Factional Politics of the Neronian Principate

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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

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Most writers, both ancient and modern, on the Roman world following the downfall of the Republic and the rise of Augustus have centered their narratives on the person of the emperor, with emphasis primarily placed on dynastic intrigue and the larger-than-life figures that made up the imperial court. This approach, although useful, has the effect of sidelining other potential loci of power within the Roman world. In order to bring these independent political actors back to the forefront, my thesis rejects these traditional approaches and instead applies political science and sociological theories to prosopographic analysis and case studies from the works of Tacitus, Cassius Dio, Suetonius, and Plutarch, among others.

I begin this thesis with a brief section outlining Roman perceptions of historical philosophy within ancient historiography, the imperial governmental apparatus, and Jeffrey A. Winters’ oligarchic theory of wealth defense and Richard Alston’s depiction of the Late Republic through the competition of patrimonial networks to the political history of the Neronian Principate. The center of the thesis is divided into two overarching sections: the first one, the product of an extensive prosopographic analysis of political figures mentioned in the historiographic tradition during the reign of Nero, centers on the court factions in the city of Rome; the second is split between a pair of case studies.
discussing the political participation of Roman soldiers and a second prosopographic analysis, this one on provincial figures of the Batavian Revolt. These analyses combine to shed light on a complex web of political factions, each seeking their own personal interests, that defined the Roman political sphere during the first century CE.
Acknowledgments

It would take me much more space than I have to properly thank everybody who has been involved, in some capacity, both my graduate career in the Rutgers Classics Department and this thesis. Nonetheless, I shall try.

I would like to first extend my deepest gratitude to my thesis advisor, Dr. Serena Connolly. Without her guidance, experience, and constructive criticism, this project would never have made the leap from “I’ve been thinking a lot about Roman political factions” to this rather lengthy thesis. Most importantly, in my opinion, I want to highlight her pragmatic advice that prompted me to rein in my impulses to continue writing and prevented me from accidentally writing a book-length project.

Next, I would like to thank my two readers, whose identity at the time of writing these acknowledgements I do not know. I look forward to hearing your feedback, and hope to have the opportunity to incorporate it at a future date.

Many thanks as well to my fellow graduate students, both on the M.A. and PhD tracks, as well as the numerous undergraduates who were regular participants in graduate classes; all of you made my time at Rutgers very special. I would be remiss not to express special appreciation to Kate Stevens, Selena Ross, and Dr. Nicole Nowbahar: our writing group sessions provided a modicum of structure during the turbulent summer of 2020, and your feedback from our biweekly “officina” meetings with Serena were invaluable.

Lastly, I would like to thank my family and friends, without whose support and friendship none of this would have been possible; particular thanks to my parents and to my brother Anthony; although you always pretended to fall asleep from boredom every
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Introduction

Perhaps unsurprisingly, discussions on politics during the Julio-Claudian dynasty in general and the reign of Nero in particular, both ancient and modern, have focused on the period’s dynastic intrigue and larger-than-life figures, with narratives that feel like they could happen in the Red Keep on Aegon’s Hill of George R.R. Martin’s Westeros just as easily as they did on the Palatine Hill in the Rome of Tacitus, Seutonius, and Cassius Dio. But exciting and enjoyable to read as they are, the tales of assassinations, succession crises, and conspiracies do not tell the whole story of political life during the Roman Principate. As always, reality was much more mundane, as those who held any semblance of power in Rome — whether Senator or freedmen, aristocrat or soldier — made the fullest use of their station in life for one goal: keeping that station.

The ancient sources primarily employed in this project are the narrative histories and imperial biographies written in the decades and centuries following the events discussed within: the *Annales* and *Historiae* of Tacitus and the biographies of Suetonius in Latin, and the *Historia Romana* of Cassius Dio and the biographies of Plutarch, supplemented by Josephus’s *Bellum Judaicum*, in Greek. Rather than focusing on their narratives, however, the analysis instead mines them for prosopographic data and case studies; in doing so, the effects of these authors’ biases, although impossible to be fully eliminated, are minimized to the greatest extent possible.

Breakdown of the Structure and Argument of the Thesis

In order to investigate the structure and nature of political competition under the Principate, this thesis has been divided into three main sections: “Background
Information,” “Political Factions of the Urban Aristocracy,” and “Political Participation of Non-Elite and Non-Roman Populations.” Although each individual section is structured non-sequentially to help keep the focus on the broader structures that drive factional politics and to make it easier to refrain from lapsing into political narrative, the three can nonetheless be seen as being relatively chronological in relation to the other two, at least in respect to the main sources used within the analysis; in particular, Tacitus’s *Annales* serves as the primary temporal frame for “Political Factions of the Urban Aristocracy,” while “Political Participation of Non-Elite and Non-Roman Populations” tends to draw from the *Historiae*. This decision, however, comes not from a deliberate choice to move chronologically, but simply from the nature of the evidence itself — the *Historiae* simply provides more evidence for provincial political developments than the Rome-centric *Annales*.

Divided into three parts itself, “Background Information” provides a general overview of Roman perceptions of politics in the age of the Empire, the imperial governmental apparatus, and the theoretical models that serve as the backbone of this thesis’s analysis. Tracing the roots of the emperor/Senate dichotomy that dominates imperial historiography to the evolution of Roman perceptions of political organization under the Late Republic, this thesis finds within the historiographic tradition an unspoken framework that underlies all political analysis, that political competition exists primarily as the collision of two opposing forces. This emphasis on colliding dualities would have been reflected, furthermore, in the political tensions that existed as a result of the self-contradictory form of government known to us as the Principate, as the traditional Republican governmental structures were subordinated to the imperial household and its
bureaucracy. Once the political structures of the Roman Principate and the ancient interpretations of them are laid out, this thesis then turns to an overview of the two theoretical models that it employs — namely, the theory of wealth defense as laid out in Jeffrey Winters’ book *Oligarchy* and the patrimonial network theory employed in Richard Alston’s *Rome’s Revolution: Death of the Republic and Birth of the Empire*.\(^1\)

At this point, the thesis turns to a discussion on the political factions of the urban aristocracy, centered primarily on the imperial court and the city of Rome — in particular, the forces that bind factions together, how they interact, and the complications added by the ancient historians’ literary agendas (namely, that the surviving narratives depict the different administrations within Nero’s reign in order to portray Senatorial advisors in general and Seneca in particular with as positive a light as possible) receive the most attention. A prosopographical analysis, the results of which can be found in Appendix A, form the foundation of this section.

While a more detailed discussion of the methods employed in this thesis will be discussed in its appropriate place within it, it is important to note here how this thesis engages with the extensive history of prosopographical analysis in the Roman tradition — or rather, in short, that it deliberately goes out of the way to avoid being a strict prosopographical analysis as much as possible. At the most basic level, according to Ronald Syme, prosopography can be described as discussing “who was born from whom, [and] who held what offices and in what times” (*quis a quo ortus, quos honores quibusque temporibus cepisset*) — at least, Syme describes the work of Titus Pomponius Atticus, from the biography of whom this quote from Cornelius Nepos comes, as

“prosopographical studies.” Modern scholars, however, have pushed prosopographical inquiry to a much larger extent, sitting at the core of not only Syme’s work (and thus, by extension, as the foundation of any modern scholarship on the Late Republic and early Augustan eras), but that of H. H. Scullard as well; in fact, almost all Roman historians found within the bibliography pay an immense debt to the prosopographical tradition, either employing or arguing against its use.

The prevalence of prosopographic studies in modern scholarship on the Roman world begs the question, of course, why this thesis deliberately avoids placing itself completely within that tradition. The answer comes in reference to both the project’s scale and resource constraints. As will be discussed in more detail later, the main data bank used came from a close reading of ancient literary texts (primarily from the historiographic and biographical traditions), supplemented by Ségolène Demougin’s *Prosopographie des chevaliers romains julio-claudiens* for provincial equestrians. Although inscriptions are cited both within the main body of the text and within the appendices, a complete survey of epigraphic prosopography was ultimately judged to be

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outside the scope of this analysis. For this reason, this thesis should be considered as
drawing upon the extensive tradition of Roman prosopography, but not firmly within it.

The nature of the evidence for provincial-based networks necessitated the
employment of two different approaches. Two parallel mutinies, one against Otho in
Rome and one in support of Vitellius at the Germanic frontier, are used as case studies to
highlight the extent to which the rank-and-file members of the army served as an
independent political agent within the Roman imperial system. Similarly, two case
studies — one of the rivalry between Lugdunum and Vienne, one of the Batavian Revolt
— backed by a second prosopographical analysis (this time focused on provincial
figures) emphasize the interplay between local political rivalries and empire-wide
conflict.

Definitions

Before beginning the discussion of any academic inquiry, it is expedient to lay
down the precise definitions used within the thesis for key terms, particularly when those
terms are the subject of much scholarly debate; it is perhaps even more so when, as
occurs within this thesis, definitions are drawn from multiple disciplines — in this case,
from Classics, history, and political science.

At the center of this thesis sits one of the oldest topics of discussion among
political scientists, that of parties and factions. The concept that like-minded political

5 Expanding the prosopographical data set would make an excellent subject for future
work. In addition to requiring more time than available for a Master’s thesis, a more
expansive prosopographical analysis that properly incorporates epigraphic, numismatic,
and other non-historiographic literary sources, proved to be difficult to properly
undertake due to the limited access to sources, particularly reference works, during the
COVID-19 pandemic. As such, the decision was made to use Tacitus, Cassius Dio,
Suetonius, Plutarch, and Josephus as the backbone of the data set for this project.
individuals organize themselves into groups to collaborate for their own political gain exists almost as a truism within the discipline: Niccolò di Bernardo dei Machiavelli, David Hume, and Edmund Burke are just three of the many Early Modern writers that discussed political opposition between two or more groups as a potentially-powerful stabilizing agent in a democratic or quasi-democratic political system. Indeed, the role of parties within modern politics has become so ingrained that E. E. Schattschneider wrote in 1942 that, “political parties created democracy and...modern democracy is unthinkable save in terms of parties.” Despite the important role they play in modern governmental and political systems, however, finding a satisfactory academic definition for parties that works in a modern context, let alone an ancient Mediterranean one, remains a work in progress.

Although, as will be discussed later, political factions have been identified by scholars as existing as early as the 4th century BCE — Machiavelli, for instance, cites the Conflict of the Orders as its first instance — what modern political scientists mean when they refer to political parties have their roots in the late 18th and early 19th century Anglo-speaking world. At that time, these emerging political groupings were known as both parties and factions, and were almost-universally condemned: James Madison penned an entire essay (using the Classical pseudonym “Publius”) warning against political factionalism and its potential for violence, while in his Farewell Address to

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Congress, George Washington warned against the perils of partisanship, saying that “The alternate domination of one faction over another, sharpened by the spirit of revenge, natural to party dissension, which in different ages and countries has perpetrated the most horrid enormities, is itself a frightful despotism. But this leads at length to a more formal and permanent despotism.”

Despite their warnings, political parties gradually became an accepted part of modern political life in a fairly short time; the term faction, however, have not lost the hostile connotation gained in this period.

Numerous scholars have attempted to explain this split in definition, typically using either a part-of-whole or an evolution-based approach. Drawing upon scholarship by Matteo Bonotti and Giovanni Sartori, Russell Muirhead and Nancy Rosenblum identify “comprehensiveness” as the key distinction, writing that “partisans take a view on the full range of issues that constitute the public interest...[and] address the public good in the widest sense...[to] benefit the nation;” in doing so, they equate factions with single-advocacy interest groups.

William Nisbet Chambers, on the other hand, defines parties as “the end production of an evolutionary development process” beginning with semi-organized factions.

To avoid stepping into this debate, this thesis will set aside the term party, based on the understanding that the formal organizational structures and clear, unified platforms

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11 Muirhead and Rosenblum, 105.
inherent in the modern definition did not exist in antiquity in a form that would be
recognizable to modern political scientists. In lieu of *party* and in the absence of other
suitable terms, this thesis will primarily use the word *faction* to describe the loosely
united groups of individuals that appear to engage in some semblance of collective action
for the (unequal) benefit of all involved.\(^{13}\) Unlike modern use of the term, *faction* will
here be stripped of its negative and single-issue connotations, and will instead take on its
pre-modern use to refer to pre-party political groupings.\(^{14}\)

Not all factions, however, operate on the same plane of competition. Most
factions that are discussed in this thesis engage in its activities at or near the apex of the
imperial political system, with faction leaders that are high-ranking officials in the
imperial court (e.g., Agrippina, Seneca/Burrus), local tribal leadership for major tribes
(e.g., Civilis), and imperial claimants (e.g., Otho, Vitellius). The members of these
factions entered into client/patron relationships, undertook economic pursuits, and, on the
whole, worked to protect their economic and political interests. However, the sheer
number of Senators, equestrians, and other members of the aristocracy throughout the
Empire, both in Rome and in the provinces, would have made it impossible for the

\(^{13}\) Other terms that were considered, but ultimately rejected, include *bloc, junta, sect, caucus,* and *coalition.* Although *bloc* and *caucus* would be appropriate for discussions of Republican political organizations due to its voting-related connotations, the lack of true discourse and important votes set before the Imperial Senate renders the terms anachronistic. *Junta,* on the other hand, primarily describes a military government that has seized power by force and has a connotation of political illegitimacy. *Sect* typically refers to religious and philosophical groupings based not on formal organizational structures but on ideological similarities. Lastly, while *coalition* can be used to describe factions, it implies an *ad hoc* union for a common goal, and thus cannot be used as an all-encompassing term.

\(^{14}\) The closest thing to a modern analogy that exists today may be the process for a modern U.S. presidential election: to some extent, every candidate can be considered as the leader of a faction within a political party, and the winner of the primary process is ultimately the faction that dictates the party platform for the general election.
overwhelming majority to forge meaningful relationships with the emperor and members of the high-ranking officials surrounding him. These aristocrats, nonetheless, would have engaged in the same activities as their more politically-minded peers: they served as literary and philosophical patrons, employed clients to serve as trade agents, and on occasion served in low-ranking magistracies in order for their families to maintain the perks of Senatorial status. What they did not do, however, was directly attempt to influence imperial policy or gain any significant level of influence at court.

While it would be ideal to discuss both types of factions directly in this thesis, it remains an unfortunate reality that politically-inactive factions did not intersect with the historians’ narratives in a significant enough capacity to be detectable as separate factions within the sources. When members do appear, they often do so only to the extent that their career enters the political arena: for example, Tacitus mentions the Stoic philosopher Musonius Rufus in the *Annales* and *Historiae* primarily to serve as evidence for the claimed skepticism that Nero and later emperors had with philosophers in general and Stoicism in particular.\(^{15}\)

One of the forces that joined together factions in Rome requires further defining. Much like *party* in respect to modern politics, *patronage* remains a remarkably-nebulous concept that stands at the center of the Roman political sphere. While a full discussion of Roman patronage is beyond the scope of this thesis — and, in truth, requires more than

\(^{15}\) Musonius Rufus, first noted as one of Rubellius Plautus’s philosophy teachers on the occasion of Plautus’s death, is exiled for allegedly being privy to the Pisonian conspiracy, but returns to Rome following Nero’s death. He was selected as a legate from Vitellius to Vespasian. Lastly, he brought Publius Celer to court over the death of Barea Soranus. None of these appearances reflect his philosophical career; instead, they represent his public dealings. Tac. *Ann.* 14.59, 15.71; Tac. *Hist.* 3.81, 4.10, 4.40.
even a full Master’s thesis devoted to it — it is important to at least summarize the main schools of thought currently surrounding the matter.

Part of what makes discussing Roman patronage so difficult is that the Romans themselves did not clearly articulate its terms. To begin, by the time of the Empire, the terms *patronus* and *cliens* were only used in legal settings, community patronage, and to describe the relationship between freedmen and their ex-masters.\(^\text{16}\) More often, \textit{amici}, \textit{amicitia}, and other “friendship words” were employed, as they implied an equality of social status.\(^\text{17}\) These words, however, have their own baggage: Matthias Gelzer relates them to patronage and \textit{hospitium} as similar words describing reciprocal relationships based on \textit{fides} and \textit{officium} that allowed the nobility to exert dominance on the Roman political system through prosopographic networks, Ronald Syme described “amicitia...[as] a weapon of politics, not a sentiment based on congeniality,” and Lily Ross Taylor argued that \textit{amicitia} in a political context ought to be translated as \textit{party}.\(^\text{18}\)

Attempts to apply modern theoretical approaches to the ancient evidence for patronage has so far been rendered unfruitful. Koenraad Verboven summarizes several of the difficulties by noting that, although sociology does contain theoretical approaches to patronage, it primarily reflects a highly specific type of give-and-take:

\begin{quote}
[an] exchange relation, or system, that occurs in different forms in different cultural contexts. The Roman concepts of patrocinium (being a patron) and clientela (clientship), however, denote a specific type of interpersonal relationship in Roman society and culture, with its own
\end{quote}

\(^\text{17}\) Saller, 11.
symbols, rituals, and history. The sociological concept of patronage may thus provide an analytical perspective to study Roman patrocinium-clientela, but the uniquely Roman cultural construct of patrocinium-clientela cannot be reduced to the theoretical construct of ‘sociological’ patronage.\textsuperscript{19}

Verboven goes on to conclude that sociology’s main contribution to the subject of Roman patronage can be found not within studies of Roman patronage itself, but in its application to cross-cultural studies. Richard Saller has similarly found anthropological methodologies to have failed, emphasizing the difficulty in finding a definition that is not so specific that it cannot incorporate the wide variety of client/patron relationships in Rome, but not so broad that it becomes a meaningless term.\textsuperscript{20}

Ultimately, the following three-part definition for \textit{patronage} offered by Saller will be employed in this thesis:

First, it involves the reciprocal exchange of goods and services. Secondly, to distinguish it from a commercial transaction in the marketplace, the relationship must be a personal one of some duration. Thirdly, it must be asymmetrical, in the sense that the two parties are of unequal status and offer different kinds of goods and services in the exchange — a quality which sets patronage off from friendship between equals.\textsuperscript{21}

While far from perfect, Saller’s definition is both succinct enough and broad enough that it can be adequately applied to literary, economic, political, and community forms of patronage that appear in this thesis.

\textsuperscript{20} Saller, 1.
\textsuperscript{21} Saller, 1. He adapts this definition from J. Boissevain, “Patronage in Sicily,” \textit{Man} n.s. 1 (1966), 18, and Robert R. Kaufman, “The patron-client concept and macro-politics: prospects and problems,” \textit{CSSH} 16 (1974), 287ff, the former of whom he quotes earlier in the paragraph from which this quotation comes.
Background Information

Duality and the Rise of the Senate/Emperor Spectrum in Roman Historiography

Throughout the development of Roman political literature and historiography, traditional political theories about governmental constitutions served as the foundation for discussion and analysis of political realities within the Roman world. In the process of these works, however, despite regular discussions of political competition within their texts, they neglect to craft a theoretical approach to the clashing of political factions (at least in the extant evidence). A brief survey of important political terminology and historical episodes among writers from the Late Republic and early Empire, however, indicate a preference for dualities that suggest an underlying unspoken theoretical framework underpinning the literary conversation. From the first formal appearance of the Optimates and Populares during the crisis of the Late Republic through the writings of imperial historians documenting court intrigue, Roman political thought appears to frame political competition as a series of competitions between two opposing forces.

The first Roman political factions about whom a fairly detailed record has survived, the Optimates and the Populares, define Roman conceptions of the Late Republic.\(^22\) In his *De Re Publica*, written around 54–51, Cicero pins the watershed moment in Roman politics at the tribunate of Tiberius Gracchus, saying that “the death of

\[\ldots\]

\(^{22}\) One could argue that the Conflict of the Orders between the patrician and plebeian classes during the sixth through third centuries BCE represented the first example of political factions within the Roman world; in fact, as mentioned above, Machiavelli does just that. On a practical level, this logic follows, at least when it comes to the plebeians: we see political organization from them throughout the period. However, very few contemporary sources survive from this period. Most discussions in antiquity occur in later centuries and project current divisions between the Optimates and Populares onto their predecessors; it is impossible to know how much these discussions reflect the actual historical reality of the Conflict of the Orders, and not the political reality of the authors.
Tiberius Gracchus, and even before, the whole tribunal reason of that one divided one people into two parties” (mors Tiberii Gracchi et iam ante tota illius ratio tribunatus divisit populum unum in duas partis). Although later Romans universally accepted the death of Tiberius Gracchus in 133 BCE as the division between the Optimates and the Populares — although many historians did project several of their issues, most notably agrarian reform, back into earlier periods — the first possible reference that survives occurs in the Rhetorica ad Herrenium, a rhetorical textbook once mistakenly attributed to Cicero; if “good orator” (oratoris boni) has this political connotation, as many claim, we thus have a terminus ante quem of the 80s BCE for the widespread recognition of this political dissonance.

Unlike modern conceptions of political parties, however, the Optimates and Populares were not, strictly speaking, organized groups, but loose labels given to politicians based on their broad allegiances. Cicero, a staunch member of the Optimates, defines them as those “who are not harmful, are not wicked in nature, not frantic, and have not wrapped up in domestic evils” (qui neque nocentes sunt nec natura improbi nec furiosi nec malis domesticis impediti) — a value-laden depiction with no insight into concrete political ideology. The Populares, on the other hand, do not receive a definition at all, but rather serve as an all-encompassing term for those who supported the

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24 For an example of a later Roman historian projecting modern political issues into earlier periods, see the apotheosis of Romulus in Livy’s Ab Urbe Condita, which injects the assassination of Julius Caesar into the narrative by reporting that many early Romans suspected that the Senators had assassinated the first king. Liv. 1.16.
26 Cic. Sest. 45. For more political usages of the term, see Liv. 3.35.4, 3.39.9, 6.39.6; Cic. Sest. 96, Att. 1.20.3. Although not using the term, Sallust is likely referring to the Optimates when discussing the nobilitas, Sall. Iug. 5.
rights of the *populus* as opposed to the *pauci*, a term dating all the way back to the plays of Plautus and Terence but finding a new, politicized meaning during the Late Republic.\(^{27}\)

Even as the political realities of the Late Republic left the Optimates/Populares spectrum behind, the Romans drew on this spectrum to conceive of the period’s political history by primarily casting it as a series of opposing political hegemonies. Following the death of the Gracchi, the rivalry between Marius and Sulla defined the Roman political landscape, with Marius loosely being associated with the Populares as a *novus homo* whose career was built upon popular dissatisfaction with the Senate and its patrician aristocracy, and Sulla with the Optimates as the champion of the traditional political hierarchy.\(^{28}\) Out of their shadows came Julius Caesar and Gnaeus Pompey, originally partisans of Marius and Sulla, respectively, who first united to control Rome, along with Marcus Licinius Crassus, in the First Triumvirate, before eventually coming to blows. Their rivalry, in fact, so dominates the mid-50s in Roman culture that Lucan does not begin his epic until after the death of Crassus so that the two great opposing generals would dominate the narrative.\(^{29}\) The assassination of Caesar would then divide the Roman world again into the heirs of Caesar (i.e., Octavian and Antony) and his assassins (Brutus and Cassius), and the victory of the former would again see the “Julian party,” as Tacitus names them, split into Octavian and Antony.\(^{30}\)

\(^{27}\) Plaut. *Trin.* 34 ff., Ter. *Hec.* 44 ff.; Accius, Pragmatica frr. 3–4W; the last may offer the first example of its use in a political context. For political usage during the Late Republic, Sall. *Cat.* 38; Cic. *Cat.* 4.9, Sest. 96.


\(^{29}\) Luc. 1.100–105. Lucan specifically cites the death of Crassus as the beginning of war. He also benefited from not having to find a way to fit the elusive Crassus into his narrative.

\(^{30}\) Tac. *Ann.* 2.1
Of course, this model of Late Republican political discourse, as do all historical models, does have its flaws, and while it would be beyond the scope of this thesis to exhaustively refute them, it would be remiss not to briefly discuss two of them. For starters, this model largely ignores the position of Cicero and other prominent Senators (usually Optimates) within the political spectrum, for in truth political necessity forced them to back Pompey, who, although a partisan of the Optimate Sullan, was distinctly not a supporter of the Senate, and Octavian, the heir of Caesar.\textsuperscript{31} Secondly, these divisions are defined primarily by civil wars between these groups, which, by their nature, are not typical political realities. In both cases, however, these simplifications reflect the development of Roman political discourse, which focused on the Senatorial Optimates less as political actors and more as political ideals, and which carried civil war affiliations into later political realities — for example, Livy had been called a Pompeian, despite the fact that this term was long obsolete.\textsuperscript{32}

Under the Principate, the narrative trends existing within the works of historians tend to become more streamlined, with virtually all episodes focusing on two opposing forces operating within the traditional Roman government and the imperial household. Conflicts between the Senate and the Julio-Claudian dynasty so dominated the historical narratives in the earlier Principate that hostility to the emperors became a standard feature of the genre itself.\textsuperscript{33} Even when a historian broke from this model, as Velleius Paterculus

\textsuperscript{31} Octavian begins as the heir to Caesar, then takes up status as the “Roman” alternative to the “Egyptian” Mark Antony and Cleopatra, and in truth, only represented a valid alternative for Cicero insomuch as he appeared green and inexperienced. Once again, this reflects the flaws in this duality-based model that permeated discussions of ancient politics both in antiquity and in modern scholarship.

\textsuperscript{32} Tac. \textit{Ann.} 4.

did in his highly laudatory Historiae, this developing divide between the imperial household and the Senate nonetheless permeates the background of the text’s composition. Unlike other historians, Velleius appears to focus his narrative less on crafting a theory of history and more on providing interesting and informative excursus that combined not only Greek and Roman history within one text, but also political and cultural history. Nonetheless, his personal background looms large within the narrative: his military experience under Gaius Caesar, the grandson of Augustus, and the (at the time future) emperor Tiberius results in Velleius’s Historiae virtually turning into a panegyric of the second emperor — complete by his ending the text with a prayer “to guard, serve, and protect this state, this peace, and this princeps” (custodite, servate, protegite hunc statum, hanc pacem, hunc principem). Standing starkly in contrast to the later tradition of Senatorial historiography that dominates Imperial Literature in both Latin and Greek, Velleius’s text nonetheless highlights the two ideological schools that imperial history would be destined to evolve into: pro-Senate and pro-dynastic history.

