those found in *Caligula* and *Nero*. In the former, Suetonius clearly separates the positive and negative sides of Caligula's personality: *Hactenus quasi de principe, reliqua ut de monstro narranda sunt* ("So much as it were about the emperor, what remains must be told as though about a monster," *Caligula* 22.1). Likewise for Nero, Suetonius distinguishes between the emperor's meritorious and unscrupulous deeds: *haec partim nulla reprehensione, partim etiam non mediocri laude*



*digna in unum contuli, ut secernerem a probris ac sceleribus eius, de quibus dehinc dicam* (“I have compiled these acts [of Nero], some deserving no condemnation, some even worthy of considerable praise, so that I may clearly separate them from his shameful exploits and crimes, concerning which I will now speak,” *Nero* 19.3). Both of these *diuisiones* are very clear about their intention to separate the good and bad aspects of each emperor. It should be conceded that neither of these two particular *diuisiones* occurs in the center rings of their *Lives*, as each appears before it with Caligula’s in *Caligula* D and Nero’s in *Nero* F. This, however, can be most easily explained by pointing out that both Caligula and Nero are represented as notoriously bad emperors and Suetonius includes more negative content than positive in their biographies; hence their *diuisiones* are located earlier in the narrative. Other *diuisiones*, however, can be found in *Julius*, *Tiberius*, *Claudius* and *Domitian*,<sup>28</sup> which do occur around the center rings and are valuable for identifying a central thematic change in the *Life*.

### A. Julius Caesar

The center ring in *Julius* A includes both a reflective comment, a thematic change, and a distinguishing attribute about Caesar’s character. First, there is statement to the effect that Caesar’s death prevented him from achieving the scope of his ambition: *Talia agentem atque meditantem mors praeuenit* (“Death intercepted him as he was undertaking and contemplating such [plans],” 44.4). One of these plans, mentioned just prior, included

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<sup>28</sup> Suetonius certainly does not depict Domitian as a good *princeps*, which would suggest that the *diuisio* should be located earlier in the *Life*. Two possible explanations can be made about its placement in the center. First, one can argue that Suetonius’ account of Domitian, while still negative, is somewhat better than those of Caligula and Nero. There is also an important structural relationship between *Domitian* A and *Vespasian* L, which I will discuss later in this section (see pg. 62), that binds the Flavian *Lives* together.

*Parthis inferre bellum* (“waging war against the Parthians,” 44.3), which reflects once more on Caesar’s unfulfilled desire to rival Alexander the Great in conquering Asia (cf. *Julius M.* and *M*<sup>1</sup>). Next occurs the *diuisio* where Suetonius writes: *De qua prius quam dicam, ea quae ad formam et habitum et cultum et mores, nec minus quae ad ciuilia et bellica eius studia pertineant, non alienum erit summatim exponere* (“Before I say more about [his death], it will not be extraneous to discuss in summary those attributes that pertain to his appearance, dress, lifestyle, and character, and equally those pertaining to his civil and military interests,” 44.4). Here, unlike as in *Caligula* and *Nero*, the *diuisio* does not highlight a shift between positive and negative attributes, but rather a shift between the public and private aspects of Caesar’s character. The center ring likewise includes a physical portrait. As has already been discussed, an emperor’s physical appearance is often joined with an account of his military endeavors (cf. *Augustus K* and *K*<sup>1</sup>; *Claudius D* and *D*<sup>1</sup>; *Vespasian H* and *H*<sup>1</sup>). It is therefore intriguing that Caesar’s physical portrait is found in the center ring of the *Life*, thereby representing Caesar as the paramount general.

## **B. Augustus**

Next in *Augustus*, Suetonius uses the center ring to discuss the emperor’s *clementia* and *ciuilitas*. In *A*, located precisely fifty chapters from the beginning and end of the *Life*, Suetonius writes: *Clementiae ciuilitatisque eius multa et magna documenta sunt* (“There are many and great proofs of his clemency and civility,” 51.1). This statement located, right at the center of the biography highlights, Augustus’ moderation and benevolence as *princeps*, demonstrated by his restraint in employing his power except when necessary. When Augustus learns that a certain Aelianus speaks negatively about him, he contents himself

with the mild retort: *faciam sciat Aelianus et me linguam habere* (“I will see to it that Aelianus knows that I also have a tongue,” 51.2). Close by in B<sup>1</sup> there is the statement that Augustus refused the dictatorship (52.1), and that he disdained the title *dominus* (53.1). Likewise, in B there is discussion of Augustus’ seal, where he first uses the image of the Sphinx, then of Alexander the Great, and finally of himself, perhaps to suggest that what Alexander had accomplished as a general, Augustus surpassed as a civic administrator.<sup>29</sup> Accordingly, the center ring of *Augustus* depicts him as the paramount *princeps*, exercising his power abstemiously and employing non-violent means for governing the empire.

### C. Tiberius

The ring structure then takes a darker twist in the case of the emperor Tiberius. A and A<sup>1</sup>, describe two contradictory dilemmas Tiberius faces. First, in A Tiberius is constantly occupied in Rome and never able to leave the city. Suetonius writes: *Biennio continuo post adeptum imperium pedem porta non extulit; sequenti tempore praeterquam in propinqua oppida et, cum longissime, Antio tenuis nusquam a fuit, idque perraro et paucos dies* (“For two whole years after he obtained the imperial power he never set foot beyond the gate [of Rome]; in the time following he was never away further than the nearby towns and, when

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<sup>29</sup> The desire to emulate Alexander the Great is a frequent trope throughout *De Vita Caesarum*. The connection between *Julius M* and *M*<sup>1</sup> has already been noted, but Caligula likewise steals Alexander’s breastplate (*Cal.* 52) from the very tomb, which Augustus had previously honored with a crown (*Aug.* 18.1), and Nero organizes a new legion of exceptionally tall soldiers called *Magni Alexandri phalange* (“the phalanx of Alexander the Great,” *Nero* 19.2). While the other three seek to emulate Alexander in a military capacity, Augustus is unique for his administrative connection with Alexander. Suetonius likewise states that when Augustus’ father made a libation to Father Liber in Thrace, a fire shot up so large that such an omen had previously occurred *unique omnino Magno Alexandro apud easdem aras sacrificanti* (“only to Alexander the Great alone as he sacrificed at the same alters,” *Aug.* 94.5). The symbolism of the Sphinx, in terms of a progression of advancement, is harder to glean, but Alexander the Great had conquered Egypt. Admittedly, the symbolism of this passage is more interpretive than concrete.

he was most at a distance, as far as Antium, and this only seldom and for a few days," 38.1). Although Tiberius makes some plans to travel abroad, he never carries them through, and is even mockingly compared to the Callippides, a Greek mimic actor who could simulate running while remaining rooted in one place (38.1).

In *Tiberius* A<sup>1</sup>, however, this dilemma is completely reversed. After Tiberius retires to Capreae, Suetonius writes *neque Romam amplius rediit* ("He did not return to Rome again," 39.1), despite later making two concerted efforts (72.1). The fact that the center ring in *Tiberius* highlights the emperor's inability to leave or return strengthens the argument of Thornburn (2008: 436) that "Tiberius' difficulties in spatial relationships manifest themselves in a cycle of withdrawal and return (or attempted return). This is especially evident in Suetonius' vocabulary in the *Lives*, where fifteen of the fifty-two occurrences of the verb *redire* ("to return") and its noun cognate, *reditus*, appear in the *Tiberius*."<sup>30</sup> In addition to the biographies' vocabulary, the center ring further demonstrates that difficulty with spatial relations was a key defect of Tiberius' character. Not long after Tiberius retires to Capreae, there is a *diuisio* in C<sup>1</sup> discussing the deterioration of his character: *secreti licentiam nanctus et quasi ciuitatis oculis remotis, cuncta simul uitia male diu dissimulata tandem profudit* ("He acquired the license of secrecy and, as if the eyes of the state were removed, unleashed all of his vices, poorly disguised for a long time, all at once," 42.1). From here the tone of the biography becomes markedly hostile, as it does with

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<sup>30</sup> Thornburn (2008: 436-7) further elaborates, "All but two of these instances refer to someone other than Tiberius making a return. Consider also that whereas in the *Lives* the verb *secedere* ("to withdraw") and its noun cognate, *secessus*, occur twenty-six times, nine of these are found in the *Tiberius*, with only one of these not referring to Tiberius ... Although *secedere* and *secessus* words do not always have a negative connotation in Suetonius' *Lives* – *secessus* can refer to a private place of study or a place for vacation – for an upper-class Roman male to withdraw from the public sphere and remain absent as long as Tiberius did was unusual."

the *diuisiones* in *Caligula* and *Nero*; it should be noted, however, that the *diuisio* in *Tiberius* takes place after the center ring, resulting in more positive than negative material being presented about Tiberius and perhaps mitigating somewhat his characterization as a bad emperor.

#### D. Caligula

For *Caligula*, the content of the center ring is even more negative. Suetonius places two of Caligula's most infamous quotes in A, the first expressing Caligula's attitude towards public disapproval: *Oderint, dum metuant* ("Let them hate me, so long as they fear me!" 30.1). Curiously, this is an intensified version of a previous quote attributed to Tiberius: *Oderint, dum probent* ("Let them hate, so long as they respect me," 59.1), likely meant to demonstrate that Caligula had proved himself even a worse *princeps* than his unpopular predecessor. A couple lines later there is Caligula's scandalous remark: *Utinam p. R. unam cervicem haberet* ("If only all the Roman people had only one neck!" 30.2). As Lindsay (1993: 122) clearly puts it, "These immortal words" aim "to show that Caligula was hated by all orders of society." Caligula's depiction in A<sup>1</sup> is no less in line with these sentiments when Suetonius writes: *Queri etiam palam de condicione temporum suorum solebat, quod nullis calamitatibus publicis insignirentur* ("He was even accustomed to complain openly about the condition of his own times, because they were marked by no public calamities," 31.1). The arrogant comments, impudent behavior, and evil desires all highlight Suetonius' view of Caligula as a tyrannical and even insane ruler. Thus the center ring for Caligula represents him as the paramount *monstrum*, in depicting only a few virtues that are outweighed by his overwhelming vices.

## E. Claudius

In *Claudius*, the center ring provides a more complex and somewhat neutral view of Claudius as *princeps*. In A Suetonius discusses Claudius' religious reforms: *Quaedam circa caerimonias ciuilemque et militarem morem, item circa omnium ordinum statum domi forisque aut correxit aut exoleta revocavit aut etiam nova instituit* ("Concerning certain ceremonies and civil and military customs, as well as the status of all orders at home and abroad, he either corrected or revived outdated customs and even instituted new ones," 22.1). Suetonius' tone towards these reforms seems largely impartial, though Hurley (2001: 158) does point out that they "call attention to Claudius' antiquarian fussiness." Next in A<sup>1</sup> Suetonius covers Claudius' legal reforms, which Hurley (2001: 160) notes is "dense with information" pertaining to a wide variety of issues.

The most prominent feature of the center ring is that Claudius appears largely to be proactive in enacting his favored measures, even when some of these seem bizarre and outdated. As Hurley (2001: 158) notes, Suetonius "implies that everything was done by the emperor himself – until the last sentence of chapter 25." Here Suetonius writes: *Sed et haec et cetera totumque adeo ex parte magna principatum non tam suo quam uxorum libertorumque arbitrio administravit* ("But he administrated both these things and the following, to such an extent for the most part of his entire reign not so much by his own judgment as that of his wives and freedmen," *Cl.* 25.5). Hurley (2001:158) describes this subject change as "an abrupt change in direction," which may be appropriately labeled a *diuisio* for the biography. From this point on the tone of *Claudius* becomes far more negative. Nevertheless, as with *Tiberius*, the *diuisio* is located after the center ring and leaves the negative content for a proportionally smaller section of the *Life*. Thus the final

portrait of Claudius given in the center ring is that of a *princeps* who enacts much that “appears sensible and to his credit” (Hurley 2001: 158); it would be a stretch, however, to say that Suetonius’ view of Claudius measures up to that of an emperor like Augustus.

## **F. Nero**

In *Nero*, as with *Caligula* previously, the center ring provides a view of the emperor that is unquestionably negative. For *Nero*, however, the center ring appears to stress Nero’s lewdness and immodesty more so than his tyrannical behavior or insanity. Both *Nero A* and *A<sup>1</sup>* discuss a wide variety of Nero’s perverse sexual behaviors, including Nero’s rape of a vestal virgin, his castration of, and marriage to, the boy Sporus, his incest with his mother, the habit of dressing in animal skins and mutilating people’s genitals, and finally a second marriage (this time with Nero in the role of wife) to his freedman Doryphorus (28-29). The most prominent ring pairing is that Nero marries Sporus who is made into an artificial female in *A*. and then Doryphorus, with himself masquerading as a woman, in *A<sup>1</sup>*. Both of these marriages stress Nero’s shamelessness and desire for unnatural pleasures. As Warmington (1999: 54) points out about this section, Nero’s “sexual vices are made the more disgraceful by the two contrasts.” Accordingly, the center ring provides a disgraceful view of Nero as a man entirely unworthy of imperial dignity or respect.

## **G. Galba**

For the biographies of the three emperors who attempted and failed to establish their rule in 69 CE - *Galba*, *Otho*, and *Vitellius* - the center rings in each are concerned with problems associated with becoming emperor, along with underlying causes of their

doomed efforts. While this is the most homogenous pattern for the center ring pairs found in the *Lives*, the characterization of each emperor and the nature of his downfall are all unique. In *Galba* A during the beginning of the revolt against Nero, Galba gives a speech deploring the state of the times, and Suetonius specifically adds the detail: *astante nobili puero, quem exulantem e proxima Baliari insula ob id ipsum acciuerat* (“with a boy standing beside him, whom, being an exile, he had summoned from the nearby Balearic isle on account of this very reason [the speech],” 10.1). From the immediate context, the boy is on display to represent the victims of Nero’s regime, although it is also conceivable that the boy alludes to and foreshadows Galba’s lack of heirs and his future failure to establish the adopted Piso as his successor (*Gal.* 17.1). Likewise, in 10.4 Suetonius discusses a division of cavalry almost deserting Galba and a band of slaves nearly assassinating him in a corridor. In 11.1 he nearly commits suicide when learning of Vindex’ death, but then marches to Rome upon the news of Nero’s suicide.<sup>31</sup> All of these incidents demonstrate the insecurity of Galba’s position, and the comments about the soldiers nearly deserting him and the assassination attempt even anticipate the eventual outcome of his death. Hence the center ring for *Galba* highlights his lack of heirs, his precarious claim to the *principate*, and his inability to maintain control over the military, all of which will eventually lead to the failure of his effort.