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34 Velleius served as a military tribune in the army of Gaius Caesar, as prefect of the equites under Tiberius, and as a legate against Pannonian rebels and during a German campaign; he held a quaestorship, which he abandoned in favor of the appointment as legate, and a praetorship. Vell. Pat. 2.101, 2.104.3, 2.111.4, 2.121.3, 2.124.4, 2.131

35 To see an example of this, compare the previous panegyric quote from Velleius to Tacitus’s record of Tiberius’s behavior as emperor: “but then Tiberius had established twelve villas, with names and large structures, on the island of Capri, and by how intent he had been toward public cares, so now he was resolute toward secrete cares in luxury and bad leisure” (sed tum Tiberius duodecim villarum nominibus et molibus insederat, quanto intentus olim publicas ad curas tanto occultiores in luxus et malum otium resolutus). Tac. Ann. 4.67. Obviously, this division gets complicated when we remember that these historians both wrote the history of dynasties earlier than that in which they lived (e.g., Suetonius, Plutarch, and Tacitus’s Annales) and writing histories that cross over multiple dynasties (e.g. Cassius Dio, Tacitus’s Historiae). Much of this, however, can be explained by the fact that pro-Senatorial attitudes are what define “good” emperors (while anti-Senatorial attitudes define “bad” ones), which maintains this separation.
Although firmly within the pro-Senate camp, most historians nonetheless played with this dynamic in various episodes throughout their texts. Within the surviving histories of Tacitus, most notably in the *Annales* but also present in the *Historiae*, these episodes can be categorized into one of three competitive groupings: Senate vs. household, emperor vs. claimant, and advisor vs. advisor. Much ink has been spilled discussing the first group, as in many respects it incorporates the conflicting ideological strains that underlies the system of the Principate, namely the facade of Republicanism over the reality of monarchical rule; perhaps this should not be unexpected, as Tacitus himself seems to invite this type of inquiry, beginning his *Historiae* by citing the year’s consuls and maintaining this structure throughout both histories, while also declaring in the prologue of *Annales* I, “How many are left who had seen the Republic?” (*quotus quisque reliquus qui rem publicam vidisset?*). The second group, that of emperor vs. claimant, can be seen in episodes such as the assassination of Agrippa Postumus at the start of Tiberius’s reign and Nero’s poisoning of Britannicus when the latter came of age. The third, and arguably least-studied, group includes the machinations of Agrippina the Younger and her political rivalry with Lucius Annaeus Seneca and Sextus Afranius Burrus, which dominates the narrative of Nero’s reign until her death in *Annales* 14.8.

Due to the fact that much of Plutarch’s historical writings on the Principate, the so-called *Lives of the Caesars*, have been lost — only the *Galba-Otho* survives, in addition to a few fragments from earlier in the texts — attempting to discuss how he fits into this paradigm using them remains impossible. Given his temporal proximity to

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36 Tac. *Ann.* 1.3.
37 Tac. *Ann.* 1.6, 13.16.
Tacitus and his high-profile status, it can be assumed that the two share similar opinions, and in the few instances where parallel episodes exist in both texts (such as the mutiny against Otho discussed on pages 53–61), this does in fact appear to be the case; furthermore, although he largely criticizes the Stoic philosophical school that the Latin historian admired, he nonetheless drew on its teachings within his writings on several occasions, highlighting their shared philosophical and literary approaches. Plutarch’s abundance of non-historical work, furthermore, emphasizes his Senatorial perspective. As Jason König notes, much of his philosophy “was very unusual...for being so closely engaged with the realities of day-to-day political life.” Although much of his writing focused on the local Greek political sphere that he inhabited, he almost certainly would have found himself aligned with the interests of the Senators in Rome, which would have been manifest in the complete Lives of the Caesars — which on the basis of what is extant may have read more like a history of the period or a series of moralizing character studies rather than a collection of essays.

Fitting Suetonius, the most prominent Latin biographer of his day, into this paradigm likewise does not appear easy at first glance. Ordering his De vita Caesarum non-chronologically, but structuring his collection of episodes around familial background, lists of vices and virtues, and other similar categories, Suetonius distinctly does not engage in the historiographic tradition. His focus primarily rests somewhat on the personalities of the emperors, but more importantly, on their status as men of rhetoric.

38 Richard Hunter and Donald Russell, introduction to How to Study Poetry, ed. Richard Hunter and Donald Russell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 12–14. 39 Jason König, “Greek Literature in the Roman World,” in A Companion to Greek Literature, edited by Martin Hose and David Schenker (Hoboken: Wiley, 2015), 118. 40 The surviving Galba-Otho reads as a continuous narrative, and not as independent biographies, suggesting that the completed work may have in fact been a historical narrative that used the emperor reigning in Rome as its division between books.
and literature — he notes that Cicero numbered Julius Caesar among the best orators of his day, praises Tiberius because “he cultivated the liberal arts of both kinds [i.e., Greek and Latin] most studiously” (Artes liberales utriusque generis studiosissime coluit), and stressed both the strength and weakness of Caligula as a man of letters; none of the Caesars, in fact, escapes judgement on his oratorical or literary skills.\textsuperscript{41} Matters that would have been of highest concern for historians, such as political developments and military campaigns, receive less attention. Even so, however, he cannot help engaging, at least to a limited extent, with the division between Senatorial and dynastic historiography: the emphasis on the emperors as individuals implicitly rejects the Republican facade that permeates Senatorial historiography as both anachronistic and intellectually useless.

By the time that Cassius Dio wrote his Historia Romana, roughly two centuries after Tacitus, Senatorial historiography had become firmly entrenched as the primary method of Roman historical analysis in both Latin and Greek. Unlike his earlier counterparts, however, Dio was not very explicit with his political views within his work; as Fergus Millar writes in A Study of Cassius Dio, he provides no framework for analysis and instead passes judgment on individuals and episodes on an \textit{ad hoc} basis.\textsuperscript{42} Nonetheless, by looking at two passages commenting on the reign of Augustus (both of which Millar highlights within his work), it is possible to draw a conclusion about Dio’s perception of the Roman political system:

\begin{quote}
Such things in the monarchy, the democracy, and among the dynasties, a period of seven hundred and twenty-five years, did the Romans do and
\end{quote}

\begin{footnotes}
\end{footnotes}
suffer: from this point, they again began to be ruled in a monarchy, strictly-speaking, and indeed Caesar was wishing to put down arms and return rule to the Senate and to the People.

ταῦτα μὲν ἐν τῇ βασιλείᾳ καὶ ἐν τῇ δημοκρατίᾳ ταῖς τε δυναστείαις, πέντε τε καὶ έκκοσι καὶ ἐπτακοσίοις έτεσι, καὶ ἔπραξαν οἱ Ρωμαίοι καὶ ἔπαθον: ἕκ δε τοῦτον μοναρχεῖσθαι αὐθής ἀκριβός ἦρξαντο, καίτοι τοῦ Καίσαρος βουλευσαμένου τά τε ὀπλα καταθέσαι καὶ τά πράγματα τῇ τε γερουσίᾳ καὶ τῷ δήμῳ ἐπιτρέψαι.\textsuperscript{43}

Mixing monarchy with democracy, he guarded freedom for them and prepared order and stability, so that, being out of the audacity of democracy and the hubris of tyranny, to live in sound freedom and in a fearless monarchy, having been ruled over by a king without slavery and ruled over by a democracy without sedition.

τὴν μοναρχίαν τῇ δημοκρατίᾳ μίξας τὸ τε ἐλεύθερον σφισιν ἐτήρησε καὶ τὸ κόσμον τὸ τε ἁσφαλὲς προσπαρεσκεύασεν, ὡς τε ἐξέ μὲν τοῦ δημοκρατικοῦ θράσους ἔξω δὲ καὶ τῶν τυραννικῶν ὑβρεών ὄντας ἐν τε ἐλευθερίᾳ σώφρονι καὶ ἐν μοναρχία ἄδεει ζῆν, βασιλευομένους τε ἄνευ δουλείας καὶ δημοκρατουμένους ἄνευ διχοστασίας.\textsuperscript{44}

The Principate worked, according to Dio, when the Princeps worked within, if not the letter of the Republican constitution, at least the spirit of cooperation between the person of the emperor (and, by extension, the imperial household) and the Senate. As Millar notes, as this is not a formal theory of history, but rather a general political philosophy, this thread is able to run throughout Dio’s work on imperial history while still permitting the historian to primarily focus on individuals and episodes: as there is no one way to

\textsuperscript{43} Cass. Dio 52.1.1. For the sake of consistency, all citations from Cassius Dio will be from the Loeb Classical Library edition published by the Harvard University Press from 1914 to 1927 and edited by Earnest Cary, Herbert Baldwin Foster, and William Heinemann; specifically, the citations will be based on the edition as listed on perseus.tufts.edu (specifically, 1.1.1. is at the following URL: http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A2008.01.0593%3Abook%3D1%3Achapter%3D1%3Asection%3D1).

\textsuperscript{44} Cass. Dio 56.43.4–44.1.
fulfill these goals, different emperors at different times could achieve them in different ways, and still be classified as “good emperors.”\textsuperscript{45} Despite not being explicit, this philosophical approach is nonetheless imbued by the “Senate vs. emperor” dynamic that had dominated previous Roman historiography of the imperial period.\textsuperscript{46}

**Political Offices under the Principate**

In order for the Republican facade of the Principate to maintain itself, a variation on the traditional political structures of Rome continued to operate. Even more so than during the height of the Republic, the Senate took a central role in the formal governance of the Roman state, bestowing honors upon deceased emperors and foreign delegations, receiving embassies, serving as the high court, and starting with the reign of Tiberius, electing the magistracies of the *cursus honorum* (and thus having some say over its own membership).\textsuperscript{47} Furthermore, beginning with the reign of Augustus, the Senate became a social class unto itself, with prerequisites and honors significantly higher than that of the equestrian class, and granted to the three generations following the last member of the


\textsuperscript{46} Writing as he was in Greek, Cassius Dio drew on not only the Roman historiographic tradition, but from the Greek tradition as well; however, while the Greek tradition granted him his style and interest in Roman political institutions (Thucydides is considered to be one of his more significant models), his perspective on the Principate definitively comes from his background as a Senator. Antonis Tsakmakis, “Historiography and Bibliography,” in *A Companion to Greek Literature*, ed. Martin Hose and David Schenker (Hoboken: Wiley, 2015), 227.

Despite these formal increases in power and status, however, the emperor had many tools to control the Senate, as he alone appointed the virgintivirate, the first stepping-stone on the cursus honorum and a requirement to stand for quaestor; additionally, emperors had to approve candidates in order for them to be eligible to run for office and could significantly affect the election by supporting a particular campaign. By the reign of Nero, the consulship became the emperor’s prerogative as well.

During the early days of the Principate, furthermore, a variety of formal governmental positions, intended for officeholders of both Senatorial and equestrian rank, were added by the Senate at the request of the emperors. Not likely designed as an organized “civil service” in the modern sense, these positions probably began on an ad hoc basis, being created to fill a particular need at a particular time, and Richard J.A. Talbert even suggests that their status as Senatorial or equestrian posts had no actual political motivation, but simply represented which class the original person appointed to the position came from. At its largest extent, eleven Senatorial positions, filled by at least thirty Senators (mostly of praetorian or consular rank) are attested, as can be seen by this chart below (Table 1).
Table 1. New Senatorial Posts within Rome and Italy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Function</th>
<th>Number and rank</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PRAEFEKTUS AERARII SATURNI</td>
<td>Management of state treasury</td>
<td>2 praetorii</td>
<td>29 to 23 B.C. and from A.D. 16</td>
<td>Function carried out between 23 B.C. and A.D. 16 by praetors and quaecons in office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRAEFEKTUS FRUMENTI DANDI</td>
<td>Distribution of corn dole at Rome</td>
<td>4 praetorii, not notionally chosen by lot</td>
<td>2 from 22 B.C., 2 more added in 18 B.C.</td>
<td>Regular assignment of one or more named main roads to an individual senatorial curator almost certainly postdates the Julio-Claudian period</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CURATOR VIARUM</td>
<td>Management of roads in Italy (though precise scope of functions remains obscure)</td>
<td>Board of uncertain composition</td>
<td>From 20 B.C.</td>
<td>Board was granted legal authority to maintain the responsibility exercised informally by Agrippa for just over twenty years prior to his death in 11 B.C.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CURATOR AQUARUM</td>
<td>Management of aqueducts of Rome</td>
<td>3 notionally chosen by lot, comprising 1 consularis, 1 praetorius, 1 senator of lesser rank</td>
<td>From 11 B.C.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRAEFEKTUS AERARII MILITARI</td>
<td>Management of military treasury</td>
<td>3 praetorii</td>
<td>From A.D. 6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRAEFEKTUS URB</td>
<td>Oversight of law and order in Rome, and command of the three urban cohorts (formerly under the direct control of Augustus)</td>
<td>1 senior centuriae</td>
<td>From A.D. 6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CURATOR AEDUUM SACRARUM ET OPERUM LOCORUMQUE PUBILORUM</td>
<td>Management of sacred buildings and public works and places</td>
<td>2 (normally consularis)</td>
<td>Instituted by either Augustus or Tiberius</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CURATOR LOCORUM PUBLICORUM JUDICANDORUM</td>
<td>Supervision of judicial business in connexion with state property</td>
<td>5, headed by a consularis</td>
<td>Only attested under Tiberius</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CURATOR TABULARUM PUBLICARUM</td>
<td>Management of public records</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Attested at most from late in Augustus’ reign to that of Nero</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CURATOR RIPARUM ET ALVEI TIBERIS</td>
<td>Maintenance of the banks and bed of River Tiber (in particular to reduce danger of flooding)</td>
<td>1, notionally chosen by lot and headed by a consularis</td>
<td>Almost certainly from A.D. 15</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AB ACTIS SENATUS</td>
<td>Keeper of the record of senatorial proceedings</td>
<td>1 of unknown rank</td>
<td>Only attested once, in A.D. 29</td>
<td>Regular tenure (by a quaestorius) is only attested after the Julio-Claudian period</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note:

A parallel series of equestrian posts existed to such an extent that, according to Tacitus, one equestrian believed it was possible to become as wealthy and influential as a consularis solely through the equestrian civil administration. Ranging from central government officials such as the Praetorian Prefects to low level administrative assistants...
called *adiutores*, equestrian military commanders and bureaucrats served a vital role within the Roman government.

Many of these equestrian positions were situated within the imperial household. With its origins as simply a very large, but still traditional, aristocratic household, the imperial household grew over the first century of the Principate to encompass a wide range of governmental institutions that existed alongside and operated independently from the formal political structures of the Roman state. Although the exact makeup of the imperial household is largely unattested, as the vast majority of our extant evidence focuses on only the most influential members within it, several conjectures can be made. For starters, procurators in charge of imperial estates scattered throughout the empire and who governed imperial *provincia* in the emperor’s name would undoubtedly have been a part of the household administration, not the formal governmental apparatus. Additionally, the emperors would have had a good propaganda reason to place the *praefectus vigilum* and the *praefectus annonae* (overseeing a fire brigade and the grain supply, respectively) within the imperial household, as they could be portrayed as gifts from the emperor through his role as the patron of the city; only the Praetorian Prefects, the Urban Prefect, and military commanders would have clearly been formal government positions. As part of the normal administration of an aristocratic household, numerous administrative positions are attested, most notably officials *a libellis* (petitions), a

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54 Procurators first appear as agents of private citizens during the Roman Republic, often referring to freedmen operating on behalf of a patron or employer. Within the imperial household, they eventually began to take on larger duties, particularly as the line between the Roman state and the household of the emperor began to blur; however, their power always rested upon the authority of the emperor, not through the formal apparatus of the traditional Roman state. Alfred Michael Hirt, "Imperial Officials and the Allocation of Responsibilities" in *Imperial Mines and Quarries in the Roman World: Organizational Aspects 27 BC–AD 235* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010); P.A. Brunt, *Roman Imperial Themes* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 163–187.
rationibus (finance), ab epistulis Latinis (Latin correspondence), and ab epistulis Graecis (Greek correspondence).

Lastly, it would be reasonable to assume that the components of the household of Augustus’s wife Livia, the only imperial household that comes down to us fully-attested, would also be found within the imperial household: domestic attendants, accountants, smiths, skilled laborers, and entertainers, both freedmen and slaves. All these components, together with the members of the imperial family and their attendants, combined to form the imperial court, the de facto center of political life under the Julio-Claudians.

Theoretical Foundation of Aristocratic Factions

No matter what the era, oligarchic elements stood at the center of the Roman state. Although almost all scholarship on Roman history has built on this assumption, comparatively little has engaged with the dynamics of Rome’s aristocratic elements, with the vast majority covering only aristocratic competition during the Republic. The major exception in recent years has come not from within the community of ancient historians, but from political scientist Jeffrey A. Winters in his 2011 book Oligarchy. Within his chapter on what he terms “Ruling Oligarchies,” Winters uses the Late Republic and early Principate to demonstrate the interaction between the various modes of oligarchy within his model, portraying Julius Caesar’s seizure of the Roman state — and Augustus’s consolidation of it thereafter — as the quintessential breakdown of a “wild ruling

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56 Mordine, 104.
57 For more information, see Gary D. Farney, Ethnic Identity and Aristocratic Competition in Republican Rome (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); David Potter, "Holding Court in Republican Rome (105–44)," AJPh 132, no. 1 (2011).
oligarchy” into a “tamed sultanistic oligarchy.” In truth, his analysis of this time lacks the nuance needed to properly engage with it, oversimplifying the narrative and relying exclusively on secondary literature and the first book of Appian. Perhaps that should not come as a surprise; not only does he admit that he “is fluent in neither Greek nor Latin, nor trained as a historian of the Classical era, and thus can unearth nothing new from the ancient texts,” but analyzing the history of the first century BCE is not the goal of his text: creating a working model of oligarchy, one that can be used to analyze everything from feudal warlords to the Italian Mafia, is.

Despite the flaws within his implementation, Winters’ theoretical approach nonetheless does provide a strong starting point for the analysis of the political goals of the Roman aristocracy, particularly under the Principate. Defining oligarchs as political “actors who command and control massive concentrations of material resources that can be deployed to defend or enhance their personal wealth and exclusive social position,” he postulates that the primary political motivation of oligarchs is not the desire to rule, but rather a desire to safeguard their economic position; this goal he defines as wealth defense. Unlike most approaches to oligarchy, he does not view it as a zero-sum game

For more information, see Jeffrey A. Winters, Oligarchy (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 90–121.


Winters, 6. He draws a distinction between his model and Marxist theory, stating that, while Marxist theory focuses on the use of material wealth economically to maintain their position, the wealth defense model focuses on its use politically. The distinction may perhaps be best illustrated by considering Marxist theory as the owner of a Fortune 500 company reinvesting his wealth into a new economic enterprise, and wealth defense theory as that same company owner instead donating that money to support the political candidates’ campaigns of his choice.
competing with democratic and monarchical elements, but instead as operating on a
different playing field, where oligarchs compete not only to protect their status and
wealth from “above” (via taxes) and “below” (via wealth redistribution), but with each
other.61

To enact these policies of wealth defense, Winters enumerates five different
sources of power that oligarchs could tap into: political rights, governmental office,
coercive power, mobilization power, and material power.62 Technically speaking, within
the Principate, political rights and governmental offices defined the aristocracy — the
Senate, for example, had an exclusive hold over the state’s limited amount of true
suffrage, and getting elected to one of these positions was what granted an individual and
his family Rome’s highest aristocratic status.63 Coercive power (i.e., military force)
remained officially vested only within the person of the emperor, although on a practical
level, the Praetorian Prefects in Rome and the generals in the provinces were the true
arbiters of coercive power in the Roman world.64 Within Rome and the imperial court,
then, it was through mobilization power, the ability to inspire and unite the political
power of others, and material wealth that the Roman aristocracy competed.

The intersection of these loci of power stands at the core of Richard Alston’s 2015
book Rome’s Revolution: Death of the Republic and Birth of the Empire, although he
does not name them as such. Envisaging the Roman state as a series of networks woven
throughout the entire fabric of the ancient Mediterranean, connecting high-ranking

61 Winters, 11, 20, 22–23.
63 Talbert, 333; Keith Hopkins, Sociological Studies in Roman History, ed. Christopher
64 The scheming of the prefect Sejanus and the ascension of Claudius demonstrated the
great power held by the Guard, while the civil wars of 69 made it clear that the armies
could lay claim to this power as well.
magistrates, soldiers, artisans, and economic resources in economic, political, and social
relationships, Alston depicts the titular revolution as the consolidation of all the state’s
resources into one patrimonial network headed by Augustus.\(^{65}\) Over the course of his
narrative, two waves of triumvirates forge networks powerful enough to control the
functioning of the Roman state, with each of them falling into civil wars, before Augustus
eventually emerged victorious and, over the span of his reign, “enhanced the power of his
network by securing key state assets…[and managed] to transform that network from a
revolutionary insurgency to a permanent feature of Roman political life.”\(^{66}\) By the time
of Augustus’s death, this network had become so firmly entrenched within the fabric of
Roman society that its control passed over to Tiberius with relative ease, despite issues in
pinpointing a successor and the existence of multiple potential rival claimants, such as
Agrippa Postumus.

The network model of the Roman state provided a suitable foundation for Alston
to explore the massive upheaval in the final years of the Republic that left a system that
was simultaneously unchanged and radically transformed. By stopping with the death of
Augustus, however, Alston does not use the model to its full potential, using it to
examine how the Principate came into existence, not how it operated. The so-called
patrimonial network of Augustus, when Tiberius took power, did not merely transfer to a
successor; it became institutionalized, as was made clear by the relative ease with which
Claudius not only took the throne, but established himself in command over all the
component parts of the imperial household administration. By the reign of Nero, this
network was no longer centered on the person of the emperor, but rather on the imperial

\(^{65}\) Alston, 10–13.
\(^{66}\) Alston, 12.
throne itself. Far from existing above the patrimonial network that incorporated the vast majority of both the imperial household and Roman elite (both of Senatorial and equestrian rank) that served as the *de facto* government of Rome, the emperor merely held the office that ostensibly sat at its apex.

Under the Republic, separate patrimonial networks competed with each other for influence and resources within the Roman state. These independent networks did not simply disappear during the Julio-Claudian dynasty: in the reign of Nero, for example, Seneca likely served, to varying extents, as a patron for his brother Gallio, his nephew Lucan, the historian Fabius Rusticus, and his friends Annaeus Serenus and Lucilius Junior, and likely more besides. In other words, Roman aristocrats continued to forge the same political relationships and engage in the same practices that their predecessors had done in the centuries prior. The plane of competition is what changed, as networks that recognized their inferiority to that of the imperial patrimonial network competed under that broader network. Although some networks eventually aimed their sights at placing one of their own on the throne and thus seize control of the imperial network, many more would have simply vied to expand their influence within both the formal government and among the elite social circles of Rome’s nobility. In the absence of formal political parties, these networks served as the major political factions within the Roman state.

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Political Factions in the Urban Aristocracy

A prosopographical study rests at the center of the following analysis on political factions in the urban aristocracy, centered primarily on Rome. The raw data originally came through a close reading of (in this order) Tacitus’s *Annales* and *Historiae*, Suetonius’s *Claudius, Nero, Galba, Otho, Vitellius*, and *Vespasian*, Plutarch’s *Galba-Otho*, books 61–65 of Cassius Dio’s *Historia Romana*, and Josephus’s *Bellum Judaicum*, which generated a list of more than 400 political names, preliminarily categorized based on their apparent political affiliation in their first appearance within the texts as they were read. From there, the names were run through Brill’s *New Pauly* to identify other citations where these figures appeared.\(^\text{68}\) Finally, this data was then compiled into the database found in Appendix A: Court Faction Prosopography, which begins on page 93.\(^\text{69}\)

Each figure named in this section will, in their first appearance, have their location within the Appendix cited in parentheses based on the following formula: (Letter of Appendix).(Heading Number in Roman Numerals).(Entry Number); thus, for example, citation A.I.1 is Agrippina the Younger, and A.III.2 is Sextus Afranius Burrus.

Membership

Although affiliated members represent one of the defining features of a political faction, properly analyzing them in detail within ancient societies represents, to some

\(^{68}\) The *New Pauly* uses the *PIR* in its database, and while it would have been ideal to use the *PIR* directly, only two volumes are available through HathiTrust Emergency Temporary Access Service — and even those are incomplete.

\(^{69}\) At a later date, the preliminary data was analyzed a second time with the same process, this time focusing on figures with a provincial origin (particularly in Gaul and Germany); this would become Appendix B: Provincial Prosopography.
degree, a fool’s errand; formal enrollment lists, such as might exist for modern political parties, even if once documented, do not survive in the existing historical record, leaving scholars primarily at the mercy of ancient historians for both the names and connections of politically active individuals. As such, since they do nonetheless provide our closest glimpse into the day-to-day structure and organization of politically-active factions, they must be properly mined for information, with scholars cognizant of the fact that, even in the most well-documented situations, they do not provide a full picture of any faction, but instead only depict individuals insomuch as they intersect the historical narrative constructed by the author. Ultimately, a prosopographical analysis of politically-active individuals during the Neronian Principate hints at a complex and ever-evolving network of politically-active factions whose members are loosely tied together via personal patronage, familial connection, and — particularly among opposition groups — sometimes political necessity.

Before analyzing the different forces that drive faction membership and its evolution, let us first articulate the criteria that will be analyzed in the coming pages for linking individuals with particular factions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2. Common Forms of Political Affiliation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Direct Attribution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patronage</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
These five criteria represent the major ways that prosopographical analysis can reliably link together two or more individuals as political associates. Of these, only four will be discussed below; due to its rather straightforward nature, the few instances of Direct Attribution that survive do not allow for significant analysis into the political dynamics of the Roman state.