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<sup>31</sup> Curiously, Suetonius describes Galba marching *dependente a cervicibus pugione ante pectus* (“with a dagger hanging from his neck before his chest,” *Gal.* 11.1). This remark is peculiar since in Tacitus’ narrative of Galba’s death (*Hist.* 1.41) Galba’s body is hewn to pieces and it is specifically only his chest that is not struck due to a chest plate. Likewise, during Suetonius’ account of Otho’s suicide, Otho stabs himself specifically in the chest with a dagger and there are no other wounds mentioned (*Otho* 10.1). There may be a certain symbolism here, but it is hard to glean its meaning.



## H. Otho

The center ring for *Otho* likewise foreshadows the failure of his undertaking, but the emphasis this time is on the unscrupulous nature of Otho's ascent and the ambition that had pushed him to a point that he could not sustain. First, Otho is haunted by his betrayal, of Galba and even attempts to seek forgiveness<sup>32</sup> from his ghost:

Dicitur ea nocte per quietem pauefactus gemitus maximos edidisse repertusque a concursantibus humi ante lectum iacens per omnia piaculorum genera Manes Galbae, a quo deturbari expellique se viderat, propitiare temptasse (*Otho* 7.2).

It is said that on that night [the one of his accession] having been terrified in his sleep he let out the deepest groans and then having been found lying on the ground before his bed by those running to him that he attempted through all manners of expiatory rites to propitiate the shade of Galba, by whom he had seen himself thrown down and driven away.

Otho's reaction is one of fear and repentance for having taken the empire through treachery and assassination. The fact that he dreams of being overthrown by Galba in the same manner by which he had betrayed Galba almost certainly foreshadows his own downfall at the hands of another usurper. Next, when a storm arises while Otho is taking auspices, he repeats the line: Τί γάρ μοι καὶ μακροῖς ἀύλοϊς; ("For what to me indeed are long flutes?" 7.2). This quotation, the only one in Greek to appear in the entire *Life* and located at its very center, is likewise mentioned by Dio who explains: ἔστι δὲ τοῦτο

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<sup>32</sup> This behavior is characteristically Neronian. After Nero murders Agrippina, Suetonius writes that he *et facto per Magos sacro euocare Manes et exorare temptavit* ("having organized a sacred ritual with the Magi attempted both to call forth the shade [of his mother] and to entreat it," *Nero* 34.4). Likewise, Otho is called Nero above (*Otho* 7.1) and he does not refuse the title.

δημῶδες, ἐς παροιμίαν φέρον, ἐπὶ τῶν ἔξω τι τοῦ προσφόρου σφισι ποιούντων (“this is a common expression used proverbially concerning those who undertake something beyond which they are capable,” 64.7). The Greek proverb in *Otho* A is perfect for both illustrating the over-ambitious nature of Otho’s attempt and his own regret for undertaking it, both of which later result in his voluntary suicide.

## I. Vitellius

The theme for the center ring in *Vitellius* is equally concerned with his eventual downfall, although, unlike Otho, Vitellius shows none of the same signs of repentance. In *Vitellius* A Suetonius explicitly states: *confirmatum per legatos suos imperium per se retinere non potuit* (“he [Vitellius] was not able through his own ability to retain the power conferred upon him by his lieutenants,” 9.1). This statement directly claims that Vitellius did not obtain the *principate* through his own skill and thus was doomed to lose control over it. In the subsequent chapter Vitellius learns of his victory at Betriacum while he is still in Gaul (10.1), but nevertheless enters Rome (11.1) as though he were the victorious general. Along the way, when Vitellius visits the battlefield of Betriacum he exhibits the most base behavior:

Utque campos, in quibus pugnatum est, adit, abhorrentis quosdam cadauerum tabem detestabili voce confirmare ausus est, optime olere occisum hostem et melius ciuem. Nec eo setius ad leniendam grauitatem odoris plurimum meri propalam hausit passimque diuisit. (*Vit.* 10.3)

As he approached the fields in which the battle was fought, he had the audacity to encourage some men terrified at the decay of corpses with a detestable statement that a dead enemy smells best, but a dead citizen better. Nevertheless, in order to

lessen the heaviness of the smell by a degree he swilled a great quantity of strong wine openly and distributed it everywhere.<sup>33</sup>

Vitellius' disrespect for the dead is shortly repeated when he likewise mocks the small modesty of Otho's grave, claiming that Otho *dignum eo Mausoleo* ("was worthy of this mausoleum," 10.3). Curiously enough, however, Vitellius is the only emperor who does not receive burial following his own death. In the case of the other *principes* who die in violent circumstances and who have no public funeral, Suetonius always provides some detail for a private funereal gesture that puts their remains to rest.<sup>34</sup> For Vitellius' death, however, Suetonius merely writes: *apud Gemonias minutissimis ictibus excarnificatus atque confectus et inde unco tractus in Tiberim* ("on the Gomanian stairs he was slashed with the smallest cuts and finished off and then dragged to the Tiber with a hook," 17.2). Vitellius' shameful death and lack of burial by being hurled into the Tiber likely reflect the lack of respect he shows towards the burial of others in the center ring of the biography.

What is more striking about Vitellius' death is that Suetonius explicitly provides a portent in *Vitellius* A1 that directly alludes to the nature of his death: *Viennae pro tribunali iura reddenti gallinaceus supra umerum ac deinde in capite astitit. Quibus ostentis par respondit exitus* ("at Vienna while pronouncing judgment at the tribunal a cock perched on

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<sup>33</sup> I cannot help but think of Philip of Macedon's similar drunken revelry after the battle of Chaeronea (Plut. *Dem.* 20.3). Suetonius likewise mentions Nero drinking in the presence of his mother's corpse (*Nero* 34.4).

<sup>34</sup> For Caligula, whose body originally only receives an incomplete burning, his surviving sisters later return and fully cremate the corpse (*Cal.* 59.1). For Nero, two nurses and his mistress, Acte, hold a private funeral and bury his ashes in the tomb of the Domitii (*Nero* 50.1). Galba's body is at first decapitated by an angry mob, but his loyal servant, Argivus, later finds his head and places it with the rest of Galba's remains (*Gal.* 20.2). Otho's modest funeral is carried out by his loyal soldiers (*Otho* 10.2). For Domitian, his family nurse privately cremates his body, the ashes of which are then secretly carried to the temple of Flavians and then mingled with those of his niece, Julia (*Dom.* 17.3). Thus, only Vitellius receives no burial, a noteworthy deficiency.

his shoulders and then upon his head, to which signs an equivalent death corresponded” (9.1). A bad omen occurs likewise in A1<sup>1</sup> when Vitellius becomes the *pontifex maximus* on the *dies Alliensis* (11.2). Both of these signs are ring paired around the center of the *Life*, and Suetonius even explicitly states that the cock in A1 predicted Vitellius’ death. In A1<sup>2</sup> - the final chapter of the biography, which deviates somewhat for the normal ring composition, but still refers to the center ring, connecting it to the parting message - Suetonius writes:

nec fefellit coniectura eorum qui augurio, quod factum ei  
Viennae ostendimus, non aliud portendi praedixerant quam  
venturum in alicuius Gallicani hominis potestatem, siquidem  
ab Antonio Primo adversarum partium duce oppressus est, cui  
Tolosae nato cognomen in pueritia Becco fuerat: id valet  
gallinacei rostrum (*Vit.* 18.1)

The prediction of those who had foretold at the augury, which (as we have said) happened to him at Vienna, did not deceive; namely they had proclaimed that nothing else was indicated than that he [Vitellius] would come into the power of a certain man of the Gauls, since indeed he was slain by Antonius Primus, a leader of the opposing faction, to whom having been born at Toulouse there was the cognomen Becco in his youth, which means a rooster’s beak.

Here Suetonius explains outright that the *gallinaceus* mentioned in *Vitellius* A1 portended that a *Gallicanus* would eventually kill him in A1<sup>2</sup>. The fact that Vitellius became the *pontifex maximus* in A1<sup>1</sup> on the same day that the Gauls had sacked Rome in 390 BCE no doubt also refers to this manner of death. The ring composition clearly links the two anecdotes in the center pair to the ending message of the biography. Vitellius’ reign is not sanctioned by divine portents and his death comes to him as if through divine judgment.

## J. Vespasian

After the ominous and destructive center rings that occur in the preceding three biographies, the center ring for *Vespasian* offers a far more positive outlook. Vespasian, after restoring order to an empire shaken by civil war, is depicted in A rebuilding Rome: *Ipse restitutionem Capitolii adgressus rudibus purgandis manus primus admovit ac suo collo quaedam extulit* ("He himself having embarked upon the restoration of the capital first applied his hands towards clearing away the debris and carried away some of it on his own back," 8.5). Likewise Vespasian undertakes new building projects, most significantly, the *templum Pacis* near the forum symbolizing the restoration of peace and the end of civil war in the Flavian age (9.1). Furthermore, in A<sup>1</sup> Vespasian conducts order reforms and alleviates the backlog of lawsuits caused by the civil war (9.2-10). Thus, the overall depiction of Vespasian given in the center ring is that of the paramount rebuilder and restorer of Rome.

## K. Titus

In like manner, the center ring of *Titus* provides a favorable view of the Flavian dynasty as well as of the emperor himself. In A, however, Titus' loyalty to his father is initially called into question after his soldiers hail him as *imperator* following his taking of Jerusalem (5.2). As Suetonius explains: *Unde nata suspicio est, quasi desciscere a patre Orientisque sibi regnum vindicare temptasset* ("From this was born suspicion, as if he had attempted to revolt from his father and to conquer the kingdom of the East for himself," 5.3). However, Titus proves himself innocent of this suspicion when, learning of it, he hastens back to Rome and even greets his father with the words: *pater, veni* ("I have come,

father,” 5.3). Following in A<sup>1</sup> Titus shows himself to be a devoted colleague to his father and as Suetonius writes: *Neque ex eo destitit participem atque etiam tutorem imperii agere* (“From that point on he did not cease to perform as the partner [of his father] and even to be the protector of his power,” 6.1). Hence the depiction of Titus in the center represents him as both the partner of his father and the preserver of the Flavian legacy.

## L. Domitian

The positive depiction of the Flavian emperors ends with the center ring in *Domitian*. At the beginning of *Vespasian* in L, Suetonius even remarks that the Flavian family *rei p. nequaquam paenitenda, constet licet Domitianum cupiditatis ac saevitiae merito poenas luisse* (“should not be regretted in any way by the state, even though it is agreed that Domitian paid the deserved punishment for his avarice and cruelty,” 1.1). The center ring for *Domitian A* contains the exact same language as *Vespasian L* when Suetonius writes: *neque in clementiae neque in abstinentiae tenore permansit, et tamen aliquanto celerius ad saevitiam descivit quam ad cupiditatem* (“He persisted long in neither the course his mercy nor his temperance, although he did by some degree sink more quickly towards cruelty than he did towards avarice,” 10.1). Thus a repetition of the words *saevitas* and *cupiditas*, foreshadowed at the beginning of *Vespasian*, are found in the center ring of *Domitian*.

The statement in *Domitian A* may be properly understood as a *diuisio* that separates the content of A1 and A2 from the content of A1<sup>1</sup> and A2<sup>1</sup>. Suetonius at first discusses in A1 how Domitian was originally so disinclined towards bloodshed that he actually considered issuing an edict to prevent oxen sacrifice (9.1). Next in A2 Suetonius discusses Domitian’s respect for wills, his granting of property, and his restrictions against informers (9.2-9.3).

These two sets of behavior are then respectively contrasted with Domitian's actions in A1<sup>1</sup> and A2<sup>1</sup>. As the *diuisio* states, Domitian is first inclined towards bloodshed when in A1<sup>1</sup> he executes people on frivolous charges, takes pleasure in torture, and even feigns mercy before killing his victims (10.2-11). Likewise in A2<sup>1</sup>, after Domitian is left destitute by his excessive spending, he is next inclined, as the *diuisio* states, towards avarice when he confiscates the property of others, seizes the content of wills, and grants credence to any informer (12). Thus the center ring in Domitian is organized by an a-b-*diuisio*-a<sup>1</sup>-b<sup>1</sup> pattern, thereby exposing the emperor's two critical vices - *saevitas* and *cupiditas* - discussed at the beginning of the Flavian *Lives* (*Ves.* 1.1), which then reappear in the center of ring of *Domitian* to justify his death and to bring an end to the Flavian dynasty.

### **M. Conclusion**

As has been demonstrated in this chapter, the center ring provides a unique character portrait for capturing the *ethos* of each *princeps*. Julius Caesar's success is cut short by his death; Augustus is the paramount granter of *clementia*; Tiberius is driven into contradictions by his inability to ever leave Rome, or return, when he desires; Caligula wishes for nothing but misfortunes upon the Roman people; Claudius fusses over antiquarian traditions; Nero lacks any chastity or sexual restraint. The year of the four emperors in 69 CE casts each the short-lived rulers as pretenders, but their actions differ in their downfall. Galba's decisions are dictated by the insecurity of his position; Otho feels remorse for his betrayal; divine portents sanction the death of Vitellius. The Flavian dynasty offers regrowth and transition. Vespasian is the rebuildder of Rome; Titus serves as the partner of his father; Domitian's downfall is determined by his *cupiditas* and *saevitas*, but it provides the transition to the future emperors of Suetonius' own time. Thus, the

center ring for each *princeps* is unique, illustrating the intricacy of Suetonius' structural approach and the complexity of his views on each of his subjects.