The traditional client/patron relationship continued to be a prime source of political affiliation and driver of political action during the Principate as it had been in the days of the Republic. Not surprisingly, this is reflected in the prosopographical data listed in Appendix A: at least ⅓ of the names appear to have benefitted directly from patronage, both imperial and private in nature, and many who benefitted from patronage in turn served as patrons themselves. Aside from directly-attested political alliances, an additional layer of alliances can be discerned in the practices of political patronage.

| Familia | Familial relationships in the ancient world existed in many different forms: in addition to blood-relation, connections by marriage and adoption were incredibly important, particularly under the Principate. Additionally, aristocratic households (of which the imperial household was one) also included slaves, freedmen, and other dependents. |
| Philosophy | Within the work of Tacitus in particular, but also found within other sources, philosophical affiliation represents political affiliation. As discussed below, this is a fiction on the part of Tacitus. |
| Political Necessity | Occasionally, the high stakes involved in Roman politics, particularly toward the apex of the imperial administration, resulted in strange alliances among those who might not otherwise be aligned. This typically occurs among opposition groups, such as Narcissus and other supporters of Britannicus as the rightful heir of Claudius. |

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70 In this thesis, political and literary patronage will be treated equally, as in a such a politicized society nothing was apolitical, and under the Principate, status, access, and relationships were the political capital of the day; thus, even literary patronage served a political end for both the client and the patron.
patrimonial relationships serve as the clearest force uniting factions in the Principate, and indeed to a large extent the patrimonial networks of high-ranking officials and wealthy individuals can be described as factions in themselves, much like Alston does for the Late Republic and Augustan eras. Despite their prevalence as unifying forces, however, these networks were remarkably unstable, as not only did clients and patrons turn against each other in order to gain influence with somebody higher up the socio-political ladder (e.g., Tarquitius Priscus (A.I.5)), but high-ranking clients regularly outgrew, and in some cases, even became the opponents of their former patrons, as in the case of Seneca (A.III.1 = A.V.4) and Burrus (A.III.2).\footnote{Tac. Ann. 12.59.}

Familial connections represent, in prosopographical analysis, the logical next force binding together individuals into one faction. To some extent, this appears to be supported within the ancient texts: Agrippina (A.I.1) moves against members of the Silani family following her assassination of Lucius Silanus, suggesting that, although they do not appear elsewhere within the historical narrative as active agents, the Silani family nonetheless had sufficient political power to potentially challenge Nero’s and Agrippina’s positions.\footnote{Tac. Ann. 13.1. The Silani represent a key example of how politically-inactive factions — and even politically-active ones without long staying power — make only a limited stamp on the historical record, complicating modern attempts to understand the day-to-day politics of the Principate.} Additionally, Seneca’s two brothers Lucius Junius Gallio Annaeans (Gallio) (A.III.3) and Annaeus Mela (A.III.4), as well as Mela’s son Marcus Annaeus Lucanus (Lucan) (A.III.5 = A.V.12), prospered while Seneca had Nero’s ear, as had Pallas’s (A.I.2) brother Antonius Felix (A.I.4) during Agrippina’s period of preeminence.\footnote{Acts of the Apostles 18.12, 24.26–27; Cass. Dio 62.20.1; Tac. Ann. 12.54, 16.17; Suet. Vita Luc.; Joseph. AJ 20.5–8; SIG 3 801 (the Delphi/Gallio Inscription).}
the existence of a Pisonian counter-dynasty that permeates the *Annales* and *Historiae*
parallel to the ruling Julio-Claudians and Flavians, this likely represents a literary fiction:
due to its age (it dates back to the 3rd century BCE), the Pisonian house would have
served as an ideal Senatorial family for Tacitus, and since its members existed across at
least three factions (the Pisonian conspiracy, partisans of Galba, partisans of Vitellius), it
remains unlikely that familial identity as *Pisones* united them. Ultimately, although
family ties by means of birth make factional association more likely, in the absence of
evidence for other unifying forces, it alone does not represent a strong enough
connection.

Forged familial connections — that is, marriage ties and adoption — on the other
hand tell a different story. The most prominent examples of these occur within the
imperial household, typically surrounding the succession (in some cases, such as that of
Nero, even combining both adoption and marriage ties, as he was both the stepson and
son-in-law of the emperor Claudius); however, these tools were nonetheless employed in
other prominent families, tying allies together. The marriage of Helvidius Priscus to
Thrasea Paetus’s daughter Fannia, for instance, tied together two prominent
pro-Senatorial statesmen, while Seneca’s brother Gallio had himself adopted into the
ancient Junia gens. Although outside the period in question, Tacitus himself provides an
example of this pattern, where his marriage to the daughter of prominent general Gnaeus
Julius Agricola almost surely helped boost his political career.\textsuperscript{74} While non-imperial
marriages do not often appear in the historiographic accounts, they nonetheless must be
taken into consideration when considering the dynamics of how political factions operate.

\textsuperscript{74} Tac. *Agr.* 9.
Although Stoic philosophy regularly appears within Tacitus’s narrative as a source of political organization, the prosopographical data reject the notion of a politically-active “Stoic faction” within the Principate. Miriam Griffin identifies ten men who were allegedly persecuted for being Stoics: Thrasea Paetus, Helvidius Priscus, Paconius Agrippinus, Barea Soranus, Musonius Rufus, Rubellius Plautus, Seneca, Lucan, Cornutus, and Demetrius the Cynic; the number and prominence of these men, along with the evidence of political opposition to Nero by attested Stoics such as Arulenus Rusticus, has led scholars for many years to postulate an organized philosophical opposition to the Principate that began under Nero and continued through the Flavian period. Tacitus himself even suggests as much, with the accuser of Thrasea Paetus claiming “That sect birthed the Tuberones and Favionii, hateful names even to the old republic. So that they would overturn the empire, they would parade liberty; if they overthrow it, they will attack liberty itself” (ista secta Tuberones et Favionios, veteri quoque rei publicae ingrata

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nomina, genuit. ut imperium evertant libertatem praeferunt: si perverterint, libertatem ipsam adgredientur). Similarly, Tigellinus (A.IV.1) allegedly insinuates that Rubellius Plautus served as a threat to Nero despite his retirement in Asia: “Plautus, with great resources, does not contrive a desire of leisure, but parades imitations of old Romans, with the assumed arrogance of the sect of Stoics which makes them disordered and seeking of business” *(Plautum magnis opibus ne fingere quidem cupidinem otii sed veterum Romanorum imitamenta praeferre, adsumpta etiam Stoicorum adrogantia sectaque quae turbidos et negotiorum adpetentis faciat).* As Griffin notes, no mention of Stoicism is made when Plautus was sent into exile at 14.22, with Nero’s concern simply being the presence of a potential pretender in the capital. This was likely a deliberate fabrication by Tigellinus, who no doubt saw the benefit in linking Stoicism, the philosophy adopted by his greatest political opponent, Seneca, to opposition against the emperor. Added to Thrasea Paetus’s status within the narrative as the epitome of Senatorial opposition to Nero, and it becomes clear that, to at least some extent, Tacitus highlighted the opposition of Stoic adherents to the Neronian Principate.

Nonetheless, the concept of a unified “Stoic Opposition” reflects, at best, an anachronistic depiction of the reign of Nero. Of the ten names listed above, Seneca, Thrasea Paetus, and Rubellius Plautus are largely depicted as being politically independent from each other, and nothing within either the Pisonian or Vinician conspiracies — the two best-attested sources of opposition — suggests an inherently Stoic component. As such, there is no extant example of any sort of specifically Stoic

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78 Griffin, 175–176.  
79 Griffin, 173–178.
political organizing. However, highlighting philosophical connections to create the illusion of philosophy-driven political affiliations would have served Tacitus well as representative of his own time. The reign of Domitian saw the executions of Arulenus Rusticus and Herennius Senecio, two Stoics, for writing biographies of Thrasea Paetus and Helvidius Priscus; these acts, combined with the exile of the philosophers, prompted the historian to describe this time as “the extreme in servitude” (ultimum...quid in servitute) for the Roman people.\textsuperscript{80} By retrojecting an aversion to philosophers within the imperial court back into the reign of Nero and fabricating an organized Stoic Opposition to his reign, Tacitus crafted a narrative of philosophically-backed and tradition-minded Senatorial opposition to “bad emperors” that can be traced across the Annales, Historiae, and even the Agricola.

Despite Tacitus’s suggestions of philosophy as a driving force in politics, in truth, principles of Realpolitik and political necessity often helped forge political alliances. This can be seen most clearly in the supporters of Britannicus, both towards the end of Claudius’s reign and the beginning of Nero’s. In the immediate aftermath of the death of Messalina, numerous high-ranking officials — most notably the freedman Narcissus (A.II.2) — within the Claudian administration began to look for alternatives to Britannicus in the succession, fearful that the boy, once he had grown up and taken power, would have sought revenge against those responsible for his mother’s death.\textsuperscript{81} Once it became clear, however, that the winds of power were shifting in the direction of Agrippina, first as she married Claudius, and then as she had her son adopted and named heir, Britannicus (A.II.1) became a symbol for loyal opposition: although only Narcissus

\textsuperscript{80} Tac. Agr. 2.
is cited directly by the ancient historians as a champion of Britannicus’s cause, the cases of Julius Densus (A.II.5) and Sosibius (A.II.6) suggest that their presence was at least somewhat more prominent than Tacitus and Cassius Dio let on. Within the historical narrative, Britannicus does not come across as much of a historical figure, as he primarily operated within the narrative as a usurped true heir whose sidelined and dispatchment represented a turning point for Rome. His role as a symbol, however, allowed him to serve as a rallying point for those who opposed Agrippina, but did not oppose the Claudian regime — a loyal opposition.

Due to the highly personal and non-philosophical nature of political organization, factions under the Neronian Principate were highly fluid, with not only individual members capable of jumping between factions, but whole factions coming together and branching apart as the political landscape changed. Although, since the ancient historians do not generally discuss imperial politics in terms of factions, explicit examples of individuals switching factions are rare, the unstable nature of the patronage system, as mentioned above, saw individuals abandon former patrons for newer, more powerful ones; in the process, this would have necessitated the switching of factions, due to the close relationship between the patronage networks and factions at the time (again, as mentioned above). Factions merging or splitting, on the other hand, occur with much more regularity in the surviving historical narratives. The most obvious example of this comes in the early days of Nero’s reign, in which the faction that backed Nero’s succession to the throne split into the groups headed by Agrippina on the one hand and Seneca and Burrus on the other. Both men received generous patronage from Agrippina, both

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82 Julius Densus was charged with preferring Britannicus; Sosibius, Britannicus’s tutor, was executed by Agrippina. Tac. *Ann.* 11.1, 11.4, 13.10; Cass. Dio 61.29.4–6, 61.32.5.
as she recalled Seneca from exile to serve as Nero’s tutor and manipulated Claudius into appointing Burrus as sole Praetorian Prefect. Once the succession had gone smoothly, however, the two worked to sideline their former patron, eventually supplanting Agrippina’s position as the stewards of the Neronian administration. Years later, Ofonius Tigellinus and Poppaea Sabina (A.IV.2) would combine their resources and influence in order to take down this same network, weakened by the death of Burrus; soon after, the supporters of Gaius Calpurnius Piso (A.V.1) joined with the remnants of Seneca’s faction, in an attempt to overthrow the administration and return to power.

How the Game was Played: Interactions between Political Factions

All factions within Rome, whether politically active or not, shared one major goal: to have the emperor in their corner. This does not, however, necessarily reflect a desire for power, for this would have been out of reach of all but a select few, but was rather an important component of wealth defense among Roman aristocrats. The accumulation of wealth and estates through formal offices and imperial patronage accompanied, and in many cases spurred, the political careers of Senators, equestrians, and freedmen alike, whether or not they were independently wealthy through familial connections. Simultaneous with and often bankrolling this generosity (and, in some cases, exploitation), however, was the seizure of land from the aristocracy; in fact, Keith Hopkins considers this behavior to have been so instrumental to the administration of the empire that its inability to do so in Late Antiquity was “the rock on which the western

83 Tac. Ann. 12.8, 12.69; Suet. Ner. 7.1; Cass. Dio 61.32.3.
84 Policy concerns that politicians would have fought over in the Senate and via elections were rendered obsolete under the Principate, as any significant decisions were made by the emperor. There are different ways of “getting the emperor in your corner,” including in extreme circumstances conspiracy to replace him.
empire floundered.” Maintaining a good relationship with the emperor’s closest advisors — and thus to be in good graces with the emperor — was thus the easiest way not only to augment your wealth, but also to prevent your property from being forcibly turned over to the imperial treasury. How the ancient historians portrayed them going about achieving this goal, however, varied greatly between factions.

Tacitus, Dio, and Suetonius manipulate the apparent position of imperial freedmen in the administration as a means to provide explicit commentary on the administration in question. At the risk of grossly oversimplifying the historical narrative, Nero’s reign can be divided loosely into three parts: the administrations of Agrippina, of Seneca and Burrus, and of Tigellinus and Poppaea. During the beginning and ending periods, freedmen dominated the narrative. Pallas, the libertus a rationibus for Claudius, helped Agrippina maneuver herself into Claudius’s bed and Nero into the line of succession, serving such an integral role in governing that Tacitus claimed they were lovers; in the process, he accumulated a massive wealth, which Tacitus cites as 300 million sesterces, and Cassius Dio at 400 million. After an absence in the narrative during the administration of Seneca and Burrus, freedmen return to prominence within

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85 Hopkins, 498.
86 Keith Hopkins argues that the emperors consistently “confiscated the estates of the super-rich...because these were the biggest assets available in the Roman economy.” Hopkins, 498. Emperors had a large toolbox when it came to gaining new land, including direct confiscation as punishment of crimes (real or fabricated) and acquisition through inheritance.
87 This division draws from and combines the divisions of two others, namely Miriam Griffin and Guy de la Bédoyère. Griffin calls her first chapter on the administration of Seneca and Burrus, “The Golden Age” and one the transition away from them and towards Tigellinus and Poppaea “The Turning Point.” De la Bédoyère, 207, states that “The years 49 to 59 might just as easily be seen as the reign of the Empress Agrippina as the last five years of Claudius and the first five of Nero.”
88 No matter the exact number, his wealth was such that he felt comfortable turning down a reward of 5 million sesterces — but not the ornamenta praetoria! —from the Senate. Tac. Ann. 12.1–2, 12.25, 12.53, 13.2; Suet. Claud. 28; Cass. Dio 62b.14; Plin. Ep. 8.6.
the narrative; for example, Pythagoras and Sporus appear as Nero’s spouses, while Polyclitus (A.VI.3) and Helius (A.I.10) fill important roles in the administration.\textsuperscript{89} It is important to note, however, that, with the noted exception of Pallas, who was dismissed from his role, and later killed, to reduce the influence of Nero’s mother, multiple freedmen who appear in the early part of Nero’s reign reappear in the narrative later on: Halotus, a suspect in the death of Claudius, was one of Galba’s prime supporters, and Helius and Locusta (A.I.8) are listed by Cassius Dio as having succumbed to Galba’s purging of the court.\textsuperscript{90} Additionally, Helius himself saw his stature increase notably between appearances in the narrative; originally a freedman in charge of imperial holdings in Asia entrusted with the assassination of Junius Silanus, he rose so high through the ranks that Dio writes “thus then the empire of the Romans was enslaved to two masters, Nero and Helius” (οὕτω μὲν δὴ τότε ἡ τῶν Ῥωμαίων ἀρχὴ δύο αὐτοκράτορσιν ἄμα ἐδούλευσε, Νέρωνι καὶ Ἡλίῳ).\textsuperscript{91}

From this information, it is reasonable to conclude that, even within the government of Seneca and Burrus, freedmen still had the opportunity to rise through the ranks. From a purely administrative standpoint, this should not be surprising; much like any aristocratic household, freedmen filled a number of important roles in the emperor’s household and those of his family. Even assuming that Seneca and Burrus pursued the goal of reducing the influence of freedmen in the government, it would simply have been one component of restoring the traditional partnership between the Senate and the princeps, a move driven less by ideological concerns and more by an attempt to sideline

\textsuperscript{90} Tac. \textit{Ann.} 12.66, 13.14–15, 14.65; Suet. \textit{Ner.} 35.5; Suet. \textit{Claud.} 44.2; Suet. \textit{Galb.} 15.2; Cass. Dio 64b.3.
\textsuperscript{91} Tac. \textit{Ann.} 13.1; Cass. Dio 62b.12.1–2 (62b.pos=1439.1).
Agrippina by moving the locus of decision-making from the imperial household to the Senate (and thus out of her reach). It should not be surprising, then, that even despite their efforts, freedmen continued to exert substantial control on the day-to-day matters of the state; the historiographical tradition that suggests otherwise reflects an attempt to promote the pro-Senatorial aims of Seneca and Burrus and disparage the more openly monarchic aspects of the Neronian regime during the Agrippina and Tigellinus administrations.92

Such a historiographic aim, in fact, appears to fly in the face of the actual administrative practices of the regime. Despite alleged differences between the different factions, a close reading of the historical narratives suggests remarkably little variation in the regular governmental aims of the various factions under Nero. Patronage stood at the center of all attempts at governing, with ancient writers documenting at least one clear instance where individuals prospered due to the influence of Agrippina (Antonius Felix), Poppaea (Gessius Florus (A.IV.6)), and Seneca (Fabius Rusticus (A.III.9)); Narcissus and Piso, furthermore, are described as generous patrons, and a CIL inscription suggests that Burrus — who is largely ignored in the texts outside of military contexts — may have conducted patronage of his own.93 Outside these examples of patronage, however, the historians portray the different faction leaders as exerting influence through very different

[92 Miriam Griffin notes that the major criticism against the Claudius regime was the prominence that the emperor’s wives and freedmen played as important governmental officials: indeed, Nero’s accession speech was even crafted to indicate to the Senate that his own reign would see him collaborate with the Senate, not with those in his household. Only during the administration of Seneca and Burrus, however, does that promise play out. Griffin, 72–73.]

means. Dio claims that Seneca and Burrus enacted extensive legislative programs. Agrippina, meanwhile, operates mainly via threats and subterfuge, bullying the Horti Tauriani away from Statilius Taurus (a powerful and wealthy senator who had been serving as proconsul in Africa), using Lucius Vitellius (A.I.3) to have Junius Silanus struck from the Senatorial rolls to facilitate Nero’s marriage to Octavia, and employing the poisoner Locusta to murder Claudius and the equestrian Publius Celerius (A.I.9) and freedman Helius to assassinate Junius Silanus. Tigellinus finds himself charged with using bribery and sexual debauchery to improve his position, both as a giver and recipient. Roman historians similarly accuse Poppaea, who “possessed all things besides an honest spirit” (cuncta alia fuere praeter honestum animum), of utilizing her “glory” (gloriam) and “reputation” (famam) to dominate Nero and partake in his extravagances.

With minimal exception, these descriptions primarily reflect the authors’ attitudes of the person, and not the actual description of events. This can best be seen by looking at the historians’ depictions of the actions of Seneca and Burrus within their narratives. Dio’s claim, for instance, that Seneca and Burrus actively engaged with the process of passing legislation is unsubstantiated within his own narrative. Tacitus records only one instance where Seneca had any effect on legislation, and even then, his influence mainly existed behind the scenes; primarily, he and Suetonius opt to sidestep the matter of legislation, focusing instead on the speeches made at Nero’s ascension to the throne (the

94 Tac. Ann. 13.3–5; Cass. Dio 61b.3.1, 61b.4.2; Suet. Ner. 10; Griffin, 50–51.
95 Cass. Dio 61b.3.1, 61b.4.2.
97 Tac. Ann. 14.48, 15.40; Cass. Dio 62b.28.4, 63.11.2; Plut. Oth. 2.1; Tac. Hist. 1.72; Griffin, 103.
former placing particular emphasis on promised political reforms, the latter on the virtues put forward.\textsuperscript{99} Even when acknowledging their engagement with actions considered less-than-desirable when committed by others, the historians — primarily Tacitus and Suetonius in this case, for Dio thinks little of Seneca — carefully work to avoid levying the same charges against them. Although depicted as standing apart from the intrigues of the imperial court, the two do not hesitate to pry Nero away from his mother by encouraging — and hiding — an extra-marital affair with the freedwoman Claudia Acte (A.III.8); criticism of the move is notably absent in the text.\textsuperscript{100} Furthermore, much like the much-maligned freedmen, Seneca did prosper as a result of his proximity to the emperor, with Tacitus reporting that he had earned 300 million sesterces via usury, and Dio claiming that his calling in a loan of 40 million sesterces sparked Boudica’s rebellion.\textsuperscript{101} Tacitus tries to spin this report as a baseless charge by a political opponent by placing it in the mouth of Publius Suillius, a man he calls “terrible and venal” \textit{(terribilis ac venalis)}, despite the fact that Seneca himself answers similar charges in \textit{De Vita Beata}.\textsuperscript{102} Lastly, and perhaps most significantly, Tacitus specifically strives to absolve Seneca from any involvement in the Pisonian conspiracy; indeed, he even uses it as an opportunity to praise him by reporting a rumor that Subrius Flavus (A.III.10 = A.V.5) plotted to kill Piso and hand the empire over to Seneca “just as if to a man chosen for the highest pediment by innocent men for his brightness of virtues” \textit{(quasi insontibus claritudine virtutum ad summum fastigium delecto)}.\textsuperscript{103} Dio on the other hand centers the conspiracy itself not on Piso, but on Seneca, lending further credence to the possibility

\textsuperscript{99} Tac. \textit{Ann.} 13.3–5; Cass. Dio 61b.3.1, 61.4.2; Suet. \textit{Ner.} 10; Griffin, 50–51.
\textsuperscript{100} Tac. \textit{Ann.} 12.13, 13.13, 14.2; Suet. \textit{Ner.} 28.1; Cass. Dio 61b.7.1.
\textsuperscript{101} Tac. \textit{Ann.} 13.42; Cass. Dio 62b.2.
\textsuperscript{102} Tac. \textit{Ann.} 13.42; Sen. \textit{Vit. Beat.} 17, 22.
\textsuperscript{103} Tac. \textit{Ann.} 15.65.
that Tacitus attempted to “redeem” Seneca.\textsuperscript{104} In all cases, Seneca (and, by extension, Burrus) finds potential criticism waived away for actions that others were criticized for; ultimately, this creates the false impression that their administration operated solely through legal and moral means, an impression which falls apart when viewed with a critical eye.

**In the Service of Seneca: Depictions of the Politically-Unaligned and the Tigellinus/Poppaea Administration**

Attempting to break down the literary facade and uncover the ideological manipulation of the historical narrative within the ancient sources does nonetheless create some problems within the analysis of the political dynamics of the period. Imperial loyalists and politically unaffiliated individuals, often including romantic or sexual partners, friends of the emperor, and women at court not within the imperial family, play prominent roles in the accounts of the reign of Nero as have been passed down; how much this represents the historical reality, however, is up for debate. Meanwhile, while Tacitus, Suetonius, and Dio provide a fairly coherent view of Tigellinus and Poppaea, evidence from outside the Roman historiographical tradition suggests that this traditional depiction may have been a literary fiction.

Particularly in the latter days of Nero’s reign and in the accounts of the debauchery of Nero’s court, individuals who appear to be politically unaligned fill the

\textsuperscript{104} The section of Cassius Dio’s text survives in epitome through the work of Xiphilinus, an 11th century Byzantine scholar. Xiphilinus’s work so closely follows Dio’s in its wording that, except where deliberately noted, the first person refers not to Xiphilinus, but to Dio himself. For more information, see P.A. Brunt, “On Historical Fragments and Epitomes,” *CQ*, New Series, Vol. 30, No. 2 (1980), and Christopher Mallan, “The Style, Method, and Programme of Xiphilinus’ *Epitome* of Cassius Dio’s *Roman History,*” *GRBS* 53 (2013) 610–644.
inner social circle of the emperor. Ranging from sexual partners, such as Sporus (A.VI.4), Pythagoras (whom Suetonius, possibly mistakenly, calls Doryphoros) (A.VI.2), and Acte to important aristocratic women like Calvia Crispinilla (A.IV.5), they represent, for Roman authors, the most undesirable parts of Nero’s reign: Sporus and Pythagoras highlight for their audiences Nero’s sexual deviances, while Crispinilla “took off, plundered, and despoiled all things, as much as was being taken” (ἦγον ἐπόρθουν ἐσύλων πάνθ᾽ ὅσα ἐνεδέχετο), earning the title “teacher of pleasures of Nero” (magistra libidinum Neronis) from Tacitus. Archaeological evidence, at least in the cases of Acte and Crispinilla, back up the historians’ portrayals that they were important figures in court: brick stamps at Tegeste back up Tacitus’s claims that she “then was powerful with wealth and with childlessness” (mox potens pecunia et orbitate), while Acte accumulated immense wealth, including estates at Puteoli and Velitrae, as well as numerous slaves of her own. Despite this, however, it remains unclear to what extent those mentioned among Nero’s social circle held any formal political power; while friendship with the emperor always contains at least a small political element — access in high places is a very important political currency — no concrete political actions are assigned to them, with the sole exception that Sporus and Acte remained by Nero’s side at his suicide. Of course, it follows then to ask whether they, as a group, might be considered a politically-inactive faction, a network of social relationships centered on the emperor

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106 For Crispinilla, the New Pauly cites brick stamps and property ownership records; for Acte, it cites PIR² C 1067, evidence for her slaves and property. Tac. Hist. 1.73; Werner Eck, “Calvia Crispinilla,” Brill’s New Pauly Online: Encyclopedia of the Ancient World (Leiden: Brill, 2005); Werner Eck, “Claudia” II 4, Brill’s New Pauly Online: Encyclopedia of the Ancient World (Leiden: Brill, 2005).

himself that, despite its proximity to political power, nonetheless did not actively attempt to influence policy; ultimately, however, the lack of unbiased sources that would give a clearer glimpse into the lives of these figures outside their relation to Nero prevents any concrete statement to be made.\[^{108}\]

In a similar vein, the Roman historiographical and literary tradition takes a very strong stance against Tigellinus and Poppaea. Tacitus claims that Poppaea was prominent primarily for her “immodesty and cruelty” (*impudicitiam...saevitiamque*) and charges Tigellinus with being “adept in vices, [who] exercised at once barbarity, then avarice [and] mature crimes” (*vitiis adeptus, crudelitatem mox, deinde avaritiam, virilia scelera, exercuit*), who corrupted Nero “to every crime” (*ad omne facinus*).\[^{109}\] Likewise, Plutarch grants Tigellinus the epitaph “the teacher and *paidagogos* of the tyrant” (“τὸν διδάσκαλον καὶ παιδαγωγὸν τῆς τυραννίδος”), and Juvenal warns the satirist not to cross somebody like him:\[^{110}\]

Put down Tigellinus: you, a pine torch, will light in that place
In which standing men burn, who in their fastened neck smoke
And a wide furrow you will lead in the middle of the sand.

pone Tigellinum: taeda lucebis in illa
qua stantes ardent qui fixo gutture fumant,

\[^{108}\] Most of these figures, however, do appear primarily during the height of Tigellinus’s and Poppaea’s power, both of whom, in the words of Miriam Griffin, “encouraged exhibitionism as a means to popularity” among the masses in Rome — i.e., the extravagant gladiatorial shows, circus races, and theatrical performances that alienated him from the traditional Senatorial aristocracy. This may be a coincidence; however, given Nero’s relationship with performers such as Eucaereus and direct participation in festival proceedings (his marriage to Pythagoras allegedly occurred as part of a festival thrown by Tigellinus), it seems prudent to mention the temporal overlap. Tac. *Ann.* 13.60, 15.37; Cass. Dio 62b.28.3, 62b.13.2 (62b.pos=1440.2); Suet. *Ner.* 29.1; Griffin, 104.


\[^{110}\] Plut. *Galb.* 17.2.
et latum media sulcum deducis harena.\textsuperscript{111}

As Griffin notes, the Pseudo-Senecan tragedy \textit{Octavia}, however, presents a very different image of the two, portraying Poppaea as “a pathetic bride, terrified by bad dreams and bent on appeasing the gods” and an unnamed Prefect — presumably Tigellinus — as a spineless soldier who does not wish to carry out Nero’s suppressive orders but who is unable to convince the emperor otherwise.\textsuperscript{112} Additionally, outside the Roman historiographical tradition, Josephus views Poppaea in a distinctly positive light, calling her a “God-fearing” (θεοσεβὴς) woman while relating how she had intervened with Nero on the Jews’ behalf and how she bestowed numerous gifts on him when the two met.\textsuperscript{113}

While it is quite impossible to uncover the true personalities of the two figures, it is nonetheless clear that the traditional depiction is a deliberately-shaped, primarily Senatorial perspective, one that attempts to tie the public manifestation of Nero’s vices to Tigellinus and Poppaea while simultaneously portraying Poppaea as a new, lesser version of Agrippina.\textsuperscript{114} By doing so, they set up Tigellinus and Poppaea’s period of influence as a foil for that of Seneca and Burrus, utilized within the historiographic tradition to highlight the importance of traditional Senatorial advisors to the imperial throne.