## Conclusion

This purpose of this thesis has been to focus on the ring patterns found within the individual biographies. While the case has been made for internal structural patterns, there is still the question of whether a broader ring design organizes all of *De Vita Caesarum* together. Ring theory analysis in other ancient works, such as the *Iliad*, has demonstrated that ring patterns can operate both in smaller episodes as well as the larger narrative. As Whitman (1958: 258) explains, “the *Iliad* presents a vast hysteron proteron of scenes, in which episodes, and even whole books, balance each other through similarity or opposition,” arranged according “the Quarrel” at the beginning and “the Reconciliation” at each end. While a full analysis of a comprehensive ring structure uniting all of *De Vita Caesarum* is perhaps beyond the scope of this thesis, a few prominent patterns should be noted.

First, as the relationship between the opening of *Vespasian* (1.1) and the center of *Domitian* (10.1) has demonstrated above, there is a broader ring pattern uniting the Flavian biographies, *Vespasian*, *Titus*, and *Domitian*, together. Recent scholarship has likewise identified a similar structural pattern in the opening of *Galba* (1), which begins with an account of the aftermath of Nero’s death and the lack of an heir for the Julio-Claudian dynasty. Tristan (2009: 216) elaborates that scholarship for several decades has debated whether this passage, because of its content, “had originally been at the end of the account of *Nero*.” However, Tristan (220) argues, “*Galba* 1 unifies both its own *Life*, and the book that it begins by connecting the three emperor’s lack of hereditary succession.” Thus, the biographies of 69 CE, *Galba*, *Otho*, and *Vitellius*, can likewise be joined through a broader ring pattern.

Furthermore, there is a curious statement at the beginning of *Tiberius* that appears to unite the Julio-Claudian biographies: *Luci praenomen consensu repudiauit, postquam e duobus gentilibus praeditis eo alter latrocinii, caedis alter conuictus est. inter cognomina autem et Neronis assumpsit* (“[The Claudian family] banned by common consent the praenomen Lucius, after out of two from the family who bore it, one was convicted of robbery and another of murder. Among their *cognomina*, however, it adopted [the *cognomen*] Nero,” 1.3). This reference to the names Lucius and Nero could not help but call to the readers’ minds the emperor Nero, whose original name was Lucius Domitius Ahenobarbus. Suetonius furthermore specifies that after Nero’s death he was buried in the tomb of the Domitii (50), suggesting that he was not a legitimate Claudian. This connection between *Tiberius* 1 and *Nero* 50 indicates that the Julio-Claudian biographies, *Tiberius*, *Caligula*, *Claudius*, and *Nero*, likewise could be joined through a broader ring structure. Although the opening of *Julius* is now lost, one can speculate that this biography may also have contained a similar statement (perhaps an allusion to Caesar’s assassination and Augustus’ vengeance) that joined *Julius* and *Augustus* together.

Beyond the pairing of adjacent *Lives* into grouped sections, there is also the question of whether the beginning of *De Vita Caesarum* can be connected with the end, which would complete the twelve biographies as a collected work. A few similarities can be identified between *Julius* and *Domitian* that indicate a fully encompassing ring structure. These include the rumor about Julius Caesar’s affair with the Bithynian king Nicomedes (*Jul.* 2.1), which is very similar to the anecdote about Domitian’s early pederastic relationship with Nerva (*Dom.* 1.1). Likewise, both Julius Caesar and Domitian die from assassination; however, whereas Caesar perishes at the hands of senatorial conspirators (*Jul.* 82),

Domitian is slaughtered by a group of freedman and a gladiator (*Dom.* 17). These observations are just the beginning of an analysis that could flesh out a larger ring structure throughout *De Vita Caesarum*, which could answer the problems posed by Syme (1958: 501) and Townend (1959: 293) about the twelve biographies' original composition and whether they were designed, from the beginning, to be a comprehensive work.

For the scope of this thesis, however, a closer investigation of the narrative structure of Suetonius' *De Vita Caesarum* reveals that all twelve of the imperial biographies were bound through ring composition. Suetonius did not simply string together a catalogue of information, but rather composed the *Lives* according to an intricate and meaningful structure. By analyzing the information joined through the ring pairs, considerable insight can be gained into how Suetonius views the parallel attributes of a *princeps*, the role of fate in shaping history, and the final character of the subject. Benediktson's (1997: 172) observation that *Galba* "can no longer be perceived as a biography barren of research or of creative shaping by Suetonius" thus applies to all of *De Vita Caesarum*. It would thus benefit scholarship to not view the *Lives* as a straightforward catalogue of information that merely records Suetonius' research, but also to investigate the underlying structures that can contain significant implications. This approach will reveal that Suetonius was not only a biographer, but also a literary artist.

## Appendices: Thematic Diagrams

### Julius Caesar

- P. **\*\*Missing material about Caesar's ancestry and birth\*\***
- O. Father's death (1.1)
- N. Caesar's opposition to Sulla; Life in danger (1.2-5)
- M. Wife's descent from Ancus Martius; Alexander statue (6-7)
- L. Involvement in conspiracies; Proposed new Egyptian office (8-11)
- K. Caesar's political rivals; Call for leniency towards Cataline (12-20)
- J. Caesar's alliance with Pompey (21-22)
- I. Loyalty of magistrates; Gallic wars; Only three military defeats (23-25)
- H. Caesar bestows gifts to the people and aids foreign nations (26-28)
- G. Build up to civil war; Caesar politically maneuvers and disguises plans (29-31)
- F. Caesar's hesitance in crossing the Rubicon; Apparition; *Alea iacta est* (32-33)
- E. Caesar's civil war campaigns; Triumphs (34-37)
- D. Generous distribution of largess, banquets, shows, plays, and races (38-39)
- C. Calendar and Senate reforms; Caesar restricts immoral behavior and luxury (40-43)
- B. Public works and building projects (44.1-44.4)
- A. Caesar's projects are cut off by his death; *Diuisio*; Bodily Description (44.5-45)
- B<sup>1</sup>. Caesar's private dwellings and love of luxury (46)
- C<sup>1</sup>. Caesar's extravagant tastes; Nicomedes; Multiple affairs with women (47-52)
- D<sup>1</sup>. Abstemious habits; Debt; Unscrupulous methods for obtaining money (53-54)
- E<sup>1</sup>. Caesar's oratory and literary works; Military commentaries (55-56)
- F<sup>1</sup>. Caesar shows caution and daring in battle; Ignores religious omens (57-59)
- G<sup>1</sup>. Caesar attacks when least expected; Presence of mind in battle (60-64)
- H<sup>1</sup>. Caesar's discipline, popularity, and generosity among his soldiers (65-68.2)
- I<sup>1</sup>. One military defeat in civil war; No Gallic mutinies; Solider loyalty (68-70)
- J<sup>1</sup>. Caesar's loyalty and kindness to his friends (71-72)
- K<sup>1</sup>. Caesar's *clementia* towards enemies and restraint in victory (73-75)
- L<sup>1</sup>. Abuse of power; Excessive office assignments (76-78)
- M<sup>1</sup>. Caesar's statue is dressed like a king; Plans for Parthian war (79)
- N<sup>1</sup>. Opposition to Caesar; Ides of March conspiracy (80-81)
- O<sup>1</sup>. Caesar's assassination; καὶ σὺ τέκνον; (82)
- P<sup>1</sup>. Caesar's funeral and legacy; His assassins all perish (83-89)