\textsuperscript{111} Juv. 1.1.156–158.
\textsuperscript{112} Griffin, 100.
\textsuperscript{113} Joseph. \textit{AJ} 20.195–197, 20.252; Joseph. \textit{Vit.} 3. Josephus clearly held no ill will against Poppaea for granting Gessius Florus, whom he portrays as one of the sparks of the Jewish War, the procuratorship of Judea.
\textsuperscript{114} Compare Tac. \textit{Ann.} 14.14, in which Seneca and Burrus are depicted as finding a middle ground for Nero to engage in pursuits deemed unacceptable for an emperor to engage in publicly, with Dio 63.12/Suet. \textit{Ner.} 23.2, in which audience members feigned fainting in order to leave his performances, and Tac. \textit{Ann.} 16.4/Suet. \textit{Ner.} 24.1, in which he competed in theatrical and musical performances. Additionally, Suetonius and Dio both emphasize how he shirked his duties at Rome and disregarded urgent dispatches from Helius in order to continue performances in Greece. Suet. \textit{Ner.} 23.1; Cass. Dio 62b.19 (62b.pos=1446.1).
Political Participation of Non-Elite and Non-Roman Populations

Although the ancient historians primarily focus their narratives on high-ranking officials within the city of Rome, they were not the only forces at play that drove political developments during the Julio-Claudian Principate. Both in the capital and at the frontier, the army remained an ever-present reminder of the civil wars of the Late Republic and the influence that the soldiers could wield either on behalf of or against their commanders. Within the provinces, meanwhile, local political rivalries simmered under the surface, while conquered populations struggled to define their relationship to the capital and to the empire as a whole.\textsuperscript{115}

The Political Power of the Army

Under the Principate, the emperor ostensibly had a monopoly on military power, as legionary commanders served at his discretion and the sole organized military force in Rome, the Praetorian Guard, primarily operated as the emperor’s personal bodyguards. In truth, however, the Prefects of the Guard held the monopoly on force within the capital, granting them an unprecedented level of coercive power locally that could be used to safeguard the status quo (as Burrus did), to gain leverage over the emperor (as, according to Tacitus, Tigellinus did), or, in extreme cases, to replace the emperor outright (as Cassius Chaerea had done).\textsuperscript{116} It was no accident that Agrippina had the two Prefects replaced with one of her own while preparing for her son’s ascension to the throne, that

\textsuperscript{115} While this thesis will discuss some provincial Senators and prominent politicians from the provinces, it will refrain from treating them as political factions in the way that, for example, Ronald Syme does. This decision has been made to prevent retreading upon what has already been done, and also because, in many respects, provincial Senators did not engage in politics all that differently from Roman-born Senators.

\textsuperscript{116} Suet. \textit{Calig.} 56.2.
Seneca’s downfall began once he lost his ally in Burrus, or that Tigellinus’s dominance did not fade with the death of the emperor’s own wife. At the start of the Principate, Augustus had packed the Senate with his own supporters in order to streamline and legitimize his reign; by the end of the Julio-Claudian dynasty, the Guard had usurped that position. Having the support of the Guard’s officers provided a substantial boost to anyone looking to advance their political influence under the Principate.

In the opening paragraphs of his Historiae, Tacitus writes that the civil wars of 69 CE “had provoked all the legions and their leaders, with the secret of the empire divulged: that it was possible that an emperor be made elsewhere than Rome” (omnis legiones ducesque conciverat, evulgato imperii arcano posse principem alibi quam Romae fieri). Such an assertion, however, deliberately neglects the development and history of the imperial Principate system. Neither Augustus nor any of his successors had forgotten the important role that legions had played during the civil wars of the Late Republic, marching on and overthrowing the existing government in Rome on at least three occasions (Sulla twice, Julius Caesar once), and ensuring Augustus’s eventual victory over the assassins of Caesar and the Second Triumvirate. Suetonius cites Tiberius as describing imperial power “as holding a wolf by the ears” (ut...lupum se auribus tenere), a comparison which Brian Campbell links with the emperor’s relationship to the Roman army. Furthermore, Nero primarily appointed relative unknowns to important military commands, particularly later on in his career, in order to prevent any general from amassing enough wealth and influence to rival him; in especially important areas,

117 Tac. Hist. 1.4.
such as along the Rhine — which held several legions in a fairly confined area — he appointed commanders with ties to himself and the imperial household.\textsuperscript{119} Although the legions were out of sight for most in Rome, and thus considered politically neutralized, their potential power nonetheless was not forgotten by those who needed to keep it.

Despite its important history in Roman politics, the legions remained politically stifled during the reign of the Julio-Claudians, apparently ceding much of their power and influence within the capital to the Praetorian Guard and becoming very much more a frontier presence. Once they returned to the political scene, they appeared to rewrite the rules of politics under the Principate, overturning the Roman state three times within eighteen months. Critical analysis of this reemergence of legionary influence on the political scene, however, reveals that, far from overturning and rewriting the governance of the Empire, the revolting legions reflected the shifting nature of political power that had been long occurring since the fall of the Late Republic: namely, the increasing importance of provincial interests and the crystallization of power blocs outside Italy that could engage in empire-wide politics.

Although they accounted for only a relatively small percentage of individuals within the provinces, a proper understanding of the political dynamics within and among the legions remains crucial to breaking down the political structures of the Roman provincia. Within the Roman historiographic tradition, the soldiers themselves are often portrayed as unruly entities, and their political engagement an overturning of the accustomed order: Plutarch writes that “many other things which having fallen to the Romans after the end of Nero hold testimony of this, and that nothing is more fearful in

\textsuperscript{119} Earlier in his reign, Seneca’s brother-in-law Pompeius Paullinus, and Duvius Avitus, a native of Burrus’s hometown, held important positions in this region. Griffin, 115–117.
an empire than military power used by uneducated and illogical forces” (アルバム τε πάθη πολλά καὶ τὰ Ῥωμαίοις συμπεσόντα μετὰ τὴν Νέρωνος τελευτήν ἔχει μαρτύρια καὶ παραδείγματα τοῦ μηδὲν εἶναι φοβερότερον ἀπαιδεύτοις χρωμένης καὶ ἀλόγοις ὀρμαίς ἐν ἡγεμονίᾳ στρατιωτικῆς δυνάμεως); while Tacitus does not so explicitly call out the rank-and-file, his narrative throughout the Historiae nonetheless reflects a philosophical agreement with its sentiment, as unruly soldiers drive many of its episodes.\textsuperscript{120} This perspective has dominated scholarship on the civil wars of 69 CE. Ronald Syme emphasized how the soldiers had “recaptured...the rights of citizens” and began to hold a “fanatical devotion to the candidate of their choice” as military discipline declined amidst civil discord. Ronald Mellor more recently links the decline of military discipline and the number of mutinies to “the conscription into the army of the lazy and self-indulgent urban rabble.”\textsuperscript{121} Only in the last fifteen years has this notion been challenged, as Gwyn Morgan attributes Tacitus’s “madness” of civil war not simply to the loss of discipline, but just as, if not more often, to “the loss of any sense of proportion among the officers;” even this reading, however, as much as it claims to break with past interpretations, is nonetheless built on the assumption that at some level the military no longer operated with any sense.\textsuperscript{122} In order to understand the roles that the soldiery may play within the political actions available to them — in the most extreme form, revolt and mutiny, but also imperial acclamation and the withholding of oaths of loyalty — this perspective must be assessed. Two examples will be analyzed in this evaluation: Tacitus’s claim that

\textsuperscript{121} Ronald Mellor, The Roman Historians (Taylor & Francis Group, 1999), 97.
\textsuperscript{122} Ronald Syme, Tacitus Volume I (Oxford University Press, 1958), 169; Morgan, 7.
Otho was ruled by the soldiers and the decision by the German legions to proclaim Vitellius, a relative unknown, as emperor.

The Mutiny Against Otho: Soldiers at Court

Following the assassination of Galba and Otho’s ascendance to the throne, Tacitus characterized the latter’s reign as one by the soldiers, writing that “all things were then decided by the judgment of the soldiers” (omnia deinde arbitrio militum acta). To defend this position, he claims the soldiers appointed their own commanders — Plotius Firmus and Licinius Proculus by the Praetorians, Flavius Sabinus by the urban cohorts — while Otho used the imperial treasury to pay the vacationes to the officers so that the common soldiers would be allowed to go on leave. As Morgan notes, however, these decisions do not necessarily reflect “a soldiery out of control nor an emperor forced to yield to their whims.” Neither Firmus nor Proculus represented strange choices: both had been complicit in Otho’s coup, and Firmus had spent his entire career working through the ranks of the soldiers in Rome, having previously served as the prefect of the vigiles. Additionally, although he does not discuss the appointment of the Praetorian Prefects, Plutarch provides not one but two alternate reasons for the selection of Flavius Sabinus, that Otho “either [was] accomplishing upon the honor of Nero...or either, by advancing Sabinus, he demonstrated favor and trust of Vespasian” (εἴτε καὶ τοῦτο πράξας

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123 Tac. Hist. 1.46.  
124 Tac. Hist. 1.46.  
125 Morgan, 93.  
126 Cynthia Damon notes that Firmus’s rise from the ranks of the praetorians to an equestrian post had not yet become normal, and thus would have represented an abnormal case that would have lent some credence to Tacitus’s claims. However, ongoing civil strife made it imperative to hire experienced and loyal military commanders, and as such, unusual appointments would not have been out of the question. Tac. Hist. 1.46; Cynthia Damon, Tacitus Histories: Book I (Cambridge University Press, 2003), 191.
Furthermore, directly before Tacitus’s claim, Otho goes directly against the wishes of the soldiers, albeit in a roundabout way, saving Marius Celsus, Galba’s consul-designate, by falsely arresting him “in a simulation of anger” (simulatione irae). Lastly, despite the important role that the donative played in Otho’s rise to power, there does not appear to be any direct evidence that the soldiers, in fact, received said donative; although he does not say anything about the donative itself, Suetonius notes that Otho’s first move after securing the throne was to put aside money to continue construction of Nero’s Domus Aurea, suggesting where the new emperor’s priorities lie. It might be argued that, given its earlier importance in the narrative, that Tacitus neglects to mention it simply because Otho’s successful coup makes its payment a mere formality; neither Suetonius nor Plutarch, however, makes any mention of one — it simply disappears from the narrative entirely.

One of the examples often cited to emphasize the unruliness of Otho’s soldiers deserves a lengthier analysis, that of the mutiny at Rome while the emperor dined with senators. As Morgan notes, despite appearing within every surviving narrative of Otho’s reign, the episode remains shrouded in much mystery (Table 3 presents a breakdown of the narratives in Tacitus, Plutarch, Suetonius, and Cassius Dio).

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127 Plut. Otho 5.2.
128 Tac. Hist. 1.45.
129 While Suetonius makes no direct comment on whether the money promised for the donative was redirected to the Domus Aurea, its continued construction indicates that a lack of funds did not prevent distribution of the donative. Suet. Otho, 7.1; Morgan, 94–95.
130 Cassius Dio provides a lone exception to this, mentioning that Otho had kept the soldiers loyal to him with gifts.
131 Morgan, 106.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tac. Hist. 1.80–85</th>
<th>Plut. Oth. 3.3</th>
<th>Suet. Otho 8</th>
<th>Cass. Dio 64b.9</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The 17th is summoned from Ostia to Rome</td>
<td>The 17th is summoned from Ostia to Rome.</td>
<td>Weapons are ordered to be removed from Praetorian camp and sent to the fleet.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At nightfall, praetorian tribune Varius Crispinus loads wagons with weapons from armory.</td>
<td>While Crispinus is preparing wagons, soldiers accuse him of conspiracy.</td>
<td>Soldiers suspect a conspiracy.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drunken soldiers suspect conspiracy, and murdered tribunes.</td>
<td>Soldiers seize arms, begin riot. Hearing that Otho is hosting Senators for dinner, soldiers rush to the Palace to slaughter members of the Senate.</td>
<td>Soldiers rush upon the Palace, demanding deaths of the Senators.</td>
<td>Soldiers rush into the Palace while armed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soldiers seize arms, rush to the Palace.</td>
<td>Soldiers wound Julius Martialis and Vitellius Saturninus.</td>
<td>Soldiers wound some officers and kill others.</td>
<td>Soldiers kill those attempting to stand in their way.</td>
</tr>
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To begin with, the scene’s premise — that of moving weaponry from Rome to Ostia to arm a unit, identified as the “seventeenth” in Tacitus and Plutarch (Morgan suggests they may be the 17th urban cohort), that had been summoned from Ostia to Rome — seems extraordinarily counterproductive at best, and suspicious at worst. In a slightly less baffling move, Varius Crispinus decided to move the weaponry overnight, possibly hoping that, by avoiding the crowds, he would be able to complete his assignment causing as little disruption to daily life as possible. In a period of peace and tranquility,

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132 Numerous potential reconstructions have been proposed; without knowing all the logistics, however, any attempt will remain unsatisfactory. Plut. Otho 3.3; Tac. Hist. 1.80; Morgan, 106–107.
133 Tac. Hist. 1.80; Suet. Otho 8.2; Plut. Otho 3.3.
such a decision may not have sparked any worries; in the months following the assassination of an emperor and in the midst of a civil war, however, he drew the attention of off-duty soldiers (potentially drunk, if Tacitus is to be believed) who, assuming a Senatorial conspiracy, took up arms and swarmed the palace, intent on ensuring the safety of Otho against his enemies in the Senate.\footnote{Tac. \textit{Hist.} 1.80; Suet. \textit{Otho} 8.2; Plut. \textit{Otho} 3.4.} Surely adding more fuel to the fire for the soldiers, moreover, was how Otho was, at that very moment, hosting prominent members of the Senate and their families for dinner in his household.\footnote{Tac. \textit{Hist.} 1.81; Suet. \textit{Otho} 8.2; Plut. \textit{Otho} 3.4; Cass. Dio 64b.9.} In truth, it is easy to see why these circumstances may have appeared as an attempt at revolution.

Complicating the analysis, the ancient writers took the opportunity within their narratives to engage in rhetoric against both the soldiers and Otho. In addition to calling the soldiers drunk, for example, Tacitus described the general attitude among the soldiers as one where “the worst had a desire for looting, the crowd, as is custom, a desire of some new revolution” \textit{(pessimus quisque in occasionem praedarum, vulgus, ut mos est, cuiuscumque motus novi cupidum)}.\footnote{Tac. \textit{Hist.} 1.80.} Plutarch similarly casts the event in the light of a soldiery which “held themselves most dangerous and troublesome, having recommended to distrust and to guard against and to curtail those worthy of mention, either truly fearing through goodwill, or using with this pretext to stir up trouble or make war” \textit{(χαλεποὺς παρεῖχον ἑαυτούς, ἀπιστεῖν παρακελευόμενοι καὶ φυλάττεσθαι καὶ κολούειν τοὺς ἁξιολόγους, εἰτ’ ἁληθῶς φοβούμενοι δι᾽ εὖνοιαν, εἰτε προφάσει χρώμενοι ταύτη τοῦ ταράττειν καὶ πολεμοποιεῖν)}.\footnote{Plut. \textit{Otho} 3.2.} Otho similarly receives criticism in his handling of the
mutiny, with Tacitus emphasizing that “against the decorum of the empire” (*contra decus imperii*) he had to stand up on a couch in order to address the soldiers who had stormed his palace, while Plutarch added that it took a great amount of effort, and a great many indignities, to get the soldiers to disperse: “exhorting many things and begging and not sparing tears he only just sent them off” (πολλὰ παρηγορήσας καὶ δεηθεὶς καὶ μηδὲ δακρύων φεισάμενος μόλις ἀπέπεμψεν αὐτούς). The aftermath of the event, if the sources are to be believed, led to the resignation of numerous centurions and tribunes, due to the wounding of Julius Martialis and Vitellius Saturninus (and the possible deaths of other officers), and a city that did not stir in the morning, but rather sat motionless and ready to be sacked as if in war. Despite this, the soldiers responsible received payment in the form of five thousand sesterces or twelve hundred fifty drachmas.

Tacitus, Plutarch, Suetonius, and Cassius Dio in all respects portrayed every event within this episode in its most negative light, in order to continue expanding on their condemnation of both Otho and the allegedly out-of-control soldiers. Looking at the sequence of events from the perspective of both relevant groups, however, provides potential alternatives that, although unable to completely disprove the assertions of the ancient authors, nonetheless cast doubt on them and permit a more nuanced glimpse into the delicate situation that was the city of Rome during 69 CE. According to Tacitus, the first soldiers to spot the movement of the weapons suspected Crispinus of preparing to distribute arms to the slaves of senators, quite possibly those same ones who were at that

138 Tac. *Hist.* 1.82; Plut. *Otho* 3.7.
139 Tac. *Hist.* 1.82; Plut. *Otho* 3.5.
140 The annual pay of a member of the legionaries was 900 sesterces annually under Augustus and 1200 under Domitian; praetorians received roughly 3000 annually. Tac. *Hist.* 1.82; Plut. *Otho* 3.7; Cass. Dio 64.9.3; M. Alexander Speidel, "Roman Army Pay Scales" in *JRS* 82 (1992), 101–102.
moment dining with Otho in the palace. Such decisive action, would have been unthinkable to the senators of Tacitus’s *Historiae*, whom he criticized earlier because they “criticized Galba, praised the judgment of the military, and kissed the hand of Otho” (*incrēpare Galbam, laudare militum iudicium, exosculari Othonis manum*) just hours after celebrating the falsely-reported death of Otho; as if to reinforce the point, those present at dinner fled the palace immediately before the soldiers arrived, highlighting their fear. Tacitus, however, need not be taken at his word here. Rome, after all, was only four years removed from the Pisonian Conspiracy, a largely Senatorial attempt to murder Nero, whom Otho very deliberately attempted to emulate; even though that previous attempt had failed, their ability to conduct violent politics would not have been forgotten. While it may be fair to say that the soldiers in question likely overreacted to what was probably a routine military maneuver, their concerns were not entirely unfounded.

In a similar vein, the ancient writers criticize Otho for being extraordinarily lenient on the mutinous soldiers, punishing only two and paying the remainder for their continued loyalty. In truth, Otho’s hands were tied. Vitellius had two armies marching south towards Italy, consisting of some of the most feared soldiers in the Roman world, the Rhine legions; Otho had the Praetorian Guard, the urban cohorts, and the I Adiutrix. With a civil war ongoing, trained soldiers were not expendable, and in truth, they had acted out of loyalty to him. Properly punishing them — i.e., killing any

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141 Tac. Hist. 1.80.
142 Tac. Hist. 1.35, 1.45, 1.81.
143 Otho does send for the four legions from Pannonia and Dalmatia to reinforce them, but it would have taken time for them to return to Italy — time which he did not have once Vitellius’s armies opted to cross the Alps during the winter. Morgan, 52, 101; Kenneth Wellesley, *Year of the Four Emperors: Third Edition* (Florence: Taylor & Francis Group, 2000), 8.
significant number — would have alienated his most ardent supporters and would have
doomed his reign; to borrow (and slightly adapt) the words of Tyrion Lannister from
*Game of Thrones*, “A ruler who kills those devoted to him is not a ruler who inspires
devotion.” Instead, he seized upon another tactic, that of rewarding the soldiers for
their devotion via an additional gift, and — at least in Tacitus’s and Plutarch’s narratives
— addressing them about the event in the camp. Plutarch simply states that Otho
commended the soldiers for their loyalty but told them he needed to punish “some few
who plotted not a good thing” (ὀλίγους δὲ τινας οὐκ ἐπ᾽ ἀγαθῷ...ὑποικουρεῖν) and who
thus harmed the reputation of both Otho and the soldiers. Tacitus, on the other hand,
crafts a speech “widely considered one of the historian’s most brilliant creations,” in
which he portrayed Otho as praising the soldiers for their bravery and loyalty, but
warning them for the overzealousness that led to distrust; additionally, he beseeched them
to show respect to the Senate as a foundational institution of the Roman state.
Ultimately, due to the nature of speeches in ancient historiography, it is impossible to
know exactly what Otho may have said to the soldiers that morning — after all, simply
drawing the line between the voice of Otho and that of Tacitus is in itself an exercise in
futility. Its survival in two different, albeit similar, traditions does at least lend credence
to the notion that this was the tactic the emperor employed in response to this particular
crisis.

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144 *Game of Thrones*, season 5, episode 8, “Hardhome,” directed by Miguel Sapochnik,
written by David Benioff and D.B. Weiss, aired May 31, 2015, HBO Max. The actual
quote within the episode changes only the gender of the pronoun to match the character
addressed: “A ruler who kills those devoted to her is not a ruler who inspires devotion.”
146 Morgan, 109; Tac. *Hist.* 1.83–84.
Both the background to and the events of the mutiny of the soldiers at Rome reveal the truth behind the power blocs within the Empire. Although the emperor sat ostensibly at the top of the ladder, both soldiers and Senators — when operating in an organized, collective manner — had the capacity to wield power over the emperor and, in extreme circumstances, topple them for their own political gain.

The Mutiny at the Rhine: Soldiers at the Frontier

While Otho grappled with mutinous soldiers in Rome, Vitellius found himself the benefactor of what began as a mutiny of two legions, but soon erupted into a full-scale revolt of the Rhine legions. To an extent, Tacitus — our main source for this time, as Plutarch’s biography of Vitellius does not survive — attempts to cast these events in the same light as those in Rome, writing that the Rhine legions “had revelled in the sacking of cities, depopulating of fields, and seizing of penates” (infensi expugnationes urbiu, populationes agrorum, raptus penatium hauserunt) after crushing Vindex’s revolt.147

Unlike the situation in Rome, however, where Otho drives the narrative for the historian, Vitellius’s generals, Aulus Caecina Alienus and Fabius Valens, take center stage. This shift in emphasis complicates the narrative, as does the fact that, in truth, Tacitus’s decision to begin the Historiae at the start of 69 CE results in the story of the Rhine legions’ discontent being picked up in medias res.

When Vitellius first arrived in Germany, he found seven legions already discontent with Galba in Rome. Tacitus pegs their frustration primarily as the result of the fact that the very tribes who had backed Vindex’s revolt — the Gallic Sequani, Aeduli, and Arverni — prospered under Galba, while the Treviri and Lingones, the Gallic

147 Tac. Hist. 1.51.
peoples who lived near the legions, were punished. Recent history, however, may not have been the sole source of malcontent. More than twenty years prior, following the plot of Gnaeus Cornelius Lentulus Gaetulicus against Caligula, Galba had been appointed governor of Upper Germany; ever the disciplinarian, he had not been lenient with the legions there:

And at once through the camps this was thrown: ‘Soldier, learn to be a soldier, for it is Galba in command, not Gaetulicus.’ With equal severity, he prohibited furloughs to be sought. He strengthened the veteran and the recruit with constant labor…

Much had changed between Galba’s appointment in Germany (39–41) and the civil wars of 69; the sheer number of years meant that few, if any, soldiers were still in service; additionally, legions were moved around the frontiers regularly, and only the XXII Primigenia had remained in Upper Germany the entire time. Accounts of this time, however, would have been passed down from one generation of soldier to the next, and service under a hard-nosed and disliked disciplinarian would have easily become entrenched in the legions’ institutional memory. Moreover, although Tacitus claims that “before the war, they knew only their own centuries and companies” (*sed ante bellum centurias tantum suas turmasque noverant*) because “the armies were separated by the borders of the provinces” (*exercitus finibus provinciarum discernebantur*), strictly speaking, this could not have been accurate: the XVI, which had been in Upper Germany

148 Tac. *Hist.* 1.51–1.53; Morgan, 51.
151 Morgan, 26–27.
during Galba’s governorship, by this point was one of the Lower German legions.\textsuperscript{152} By the time that Galba had been declared emperor by Vindex’s revolt, there is reason to believe that all seven Rhine legions not only knew his reputation, but likely had heard stories about his harshness. Their decision to crown Verginius Rufus as emperor, only to immediately back Nero again when he refused it, was founded primarily in opposition to Galba’s pursuit of the throne, and not in a specific desire to see Verginius made emperor.\textsuperscript{153}

Galba’s reputation, however, did not alone drive the Rhine legions to revolt, as when the year 69 began, five of the seven legions swore their annual oaths of fealty to Galba, albeit “with much delay and with few voices in the first ranks” (\textit{multa cunctatione et raris primorum ordinum vocibus}).\textsuperscript{154} Only the IV and the XXII, both stationed in Upper Germany and not directly subordinate to Vitellius, refused, tearing down statues of Galba erected in the camps and “swearing with an oath to the now-forgotten names of the Senate and People of Rome” (\textit{senatus populique Romani oblitterata iam nomina sacramento advocabant}).\textsuperscript{155} The handful of officers who attempted to intercede on Galba’s behalf were killed, and in the following two days, the remaining German legions rose in revolt as well.\textsuperscript{156}

In many respects, Aulus Vitellius represented a strange choice as emperor by the legions. Although the Vitellius name surfaced in some of the earliest stories of Roman

\textsuperscript{152} Tac. \textit{Hist.} 1.51; Morgan, 26–27.
\textsuperscript{153} Morgan, 25–26.
\textsuperscript{154} Tac. \textit{Hist.} 1.55.
\textsuperscript{155} Tac. \textit{Hist.} 1.55. Lydia Spielberg notes the irony that the Senate and People of Rome only had any weight at the frontiers, far from the things referred to in the name. Lydia Spielberg, "Language, Stasis and the Role of the Historian in Thucydides, Sallust and Tacitus" in \textit{AJPh} 138, no. 2 (2017): 331–373.
\textsuperscript{156} Tac. \textit{Hist.} 1.55–1.58; Suet. \textit{Vit.} 7–8; Cass. Dio 64b.4.
history, it did so in a villainous capacity: Livy and Plutarch both record members of the Vitellii family as ringleaders in a conspiracy to restore Tarquinius Superbus to the Roman throne in the early days of the Republic. The more immediate Vitellii lineage, meanwhile, has a more ambiguous background, with Suetonius recounting two very different traditions. In one, the Vitellii had come from Sabine and were descended “from Fanus, King of the Aborigines, and Vitellia, who was honored as a goddess in many places” (Fauno Aborigineum rege et Vitellia, quae multis locis pro numine coleretur); in the other account, the family was descended from cobblers who married into a family of bakers. Although his father had been a Senator of consular rank and was a close political partner for Agrippina, his background was uncertain at best.