## Augustus

- Q. Augustus' ancestry and family history (1-2)
- P. Father's career and death (3-4)
- O. Birth; Birth place shrine and nursery; Title Augustus (5-7)
- N. Civil wars; Philippi; Human sacrifices; Neptune blasphemy (8-16)
- M. Egyptian war; Antony's suicide; Tomb of Alexander (17-18)
- L. Quells revolts; Cantabrian campaign; Closes temple of Janus (19-22)
- K. Military defeats; Strict discipline; Preference for caution (23-25)
- J. Augustus' premature offices; Excessive violence in proscriptions (26-27)
- I. Public works and building projects; Leaves marble in place of clay (28-30)
- H. Stores oracles at temple of Apollo; Merciful administration of justice (31-33)
- G. Augustus' laws on marriage and adultery; Expels vulgar senators (34-35)
- F. Pays proconsuls; Assigns more offices; Grants triumphs to generals (36-38.1)
- E. Trains senators' sons; Expels immoral knights; Keeps citizens Roman (38.2-40)
- D. Augustus' generosity towards all classes; Extravagant public shows (41-45)
- C. Grants colonies voting rights; Respects loyal provinces and client kingdoms (46-48)
- B. Military reforms; Postal improvements; Seal of the Sphinx, Alexander, and self (49-50)
- A. Augustus' *clementia*; Toleration of criticism; "*sciat Aelianus et me linguam habere*" (51)
- B<sup>1</sup>. Augustus' temples in provinces; None at Rome; Augustus rejects title *dominus* (52-53)
- C<sup>1</sup>. Augustus feuds with Senate; Tolerates free speech; Modesty towards praise (54-56)
- D<sup>1</sup>. Love of the people; *Pater Patriae*; Honors paid by foreign kings (57-60)
- E<sup>1</sup>. Family; Trains grandsons; Rumor of foreign marriage; Punishes Julia (61-65)
- F<sup>1</sup>. Friendships; Loyal and expecting loyalty; Amiable towards dependents (66-67)
- G<sup>1</sup>. Augustus' rumored sexual immorality; Habit for adultery (68-69)
- H<sup>1</sup>. δωδεκάθεος dinner; Augustus' Apollo costume; Moderate behavior (70-71)
- I<sup>1</sup>. Private dwellings; No marble decorations; Simple furniture (72-73)
- J<sup>1</sup>. Formal dinners and festivals; Abstemious drinking and eating (74-77)
- K<sup>1</sup>. Physical appearance and poor health; Hasty grooming habits (78-80)
- L<sup>1</sup>. Illness at Cantabria; Gives up arms training after civil wars (81-83)
- M<sup>1</sup>. Literary style; Ajax tragedy; Greek studies (84-89)
- N<sup>1</sup>. Religious attitudes; Philippi dream; Regard for omens (90-93)
- O<sup>1</sup>. Portents about Augustus' birth, glory, and death (94-97)
- P<sup>1</sup>. Last days; Augustus dies in same room as his father (98-100)
- Q<sup>1</sup>. Augustus' will and heirs (101)

## Tiberius

- N. Tiberius descends from an aristocratic heritage (1)
- M. Tiberius' ancestors show contempt for the Roman people (2)
- L. Tiberius' recent relatives; Conflicting accounts of his birthplace (3-5)
- K. Tiberius' childhood and early career (6-9)
- J. Tiberius longs for seclusion; Augustus complains to the Senate (10)
- I. Exile at Rhodes; Tiberius' paranoia; Recalled to Rome (11-13)
- H. Prophecies, portents, and the oracle about Tiberius' accession (14)
- G. Tiberius' military and civic achievements (15-20)
- F. Praise from Augustus; Greek phrases (21)
- E. Tiberius' accession to the *principate* (22-25)
- D. Tiberius is modest and open in his government (26-32)
- C. Tiberius promotes public morals and limiting excess (33-35)
- B. Tiberius exiles astrologers; Strengthens the empire (36-37)
- A. Tiberius stays in Rome and never leaves (38)
- A<sup>1</sup>. Tiberius leaves Rome and never returns (39)
- B<sup>1</sup>. Tiberius goes into exile at Capreae; Allows the empire to be overrun (40-41)
- C<sup>1</sup>. *Diuisio*; Tiberius indulges in excess and perversion (42-45)
- D<sup>1</sup>. Tiberius is stingy and rapacious in his government (46-49)
- E<sup>1</sup>. Tiberius persecutes his family and heirs (50-55)
- F<sup>1</sup>. Greek phrase; Tiberius scorns Greeks and Augustus' memory (56-57)
- G<sup>1</sup>. Tiberius' abuse of power and cruelty (58-62)
- H<sup>1</sup>. Tiberius' restricts soothsayers; Attempts to ban all oracles (63)
- I<sup>1</sup>. Sejanus is suppressed; Tiberius' paranoia; Public condemnation (64-66)
- J<sup>1</sup>. Tiberius confesses his misery to the Senate; Foresees his destiny (67)
- K<sup>1</sup>. Physical description; Religious beliefs; Literary interests (68-71)
- L<sup>1</sup>. Last days; Conflicting accounts of his death; Death omens (72-74)
- M<sup>1</sup>. The Roman people show contempt for Tiberius' death (75)
- N<sup>1</sup>. Low born persons sign and seal Tiberius' will (76)

## Caligula

- M. Germanicus' career and death; Poisoned heart will not burn (1-4)
- L. Public concern and mourning for Germanicus (5-6)
- K. Caligula's relatives (7)
- J. Caligula's birth; Origin of the nickname "Little Boots" (8-9)
- I. Danger on Capreae; Caligula's power of dissimulation (10)
- H. Caligula's theatrical disguises; Tiberius compares Caligula to Phaethon (11)
- G. Fears about accession; Caligula becomes emperor; Near fatal illness (12-14)
- F. Caligula seeks popularity; Pardons condemned persons; Grants largess (15-17)
- E. Extravagant shows; Bridge across the bay of Naples; Foreign spectacles (18-20)
- D. Public works; *Diuisio*; Caligula connects his palace to the Temple of Jupiter (21-22)
- C. Caligula's contempt for relatives; Incest with sisters; Shameful marriages (23-25)
- B. Caligula's disrespect towards all orders; brutal executions; Pride in cruelty (26-29)
- A. Evil quotes: "*Oderint, dum metuant;*" "*Utinam p. R. unam ceruicem haberet!*" (30)
- A<sup>1</sup>. Caligula laments the stability of his time and desires wars, plagues, and disasters (31)
- B<sup>1</sup>. Caligula's impulsive violence; Disrespect for famous families and authors (32-35)
- C<sup>1</sup>. Caligula's homosexuality; Adultery with senators' wives; Unnatural luxuries (36-37)
- D<sup>1</sup>. Empty treasury; Auctioning and taxes; Caligula opens brothel in palace (38-42)
- E<sup>1</sup>. Mock military campaign with Britain and Germany; War with Neptune (43-46)
- F<sup>1</sup>. Expensive triumph; Plan to kill soldiers; Books of condemned persons (47-49)
- G<sup>1</sup>. Bodily portrait; Physical and mental illnesses; Conceit and timidity (50-51)
- H<sup>1</sup>. Extravagant outfits; Caligula dresses in the costumes of gods (52)
- I<sup>1</sup>. Caligula's loud voice and power of oratory (53)
- J<sup>1</sup>. Caligula plays the role of a gladiator, charioteer, singer, and dancer (54)
- K<sup>1</sup>. Caligula's favored persons (55)
- L<sup>1</sup>. Public hatred and conspiracies against Caligula (56)
- M<sup>1</sup>. Caligula's death; Body not fully cremated; Julius Caesar (57-60)