Moreover, prior to his appointment in Lower Germany, Vitellius had a fairly uneventful career with no military commands — a rather unusual path for the son of a prominent consular, which Suetonius attributes to a horrific horoscope that saw his parents actively discourage military enterprises for their son. Within Rome, he had allegedly been a favorite of Tiberius, Caligula, and Nero, and was known for a “bottomless appetite” (profundam gulam), living life “in licentiousness” (τῇ ἀσελγείᾳ) and his support of the Blues charioteering faction. Only his parentage — his father had held three consulships, had served as censor, and had been an important ally of Agrippina

157 Plut. Publ. 2.3; Liv. 2.3–4.
158 Suet. Vit. 1.1–2.1.
160 Suet. Vit. 3.2.
161 C.L. Murison argues fairly convincingly that Suetonius’s charge that Vitellius was one of Tiberius’s spintriae to be nothing more than fantasy and rumor. Suet. Vit. 7.1; Cass. Dio 64b.4.2; C.L. Murison, “Tiberius, Vitellius and the spintriae,” Ancient History Bulletin (1987), 97–100.
— suggested any sort of imperial pedigree, and at least traditionally, pedigree had appeared important to the soldiers. While, within the immediate vicinity, he represented the best possible choice for the office (Hordeonius Flaccus, the governor of Upper Germany, refused to take any action during the civil war and thus could not have been a realistic option), Vitellius himself was not the type of figure that soldiers would have rallied behind.\textsuperscript{162}

It was to Caecina and Valens that Tacitus ascribes the transformation of a mutiny of two legions into a revolt of seven. Commanders in Upper and Lower Germany, respectively, both had no love for Galba: Caecina, once a staunch supporter of the emperor, had been charged with embezzlement after receiving his legionary command, while Valens felt that his role in stopping Verginius Rufus and Fonteius Capito had gone unappreciated.\textsuperscript{163} As commander of the Legio I, Valens began whispering in Vitellius’s ear even before the troops first mutinied,

Showing him that there was a zealousness of the soldiers, that he was with abundant fame everywhere, that there was no obstacle in Hordeonius Flaccus, that Britannia was with him, that the German auxilia would follow him, that the provinces were disloyal…

\begin{quote}
ardorem militum ostentans: ipsum celebri ubique fama, nullam in Flacco Hordeonio moram; adfore Britanniam, secutra Germanorum auxilia, male fidas provincias…\textsuperscript{164}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{162} Both Tacitus and Suetonius emphasize how he courted favor with individual soldiers on his way to and while in Germany, attributing that to the legions’ eagerness to crown him emperor. While it would certainly have made him a more appealing option to the rank-and-file when the decision to revolt had been made, he is not the type of figure that himself would have inspired the revolt. Cassius Dio, on the other hand, treats him as a compensation choice, since they had been unable to convince Verginius Rufus to rebel.\textsuperscript{163} Tac. Hist. 52–53

\textsuperscript{164} Tac. Hist. 1.52
No parallel story exists for Caecina, perhaps unsurprisingly — after all, he had been stationed in Upper Germany, whereas both Vitellius and Valens operated out of Lower Germany. Nonetheless, although Tacitus does not outright express the notion that he helped spark the mutiny of the Upper German legions, the historian does highlight how Caecina had won over the hearts of his men immediately before detailing the individual grievances that both general and soldier held against Galba. Clearly, he expected the reader to draw the necessary connections.

As with the mutiny in Rome, the rhetorical aims of the ancient authors complicate the analysis. On the most basic level, all the ancient sources continue with the goal of attributing blame for the unrest to a lack of discipline among the soldiers: for example, Cassius Dio begins his account of Vitellius’s uprising with “the soldiers in the Germanies, whom once Rufus held, were heated more, having found no benefit from Galba” (οἱ ἐν ταῖς Γερμανίαις στρατιῶται, οὓς εἶχε Ῥοῦφος, μηδεμίαν εὐεργεσίαν ύπὸ τοῦ Γάλβα εὑρόμενοι ἐπὶ πλεῖον ἐφλέγμηνα), while Tacitus opens his own discussion by pontificating on the restlessness of the soldiery: “they were desiring a campaign and a battle, preferring prizes more than stipends...they loosened discipline, unyielding in peace, in civil discords, with corruptors prepared and with treachery unpunished” (expeditionem et aciem, præmia quam stipendia malebat...quam [disciplinam] in pace inexorabilem discordiae civium resolvunt, paratis utrimque corruptoribus et perfidia impunita). In this instance, it is difficult to assess the validity of these interpretations, as the nature of this particular episode is very linear — soldiers are discontent, soldiers refuse obedience to existing emperor, soldiers name new emperor; this stands in sharp

165 Tac. Hist. 1.53.
166 Cass. Dio 64b.4.1; Tac. Hist. 1.51.
contrast to the mutiny in Rome, where the clash of social classes underlying the narrative allows the scene to be set within the backdrop of recent history, and is thus able to be analyzed in greater detail.

In truth, the most detailed accounts of Vitellius’s acclamation as emperor, those found in Tacitus and Suetonius, are structured primarily to provide commentary on Vitellius and his top generals, not on the soldiers themselves. From the beginning, Vitellius appears to fail his way upward: Suetonius writes that “he was chosen by contempt” (sit contemptu...electum) to serve as the governor of Lower Germany, while, as mentioned above, Tacitus attributes his rise to the imperial office to Valens and Caecina. These two men dominate the military components of the narrative, each leading one portion of a two-pronged attack into northern Italy. This component, as Morgan notes, Tacitus does not tell in chronological order; instead, he organizes the episodes within the story of each column in order to portray first the moral degradation of Valens’s character and the collapse of discipline within his army, then, in contrast, “the masterful generalship with which Caecina took his men through enemy territory and the Alps alike.” The behavior of the soldiers, in this case, became merely for Tacitus a tool used in his depiction of the moral characters of the generals who dominated Vitellius’s (brief) reign.

Both episodes discussed see the rank-and-file soldiery fill a different role within the narrative. In the first instance, the soldiers in the capital play a direct role within the

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167 Suet. Vit. 7.1.
168 Tac. Hist. 1.61.
169 Morgan, narrative from 84–90, quotation from 87.
170 Neither figure appears directly in Suetonius’s biography of Vitellius, as Suetonius focused on the direct action of the emperors; within his narrative, Vitellius travels behind the main force, appearing on the battlefield where Otho was defeated after the fact.
narrative as independent political actors looking out and acting for their own personal benefit. The soldiers, suspecting an attempted coup against an emperor with whom they had a favorable relationship by the social elites whom they competed with for influence, got together, decided on a course of action to protect their interests, and enacted their plan. Not only did they do so successfully, they received great personal profit above and beyond what had probably been their primary goal, a testament to their importance to the security of Otho’s administration. That said, their power here must not be overstated: far from being a slave to the whims of his soldiers, Otho appears to have had in some capacity a plan to keep his army loyal and subservient; recognizing how Galba’s harsh treatment of the soldiers led directly to his demise, he decided the best course of action was not the lash, but rather conciliation via praises and gifts.

The second episode, on the other hand, although permitting the soldiers to engage in the same physical actions that their counterparts in the capital did — namely, violence and mutiny against their officers — deprived them of political independence and saw their rebellious acts serve the political interests of their commanders, not themselves. Of all the differences between the two episodes that led to these differing outcomes, the most important was the proximity of the soldiers to imperial power. The two legions of Upper Germany that initially mutinied likely had similar, if not greater, absolute military power relative to the mutineers in Rome; unlike their city-dwelling counterparts, however, they were physically far from the capital and, more importantly, far from the person of the emperor; a simple mutiny on the frontier had no ability to directly exert political pressure on the person of the emperor or that of the imperial household, while

171 It must be noted that the soldiers do benefit from the actions of their commanders, such as through the opportunities for plunder; what is relevant here is which group or individual receives the immediate benefit of a particular action.
those within Rome easily could. Had the mutiny not been taken advantage of by Valens and Caecina to have Vitellius proclaimed emperor, it would have likely been short-lived, defeated militarily by nearby legions if they had not simply returned to order on their own. Outside the capital, military discontent served as a political tool, not as its own political force.

**Political Agency of Local Populations**

The soldiers, however, were not the only non-Romans to have been organized politically. Even in periods of stability and clear Roman domination, local populations continued to engage in politics through intertribal and intercity rivalries that spanned multiple generations. In periods of civil discord, these local issues oftentimes found themselves wrapped up in empire-wide politics, serving as power bases for and against various imperial claimants.

**Intercity Rivalries**

In *The Roman Empire At Bay*, David Potter discusses how the various cities of the empire utilized the civil wars between the death of Commodus and the rise of Septimius Severus in order to improve their standing within the empire and earn the rights granted via *metropolis* or *colonia* status.\(^{172}\) By the time period that Potter is writing about, it had become the standard practice for cities within the empire — whether conquered by the Romans or established as colonies — to consider themselves integral parts of the Roman

world; while independence revolts still occurred, it was far more common for cities to agitate to be *more* integrated within the empire, not excluded from it.

The beginnings of this later trend can be seen in the rivalry between Lugdunum (modern Lyon) and Vienne during the 1st century CE. Both situated near each other on the Rhone in the province of Gallia Narbonensis, the two cities had been jockeying since their early days for prominence in the region (see Figure A below to see their proximity within Gaul). The inhabitants of Vienne, the Allobroges, are first mentioned in Caesar’s *Bellum Gallicum*, where they are described as “recently subdued” (*nuper pacati*), although the city itself does not appear until Tacitus’s description of their feud in the first book of the *Historiae*.173 The tribe played a major role in shaping the history of Roman involvement in Gaul, first fighting with the Romans in the 2nd century BCE, then aiding Cicero in thwarting the Catiline conspiracy, and later participating in the civil wars between Caesar and Pompey.174 Following the assassination of Caesar, however, they became the architects of their own rivals, as the Senate ordered Lucius Munatius Plancus and Marcus Aemilius Lepidus to found a colony on the Rhone with Romans driven out of Vienne by the Allobroges; this city would become Lugdunum.175

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175 Cass. Dio 46.50.4; *CIL* X 06087.
Figure A. Major cities of Gaul and Germany.
Feitscherg, CC BY-SA 3.0 <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/>, via Wikimedia Commons.

https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/b/ba/Map_Gallia_Tribes_Towns.png
Blue underlining of Lugdunum and Vienne are my additions.

Both cities prospered greatly under the Principate. Strabo reports that Lugdunum “abounds in men more than other cities [of Gaul] except for Narbos” (εὔανδρεῖ δὲ μάλιστα τῶν άλλων πλῆν Νάρβωνος), and attributed to the site a large altar to Augustus dedicated by sixty Gallic tribes; additionally, he calls the city an “ἀκρόπολις” for Gaul, noting that Marcus Vipsanius Agrippa had used the city as the crossroads for his road
network through the Gallic countryside. Seneca, meanwhile, had called it the “jewel of the provinces” (ornamentumque provinciarum) and “the prodigy in Gaul” (quod ostendebatur in Gallia), dedicating the entirety of Epistle 69 to its fire. In time, the city became an important center for the Julio-Claudian dynasty: in addition to being a cult site visited by four emperors (Augustus, Tiberius, Caligula, and Claudius) and the birthplace of Claudius, Lugdunum eventually received an imperial mint and was guarded by the cohors XVIII urbana, which typically would have been stationed in Rome.

When Claudius decided to permit Gallic noblemen entry into the Roman Senate, the city decided to commemorate the decision with a bronze tablet inscribed with the speech given to the Senate, today known as the Lyon Tablet. Additionally, following the Great Fire at Rome, Lugdunum sent four million sesterces to the capital for reconstruction; when Lugdunum suffered a similar fate, Nero returned the favor.

Despite the careful attention paid to it by the imperial household, however, the city nonetheless struggled to build an identity as its own city, instead evolving into a

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176 Strab. 4.3.2, 4.6.11. Vienne also receives praise, albeit to a lesser extent: “being an unwalled village called a metropolis nevertheless of those people, they built it up as a city” (κώμην πρότερον οὖσαν μητρόπολιν δ᾽ ὅμως τοῦ ἔθνους λεγομένην, κατεσκευάσας πόλιν). The altar dates to 12 BCE, established by Drusus. Strab. 4.1.11; Liv. Per. 139; Woolf, 39; Andrew C. Johnston, The Sons of Remus: Identity in Roman Gaul and Spain (Cumberland: Harvard University Press, 2017), 141.

177 Sen. Ep. 91.2, 91.10.

178 Suet. Claud. 2.1; Suet. Calig. 20.1; Strab. 4.3.2; Morgan, 22; Johnston, 143. The city even had the honorific title “Colonia Copia Claudia Augusta.”

179 CIL XIII 1668; the speech as recorded on the tablet differs from that recorded by Tacitus in Ann. 11.23–24, although the overall point remains the same.

180 The exact timeline is uncertain. Tacitus cites the Lugdunum fire as occurring after the Great Fire at Rome, a date which Morgan agrees with. On the other hand, Seneca discusses it in Epistulae 91, which likely had been written earlier, as Tacitus records his death before the fire; this is complicated by the fact that Tacitus is very willing to play with chronology for his own narratological ends. In essence, however, the sequence of events does not truly matter; what does matter is the fact that both the imperial household deemed it worthy to invest in Lugdunum, and Lugdunum jumped at the opportunity to aid the capital. Tac. Ann. 15.60–64, 16.13; Sen. Ep. 91; Morgan, 22.
cosmopolitan “capital” for local tribal leadership from throughout the Gallic provinces to come together.\(^{181}\) As can be seen in Appendix B, so few officials named Lugdunum as their hometown that none appeared in this study;\(^{182}\) many Gauls from elsewhere, on the other hand, saw themselves holding prominent positions in Lugdunum, such as a priesthood in the *Tres Galliae* sanctuary, which Greg Woolf describes as “the culmination of a Gallo-Roman aristocrat's career.”\(^{183}\) Furthermore, tribal leaders from throughout Gaul competed with each other by serving as patrons within the city and sponsoring construction projects, just as they might have done at Rome if the imperial household did not essentially have a monopoly on such projects.\(^{184}\) Important individuals within Gaul also received honors at Lugdunum — see, for example, this inscription from the city:

In honour of Quintus Julius Severinus, the Sequanian, who had performed all the offices among his own people and was patron of the magnificent guild of the shippers of the Rhone and the Saone, and was twice decreed statues by the council of his own state on account of his integrity. The three Gallic provinces voted this in his honour on the occasion of his holding the post of Inquisitor of the Gauls.

\(^{181}\) Andrew Johnston notes that the city developed its own mythological foundation story that was “on the one hand notably reminiscent of that of Rome, but on the other was markedly different in its retroactive assertion of local, non-Roman agency.” Such a story stresses the city’s lack of a distinctly local identity, as it can only define itself in relation to others, not through itself. Johnston, 141–146.

\(^{182}\) The same methods used in the creation of Appendix A were repeated to create Appendix B. Demougin records no equestrians from Lugdunum, and records of Senators from Lugdunum have been notably absent within scholarship of Gallic Rome. For a provincial urban center as important as Lugdunum, this lack of Lugdunum-native aristocrats is surprising at first glance; however, this may instead reflect the city’s role as a pan-Gallic center. Additional research on this subject is required.

\(^{183}\) Woolf does note that “other chances for distinction existed,” mostly in military contexts. Woolf, 35.

\(^{184}\) Woolf, 40.
Q(uinto) Iulio Severino / sequano omni(bus) / honoribus in/ter suos functo
/ patrono splendi/dissimi corporis / n(autarum) Rhodanico(rum) et /
Arar(icorum) cui ob innoc(entiam) / morum ordo civi/tatis suaes bis statuas
/ decrevit inquisito/ri Galliarum tres / provincia Gall(iarum)\textsuperscript{185}

As Woolf notes, the formulaic nature of this inscription indicates that it was primarily for a local audience who would have known exactly what was entailed by “all the offices among his own people.”\textsuperscript{186} The fact that this was established at Lugdunum, and not among the Sequani, is also significant, highlighting an ever-growing shared sense of community among the Gaus and the role that the city played within it.

Although overall overshadowed by Lugdunum by the imperial family, Vienne nonetheless did not fail to benefit under the Julio-Claudians. Strabo highlights the city in his survey of Gaul, albeit to a lesser extent: “being an unwalled village nevertheless called the metropolis of those people, they built it up as a city” (κώμην πρότερον οὖσαν μητρόπολιν δ’ ὁμοιός τοῦ ἔθνους λεγομένην, κατεσκευάκασι πόλιν).\textsuperscript{187} Martial refers to the city as pulchra Vienna in his epigrams, claiming that to be read in the city gave him more joy than in Egypt or within the provinces of Hispania, while Claudius hails the city in a speech as “the most ornate and strongest city of the Viennians” (ornatissima ... colonia valentissima Viennensium).\textsuperscript{188} As the capital of the Allobroges, the city remained important enough that it housed a temple of Augustus and Livia (originally dedicated to Augustus and Roma), along with other architectural projects common in prominent cities of the empire.\textsuperscript{189} Furthermore, over the course of the Julio-Claudian dynasty, the city produced an extensive amount of Roman officials, as can be seen in Appendix B — in

\textsuperscript{185} CIL XIII 1695, text and translation by Greg Woolf; Woolf, 78–79.
\textsuperscript{186} Woolf, 79.
\textsuperscript{187} Strab. 4.1.11.
\textsuperscript{188} Mart. 7.88; ILS 212 II,10.
\textsuperscript{189} Woolf notes the existence of a forum and two sacrae areae in the city. Woolf, 225.
addition to the consular Decimus Valerius Asiaticus (B.II.1) and his identically-named son (B.II.2), records survive for at least eight members of the equestrian order who served in some capacity, and it is likely that there were others whose careers were not documented either in the literary or epigraphic evidence.

Unsurprisingly for two cities in such close proximity who held different claims to prominence, Lugdunum and Vienne regularly fought with one another for influence, and their feud manifested clearly during the civil wars of 68–69 CE. With this in mind, the political maneuvering between the two cities until the rise of Vespasian falls rather easily into place. Because of Lugdunum’s close relationship to the ruling dynasty, when Julius Vindex (B.III.1) revolted, the city never wavered in its loyalty for Nero despite being Vindex’s gubernatorial seat; his first move, in fact, was to lay siege to his own capital, using a levy from Vienne and the surrounding Gallic tribes. The fighting, Tacitus writes, “was so repeated and savage that they did not fight only on behalf of Nero and Galba” (crebrius infestiusque quam ut tantum propter Neronem Galbamque pugnaretur). Although the forces of Vindex were defeated, Galba recognized the two sides each had fought for, and diverted funds from Lugdunum to augment the battered imperial treasury while showing Vienne multus...honor. As such, when the forces of Vitellius under the command of Fabius Valens came through, they not only provided his army supplies and soldiers “with joy” (gaudio), they riled the soldiers up and convinced them that it was necessary to launch a preemptive attack on Vienne:

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190 Morgan, 20–22; Tac. Hist. 1.65. As the governor of an unarmed province, Vindex did not have legions at his disposal, which is why he did not declare himself emperor, but rather offered the title to Galba in Hispania.
191 Tac. Hist. 1.65.
192 Tac. Hist. 1.65.
Therefore, the people of Lugdunum stimulated the minds of the soldiers to strike into the destruction of Vienne, by reminding them that the colony was besieged by them, that they attempted aiding Vindex, that they had conscripted legions recently into the defense of Galba. And where they had presented the causes of hatred, they showed the magnitude of plunder, not only secret exhortation, but public entreaties: may they go as avengers, may they burn the seat of Gallic war: all there are outsiders and enemies; ourselves, a Roman colony and a part of the army and allies of prosperous and adverse things. If fortune gives adverse things, may they not abandon us to angry enemies.

igitur Lugdunenses extimulare singulos militum et in eversionem Viennensium impellere, obsessam ab illis coloniam suam, adiutos Vindicis conatus, conscriptas nuper legiones in praesidium Galbae referendo. et ubi causas odiorum praetenderant, magnitudinem praedae ostendebant, nec iam secreta exhortatio, sed publicae preces: irent ultores, excinderent sedem Gallici belli: cuncta illic externa et hostilia: se, coloniam Romanam et partem exercitus et prosperarum adversarumque rerum socios, si fortuna contra daret, iratis ne relinquerent.\textsuperscript{193}

The rhetoric here is fairly straightforward; the people of Vienne, because of their support of Galba, are enemies of the state, and therefore deserve to be destroyed — an obvious and maliciously-intended fabrication. In the end, the city was spared from attack, but only because they surrendered as if to an invading Roman army and because, Tacitus implies, they bribed Valens.\textsuperscript{194}

A surprising amount of Vitellius’s brief reign continued to be devoted to the rivalry between these cities. In celebration for his victory over Otho, Vitellius threw games at Lugdunum before departing for Rome, taking the opportunity to declare his six-year-old son as Imperator and bestow on him the name Germanicus.\textsuperscript{195} At the same time, he betrothed his daughter to Decimus Valerius Asiaticus, the son of the first Gallic

\textsuperscript{193} Tac. Hist. 1.65.
\textsuperscript{194} Tac. Hist. 1.66.
\textsuperscript{195} Cass. Dio 65.1.2–3.
consul and a native of Vienne.196 Both his son and daughter appeared on coinage minted on Vitellius’s orders (Figure B).197 Although the image of a strong familial unity would have certainly aided Vitellius’s attempts to stabilize the empire by drawing on similar tactics used by the Julio-Claudians, he need not have had only one motive in mind. The continued presence of the mint at Lugdunum and the declaration of his son as heir while in the city reaffirmed its importance to the imperial household, a sign to local leadership that the new dynasty did not necessitate a new relationship with the city. To the citizens of Vienne, he gave a gift that had the potential to be far greater: direct membership for an important aristocrat into the imperial family, publicly proclaimed through the prominence of his daughter on numismatic imagery.

Figure B. RIC I Vitellius 57. Denarius. Struck 69 CE. Lugdunum mint.
Obverse: A VITELLIVS IMP GERMAN: Head of Vitellius, laureate, right; globe at point of neck
Reverse: LIBERI IMP GERMAN: Busts of Vitellius’ son and daughter, left and right respectively, draped, confronting
British Museum, OCRE
http://numismatics.org/ocre/id/ric.1(2).vit.57
Accessed February 12, 2021

196 Syme, Tacitus, 590; Morgan, 149.
197 Morgan, 149.
Armed Resistance

More than simply providing a means for cities to play out their rivalries with one another, the civil wars of 69 CE shook the Roman world sufficiently to the point that native revolts occurred throughout the empire. In addition to the revolt in Judea that had been ongoing for three years at this point, the Brigantes in Britain and the Batavians in Germania took up arms against Rome in an effort to take advantage of the political turmoil. While a full-scale analysis of each revolt individually would be suitable for projects of their own and thus outside the scope of this thesis, an analysis of the political circumstances that set one revolt in motion — the Revolt of the Batavi — can provide immense insight into the roles that local leadership played in the politics and governmental administration of the empire at large.

Tacitus frames the Batavian Revolt almost as if it were an invasion beyond the frontier. Throughout the Historiae, he emphasizes the “otherness” of the rebels in general and Julius Civilis (B.III.2) in particular, noting both his disfigured face (and thus directly casting him as an enemy of Rome equivalent to Sertorius or Hannibal) and how he cut his “long-hanging and dyed-red hair” (propexum rutilatumque crinem) only after defeating the Romans in battle (a custom that he mentions in the Germania).198 A prosopographical analysis (Appendix B) of the figures mentioned within the revolt,

198 Tac. Hist. 4.13, 4.61; Tac. Germ. 31. This decision to cast Civilis as a new Hannibal may have reflected a programmatic concern with the German frontier that began with the Germania; exactly what that program was, however, remains up for debate and beyond the scope of this thesis. Zoë M. Tan provides a concise overview of the debate in respect to the Germania: “In the absence of a conventional prologue or other clearly programmatic statements scholars have reached no agreement as to the ‘purpose’ of the monograph. It has been positioned and repositioned as an act of pure ethnographic research, as a moral treatise, a historical excursus, or as a political pamphlet advocating for, or against, further Roman action across the Rhine.” This same uncertainty extends to the Batavian Revolt in the Historiae. Zoë M. Tan, “Subversive Geography in Tacitus' Germania,” JRS 104 (2014).
however, tell a different story. With the exception of Brinno (B.III.8), the general of the Canninefates, and Veleda (B.III.7), a Germanic seer worshipped as divine on both sides of the Rhine river, every German or Gallic leader that comes down to us in Tacitus has a Roman name — regardless of whether they supported or opposed the revolt — and with all but two having a nomen connected to the imperial dynasty, Julius or Claudius.199 At least one — Julius Civilis — had Roman citizenship, as evidenced by the fact that, rather than be immediately executed when accused of plotting a revolt by Capito, he was sent to Rome for trial before the emperor; Brian Turner seems to believe that most, if not all, of the revolt’s leadership in fact could claim Roman citizenship.200 Furthermore, even assuming we take Tacitus at his word that Civilis did truly attempt to portray himself as a non-Roman outsider, we must remember that he would not have looked so starkly different to the Romans than their own legions: of Vitellius’s general Caecina, Plutarch writes that he was “holding neither common speech nor form, but was grievous and monstrous, of great stature, having been dressed with Gallic trousers and sleeves, having conversed with Roman leaders by signals” (οὔτε φωνήν ὦτε σχῆμα δημοτικός, ἄλλ᾽ ἐπαχθῆς καὶ ἀλλόκοτος, σώματος μεγάλου, Γαλατικῶς ἀναξιρίσι καὶ χειρίσιν ἑνσκευασμένος, σημείοις καὶ ἄρχουσι Ῥωμαϊκοῖς διαλεγόμενος).201 While Plutarch was certainly exaggerating, at least in terms of Caecina’s ability to speak Latin and converse

199 Although not mentioned in the prosopography, since their role in the narrative predates the Batavian Revolt, we see this trend elsewhere: the Helvetian leader was Claudius Severus, and they had Julius Alpinus as one of its prominent members. Tac. Hist. 1.68
200 Dual citizenship among the revolt’s leadership would have allowed them to operate on both a local level and in an empire-wide capacity, depending upon the circumstances. While citizenship is not the subject of this present discussion, this nonetheless highlights the sheer number of levels that existed within the Roman world that political engagement operated within. Brian Turner, “From Batavian Revolt to Rhenish Insurgency,” in Brill’s Companion to Insurgency and Terrorism in the Ancient Mediterranean, ed. Timothy Howe and Lee L. Brice (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2015), 287, 292.
201 Plut. Oth. 6.3.
with his subordinates, it nonetheless highlights the growing provincialization of the
Roman legions in Germany that would have made any attempt by Civilis to seem
non-Roman make him look, ironically, much like a Roman soldier.