## Claudius

- L. Claudius' father; Claudius' identity is kept secret as a child (1-2)
- J1. Claudius' liberal arts studies (3.1)<sup>35</sup>
  - K. Female relatives abuse and insult Claudius (3.2)
- J2. Augustus' approval for Claudius; Greek quotes; no inheritance (4-5)
- I. Claudius' family scorns him at a young age; Mockery under Caligula (6-8)
- H. Caligula's assassination; Claudius secures the principate (10-12)
- G. Claudius is highly *ciuilis* in the beginning of his reign (12)
- F. Revolts and assassination attempts against Claudius (13)
- E. Claudius' political offices; Active behavior in court (14-16)
- D. British campaign and triumph; *maiestas* (17)
- C. Claudius shows initiative in importing grain and producing public works (18-20)
- B. Largess; Secular Games; Gladiatorial shows (21)
- A. Claudius' religious reforms (22)
- A<sup>1</sup>. Claudius' judicial reforms (23)
- B<sup>1</sup>. Triumphal honors and ovations; Order reforms; *Diuisio* (24-25)
- C<sup>1</sup>. Claudius shows little initiative and is ruled by his wives and freedmen (26-29)
- D<sup>1</sup>. Claudius' physical appearance; *auctoritas* and *dignitas* (30)
- E<sup>1</sup>. Slothful and gluttonous behavior; Love of games (31-33)
- F<sup>1</sup>. Claudius' bloodthirsty and cruel behavior (34)
- G<sup>1</sup>. Claudius abandons his *ciuilitas*; Intratextual reference to chapter 12 (35)
- H<sup>1</sup>. Fear of assassination; Execution of conspirators and Messalina (36-37)
- I<sup>1</sup>. Claudius' absent-mindedness, Erratic sayings and behaviour (38-40)
- J<sup>1</sup>. Claudius' Greek literary works; Repentance toward Britannicus (41-43)
- K<sup>1</sup>. Agrippina poisons Claudius (44)
- L<sup>1</sup>. Claudius' death is at first concealed; Father's statue is struck (45-46)

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<sup>35</sup> Here the ring pattern deviates somewhat by overlapping J1 and J2 with K.



## Nero

- M. Nero's ancestors desire undue honor and fame (1-5)
- L. Birth; Claudius; Trojan Games; Nero pleads in Greek and Latin (6-7)
- K. Claudius' funeral; Agrippina; Nero claims to rule like Augustus (9-10)
- J. *Incendium* stage play; Nero establishes the *Neronia* (11-12)
- I. Tiridates supplicates himself to Nero; Temple of Janus is closed (13)
- H. Consulships and justice admin; Nero issues edicts in writing (14-15)
- G. Nero builds fire fighting platforms; No desire to expand the empire (16-18)
- F. Planned trip to Alexandria; Isthmus project; *Diuisio*; Greek proverb (19-20.1)
- E. Earthquake at Naples; Nero performs as Orestes, Oedipus, and Hercules (20.2-21)
- D. Trip to Achaia; Nero rewards judges who confer prizes upon him (22-24)
- C. Triumphal procession through Rome; Nero adorns his bedroom with statues (25)
- B. Nero robs shops; Squanders loot; Passes the cost of banquets onto others (26-27)
- A. Nero rapes vestal virgin; Incest with Agrippina; Marriage to Sporus (28)
- A<sup>1</sup>. Lack of chastity; Sexual assault in animal costume; Marriage to Doryphorus (29)
- B<sup>1</sup>. Excessive spending; Nero praises Caligula for wasting Tiberius' estate (30)
- C<sup>1</sup>. Golden House spreads throughout the city; Colossal statue of Nero (31)
- D<sup>1</sup>. Poverty; Nero demands the return on rewards he had given in Greece (32)
- E<sup>1</sup>. Murder of kin, especially Nero's mother, stepfather, and wives; Comet (33-36)
- F<sup>1</sup>. Egyptian monster; Isthmus project; Greek quote (37-38.1)
- G<sup>1</sup>. Nero sets fire to Rome; Military disasters in the provinces (38.2-39.1)
- H<sup>1</sup>. Lampoons written in Latin and Greek are circulated about Nero (39.2-39.3)
- I<sup>1</sup>. Civil war begin; Astrologers predict that Nero will rise in the East (40)
- J<sup>1</sup>. Vindex calls Nero Ahenobarbus; Nero plans to burn Rome again (41-44)
- K<sup>1</sup>. Mausoleum opens; *Tu facies, Auguste*; Oedipus performance (45-46)
- L<sup>1</sup>. Vergil and Homer quotes; Death; Burial in tomb of Domitii (47-50)
- M<sup>1</sup>. Reflections on Nero's life; Desire for immortal fame (51-57)

## Galba<sup>36</sup>

- J. Destruction of statues; Nero (1)
- I. Mythological ancestors (2)
- H. Father, gibber (3)
- G. Greek quote, presage; Latin quote, old age (4.1)
- F. Portents and dreams; Fortuna (4.2-4.4)
- E. Marriage; Lack of heirs; Failure to collect inheritance (5)
- D. Use of power (6)
- C. *canescere* (8)
- B. Cruelty as administrator (9)
- A. Ascent to power (10-11)
- B<sup>1</sup>. *saeuitia, auaritia* as emperor (12.1-12.2)
- C<sup>1</sup>. Canus (12.3)
- D<sup>1</sup>. Abuse of power (14-15)
- E<sup>1</sup>. Failure to pay donative; Adoption of heir (16-17)
- F<sup>1</sup>. Portents and dreams; Fortuna (18-19)
- G<sup>1</sup>. Latin quote, presage; Greek quote, youth (20)
- H<sup>1</sup>. Arthritis, *caro* (21)
- I<sup>1</sup>. Gluttony and excessive homosexuality (22)
- J<sup>1</sup>. Destruction of statues; Vespasian (23)

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<sup>36</sup> The thematic diagram for Galba is adapted from Benedikston (1997: 173).