Tacitus’s account of the Batavian Revolt, however, is not the only tradition on the
subject that survives from antiquity. Although the epitome of Cassius Dio glosses over
the events rather quickly, his brief account does nonetheless tell a starkly different story:

In Germania, there were other insurrections against the Romans, none
worth bearing into memory for me certainly, and one worthy of marveling
is gathered together. A Julius Sabinus, a first man of the Lingones,
collected a force of his own and was pronounced Caesar, saying to be a
grandson of Julius Caesar…

ἐν δὲ τῇ Γερμανίᾳ ἄλλαι τε κατὰ Ῥωμαίων ἐπαναστάσεις ἐγένοντο, οὐδὲν
ἔς μνήμην ἔμοι γοῦν ὁφελος φέρουσαι, καὶ τι συνηνέχῃ καὶ θαύματος
ἀξίων. Ἰούλιος γάρ τις Σαβῖνος, ἀνήρ πρῶτος τῶν Λιγγόνων, δύναμιν καὶ
αὐτὸς ἰδίαν ἄξιον καὶ Καῖσαρ ἐπωνομάσθη, λέγων ἔγγονος τοῦ
Καῖσαρος τοῦ Ἰούλιου εἶναι...

A few things need to be noted here. For starters, Dio’s use of the plural ἐπαναστάσεις
instead of the singular ἐπανάστασις suggests that the Romans did not see this as one
revolt at all, but rather as a group of simultaneous uprisings with no central leadership or
organization. Furthermore, although Civilis might have received a mention in the
non-epitomized version of the events, the decision to emphasize Julius Sabinus (B.III.4)
is puzzling when considering how much longer-lived Civilis’s revolt was than that of
Sabinus in Tacitus’s narrative. There are a few possible explanations for this — for
example, Dio may be setting the stage for the story of his wife Epponina (Dio calls her
Peponila) pleading for mercy later in the book, or the epitomizer Xiphilinus may have

202 Cass. Dio 65.3 (65.pos=15.18.1).
203 Sabinus’s defeat occurs at Tac. Hist. 4.67, while Civilis does not begin to negotiate a
surrender until the end of (the extant portion of) book 5.
had the later Gallic Empire of the third century in mind and was looking to emphasize a
growing tradition of imperial centers not focused on Italy in general and Rome in
particular.\textsuperscript{204} Whatever his reasoning, the competing traditions nonetheless certainly
reflect divisions within the rebel alliance that Tacitus attempts to portray in his narrative.

Brian Turner explains these conflicting traditions by applying insurgency theories
to craft a depiction of the revolt as

a multi-polar competition for power in which various individual leaders
organized followers, relied on violent and subversive action, regularly
pursued an indirect approach, but often — as the competitive environment
and the nature of ancient warfare logically necessitated — eschewed
protraction in favor of decisive victory.\textsuperscript{205}

Viewing the revolt in this light causes much of the narrative to fall into place, for
although Tacitus attempts to portray the revolt as an organized insurrection as often as
possible, cracks within his model emerge on multiple occasions. At Tac. Hist. 4.70, for
example, none of the rebel leadership can be seen coordinating with one another —
Civilis was wildly chasing Claudius Labeo around the Gallic countryside, Tutor (B.III.5)
slowly made his way to the Alps while raising levies from allied tribes, and Classicus
(B.III.6) spent his time “lazily engaging in plentiful leisure, just as if he enjoyed a share
of the empire” (\textit{segne plerumque otium trahens velut parto imperio fruebatur}); by this
point, Sabinus had already been defeated by the Sequani, whom he had attacked on his
own after raising a levy from among the Lingones.\textsuperscript{206} While sheer incompetence could
result in such a disorganized strategy, Turner instead sees pragmatic political

\textsuperscript{204} Cass. Dio 65.16.2. Sabinus’s wife would later be the inspiration for the character
Eponine in \textit{Les Misérables}. The note on Xiphilinus is purely my speculation, and
requires additional research at a later date.
\textsuperscript{205} Turner, 286.
\textsuperscript{206} Tac. Hist. 4.67, 4.70.
maneuvering — namely that, in the midst of a power vacuum due to the apparently-collapsing empire, local tribal leaders did not merely strike against the remnants of Roman authority in the area, but competed with each other to ensure their own dominance in the region following the conclusion of hostilities.\footnote{Turner, 307–308.}

With this in mind, it becomes possible to see three factions that fall under the umbrella of the Batavian Revolt, organized almost entirely along tribal lines: the Batavians under Civilis, the Treviri under Tutor and Classicus, and the Lingones under Sabinus.\footnote{It is certain that others existed, both as opposition factions within these groups and from elsewhere. For example, Labeo and Julius Briganticus reveal that Civilis did not have unanimous support among the Batavians, while both Julius Auspex of the Remi and the tribe of the Sequani highlight the extensive divisions among the Gauls and Germans.} Of these three, Civilis’s faction is probably the one most fully represented directly within Tacitus’s narrative, although there is reason to question his assertion that Civilis’s initial declaration of support for Vespasian was not genuine: he and his tribe would certainly have benefited greatly from backing the right claimant, a motivation for choosing sides that should not be underestimated.\footnote{In addition to the factors that would have pushed Civilis to deliberately choose one claimant over another in the civil wars, the Batavians had numerous reasons to despise Vitellius: although they initially fought in his army, the Batavian cohorts attached to the XIV had quarreled with the Roman legionnaires, and Civilis himself had been arrested by Vitellius to satiate the anger of the soldiers. Tac. \textit{Hist.} 1.59, 4.13.}

The Treviri, on the other hand, represent a more complicated case, for not only did they have no clear motivation for rebellion, they had, in fact, been among Vitellius’s biggest supporters, and their leaders had even served in his army.\footnote{Tac. \textit{Hist.} 2.14, 4.55.} Tacitus attributes their decision to take up arms to the fire in Rome that burned down the Temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus on the Capitoline, noting that the druids considered this to be a sign
that the end of the Roman Empire was at hand.\textsuperscript{211} Morgan very sensibly dismisses this idea, saying that “here Tacitus’ rhetoric runs away with him” and highlights that not only had it burnt down multiple times before, the newly-reconstructed temple would survive only ten years before it too succumbed to a blaze.\textsuperscript{212} That does not mean, however, that there was no turning point in the revolt at this time. In the aftermath of the death of Vitellius, the governor Hordeonius Flaccus was murdered by his troops for celebrating the victory of Vespasian; additionally, Tacitus reports rumors that the Gallic chiefs had agreed to seek independence if the civil war between Otho and Vitellius saw Rome devolve into a cycle of civil wars and internal strife and that “the legions of Vitellius preferred foreign servitude than the emperor Vespasian” (\textit{Vitellianae legiones vel externum servitium quam imperatorem Vespasianum malle}).\textsuperscript{213} Assuming that Vespasian would follow in the footsteps of Galba and punish the Gallic tribes that had supported the emperor that he had supplanted, the Treviri leadership clearly saw an opportunity to align themselves with discontented Roman legions and seek their own fate.

Most confusing of all, however, remain the Lingones. For much of the narrative, they exist side-by-side with the Treviri — both tribes are punished together by Galba, incite the legions to declare for Vitellius together, and are depicted as joining Civilis together.\textsuperscript{214} In their revolt, however, the Lingones take matters one step further than the Treviri, crowning Julius Sabinus as Caesar. Tacitus laughs off the claim that Sabinus was descended from Julius Caesar through his great-grandmother as “implanted vanity with the glory of a false heritage” (\textit{insitam vanitatem falsae stirpis gloria}).\textsuperscript{215} But regardless

\textsuperscript{211} Tac. \textit{Hist}. 4.54.
\textsuperscript{212} Morgan, 246.
\textsuperscript{213} Tac. \textit{Hist}. 4.54.
\textsuperscript{214} Tac. \textit{Hist}. 1.51-1.53, 4.55.
\textsuperscript{215} Tac. \textit{Hist}. 4.54.
of whether or not his descent was valid, the claim lent a certain legitimacy to the Lingones, who now could claim to be fighting for the true heir of the Julio-Claudian dynasty. That he was descended from the maternal line of Julius Caesar, and not through any who officially held the title of princeps, would have merely been an issue of semantics, and not a concern for the Romans who, as Suetonius’s editorial choice informs us, treated Julius Caesar as part of the imperial line. Unfortunately, due to their swift defeat, it remains impossible to do more than speculate that the Lingones’ goal was to install Sabinus in Rome; it does, however, appear to be the natural endgame for them.  

The Problem of the Urban *Populus*

No analysis of the political dynamics of the Principate would be complete without a discussion of the broader population of the city of Rome. From the end of the Roman monarchy, the *populus* stood at the center of Roman political ideology: not only was the state referred to as the *res publica* — i.e., “the public affair” — even through the Empire, the *Senatus* half of *Senatus populusque Romanus* was originally a creation of the *populus*, via the electoral process. A metaphorical tug of war between the Senate and *populus* occurs throughout the history of the Republic, from the Conflict of the Orders in the 5th–3rd centuries BCE to the the ideological divide at the end of the Late Republic defined by notions of traditional Senatorial elitism and appeals to popular support; Appian even opens his *Bella Civilia* by saying that “The Roman *demos* and the Senate...
often were at odds with each other concerning the setting of laws, the canceling of debts, the distribution of the land, and in the election of magistrates” (Ῥωμαίοις ὁ δῆμος καὶ ἡ βουλή πολλάκις ἔς ἀλλήλους περὶ τε νόμων θέσεως καὶ χρεῶν ἀποκοπῆς ἢ γῆς διαδατουμένης ἢ ἐν ἀρχαιρεσίαις ἐστασίσαν). Only by placating the Senate with the facade of the old Republic and portraying the emperor as the protector of the people via the adoption of tribunician power was the Augustan Principate able to establish sufficient stability in Rome to rule. As such, throughout the Julio-Claudian dynasty, the importance of maintaining popularity with the *populus* remained a centerpiece of the dynasty’s propaganda. It is no accident, after all, that the maintenance of the grain supply for the capital ran through the imperial bureaucracy, and not Senatorial channels, nor that the emperors regularly threw gladiatorial contests, chariot races, and other entertainment events.

Despite their importance to the public persona of the imperial administration, however, the urban populace as depicted in the works of Tacitus, Suetonius, Dio, and Plutarch do not reflect the realities of the Roman political sphere, but rather a literary fiction. While it is beyond the scope of this thesis to discuss in depth the role that the *populus* plays in their respective narratives, it is nonetheless important to provide a brief account of its characterization within the historiographic tradition.

Within the ancient historical narratives, following the Conflict of the Orders, the Roman *populus* primarily operates in a political manner directly only through violence.

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218 App. B Civ. 1.0.
220 Griffin, 104–110. Nero in particular was obsessed with the grain supply, going so far as to plan engineering projects that would cut down on the total time it would take to ship grain to the capital from the provinces where it was produced (Sicily, Sardinia, Egypt, and Africa).
The traditional accounts of early popular politics at Rome remained nonviolent, at least in the collective imagination, although Livy does note that the first *secessio plebis* did almost turn violent.\(^{221}\) More recent history, however, saw the *populus* often engaging in violence — the aftermath of the funeral of Julius Caesar, for example, saw “the now-provoked *demos* disregard the recently-voted amnesty and rush upon the houses of the assassins with fire” (δῆμος ἐρεθισθεὶς ὑπερεῖδε τῆς ἄρτι ἐπεψηφισμένης ἁμνηστίας καὶ ἐπὶ τὰς οἰκίας τῶν σφαγέων σὺν πυρὶ ἔδραμον).\(^{222}\) Having heard a rumor that Nero had put aside the unpopular Poppaea and had remarried his first wife Octavia, who was popular with the people,

> Then the happy people ascended the Capitoline and venerated the gods at length. They hurled down effigies of Poppaea, they bore up on their shoulders statues of Octavia, they scattered them with flowers, and they set them up in the forum and in temples...and now they filled the Palatine with a multitude and with shouting, when crowds of soldiers, having been sent, dispersed the throngs with outstretched iron.

> Exim laeti Capitolium scandunt deosque tandem venerantur. effigies Poppaeae proruunt, Octaviae imagines gestant umeris, spargunt floribus foroque ac templis statuunt...iamque et Palatium multitudine et clamoribus complebant, cum emissi militum globi verberibus et intento ferro turbatos disiecere.\(^{223}\)

Although Tacitus likely would have agreed with the crowd and approved of Nero putting his mistress aside and returning to marital fidelity with the daughter of Claudius, he nonetheless condemns their celebration as nothing but an outburst of violence and a chaos that must be stopped.\(^{224}\)


\(^{222}\) App. *B Civ.* 3.1.2.


\(^{224}\) There has been much scholarship on how the *populus* at Rome was able to express their feelings of content or discontent through their reactions at the games. In many respects, this reflects the same type of force, as the size of the crowd does represent the
A predisposition towards violence is not the only characteristic that the historians give to the urban crowds. Far from seeking their own goals, the *populus* is often manipulated to serve the political ambition of prominent Senators and members of the imperial family. The violence mentioned above following the funeral of Caesar was attributed largely to Mark Antony and his oration in honor of the assassinated dictator, and this reaction by the crowd occurred, according to Appian, just minutes after they had accepted favorably Brutus’s speech in defense of the assassination.\textsuperscript{225} Similarly, in the aftermath of the death of Nero, the *populus* turned against many of Nero’s top advisors, such as Halotus and Tigellinus, who were presumably popular figures during the reign of the popular emperor.\textsuperscript{226} The mob was fickle — at least, according to the literature.

In all, these characteristics combine to portray the Roman *populus* as a monolithic entity that only engages within the political sphere through unorganized mass violence. To some extent, this depiction reflects the limited political agency of the non-elite urban population and the narrow playbook available to them. With the transfer of electoral power from the broader Roman citizenry to the Senate, the only means of expressing either satisfaction or discontent with the current course of government was through crowd politics and protests. To a Senatorial audience taking little more than a glancing look at the lower classes through an external lens and with a condescending attitude, it should not be too surprising that our sources viewed these outbursts of passion as representative of the entire stratum. In such a large population, however, political opinions would

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\textsuperscript{225} App. B Civ. 2.137–148, 3.1.

\textsuperscript{226} Suet. Gal. 15.
usually have been divided — one needs only to look at modern political elections to see the diversity in political opinions throughout society. Furthermore, the citizens of Rome would not have been choosing between one or two positions, either supporting or opposing the current emperor, but would have held a great many different opinions on a wide variety of issues; only on certain few issues, such as the grain supply, can it reasonably be assumed that one opinion permeated the majority. Complicating the issue is how, even disregarding political opinions, to speak of a singular urban *populus* ignores numerous other potential interest groups with their own political goals and agendas and with varying levels of agency.

A proper engagement with political factionalism among the Roman *populus* is thus an immense undertaking, and would require a thesis of its own to do it justice. As such, rather than engaging with this material superficially, this thesis will leave it to the side.227

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Conclusion

Historiographers have traditionally portrayed Roman government as comprising two opposing forces: the imperial household on one side and the Senatorial aristocracy on the other. Yet under the Principate, it comprised instead a vibrantly complex web of factions. Whether active in the highest circles of the imperial court seeking to change imperial policy or serving only to protect the self-interests of a few out of the limelight, operating in the streets of Rome or at the Germanic frontiers, each faction used its own methods and sought its own individual goals.

What united all factions, no matter how big or small, was a primary interest in wealth defense — for example, landowners may have wanted their property rights secure, merchants their trade routes safe from pirates and robbers, and tribal leaders influence in their region. In the political factions consisting of high-ranking Senators and members of the imperial family and that operated within the imperial court, pursuing this defense most significantly involved insuring that the emperor was “in their corner” — even if that meant removing the current emperor to make that happen; the proximity to the throne made this focus a necessity. Lower-ranking and less ambitious members of the aristocracy, along with those with less immediate access to the emperor such as the army and provincial elite, would have typically had different objectives: although being in favor with the emperor was always a benefit, being close enough to use that favor was typically not a realistic goal. Instead, they pursued their own smaller agendas with the same intensity as the politically active factions did in attempting to win over the emperor.

By expanding the concept of factions beyond the highest levels of political society, it becomes possible, furthermore, to see that traditional Roman constructions of
the political sphere, comprising simply a Senate and imperial household in opposition, easily break down. The army, both in the capital and along the frontier, interjected their own personal goals into the political sphere — sometimes on their own accord, at other times on behalf of their generals, largely in response to political realities and their physical location in relation to imperial power. Similarly, the Batavian Revolt, which on an empire-wide level seemed as one Gallic-Germanic faction seeking independence from Rome, in truth saw divisions at both inter- and intra-tribal levels. The operations of these groups add a complexity that does not fit in with the traditional Roman ideas about opposing dualities as the driving force of politics.

Looking retrospectively back on the course of this project, this particular method of analysis has a predecessor in the work of John Nicols, in particular his 1978 book *Vespasian and the Partes Flavianae*.\(^{228}\) With the COVID-19 pandemic restricting access to resources, a copy of the book was not received until after the second draft of this thesis had been completed, and as such, could not be incorporated into the analysis. Structurally, having access to this text would have been useful, as it engages in a similar type of analysis, using the writings of Tacitus, Cassius Dio, Suetonius, and Josephus as a backbone for a prosopographical analysis, with the added benefit of having direct access to the *PIR*. That said, this thesis departs from the *Partes Flavianae* in two major ways. Nicols, writing more firmly in the prosopographic tradition than this thesis does, relies extensively on familial connections, going so far as to refer to political factions by family names (e.g., the Vitellian Group, the Flavian Group); as discussed above, family ties did not necessarily guarantee political affiliation. In a much more significant departure, this thesis deliberately avoids discussing Vespasian and the Flavians at all, in order to avoid

becoming too teleological (i.e., knowing that Vespasian ultimately takes the throne, and looking to find evidence for this future outcome); Nicols, on the other hand, engages with them directly, deliberately searching for (and very often failing to find) evidence that would make Vespasian’s rise to the throne appear inevitable, in order to come to a greater understanding of how he emerged victorious from the period of civil war.

Despite these differences, the very existence of *Vespasian and the Partes Flavianaee* highlights the possibility for future work employing this methodological framework. The temporal limits chosen within this thesis — that of the Neronian Principate and the early parts of the civil wars of 69 CE — stem not from a scarcity of evidence for other periods, but rather a scarcity of space within a project of this scale; as such, there are numerous pathways for further research. The theoretical approaches employed in this thesis could easily be pushed further into the Flavian dynasty, updating Nichols’s work to reflect modern advances in the field of Roman prosopography, or even into the Antonine period; the latter project would allow for a comparison between political factionalism during periods of strict dynastic succession with those of the Antonines, whose successions were secured primarily through adoption. Similarly, as much prosopographic data has been collected for the Late Republic and Augustan eras, it may be possible in a larger-scale project to trace the development of political factions from the triumvirates through to the end of the Julio-Claudian dynasty, perhaps in order to see the impact that these factions had on the early development and crystallization of the Principate as a political institution. Lastly, a more in-depth study of the period covered in the surviving chapters of Tacitus’s *Historiae* could readily be done; in fact, early plans for this thesis dove deeper into the Year of the Four Emperors, with the intent
to analyze how factions with provincial origins, such as those of Galba, Vitellius, and Vespasian, split into new ones as they consolidated power in Rome and attempted to restore some semblance of normalcy in the capital.
Appendix A: Court Faction Prosopography

I. The Party of Agrippina

1. Julia Agrippina Minor. The daughter of Germanicus Julius Caesar and Vipsania Agrippina Maior, Agrippina emerged as a powerful political force during the reign of Claudius, both before and after her marriage to him. Following the death of her first husband and Nero’s father, Gnaeus Domitius Ahenobarbus, she married Gaius Sallustius Crispus Passienus, the heir to the fortune of Sallustius Crispus, allegedly following an attempt to steal the future emperor Galba from his wife. After his death, she inherited his estate, and her wealth, combined with her direct descent from Augustus, helped her to maneuver herself into position to become Claudius’s fourth wife. As empress, Agrippina moved quickly to strengthen her position, marrying her son to Claudius’s daughter Octavia, recalling Seneca from exile to serve as his tutor in rhetoric, and bringing the Praetorian Guard under her control, at least for a time, by having Sextus Afranius Burrus named its Prefect. As first the wife and later mother of the emperor, she operated her own household, which certainly dwarfed any in Rome save that of the emperor himself, and served as a generous patron, probably in both political and literary endeavors. Prior to the death of Claudius, Agrippina wielded sufficient power to bully the Horti Tauriani from Statilius Taurus, a powerful and wealthy senator who had been serving as proconsul in Africa, and, according to Josephus, intervene in provincial affairs in Judea. Her influence remained so

229 Griffin, 27–28; Suet, Galb. 5.1.
230 Tac, Ann. 12.8–9, 42; Mordine, 106; Griffin, 32.
231 Mordine, 106.
prominent that Guy de la Bédoyère writes, “The years 49 to 59 might just as easily be seen as the reign of the Empress Agrippina as the last five years of Claudius and the first five of Nero.”

2. **Marcus Antonius Pallas.** A descendent of the Arcadian kings according to Tacitus, the freedman Pallas served as the *libertus a rationibus* of Claudius during his reign. During this time, he used his access to the emperor to amass a great wealth — Tacitus describes his net worth as 300 million sesterces, while Cassius Dio 400 million; in any case, his wealth was such that he felt comfortable turning down 5 million sesterces (although not the *ornamenta praetoria*) from the Senate. He would later be an influential figure in helping Agrippina secure the throne for her son, both by facilitating her marriage to Claudius and then Claudius’s adoption of Nero. Most likely, Agrippina and Pallas operated as partners in government, as evidenced by the charges from Tacitus that the two were lovers. Eventually, in an effort to weaken his mother’s position in the government, Nero dismissed Pallas from his role, a move that, according to Tacitus, so weakened Agrippina’s position that she threatened to push Britannicus’s claim in an effort to regain political leverage; a few years later, Nero had him killed.

3. **Lucius Vitellius.** Three times consul (34, 43, and 47) and censor, the father of the future emperor served in a wide range of roles and under three different

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233 de la Bédoyère, 207.
emperors, including as the governor sent to restore order following the
procuratorship of Pontius Pilate and as the regent in Rome during Claudius’s
invasion of Britain.\textsuperscript{239} Once a close associate of Messalina, he would later
become Agrippina’s “principle defender” (\textit{praeciiupuus propugnator}) in the
Senate, as he helped her orchestrate Nero’s marriage to Octavia by having Junius
Silanus struck from the Senate rolls.\textsuperscript{240}

4. \textbf{Antonius Felix.} The brother of Pallas, Felix served as the procurator of Samaria
and Judea during the latter years of the reign of Claudius, likely due to his
brother’s position. The accounts in both Tacitus and Josephus differ as to the
exact course of events that took place during his governorship. According to
Tacitus, as governor of Samaria, he fought with the governor of Galilee, Ventidius
Comanus, before eventually ousting his foe.\textsuperscript{241} Josephus, meanwhile, states that
Felix had been sent by Claudius to put an end to the growing violence between
the Jews and Samaritans.\textsuperscript{242} In either case, what does remain clear is that Felix
remained eminently unpopular among locals: Tacitus stated that “Antonius Felix
through every barbarity and lust exercised the rule of kings in the nature of a
slave” (\textit{Antonius Felix per omnem saevitiam ac libidinem ius regium servili
ingenio exercuit}), while Josephus describes his reign as filled with piracy, robbery,
and false prophets.\textsuperscript{243} Even the author of Acts of the Apostles, although not
directly criticizing Felix outright, nonetheless does casually charge him with
bribery, noting that Paul was not released from prison: “at the same time also

\textsuperscript{239} Suet. \textit{Vit.} 2.4.
\textsuperscript{240} Tac. \textit{Ann.} 12.42.
\textsuperscript{241} Tac. \textit{Ann.} 12.54.
\textsuperscript{242} Joseph. \textit{AJ} 20.5–8.
\textsuperscript{243} Tac. \textit{Hist.} 5.9; Joseph. \textit{AJ} 20.8.
hoping that money would be given to him by Paul...Felix left Paul fettered” (ἂμα καὶ ἐλπίζων ὅτι χρήματα δοθήσεται [αὐτῷ] ὑπὸ τοῦ Παῦλου...ὁ Φῆλιξ κατέλιπε τὸν Παῦλον δεδεμένον).  

5. **Tarquitius Priscus.** Having served as a legate under Statilius Taurus in Africa, Tarquitius Priscus had his former patron charged with “a few crimes of extortion, and also magical superstitions” (*pauca repetundarum crimina, ceterum magicas superstitiones*) on behalf of Agrippina. Struck from the curia for his actions, he would later be readmitted to the Senate, before eventually being convicted himself for *rependarum* by the Bithynians in 61.  

6. **Faenius Rufus.** The career of equestrian Faenius Rufus first appears on the radar of Roman historians in 55, when he was appointed to the *Praefectura Annonae* following Agrippina’s ousting of Junia Silana and her associates. His apparent honesty allowed his career to prosper: he eventually became co-Prefect of the Praetorian Guard on account of his popularity with the masses, as he was one of the few grain officers who did not prosper financially from the position. His close relationship with Agrippina, however, rendered him a target, especially following her death, and he would eventually become involved with the Pisonian conspiracy.  