## Otho

- F. Otho's father prevents a conspiracy against Claudius (1)
- E. Otho is deviant and extravagant in his youth (2)
- D. Nero annuls Otho's marriage with Poppaea (3)
- C. Otho's initial support for Galba; Piso's adoption; Conspiracy against Galba (4-5)
- B. Unfavorable omens are announced to Galba (6)
- A. Otho becomes emperor; Galba's ghost; Greek proverb (7)
- B<sup>1</sup>. Unfavorable omens at the beginning of Otho's campaign (8)
  - C<sup>1</sup>. Otho despairs of civil war (9)
    - D<sup>1</sup>. Otho pledges his remains to Nero's widow, Messalina (10)
    - E<sup>1</sup>. Otho demonstrates courage and modesty in his death (11)
    - F<sup>1</sup>. Reflections on Otho's conspiracy against Galba (12)

## Vitellius

- F. Ancestry; Both good and bad versions of family history; Baker (1-2)
- E. Vitellius' relations with previous emperors, particularly Tiberius and Nero (3-4)
- D. Priesthoods; Temple robbery; Vitellius accuses son of attempted poisoning (5-6)
- C. Appointment to Germany; Personal debt; Gluttonous and greedy behavior (7.1-7.2)
- B. Popularity among soldiers and low ranking persons; Declared emperor (7.3-8)
- A1. Portents; *Gallinaceus* perches on Vitellius' shoulder; Inability to maintain power (9)
- A. Punishment of Otho's petitioners; Lavish behavior; Disrespect for the dead (10)
- A1<sup>1</sup>. Vitellius becomes pontifex maximus on the *Dies Alliensis* (11)
- B<sup>1</sup>. Vitellius is ruled by the lowest classes; Homosexual relationship with freedman (12)
- C<sup>1</sup>. Shield of Minerva platter; Hostility towards debtors; Excessive cruelty (13-14.3)
- D<sup>1</sup>. Hostility towards astrologers; Vitellius poisons his mother (14.4-14.5)
- E<sup>1</sup>. Revolts; Vitellius sets fire to Rome; Dines in Tiberius' house (15)
- F<sup>1</sup>. Attempted escape with baker; Shameful death; Bodily description (16-17)
- A1<sup>2</sup>. Prophecy is fulfilled that Vitellius would be killed by a *gallicanus* (18)

## Vespasian

- L. Flavian family and ancestry; Domitian ends dynasty (1)
- K. Vespasian is born in the Sabine country, near Reate (2.1)
- J. Mother's sarcasm; Vespasian's early career (2.2-2.3)
- I. Deaths of Vespasian's wife and daughter; Mistress Caenis (3)
- H. Vespasian's military campaigns and triumphal regalia (4.1-4.2)
- G. Governorship in Africa; Vespasian loses money; Poverty and stinginess (4.3)
- F. Vespasian offends Nero by falling asleep during one of his performances (4.4)
- E. War in Judea; Vespasian is chosen to subjugate the nation (4.5-4.6)
- D. Portents predicting Vespasian's future reign (5)
- C. Vespasian is reluctant to begin civil war; Civil war begins; Healing powers (6-7)
- B. Return to Rome; Triumph; Punishment of disorderly soldiers and provinces (8.1-8.4)
- A. Vespasian rebuilds Rome; Clears debris with his own hand; Builds temples (8.5-9.1)
- A<sup>1</sup>. Senatorial and Equestrian reforms; Vespasian alleviates buildup of lawsuits (9.2-10)
- B<sup>1</sup>. Restrictions on licentious behavior; Quote showing modesty towards triumph (11-12)
- C<sup>1</sup>. Vespasian's tolerance of criticism; Disinclination to punish former enemies (13-14)
- D<sup>1</sup>. Vespasian's one imperial vice: avarice (16)
- E<sup>1</sup>. Vespasian aids damaged cities throughout the empire; Pays restorers (17-18)
- F<sup>1</sup>. Vespasian rewards actors and lyre players (19.1)
- G<sup>1</sup>. Reputation for stinginess; Alexandrians call Vespasian Cybiosactes (19.2)
- H<sup>1</sup>. Vespasian's physical appearance and good health (20)
- I<sup>1</sup>. Death of Caenis; Vespasian's concubines and prostitutes (21-22)
- J<sup>1</sup>. Vespasian's witticisms and humor; Death portents (23)
- K<sup>1</sup>. Vespasian dies in country house, near Reate (24)
- L<sup>1</sup>. Vespasian's faith in his family; Predicted length of dynasty (25)

## Titus

- F. Hated as private citizen but loved as emperor; Born in a poor, dark room (1)
- E. Friendship with Britannicus; Titus nearly dies from the same poison (2)
- D. Titus' natural talents and good fortune (3)
- C. Early career; Pleader in the Forum; Subjugates towns in Judea (4)
- B. Oracle predicts Titus' future reign; Soldiers declare Titus *imperator* (5.1-5.2)
- A. Titus is suspected of conspiring against his father; Affirms loyalty to Vespasian (5.3)
- A<sup>1</sup>. Titus is Vespasian's chief partner and protector; Becomes Praetorian Prefect (6.1)
- B<sup>1</sup>. Titus eliminates threats to his future reign; Predicted to be a second Nero (6.2-7)
- C<sup>1</sup>. Imperial career; Rebuilds towns in Campania; Punishes informers in the Forum (8)
- D<sup>1</sup>. Conspiracies against Titus; Titus declares that imperial rule is granted by fate (9)
- E<sup>1</sup>. Titus' fatal illness; One regret; Possible affair with Domitia (10)
- F<sup>1</sup>. Dies in father's country house; Loved more in death than in life (11)

## Domitian

- L. Nerva debauches Domitian in youth; Refuge in Capitol (1.1-1.2)
- K. Wife Domitia; Feigned interest in poetry; Plots against Titus (1.3-2)
- J. Spends early reign stabbing flies; Love of the actor Paris (3.1)
- I. Domitian's initial mix of virtues and vices; Later tendency to vices (3.2)
- H. Gladiatorial shows; Domitian views games with deformed boy (4.1-4.1)
- G. Banquets; Domitian eats first (4.5)
- F. Capitolium; Flavian Temple; Forum Expansion; Nerva inscription (5)
- E. Antonius' revolt is suppressed, which Domitian first learns of by omens (6)
- D. Distribution of food; Grain shortage; Restrictions on wine vineyards (7.1-7.2)
- C. Domitian fears military conspiracy; Limits the total resources in one camp (7.3)
- B. Responsible administration of justice; Prevention of sacrilege (8)
- A1. Domitian's lack of violence; Plans to stop oxen sacrifice; *Georgics* quote (9.1)
- A2. Respect for property and wills; Domitian punishes informers (9.2-9.3)
- A. *Diuisio*; Domitian is inclined first towards *saeuitas*, then towards *cupiditas* (10.1)
  - A1<sup>1</sup>. Domitian's executions; Torture methods; Feigns *clementia* before killing (10.2-11)
  - A2<sup>1</sup>. Domitian resorts to extortion; Annuls wills; Uses informers; *Iliad* quote (12)
  - B<sup>1</sup>. Domitian's claims to divinity; Excessive consulships (13)
    - C<sup>1</sup>. Conspiracy started within Domitian's family; Prophesized day of death (14.1)
    - D<sup>1</sup>. End of vineyard restrictions; *Fasti* quote about pouring wine on sacrifice (14.2)
    - E<sup>1</sup>. Domitian's paranoia; Fear of prophesized death (14.3-14.4)
    - F<sup>1</sup>. Lightning strikes Capitol and Flavian Temple; Astrologer Ascleterion (15)
    - G<sup>1</sup>. Domitian stores apples day before death, hoping to eat them later (16)
    - H<sup>1</sup>. Violent death; Gladiator among killers; Servant boy sees death (17)
    - I<sup>1</sup>. Bodily description; Attractive in youth; Disfigured later in life (18)
    - J<sup>1</sup>. Domitian's love of archery and exceptional good aim (19)
    - K<sup>1</sup>. Lack of liberal studies; Fear of plots; Affair with Domitilla (20-22)
    - L<sup>1</sup>. Raven perches on Capitol; Succeeding *principes* (23)

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