7. **Gaius Sertinius Xenophon.** A member of an important family from the island of Cos that claimed Asclepius among its ancestors, Xenophon served as Claudius’s

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249 de la Bédoyère, 258. The Pisonian Conspiracy will be discussed in more detail below.
personal doctor and received great praise for his service during the invasion of Britain.\footnote{Cynthia Damon, \textit{Tacitus Histories: Book I} (Cambridge University Press, 2003), 411.} According to Tacitus, he was a complicit in Agrippina’s poisoning of Claudius.\footnote{Tac. \textit{Ann.} 12.67.}

8. **Locusta.** A poison maker in the imperial court, Locusta allegedly took part in numerous assassinations within the imperial court. Her first appearance comes in Annales 12.66, as the supplier of the poison for Claudius. She would later become a favorite of Nero, supplying the poison for Britannicus and, later, for Nero himself.\footnote{Tac. \textit{Ann.} 13.15–16; Suet. \textit{Ner.} 33.2–3, 47.1.} Eventually, she would meet her end as part of Galba’s purging of the imperial court, and she would later become so infamous that Juvenal treated her as the gold standard of poisoners.\footnote{Cass. Dio 64b.3; Juv. 1.71.}

9. **Publius Celerius.** The equestrian Publius Celerius, according to Tacitus and Cassius Dio, administered the same poison allegedly used on Claudius to assassinate Junius Silanus on Agrippina’s behalf.\footnote{Tac. \textit{Ann.} 13.1.} He later faced trial by the people of Cilicia for this murder, which Nero dragged out so long that Celerius eventually died of old age.\footnote{Tac. \textit{Ann.} 13.33.} He served as the patrimonial procurator in Asia under both Claudius and Nero.\footnote{Werner Eck, “P. Celerius,” \textit{Brill’s New Pauly Online: Encyclopedia of the Ancient World} (Leiden: Brill, 2005); \textit{I. Eph.} 7,2,3043/44; \textit{SEG} 39, 1172.}

10. **Helius.** Along with Publius Celerius, Helius was a freedman in charge of imperial holdings in the province of Asia. He participated in the assassination of Junius Silanus, although he would escape any formal punishment.\footnote{Tac. \textit{Ann.} 13.1.} Helius rose
through the ranks of the imperial bureaucracy, eventually becoming Nero’s representative in Rome during the emperor’s absence.\footnote{Cass. Dio 62b.12.1 (pos=1439.1).} He eventually fell victim to Galba’s purge of the imperial court.\footnote{Cass. Dio 64b.3.}

11. \textit{Crepereius Gallus}. A member of Agrippina’s household, the entirety of what is known for certain about him comes from a single sentence in Tacitus: “from which Crepereius Gallus was standing not far off from the rudder...when with the signal given, the ceiling of the place to fall, with much heavy lead, and Creperius, crushed, was deprived of life on the spot” \footnote{Tac. \textit{Ann.} 14.5; Cass. Dio 62.13.3.} (\textit{ex quis Crepereius Gallus haud procul gubernaculis adstabat...cum dato signo ruere tectum loci multo plumbo grave, pressusque Crepereius et statim exanimatus est}).\footnote{Barbara Levick and Shelagh Jameson, "C. Crepereius Gallus and His Gens," \textit{JRS} 54 (1964), 97–99.} Barbara Levick and Shelagh Jameson argue that he may be identical with a \textit{procurator Augusti} from an inscription in the Roman colony Antioch towards Pisidia, and suggest that the presence of multiple inscriptions honoring both the man’s wife and a kinsman indicates that Gallus likely was a native of the region.\footnote{Tac. \textit{Ann.} 14.5; Cass. Dio 62.13.3.}

12. \textit{Acerronia Pollia}. A confidante of Agrippina, she had been present with her when Nero attempted to assassinate his mother by sinking the boat she was on.\footnote{Tac. \textit{Ann.} 4.45.} She may have been the daughter of Gnaeus Acerronius, consul in 37.\footnote{Tac. \textit{Ann.} 14.5; Cass. Dio 62.13.3.}

13. \textit{Lucius Agermus}. Agrippina sent Agermus, her freedman, to Nero to inform him that she suffered a boating accident, but had survived.\footnote{Tac. \textit{Ann.} 14.6; Suet. \textit{Ner.} 34.3.} He was, however,
framed for an attempted assassination on Nero, and thus arrested, disappearing from the historical record.265

II. The Supporters of Britannicus

1. Tiberius Claudius Caesar Britannicus. The son of the emperor Claudius and Messalina, Britannicus had been the heir presumptive until Agrippina’s marriage to Claudius and Nero’s adoption.266 Following the downfall of her mother, however, he found himself pushed aside in favor of his adopted brother, ostensibly due to his age, but also because of Agrippina’s and Nero’s popularity in Rome.267 Britannicus remained in the imperial household for the early years of Nero’s reign, but, once his brother had come of age, Nero had him assassinated, in order to remove him as a potential threat to the throne.268

2. Tiberius Claudius Narcissus. Claudius’s freedman ab epistulis, Narcissus stood at the center of the Claudian imperial administration; responsibilities he undertook at various moments included halting a mutiny in Britain, assigning legionary commanders in Germany, and overseeing construction on Lake Fucinus.269 He orchestrated the downfall of Messalina, going so far as to take control of the Praetorian Guard.270 Narcissus’s control was so great, in fact, that Cassius Dio claims that he openly mocked Claudius to his face.271 He urged the emperor to remarry Aelia Paetina; Anthony Barrett argues that his intention was to sideline

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265 Tac. Ann. 14.7–8; Suet. Ner. 34.3.
266 Suet. Claud. 27.1.3.
269 Tac. Ann. 12.56–57; Cass. Dio 60.19.2; Suet. Vesp. 4.1.
270 See Tac. Ann. 11 for the full narrative.
Britannicus, who may have resented him for taking down his mother, in favor of Faustus Cornelius Sulla Felix, the husband of Claudius and Paetina’s daughter Antonia.272 No matter his intentions, following Claudius’s marriage to Agrippina, Narcissus threw his support behind Britannicus, knowing that his rivalry with the empress would seal his fate should Nero ascend the throne.273 Given the immense wealth and power that the freedman possessed — Dio reckons his net worth to be 400 million sesterces at his death, and notes that both kings and cities had sought his patronage over the years — Agrippina made sure to have him take a vacation to Campania to relieve his gout before allegedly poisoning Claudius; in fact, as Barrett notes, the combination of Narcissus’s power and loyalty to the emperor suggests that the entire plan could not even have been beyond its early conception until after his departure from Rome.274

3. **Lusius Geta.** As the Praetorian Prefect alongside Rufrius Crispinus, Lusius Geta’s loyalty stood in such doubt during the downfall of Messalina that the freedman Narcissus was temporarily given charge of the Guard to ensure its loyalty during Claudius’s confrontation with her.275 Believing him and Crispinus to be loyal to Britannicus, Agrippina convinced Claudius to replace them with Sextus Afranius Burrus, ostensibly to prevent rivalry within a divided Guard; he was given a *de iure* promotion, becoming the Prefect of Egypt, although in truth it removed him from Rome during the critical succession period.276

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274 Cass. Dio 61.34.4; Barrett, 163. Barrett’s point emphasizes the important role that being directly present in the capital and around the emperor plays within court politics.
276 Tac. *Ann.* 12.42; Griffin, 68.
4. **Rufrius Crispinus.** Likely an equestrian from Egypt — Juvenal calls him “part of the plebs of the Nile, a slave of Canopus” (*pars Niliacae plebis...verna Canopi*)\(^{277}\) — Rufrius Crispinus rose through the equestrian ranks, becoming Geta’s colleague as Prefect of the Praetorian Guard and awarded with the *insignia praeturae*.\(^{278}\) Much like Geta, his loyalty was believed to be to Messalina, and he was removed from office in favor of Burrus; he received consular status in compensation.\(^{279}\) He later married Poppaea Sabina, prior to her marriage to Otho.\(^{280}\)

5. **Julius Densus.** A member of the equestrian order, Julius Densus was indicted for partiality to Britannicus, but the charges were blocked by Nero.\(^{281}\)

6. **Sosibius.** As the tutor of Britannicus and a close companion of the senator Publius Suillius Rufus, Sosibius stood near the center of Claudius’s administration.\(^{282}\) As a reward for his accusation against Decimus Valerius Asiaticus, he received a reward of one million sesterces, giving a wealth baseline equivalent to the senatorial elite.\(^{283}\) Due to his influence, Agrippina had him removed from office and executed.\(^{284}\)

III. **The Coalition of Seneca and Burrus**

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\(^{277}\) Juv. 1.1.26–27.  
\(^{278}\) Tac. *Ann.* 11.4.  
\(^{279}\) Griffin, 68.  
\(^{281}\) Tac. *Ann.* 13.10.  
\(^{284}\) Cass. Dio 61.32.5.
1. **Lucius Annaeus Seneca.** Born to an equestrian family from Cordoba around year 1, Seneca had a turbulent rise to the top in his political career.\(^{285}\) Despite the opposition of Caligula, he managed to gain admittance to the Senate through the quaestorship, before ultimately being exiled to Corsica in the reign of Claudius due to the influence of Messalina.\(^{286}\) Needing a tutor in rhetoric for Nero, Agrippina convinced Claudius to end his banishment and grant him a praetorship.\(^{287}\) As the empress cleared the path for her son’s succession, Seneca’s influence within Rome grew. Although owing his position to Agrippina, Seneca quickly distanced himself from her as he became the most important non-military locus of power within the Nero administration. His influence primarily can be found by being the architect of Nero’s public persona — he was responsible for writing Nero’s speech to the Praetorian Guard at his succession and the emperor’s eulogy to Claudius, among other public addresses — and through his abilities to influence the emperor’s behavior, as there exists little evidence that Seneca was behind any legislation in the Senate.\(^{288}\) Miriam Griffin notes that his indirect ruling style can be seen in the *De Clementia*, arguing that Seneca “was taking publicity and propaganda to the level of imperial ideology,” highlighting mercy as a fundamental pillar of Nero’s reign.\(^{289}\) On top of the power brought by his proximity to the emperor, Seneca amassed a massive fortune, with Tacitus

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\(^{285}\) Conte, 408.


\(^{287}\) Tac. *Ann.* 12.8; Suet. *Ner.* 7.1; Cass. Dio 61.32.3.

\(^{288}\) Dio writes that Seneca and Burrus enacted legislation, but it is not substantiated by the narrative; Tacitus records only one instance where Seneca had any effect on legislation, and even then, his influence mainly existed behind the scenes. Tac. *Ann.* 13.3; Cass. Dio 61b.3.1; Griffin, 50–51.

\(^{289}\) Griffin, 77.
reporting that he had earned 300 million sesterces via usury, and Dio claiming that his calling in a loan of 40 million sesterces sparked Boudica’s rebellion.\textsuperscript{290} Juvenal and Martial, furthermore, each cite Seneca as an example of a generous patron, suggesting the existence of a wide patrimonial network centered on him.\textsuperscript{291} Over time, however, particularly after the deaths of Agrippina and Burrus, Seneca’s influence waned, and he attempted on two occasions to retire.\textsuperscript{292} Eventually, he would be forced to commit suicide, implicated in the Pisonian conspiracy.\textsuperscript{293}

2. **Sextus Afranius Burrus.** Born in Gallia Narbonensis, Burrus rose through the equestrian ranks, serving as the tribune of a legion, a procurator for Livia, Tiberius, Caligula, and Claudius.\textsuperscript{294} Known for his military service, Agrippina had him appointed as sole Praetorian Prefect prior to Claudius’s death, allowing for Nero’s smooth succession due to the loyalty of the Guard.\textsuperscript{295} He remained in that role, working alongside Seneca to guide Nero’s reign, until his death in 62.\textsuperscript{296} Despite leaving little record beyond one inscription and references in the historical record, Burrus’s control of the Praetorian Guard allowed him to be the premier source of military power within the imperial court, and thus his influence likely carried much further than the historians, who often prefer Seneca, suggest.

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{290} Tac. *Ann.* 13.42; Cass. Dio 62b.2.
\item \textsuperscript{291} Mart. 12. 36, vv 8–9; Juv. 5.109; Griffin, 148.
\item \textsuperscript{292} Tac. *Ann.* 14.52–54, 15.45.
\item \textsuperscript{293} Tac. *Ann.* 15.56, 15.60–64.
\item \textsuperscript{294} Karl-Ludwig Elvers, “Afranius,” *Brill’s New Pauly Online: Encyclopedia of the Ancient World* (Leiden: Brill, 2005); *CIL* XII 5842 = *ILS* 1321.
\item \textsuperscript{295} Tac. *Ann.* 12.69.
\item \textsuperscript{296} Tac. *Ann.* 14.51.
\end{itemize}
3. **Lucius Junius Gallio Annaeanus.** Likely prospering through the influence of his younger brother Seneca, Gallio’s career can be tracked through a wide range of sources beyond just Tacitus’s *Annales* and Cassius Dio’s *Historia Romana*. Acts of the Apostles and the Delphi inscription identify him as the proconsul of Achaea during the reign of Claudius, while sometime in the mid 50s, he reached the consulship.\(^{297}\) Cassius Dio references him announcing Nero’s performances, highlighting his proximity to the imperial regime.\(^{298}\) Following the death of Seneca, he immediately became a target — Salienus Clemens attacked him as “an enemy and a parricide” (*hostem et parricidam*).\(^{299}\) It is unlikely that, even if he survived long after, he held any true influence without Seneca.

4. **Annæus Mela.** As the youngest brother of Seneca and Gallio and the father of Lucan, Mela’s career went largely underreported, with its first major reference in Tacitus being his demise. According to the historian, Mela preferred to accumulate wealth through procuratorships that allowed him to obtain the consular-level wealth while retaining equestrian status. In the aftermath of the Pisonian conspiracy, he was forced to commit suicide.\(^{300}\)

5. **Marcus Annæus Lucanus.** The son of Annæus Mela, Lucan prospered in both his political and literary career under Nero, performing a eulogy of Nero at the Quinquennial Contests and receiving a quaestorship.\(^{301}\) For some reason,

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\(^{297}\) *Acts of the Apostles* 18.12; *SIG* 3 801 (the Delphi/Gallio Inscription).
\(^{298}\) Cass. Dio, 62.20.1.
\(^{299}\) Tac. *Ann.* 15.73.
\(^{300}\) Tac. *Ann.* 16.17.
\(^{301}\) Suet. *Vita Luc.*
however, he soon fell out of favor with the emperor, and joined the Pisonian conspiracy, and was forced to commit suicide as a result.302

6. **Lucilius Junior.** A close friend of Seneca and dedicatee of *Natural Questions* and *De Providentia* and whose life is mostly documented in the *Epistulae Morales*, Lucilius Junior likely received his position as procurator of Sicily from the influence of Seneca.303 Either a native of Pompeii or a resident there later in life, he reportedly had a villa in Ardea.304 Additionally, Seneca mentions multiple references to poetry written by Lucilius.305

7. **Annaeus Serenus.** A close friend (and possibly relative) of Seneca, Annaeus Serenus served as the *praefectus vigilum*, likely having received the position via Seneca’s patronage.306 He is most known for posing as the lover of Claudia Acte, in order to hide her status as Nero’s mistress — and a possible rift between Nero and Octavia — from the public.307

8. **Claudia Acte.** Originally a slave from Asia, the freedwoman Acte became Nero’s mistress and lifelong confidante, and a rival of Agrippina.308 Within the court, she seems to have allied herself with Seneca, who provided her with cover in the form of Serenus, potentially in exchange for helping rid Nero of his mother’s influence.309 Over time, she accumulated immense wealth, including estates at Puteoli and Velitrae, as well as numerous slaves of her own.310

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302 Tac. *Ann.* 15.49, 15.70.
310 *PIR²* C 1067.
remained loyal to Nero to the end, and, along with his nurses, cremated him and buried his ashes in the Domitii family tomb.\footnote{Suet. Ner. 50.}

9. **Fabius Rusticus.** Fabius Rusticus was a prominent historian of the Flavian period cited by name in Tacitus’s *Annales* on at least three occasions, and who the historian praises for his literary style.\footnote{Tac. Ann. 13.20, 14.2, 15.61; Tac. Agr. 10.3.} He prospered as a client of Seneca, although it remains unclear whether this patronage existed only at a literary level, or if it entailed political support as well.\footnote{Of course, given the time period, literary pursuits were by definition a political endeavor — particularly due to, although not simply because of, due to Nero’s love of the arts; thus, the division may simply be splitting hairs. Tac. Ann. 13.20; Griffin, 78, 148–149.}

10. **Subrius Flavus.** See citation A.V.5 below.

11. **Faustus Cornelius Sulla Felix.** The son-in-law of Claudius and cousin of Nero, Sulla’s existence served as a threat for Nero as a potential claimant to the throne; in fact, Tacitus reports refuted charges that Burrus and Pallas had conspired to put him on the throne, giving some credence to the fear for Nero.\footnote{Tac. Ann. 13.22.} The fact that such a story could be conceived suggests some sort of professional relationship between Burrus and Sulla. A few years later, Sulla was falsely accused of plotting to attack the emperor, and was exiled to Massilia, before finally being killed in 62 due to Tigellinus’s fears that he sought control of the Rhine legions.\footnote{Tac. Ann. 13.47; 14.57; Griffin, 178.}

12. **Novius Priscus.** A known friend of Seneca, Novius Priscus was exiled, along with his wife, following the failure of the Pisonian conspiracy.\footnote{Tac. Ann. 15.71.}
13. **Duvius Avitus.** Duvius Avitus represents the likeliest example of direct patronage exercised by Burrus, as Avitus, a native of Burrus’s native city, received a gubernatorial position in Germania Inferior in 52.\(^\text{317}\) Within Germania, he appears to have had a not-inconsequential network, as he remained close enough with the ruler of the Ampsivarii, Boiocalus, to promise him assistance while simultaneously threatening the populace.\(^\text{318}\)

### IV. The Alliance of Tigellinus and Poppaea

1. **Ofonius Tigellinus.** One of the two Praetorian Prefects following the death of Burrus, the ancient tradition largely portrays Ofonius Tigellinus as the mastermind behind Nero’s depravity in the second half of his reign.\(^\text{319}\) Both Tacitus and the scholiast on Juvenal claim that he came from obscure origins, possibly from Agrigentum, Sicily; the scholiast further rights that Tigellinus used sexual relations with Agrippa and Livilla to forge connections in the households of Gnaeus Domitius and Marcus Vicinius.\(^\text{320}\) Griffin notes that this story likely represents some form of propaganda — more likely, his family had some semblance of wealth, which gave him some foundation upon which to climb the social ladder.\(^\text{321}\) Banished on two charges of adultery with Agrippina and Julia Livilla in his early years, Tigellinus purchased land in Apulia to train racehorses,

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\(^{317}\) Griffin, 79; *CIL XII* 1354 = *ILS* 979; *AE* 1976, 391.


\(^{319}\) Griffin, 101; Plut. *Galb.* 17.4; Juv. 1.156–158.

\(^{320}\) *Tac. Ann.* 1.72; Griffin, 103; Miriam Griffin cites the *Scholiast on Juvenal* directly, but I have been unable to find an online edition.

\(^{321}\) Griffin, 103.
in which time he became an acquaintance of Nero.\footnote{Griffin, 103; Werner Eck, “Ofonius Tigellinus,” \textit{Brill’s New Pauly Online: Encyclopedia of the Ancient World} (Leiden: Brill, 2005).} Upon Tigellinus’s return to Rome, Nero appointed him to the \textit{praefecturam vigilum}; upon the death of Burrus, he entered Nero’s inner circle as Praetorian Prefect.\footnote{Tac. \textit{Hist}. 1.72.} Married to the daughter of the senator Cossutianus Capito, Tigellinus accumulated a not-insignificant amount of wealth during his time in office, including a villa in the Aemilian district of Rome and a country estate at Sinuessa, both as rewards for his service and through bribery.\footnote{Tac. \textit{Ann}. 14.48, 15.40; Cass. Dio 62b.28.4, 62b.11.2 (62b.pos=1438.1); Plut. \textit{Oth}. 2.1.} Along with Poppaea, and Helius, he appears to have ruled in Rome during Nero’s last years, especially after he earned the \textit{ornamenta triumphalia} for his role in crushing the Pisonian conspiracy.\footnote{Tac. \textit{Ann}. 15.61, 15.72; Cass. Dio 62b.13.3, 62b.12.3 (62b.pos=1439.3).} However, when Nero’s downfall appeared imminent, he did not hesitate to help turn the Guard against him.\footnote{Plut. \textit{Galb}. 2.1.}

2. **Poppaea Augusta Sabina.** The former wife of Rufrius Crispinus and Marcus Salvius Otho, Poppaea the Younger “possessed all things besides an honest spirit” \textit{(cuncta alia fuere praeter honestum animum)}, and caught Nero’s eye due to her “glory” \textit{(gloriam)} and “reputation” \textit{(famam)}.\footnote{Tac. \textit{Ann}. 13.45.} The daughter of the ex-quaestor Titus Ollius, numerous signs point to descent from a prominent Pompeiian family: the Poppaea family appeared to have owned at least five homes in the city, including the House of the Golden Cupids and the House of Menander, a wax tablet from Herculaneum refer to Poppaea-owned brick houses, and inscriptions from the city mention the Ludi Poppaeenses; furthermore, the Ollii family owned...
property in the city and surrounding area, and the city received colonial status from Nero, much like Agrippina’s birthplace had.\footnote{Griffin, 102; \textit{CIL} IV 259; \textit{CIL} IV 6682.} Allegedly a rival of Agrippina (most ancient historians claim that she prompted Nero to commit matricide), Poppaea mimicked many of her mother-in-law’s actions in order to garner a base of influence within the imperial court. Josephus praises her as a “God-fearing” (\(\theta\varepsilon\omicron\sigma\epsilon\beta\iota\varsigma\)) woman, and relates how she intervened with Nero on the behalf of the Jews, had Gessius Florus appointed as procurator, and bestowed on Josephus numerous gifts when she met him.\footnote{Joseph. \textit{AJ} 20.195–197, 20.252; Joseph. \textit{Vit.} 3. Josephus portrays Florus as one of the sparks of the Jewish War, although he does not seem to blame Poppaea for inflicting him upon them.} Roman historians, however, held her in much lower esteem, treating her as an equal partner in Nero’s extravagances and claiming that she dominated him.\footnote{Tac. \textit{Ann.} 14.60; Cass. Dio 62b.28.1.} All sources report her death at Nero’s hands, due to a kick in the stomach during pregnancy.\footnote{Tac. \textit{Ann.} 16.6; Suet. \textit{Ner.} 35.3; Cass. Dio 62b.28.1.}

3. **Cossutianus Capito.** The father-in-law of Tigellinus, Capito was expelled from the Senate following a conviction on charges of extortion filed by the Cilicians, for whom he had served as governor.\footnote{Tac. \textit{Ann.} 13.33.} Following his return to the Senate, he resumed his work as a \textit{delator} and as a lawyer, most notably assisting in the trial of Thrasea Paetus.\footnote{Tac. \textit{Ann.} 14.48, 16.17, 16.21.}

4. **Cocceius Nerva.** The future emperor of Rome, Nerva played an important role in the uncovering of the Pisonian conspiracy, as he received the \textit{ornamenta}
triumphalia and a statue placed within the imperial palace itself.\textsuperscript{334} He received a praetorship for the year 66, and would later prosper under the Flavians.

5. **Calvia Crispinilla.** A wealthy woman of Senatorial status, Calvia Crispinilla receives harsh criticism in Tacitus, who calls her “teacher of pleasures of Nero” (*magistra libidinum Neronis*), and Cassius Dio, who claims that she “took off, plundered, and despoiled all things, as much as was being taken” ( OMITTED TEXT).\textsuperscript{335} Nonetheless, Tacitus attests to her political influence due to her wealth, and archaeological evidence, such as brick stamps at Tegeste, and she was able to serve through several imperial administrations.\textsuperscript{336}

6. **Gessius Florus.** Both Josephus and Tacitus cite Gessius Florus’s term as procurator of Judea as the cause of the Jewish War.\textsuperscript{337} He received his post through the influence of his wife Cleopatra, who had a close relationship with Poppaea Sabina.\textsuperscript{338}

7. **Maevius Pudens.** Tacitus describes Maevius Pudens as one of Tigellinus’s closest friends in his *Histories*.\textsuperscript{339}

V. **The Pisonian Conspiracy**

1. **Gaius Calpurnius Piso.** A powerful senator and a descendant of a prominent Republican family (he shares his name with contemporaries of Scipio Aemilianus and Cicero), Piso remains best known for the conspiracy to overthrow Nero that

\textsuperscript{334} Tac. *Ann.* 15.72.
\textsuperscript{335} Tac. *Hist.* 1.73; Cass. Dio 62b.12.3 (62b.pos=1439.3).
\textsuperscript{337} Tac. *Hist.* 5.10; Joseph. *BJ* 2.20.1.
\textsuperscript{338} Joseph. *AJ* 20.252.
\textsuperscript{339} Tac. *Hist* 1.24.
bore him as its figurehead and allegedly planned on installing him upon the throne. What survives about his career outside the conspiracy, however, make it clear why the conspiracy would have turned to him as a potential emperor: a descendant of the Calpurnii family, Piso owned an estate at Baiae and is described as a very generous patron, much like Seneca, by Martial and Juvenal. The *Laus Pisonis*, whose recipient is often identified as the conspirator, further praises Piso for his generosity as a patron; additionally, Titus Calpurnius Siculus’s fictional poet Corydon’s patron Meliboeus is often believed to be Piso. Much like Nero, Piso engaged in the performing arts, performing in lyrical tragedies. In the end, with the conspiracy revealed to Nero and the administration, Piso was forced to commit suicide.

2. **Faenius Rufus.** One of the two Praetorian Prefects following Burrus’s death, Cassius Dio pins Faenius Rufus as one of the two major figures of the Pisonian conspiracy, alongside Seneca. Named by Tacitus the “highest hardwood” (*summum robur*) of the conspiracy, Rufus allegedly turned against Nero when his colleague, Ofonius Tigellinus, utilized Rufus’s connection to Agrippina to sideline him. He escaped detection for a time, but eventually was outed and executed. It remains uncertain whether the Horrea Faeniana, mentioned in one inscription,

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340 Tac. *Ann.* 15.48, 15.52; Juv. 5.109; Mart. 12. 36, vv 8–9.
341 *Laus Pisonis*; Griffin, 147–148.
345 Tac. *Ann.* 15.50.
346 Tac. *Ann.* 15.58, 15.66, 15.68.
receives its name from him; if they were, it would be further evidence that Rufus likely served as one of the ringleaders of the plot.\textsuperscript{347}

3. **Marcus Julius Vestinus Atticus.** Consul ordinarius in 65, Vestinus was expected by many to be a part of the Pisonian conspiracy, although Tacitus claims that he had not been included due to “old animosity toward him” (*vetustis in eum simultatibus*) and “because they believed him headstrong and un-alliable” (*quia praecipitem et insociabilem credebant*).\textsuperscript{348} Likely a close confidante of Nero — the emperor would later marry his wife — Vestinus had been a prominent individual within the city: he owned a house overlooking the forum, he came from an important provincial family (his father, the equestrian Lucius Julius Vestinus from Vienna, rose to become the Prefect of Egypt and a highly-respected advisor to Claudius and, later, Vespasian), and there was apparently concern that he, and not Piso, would become the face of the revolt against Nero.\textsuperscript{349} His wife, furthermore, was the great-granddaughter of Titus Statilius Taurus, a two-time consul who received a triumph.\textsuperscript{350} Despite not being directly involved, however, the expectation that he would have been suggests that he was fairly close to the conspirators.

4. **Lucius Annaeus Seneca.** Please see citation A.III.1 above.

5. **Subrius Flavus.** Tacitus lists the Praetorian tribune Subrius Flavus as one of the core instigators of the Pisonian conspiracy, attributing his hatred of Nero to the

\textsuperscript{347} CIL VI. 37796.  
\textsuperscript{348} Tac. Ann. 15.48, 15.68.  
\textsuperscript{349} Tac. Ann. 15.52, 15.69, CIL XIII 1668 = ILS 212 col. II; Werner Eck, “Iulius” II 146, Brill’s New Pauly Online: Encyclopedia of the Ancient World (Leiden: Brill, 2005).  
\textsuperscript{350} Suet. Ner. 35.1.
emperor’s stage performances.\textsuperscript{351} Allegedly, he, along with several other centurions, planned to overthrow Piso and give the throne to Seneca.\textsuperscript{352} His role within the Guard allowed him to escape detection for some time, although his participation was eventually discovered, leading to his execution.\textsuperscript{353}

6. **Plautius Lateranus.** Having been removed from the Senate for having an affair with the empress Messalina, Plautius Lateranus gained readmission to the political scene through an act of generosity by Nero early in his reign, which Tacitus attributes vaguely to Seneca’s influence.\textsuperscript{354} A member of a wealthy family — his family estate in Rome, the Domus Lateranus, remains standing as the Lateran Palace in the Vatican — Lateranus allegedly joined the conspiracy as a consul-designate not because of any personal vendetta against Nero, but due to “love of the state” (*amor rei publicae*).\textsuperscript{355} Within the conspiracy, he was charged with ambushing Nero; he was executed for his role, and his lands were confiscated.\textsuperscript{356}

7. **Flavius Scaevinus.** Flavius Scaevinus was a senator cited by Tacitus as being a surprising member of the conspiracy due to his “mind dissolved by luxury and thus [lived] a life with sluggish sleep” (*dissoluta luxu mens et proinde vita somno languida*).\textsuperscript{357} Nonetheless, he must have been an important member of the group, not only due to the fact that he is the first complicit senator named by Tacitus, but

\textsuperscript{351} Tac. *Ann.* 15.49–50; Cass. Dio 62b.24.2.
\textsuperscript{352} Tac. *Ann.* 15.65.
\textsuperscript{353} Tac. *Ann.* 15.67.
\textsuperscript{354} Tac. *Ann.* 13.11.
\textsuperscript{357} Tac. *Ann.* 15.49.
also because he was chosen to be the ceremonial slayer of Nero.358 The conspiracy’s revelation, however, came from a traitor within his household, Milichus.359

8. **Gavius Silvanus.** The Praetorian tribune Gavius Silvanus was sent by Nero to order Seneca to commit suicide; as one of the members of the conspiracy, he convened with Faenius Rufus before carrying out the order.360 He received a pardon, but took his own life anyway.361

9. **Rufrius Crispinus.** See citation A.II.4 above for earlier history. At some point, he entered the Roman Senate, as Martial dedicates an epigram to his missing purple toga.362 Tacitus claims that he did not partake in the conspiracy, but Nero nonetheless used the opportunity to banish the former husband of Poppaea.363

10. **Claudius Senecio.** Tacitus cites the equestrian Claudius Senecio as a member of the conspiracy, describing him as “one from the particular friendship of Nero” (*e praecipua familiaritate Neronis*) who operated as a spy on the inside for the conspirators.364 He allegedly revealed Annius Pollio’s complicity in an attempt to save his own life.365

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358 Tac. *Ann.* 15.53.
362 Mart. 8.48.
364 Tac. *Ann.* 15.50.
365 Tac. *Ann.* 15.56–57, 15.70.
11. **Sulpicius Asper.** Tacitus lists the Praetorian centurion Sulpicius Asper as one of the core instigators of the Pisonian conspiracy.\(^{366}\) Like other Guards in the conspiracy, he was executed.\(^{367}\)

12. **Marcus Annaeus Lucanus.** See Marcus Annaeus Lucanus, citation A.III.5.

13. **Afranius Quintianus.** Tacitus cites Afranius Quintianus as a surprising member of the conspiracy due to his “softness of body” (*mollitia corporis*), joining the conspiracy because Nero mocked him in a poem.\(^{368}\) Allegedly, he revealed the complicity of his friend Glitius Gallus in an attempt to save his own life.\(^{369}\)

14. **Cervarius Proculus.** Tacitus names Cervarius Proculus as one of the equestrians who joined the Pisonian conspiracy.\(^{370}\) Ultimately, he received immunity.\(^{371}\)

15. **Vulcacius Araricus.** Tacitus cites Vulcacius Araricus as one of the equestrians who joined the Pisonian conspiracy.\(^{372}\)

16. **Julius Augurinus.** Tacitus cites Julius Augurinus as one of the equestrians who joined the Pisonian conspiracy.\(^{373}\)

17. **Munatius Gratus.** Tacitus cites Munatius Gratus as an equestrian who joined the Pisonian conspiracy.\(^{374}\) See Brill’s *New Pauly*, which cites *PIR*\(^2\) M 726.

18. **Antonius Natalis.** Tacitus cites Antonius Natalis as an equestrian who joined the Pisonian conspiracy.\(^{375}\) His conversation with Scaevinus helped confirm

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\(^{368}\) Tac. *Ann.* 15.49.

\(^{369}\) Tac. *Ann.* 15.56–57.

\(^{370}\) Tac. *Ann.* 15.50.

\(^{371}\) Tac. *Ann.* 15.71.

\(^{372}\) Tac. *Ann.* 15.50.

\(^{373}\) Tac. *Ann.* 15.50.

\(^{374}\) Tac. *Ann.* 15.50.

\(^{375}\) Tac. *Ann.* 15.50.
Milichus’s story that revealed the conspiracy.\textsuperscript{376} He eventually received immunity.\textsuperscript{377}

19. **Marcius Festus.** Tacitus cites Marcius Festus as an equestrian who joined the Pisonian conspiracy.\textsuperscript{378}

20. **Statius Proxumus.** The Praetorian tribune Statius Proxumus received a pardon for his role in the conspiracy, but nonetheless “he ruined the pardon which he had accepted from the emperor, having been destroyed by his vanity” (\textit{veniam quam ab imperatore acceperat vanitate exitus corrupt}).\textsuperscript{379}

21. **Maximus Scaurus.** Tacitus cites Maximus Scaurus as one of the Praetorian centurions brought in to provide military backing for the Pisonian conspiracy.\textsuperscript{380}

22. **Venetus Paulus.** Tacitus cites Venetus Paulus as one of the Praetorian centurions brought in to provide military backing for the Pisonian conspiracy.\textsuperscript{381}

23. **Epicharis.** The exact connection that the freedwoman Epicharis had to the conspiracy remains unclear to historians: Tacitus claims uncertainty as to how she learned about it in the first place, Polyaenus identifies her as the mistress of Mela, and Cassius Dio skips over the question entirety, simply praising her for revealing nothing of the scheme despite being under torture.\textsuperscript{382} Apparently dissatisfied with the plot’s pace, she attempted to kickstart the affair by recruiting Volusius

\textsuperscript{376} Tac. \textit{Ann.} 15.54–55.
\textsuperscript{377} Tac. \textit{Ann.} 15.71.
\textsuperscript{378} Tac. \textit{Ann.} 15.50.
\textsuperscript{379} Tac. \textit{Ann.} 15.50, 15.71.
\textsuperscript{380} Tac. \textit{Ann.} 15.50.
\textsuperscript{381} Tac. \textit{Ann.} 15.50.
\textsuperscript{382} Tac. \textit{Ann.} 15.51; Polyaenus \textit{Strat.} 8.62; Cass. Dio 62b.27.3.
Proculus, a naval commander, who reported the plot and had her arrested; she did not, however, betray anybody, leading to praise from Tacitus and Dio alike.\(^{383}\)

24. **Annius Pollio.** Married to Servilia, the daughter of Barea Soranus, Annius Pollio, according to Tacitus, was named as a member of the conspiracy by Senecio, receiving exile as punishment.\(^{384}\)

25. **Glitius Gallus.** Married to Egnatia Maximilla, Glitius Gallus was exiled to Andros, after having his name revealed by Quintianus.\(^{385}\) He later returned, and prospered under the Flavian dynasty.\(^{386}\)

26. **Cornelius Martialis.** Tacitus writes that Cornelius Martialis was “drawn out then from the tribuneship” (\textit{exuti dehinc tribunatu}) in the aftermath of the conspiracy.\(^{387}\)

27. **Flavius Nepos.** Tacitus writes that Flavius Nepos was “drawn out then from the tribuneship” (\textit{exuti dehinc tribunatu}) in the aftermath of the conspiracy.\(^{388}\)

28. **Statius Domitius.** Tacitus writes that Statius Domitius was “drawn out then from the tribuneship” (\textit{exuti dehinc tribunatu}) in the aftermath of the conspiracy.\(^{389}\)

29. **Verginius Flavus.** A famous rhetorician of the 1st century, Verginius Flavus was exiled in the aftermath of the Pisonian conspiracy.\(^{390}\)

\(^{383}\) Tac. \textit{Ann.} 15.51, 15.57; Cass. Dio 62b.27.3.
\(^{384}\) Tac. \textit{Ann.} 15.56, 15.71, 16.30.
\(^{385}\) Tac. \textit{Ann.} 15.56, 15.71.
\(^{386}\) \textit{CIL} XI 3097; \textit{CIL} XI 3098 = \textit{ILS} 999.
\(^{387}\) Tac. \textit{Ann.} 15.71. There exist some problems in the text here, but most translations take Cornelius Martialis and the names listed with him with this phrase.
\(^{388}\) Tac. \textit{Ann.} 15.71. There exist some problems in the text here, but most translations take Cornelius Martialis and the names listed with him with this phrase.
\(^{389}\) Tac. \textit{Ann.} 15.71. There exist some problems in the text here, but most translations take Cornelius Martialis and the names listed with him with this phrase.
\(^{390}\) Tac. \textit{Ann.} 15.71.
30. **Cluvidienus Quietus.** Tacitus cites Cluvidienus Quietus as an individual exiled to the Aegean Sea in the aftermath of the Pisonian conspiracy.\(^{391}\)

31. **Julius Agrippa.** Tacitus cites Julius Agrippa as an individual exiled to the Aegean Sea in the aftermath of the Pisonian conspiracy.\(^{392}\)

32. **Blitius Catulinus.** Tacitus cites Blitius Catulinus as an individual exiled to the Aegean Sea in the aftermath of the Pisonian conspiracy.\(^{393}\)

33. **Petronius Priscus.** Tacitus cites Petronius Priscus as an individual exiled to the Aegean Sea in the aftermath of the Pisonian conspiracy.\(^{394}\)

34. **Julius Altinus.** Tacitus cites Julius Altinus as an individual exiled to the Aegean Sea in the aftermath of the Pisonian conspiracy.\(^{395}\)

35. **Caesennius Maximus.** A friend of Seneca, Caesennius Maximus was exiled from Italy in the aftermath of the Pisonian conspiracy; according to Tacitus, the banishment was the first indication that he had even been on trial.\(^{396}\)

### VI. The Politically-Unaffiliated

1. **Eucaerus.** A native of Alexandria and a talented player of the tibia, the slave Eucaerus played the part of Octavia’s faux lover so that Nero could have her put aside on charges of adultery.\(^{397}\)

\(^{391}\) Tac. *Ann.* 15.71.
\(^{392}\) Tac. *Ann.* 15.71.
\(^{393}\) Tac. *Ann.* 15.71.
\(^{394}\) Tac. *Ann.* 15.71.
\(^{395}\) Tac. *Ann.* 15.71.
\(^{396}\) Tac. *Ann.* 15.71; Mart. 7.45; Sen. *Ep.* 87.2.
\(^{397}\) Tac. *Ann.* 13.60.
2. **Pythagoras.** Both Tacitus and Cassius Dio record Pythagoras as the freedman that Nero married during a series of banquets offered by Tigellinus (Suetonius, probably mistakenly, refers to him as Doryphoros).\(^{398}\)

3. **Polyclitus.** The freedman Polyclitus first appears in Book 14 of the *Annales*, with Nero sending him to Britain to solve a dispute between Suetonius Paulinus and Julius Alpinus Classicianus in the aftermath of Boudica’s rebellion.\(^{399}\) During his career, he accumulated a large amount of wealth through his influence within the imperial administration; indeed, Tacitus would even use him as a standard for freedmen accumulating power and wealth in this way.\(^{400}\)

4. **Sporus.** Nero castrated the freedman Sporus, dressed him up as Poppaea Sabina, and took him as his bride due to Sporus’s apparent resemblance to his deceased wife.\(^{401}\) The two were clearly close, however, as evidenced by the fact that Sporus remained by Nero’s side until the very end.\(^{402}\)

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\(^{400}\) Tac. *Hist.* 1.37, 2.95; Cass. Dio 62b.12.3 (62b.pos=1439.3).


\(^{402}\) Suet. *Ner.* 48–49.
Appendix B: Provincial Prosopography

I. Elites of Lugdunum

None found.

II. Elites of Vienne

1. Decimus Valerius Asiaticus (I). A senator from Vienne, Asiaticus was the first Gallic man both to enter the Senate to reach the consulship, although his career prior to his suffect consulship in 35 remains shrouded in mystery. He remained very close to the Julio-Claudian dynasty, although the relationship between him and the imperial household rose and waned over the years: Caligula, for example, both bestowed upon him estates in Egypt and committed adultery with his wife Lollia Saturnina (the sister of the emperor’s wife). He had a good relationship with Claudius’s mother Antonia, which may have saved him from execution when Messalina accused him of being privy to Caligula’s murder, although Josephus does note that he wished he had been involved: “Would that it had been me!” (εἴθε γὰρ ἔγωγε). Likely because of this, he was mistrusted by Claudius, who deliberately did not mention him in the speech opening the Senate to Gauls. Messalina ultimately accused him of adultery with Poppaea Sabina the Elder in order to seize the Horti Lucullani, and he was ultimately driven to suicide.

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403 Syme, Tacitus, 590.
405 Tac. Ann. 11.1–3; Joseph. AJ 19.159.
406 CIL XIII 1668, 14–15.
407 Tac. Ann. 11.2.
Despite this turbulent relationship with the imperial household, Asiaticus nonetheless accumulated extensive tracts of land in Rome and Gaul, in addition to his imperially-bestowed estates in Egypt.\textsuperscript{408} He likely served as a patron within Gaul, and may have had some financial stake in a theatre company, the Scaenici Asiaticia; furthermore, at least one of his freedmen is known to have become wealthy.\textsuperscript{409}

2. **Decimus Valerius Asiaticus (II).** The son of Decimus Valerius Asiaticus (I) and Lollia Saturnina, Asiaticus’s career first appears in the historical narrative as the governor of Gallia Belgica.\textsuperscript{410} He became very prominent during the civil wars of 69 CE, as he was married to Vitellius’s daughter and was named consul-designate; however, not only did Vitellius lose the throne, but he also died before assuming the consulship.\textsuperscript{411} In addition to the estates inherited from both his parents, Asiaticus represented a potential source of power within Rome due to his ancestry; although the Lollii had only been distantly related to the Julio-Claudian dynasty, due to the elimination of the direct descendants of Augustus and his sister (e.g., the Junii Silani, Faustus Sulla Felix, Rubellius Plautus), Asiaticus represented a potential claimant to the throne.\textsuperscript{412}


\textsuperscript{409} *CIL* XII 1929; *CIL* XIII 5012.

\textsuperscript{410} Morgan, 149.

\textsuperscript{411} *CIL* VI 1528; Morgan, 149.

\textsuperscript{412} Thomas Wiedemann, ‘Valerius Asiaticus and the Regime of Vitellius,” in *Philologus* Vol 143 (2): 1999, 329. Wiedemann hypothesizes that Asiaticus may have actually been the original claimant desired by the Rhine legions when they revolted in 68/69, not Vitellius; he attributes this due to the prominence that the father is given in both Tacitus’s and Josephus’s narratives, noting that Tacitus in particular deliberately highlights the fathers of known conspirators as threats to the emperor.
3. **Lucius Aemilius Tutor.** An equestrian from Vienne, Tutor’s career is known from one inscription, *CIL* XII 2600, which notes that he served as a priest of Mars and at a shrine to Augustus and Roma.\(^{413}\)

4. **Sextus Decius.** An equestrian from Vienne, Sextus Decius served as a military tribune under Tiberius and held a priesthood at a shrine to Mars.\(^{414}\)

5. **Gaius Passerius Afer.** A member of a family from Vienne, Passerius Afer had an extensive equestrian career during the reigns of the early Julio-Claudians. In addition to serving as a military tribune, he held priesthoods of both Augustus and Germanicus, and served as *praefectus fabrum*.\(^{415}\)

6. **Lucius Julius Fronto.** Attempting to reconstruct the career of Lucius Julius Fronto from one two-line inscription remains an exercise in futility; however, Demougin attempts to date his career prior to the reign of Caligula, due to the fact that Vienne only received *colonia* status at this time.\(^{416}\)

7. **Lucius Vibrius Punicus.** As Demougin notes, the career of Punicus as represented in the inscription *CIL* XII 2455 cannot have happened as is written, as multiple responsibilities in the traditional equestrian *cursus honorum* are out of order. His career appears to have reached his apex under Nero, when he was appointed prefect of Corsica.\(^{417}\)

8. **Gaius Marius.** A native of Vienne, Gaius Marius appears to have held a standard equestrian career between 37 and 54.\(^{418}\)

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\(^{413}\) *CIL* XII 2600; Demougin, 131–132.

\(^{414}\) *CIL* XII 2460; Demougin, 295.

\(^{415}\) *CIL* XII 1872; *CIL* XII 1873; *CIL* XII 2566; *ILGN* 268; Demougin, 255–256.

\(^{416}\) *CIL* XII 2393; Demougin, 308.

\(^{417}\) *CIL* XII 2455; Demougin, 328–329.

\(^{418}\) *ILGN* 348; Demougin, 417.
9. **Lucius Julius Vestinus.** An equestrian from Vienne, Vestinus had been a close companion of the emperor Claudius, having received great praise in the speech opening the Senate to the Gauls.\(^{419}\) He later was appointed *Praefectus Aegypti* during the reign of Nero, and was later given the responsibility by Vespasian to rebuild the Capitoline after it had burned down during the civil wars of 69.\(^{420}\)

10. **Marcus Coelius Lectus.** According to Demougin, Lectus appears to have begun his career as a local official within Vienne, but ultimately was able to enter the Roman equestrian order and rise through the ranks there.\(^{421}\)

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### III. Revolts in Gaul and Germany

1. **Gaius Julius Vindex.** Known most for his revolt against Nero in 68, Vindex was the son of a Roman Senator and of Aquatanian royal descent.\(^{422}\) As the governor of Gallia Lugdunensis, he had been able to unite multiple Gallic tribes to form an army, levying troops from the Sequani, Aeduli, and Arverni, and immediately laid siege to his capital Lugdunum; lacking any legions and insufficiently-manned to make a sustained revolt feasible, he wrote to Galba, at the time a governor in Hispania, to offer him the throne.\(^{423}\) He was defeated in battle by Verginius Rufus near Vesontio and subsequently committed suicide.\(^{424}\)

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\(^{419}\) *CIL* XIII 1668.

\(^{420}\) Tac. *Hist.* 4.53; Demougin, 574–575.

\(^{421}\) *CIL* XII 1867; Demougin, 625.

\(^{422}\) Cass. Dio 63.22.1.2.


\(^{424}\) Cass. Dio 63.24; Plut. *Galb.* 5.3.
2. **Gaius Julius Civilis.** A member of the Batavian royal family, Julius Civilis first appears in the historical narrative as a commander of the Batavian units that were attached to the legions at the Rhine. He first appears in Hist. 1.59, allegedly saved from execution by Vitellius, who needed the support of the Batavian cohorts in his march against Galba/Otho.\(^{425}\) His full backstory, however, is not revealed until three books later, where Tacitus notes that he was imprisoned by Fonteius Capito, falsely accused of planning a revolt, before being pardoned by Nero and then ultimately arrested on the orders of Vitellius on the instigation of the soldiers.\(^{426}\) Angered by such disrespect and encouraged by the Flavian supporters Hordeonius Flaccus and Antonius Primus, he organized a revolt, spearheaded by Batavian leadership but incorporating also the Canninefates and the Frisii.\(^{427}\) After early victories, they were joined by rebels in Gaul, and after early victories, he openly (albeit false) declared for Vespasian, in order to give the revolt a fallback should they fail against Vitellius.\(^{428}\) Following the death of Vitellius, however, he openly declared an attempt at independence; joined by Julius Classicus and Julius Tutor of the Treviri and Julius Sabinus of the Lingones, he continued to win victories until Vespasian’s victory over Vitellius and the defeat of the Jewish Revolt freed enough legions to allow the Romans to counterattack en masse.\(^{429}\) Forced to withdraw all the way to the Batavian isle, Civilis met with the Roman general Quintus Petillius Cerialis on the “bridge over the Nabalian river” (*Nabaliae fluminis pons*), at which point the manuscripts cut

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\(^{425}\) Tac. *Hist*. 1.59.  
off soon after Civilis begins to speak; he disappears from history, and his fate is unknown.\footnote{Tac. \textit{Hist}. 5.26.} He is notably absent in Cassius Dio’s account.

3. **Julius/Claudius Paulus.** Another Batavian “of royal lineage” Paulus was executed under the same false charge by Capito that led to Civilis’s arrest.\footnote{Tac. \textit{Hist}. 4.13.} Some say that his name is Claudius Paulus, and describe him as Civilis’s brother.\footnote{Werner Eck, “Iulius” II 43, \textit{Brill’s New Pauly Online: Encyclopedia of the Ancient World} (Leiden: Brill, 2005).}

4. **Julius Sabinus.** A leader among the Lingones, Sabinus claimed maternal descent from Julius Caesar, saying that his great-grandmother had been Caesar’s mistress during his Gallic campaigns.\footnote{Tac. \textit{Hist}. 4.55; Cass. Dio Cass. Dio 65.3 (65.pos=15.18.1).} As such, he declared himself Caesar, and attacked the Sequani, who had remained loyal to Rome, where his army was badly defeated.\footnote{Tac. \textit{Hist}. 4.67.} His wife Epponina (called Peponila by Dio) hid him for years, eventually pleading in vain with Vespasian to pardon him; their story is also told in Plutarch’s \textit{Amatorius}.\footnote{Cass. Dio 65.16.2; Plut. \textit{Amat}. 25.}

5. **Julius Tutor.** Appointed \textit{praefectus ripae} on the Rhine by Vitellius, the Trevirian Julius Tutor joined with Classicus and Sabinus in their Gallic revolt.\footnote{Tac. \textit{Hist}. 4.55.} Besieging Colonia Agrippinensis, he forced the city and the legions on the Rhine to swear fealty to Sabinus; those prefects that failed to do so, he executed.\footnote{Tac. \textit{Hist} 4.59.} Later, having levied troops from the Vangiones, the Caeracates, and the Triboci, he murdered...
two legates, and led the Gallic forces against Cerialis. He would continue
serving under Civilis until the end of the war, after which he escaped across the
border.

6. **Julius Classicus.** First appearing as a cavalry commander serving under
Vitellius, Classicus came from the royal family of the Treviri. After
exchanging letters with Julius Civilis, he joined in the latter’s revolt, leading
forces often in conjunction with Tutor. Following the end of the war, he joined
Tutor and escaped across the border.

7. **Veleda.** A seer from the Bructeri tribe, Veleda was worshipped as divine by the
Germanic tribes east of the Rhine. Allegedly having foretold that the uprising
would destroy the Roman legions and result in great success, she served as an
arbiter for the rebels on at least one occasion. Her importance is highlighted by
the fact that on multiple occasions, the rebels gifted her spoils of war, including
the captured general Gaius Licinius Mucianus and the flagship of the Roman
fleet. Following the war, she evidently was granted her liberty, although she
was later granted entry into Roman territory, possibly as a captive, and is
mentioned in one of Statius’s poems.

8. **Brinno.** A man “of solid audacity with a marked nobility of birth” (*Stolidae
audaciae...claritate natalium insigni*), Brinno was chosen to be the general by the

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438 Tac. *Hist* 4.70, 4.76–78.
441 Tac. *Hist*. 4.55, 4.57, 4.59, 4.70, 4.76–79.
443 Tac. *Germ*. 8.2; Tac. *Hist*. 4.61, 4.65.
444 Tac. *Hist*. 4.61, 4.65.
445 Tac. *Hist*. 4.61, 5.22.
Additionally, his father had been a vocal opponent to Caligula in the region. Additionally, his father had been a vocal opponent to Caligula in the region.

9. **Claudius Labeo.** A rival to Civilis, Labeo had been in command of the Batavians that defected from Vitellius’s army to Civilis. Civilis had him imprisoned among the Frisii, fearing that he would sow dissent among the Batavians; he escaped, however, and after receiving a small force from Vorcula, engaged in guerrilla tactics against the Canninefates and Marsaci. Recruiting troops from among the Baetasii, Tungri, and Nervii, he managed to get Civilis to pursue him in vain, splitting up the rebels’ forces.

10. **Julius Auspex.** A member of the Remi ruling class, Auspex attempted to convince the Gallic rebels to stand down and make peace with the Romans, arguing that they were too divided to form a strong enough front to achieve victory.

11. **Julius Valentinus.** A military commander of the Treviri forces, Valentinus convinced the Gallic tribes who had gathered among the Remi to continue the war. He later joined Tutor in murdering Roman legates, but was defeated in the first engagement against Cerialis.

12. **Julius Briganticus.** The nephew of Civilis on his sister’s side, Julius Briganticus originally served as a cavalry commander in Otho’s army, but joined Vitellius

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⁴⁴⁷ Tac. Hist. 4.15.
⁴⁴⁸ Tac. Hist. 4.15.
⁴⁴⁹ Tac. Hist. 4.18.
⁴⁵⁰ Tac. Hist. 4.18, 4.56.
⁴⁵¹ Tac. Hist. 4.66, 4.70.
⁴⁵² Tac. Hist. 4.69.
⁴⁵³ Tac. Hist. 4.68–69.
⁴⁵⁴ Tac. Hist. 4.70–71.
after the Battle of Placentia.\textsuperscript{455} Later, he appears under the command of Cerialis’s army, where he dies in battle against his uncle.\textsuperscript{456}

13. \textbf{Alpinius Montanus}. One of the “one hundred and thirteen Senators of the Treviri” (\textit{centum tredecim Trevirorum senatores}), Montanus served as a military officer in Vitellius’s defeated army before joining Civilis’s revolt.\textsuperscript{457} He crossed the Rhine to try and gain supporters for the revolt from beyond the border.\textsuperscript{458}

14. \textbf{Decimus Alpinius}. The brother of Alpinius Montanus, he joined Montanus when he went across the border.\textsuperscript{459}

\textsuperscript{455} Tac. \textit{Hist}. 2.22.
\textsuperscript{456} Tac. \textit{Hist}. 4.70, 5.21.
\textsuperscript{457} Tac. \textit{Hist}. 3.31, 3.35; 5.19.
\textsuperscript{458} Tac. \textit{Hist}. 5.19.
\textsuperscript{459} Tac. \textit{Hist}. 5.19.
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